

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Important Lessons From The Story Of The Mekalel

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
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In this week's Parsha, the Torah records the story of the person who cursed Hashem. The Rabbeinu Bachya says in his commentary on this episode, "Why was it necessary for the Torah to record this story that occurred in the Midbar? It would have been appropriate to conceal it out of honor to Hashem and not reveal it at all. The Torah should have just taught the law to Klal Yisrael in general, that if a man curses Hashem he will die...It appears that the Torah's intention in sharing this story is for two benefits. One is to let us know that no member of Klal Yisrael can stumble in this sin unless they are wicked and intrinsically flawed from birth, due to parental deficiencies. The second reason is that from here a significant principle and a great foundation in blessing Hashem is clarified. How is a person obligated to bless Hashem? The one who cursed Hashem, at first he expressed the name of Hashem in its letters, and then he cursed Hashem...for doing this he was deserving of the death penalty. Similarly, in regards to blessing Hashem and reward, it is necessary for the one making the Bracha to first reflect in his heart on the meaning of the letters of Hashem's name, and what they teach. Then, he should have this intention in his mind and only at that point should he make the Bracha. By doing so he will receive a reward and live forever. This is supported by the Pasuk, "I will raise up Hashem the King and bless His name forever." Meaning to say, I will raise Him up first in my mind and the intentions of my heart, and then I will bless Him. This is similar to the idea expressed by our Sages, that a person should always enter into the Shul two entrance lengths, and then he should Daven."

A few very important and powerful insights can be gleaned from the above Rabbeinu Bachya. Firstly, it was worth it and justified for the Torah to record a massive Chilul Hashem of someone cursing Hashem, which also runs the risk of making us more vulnerable to this sin, since we know that exposure dulls our

barriers, all for the purpose of letting us know who a Jew really is. A Jew of pure lineage would never engage in such behavior, as a Jew's Neshama has such a deeply rooted appreciation of Hashem. This information was so critical for us to know, that the Torah went so far as to record a massive Chilul Hashem. This underscores how important it is for a person to know how great a Jew is. This information will allow a person to be more ready to be Mashpia and Mekarev others, due to the realization of how much they intrinsically appreciate Hashem.

Secondly, it was worth it and justified for the Torah to record a massive Chilul Hashem, to teach us a seemingly simple and not so significant message that a person needs to think about who Hashem is before he makes a Bracha. One would have thought that the devastation of this story and its potential to disconnect a person from Hashem should override the need for Hashem to teach this message. We see that the power of thinking about who Hashem is before making a Bracha is so impactful in connecting us to Hashem, that it is worth the negative risks of the story.

Thirdly, the Rabbeinu Bachya is connecting the concept that if someone stands in the back of the shul, appearing as if davening is a burden to them and they are waiting to leave, it is as if they are making a Bracha without proper appreciation of Hashem. At first glance, these two concepts are not connected and express different ideas. However, the Rabbeinu Bachya is telling us that these two ideas are one and the same. A person who stands in the back of the shul is subtly communicating that he doesn't appreciate who Hashem is. If he did appreciate who Hashem is, he would not be running to leave. However if a person makes sure to not stand by the door, appearing that he wants to get davening over with, he is deepening his appreciation for Hashem, and his davening is enhanced.

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