

Chanukah - Nature's Challenge to Bitachon

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 | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

The Medrash discusses the story of Chanukah, and records a few of the episodes that led up to the war, and the miracle of the oil. The Medrash tells us that there was a group of Jews who defied the decree of the Greeks, and hid in a cave to be able to keep Shabbos. The Greeks found them and killed a thousand of them. Throughout the Medrash we see numerous examples of the Greeks murdering thousands of Jews. However, despite the killings of the Jews, they continued to fight their decrees. Antiochus's advisors told him that he won't be able to beat the Jews alone, thus they advised him to summon his allies from all over to join him in the battle against the Jews, and to enforce his decrees. The wicked Bagrus came with 10 million, eight hundred thousand men to force Klal Yisrael to violate the Torah, and to listen to the decrees of Antiochus.

Klal Yisrael lifted up their eyes to the heaven in Tefillah and said, "Not for us Hashem, not for us, but for the honor of your name, that you not be degraded among the nations of the world." Hashem responded that He will not forsake us. At that moment they looked towards the mountains in the east and said that perhaps the Parsaim will come to help us. Matisyahu the Kohen Gadol became angry with them, and said to a Chashmonai, "Isn't it written, cursed is the man who puts his trust in people, and removes his heart from Hashem. Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem?" He said to him, "You are correct, I and my seven sons, and you and your three sons are a total of twelve. I am confident in Hashem that He will do miracles and wonders for us." They fasted and wore sackcloth to beg Hashem for mercy. After they prayed, they waged war against the nations and killed many of them.

Upon initial analysis, Klal Yisrael hoping that the Parsaim would come to assist them and looking towards natural means is quite perplexing, as they seem to be way beyond this Madraigah. Their lofty Madraigah is illustrated by the fact that they were willing to give up their lives to avoid the decree of the Greeks. In addition, in their Tefillah their primary concern was not for their own lives or their inability to do Mitzvos, but rather to be saved out of concern for Kovod Shomayim. Furthermore, they were promised by Hashem that they would be saved and not be forsaken. Seeing Klal Yisrael from this lofty vantage point, especially with the promise they received, makes it difficult to understand their hope in the Parsaim, which was chastised with, "Cursed is one who trusts in man," by Matisyahu.

It must be that for a person to reach a level of Bitachon in which he is no longer bound by the constraints of nature is extremely difficult. This is even true for a person who has attained such lofty levels of Mesirus Nefesh, concern for Kovod Shamayim, and has received a promise from Hashem. Although a person may have passed many great Nisyonos, viewing things through the eyes of nature is an even greater challenge.

We can glean from here an important insight in regards to Bitachon. On the one hand we see that it was due to the Zechus of Bitachon that their salvation came about. On the other hand we see that having Bitachon in the face of nature, even to someone on a very high level, is extremely difficult. Therefore we must make sure to constantly learn Mussar on the topic of Middos HaBitachon, so that we can break through the shackles of nature, and be confident in Hashem, even when all the cards seem stacked against us.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Many Seforim write that the time of lighting the Chanukah Menorah is mesugal to daven for whatever one needs. Perhaps one reason for this is the following.

The Sefer Chasidim (773:1) writes:

“When during Tefillah one suddenly feels the joy of love of Hashem in his heart he should know this means Hashem wants to fulfill his desires as the Pasuk (*Shir HaShirim 7:7*) says, ‘How fair you are, how beautiful! O Love, with all its rapture!’ And as it states (*Yeshayah 58:14*), ‘Then you can seek the favor of Hashem. I will set you astride the heights of the earth, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Yaakov – For the mouth of Hashem has spoken.’ And it says (*Iyov 22:26-28*) ‘For then over Hashem you will rejoice and lift up your face to G-d. You will pray to Him, and He will listen to you, and you will pay your vows. [You will decree, and it will be fulfilled, and light will shine upon your affairs.]’ If one experiences this feeling during the Bracha of Shome’ah Tefillah or before Yihiyu L’ratzon at the end of Shmoneh Esrei he should ask of Hashem as follows, ‘It should be Your will that this love will always be implanted in my heart and in the hearts of all my descendants,’ and one should ask solely for this.”

The first Pasuk quoted above upon which the Sefer Chasidim bases this idea is interpreted by Chazal (*Meseches Sofrim 20:5*) as follows: “How fair you are, with the Mitzvah of Mezuzah, how beautiful, with the Mitzvah of the Chanukah lights.” We see from here that also when we light the Chanukah lights Hashem says to us, “How fair you are, how beautiful!” and, as we see from the Sefer Chasidim, he seeks to fulfill all that we ask of him!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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Rabbeinu Bachaya in last week’s Parsha explains Yosef’s flaw, on his lofty level, in asking the chief of the butlers to mention him to Pharaoh, was because the highest level of Bitachon is when one, “learns to be happy with whatever G-d has decided should be his fate. ... He must appreciate that if G-d saw fit to subject him to trials and tribulations in his life on earth, that G-d had a benevolent purpose in all this, that He has his best interests at heart.... Seeing that G-d’s superior wisdom decrees if man is to undergo afflictions of one sort or another, it behooves man to accept such afflictions willingly. He is not to look for ‘natural’ ways to escape such predicaments. If he does so, this demonstrates that his faith in G-d is not absolute but that part of his being is still convinced that he can escape what is decreed for him..We have already mentioned that Elijah was a prime example of someone who did not try and survive by looking for logical means to do so, but that he took refuge in a place where there was no possible chance to find food and that he relied on G-d to provide it for him in His own way. This is the highest level of trust in G-d. Yosef HaTzadik, because he asked the chief of the butlers to intercede on his behalf, he did not attain this level of trust in G-d.”

We see from the last line of Rabbeinu Bachaya that sometimes to get to the highest level of Bitachon we must act as if we are already there. The question remains: What was the great Yosef thinking when he sought a natural means by which Hashem would save him instead of leaving that to up to Hashem? Perhaps that which the Rabbeinu Bachaya writes regarding the highest level of bitachon, “Appreciate that if G-d saw fit to subject him to trials and tribulations...G-d had a benevolent purpose in all this, that He has his best interests at heart,” applies in situations of physical affliction, however, when it comes to spiritual issues even on the highest level of Bitachon one must try to extricate himself from any negative situation. Perhaps this is where there was room for even Yosef to miscalculate, that for his spiritual welfare he should be seeking even natural means for Hashem’s salvation.