

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

We Need Passion!

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 asks Hashem (33:13), "And now please if I find favor in Your eyes, let me know Your ways." The Ralbag comments on this Pasuk, "The fifth lesson is in Middos. It is to inform us that it is not appropriate for a person to neglect acquiring wisdom because he already attained an abundant amount of wisdom. Rather it is appropriate not to fall short in this, and focus all of his energy into constantly increasing his knowledge, as this is the fruit of all man's labor. This lesson can be derived from Moshe, who although he reached such high levels of wisdom, he constantly craved even more wisdom. This passion for wisdom brought him to even ask for knowledge in areas that were beyond his comprehension."

The Middah the Ralbag is describing requires further understanding. Firstly, if a person amassed a wealth of knowledge, it was most likely due to his great appreciation for knowledge. Why would a person who has such an appreciation for knowledge neglect to further increase his wisdom? Secondly, it is difficult to understand the line of reasoning behind this neglect. Granted a person may have acquired a large amount of knowledge, but how does what he knows create a feeling of satisfaction that he already has enough? He is totally devoid of wisdom in the areas that one does not know. Therefore, knowledge in one area should not satisfy a person who appreciates wisdom, to be content with his complete lack of knowledge in other areas.

It must be that there is a certain tendency in a person, that when he knows so much he begins to feel that he is already a wise person, and there is no need to keep pushing himself. This bad Middah, although irrational, can cause a person who appreciates wisdom to stop pursuing wisdom.

How does a person combat this bad Middah that is based in irrational thinking? How does one overcome this Middah and continue his pursuit of wisdom? It seems from the Ralbag that this is done by focusing on Moshe's passion for wisdom; seeing how Moshe begged to understand that which was beyond his comprehension, although he knew so much and reached the 49th level of wisdom. The only way beyond this Middah of neglect is to see this image of passion to know even beyond my capabilities.

We find a similar idea in the Sefer HaChinuch on the Mitzvah of Parah Adumah. The Sefer Hachinuch expresses that he feels unable to write a reason for this Mitzvah, as even Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men, said the reason was beyond him. However, he then writes a reason for the Mitzvah of Parah Adumah, and he explains that his passion to understand the secrets of the hidden things moved his pen to write it. In other words, the Sefer Hachinuch understood rationally that he was limited in understanding this Mitzvah, however, his passion to understand caused him, perhaps even forced him, to go beyond what he felt incapable of understanding.

It seems from the above sources that if we want to overcome the natural resistance to continuously pursue wisdom, we need to develop a passion for wisdom and getting close to Hashem. This passion can be developed through learning Mussar with feeling. Through Mussar we can bridge the gap between our intellect and our emotions.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Week after week I learn from Shir HaShirim about the overwhelming love Hashem has for me even in the depth of Galus. This being so, why don't I feel this love? Why do I feel so distant? Wouldn't He show me this love if it really were there?

The Vilna Gaon (Commentary on Esther 1:2) says that the uniqueness of Purim amongst the other Nissim that Klal Yisroel has experienced is that it took place during Galus when Hashem is hidden from us, as the Pasuk (Devarim 31:18), which is where Esther is hinted to, states: I will keep My face hidden **הסתר** (אסתר) from them on that day. He explains with a Mashal:

The king's great love for his only son caused his ministers to be jealous. Time passed and the son sinned against his father, whereupon he threw him out into the forest. The son thought his father had abandoned and forgotten him, however the king feared he would be attacked by the wild animals of the forest or the ministers who hated him. What did he do? He sent his servants into the forest as well, but, he said to them that his son should not find out about this, so that he will repent from his sins. When one day a bear attacked him and one of his father's servants saved him, he thought it was mere happenstance. Later, one of the ministers who hated him also attacked him, but, one of his father's servants came and saved him again. The son understood that it cannot be mere happenstance again and again, and understood that his father was behind this, whereupon love for his father was rooted into his heart and he returned in complete repentance. The Holy One, blessed be He, sent us into exile, but He feared lest the harsh bears harm us, so He sent His servants, and He performs miracles through them, but He remains hidden. However, Mordechai and Esther and their generation saw and understood that it was from Heaven and accepted upon themselves the Torah with great love.

Upon analysis of this Mashal one notices a contradiction: The son ultimately does Teshuva because he understands, "That it cannot be mere happenstance again and again, and he understood that his father was behind this, whereupon love for his father was rooted into his heart and he returned in complete repentance." However, originally, the king warns the servants he sends to protect his son to hide this fact from him, "So that he will return from his sins."

We see from here that, ultimately, we return to Hashem when we realize that He has never forsaken us, but, if not for the period where He hides His face from us, we never would end up returning. We need to "lose Him" in order to appreciate what we have and not take it for granted. The Pasuk in Shir HaShirim (6:5) alludes to this: *Turn your eyes away from me, for, they overwhelm me!* Rashi explains: *The Holy One, Blessed Is He, said, "In this Beis Hamikdash, it is impossible to restore to you the Ark, the Ark cover, and the Cherubim, which excessively endeared you to Me in the first Beis Hamikdash, to show you great affection, until you betrayed Me."*

The distance we sometimes feel from Hashem, not only does not show a lack of infinite love for us, it epitomizes that love! It is the painful distancing of a father from his son in a desperate attempt to win back his love! We just need to show Him He has won it back, so He can come out of hiding once again!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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Anyone who prolongs his prayer and examines it, will ultimately come to heartache, as it is stated: "Prolonged hope makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12). (Brachos 55a)

The Sefer Ha'ikarim further explains the above Pasuk:

One might say that hope and expectation are not good for man, because they disturb the power of thought, weaken one's strength and make the mind sick...as we read: "Prolonged hope makes the heart sick." Hence every intelligent person should remove from his mind hope and expectation...

According to the above how can we understand the following Medrash (Mechilta D'Rashbi 14:10), "Blessed is the man who has bitachon in Hashem and Hashem is his security," (Yirmiyahu 17:7) - this refers to Tefillah."

Is hope a good thing or a bad thing? Should one hope his prayers will be answered or not? The Sefer Ha'ikarim quoted above continues:

How then can we say that hope and expectation are good for a believer, so much so that the novi urges hope above all things? As we read: "Therefore turn to your G-d; have mercy and justice, and wait for your G-d continually," from which it seems that hope is as essential to a believer as mercy and justice or even more so. The answer to the question is this: Hope for something about which one is in doubt whether it will come or not, does disturb the soul, preoccupying it with thoughts of how to obtain it, but hope for a thing which one is sure will come as, for example, the hope for the light of the morning, does not disturb the soul but makes it glad, because it conceives the good which is sought and is confident that it will come. This is the kind of hope one must have in G-d. One must trust implicitly that G-d will fulfill one's hope without doubt, since He has the power and there is no one to prevent Him. Such hope, as we have described, strengthens the heart and makes it glad, as we read: "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you that wait for Hashem." Hope in G-d, far from weakening the heart, strengthens it, for if one hopes in G-d and his heart truly relies upon the Holy One of Yisroel, trusting that He will grant his request, he gets stronger and more courageous...

It seems from the above that hoping for something based on the merit of one's prayer is what Chazal warned us against because the merit of one's prayer is not fool-proof. However, prayer should bring one to rely, not upon its merit, but upon the kindness of Hashem, which does not make "the heart sick," because it is assured as "the hope for the light of the morning, so it does not disturb the soul but makes it glad, because it conceives the good which is sought and is confident that it will come!"