

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

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Middos Don't Operate In A Vacuum

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

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנח | 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

The Ralbag in this week's Parsha writes, "The sixth lesson is in Middos. It is inappropriate for one who is in charge of someone else's possessions to give that which he wishes to his relatives. Rather he should only give what the owner allows. This is true even if the owner only came to possess these items due to the one in charge. This can be derived from Yosef, who despite being in charge of the entire land of Egypt, did not want to give his family the best land without Pharaoh's consent. Therefore, the Torah says that Yosef gave them the best land as Pharaoh commanded. Similarly we find that in regards to the produce that was in Yosef's control to distribute to whomever he wanted, he did not want to give his family more than they needed. Therefore, the Torah writes that Yosef sustained them with enough bread for the young. This is all despite the fact that he was the sole reason that Pharaoh amassed this produce. When Pharaoh commanded them 'To eat from the fat of the land,' he allowed them to take from the best of what was in Yosef's hand. ***Yosef's behavior shows the extent of his Middah of integrity, and that he was not interested in luxuries.*** It is for this reason that he did not ask Pharaoh to give more to his father."

Upon initial analysis the Ralbag seems difficult to understand. How does Yosef's distribution of what was under his control only with Pharaoh's consent, indicate both his integrity and his lack of interest in luxuries? Perhaps Yosef did desire luxuries, but since he was so

honest and upright he would not make a move on Pharaoh's possession without him. Where is there a proof from here that Yosef was disinterested in luxuries?

We can explain the Ralbag as follows: He must have understood that human nature is such, that if Yosef was interested in luxuries, that interest would have undermined his integrity. His desire for more would have impacted his honesty and would have caused him to act against Pharaoh's wishes. Therefore the Ralbag was able to see from here both Yosef's integrity and his lack of interest in luxuries.

A powerful insight in regards to our Middos can be learned from here. Character traits do not operate in a vacuum. Even good Middos that you possess can be impacted negatively by other Middos. Just because a person has a strong positive Middah does not mean that this Middah will now guide his actions and behavior in all areas. As we see from Yosef, a refined Middah can be tainted and dulled by another Middah that has not been refined. It is therefore integral that we work on all our Middos so they work in harmony.

Practically this means that we need to set a time daily to learn Mussar and work on all of our Middos. All too often this Avodah gets ignored. The Vilna Gaon said, "If not for Tikkun Hamiddos why am I alive?" Clearly, this is not something we can afford to neglect.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

She could not imagine that there existed someone else in the world with such outstanding qualities. She knew that deep down she loved him with all of her heart and soul and that the feeling was mutual. Though she was aware that only with him would she attain true happiness, she wanted freedom and her overpowering love for him loomed as a potential yoke that would hamper it. Her only option was attempting to ignore and stifle her deep felt emotions, thereby slowly burying them ever deeper into her subconscious, however, it was not to be. The depth of her love was too great to deny and the clear knowledge of her only true path to happiness did not bear obfuscation. Despite her many attempts at denial, the overpowering love buried deep within her eventually burst forth like a volcano. With it came ultimate happiness as she accepted upon herself that yoke of love which she had always known deep down was her only path to true bliss, uniting her eternally with the love of her life.

Shir HaShirim is a description of this struggle, with Klal Yisroel described as the bride and Hashem as the groom. Therefore, despite the absence of any mention of the “awe of Heaven and acceptance of the yoke of its rule,” Rashi explains the words of Reb Akiva describing Shir HaShirim as “Holy of Holies” with the following words: **For its entirety is expressions of awe of Heaven and the acceptance of the yoke of its rule.** (Rashi, Shir HaShirim 1:1)

The yoke of the rule of Heaven should not be confused with the yoke of a kingdom on Earth. It is rather a far different sort of yoke, one that comes with the acknowledgement of ultimate love and the eternal happiness it brings which we at times subconsciously attempt to deny for a mere fleeting pleasure. For this reason, we preface our twice daily acceptance of, “the yoke of Heaven” in the recital of Shema, with the blessing: The One who chooses Yisroel with love. This is also why we immediately follow it with the mitzvah: And you shall love Hashem with all of your heart, and your soul and all of your might!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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I am Hashem your G-d who brought you up from Egypt, open wide your mouth - to ask of Me all your heart's desires, and I will fill it - as much as you ask I will fulfill.
(Tehillim 81 with Rashi)

This statement made by Dovid HaMelech, with Rashi's explanation, begs the question: Why do we not always see Hashem fulfilling our tefillos?

Perhaps a second look at the pasuk provides us an answer. Hashem compares our asking of Him and His commitment to fulfill our requests as our opening our mouth wide and His filling it. When one gets ready to eat, he doesn't open his mouth wide until he is actually holding the food in front of his mouth ready to eat it. If we ask of Hashem in the same fashion, as if we see the fulfillment of our requests as much an imminent certainty as eating the food before us when we open our mouths, then we can truly be assured that He won't let us down.

But how do we develop such a feeling of trust in Hashem's salvation?

This is explained in the first half of our Pasuk: *I am Hashem your G-d who took you out from Mitzrayim.* The Medrash Agadah quotes our opening Pasuk interpreting it as follows: Just as I saved you from Mitzrayim, so to I will save you from every calamity that may befall you.

Hashem is telling us: While you're worried about how you're going to get a business deal through, remember who you have on your side worrying about you, your Father, Who took you and millions of others out of Mitzrayim in miraculous fashion. Just as I saved you from Mitzrayim, I will save you now. However, Chazal say that Klal Yisroel merited redemption in the merit of the righteous women who, even while in slavery, prepared musical instruments to celebrate their redemption displaying their undying Bitachon in Hashem's ultimate salvation. “If you trust in me as they did, you too will be saved!”