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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Masei

Our Duty to Avoid Causing Others Pain

Bamidbar (35:25-28) states, "The assembly shall rescue the killer from the hand of the avenger of the blood, and the assembly shall return him to his city of refuge where he had fled; he shall dwell in it until the death of the *kohen gadol*, whom one had anointed with the sacred oil. But if the killer will ever leave the border of this city of refuge in which he had fled, and the avenger of the blood shall find him outside of the border of his city of refuge, and the avenger of the blood will kill the killer - he is not guilty for killing him."

Questions:

- 1- Why did the Torah make the length of the killer's exile dependent on the death of the *Kohen Gadol*?
- 2- After the Torah stated that the killer goes free with the death of the *Kohen Gadol*, won't murderers now pray for the death of the *Kohen Gadol*?

The Way of the World

When we reflect upon daily life, we will see that a person does not take careful consideration of the pain that his words and actions may cause. This applies to his wife, friends, congregation or co-workers. Even if he is sensitive to this, nevertheless, when he sees another person in distress, he doesn't responsible to help the person and alleviate his pain; rather, he ignores him and continues on his way. Certainly, it won't cross his mind to pray to Hashem to help this person and save him from his suffering. We live our lives knowing that every person has their own private problems, and we don't give the matter another thought. However, our holy Torah teaches us that this is incorrect, and one is obligated to be very careful not to pain another, especially his wife and parents. Moreover, when he sees his friend suffering, he must help him to the best of his ability, even praying on his behalf. Doing anything less than this, as we will explain, can cause ill-will and, Heaven forbid, bring tragic consequences on himself and his family.

The Reason the Murderer's Exile is Dependent on the *Kohen Gadol's* Death; The Reason the *Kohen Gadol's* Mother Brings the Murderers Food:

The *Mishnah* in *Masechot Makot* (11a) says that the mother of the *Kohen Gadol* would bring the murderers' food and clothing so that they would not pray for the death of her son. The *Gemara* quotes the *pesukim* in this week's *parasha* which state that the killer goes free upon the death of the *Kohen Gadol*. The *Gemara* then asks: The mother of the *Kohen Gadol* gives the murderers food and clothing so that they shouldn't pray for her son's death. This indicates that if they were to pray for his death, their prayers would be effective and he would die. But the *pasuk* says that a baseless curse will not come true. The *Gemara* quotes the *Saba* as saying that the *Kohen Gadol* should have prayed for Hashem to have mercy on his generation (and that there should be no misfortunes like accidental killings) and he didn't. The *Gemara* is clear - since the *Kohen Gadol* did not pray for his generation, the murderers have a claim against him and a cause for complaint. Their claim is so powerful, that if they were to pray for the *Kohen Gadol's* death, he would die. *Rashi* in *Makkot* also explains the *gemara* in this manner. The *Targum Yonatan* also explains the *pesukim* in this way, stating that it is the responsibility of the *Kohen Gadol* on *Yom Kippur* when he enters the Holiest of Holies, to pray that there should be no sins of bloodshed, adultery, or *avodah zara* found amongst the Jewish people. The *Maharsha* in *Makot* adds: "This matter is dependant on the *Kohen Gadol*, since his prayer on *Yom Kippur* is to atone for the Jewish People and to nullify any evil decrees



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against them. He is also to pray that any decrees against the wicked should be nullified, so that they will have an opportunity to turn back from their evil ways." It is important for us to know just how exacting they are in *Shamayim* in this area: Even someone who has the ability to help his fellow with his prayers and doesn't pray for him – if his friend bears him ill-will – may receive a terrible punishment. How much more so is this true if one pains his wife or friend - this is a very serious and dangerous thing, as will be explained.

True Story - One Must Fear the Prayers of Another:

In the *sefer Derech Sicha* of the *Gaon*, Rav Chaim Kanievsky *Shlita* (Volume 1 *Parashat Chayei Sarah*) the following story is recorded: A girl, who lived with her widowed father, got engaged. The wedding date was set for the 15th of Av. Soon after the engagement, the father was diagnosed with a serious illness. He asked his daughter if she could delay the wedding - if she moved out, he didn't think he'd be able to manage by himself. The *chatan* said that they should ask the Rav and whatever the Rav decided, he would do. The question got to Rav Chaim, and his ruling was based on the aforementioned *Gemara* in *Makot*: Just like we're afraid that the murderers will pray for the death of the *Kohen Gadol*, so too, in this case, if they were to delay the wedding, we must fear that the *chatan* will pray for the death of the father in the secret recesses of his heart. Some challenged Rav Chaim's ruling: In *Makot*, we assume the murderers' prayers would be effective, since they had a valid complaint against the *Kohen Gadol*. But here, what cause of complaint was there for the *Chatan*. Rav Chaim answered that the *Chatan* had a valid claim against the father because the father should not delay the wedding.

When Someone has a Complaint Against You, Their Prayer or Curse May be Fulfilled

I saw written in the Responsa *Asei Lecha Rav* from the *Gaon* R' Chaim Dov HaLevi *zt"l*, the Rav of Tel Aviv (3:54) that he was asked whether one should be concerned about one who is angry with him and curses him, or if an enemy prays against him. He cites proof from the aforementioned *gemara* in *Makot* that if the murderers, who were regular simple people, could kill the *Kohen Gadol*, even if he was a big *tzaddik*, then certainly if the person getting cursed is a sinner who had done sins that obligate him in death by Divine decree, the curses can kill him. From the words of the *Zohar* (that were mentioned earlier in the responsa) we can learn another reason to be concerned with a curse: even if a curse would be ineffective at normal times, in moments of danger, the curse could take effect. We find a similar idea in the *Gemara Shabbot* (32a). The *Gemara* says that because of three sins women die in childbirth. The *Gemara* asks why specifically during childbirth, aren't there sins for which one is punished even not at the time of childbirth? The *Gemara* answers that once a person enters a difficult predicament, he is more likely to be harmed in the future as well.

Playing with Fire

In *Sichot Mussar* (*Parashat Korach*) the *Gaon* R' Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt"l* writes that when it comes to hurting somebody, good intentions are irrelevant. Even if one does it completely for the sake of Heaven, there will still be dire consequences. A case in point is Penina. Our Sages say that Penina had pure intentions when she mocked Channa - she wanted to encourage Channa to pray to Hashem for a child. Even though it was undoubtedly very difficult for Penina to act this way, she undertook this unpleasant task out of concern for Channa. Nevertheless, with all her good intentions and purity of thought, she received a terrible punishment- all her children died before her. Why was she struck with such a tragedy? R' Chaim answers that it is because hurting another person is like putting your hand into a burning oven, and all the good intentions in the world are not going to help you from being burned. Sins between man and his friend are the same way - they are sins which create a real fire, a fire that burns anything that is in its path and from which there is little hope for escape.

Three Examples From Our Sages



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We find three examples from our Sages of this phenomenon: The *Gemara* in *Ketubot* (62b) relates that Rav Rechumi's practice was to leave his house for the year and return just before *Yom Kippur*. One time, he got caught up in his Torah learning and was late to arrive. His wife was waiting for him, telling herself, "Now he will come, now he will come." When he didn't arrive, she was greatly pained and a tear escaped her eye. At that very minute, her husband was sitting in an attic immersed in his learning when suddenly the floor of the attic gave way, and he plummeted to his death. From here we learn that the punishment that one receives for hurting another is not to appease the one that was hurt. In this case, Rav Rechumi's wife certainly suffered more than anyone else from the death of her husband and if she shed one tear because he was delayed, how many tears must she have shed upon learning of his death. Rather, we see that to cause pain to another is to stick one's hand into a burning oven, where one gets burned not because he is being punished per say, but because this is a fact of reality - fire burns. An even better example of this is the *Gemara* in *Masechet Baba Kama* (117). The *Gemara* relates that Rav Yochanan was an old man and his eyebrows covered his eyes. He wanted to see Rav Kahana and asked his attendant to lift up his eyebrows. He saw that Rav Kahana's lips were split open [they were split open due to a cut, *Rashi*] and thought that Rav Kahana was laughing at him. Rav Yochanan was offended and Rav Kahana died. This is frightening! Rav Kahana did nothing wrong and yet, nevertheless, he died as a result of causing pain to Rav Yochanan. We see from here that even if one is completely innocent, when he causes his friend pain, he is still burnt by the fire. The last example, is the *Yalkut Parashat Vayeshev* (143), which says that since Binyamin caused the brothers to tear their clothes (when Yosef's goblet was discovered in his pack), in *Shushan*, Mordechai had to rip *his* clothes. Here too, Binyamin did nothing wrong and yet since, in some way, he caused others to suffer, his descendant Mordechai had to suffer as well. *Sichot Mussar* concludes, that if we think about the great responsibility we have in the *mitzvot bein adam le'chavero* (between man and his friend), we will certainly become more careful in these mitzvot. We can learn from Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz how particularly careful a married couple must be to not cause one another any pain. Even if she (or he) is acting inappropriately and he wants her to change her ways, it is forbidden to cause her pain even though he has the purest of motives. A husband must try his utmost to make sure he doesn't cause his wife even the least bit of pain and suffering, as we are taught, "Whatever is hateful to a person, he should not do to his friend." Just like nobody wants to be embarrassed or to suffer, so too, he should not cause others pain and suffering, even with the best of intentions.

The Punishment for a Neighbor's *Kepeida* (Ill-Will)

In the *sefer Tuvcha Yabiyu*, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein relates an incident in which he was personally involved. Two young kollel students came to him for a *din Torah*. Reuven was extending his succah and Shimon complained that the extension bothered him greatly. Previously, he had been able to tell his son that it was safe to cross the street (on his way to school) while staying inside his house. Now this would be impossible. Before they parted ways, Shimon asked Reuven, "It doesn't bother you that I'm unhappy about this and have a *kepeida* (bear you ill-will)? Every day and every hour when I see the extension, my heart burns within me. But you Reuven don't care about my ill will in the slightest; it is meaningless in your eyes." Reuven ignored Shimon's words. However, a few days later, he came back to Rav Zilberstein and whispered in his ear that he was diagnosed with a serious illness. Rav Zilberstein immediately went to the house of his brother-in-law, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, and related the whole story. Rav Chaim replied, "Indeed the ill will of a neighbor is no small thing and many people don't take it seriously. Obviously, Reuven must now do his best to appease Shimon and ask his forgiveness. Shimon will certainly forgive him and this will be of great help." There is only one conclusion to draw from this story: The *kepeida* of a neighbor or any Jew is no small thing, and we must be extremely careful not to pain anyone, whomever he may be.

How the *Gaon* Rav Moshe Feinstein was Careful Not to Hurt Anyone



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It is told about Rav Moshe Feinstein that when he first became a rav in Luban, he was still single and the town hired a lady to prepare his meals. Unfortunately for Rav Moshe, she was a poor cook and the food was barely edible. However, not wishing to cause her any pain, he ate everything she prepared for him. She thought that he enjoyed her cooking, so she made him even bigger portions which he dutifully ate as well. Once his sister, Rabbanit Chana (Small) visited him and was served food prepared by this woman. Upon tasting the food she almost vomited. She asked her brother how he could eat such horrible food. He answered her that he exerted himself at every meal so as not to embarrass the cook. In lighter moments, Rav Moshe would relate that his sister saved him from eating that meal by putting all the food into her pocketbook with the cook being none the wiser.

Words of Mussar

We must reflect and take to heart the great danger that lies in another person's grudge. Not only when we hurt him or damaged him, but even when we were able to help him but didn't, or pray for him but didn't. The person's ill-will can cause us and our family to be judged strictly and severely, even if we are generally righteous and upstanding people. Therefore, we must be conscious and extremely sensitive not to cause pain to others, especially our wives (who easily cry), even if we have the purest of motives. We must accustom ourselves to talking calmly and respectfully and not allowing any negative and hurtful words escape our mouths. Everyone who takes great care in this matter will see an increase of peace and both he and his family should live happily with great blessing and joy.

Shabbat Shalom

Rav Mordechai Maka