
פרשת ויגש

פרק מז פסוק כט

וַיֵּאָסֶר יוֹסֵף מִרְפַּבְתּוֹ וַיַּעַל לְקִרְאֵת-יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גְּשֻׁנָּה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפְלֵ עַל-צְוֹאָרָיו
וַיִּבֶךְ עַל-צְוֹאָרָיו עוֹד:

חז"ל ומושג

אֶהְבֶּה מִקְלָקֶלֶת אֶת הַשׂוֹרֵה וְשׂוֹנֵא מִקְלָקֶלֶת אֶת הַשׂוֹרֵה (ב"ר פרק נה)

Translation:

Love disrupts normal behavior and hatred disrupts normal behavior.

Explanation:

When a person acts out of passion, either love or hate, they not only do things they normally would not do, but they do things they normally could not do.

Therefore, the acts of love of אברהם אבינו and of יוסף, were needed to counterbalance the acts of hate done by פרעה and בלעם. Without this counterbalance the evil acts might have done tremendous damage.

We should learn from this the importance of being passionate in our service of Hashem as it significantly raises the level of our עבודת ה'.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Midrash from which our Musag is taken picks up on the fact that the word ויאסר, meaning to harness, is used only twice in the חומש. The same applies to the word ויחבש, which means to saddle. The Midrash understands that there is a parallel between the two times each word is used, as one comes to counterbalance the other. In each case the first speaks of an act done out of love while the second speaks of an act done out of hatred. Both are acts of passion and have powerful effects beyond what normal acts might achieve.

This is not the first time we have been introduced to this Musag. In פרשת וירא (כב:ג) by the story of the עקידה we read that אברהם saddled his own donkey. Rashi there quoted part of the Midrash¹ from which our Musag is taken. The Midrash teaches:

וישכם אברהם בבוקר ויחבוש את חמורו אר"ש בן יוחאי אהבה מקלקלת את השורה ושנאה מקלקלת את השורה אהבה מקלקלת את השורה דכתיב וישכם אברהם בבוקר וגו' ולא היה לו כמה עבדים? אלא אהבה מקלקלת את השורה. ושנאה מקלקלת את השורה (במדבר כב) ויקם בלעם בבוקר ויחבוש את אתונו ולא היה לו כמה עבדים? אלא שנאה מקלקלת את השורה. אהבה מקלקלת את השורה שנאמר (בראשית מו) ויאסור יוסף מרכבתו ויעל לקראת ישראל אביו וכי לא היה ליוסף כמה עבדים אלא אהבה מקלקלת את השורה שנאה מקלקלת את השורה דכתיב (שמות יד) ויאסור את רכבו ולא היה לו כמה עבדים אלא שנאה מקלקלת את השורה.

The Midrash brings a proof from אברהם regarding love and from בלעם regarding hatred. It continues by doing the same for יוסף and פרעה.

There are two issues worthy to explore:

1. The Musag can be understood very easily and correctly as love or hatred will cause people to act in ways that they would not normally act. This is rather obvious as almost everyone has experienced either saying or doing something when they were in love or angry which they normally would not say or do. Why does the Midrash feel a need to teach us this lesson?
2. The Midrash seems to pairing the acts of אברהם ובלעם and the acts of פרעה ויוסף. The fact that these are the only two times the word ויבש is found in the Torah and the only two times the word ויאסר is found, certainly warrants this understanding. Is it simply a coincidence that we seem to have an example of love and hate from both or is there a deeper connection between the pairings?

Rashi in (כב:כא) comments that indeed the acts of אברהם and of בלעם are connected²:

ויחבש את אתונו. מפאן שהשנאה מקלקלת את השורה, שחבש הוא בעצמו. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא, רשע, כָּבַר קִדְמָךְ אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיךָ, שְׁנֵאָמַר וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּחְבֹּשׁ אֶת חֲמֹרוֹ.

A careful reading of the תנחומא from which Rashi quotes points to the fact that the act of אברהם acted as a balance to void the act of בלעם.⁴ The continuation of the Midrash Rabba quoted above makes a similar point:

אר"ש בן יוחאי תבא חבשה ותעמוד על חבשה תבוא חבשה שחבש אברהם אבינו לילך ולעשות רצונו של מקום של מי שאמר והיה העולם שנאמר וישלח אברהם את ידו וגו' ותעמוד על חבשה שחבש בלעם לילך ולקלל את ישראל תבא אסרה שאסר יוסף לקראת אביו ותעמוד על אסרה של פרעה שהיה הולך לרדוף את ישראל.

The Midrash goes out of its way to parallel the love of Avrohom with the hatred of Bilaam and the love of Yosef with the hatred of Pharaoh. Other than the parallel of words, ויחבש and ויחבש, and ויאסר and ויאסר, the Midrash clearly is conveying that the act of Avrohom somehow stood against - the act of Bilam, as did the act of Yosef against the act of Pharaoh. The Midrash

¹ ויחבש. הוא בעצמו, ולא צנה לאחד מעבדיו, שהאהבה מקלקלת את השורה.

² Interestingly, the Mishna in Avos (פרק ה משנה יז) contrasts the two personalities.

³ Rashi's wording of כבר קדמך is not found in the מדרש רבה, but rather in the (במדבר ח) מדרש תנחומא: מיד השכים בבקר, שנאמר, ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבוש את אתונו. וכי לא היה לו עבד ולא שפחה. אלא מרוב שנאה שנאה את ישראל, קדמתו ועמד בזריזות הוא בעצמו. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, רשע, כבר קדמך אברהם אביהם לעקידת יצחק בנו, שנאמר, וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבוש את חמורו

We will explore later the meaning of כבר קדמך.

⁴ When Rashi uses the term קדמך he does not mean that אברהם got up earlier than בלעם (as by אברהם it says וישכם whereas by בלעם it only says ויקם). Rather Rashi is referring to the usage of the word in the תנחומא which means that he preceded. The תנחומא uses the word קדמתו by בלעם as well, meaning אברהם preceded to saddle his donkey before his servants could do so. Hashem told him that אברהם had already done an alike act when he too proceeded to saddle his donkey before his servants. While it is true that אברהם did get up earlier than בלעם this is not the point of the תנחומא nor of Rashi (thus, it would seem to me that the contention of the גור אריה is not warranted).

seems to say that the ויחבש of love of Avrohom was necessary to counteract the ויחבש of hate of Bilaam, as was the ויאסר of love of יוסף necessary to counteract the ויאסר of hate of פרעה. But why was this necessary? What do these two acts have to do with each other?

Perhaps the answer is that we should not explain our Musag to mean that when one acts out of love or hatred they will do things they normally *would* not do, but rather that they will do things they normally *could* not do. When someone does something with incredible passion⁵, (either love or hate) they are able to achieve things they would not normally be able to achieve. They receive almost super abilities with which they can do tremendous good or tremendous damage. This is the deeper meaning of אהבה ושנאה מקלקלים את השורה, love or hate, which are powerful emotions, disrupt normal activity, and help people go beyond their normal שורה, their normal line of achievement.

The acts of hate by both Bilaam and Pharaoh would have had consequences beyond the normal range of what they could effect, and therefore had to be offset by equal acts of passion, love, by Avrohom and Yosef. Our Musag thus teaches us not only to be careful how we act when we are in love or angry, but also how powerful those acts might be. When we are able to connect passion together with the correct action we can accomplish almost anything.

This is obviously an extremely valuable lesson in the way we should act in our service of Hashem. If we act with passion and אהבת ה' our deeds take on an elevated significance well beyond what our abilities might normally achieve.

Questions for Further Thought:

- a. Can you think of instances where your עבודת ה' would be improved through greater passion? And, what do you think are the reasons we usually do not serve Hashem with passion?
- b. How do you think the Torah should relate legally to crimes of passion? Does it make the person more liable or less liable?

⁵ The common factor in all their acts is passion. This is supported by the מכילתא which teaches: ארבעה אסרו בשמחה אברהם אסר בשמחה שנא' (בראשית כ"ב) וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבוש את חמורו ולא היו לו כמה עבדים אלא לכבוד המקום. יוסף אסר בשמחה שנאמ' (שם מ"ו) ויאסור יוסף מרכבתו ולא היו לו כמה עבדים אלא לכבוד אביו. בלעם אסר בשמחה שנאמר (במדבר כ"ב) ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבוש את אתונו. פרעה אסר בשמחה שנאמר ויאסור את רכבו.