



Table Talk Parshat Vayechi

Yakov leaves Shimon and Levi with a strong message on his deathbed, that their anger is dangerous and he looks down upon it. He separates them forever in his dying wishes.

בראשית מ"ט:ה'-ז'

שָׁמַעוּ וְלֹא יְאַקֵּם כָּל־חָמֵס מִכְרָמִים: בְּסַפְתֶּם אֶל־פָּבָא נַפְשִׁי בְּקָהָלֶם
אַל־תִּמְךָ בְּבָנֵי בְּאֶסְתָּמָךְ הָרָנוּ אֲלֵישׁ וּבְכָצָם עֲקָרוֹנִישׁוּ: אָרְרוֹ אָפֶם
כִּי תַּעֲבֹרְתֶּם כִּי קָשְׁתֶּה אַסְלָקָם בְּנֵיעַלְבָן אַפְּגָם בִּישְׁרָאֵל: (ס)

Genesis 49:5-7

Shimon and Levi are a pair; Their weapons are tools of lawlessness. Let not my person be included in their council, Let not my being be counted in their assembly. For when angry they slay men, And when pleased they maim oxen. Cursed be their anger so fierce, And their wrath so relentless. I will divide them in Jacob, Scatter them in Israel.

רש"י על בראשית מ"ט:ז':ב'

אֲחָלָקָם בַּיְעָקָב. אַפְּרִיקָם זֶה מִזָּה שְׁלָא יְהָא לְוִי בְּמִנְנָה כְּשָׁבָטִים, וְהָרִי
הַמְּלֻקִים.

Rashi on Genesis 49:7:2

אֲחָלָקָם בַּיְעָקָב I WILL DIVIDE THEM IN JACOB — I shall separate them from each other inasmuch as Levi shall not be numbered among the tribes (cf. Numbers 26:62) and thus they (Shimon and Levi) will be divided (cf. Genesis Rabbah 98:5).

אבן עזרא על בראשית מ"ט:ז':א'

אָרְרוֹ אָפֶם כִּי עַז. דָּרְךָ נְבוֹא, אוֹ דָּרְךָ תִּפְלָה שִׁיחָסָר אָפֶם וְטוּב
לְהַמְּלֻקִים כִּי אָרְרוֹ הַפְּרָקָר בְּרוּךְ וְאָכָר הַבְּרָכָה תֹּוסֶפֶת הַאֲרִירָה מְגֻרָּעָה

Ibn Ezra on Genesis 49:7:1 Cursed be their anger. He prophesied — or prayed — that their fiery tempers would cool down.

משנה תורה, הלכות דעתות ב':ג'

...בְּנָוֹן הַפְּעָס מִזָּה רָשָׁה הָיָה עד לְמַאֲזָן נָרָא יְלָאָקָם שִׁיזְוָתָק מִזָּה
עַד הַקְּצָה הַאָחָר. וַיָּלֶד עַצְמֹו שְׁלָא יְכָעֵס וְאַפְלוּ עַל צָבָר שְׁרָאֵי
לְבָנָס עַלְיוֹ. וְאַם רָצָה לְהַטְּלִיל אִימָה עַל בְּנֵי וּבְנֵי בִּתוּ אָז עַל קַבְּרָא
אִם הָיָה פְּרָקָס וּרְצָה לְכָעֵס עַל יְהָוָה קָדוֹשׁ שִׁזְוָתָרָו לְמוֹטָב נְרָאָה עַצְמָו
בְּפָנֵיכֶם שֶׁהָוָא פָּוָעֵס קָדוֹשׁ לִיְּסָרָם וּתְהִיה דָּעַתָּו מִשְׁבָּת בֵּינוֹ לְבֵינוֹ
עַצְמָו קָאָקָם שֶׁהָוָא מִדְּמָה כּוֹעֵס בְּשָׁעַת פָּעָס וְהָוָא אַיְנוֹ כּוֹעָס...

Mishneh Torah, Human Dispositions 2:3

...One should teach himself not to get angry, even over a matter which befits anger. If one desires to engender awe in his children and his household, or in the public, if he be at the head of a community, even if he desire to get angry at them so as to bring them back to the good way, he should only act angry in their presence so as to reprove them, but his disposition must remain calm within himself, even as a man imitates, who is angry when the time calls forth anger but in reality he is not angry...

"Healthy emotions are essential to a good and happy life, but temperament is not something we choose. Some people just happen to be more patient or calm or generous-spirited or optimistic than others. Emotions were at one stage called the "passions," a word that comes from the same root as "passive," implying that they are feelings that happen to us rather reactions we chose to have. Despite this, Maimonides believed that with sufficient training, we could overcome our destructive emotions and reconfigure our affective life... What is dangerous about anger is that it causes us to lose control. It activates the most primitive part of the human brain that bypasses the neural circuitry we use when we reflect and choose on rational grounds. While in its grip we lose the ability to step back and judge the possible consequences of our actions. The result is that in a moment of irascibility we can do or say things we may regret for the rest of our lives."

- The Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Let's Talk!

Why is it a good idea to separate from people who don't bring out the best in you?

Yaakov separated Shimon and Levi so they would calm down. What do you think about this?

Why is it dangerous to become angry?

How are we unable to think about other people's feelings when we are angry?

Do you sometimes get angry?

What are things you can do when you are angry to avoid making poor decisions?

Do you think people can learn how to control their anger and their feelings?



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