

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Middos Even To Reshaim

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

In this week's Parsha, the Ralbag writes, "The 14th lesson is in Middos. When asking someone who is under your control to do something, it is not appropriate to demand your request by force. Rather, you should first attempt to see if you can achieve your request without force. However, if your request is denied, it is then appropriate to attain it by force. This should also be done gradually. This lesson is derived from the manner in which Hashem dealt with Pharaoh. First, Hashem wanted to test Pharaoh and see if he would agree to send out the Jews willingly. Only after he did not agree did Hashem send the Makkos. This was also done gradually. First, Hashem brought the lighter Makkos, and only later did he bring the heavier ones."

The above lesson is mind boggling! Pharaoh tortured Klal Yisrael for 210 years. The Mitzriyim killed their babies and gave them no respite from their work. In addition, Klal Yisrael was impacted from their surroundings, and had reached the 49th level of impurity. Now it was finally time to leave. Yet despite Pharaoh's wickedness, and the suffering Klal Yisrael was currently enduring, Hashem acted with sensitivity towards him and gave Pharaoh a chance to act on his own free will, rather than allowing Klal Yisrael to leave Mitzrayim right away. This sensitivity continued even after Pharaoh refused to let them go, as Hashem sent the lighter Makkos first to allow Pharaoh to act as willful as possible.

We can learn a powerful lesson from here. Often when people are acting inappropriately we tend to think that we are not obligated to treat them nicely and to benefit them. Our feeling may be that they don't deserve such treatment. We see from here that our sensitivities and Middos must be shown even to Reshaim, even at a time where it can cause us more pain.

Safety First

In the next Perek the Ralbag writes, "The second lesson is, it is not appropriate to place yourself in danger. This is true even if you are going based on the command of Hashem. This lesson is derived from the fact that Hashem told Moshe to return to Mitzrayim because those who were out to kill him had died. It is implied from here that if they would not have died, Moshe would not have agreed to go there because one is not allowed to rely on a miracle. This

idea is supported from Shmuel, who said to Hashem after being commanded to anoint Dovid, "How can I go, Shaul will hear and kill me?"

This Ralbag highlights to us the obligation that we have to preserve our lives, and to not put ourselves in danger. Here Hashem is telling Moshe to go, but if those people who were trying to kill him were alive, Moshe would not have listened to Hashem. This is perplexing. Obviously if Hashem was telling him to go, Moshe had nothing to worry about, as Hashem would protect him. However, Moshe understood that he was not allowed to rely on a miracle even if Hashem commanded him to go. He understood that he was obligated to protect himself and to avoid danger. We see from here how careful we need to be in avoiding any situation that can endanger our lives.

Doing A Mitzvah With Zerizus

The Ralbag writes further, "The fourth lesson is in Middos, to make known to us that Hashem brings bad on Tzadikim for the purpose of motivating them to complete Hashem's Mitzvos with Zerizus and not be lax in them. This lesson is derived from the fact that when Moshe Rabbeinu was neglectful in the Mitzvah of Milah, he was faced with a terrible situation."

A powerful insight into the value of Zerizus can be derived from this Ralbag. Moshe Rabbeinu had a strong rationale for delaying his son's Bris Milah. Moshe Rabbeinu reasoned that doing the Bris Milah would prevent him from traveling to Mitzrayim, as traveling would be dangerous. Therefore, he did not do the Bris Milah so as not to delay going down to Mitzrayim. Yet we see clearly that Moshe erred in his calculation and he should have done the Bris Milah. An error that would have been avoided with an increased Middah of Zerizus. One would have thought that this deficiency in Zerizus is considered a slight error that could be overlooked, and Moshe would have been allowed to do the Bris Milah once he reached Mitzrayim. However, we see the exact opposite. Hashem will place Moshe Rabbeinu whom He loves, in pain, in order to ensure the Mitzvah is done with Zerizus. We see from here how significant doing a Mitzvah with Zerizus is to Hashem.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Draw me after You, let us run! (Shir HaShirim 1:4)

Mefarshim explain that this alludes to our running after Hashem into the Sinai Desert as the Navi says in this week's Haftorah (Nusach Safard): The word of Hashem came to me, saying, "go proclaim to Jerusalem: Thus said Hashem: I accounted to your favor the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride— how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown..." (Yirmiyahu 2:1,2)

How comforting is the thought, the King of the universe dwells on the love we expressed to Him so many years ago when He chose us as His bride. But one may ask: Perhaps Hashem dwells upon these memories, so to speak, only when we act appropriately?

A quick perusal of the Pesukim following these will dispense of this notion as the Navi continues "... Oh, I will go on accusing you —declares Hashem — and I will accuse your children's children! Just cross over to the isles of the Kittim and look, send to Kedar and observe carefully; see if anything like this has ever happened: Has any nation changed its gods even though they are no-gods? But My people has exchanged its glory for what can do no good. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be horrified, utterly dazed! — says Hashem. For My people have done a twofold wrong: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which cannot even hold water." (ibid. 9-13)

We see that it is specifically at times when Klal Yisroel's spiritual level is at its lowest point that Hashem reminds Himself, so to speak, of the love we showed Him when we were newlyweds. Why? Because He knows that deep down in the depths of our hearts that is the love that still burns brightly for Him even while it is covered over with so many layers of sin.



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Moshe said to Hashem, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The G-d of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And G-d said to Moshe, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh - I will be that I will be." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" (Shemos 3:16)

Rashi explains: *I will be that I will be* — I will be with them in this sorrow — I Who will be with them in the subjugation they will suffer at the hands of other kingdoms (Berachos 9b.)

One may ask: Hashem has many names, each conveying a certain aspect of our perception of His traits. Ehyeh is the rarest of those and is not used anywhere else in Tanach. Many of Hashem's more common names seem more fitting to convey encouragement to Bnei Yisroel during their bondage, such as those mentioned in the Pasuk (Shemos 34:6): G-d, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, Abounding in Kindness, and Faithful. Why of all the many names of Hashem did He choose specifically this one to introduce Himself to Bnei Yisroel during their suffering?

Let us explain with a story: *When Professor Halperin, the eminent mental health expert in Yerushalayim, was asked what he does when he can't help someone he responded, "I send him to Rav Aryeh Levin." When they asked Rav Aryeh "What is your secret that lets you help people whom the greatest professionals couldn't help?" he answered, "I know how to listen, and share their pain."* What Rav Aryeh said is what we learn from the above Pasuk. The first and most powerful way to relieve another's suffering is letting them know what Hashem always lets us know, that you truly feel their pain.