

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

A צלם אלקים Can Do No Wrong

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

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

In this week's Parsha, we are commanded in the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**, "You should love your friend like you love yourself." The Medrash Rabbah (Bereshis 24:7) discussing this Pasuk comments, "Ben Azai says the Pasuk of 'This is the book of the generations of man,' (5:1) is a greater principle in the Torah than the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**. Rabbi Akiva says the Pasuk of 'You should love your friend like you love yourself,' is a great principle in the Torah. A person should not say, since I am disrespected, I will disrespect my friend, since I am degraded, I will degrade my friend with me. Rabbi Tanchuma says, If you do this, know you are degrading a person who was made in the image of Hashem." The commentary of the **די משה** on this Medrash elaborates on this idea further, and quotes a Medrash Shocher Tov that says, "After I explained to you that it is appropriate to include all the details of the Torah in one short statement, you can understand that our Sages have an argument regarding which statement to include it in. One of our Sages says **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**, another Sage says Shema Yisrael, and one says, 'This is the book of the generations of man.' He explains their argument that one Sage says that by fulfilling the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** a person fulfills the majority of the Torah. The other Sage says that by accepting the kingship of Hashem a person will come to fulfill the entire Torah. Another Sage says that if a person understands that he was created by Hashem, he will not be able to do any bad, as "from the wicked goes out wickedness". However, one who is created in the image of Hashem can do no wrong."

In summary, it seems from Ben Azai that focusing on the fact that we are created in the image of Hashem will have a greater influence on us keeping all the Mitzvos than the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**. This is because the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** has a limitation, as one is only required to love another as much as himself. Therefore, if a person does not mind being mistreated he may act that way to his friend. However, focusing on the fact that a person is created in the image of Hashem will go beyond this limitation, and will cause a person to treat his friends properly, even in areas in which he may be mistreated.

Upon initial analysis this Medrash requires further clarification. Granted, the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** has a limitation, but this Mitzvah also seems to extend to many areas well beyond the principle proposed by Ben Azai of focusing on the fact that we are created in the image of Hashem. Firstly, it requires us to love every Jew and be concerned about every aspect of his existence. The amount of Chesed and following in the footsteps of Hashem that emanates from this love is unparalleled. Secondly, it is this love that generates the feeling of Achdus in Klal Yisrael that we are all one. The Gemara tells us that this feeling of unity is so powerful that it can make us feel that by hurting another Jew we are hurting ourselves. Based on the widespread impact of the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**, how can Ben Azai say that by focusing on being created in the image of Hashem one will be impacted beyond the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**?

In order to explain Ben Azai we must say that whatever positive influence the Mitzvah of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** accomplishes, it also exists regarding one who recognizes that he is created in the image of Hashem. One who is aware of his own greatness and G-dliness will emulate Hashem and go beyond both the great impact of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**, and its limitation. As the **די משה** said, "One who recognizes that he is created in the image of Hashem can do no wrong." It is clear from here how important it is to constantly focus on the fact that we are created in the image of Hashem.

Although we just said that one who recognizes that he is created in the image of Hashem can do no wrong, there may be interferences to this at

times. In this week's Parsha, we are commanded, "And in front of a blind man do not place a stumbling block." (19:14) The Gemara tells us that this is referring to one who hits his adult son (Moed Katan 17a) or lends money to someone without witnesses (Bava Metziah 75b). At first glance both of these cases seem to have no relevance to this commandment. This commandment generally refers to cases where the one sinning has no idea that he is sinning. An example is giving a Nazir wine to drink without him realizing, or feeding non kosher food to someone. In both of these cases the sinner can be called blind, as he is totally unaware of the wrong he is doing. However, if one hits his son who is thirteen, why is his son called blind? Granted he placed his son in a challenging situation, as his son has to now control himself from sinning, but he is still aware that hitting his father is wrong. Similarly if one lends money to someone without witnesses, granted he is tempted to lie and deny paying back the lender, however he is aware that this is wrong. So how are these two cases derived from this Pasuk?

We can answer the above question as follows: It must be that our Sages viewed placing someone in a tempting and challenging situation as more than just a fight between the Yetzer Tov and Yetzer Harah. They understand how vulnerable a person is, and how powerful the Yetzer Harah is. Therefore, their perspective was that by placing a person in a **מקום ניסיון**, you blinded them. Our Sages understood that even a person who is aware that he is created in the image of Hashem can be blinded. It is therefore critical that we learn Mussar to remove these blinders

Another insight into a human being can be derived from Rashi on this Pasuk. Rashi comments as follows, "Before a blind man, do not give him bad advice, do not tell him to sell his field or buy a donkey, and you're really tricking him." The Pasuk ends as follows, "And you should fear your G-d". Rashi explains why the Pasuk concludes this way, "Because a person's intentions whether good or bad are hidden in this matter, and one can say he intended for good. Therefore, the Torah writes, "And you should fear G-d", who recognizes your thoughts. So too any matter which the intentions are only known to the one who is doing it, the Torah says and you should fear your G-d."

The Gemara often asks, "Are we dealing with wicked people?" The assumption of our Sages is that the Torah is referring to everyone. Therefore we can assume that Rashi is not only referring to someone who purposely gives someone bad advice for his own benefit, but Rashi is also referring to one who thinks he is giving good advice but subconsciously has his own benefit in my mind. If that is the case, how does focusing on the fact that Hashem sees the motives of your heart prevent a person from giving this bad advice? The person himself is unaware of his true motives? We see from here, that when a person focuses on the fact that nothing is hidden from Hashem, and that He is able to see all his thoughts and motives, that can penetrate and dispel even his subconscious rationalizations.

Finally, we also see from here how important it is to address our areas of challenge in a specific way, and not rely on our general knowledge. This can be derived from the fact that the Torah wrote "And you should fear G-d," over here to express that Hashem sees the motives of our heart. This idea is a fundamental tenet of our Emunah and is said in many places in the Torah. A person is supposed to be living with this principle throughout his life. Why is it necessary to specifically say it here if we are already aware of it? It must be that general knowledge is not enough to prevent us from sinning in tempting situations, and a more acute focus is required. This idea further strengthens the need to learn Mussar.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

In this week's Parsha we read:

Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon who died when they drew too close to the presence of Hashem.

Chazal teach us that Nadav and Avihu were already sentenced to death by Har Sinai, where the Pasuk tells us, "...and they saw the God of Israel: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. Yet He did not raise His hand against the leaders of Yisroel; they beheld G-d, and they ate and drank." Rashi explains: They gazed intently, and by peeking in their attempt to catch a glimpse of the Supreme Being, they failed in this, thereby making themselves liable to death. It was only because Hashem did not wish to disturb the joy caused by the Giving of the Torah that He did not punish them instantly, but waited (postponed the punishment) for Nadav and Avihu until the day when the Mishkan was dedicated, when they were stricken with death.

Targum Onkolus on the above words, "And they ate and drank" states, "And they were happy over the acceptance of their Korbon as if they were eating and drinking."

Chazal tell us that Nadav and Avihu were, in a way, greater than Moshe and Aharon. How can we understand that they were only happy with the acceptance of their Korbon as if they were eating and drinking?!

Perhaps we can suggest that certainly their happiness over the acceptance of their Korbon was infinitely more than mere eating and drinking, however, the Pasuk is telling us that not only were they emotionally happy, but their happiness was so great that it gave them physical pleasure like eating and drinking does as well.

Similarly, we find Dovid HaMelech (Tehillim 63:2) saying to Hashem, "...my soul thirsts for You, *my flesh yearns for You*, as a parched and thirsty land that has no water."



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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The Sefer HaChinuch in this week's parshah explains the root of the prohibition of taking revenge as follows:

It is from the roots of the commandment that a person know and put into his heart that everything that happens to him - good and bad - that the cause of it coming to him is from Hashem, blessed be He. And from the hand of man - from the hand of a man to his brother - there would not be anything without the will of Hashem, blessed be He. Hence, when a person caused him pain or hurt him, he should know for himself that his [own] sins caused [it], and that Hashem, may He be blessed, ordained this for him. And he should not place his thoughts to taking vengeance from [the one who pained him] since he is not the cause of his evil, but rather the sin is the cause; like David, peace be upon him, stated (II Samuel 16:11), "Leave him to curse since Hashem told him [so]" - he made the matter depend upon his [own] sin, and not upon Shimei ben Gera (the one who had cursed him).

I recall the Rosh Yeshiva zt"l quoting this Chinuch and saying: How can one want to take revenge? He surely doesn't want to be an apikores!

In truth we can say the same thing about the basic level of Bitachon, which is to realize that Hashem alone will decide your fate no matter how bleak your situation may seem.