

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

פרשת
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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 בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

The Importance of Respecting Someone's Privacy

In this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that Noach's son, Cham, saw his father naked and then went to tell his brothers. This led Noach to curse Cham's son, Canaan. The Ralbag derives the following lesson from here: "It is appropriate for a person to distance himself from gazing at someone who is naked. This is surely true if it is one's parents, because doing so would be extremely brazen. This results in a person being drawn after promiscuous behavior. Due to this, we find Canaan's children engaged in immoral behavior as the Torah later mentions. We similarly find Mitzrayim, who are also children of Canaan, entrenched in this lowly behavior."

The Ralbag's statement that the brazenness of looking at his father naked caused the promiscuous behavior requires further clarification. We would normally think that the catalyst for immoral sexual behavior is temptation. A person's urges and impulses overpower him and lead him to sin. However, the Ralbag seems to be saying that it wasn't temptation that led Cham's descendants to sin, rather, it was the Middah of Azus that Cham transmitted to his children. How can this be explained?

The Ralbag is sharing with us a fascinating insight. Since Cham showed disrespect and cheapened something that was expected to be kept private, he therefore was unable to restrain his temptations. If however, he would have had that respect for someone's privacy, despite the strength of the temptation, he and his future generation would not have fallen into immoral behavior.

This idea is very relevant for our generation and its ramifications are far reaching. We live in a generation in which the most private matters are displayed publicly for all to see. This constant exposure has the potential to generate within us the Middah of Azus which will negatively impact all future generations. Therefore, we have to be extremely cautious to make sure to protect ourselves and our children, and maintain the respect for someone who is not dressed properly. It is this respect that is the key to self-control.

Deepening Our Appreciation Through Tefillah

In Parshas Bereshis, the Torah says (2:5), "When no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because Hashem, Elokim had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil." Rashi explains the Pasuk as follows: "And what is the reason that Hashem had not caused it to rain? Because there was no man to till the ground, and there was therefore no one to recognize the good of the rain. When Adam came, he realized that it was necessary for the world, he prayed for it and it fell, so that trees and vegetation sprang forth."

According to Rashi, Hashem held back the rain so that Adam would appreciate its benefit. Through recognizing the need for rain, its benefit would be realized, as Rashi says, "When Adam came, he realized that it was necessary for the world, he prayed for it and it fell."

Upon initial analysis Rashi is difficult to understand, why is Tefillah a necessary component in recognizing the good of the rain. Shouldn't the realization of the need suffice?

We see from here that just recognizing the need on an intellectual level is not enough, one has to deepen that realization through Tefillah. Only through this can one truly appreciate the good that he needs.

An important lesson can be gleaned from here. Often we are lacking in our Chashivus for Torah and Tefillah. From here we see that our value for something can increase through Tefillah. If we daven for Hatzlacha in Torah, and ask Hashem to help us in Tefillah that will strengthen our Chashivus Hatorah and Tefillah. This will ultimately give us more ability to do it, as it has now become more Chashuv in our eyes.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

The Rabbi of the assisted living facility could not get over the contrast. Mr. Jacobs and Mr. Fried both had to deal with wives who were nothing less than abusive towards them. However, whereas Mr. Jacob's relationship with his wife was in ruins, Mr. Fried's overwhelming love and care for his wife was obvious to all. One day, upon witnessing Mr. Fried's loving response to his wife's public mistreatment, the Rabbi commented, "You're unbelievable! How do you manage to keep it up when others who are treated similarly fall apart?" "Rabbi," Mr. Fried responded, "How can you compare my situation to my friend's? While his wife is perfectly healthy, mine suffers from dementia. I know how much she really loves me, and seeing her suffering just arouses my love for her."

Sometimes we come across people who have rebelled against Hashem in the most egregious of ways. We know from the study of Shir HaShirim the unbelievable level of love Hashem has even for them and we wonder, how could it be?

The following Pasuk in Shir HaShirim with Chazal's explanation provides us the answer.

"Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, For I am sick with love." (Shir HaShirim 2:5) The Medrash explains these words to mean: Even though I am sick I am beloved to Him.

The above sickness of Klal Yisroel is obviously not referring to a physical sickness, rather it refers to our spiritual state. We see from here that in truth, the actions of any Jew even at his lowest state, are not a true reflection of himself. Rather, they are merely the actions of someone who has temporarily fallen ill, who with caring attention will surely recover. Therefore, of course Hashem's infinite love for him is not diminished.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

A Westwood Realty Initiative

Excerpts of a letter written by Rav Chaim Greinaman Zt"l:

"It is a common belief that the advancement of medicine results in a longer lifespan, for example: So and so who was stricken with a certain illness today will be cured, as opposed to if he would have gotten it yesterday. Or: If not for the dangers of the roadways there would be many more people alive with us today and it's a miracle that there are groups of Hatzalah, for that's why so and so remained alive, for they arrived when there was still time and treated him properly.

All the above are thoughts founded in Kefira (heresy) in Hashgacha Pratis (Divine Supervision). No one ever remained alive if it was decreed upon him to die and no one ever died before his preordained time....

The truth is just the opposite. It was decreed upon so and so to die, therefore he was stricken by an incurable illness or happened to be at the place of the accident and at a time when no one was able to save him. His friend, on the other hand, who's preordained time had not come, was stricken by an illness that already had a cure, or reached the place of the accident a minute later, or was hit at a time when there were people available to save him.

Those who associate these events to each other, calculating how many died from a specific illness during this month or how many died in accidents during that month etc. are involved in Kefira Beshogeg (unintentional heresy) and misleading people to attribute everything to chance as if, G-d forbid, the world is Hefker (a free-for-all)."