

The Song of the Ant



נְמִלָּה אוֹמְרָת: לֵךְ אֶל נְמִלָּה עֹצֵל רְאֵה דַרְכֶיהָ וְחִכְמָהּ. (משלי ו, ו)

The ant says: **Go to the ant, lazy one, watch its ways and become wise.**

With these words, the wisest of men, King Shlomo, directs the lazy to go to the ant and learn from it the virtue of disciplined work. This tiny insect can be seen throughout the summer carrying food many times its size in order to store it for the winter.

The ant is the epitome of industriousness. It is a simple insect with almost no personal needs and yet it knows no rest. Some ants require only a wheat kernel and a half in order to live out their short lifespans, and yet they horde masses of grain with seeming foresight that perhaps they will live much longer.¹

Ants function as a complex superorganism. Their methods of building their intricate colonies, tracking food, navigating their way back home, reproducing and expanding, attacking and defending, would put to shame the greatest of human armies.

Most noteworthy, there are no rulers or officers standing over them² to instruct and discipline them, yet each ant fulfills its function with wisdom and alacrity. They are also known to conduct themselves with seeming honesty. If an ant drops a kernel of grain, others will smell it and not take it so as not to steal from another.

The existence of the myriad ant colonies that thrive around the planet is a God-sent message to the mankind. It sings of the virtues of discipline, organization, foresight, and healthy hard work. Even the most lethargic can be made wise by contemplating it.

Thus, the lowly ant in truth sings a divine song. It displays the traits of conduct by which the Creator's world performs in perfect symphony.

"Go to the ant, lazy one, watch its ways and become wise."

¹ Tanchuma.

² As it says in Mishlei in the conclusion of the verse of the song.

Living with Song

From the most basic of creatures we learn the most basic of lessons. It is common sense for one to utilize the time he has been granted to achieve that purpose for which he has been created.

Effective usage of the body and the mind is neither tedious nor damaging. It is the natural function of the capable and thinking man. On the contrary, lethargy and inaction foster negative emotions and are altogether unhealthy for a person. The more one labors the more he will become inspired to achieve yet more and he will be both physically and emotionally satiated. Those that do not wish to use their lives productively are not only giving up on what is good for themselves. They are also passively destroying the world that Hashem created to be settled and developed.

If the ant which needs almost nothing to live its insignificant life carries loads many times its mass and of greater quantity than it now needs, all the more so should we, whose lives are truly significant. The Jewish nation needs to amass enough Torah and Mitzvos to last it eternally in the World to Come. Moreover, we have a King overseeing us watchfully. We should be wise to shake off the bonds of lethargy and merit eternal goodness.³

If we do not listen to the song of the ant, who shall?

³ Based on Knaf Renanim.

