



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Vayigash

HAMELECH

Yosef and his Brothers

When we study these *parshiot*, we are most impressed with Yosef's behavior. After all that his brothers did to him, we may have expected him to have reacted much more harshly. Once Yosef revealed himself to his brothers he tried to encourage them and explain how everything was part of Hashem's Master Plan.

It is all a matter of attitude, and attitude is based upon *emunah* and *bitachon*. Without the right attitude, someone who feels wronged, feels compelled to avenge the wrong. With *emunah* and *bitachon*, a person views all pain and inconvenience as being delivered to him from Heaven. Sometimes he has a legal right to demand remuneration in Beit Din. But he never gets upset at another person. He views him as a mere agent of harm, giving him what he rightfully deserves.

The Torah exhorts: Do not take revenge from nor bear a grudge against the members of your nation. Love your fellow as yourself; I am Hashem (Vayikra 19:18). Why the juxtaposition?

Well, when someone does something which annoys us or afflicts us, the immediate reaction is one of hatred, or attempting to get him back. So the Torah tells us not to; not only do not take revenge, even love him. How can we arouse ourselves to do that? By focusing on Ani Hashem – realize that Hashem is the One who orchestrated the whole chain of events.

Don't Bite the Stick

In Chullin 7b, Rabbi Chanina teaches: A person will only injure his finger down here in this world if it so was decreed upon him in the Upper Spheres. The Meiri comments: This is a fundamental principle of the Torah: that a person is to realize that any degree of pain which befalls him is all meted out precisely. If it hurts, our first reaction should be: Oh, it seems that Hashem is giving me a wakeup call, inspiring me to improve. In the heart of a believer, "revenge" is not even a remote consideration.

Unfortunately, not everyone has the appropriate outlook on life. Too many people get harmed or insulted and focus upon the agent of harm and seek to deliver a counter blow. In this vein, some have explained (Sota 49b): the generation (immediately prior to the arrival of Mashiach) will act as dogs. In what way? If someone throws a stick or a stone at a dog, the dog will then try to bite the stick or stone, viewing it as his adversary and the cause of his pain. He fails to notice that somebody threw it. Similarly, in our times, when people are afflicted or feel wronged, they take it out on the agents of punishment, instead of understanding it as a message from Hashem to arouse them to repentance.

The Snake and the Rock

Rabbi Yochanan would cry upon reaching the line in which Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and they were astounded and



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speechless. Rabbi Yochanan exclaimed: If this was the reaction of the brothers, what will be our reaction when Hashem comes to rebuke us for what we have or have not done?!

What was Yosef's rebuke? Perhaps the very fact that he did not hold it against them all of the suffering which he endured.

The Zohar HaKadosh in this weeks' *parasha* stresses this point: Not only did Yosef not harm his brothers, he even did kindness for them. That is the way of the righteous. And that is why Hashem favors them, in this world and the next.

The Zohar relates: Rabbi Abba was once sitting at the entrance to Lod. He saw a man approach and sit upon a rock on the side of the road. The man dozed off into a slumber. Meanwhile, a dangerous snake came towards him, about to bite. Out came a certain rodent and killed the snake. The man woke up and saw the dead snake. He stood up, and just then, the rock he had been sitting on fell down the mountainside.

Rabbi Abba: Please tell me what you have done to have merited these two miracles which saved your life?

The man responded: Whenever anyone did anything against me, we made amends immediately. Even if we could not come to terms, I verbally forgave him before retiring for the night. Additionally, from that day onwards, I did whatever I could to help out specifically that individual who wronged me.

Rabbi Abba was moved. He exclaimed, "Wow! This man is greater than Yosef. Yosef did so for his brothers to whom one is supposed to be exceptionally devoted. This man did so for one and all. Now wonder that Hashem performed for him miracles."

Shochet-In-Training

Chovot HaLevavot (Bitachon 4:4) says that a person must believe and trust that everything is dependent upon Hashem's Will. No one can do anything against Hashem's Will. Trusting anyone or anything else will cause that Hashem will take care of him less.

A person must internalize that even if a person seems to be the cause of his harm, it is all from Hashem. With this attitude, there is no room for hatred or revenge. No reason to quarrel. Don't bite the sticks and stones.

Rav Yisrael Salanter was once on a train from Kovno to Vilna. A young man kept on annoying him in various matters. Upon arrival in Vilna, Reb Yisrael received a grand welcome, befitting a Talmid Chacham of his stature. The rude man was astounded and ashamed to discover that he had acted so *chutzpadik* to the *Gadol HaDor*. He begged for forgiveness.

Reb Yisrael immediately forgave him and inquired as to his visit to Vilna. The man said that he came to be tested to be a *shochet*. Reb Yisrael had his son-in-law test him and found him very wanting. Reb Yisrael arranged for a *chavrusa* who would review with him the relevant *Halachot*.



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Several weeks later, he re-tested and succeeded. Reb Yisrael got him a job as a *shochet*.

Here is a story of how a Gadol took an insult and returned only an outpouring of favor and goodness.

Hit on the Head

And here is another one.

A boy in Tel Aviv grew up in an irreligious home. On Shabbat, he played soccer right outside of the Beit Knesset of Rav Ovadia Yosef. They played loudly and disturbed the prayers.

One Shabbat, Rav Ovadia walked out of the shul, and this boy kicked the ball straight at the Rabbi. Boom! Right on his head. His hat fell off. The kids laughed.

Rav Ovadia put his hat back on and approached the boy. The young lad was expecting some ranting and raving. Instead, he received an invitation. "Come with me, dear," said Rav Ovadia gently.

The youth, wanting to show that he was not scared, motioned to his friends, as if to say, "I'll show that Rabbi not to start up with me," and went along for a stroll.

Rav Ovadia took him to his home and invited him in. "Are you hungry and thirsty?"

"Yes," he replied, and joined the Rav and the Rabbanit for their Shabbat Seuda.

They had not prepared for guests. Nonetheless, the guest received a generous portion, while the Rav and Rabbanit managed with a meager portion.

After the meal, the Rav asked, "Are you tired?"

"Yes," said the boy, and was promptly shown to a comfortable bed, where he slept until Shabbat was over.

Upon awakening, he was invited to attend *Havdalah*, and also invited to return tomorrow. He was sent home with a little spending money.

Appreciating the warmth, he indeed showed up the next day and again received a grand welcome. He became a regular visitor. When Rav Ovadia felt that the time was right, he offered to teach him which Bracha to say on each food, and a bit later, he gave him tefillin to put on. Slowly, slowly, he took on mitzvah after mitzvah and eventually went to learn in Yeshiva. This young boy was diligent in his studies and even became a *dayan*! All thanks to Rav Ovadia's patience and ability to return goodness after receiving harm and disgrace.

The story speaks for itself.

I wish upon all of you only goodness. At the same time, we are still in a world of pain and exile and must prepare ourselves for hard times, that when they come, seize the opportunity. Let us not get stuck on seeing only the sticks and stones. Let us see the big picture and ask ourselves what Hashem wants of us in this situation. Maybe we too can turn around the "bad" people in our lives into productive Jews, if we just find it within ourselves to be patient and persevering, kind and generous.

It is all Hashem's doing.

**Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka**