

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

ענני הכבוד Lessons From The

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 | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

In this week's Parsha, the Torah discusses the clouds that protected and guided Klal Yisrael throughout their years in the desert. The Rabbeinu Bachya explains, "Through Klal Yisrael being led by the clouds, the Torah is illustrating their greatness. This is because in the desert there were places that were pleasant and places that were unpleasant. For example, Marah and Elim. There were pleasant places in which Klal Yisrael wanted to extend their stay. However, as soon as the cloud lifted they left immediately. There were unpleasant places that they wanted to leave, however, due to the cloud hovering there for a long time they had to stay. In conclusion, they did not travel based on their own will, rather they travelled based on the will of Hashem, which was expressed through the moving of the cloud."

The Rabbeinu Bachya is difficult to understand. Klal Yisrael is being praised for following the will of Hashem, and not following their own will. What was the great challenge of following the will of Hashem in this circumstance that would warrant praise? The clouds protected them from the dangerous elements of the desert. They provided shade from the sun and heat from the cold. Within the clouds they were protected from snakes and scorpions. Staying in a more pleasant place, or leaving the unpleasant place, thereby exiting the protection of the clouds, would be suicide. So why are they so highly praised for not following their own will, and following the will of Hashem?

It must be that a person's own will is stronger than we would have thought, and therefore Rabbeinu Bachya understood that ignoring their own will presented a challenge, even though the alternative was extremely dangerous. A powerful insight can be derived from here

into how difficult it is for a person to not follow his own wants and desires. A human being is so independent minded that he will even follow his own desires despite the dangers. Therefore, resisting this pull and following the will of Hashem is extremely praiseworthy. This insight can help us gain control over the desire to do our own thing, as awareness is the first step in the battle.

The Rabbeinu Bachya continues and says, "The Pasuk also explains the kindness of Hashem with them, that He only caused them to travel and camp in the desert in the morning...Hashem did not want to ever trouble them to initiate their travel and camping at night."

If we think about this Chesed it seems to be very subtle and somewhat insignificant. What would have been the big deal if they travelled at night? Especially since all the Rabbeinu Bachya says is that Hashem didn't want to start the travel or camping at night. However, once they were already travelling it sounds like they would continue during the night. In the context of the greater Chesed they were receiving in the desert, this kindness seems to be so overshadowed. Why does the Torah point out such a seemingly small Chesed?

We see from here that the Torah wants us to recognize every Chesed that Hashem does for us. The full details and extent of the Chesed should be focused on. Training ourselves to notice the most subtle kindnesses of Hashem can really help us in times of pain and suffering. If we develop this acute awareness, we will notice a ray of light in the darkest of times.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

“Before everything else one must know and believe with complete belief that the Creator, may His name be blessed, loves each and every Jew with a tremendous love, and that he (man) is very important to Hashem as if he was an only son to Him. As Rabbeinu Yonah (*Sha’arei HaAvodah*) writes: The first entranceway [to Avodas Hashem] is that one who serves Hashem should be aware of his own value, his importance and the importance of his ancestors, and how they are appreciated and beloved by Hashem...tell himself, ‘A great and distinguished person like myself, who has many great and elevated virtues, and being the offspring of great ones, of ancient kings, how can I commit such a grave sin and be a sinner before Hashem...’ One should reexamine and review this not only during a time of temptation to sin, rather, also many times each day, when he finds himself feeling down and broken in spirit he should boost and strengthen himself and he should think and say this explicitly with his mouth until his soul lights up and he extricates himself from the mud of low self-esteem.” (*Sefer Eitzos VeHadrachos*, based on the letters of the Steipler Gaon zt”l)

There is no greater means one can use to realize his innate value than through the in-depth study of Shir HaShirim. The constant review of the praises it heaps on each one of us will raise our appreciation for ourselves. Each of us are, in the words of the Creator of Heaven and Earth, “My Beloved, My dove, My perfect one!”



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The Ramban (*Shemos 13:16*) writes: “And the purpose of all the commandments is that we believe in our G-d and be thankful to Him for having created us, for we know of no other reason for the first creation, and G-d, the Most High, has no demand on the lower creatures, except that man should know and be thankful to G-d for having created him.”

However, the Vilna Gaon seems to disagree, he writes (*Mishlei 22:19*): “The central reason for the giving of the Torah to Klal Yisroel is so that they will place their trust in Hashem, as the Pesukim (*Tehillim 78:5-7*) state: ‘And He established testimony in Jacob, and He set down a Torah in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to make them known to their sons. In order that the last generation might know, sons who will be born should tell their sons. And they should put their hope in G-d, and not forget the deeds of G-d and keep His commandments.’ For the main point of everything is true Bitachon, and it is the sum total of all the Mitzvos!”

Can these two outlooks be reconciled?

From the following words of one of the great Rishonim (*Sefer Ha’ikarim 4:49*) we see that the outlook of the Ramban and the Vilna Gaon are one and the same. He writes on the Pasuk (*Tehillim 27:14*) - “For hope and waiting for Hashem are better than all the praises that one can give Him, as the Psalmist (*71:14*) says: ‘But as for me, I will hope continually, and I will add to all Your praises.’ Now this seems a very strange remark indeed. How can he say that he will add to all the praises of Hashem, when we read (*Tehillim 106:2*): ‘Who can express the mighty acts of Hashem or make all His praise be heard?’ A person cannot even enumerate the infinite praises of Hashem, not to speak of adding to them! But the meaning of the verse is this, that by waiting continually for Hashem he adds to all the praises which a person can give to Hashem.”

The greatest praise that we can give to Hashem, is placing our hope in Him!