



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
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
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



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Shabbat Shuva

The Best Days of All

In the *haftara* for *Shabbat Shuva*, the *Navi* Hoshea states (14:2-3), "Return Israel to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled in sin; Take words with you and return to Hashem; say to Him, 'May you forgive all sin and accept good, and my our lips take the place of bulls.'"

The question begs to be asked: What is the *Navi's* intention when he says, "Take words with you and return to Hashem?" What does this mean?

The Average Man's Way of Life

When we contemplate the way the average man conducts himself, we will realize that when he enters a dispute with his neighbor, boss, or family members, we will notice the following. When they hurl insults at him, he immediately reacts by trying to defend himself, and he responds by uttering insults which are twice as vicious. His heart burns inside of him with desire to display his sharp tongue and cleverness. He wants to show how he can put this person in his place, and by doing so, prove victorious. However, the *Navi* teaches us that the proper way is to act in the exact opposite manner. The more an individual overcomes his *yetzer hara* and his inner urges to react, and instead, remains silent and overlooks the affront, the more he merits a great reward. Our Sages teach that he merits being one of Hashem's beloved, and his sins are also overlooked. He is thereby able to stand in judgment before Hashem. This is as our Sages state (*Shabbat* 88b, *Gitten* 36b), that those who are insulted but do not respond with insults, hear themselves being disgraced but do not respond, are considered the beloved of Hashem. Our Sages add (*Yoma* 23a), "Said Rava: Every person who overlooks personal offense, his sins are overlooked." On the contrary, he even becomes deserving of the *Shechina* residing upon him [see the *Tur* (*Even Ha'ezer siman 2*)].

Overlooking Personal Affronts Causes Prayers to be Accepted

We will begin by quoting the Gemara in *Masechet Taanit* 25b, "The Rabbis taught: There was an incident involving Rabbi Eliezer. He decreed 13 fasts on the congregation, but rain still did not fall. The final time, the people started to leave. He therefore said to them, 'Have you set up graves for yourselves?' All the people started to cry, and then rain fell. There was another incident involving Rabbi Eliezer. He went to lead the prayers, recited 24 blessings, but still was not answered. Rabbi Akiva then went to lead the prayers, and said, 'Our Father our King, we have no other King besides for You. Our Father our King, for Your sake, have mercy on us.' Then the rain fell ... A Heavenly voice rang out and said, 'It is not because this one is greater than that one; rather, it is because this one overlooks personal offenses and this one does not.'" Our Sages state in *Sanhedrin* 68a that, in fact, Rabbi Eliezer was greater in Torah than his disciple Rabbi Akiva. Additionally, in *Bava Metzia* 59b, our Sages relate that Rabbi Eliezer had the power to decree that supernatural events should occur, and Hashem actually fulfilled what he decreed! The Gemara relates that there was a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua and his contemporaries, relating to the laws of impurity and purity. Rabbi Eliezer said to them that if the *halacha* was like him, then the carob tree which stood before them would prove it. Suddenly, the carob tree uprooted itself from its place and walked 100 *amot*! They told him that one cannot bring a proof from a carob tree. Rabbi Eliezer now said that the stream of water in front of them would prove that the *halacha* was like him. Immediately, the stream of water began to flow backwards! They did not agree to this either. Rabbi Eliezer now said that the walls of the *beit midrash* would prove that the *halacha* was according to him. Immediately, the walls of the *beit midrash* began to fall! Rabbi Yehoshua immediately yelled at the walls, and they stopped falling. Nevertheless, they remained in a slanted state out of honor for Rabbi Eliezer. Again, he said to them that Heaven would prove that he was correct. A Heavenly voice then rang out that the *halacha* was indeed like Rabbi Eliezer. Despite this, they nevertheless did not accept his words and they excommunicated him. The Gemara relates that because of this, tears flowed from his eyes, and it caused great damage in the world. Everything he looked at went up in flames. Rabban Gamliel, who was from those who had disagreed with Rabbi Eliezer, almost drowned in a boat.



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His sister was married to Rabbi Eliezer, and from that day on, she did not allow him to say *tachanun*, for she knew that this could endanger her brother. However, one time a pauper arrived at their doorstep, and she went to answer the door. At that very moment, her husband, Rabbi Eliezer, said *tachanun*. She realized that Rabban Gamliel was in great danger, and at that very moment, word spread that Rabban Gamliel had passed away. If so, once we have seen the greatness of Rabbi Eliezer in Torah and his prowess in working miracles, how could it be that the prayers of his student were accepted more readily than his were? [See *Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer*, 17:41].

R' Yisrael Salanter's Explanation

R' Yisrael Salanter answers that we actually find a similar difference between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*. It is known that Shammai was strict in his approach, while Hillel was patient and lenient in his. Shammai, in his holiness, felt that Hashem wanted him to act strictly and refuse to pardon any slight to the honor of the Torah. However, *Beit Hillel* thought differently, and acted leniently. They also disagreed when it came to overlooking wrongdoings. However, our Sages have stated, "Both these and these are the words of the Living G-d." Certainly *Beit Shammai* will receive the same Heavenly reward for acting strictly as *Beit Hillel* will for acting leniently. Rabbi Eliezer who, as is known, was a student of *Beit Shammai*, upheld this path completely. His teacher had taught that strictness was the proper path, and this was adhered to by Rabbi Eliezer. However, Rabbi Akiva was from the disciples of *Beit Hillel*. He therefore upheld their path of overlooking wrongdoings. Therefore, is it possible to say that Rabbi Akiva was a greater *tzaddik* than Rabbi Eliezer since he exemplified the trait of leniency? Heaven forbid. Rather, it was just that in this specific case, there was a need to overlook the sins of the Jewish people for rain to fall. Therefore, Rabbi Akiva's prayer was accepted more readily, because anyone who overlooks others' wrongdoings has his own sins overlooked. This was the intention of the Heavenly voice, "It is not because this one is greater than that one; rather, it is because this one overlooks personal offenses, and this one does not." You therefore see from here that overlooking personal affront is very effective in enabling prayers to be accepted. Indeed, I found this written by R' Yaakov Sofer in his *sefer Yichi Yosef* (introduction ot 5), "Our Sages state in *Midrash Ohr Gadol* (*perek* 15) that one who overlooks personal affronts and does not get angry, Hashem loves him and listens to his prayer. This is as we are taught in a *braita* that there are three individuals whom Hashem loves: one who does not grow angry, one who does not get drunk, and one who overlooks personal offense. R' Yisrael Alankava *z"l hy"d* cites this in *Menorat Hame'or* (volume 6, pg. 534)."

The Benefit of Overlooking Wrongdoings

We could add an additional explanation according to the words of our Sages (*Masechet Derech Eretz* 7:3) that one who overlooks offense merits that all of his sins are overlooked. This is as the *pasuk* states, "Who is like You, He who bears iniquity and overlooks transgression." Our Sages expound, "For whom does He bear iniquity – for the one who overlooks transgression." Additionally, our Sages state (*Rosh Hashana* 17a, *Yoma* 23a and 87b, and *Megila* 28a), "Said Rava: Anyone who overlooks wrongdoing, all of his sins are overlooked ..." It is furthermore stated (*ibid.* 17b), "And Hashem passed over his face, and he called out." Said Rabbi Yochanan: If the *pasuk* was not written, it would be impossible to say it; this teaches that Hashem wrapped Himself like a *shaliach tzibbur*, and He showed Moshe the order of prayer. He said to him, 'Any time the Jews sin, they should do this order of prayer before Me, and I will forgive them. [- The Gemara continues with the prayer,] 'Hashem, Hashem' – I am He before man sins, and I am He after man sins and repents. '*Kel Rachum veChanun*, A Merciful and Sympathetic G-d.' – Said R' Yehuda: There is a covenant forged that the 13 Attributes of Mercy will not return empty ..." Rashi explains that the explanation of "one who overlooks" is one who does not exact vengeance against those who distress him. Rather, he simply walks away. Rashi explains that when the Gemara states that such an individual's sins are overlooked, it means that the Attribute of Strict Judgment is not exacting with him. Rather, it leaves him be. We can also point out that the words of our Sages are "they should **do** this order of prayer before Me, and I will forgive them." Why do our Sages not say "they should **say** ... before Me?" After all, we are speaking here about the 13 Attributes of Mercy, which are **recited** and not **done!**

Measure For Measure



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I therefore think that the Sages' intention is not that the recital of the Attributes is what is primary; rather, they must **do** them, i.e., by overlooking evil that was done to them. By doing so, they merit having Hashem overlook their sins. This is because Hashem wants us to imitate His attributes, as our Sages teach (*Yoma* 69b), "[Hashem says,] Just as I am merciful, so too, should you be merciful ..." Therefore, when an individual forgives and pardons another, as opposed to seeking revenge, the mouths of the prosecuting angles are sealed. After all, he, himself, has overlooked all the distress that others have caused him. How, then, can Hashem, as it were, not overlook his sins? Therefore, we see that this is the greatest way to emerge triumphant in judgment. The words of R' Yisrael Salanter are now understood. Even though Rebbi Eliezer was greater than Rebbi Akiva, however, when an individual overlooks what was done to him, Hashem does not refuse him. This is not because he is greater; rather, it is so that it does not appear as if the individual overlooks what others have done to him, yet Hashem does not act similarly, Heaven forbid. Therefore, his prayer is accepted just like Rebbi Akiva's was accepted.

In *Rabbeinu Yona's Shaarei Teshuva* (*shaar* 1) it states, "This piece of advice [-to overlook wrongdoing] is an opening that leads to very great hope." *Maran HaChida* explains this in *Chomat Anach* (*Tehillim* 79:9) according to the teaching of the *Zohar Hakadosh* that sins have a damaging effect on the *Shechina*, as it were. When we ask Hashem to atone for our sins (see the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* cited above), we are requesting that the *Shechina* should be given respite, as it were, and that it should no longer suffer, *chas ve'shalom*. Perhaps this is the reason why someone who overlooks personal offense has his sins overlooked. For since he overlooks the affronts of others and, in effect, earns his friend atonement, the *Shechina* no longer suffers as well. Therefore, measure for measure, all of his sins are overlooked, and the *Shechina* no longer suffers on account of **his** sins. This is similarly written by the *Chafetz Chaim* in the *Mishna Berura* (606:8), who writes, "An individual should not be cruel and refuse to forgive. For all those who overlook wrongdoing have their transgressions overlooked. However, if he does not wish to forgive, they will also not forgive him in Heaven." The *Shaar Ha'tziyun* explains that this is even if someone intentionally wronged him. If he nevertheless forgives him, he will be forgiven even for intentional transgressions. This is as the Gemara states, "Whose sins are overlooked? The one who overlooks wrongs that were perpetrated against him."

The Navi's Advice: "Take Words with You"

According to this, we can understand the *Navi* Hoshea's words, "Take words with you and return to Hashem, for you have stumbled in your sin." His intention is to advise man to make use of the greatest means available after he has sinned and needs atonement. The advice is to overlook other's wrongdoings and say that he forgives all those who hurt him. Hashem will act measure for measure and forgive him.

Meriting Long Life

It has also been stated that the merit of overlooking transgression is so great that it even lengthens man's days and years. This is as the Gemara states (*Chagiga* 4b) that R' Bibi the son of Abaye used to meet the Angel of Death on occasion. The Angel of Death told him that he sometimes takes individuals before their allotted time. R' Bibi therefore asked him what he does with the extra years of life that the deceased was meant to live. Who does he give the years to? He responded that if there is a *talmid chacham* who overlooks personal offense, when his time to depart arrives, he gives him those years. The *Chafetz Chaim* writes similarly in *Shemirat Halashon* that this trait of overlooking affronts can sometimes add days on to man's life, even if he has already been sentenced to die. This is as taught in *Masechet Rosh Hashana* (17a) that R' Huna was very sick and R' Papa went to visit him. Seeing R' Huna, he told his family that his end was near and that they should prepare his death shrouds. However, R' Huna recovered. R' Papa was embarrassed – how could he have said what he said? However, R' Huna was asked what had happened for it seemed like his soul actually left him! He responded that he actually died, but when his soul ascended to Heaven, Hashem said that there is nothing to judge him for since he overlooks personal affront. They therefore returned his soul to him, and he lived a long life. We see, then, that even if death was decreed upon an individual, he can annul it by overlooking personal offense.

How to Acquire this Trait



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In *Michtav MeEliyahu*, R' Dessler asks how one can attain this trait which has the power to purify us from every impurity. He answers simply, that we must grow accustomed to looking at our friends the way they look at themselves. All anger, hatred, and arguments stem from the fact that a person looks at himself through his own eyes, and refuses to see himself through his friend's eyes. For example: a pauper requests significant financial assistance from a particular wealthy man. The wealthy man views this as nerve and gets angry. The pauper gets insulted and thinks, "Hashem has given him so much; why hasn't He given me what I need?" The two depart in strife, with bad feelings, etc. Instead, when one's fellow insults him, he should view himself from his friend's perspective and think about what brought him to offend him. Perhaps he would have also acted in such a fashion if he was in his friend's shoes. Even if he cannot manage to justify what his fellow did, it is likely that he was worried or annoyed about a particular item, and he therefore did not really mean what he said. This will lead to removing the bad feeling against his fellow from his heart, and this is what our Sages call overlooking affront. In Heaven, this person is also viewed in such a manner. It is considered how he would justify his own shortcomings. Perhaps it was difficult for him to overcome his *yetzer hara* or he did not realize the severity of the sin. Perhaps he was very preoccupied with something, and therefore did not find the time to do a certain mitzva.

Words of Mussar

Who can read these words and not rejoice over each time he is disgraced, injured, or put down? For by doing so, he merits all of the great things mentioned above. Our Sages have said that there were no better days than Yom Kippur, because he is forgiven for all his sins on this day. All the more so then, when an individual is offended by another it is truly a *Yom Tov* even greater than Yom Kippur. For on Yom Kippur he must fast day and night, and must pray the entire day to earn forgiveness. However, one who is insulted, in one moment is forgiven for all his sins. Is there a greater *Yom Tov* than this? We must also consider the fact that there is two sides to every coin as R' Dessler wrote. Furthermore, overlooking offense merits an individual long life, success, and to be the beloved of the King of All Kings. By remembering this, he will overcome his *yetzer hara* and overlook what has happened. Therefore, everyone is accustomed to saying sincerely that he completely forgives everyone who wronged him, whether physically, financially, or by slighting his honor. By doing so, we will all merit a *gmar chatima tova. Amen.*

You should be blessed with a *shanah tova u'mevorachat*, and merit, along with your entire family, to be written and sealed in the book of the righteous for a good life and peace, health, and much success. *Amen ve'amen.*

**Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka**