

The Significance of the Insignificant

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

In this week's Parsha, Yosef sends a message to his father, Yaakov, to convince him to come down to Mitzrayim. The Ralbag derives from here that, "It is appropriate for a person who is trying to achieve something to invest effort in removing anything that can prevent him from accomplishing this goal, and to present everything that would cause the goal to be achieved. This can be learned from the fact that Yosef knew that Yaakov was afraid to leave Eretz Canaan, because it was the chosen land. In addition, Yaakov feared the harsh government of Egypt. Therefore, Yosef informed him that he had full power in Egypt to do whatever he wanted, and there was no reason to fear coming down to Mitzrayim. Yaakov could leave whenever he wanted and return to Eretz Canaan. Additionally, staying in Eretz Canaan was dangerous, due to the famine. Yosef also sent extravagant gifts to Yaakov to show him his wealth, his ability, and his desire to benefit him. He sent nice clothing as well, so that Yaakov would not hesitate to come due to a lack of owning dignified clothing that would be respectful to wear in front of the king."

What comes out from the above Ralbag is a powerful lesson. We would have assumed that had Yosef told his father the extent of his power, which would've allowed Yaakov to leave whenever he wanted, and on top of that, his mentioning that staying in Eretz Canaan was not an option due to the famine, it would have been enough Hishtadlus on Yosef's part to convince Yaakov to come down to Mitzrayim. However, it is clear from the Ralbag that this was not enough, and had Yosef not sent the nice clothing to Yaakov, it would have been a lack in this Middah of removing all obstacles to achieve your goal. This is despite the fact that the potential hesitation on Yaakov's part seems unlikely, being that the alternative would be starvation. We see from here that when a person has a goal he needs to remove all obstacles that can get in his way, no matter how unlikely they are to hinder him.

This idea that proper Derech Eretz and Middos require a person to pay attention to the finest details and nuances, is echoed in a Medrash, which states the following: "Rebbi Shimon Ben Yochai

says, there are three things that Hashem hates, and I myself don't love... There are also those who say that this refers to one who enters a house suddenly, without warning. When Rebbi Chanina arrived at his house he would emit sound from his throat. He learned this from the fact that Yaakov said to Yosef, "I would have died from seeing you, if not for you first sending the message that you are still alive."

Upon initial analysis this Medrash proves difficult to understand. What comparison can be made between Yaakov and Rebbi Chanina's household? Yosef was afraid that the news of him being alive would startle his father, and he would be in danger of death due to the shock of not seeing his son for so many years. What danger would Rebbi Chanina's family be in if he walked in unannounced? They were aware that he lived there and that he may walk in at any time. The shock impact of the two situations seem drastically different!

We can explain Rebbi Chanina's behavior as follows: Rebbi Chanina saw from Yaakov that there was a possibility that startling someone could shock them to death. Once that possibility existed, Rebbi Chanina felt that proper Derech Eretz dictates avoiding shocking someone even if death is highly unlikely. This idea can be used to explain the Halacha of saying Viduy at Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur, which is due to the fear that one may choke. At first glance this fear seems bizarre, as the overwhelming majority of people don't ever choke. So why would we be concerned about something that is so statistically uncommon? This Halacha can be explained based on the above idea that the mere possibility of danger must be addressed. Derech Eretz dictates behavior that is in line with every possibility of a situation.

We live in a world that lacks sensitivity and refinement of character. A world that often ignores the obvious and likely scenarios, certainly the more subtle and seemingly insignificant details. We see from here that Derech Eretz and Middos require us to take every detail and possibility into account, and adjust our behavior accordingly.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

When Yosef saw that they were extremely embarrassed, he said to them: "Come near to me, I pray to you." (*Beraishis 45:4*) As each one of them approached, he kissed him and wept upon him, as it says: "And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them." (*ibid., 15*). Just as Yosef comforted his brothers through weeping, so the Holy One, blessed be He, will redeem Yisroel through weeping, as it is said: "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them..." (*Tanchuma Vayigash 5*)

It seems from the Medrash that Hashem will weep during the Geula as a way of comforting us. What is the need for Hashem to comfort Klal Yisroel through crying during their redemption? The very act of Geula would seem to provide the greatest comfort?

Perhaps the connection between Hashem's and Yosef's comforting runs much deeper. We are comforted from the pains of our exile through redemption itself, however, as by Yosef's brothers, we may still worry upon seeing Hashem's great love that perhaps the great pain we caused Him by forcing Him, so to speak, to part from us all those years, will affect our closeness to Him even after our redemption. Therefore, just as Yosef cried upon revealing himself to his brothers who sold him, comforting them through this show of love, so too, Hashem will cry as a show of love when He will reveal Himself to us, His dear children, who caused Him so much pain of separation, comforting us that He doesn't hold it against us that His love for us remains just the same.



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Three times each day we recite these words: Grant bountiful reward to all who trust in Your Name in truth; and place our lot among them, and we will never be put to shame, for we have put our trust in You. (*"Shemoneh Esrei, the bracha of "Al HaTzaddikim"*)

In his commentary on the Siddur, the Magid of Vilna explains these words as follows:

Grant bountiful reward to all who trust in Your Name. When one trusts in a powerful person if he is lucky that person will pity him and fulfill his request, however, when one places his trust in Hashem not only is he guaranteed that his request will be fulfilled, he is additionally rewarded just for the act of trusting Hashem. And we will never be put to shame, for we have put our trust in You. When one trusts in a powerful person even if his request is ultimately fulfilled it is embarrassing that he must rely on someone to fulfill it, however, when one trusts in Hashem, he is honored for it.

There is no greater honor than coming to the realization of what you know deep inside of yourself, that your Father is the Creator and Sustainer of all Heaven and Earth and that He has no greater desire than for you to place your trust in Him!