

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

פרשת
שלה

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Discovering Our True Motives

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, Klal Yisrael reacts to the report of the spies by expressing, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt." (14:4) The Ralbag comments that, "The purpose of these Pesukim is to publicize the bad heart of this generation. Despite Hashem directing them through the desert in a manner that they will not confront war and thereby desire to return to Egypt, they still said, "Appoint a leader and we will return to Egypt."

This Ralbag requires some explanation. Where do we see Klal Yisrael's bad hearts from here? The majority of the leaders of each Shevet just came back from Eretz Yisrael and expressed to them the dangers involved in conquering the land. This lack of confidence expressed by their leaders seemed to evoke a fear, which caused them to respond with, "Appoint a leader and we will return to Egypt." We don't see a "bad heart" from here, rather a reasonable fear that was caused by a shake up in their Emunah. How can we explain this Ralbag?

The Ralbag must have understood that based on the miracles and daily hashgacha that Klal Yisrael experienced in the desert, there was no room for fear. Klal Yisrael knew that Hashem was on their side and no weapons or armies stood a chance against them. Therefore, if they suddenly became afraid it must have been based on a different factor. Klal Yisrael must have had some other agenda as to why they didn't want to go into Eretz Yisrael. It is this ulterior motive which was the root cause of the fear.

Based on this understanding of the Ralbag we can derive a powerful insight into the nature of a human being. What a person is feeling and expressing often can be motivated

by a subtle and subconscious agenda. Therefore we need to properly introspect through Limud Hamussar to train ourselves to uncover our real motives behind our feelings and behavior.

The Secret To Change

In this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that a convert should bring an Olah offering upon his conversion. The Ralbag explains the purpose of this Korban, stating that "A convert will not be able to imagine himself changing from a state in which he lacked purity to a state in which he possesses purity, without doing something big that will make an impression on his soul. This is why a convert is required to do tevillah, and to bring a Korban."

From this Ralbag we can derive the secret to change. A convert is someone who is willing to leave their family, friends, and community to join the Jewish people. The strength of character, and clarity of truth that is necessary to make this commitment is enormous. We would have thought that a person who is willing to convert is positioned to change just based on the strength of his conviction. However, the Ralbag tells us that this commitment to change is not enough. For change to happen it is necessary for a person to be able to imagine and picture himself transforming. Without this imagery he will not be able to change. The secret to change is the ability to imagine and clearly see the change.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

We see throughout Shir HaShirim that Hashem overflows with infinite love for Klal Yisroel, independent of their spiritual state. This can be understood as the unconditional love of a parent to a child despite any failings in his character. However, from the following Chazal we see that the secret behind Hashem's love to us is something else entirely.

The Medrash (Bereshis Raba, 20) states: There are four central desires in this world: The desire of a wife is solely for her husband... the desire of the Yetzer Hara is solely for Kayin and his like (Reshaim)... the desire of rain is solely for the earth... and the desire of Hashem is solely for Klal Yisroel...

The Maharal (*Derush L'Shabbos HaGadol*) in explanation of this Medrash states: "The desire of the Yetzer Hara is solely for Reshaim...for evil clings to evil... for the similar attaches to the similar and good desires good and Hashem who is the essence of good... desires Klal Yisroel who are good."

How comforting are these words to every Jew! The infinite love of the Creator of the universe to every Jew displayed throughout Shir HaShirim is not merely the unconditional passion of a parent towards its child. Rather, it is the natural attraction of that which is like each other! Imagine: Hashem himself, overflows with infinite love to the most rebellious Jew, not because a son is a son no matter how low he falls, rather, because deep down that rebellious son is actually the epitome of good and therefore attracts that which is similar to him, the essence of good, Hashem Himself. Next time we look down at a rebellious Jew, let us remember how Hashem Himself looks at him and says (*Shir HaShirim 5:2 as explained by the Medrash*) Tamasi - My twin!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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In this week's Parsha, the Meraglim say to Klal Yisroel something that seems incomprehensible, "But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than Him.'" Chazal tells us that Him refers to Hashem. How could the Meraglim who had been Gedolei Yisroel have said such a thing?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that they meant to say that the giants of the land of Israel were more powerful than what Hashem can do through Midas Hadin, when Klal Yisroel sins. Chazal (*Sotah 35a*) tell us Yehoshua's response to this was, "Is this the only thing the son of Amram has done to us?!...Did he not divide the Red Sea for us, and bring down the Manna for us, and collect the quails for us?!" The Chofetz Chaim explains that Yehoshua was showing them that despite the sins they had committed Hashem had saved them until now and so He would continue to save them.

The Pasuk in Tehillim regarding this (according to some Rishonim) says, "Because they did not put their trust in G-d, and did not rely on His deliverance."

This is a lesson to each and every one of us. If we have doubt in Hashem's salvation because of our sins, we must realize that just like until now Hashem has saved us despite them, so will He continue to in the future!