

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

## All We Need To Do Is Focus

*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, Moshe informs Klal Yisrael that Hashem told him that He would take them out of Mitzrayim. However, the Pasuk says (6:9), "And they did not listen to Moshe due to their shortness of breath and hard work." The Seforno explains as follows, "They did not listen to Moshe, which means they did not reflect on all this in a manner that would have caused them to trust in Hashem that He would save them. If they would have trusted in Hashem it would have been a merit for them, like it says by Avraham. Therefore the Pasuk of, 'I will give it to you' was not fulfilled in them, but in their children. They did not focus, due to their big shortness of breath and therefore they did not have Emunah (Tehillim 78:8). If not for the hard work, they would have focused on what Moshe was saying, and they would have understood that it was appropriate to have Bitachon in Hashem."

This Seforno presents a challenge in understanding. He says that the only factor preventing Klal Yisrael from trusting in Hashem was their lack of ability to focus. If they would have focused, they would have been inspired to trust in Hashem. At that point, they were still skeptical as to whether Moshe was acting on his own or if he was a messenger of Hashem. As the Rambam tells us, they only reached complete faith in Moshe at Har Sinai, and this was happening even before the miracles that happened in Mitzrayim. Based on this, it is difficult to understand how focusing would have helped. Wouldn't they still be doubtful of Moshe's message that Hashem would redeem them?

We can answer that it must be that the truth of the words of Hashem themselves have a power to inspire us. Although we may be skeptical, the truth itself can inspire and dispel doubts. The only factor that can play a role in watering down the message is our lack of focus. Therefore, if Klal Yisrael were able to focus they would have been inspired to trust. We can glean from here a powerful insight. Often we encounter Pesukim and statements from our Sages that have the power to inspire trust in Hashem in all areas of life. These statements have a power on their own to inspire us, as they represent the ultimate truth, the words of Hashem. All we need to do is focus.

The above Seforno references a Pasuk in Tehillim that says, "They did not have Emunah in Hashem." The Pesukim in Tehillim are discussing the fact that Hashem gave Klal Yisrael a Torah, which has within it logical proofs. The Seforno in Tehillim says as follows, "The Torah has within it logical proofs that Hashem created the world, is intimately involved with the world, and that points to the eternity of the soul...But this generation did not focus on these proofs, and they therefore had their doubts in Hashem. If they would have focused on these things they would have reached total clarity, and they would have been doubt-free. However, they did not focus because they were drawn after their desires."

It is interesting to note that the Seforno seems to identify three factors, that if a person would focus on they would be doubt free. One is the creation of the world, two is Hashem's involvement in every detail of the world, and three is the eternity of the soul. We would have thought that if someone has doubts they should focus on Har Sinai and Yetzias Mitzrayim, yet we see from here that the antidote to all doubt is this three pronged formula.

The Seforno further states that the only impediment to this formula is not being able to focus, due to our desire to indulge in the pleasures of this world. The fact that desire stops a person from focusing on these three factors is mind boggling. We would have assumed that the desire for purpose and meaning, which is born out of the concept of creation, and the desire to have a relationship with Hashem, which is expressed through Hashgacha, would overpower our desires for this world. In addition, eternity is more appealing than the temporary pleasures of this world. So how would desire for this world stop us from focusing?

We see from here that our desires for this world are so powerful, and although they don't hold a candle to the spiritual bliss we would experience, they still stop us from focusing. It is therefore incumbent on us to subdue our desires through Limud Hamussar. This way we can focus and achieve clarity.



## Shir HaShirim Insights

*In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern*

In this week's Parsha, Hashem refers to Klal Yisroel by the name angels are referred to, "My hosts," as Hashem tells Moshe (Shemos 7:4), "I will lay My hand upon Egypt and deliver My hosts, My people the Bnei Yisroel, from Mitzrayim.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that one may have thought that Hashem has many hosts in Heaven, Klal Yisroel being just another one of them, but the wording, "My hosts, My people" teaches us that the name, "Hosts of Hashem" refers only to Klal Yisroel "the exalted and exceptional ones!"

Now, in what spiritual state were Klal Yisroel at this time? A few Pesukim earlier (6:9) we find Klal Yisroel ignored Moshe's message from Hashem heralding their redemption. Why? "Because of their shortness of breath and hard work," Chazal (see Targum Yonasan) tell us that the "hard work" in this Pasuk is a euphemism for the Avodah Zara they worshiped in Mitzrayim. It seems that Klal Yisroel had fallen to such a shocking depth that they would have rather continued to suffer the holocaust of Egyptian bondage, instead of freedom in the "land of milk and honey," if it would mean having to give up their Avodah Zara!

Yet, at that very time they are referred to as the most "exalted and exceptional ones" of all Hashem's hosts and angles?! Yes! For at whatever current spiritual level a Jew may be, deep down he is still more exalted and exceptional than even the Malachim! His soul is merely covered by layers of dust, that when removed will uncover the greatest of Hashem's creations!



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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Why did Hashem give us the Torah?

In Tehillim (78:5-8) we find an answer to this question: He established a testament in Yaakov, and placed Torah in Yisroel, charging our fathers to make them known to their children, so that the future generations will know — children yet to be born — and in turn tell their children **so that they will put their trust in G-d, and not forget G-d's great deeds, but observe His commandments, and not be like their fathers** (in Mitzrayim and the Midbar - Rashi) **a wayward and defiant generation**, a generation who did not prepare their heart, whose spirit was not true to G-d.

The question begs: Hashem charged the fathers to make known to future generations the great miracles that He performed for them, so that they will trust Hashem and observe His commandments and **not be like their fathers, a wayward and defiant generation**? If the generation that experienced the miracles themselves remained wayward and defiant why will the following generations be faithful through simply hearing their stories?

The answer lies in the words the Pasuk uses to describe that wayward generation. "... a generation who did not prepare their heart..." As the Radak comments: **And not be like their fathers**: Who did not put their trust in Hashem and were a wayward nation and this was the generation of the Midbar who did not prepare their hearts for Hashem.

The Torah was given to us to prepare our hearts to internalize the great miracles Hashem has done for us. One can witness the greatest miracles in the world but if his heart is not properly prepared to accept the conclusion that arises from them they will have no effect upon him. However, when one's heart is prepared, even the mere testimony to those miracles that happened thousands of years before, is enough to make them live by their logical conclusions.

We see from here the great importance of preparing the hearts of our children to take notice of the Hashgacha Pratis that surrounds us each day, and to internalize the testimony we pass on to them, and be ready and waiting to follow them to their logical conclusions, to cling to Hashem their entire lives!