

BITACHON LESSON FROM THE PARSHA

פרשת קדשִׁים תהִי תשפ"ד – Don't Focus on the Messenger

Did you ever get deeply insulted by someone? Perhaps you were the subject of a stinging piece of Lashon Hara? Did a competitor ever steal away one of your good customers? Were you ever publicly mocked or ridiculed, where everyone in the room had a hearty laugh at your expense while you stood there red-faced? Maybe you even received a physical slap in the face or another physical blow?

Think back to any of those - or similar - events, and try to recall what your initial reaction was, and what your response was to being hurt, pained or humiliated. Did you seek revenge? Did you scheme and strategize about how best to retaliate? Is it eating you up inside? Do you still harbor animosity toward the perpetrator, despite the passage of time?

If you're reading this, we can safely assume that you are a human being, and as such your mind probably reacted with some type of anger to the infraction that was perpetrated against you. Thoughts like "*How dare he do that to me*" and "*I will teach her a lesson*" and "*I won't accept this lying down*" were probably swirling through your mind. That is indeed a very human response.

But is it the correct response? Is it the way the Torah wants us to react? As Torah-observant Jews, we take our cues from Hashem and His holy Torah, and in the aforementioned scenarios the Torah simply states (Vayikra 19:18) **לֹא תִקֵּם וְלֹא תִטּוֹר**, commanding us to not seek revenge nor bear any grudge. You may not even harbor any animosity at all in your heart toward the perpetrator for his actions (As Rashi writes, *זו היא נטייה שנוטר האִיבה בלבו אף על פי שאינו נוקם*. See Sefer Chareidim 21:20 that you must eradicate all resentment from your heart completely. See also Chofetz Chaim; Pesicha; Lavin 8 and 9 in Be'er Mayim Chaim)

But why?! If Reuven hurt me, why can't I bear a grudge against him? He is clearly a sinner, and he is clearly in the wrong, why can't I feel animosity toward him for what he did to me? Why can't I "just be human" and allow my natural feelings to reign?

The answer is because Reuven didn't hurt you!

What?! Of course he did! What does that mean that he didn't hurt me?!

Let's examine some powerful words and glean a penetrating insight into the workings of Hashem, and an understanding of how to see things through the lens of Bitachon. The Chinuch (Mitzvah 241) writes:

שידע האדם ויתן אל לבו כי כל אשר יקרהו מטוב עד רע, הוא סבה שתבוא עליו מאת השם ברוך הוא. ומיד האדם מיד איש אחיו לא יהיה דבר בלתי רצון השם ברוך הוא, על כן כשיצעהו או יכאיבהו אדם ידע בנפשו כי עונותיו גרמו, והשם יתברך גזר עליו בכך, ולא ישית מחשבותיו לנקם ממנו, כי הוא אינו סבת רעתו, כי העון הוא המסבב
A person must know, and internalize in his heart that everything that happens to him - good or bad - is caused by Hashem, and no human can do anything to you without it being the will of Hashem. Therefore, when a human causes you pain, anguish or any suffering, know in your heart that your own sins brought it on, and Hashem decreed the suffering upon you. Don't contemplate seeking revenge against the human, as he isn't the cause of your anguish; your own sins are the cause.

Is Reuven off the hook? No, of course not! But that's between him and Hashem. Yes, he must seek your forgiveness and make reparations for his wrongdoing, but that's HIS issue. Your issue is to figure out why Hashem decreed that you should experience that particular pain. It was a message from Hashem cloaked as "Reuven hurting you". Ultimately, Reuven was just the "Stick" that Hashem used to chastise you. Getting mad at the stick is an exercise in futility. Taking revenge against a stick is just plain silly.

This is a tenet of Yiddishkeit and a fundamental of Bitachon; to recognize that EVERYTHING that happens - **כל אשר יקרהו מטוב עד רע** - is determined by Hashem. No exceptions.

We can now understand the flow of the Posuk more clearly - **לֹא תִקֵּם וְלֹא תִטּוֹר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ לְרַעַךְ כִּמֹּד אֲנִי ה'**

לֹא תִקֵּם וְלֹא תִטּוֹר - Don't focus on the messenger; he is not the real source of your pain

אֶת בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרַעַךְ כִּמֹּד - You must continue to love him as you must love all Yidden, despite the pain that he caused you

אֲנִי ה' - "I", Hashem, am the One that sent the message; that's where your focus shall be

One more thing to keep in mind: Not only does Hashem determine everything that happens to every person; He did so already at the creation of the world, thousands of years before you - or the person who ultimately was the messenger that hurt you - even existed!

Not only that, Hashem told you what was going to happen, and YOU agreed to it! Yes, indeed! Take a look at these words of the Rabbeinu Bechayei (Devarim 22:8)

ועשית מעקה לגגך כי יפול הנופל ממנו, ראוי היה ליפול מששת ימי בראשית... וענין המדרש הזה, כי כל הנבראים כלן נבראו בחפצם ורצונם והקב"ה הודיעם בראשית הבריאה כל עניניהם כלם וכל המקרים העתידיים לבא עליהם, וכן הודיעם ימי חייהם ומיתתם היאך תהיה, וכן ענין מזונותם אם בריוח אם בצער אם ע"י עצמן אם משל אחרים, וכן דרשו רז"ל כל מעשה בראשית לדעתם נבראו לצבינוס נבראו שזאמר (בראשית ב) וכל צבאם, והכל רצו וקבלו, ועל זה אמרו ראוי היה ליפול מששת ימי בראשית, ואף על פי כן יש עונש גדול למי שמסבב, ולכן ועשית מעקה לגגך

So, next time you get insulted and start thinking "*I won't accept this lying down*", remember, you already accepted this and agreed to it 5,784 years ago! No point in getting upset. No point in seeking revenge. Focus on the message, not on the messenger.

Good Shabbos!