

Don't Fake It Until You Make It

פרשת שלח

The Mussar Giants often emphasize the importance of serving Hashem wholeheartedly by quoting the Pasuk in Yeshaya (29:13), "My master said, 'They approach me by showing honor with their mouth and lips, while their hearts are distant from me. Their fear of me is expressed like men who were taught to act this way.'" Rashi comments that they approached Hashem to elevate themselves through an expression of honor with their mouth and lips, while at the same time distancing their heart from Him. Their fear of Hashem was not with a full heart, but was done as if someone was teaching them. They appeared as humble in order to persuade Hashem with their mouths.

It seems from Rashi that the Pasuk is identifying a person that serves Hashem insincerely as one who is distancing themselves further from Hashem. A person that goes through the motions of Tefillah and Avodas Hashem without a complete heart is not merely losing an opportunity for growth. Rather, this act without the engagement of the heart, may cause a person to be further distanced from Hashem. This Rashi can help us understand how critical it is to engage our hearts in our Avodas Hashem. We tend to view all of Avodas Hashem under the purview of מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה, through doing it for the wrong reasons, it will come to the right reasons. However, we see

"Acting insincerely will not only propel us forward, but it can cause us to further distance our hearts from Hashem."

from here that in regards to our obligations that require a sincere heart, such as Tefillah, acting insincerely will not only not propel us forward, but it can cause us to further distance our hearts from Hashem.

Based on the above insight, it is important that we find strategies and ideas that will help us engage our hearts in Avodas Hashem. In this week's Parsha, Rashi shares with us a powerful idea that can help to connect our hearts to Hashem. After the episode of the Meraglim, Moshe Rabbeinu pleads with Hashem not to destroy the Jewish people for their sin. Moshe says to Hashem (14:13-17) that destroying the Jewish people will be a disgrace to Your honor. The Egyptians who saw Your might when You took the Jews out of Egypt will say that Hashem was among them and led them with His pillar of cloud day and night. We never saw this bond of love

broken and therefore it must be that the reason Hashem destroyed them is because He is too weak to wipe out the nations of Eretz Yisroel.

At first look this conclusion seems irrational. Clearly there is a more sensible and rational alternative as to why Hashem destroyed the Jewish people, that would not end up as being a Chilul Hashem. It would be more logical for a nation that witnessed Hashem's might in the Makkos and at Krias Yam Suf, to not question Hashem's strength, but rather conclude that the Jews must have sinned and severed their relationship with Hashem, and they are therefore being destroyed.

We see from here that a person who witnessed and experienced Hashem's intense love for the Jewish people, cannot imagine or believe that this bond is breakable. This even applies to the Egyptians who witnessed Hashem's might, and understood that this bond could not break. However, without an indication that this bond was severed, all options no matter how irrational, are more logical than the severing of this relationship. We see from here that the more we recognize Hashem's kindness and love for us expressed in our daily lives, it will serve to foster within us a feeling that our bond with Hashem is unbreakable.