

Cheaters Never Prosper

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

לעילוי נשמות 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

In this week's Parsha, the Ralbag learns the following lesson in Middos from the deal that Yaakov made with Lavan. "When a person sees someone trying to deprive him of what he is legitimately owed, it is appropriate for him to try to get what he is owed in a manner that is completely devoid of any wrongdoing. This lesson is derived from the fact that when Yaakov saw that Lavan wanted to send him away empty handed, he tried to get what he was owed, without doing anything wrong, through the rods. He was aided in this from Hashem. In doing this there was no wrongdoing because Lavan agreed that Yaakov can have sheep born in this manner. Lavan never made a condition that Yaakov can't cause the sheep to be born in this way."

Upon initial analysis this Ralbag is perplexing. The Ralbag implies that had Yaakov agreed to not have the sheep be born in this manner, he would have allowed himself to be cheated out of what was rightfully his. This needs further clarification, as we would have thought that when dealing with such a deceptive person as Lavan, who has been cheating Yaakov since the day he met him, and now he wanted to send him out with nothing, it would be permitted to break his agreement and take what is rightfully his. Why is this not allowed?

We see from here that it would be inappropriate to do anything that is wrong, even in attempting to take what is rightfully yours. A person must rather let himself be cheated. This Middah is more relatable, and able to be expressed within the context of the belief that Hashem runs the world. If a person truly believes that no human being can cheat him out of what he deserves, he can easily allow himself to be cheated, and restrain himself from any wrongdoing to take what is rightfully his.

The Ralbag in discussing the marriage of Yaakov to Rachel takes this one step further. He writes, "It is appropriate for a person to be smart in his business dealing with people, to make sure that he does not leave any opening to be tricked. This is derived from

the fact that despite Yaakov reaching Shleimus, since Rachel was supposed to be his wife and not Leah, he strategized to make a clear condition with Lavan. He clarified the matter in a manner that there would be no doubts. This is why he specified and said to Lavan, 'Rachel, your youngest daughter.' Yaakov thought that perhaps Lavan would change his oldest daughter's name to Rachel, therefore he said your youngest. Or perhaps Lavan would bring another girl named Rachel, therefore he specified your daughter. Since Yaakov suspected that Lavan would deceive him, he wisely structured the condition in this way."

The Ralbag's lesson that he learns from Yaakov, seems to apply to everyone. This requires further analysis as this tactic to make sure there is no room for deception was used by Yaakov in dealing with Lavan who was a known cheat. How can we derive from here that one should use this tactic in all his business dealings? Perhaps this would be insulting and disrespectful to a person who is honest and trustworthy?

It must be that the Ralbag understood that if this was not a proper business practice that should be used in every situation, Yaakov would not have acted this way to Lavan, as it would have been insulting to him. However, since it is proper for someone to always structure their business dealings in a manner that leaves no room for dishonesty, Yaakov was able to express this concern to Lavan.

We tend to think that if someone is trying to take advantage of us, we can take advantage of them and disrespect them. We see from the above statements of the Ralbag that not only do we have to allow ourselves to be cheated rather than do anything slightly wrong, we even have to treat the one trying to cheat us with respect. This idea should not be mistaken to mean that letting ourselves get taken advantage of is a positive Middah promoted by the Torah. This Middah is rather built on the strong belief that no person has any power to hurt another, and therefore the proper way to act is unchanged by how someone is acting towards you.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

King Shlomo [throughout Shir HaShirim, this is a reference to Hashem] made himself a canopy: This refers to the Tent of Meeting, which was established in the Tabernacle at Shiloh. He made Himself a crowning canopy for glory... (*Shir HaShirim 3:9*)

Why did Hashem feel the need to make Himself a crowning canopy for glory? Why is this written in the song of songs describing the infinite love between Him and His children? Similarly, in Shemoneh Esreh we say: And He will bring the Redeemer to their children's children for the sake of His name, with love. Can it be that our Father in Heaven Who is constantly overflowing with infinite love for us will finally send Mashiach, our redeemer, not for the sake of His two thousand year long suffering children, rather, for the sake of His name?

The answer lies in the end of the above sentence, for the sake of His name, with love. Hashem is perfection without the slightest need. However, He worries about His glory and the honor of His name out of love for us for the surest way to bring us to love Him, thereby meriting eternal paradise, the purpose of Creation, is through the revelation of His glory. As the Rambam states:

What is the path [to attain] love and fear of Him? When a person contemplates His wondrous and great deeds and creations and appreciates His infinite wisdom that surpasses all comparison, he will immediately love, praise, and glorify [Him], yearning with tremendous desire to know [G-d's] great name, as David stated: "My soul thirsts for the Lord, for the living G-d" [*Tehillim 42:3*]. When he [continues] to reflect on these same matters, he will immediately recoil in awe and fear, appreciating how he is a tiny, lowly, and dark creature, standing with his flimsy, limited, wisdom before He who is of perfect knowledge, as David stated: "When I see Your heavens, the work of Your fingers... [I wonder] what is man that You should recall Him" [*Tehillim 8:4-5*]. (*Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah Chap. 2*)



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

A Westwood Realty Initiative

I took refuge in You, O Hashem; I will not be shamed forever; rescue me with Your righteousness.
(*Tehillim 31:2*)

Even without my praying, rather, solely because I took refuge in You, because of this alone I know that I will not be shamed forever; not in this world, from physical suffering, nor in the World to Come, from the sufferings of the soul. I will not even need to ask this of You, rather, You will rescue me with Your righteousness – as a form of kindness, without any diminishment of my merits. The reason You'll do this is in the merit of my taking refuge in You, even without my praying. (*Alshich ibid.*)

We see from here that one who places his trust in Hashem is assured he will not be let down even without praying to Hashem. This applies even regarding his future in the World to Come, which is based upon his level of service of Hashem. How can this be?

In truth this question can be asked regarding trusting Hashem in matters of this world as well, as Chazal (*Bava Kama 50a*) teach us: Rav Chanina said: If a man says that the Holy One, blessed be He, is lax in the execution of justice, his life shall be outlawed, for it is stated: He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment (*Devarim 32:4*).

Perhaps the answer to the above questions can be found in the closing words of the Alshich above: You will rescue me with Your righteousness – as a form of kindness, without any diminishment of my merits. The reason You'll do this is in the merit of my taking refuge in You, even without my praying. These words are hard to understand for if You'll do this is in the merit of my taking refuge in You then how will it be without any diminishment of my merits?

It seems that the very act of trusting in Hashem when one is bereft of his own merit – which is the purest and most difficult form of trust in Hashem – is in and of itself meritorious enough for a person to truly deserve Hashem's salvation. For this reason, Hashem's salvation will not diminish his other merits, and even in matters of the World to Come he will not be let down!