

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

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Captives of Our Emotions

based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

After Yaakov's passing, the Shevatim were concerned that perhaps Yosef still hated them, and would take revenge on them. The Medrash Rabbah (100:8) discusses what happened that caused the brothers to think this: "And Yosef returned to Egypt; Rebbi Levi and Rebbi Yitzchak say he no longer invited them to eat with him. Rebbi Tanchuma says that Yosef's intentions were for the sake of Heaven. Yosef said that in the past his father placed him at the head of the table above Yehuda who is a king, and Reuven who is the first born. However, now it is not appropriate that he should sit at the head of the table. The Shevatim did not think of this possibility, and therefore thought that Yosef hated them. Rebbi Yitzchak says Yosef went and stopped by the pit that his brothers threw him into. (He went there to make a Brocha at the place where a miracle was done for him.) Rebbi Tanchuma says his intention was for the sake of Heaven, however they did not say this, rather Yosef hates us."

The above mentioned Medrash seems difficult to understand. The Shevatim were great Sages who possessed the wisdom and clarity of mind to think of every angle and possibility in any given situation. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why the Shevatim wouldn't be able to think of the rationale behind Yosef's behavior on their own. Why would they conclude that Yosef hated them, when Yosef had already done so much to show them that he felt otherwise? It must be that although the Shevatim were normally able to see every possibility, here they were blinded by their emotions. The Shevatim must have felt some guilt or fear that prevented them from properly weighing all the possibilities in this situation.

An important insight can be derived from here. It seems that even the greatest minds can be compromised by their emotions. If that's the case for the Shevatim, how much more so for us who don't possess their greatness. We therefore must double our efforts in learning Mussar so we are able to free our minds from the captivity of our emotions.

Restoring Relationships

The Ralbag writes as follows in this week's Parsha, "The 14th lesson is in Middos. It is appropriate for a person who fears Hashem to quickly forgive someone who did bad to him, when he asks for forgiveness. He should restore the relationship back to its original love that existed before his friend did bad to him. This lesson is derived from Yosef who forgave his brothers that did bad to him immediately upon their request for forgiveness. He said to them they should not be afraid, as he fears Hashem. This indicates that it is not the way of someone who fears Hashem not to forgive someone who did bad to them when they request forgiveness, and to take revenge on them. He expressed to them that he loves them as if they did good to him, and in return he will feed them and their children. Yosef wasn't satisfied with just this, but he wanted to settle their minds and express to them that they didn't do anything wrong, as it was all from Hashem so that he would sustain a large nation."

At first glance, the Ralbag's lesson and proof don't seem to align, and they require further clarification. In his lesson he writes, "That you should restore the relationship to its original state." However, in the proof from Yosef, it seems that Yosef didn't merely restore the relationship to where it was before, rather he took the relationship to a level beyond where it was originally. As the Ralbag writes, Yosef expressed to them that they actually did good for him.

The Ralbag can be explained as follows: Restoring a relationship to its original state is not a simple matter. When there is a breach in any relationship, even though both parties may have fully forgiven each other, there still remains a tension and breach that is not easily repaired. Therefore, one must go beyond where the original relationship was just to restore it to its original state.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Before Yaakov goes down to Mitzrayim, Hashem appears to him and says: “I am G-d, the G-d of your father. Fear not to go down to Mitzrayim for I will make you there into a great nation. I Myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also bring you back; and Yosef’s hand shall close your eyes.” The Mechilta explains that Hashem was telling Yaakov that His Shechinah will accompany Klal Yisroel throughout their exile.

We find this idea in Shir HaShirim as well where it states: *With me [will you come] from Levanon O bride.* When you are exiled from this Levanon [Beis Hamikdosh], with Me you will be exiled, for I will go into exile with you. *With me from Levanon will you come.* And when you return from the exile, I will return with you, and also throughout the exile, I will be distressed in your distress. Therefore, [Scripture] wrote, “With me from Levanon will you come.” When you are exiled from this Levanon, you will come with Me, and [Scripture] does not write, “With me to Levanon will you come,” to denote that from the time of your departure from here until the time of your return, I am with you wherever you will go and come. (*Shir HaShirim 4:8* with Rashi)

The test of true love is its endurance through hard times. As the Yerushalmi states, *“For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the Hashem our God whenever we call upon Him?”* Rav Shimon ben Lakish said: *A person who has a relative; if he is wealthy, he admits to it, but, if he is destitute he denies it. However, Hashem is not like this, rather, even if Klal Yisroel are on the lowest level He calls them, “My brother and friend!”* As the Pasuk (Tehillim 122:8) says, *“For the sake of My brother and friend...”*

For your real friend is the One who walks in when the rest of the world walks out!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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In this week’s Parsha, Yaakov foresees the death of Shimshon HaGibor at the hands of the Plishtim and says (Bereishis 49:18), *“For Your salvation I await, Hashem.”* Rabbeinu Bachaya explains, *“Yaakov foresaw the death of this judge of Israel who is the one who prayed ‘For Your salvation I await, Hashem.’”* Rabbeinu Bachaya is then bothered by the question: How can Shimshon’s death be considered his salvation? So, he continues, *“And though he died with them, this was his salvation, taking revenge upon his enemies and dying with them, for this is what he desired. As the Pasuk (Melachim 16,30) recounts his request, ‘Let me die with the Plishtim.’”*

Perhaps we can explain further how dying with the Plishtim can still be considered, “Hashem’s salvation,” based upon an additional understanding of what is meant by “Hashem’s salvation” based upon the following Medrash (Tanchuma Acharei Mos 12): *“And to the one who sets his way aright I will show the salvation of G-d.”* Rav Abbahu said, *“All salvation that comes to Israel, the Holy One’s blessed be He, as stated (in Ps. 91:15-16), ‘I will be with him in distress ... and show him My salvation.’”*

We see from this Medrash that “Hashem’s salvation” doesn’t merely mean Hashem is the one saving. Rather, it means that He is the One being saved through saving the person whose distress He shares. Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains that this is the epitome of Tefillah, to understand that Hashem fully shares your pain and then to ask Hashem to relieve His own pain by helping you. According to this, Shimshon’s prayer can be understood as saying, “I am in distress because I would like to ‘die with the Plishtim’ and now I have lost my power. Since I am in distress so are You, therefore I pray ‘For Your (very own) salvation,’ which in fact occurred when Shimshon’s desire of killing all the Plishtim with him was fulfilled.”