

The Great Escape

The emotions of love and fear are often the driving forces motivating our actions. Thus we are commanded to instill these feelings in our hearts, as they play an important role in our עבודת ה. However, Rashi (6:5) points out in this week's Parsha that serving Hashem out of love has a significant advantage over that of fear, when confronted with excessive pressure.

The Pasuk states in פרשת ואתחנן, “You should love Hashem with all your heart...” (6:5). Rashi comments, “One who serves Hashem motivated by love, is not comparable to one who serves Hashem out of fear. A person who serves his master out of fear will escape when he feels overburdened by the demands placed upon him.” By contrast, this is not the case when one serves Hashem inspired by love.

At first glance understanding this Rashi poses a challenge, as the concept expressed in the משל does not seem to apply to Hashem. In the relationship that exists between

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a slave and master, since a slave is capable of escaping, there is a valid concern. However, regarding Hashem, with whom מלא כל הארץ כבודו is the reality, a person has nowhere to flee! Surely a person who is serving Hashem out of fear is well aware that there is no nook or cranny bereft of Hashem's providence. This being the case, further clarification is necessary to relate this idea to Hashem and our service of Him.

To rectify the above-mentioned discrepancy it is necessary to establish the premise that Rashi understood that emotional pressure can overwhelm a person, even to the extent that he can be in complete denial of what he knows to be true. In an effort to relieve this pressure, one may come to reject and undermine his own belief system. With this concept in mind, the משל offered by Rashi accurately captures a person's feelings when overwhelmed by the expectations placed upon him. These feelings can generate thoughts of כפירה, and just as in a human relationship a slave will run away from his master, a person will run away from Hashem, by developing the belief that he is not under Hashem's control.

We can glean from here a powerful insight into maintaining a sustainable commitment to עבודת ה. It seems that אהבת ה is the key ingredient necessary to withstand the pressures and demands that can overwhelm us and generate a strong urge to escape. A person derives such pleasure from this positive and loving relationship with Hashem, that leaving it is unimaginable. To a person motivated by love the hardships are כימים אחדים באהבתו אתה (ויצא כט,כ).

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

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