

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

## Nurturing Our Drive to Build and Accomplish

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

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

In this week's Parsha, Yitzchak calls Eisav to give him the Brachos and tells him (27:3), "Behold I am old and I don't know the day of my death." The Medrash says, "There are three things that Hashem hid from his people, the day of death, the day of judgement, and the reward for Mitzvos. Why was the day of death hidden from mankind? This is because if a person would know the exact date that he would die, he would say, 'Why do I have to plant and build this world, I am going to die tomorrow?' Hashem said I will hide it so they don't neglect my world."

Upon initial analysis this Medrash seems perplexing and requires further clarification. Even if we grant the fact that a person does not know when they will die, they surely know with certainty that they will die. So why doesn't this knowledge cause a person to neglect the world? In addition, why would a person stop striving to accomplish and build this world if he knows he will die in seventy to eighty years?

It is apparent from here that human nature is such that if a person doesn't know the exact date that he will die, he is capable of deluding himself into thinking it will never happen. He can ignore the reality. However, if he knows a specific date, even if it is in one hundred years, death becomes a reality. This reality causes him to become paralyzed, and lose any desire to be constructive in this world. Every opportunity to build is challenged and met with a feeling of despair that is expressed as, "What is the point?"

Based on the above, it would seem that due to the lack of a specific date, knowing that there is a day of death

is unable to impact us. However, there is a Gemara in Brachos (5A) that implies the exact opposite. The Gemara says, "One should always incite his Yetzer Tov against his Yetzer Harah.. If he wins good, however if not he should learn Torah... If he wins good, if not he should say Krias Shema.... If he wins good, if not he should remember the day of death." This Gemara implies that the day of death, without a specific date does have the power to influence our behavior. This influence is so powerful that even when Torah and Krias Shema failed, the day of death would be effective in beating the Yetzer Harah. How can we reconcile the contradiction between the Medrash and the Gemara?

We can resolve it as follows: Granted that the awareness that the day of death exists can squelch the Yetzer Harah, as the Gemara says, however, it cannot stifle our innate drive to build and accomplish in this world. It is specifically this drive to build that the Medrash is referring to.

Two powerful insights into the nature of a human being are derived from here. Firstly, our drive to accomplish and build in this world is extremely intense. Therefore, it is extremely important that we engage in fulfilling this need. Secondly, although we are able to ignore the inevitable reality of death, the knowledge of a specific date can bring that reality into focus, and suppress one of our greatest drives. This reinforces the need to utilize the tool of **כח הציור** taught to us by Rebbi Yisrael Salanter. The more tangible and realistic we depict something the more impactful it will be.



## Shir HaShirim Insights

*In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern*

“I understand the infinite love that Hashem has for every one of us from the study of Shir HaShirim. I understand as well that this love is not conditional upon our spiritual state, rather, it is a result of our ancestors’ love for Him. However, it still seems that this love is still not as pure as if Hashem would love me solely for my own sake.”

We see from this week’s Haftorah that the premise of this statement is flawed. Hashem says to Klal Yisroel: “I have shown you love, said Hashem. But you ask, ‘How have You shown us love?’ After all— declares Hashem—Eisav is Yaakov’s brother; yet I loved Yaakov. And I hated Eisav...”

The Abarbenel explains: Hashem is telling Klal Yisroel: “From the day I knew you, I always loved you enduringly. Even when you sinned before Me and I punished you I always loved you. For, ‘As a man punishes his son, Hashem your G-d punishes you’ - out of love. Yet you were so ungrateful as to ask, ‘How have you loved us?’” This does not mean that Klal Yisroel denied Hashem’s love of them, for this is impossible as it is self-evident, however, they were saying to Hashem, “For what reason did you love us?” The meaning behind this statement is that Hashem loved Klal Yisroel because Avraham, their patriarch, loved Him, as the Pasuk states, “The seed of Avraham who loves Me,” meaning, because Avraham loved Hashem, He loved his children. Similarly, the Pasuk states, “Because He loved your ancestors He chose their seed after them.” This indicates that Hashem’s love for Klal Yisroel was not out of kindness, rather, it was in reward for the love Avraham their patriarch first had for Him. Therefore, Hashem’s response to this was, “Is Eisav not a brother to Yaakov? And I loved Yaakov...” This means: Eisav was Yaakov’s brother, both were sons of Yitzchak and Rivka his wife, and each one had the merit of Avraham, and yet Yaakov I loved and Eisav I hated. This proves that this was not a result of Avraham’s love for his Creator, for both Eisav and Yaakov were sons of Yitzchok, Avraham’s son. Rather, Hashem simply desired Yaakov and his descendants and not Eisav!

We see from here that the infinite love Hashem has for each of us that is “undeniable as it is self-evident,” is not merely a result of our ancestors love for Him, for then Hashem would have loved Eisav as well. Rather, it is an original love for Yaakov and each and every one of his descendants for their own lovable sake!

So hold your head even higher as you feel Hashem’s infinite love coursing through you, for now you know it is not merely a result of your ancestors love for Him, it is for your own lovable sake!



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

*A Westwood Realty Initiative*

Intellectually I know how much Hashem loves me and how much I love Him deep in my heart. However, when I meet Him in prayer three times each day I just can’t feel this love emotionally. What can I do to fix this?

*R’ Moshe had spent the last nine years since the war’s end searching for his only child, Yossaleh, he had left behind as a mere baby when he was taken away to the camps. He was his only reason to continue living and something told him he was still alive. Finally, all of his longing paid off when he received a call from R’ Yankel, a prominent askan who dedicated his life to reunite lost children with their parents, telling him that his son had been found. The euphoria he found himself in cannot be described with mere words. Finally, the reunion took place, they hugged and he cried tears of happiness over his Yossaleh’s shoulder for nearly an hour after which they caught up on each others’ lives. Later that evening, when R’ Yankel met R’ Moshe he was surprised to see how sad he appeared. R’ Moshe explained to him the heartache he experienced when seeing how, because he had left him when he was still a mere baby, despite being consumed with love and yearning for him his entire life since then, Yossaleh had a hard time feeling real love in return. Later that night, R’ Yankel discussed this with Yossaleh. “What can I do?” He asked, “Logically I know I love him dearly but because I don’t remember him at all there’s no way I can feel that love.” “I understand,” responded R’ Yankel, “but there is a way you can begin to feel these emotions when you meet your father. Next time you meet, instead of thinking about your own mediocre emotions towards your father focus and try to understand and feel the infinite love and emotions he is experiencing as he talks to you. Imagine how you would feel if you were in his shoes and it was the child you yearned for your whole life that you were finally meeting. Yossaleh heeded R’ Yankel’s advice the next time he met his father and slowly but surely his emotions were awakened and after just a few minutes they were both shedding tears like water.*

Each one of us is Hashem’s beloved child about whom, since before we were born until today, He has never stopped thinking of and overflowing with love and yearning. We know this intellectually as Chazal have taught us, however, in this world we struggle to feel it.

The Eitzah to overcome this is to stop thinking about how we feel when davening to Hashem, instead think about how He feels (see *Yalkut Tehillim*) by imagining how you would feel if you were the father and it was your missing son, whose return you constantly craved for, that you were finally meeting. It was your son who, because he had no recollection of you, was now struggling to feel the epic emotions that were coursing through you. Then remember that the greatest craving any human father can have for a son is nothing compared to Hashem’s infinite love and craving for you. Keep in mind the unbelievable emotions that are taking place right then and there as you stand before Him regardless of you being able to feel it as well. When you do this consistently you will slowly begin to feel it too.