

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Vulnerability and Receptivity

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 יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא

In this week's Parsha the Ralbag derives a lesson in Middos from the way Moshe structured the condition for the Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven. The Ralbag writes, "It is fitting for each person that has a dealing with another to structure the deal in a manner that will ensure that there is no room for deception or strategies. This is derived from how meticulous Moshe was in structuring the condition for the Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven. He expanded his words to ensure that there was no room for deception."

The initial reading of this Ralbag presents some difficulty in understanding and requires further clarification. Granted that one should make sure in his dealings to thoroughly clarify everything, thereby ensuring that there are no miscommunications or forgotten details. However, Moshe's concern of deception seems unfounded, especially in this context, as we are talking about the דור דעה, the greatest generation that ever lived.

We can explain this Ralbag as follows: Moshe must have understood that no matter how great a person is, he is vulnerable to fall into the trap of trickery and deception. One's biases and desires can cause even the greatest person to rationalize and stoop so low that he would purposely lie. (Of course we must realize that any infraction of this great generation was on a miniscule level.) Therefore, one is required to structure his dealings in a manner that closes off any possibility of deceit or trickery. Thus, the lesson derived is that even the greatest person is vulnerable to the lowliest of behaviors, commensurate to his level.

In contrast, in Parshas Masei we see that even the lowliest person is capable of the most refined behavior. When the Torah repeats the miracles of Mitzrayim, the Ralbag writes, "This is coming to tell

us the greatness of Hashem's wonders, and the fulfillment of his promise. This can be derived from the fact that someone died in every house in Egypt, and they knew that this tragedy was caused by Bnei Yisroel. Despite their personal tragedy, Hashem caused the Egyptians to see the חן, the grace of the Bnei Yisroel, which caused the Egyptians to lend them all of their valuables, thereby liquidating the entire Egypt. Yet with all this, the Bnei Yisroel left with a raised hand while the Egyptians were burying their dead." The Ralbag is clearly saying that the cause of the Egyptian generosity to lend all their valuables was not based on a removal of their free-will. Rather it was due to Hashem revealing to them the beauty of the Bnei Yisroel. Upon seeing this beauty, this חן, it evoked a response of generosity that resulted in the liquidation of the valuables of the entire Egyptian population. This was a response that was elicited by choice despite the fact that the Egyptians hated the Jewish people and viewed them as the cause of their personal suffering.

From here we derive that even the lowliest person can reach the greatest heights. The Egyptians with all their cruelty and evil had not dulled the sensitivities of their Tzelem Elokim. They were still able to be awakened by seeing the beauty of the Bnei Yisroel, and respond to the nation they hated, with great generosity.

We can learn from these two pieces in the Ralbag that on the one hand a great person can easily fall, and he therefore must do everything possible to protect himself from falling. On the other hand even the lowliest person can still be receptive and responsive to Middos and modesty that may seem foreign to him. We must never give up hope on anyone.

Why did Priority-1 initiate the 1-Focus Say Nishmas Campaign?

Priority-1 initiated this campaign because we are passionate about helping people strengthen their emunah and develop a strong connection with Hashem. We have noticed a wonderful increase in awareness of Hashem's absolute control over the world during the coronavirus pandemic. We want to ensure that the strides we have made on a communal level continue even after the crisis ends. That is the sole purpose of this campaign.





Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Last week we showed from Chazal that the tangible and immediate enticements of the Yetzer Harah must be countered by our Yetzer Tov with tangible and immediate consequences. We explained that this can be provided through the development of a tangible and intimate relationship with Hashem through the study of Shir HaShirim.

There is an additional tangible and immediate benefit we gain to counter the Yetzer Harah through the study of Shir HaShirim which, according to the following words of Rabbeinu Yonah, is “the first entranceway” to our Avodas Hashem. “The first entranceway is that one who serves Hashem should be aware of his own value, his importance and the importance of his ancestors, and how they are appreciated and beloved by Hashem...”

Rabbeinu Yonah’s explanation as to how these thoughts help us overcome the Yetzer Harah is another proof to the idea we have put forward, that the tangible and immediate enticements of the Yetzer Harah must be countered by our Yetzer Tov with tangible and immediate consequences, as he explains: “When one is tempted...to do something improper, one will be ashamed of himself and before his ancestors, and will tell himself: ‘A great and distinguished person like myself, who has many great and elevated virtues, and being the offspring of great ones, of ancient kings, how can I commit such a grave sin and be a sinner before Hashem and my ancestors all my days...’” It seems the potent power of this pride is its tangibility in the here and now which allows it to counter the Yetzer Hara’s enticements in the here and now.

There is no greater weapon one can hold in his hand as he arrives at “the first entrance way in our Avodas Hashem” than the book of Shir HaShirim and the praises it heaps on its bearer in the words of the Creator of Heaven and Earth to him, “My Beloved, My dove, My perfect one!”



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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Rav Chaim Kanievsky’s daughter, Rebbitzin Tzivyon, relates: Many would approach my grandfather, the Steipler Gaon, for a Bracha when faced with danger or calamity. Usually he would tell them, “First of all, daven! There is nothing as powerful as the prayer of a sick person for himself. Secondly, accept upon yourselves, bli neder, that when you emerge from this danger you will recite the Tefillah of Nishmas, including the section of Yishtabach (excluding the Bracha).” This Segulah is a tradition from Rebbe Herschel, who was the Shach’s Rebbi. I recall, when one of the girls in the family was in danger and taken to the hospital, my grandfather quickly arrived there and told everyone to accept upon themselves, bli neder, to recite Nishmas when she returns home healthy and complete.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlit”a and his Rebbetzin adapted this custom as well. Before each birth or sickness of a child or whenever they were in need of a Yeshuah they would accept upon themselves to recite this Tefillah when the Yeshuah arrived. Indeed, whenever they saw the Yeshuah they would immediately recite it. Rebbetzin Tzivyon adds: Mother’s closeness to Hashem resulted in our witnessing His clear guiding hand in our lives every day. Therefore, every evening she would recite Nishmas as a thank you to Him for the good day that passed.

Mother publicized this Segulah amongst the women who came to her house. During every dire predicament she would say, “Accept upon yourself, bli neder, to say Nishmas when the salvation arrives!”

Many stories were told of actual miracles that came about through this custom. One of them Rebbitzin Tzivyon relates: A child fell from a high place and crushed his leg. The doctors said that he would have to go through several operations and even then, they did not promise they would be able to return the leg to its original state. Everyone was really worried. The child’s grandmother rushed to Mother crying about the situation. Mother heard her out, told her to say Nishmas, and then said, “There will be no need for an operation!” During that period of time Mother repeatedly inquired regarding the child’s situation and said that Nishmas should be recited each time there was an improvement. Against all the doctors’ predictions, the child had a complete recovery without having to go through any operation!

Through accepting upon ourselves to thank Hashem for His ultimate salvation, while calamity still looms threateningly, we show and strengthen our trust in Him that, indeed, He will not let us down and will give us cause to thank Him for saving us.