

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

פרשת  
שופטים

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

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## The Responsibility Of Leadership

At the end of this week's Parsha, the Torah discusses the topic of the Eglah Arufah, where someone was found murdered near a city and it is unknown who was responsible for this death. They measure to find out which is the closest city, and then the elders of the city go out and announce, "Our hands did not murder this person." Rashi explains this to mean that they are saying, "We didn't let this person leave without food and escorting him, and therefore we are not responsible for his murder."

The Ralbag derives from the above that, "This Parsha is coming to teach us that the despicable behavior that occurs in a place is considered a sin on those who are fitting of leading in that place. Therefore, all the elders have to say, 'Our hands did not spill his blood, and we did not see.' However, if these elders would do that which is right in the eyes of Hashem, to lead in the proper way, this will be a cause that these disgraceful behaviors will not occur."

We can learn from here a powerful insight into the true impact of leadership. Proper leadership ensures that improper behavior will not occur. Perhaps this can help us gain a deeper insight into the Seforno (32:26), when he says that Eisav's angel was able to injure Yaakov by showing him the shortcomings in leadership in future generations. Eisav's angel understood that great leadership ensures the proper behavior of Klal Yisrael and improper leadership plays a role in their downfall. Thus despite all of the tragedies and bloodshed that took place throughout Jewish history, the angel felt that this would have the greatest impact on Yaakov.

An additional insight in leadership can be derived from the Ralbags emphasis that, "It is considered a sin on those who are fitting of leading in that place." This implies that even those elders who are not actually leading or in leadership positions, are held responsible due to the fact that they are capable of leading. It seems from this Ralbag that someone who has the ability to lead and make a difference and doesn't, is still responsible even though he holds no formal position. If someone has leadership capabilities, he needs to use it.

## Kavod Is Critical To Our Relationship With Hashem

In Parshas Reah (14:1), the Torah warns us not to mourn excessively by inflicting self harm, as we are children of Hashem. The Seforno comments, "It is not appropriate to express extreme worry and suffering over a relative that died when there still remains a relative that is more elevated in his status, and you should hope that he can do good for you. Therefore you, who are children of Hashem, that have a father Who is eternal, should not express extreme mourning over a relative that died."

At first glance this Seforno is a bit perplexing and requires clarification. It seems that the critical factor comforting a person for his loss is the fact that he still has a relative that is more elevated and that can do good for him. However, the pain that the mourner is feeling is not due to losing someone honorable or one that can do good for him. It is stemming from the lost relationship and connection. It is stemming from the loss of love. Therefore, why does the Seforno focus on this factor of Hashem's elevated status, as a component alleviating the suffering?

It is evident from here that our relationship with Hashem requires an ingredient to be able to soothe our suffering. We have to have a true sense of the greatness of Hashem for it to be able to compensate for our loss. It is quite common in any relationship that the closer and more familiar one gets, honor tends to fall by the wayside. However, we see from here that we have to be so careful to maintain that sense of honor for Hashem, as it is the key to fill the void left by losing a loved one. This component is integral to our relationship with Hashem.



## Shir HaShirim Insights

*In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern*

The Medrash compares Hashem's severe rebuke to Klal Yisroel to a husband who runs out of his house threatening to divorce his wife and then goes right to a jeweler to buy her a piece of jewelry. We explained that in regard to Hashem, such harsh expressions can only be a tactic to get His beloved children to return to Him. However, the question remains: Why would Hashem immediately change from this tactic to the opposite extreme of a husband buying jewelry for his wife?

The Pasuk in Shir HaShirim (2:6) states: His left hand was under my head, and His right arm embraced me. Mefarshim explain this referencing the Gemara (*Sanhedrin 107b*) that says, "The Sages taught: Always the left hand should drive away and the right draw near." They explain that the very purpose of "the left hand driving away" is so that there will be a greater appreciation of "the right drawing near."

Based on this we can explain our Medrash as follows: The entire act of the husband running out and threatening divorce (Hashem's left hand driving away) is only so that we will appreciate even more his acts of endearment and gifts (Hashem's right hand drawing us near)! It is for this reason that one immediately follows the other.



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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If true Bitachon is unstoppable, then why do Tzadikim ever suffer?

The Vilna Gaon addresses this question in a comment on the following Gemara (*Brachos 60a*): The Sages taught: There was an incident involving Hillel the Elder, who was coming on the road when he heard a scream in the city. He said: I am certain that the scream is not coming from my house. And of him, the verse says: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in Hashem." (*Tehillim 112:7*). Rava said: Either way that you interpret this verse, its meaning is clear. The Gemara goes on to explain: It can be interpreted from beginning to end: Why is it that he should not be afraid of evil tidings? Because his heart is steadfast, trusting in Hashem. The Gemara continues: And it can be interpreted from end to beginning: One whose heart is steadfast trusting in Hashem is a person who shall not be afraid of evil tidings.

The Vilna Gaon (*Imrei No'am, ibid*) comments on the above Gemara: "The fact that there are Tzadikim who suffered, one must explain that it all depends on the strength of Bitachon in their heart."

Indeed, nothing can stand in the way of complete trust in our Father in Heaven!