

A POSITION OF STRENGTH

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

Parshas Bo

A Position Of Strength

By Rabbi Shlomo Jarcaig

The ninth of the ten plagues to strike the Egyptians was darkness. The Torah relates that during this affliction "no [Egyptian] could see his brother nor could anyone rise from his place for a three day period; but for all the children of Israel there was light in their dwellings." (Shemos/Exodus 10:23) G-d created a tangible darkness through which the Jews were able to see but the Egyptians were not. Why was it necessary for G-d to create such a miraculous darkness? Could He not have temporarily blinded the Egyptians and accomplished the same thing?

Chasam Sofer (1) explains that G-d did not want to blind the Egyptians because a natural outcome of blindness is a heightened sensitivity of the other senses. By engineering a circumstance that they were able to see but the darkness obstructed the function of that ability, not only were they practically unable to see, but their expended effort diverted their focus and attention from the other senses they could have utilized.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (2) expounds that it is ideal for a person to use a similar methodology in his service of G-d. Initially, a person should recognize his strengths and focus on them. His improvement in these areas will have a ripple effect on the other areas of his life in which he is deficient; his certain success in his areas of strength will generate successes in his weaker areas as well.

Just as the blind person instinctively focuses his energies to the senses he can utilize and is more successful as a result, we should also focus on our own strengths and capabilities. If a person has a natural proclivity for acts of kindness or prayer, he should focus on that first rather than focusing all of his energies on his weak points. To ignore this advice is to condemn oneself to the curse of the Egyptians: wasting time attempting performance of the impossible, while squandering valuable energies and actual strengths that contain such vast potential.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) Rabbi Moshe Sofer of Pressburg; 1762-1839; acknowledged leader of Hungarian Jewry of the time
(2) in Michtav Me'Eliyahu, his collected writings and discourses; 1891-1954; of London and B'nai Brak, one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement

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