

Part II: Depressurizing Through a Relationship with Hashem

Since we need to protect our children and students, and at times the threat of consequences is the only way, we must find a solution to deal with the pressure that could undermine their commitment. To find this solution, we need to look no further than what Rava said in the above Gemara. Rava said that after the miracle of Purim, the defense of 'coercion' is no longer admissible in court. During the days of Purim, the Jewish People accepted the Torah willingly because of the great love that they had for the miracle that just took place. It would seem that Rava is explaining that the miracle of Purim created such a desire in the Jewish People to serve Hashem, that it removed the feeling of being forced, which allowed them to feel pressure-free when serving Hashem. This is despite the fact that the threat of the mountain over their heads still remained. We can learn from here that if we want to remove the religious pressure that our children and students sometimes feel, we need to help them develop a positive relationship with Hashem. The more they feel that Hashem loves them and that He is there for them, their want and desire to connect to Him has the power to relieve that pressure.

The question can be asked though, if it is true that a positive relationship with Hashem can release the pressure, what is unique about the miracle of Purim? The miracles that occurred to the Jewish People when they were being taken out

of Egypt, and throughout the 40 years in the desert, surely trumped the miracle of Purim. These miracles should have engendered an even stronger relationship with Hashem than the miracle of Purim. Why didn't those miracles relieve the pressure? Why is it that only after the miracle of Purim there was no longer a defense of, 'we were forced'?

"It was a hidden miracle in which one had to 'connect the dots' on his own to see the hand of Hashem"

In order to answer these questions it is necessary to understand that pressure can come in different forms. One way that pressure can develop is through a fear of consequences. Another form of pressure can emerge through a positive relationship. This idea that love itself can be too pressurizing, is found in a Rashi in Shir Hashirim (6:5), where he explains the reason why in the second Beis Hamikdash Hashem didn't give the Jewish People the Aron and Keruvim as He did in the first Beis Hamikdash. Rashi explains that the Aron and

Keruvim represented an extreme affection that Hashem had for the Jewish People, and it was that extra show of love that caused them to sin.

If that's the case, perhaps we can answer that the miracle of Purim was the perfect balance of love without the added pressure. It was a hidden miracle in which one had to 'connect the dots' on his own to see the hand of Hashem. It was self-discovery, and it was therefore easier to digest. This is in contrast to the miracles of Egypt that were so clear and spectacular, which can overwhelm a person and be a source of pressure. We see from here that if we want to relieve the religious pressure, the best strategy is to utilize stories of Hashgacha Pratis in a way that will allow our children and students to discover Hashem's love and involvement in a more subtle and indirect manner. In this way they will develop a positive relationship with Hashem that doesn't result in an overwhelming pressure.

There is a story told about a girl who had a trip to an amusement park and asked her parents for seventy five cents for a soda. Her parents didn't have the money and suggested she daven to Hashem for the money. The girl sat down and davened fervently. The next day she went on the trip not knowing how she would pay for a soda. Unexpectedly her friend approached her and said, "Do you remember I borrowed seventy five cents from you a while ago? Here it is." We can only imagine how it felt for this girl to have her tefilos answered in such a subtle manner. It is this type of self discovery that can connect us to Hashem without the pressure.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לרפואה שלמה רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה