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אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS

ACHAREI MOS-KEDOSHIM

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT

RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

בשבת

TAKING THE HIGH ROAD

With the words “לא תקם ולא תטר”¹ the Torah introduces a new dynamic into our interpersonal relationships. Translated as, “You shall not take revenge, and you shall not bear a grudge,” this *Pasuk* refers to responding to someone else’s unfriendly behavior. *Rashi*² explains that both ‘revenge’ and ‘a grudge’ have the same starting point - Person A didn’t lend an item to Person B. ‘Revenge’ refers to Person B later refusing to lend an item to Person A, and ‘a grudge’ refers to Person B lending the item, but saying, “I’m not like you, who didn’t lend to me!” This behavior is censured by the Torah - a person is expected to take the high road, and not respond in kind.

The *Chizkuni*³ (Chizkyah Ben Manoach, 13th century) points out that this doesn’t seem fair! Both are guilty of the same error, yet the Torah only takes issue with ‘Person B,’ ignoring the first person’s stinginess. Why is that so?

The *Chizkuni* explains that though the actions are the same, the motivations are different. The first person may very well have been stingy, which is not a good character trait. However, the Torah doesn’t force a person to lend out their items to just anyone who asks. The second person, though, *would have been willing to lend his item*, if not for the revenge that he wants to exact. The Torah isn’t forcing him to lend his item - in reality, he is willing to do that. His hatred, though, stands in the way. Therefore, the Torah is teaching him how to react to another’s shortcomings; don’t let it get to you, says the Torah, you can be bigger than this.

Whether in school, home, or at work, we interact with others, and at times they may do things that seem unfair. This can cause resentment, which in turn, can cause us to respond to their poor treatment of us with angry words and actions. In instructing us to not hold a grudge or take revenge, the Torah tells us something amazing and special about every one of us. Though it may seem surprising, each one of us has the ability to overcome our resentment or feelings of revenge.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

How in the world does someone ‘take the high road?’ When someone gets under our skin, it’s so hard to ignore it!

The *Sefer HaChinuch*¹ and the *Chofetz Chaim*² both write that one should understand that everything comes from Hashem. When someone else bothers us, hurts our feelings, and doesn’t allow us to borrow their stuff, it means that Hashem wanted us, for whatever reason, to have that experience.

The *Chofetz Chaim* compares this to someone looking for a man named Reuven, who would do him a favor. He finds a group of people, but Reuven isn’t there. Would that man get angry at those present, for not being Reuven? How ridiculous would that be!

It’s the same idea - when someone doesn’t do us a favor, they’re simply not ‘the one’ who is going to do that favor for us. To get upset at that person is as ridiculous as getting upset at a person for having the wrong name!

The more we recognize Hashem in our lives, the more we are able to accept our circumstances and move forward.

1 *Mitzvah* 241

2 *Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah* p. 162

1 *Vayikra* 19:18

2 *ibid.* s.v. לא תקם

3 *ibid.* s.v. לא תקם

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A THOUGHTFUL RIDE

After concluding a meeting, Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky stood in discussion with one another for a moment before entering a waiting car. As they took their seats, Rav Yaakov chose to sit next to the driver while Rav Moshe seated himself in the back.

After Rav Moshe alighted from the car, Rav Yaakov explained to the driver the reason for the delay. "We were discussing who would be getting off first. That person, we decided, should sit in the back. Were he to sit in the front, you would be left alone there when he left the car, with your remaining passenger in the back. It would have looked as if you were nothing more than a chauffeur."

Taken from "A Letter for the Ages," by Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer

WHAT MAKES A PERSON GREAT?

Rabbi Zions once had the opportunity to attend an Agudah convention, and there he met Rabbi Becker, one of the administrators of the Agudah. In conversation, Rabbi Zions asked Rabbi Becker, "To be a *Gadol*, it takes a lot of learning, and a lot of *Mussar*. I'm curious, though, if there is something in particular that is required. You rub shoulders with many of the great leaders of the Jewish people. Each one is distinct, but is there something that is common to all of them?"

After some thought, Rabbi Becker replied, "Yes, I've never thought about it, but now that you mention it, there is something that I've seen in all of them. They all have tremendous *Ahavas Yisrael*, they love every individual, and do what they can for each person, and for *Klal Yisrael* as a whole."

DID YOU KNOW?

- One who thinks it is important to be careful with the *Mitzvos* between himself and Hashem, but not the *Mitzvos* in regards to others, is terribly mistaken, as the two are intertwined.¹
- A good way to learn to love others is by starting with just a few people in your life, and expanding from there.²
- We interact with the most hardened criminal, who committed the most heinous crimes, with love, based on "ואהבת לרעך כמוך," "Love your neighbor like yourself."³
- When we recognize the preciousness of every member of *Klal Yisrael*, there is simply no room in our hearts for vengeance and hate.⁴

1 *Tiv Hischasdus, Chesed* p. 263

2 *Toras Avraham*, p. 233

3 *Sanhedrin* 52a

4 *Rav Hirsch on Chumash, Vayikra* 19:18 s.v. לא תקם