



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

עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Miketz

HAMELECH

From Depths to Heights

In Parashat Miketz, we find Yosef Hatsadik taken from the dungeons to be appointed second-in-command of the leading empire of the times. How did he get there? It was against the law for a foreigner or a slave to rule. Yosef was both. So how is it that he became the viceroy?

Carefully Meted Out

We know that when rewarding and punishing, Hashem uses an intricate system based upon the concept of *mida keneged mida* – this for that; the response befits the deed.

Rav Yosef teaches (Sotah 8b): Although a Jewish Court of Law no longer executes capital punishment, nonetheless, anyone who commits a crime which deserves such a punishment will die in a similar fashion. For example, one who violated the *Shabbat* will fall off a roof or be attacked by a wild beast. One who is guilty of certain incestuous relationships will be burnt in a fire or bitten by a poison's snake. One who killed another will be beheaded by the authorities or by gangsters. One who inflicted a wound upon his parent will drown or die of strangulation.

[Certainly, the system of reward and punishment is very complex. There seem to be wrongdoers who die peaceful deaths. On the other hand, righteous people can suffer and cease to live abruptly. No human being can fully understand Hashem's ways. This article deals with *mida keneged mida*, which is a device which Hashem uses in many occasions.]

Why did this happen to me?

Why does Hashem punish in a way that the retribution suits the crime? For one, it is simply fair and just. Additionally, it can give a person an inkling as to where he went wrong. Hashem does not just punish as a lashing out, an expression of

anger. Hashem's punishments are carefully calculated, down to the last detail.

Thus, if a person almost fell from a great height, he should think if anything in his home could be harmful to others.

In Bava Kama 50b, we find an individual who takes a walk and stumbles upon a rock which he himself had previously flung into a public thoroughfare irresponsibly.

Sometimes a person is taken to task for not having admonished others.

Sefer Hasidim writes that a scholar who is ridiculed should seize the opportunity for self-introspection; perhaps he himself had ridiculed men of stature.

Whether something happens to you or to those in your surroundings, consider the possibility that trying circumstances are often sent as an "alarm" to arouse us to penitence.

Of Mice and Ma'aser

Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair was once consulted regarding a mice attack on the produce of a certain city. Rabbi Pinhas called together all the mice for an emergency meeting. They assembled and began squeaking to each other.

Rabbi Pinhas asked the townspeople, "Do you understand what they are saying?"

"No," they said.

Rabbi Pinhas explained, "They say that you do not separate tithes properly. That is why they dine excessively on your produce."

Is there any real connection between mice and *ma'aser*?

In Eiruvim 100b we are taught to learn lessons from beasts, such as modesty from the cat and not to steal from the ant.

What can we learn from mice?



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Yerushalmi Bava Metzia (3:5) observes that when mice discover a 'find,' they do not keep it for themselves. They make sure to share the wealth. They bring along friends and make it a party.

So what should a person do who is blessed with prosperity? He should share it with the needy and less fortunate and servants of Hashem. This is accomplished by heeding to the dictates of the laws of tithing. Those who withheld their priestly gifts and did not tithe properly, failed to learn this lesson from mice. Therefore, they became victims of a mice attack. (Explanation found in Yabia Omer Vol. II, Y. D. 8:7)

M. K. M. in the Parsha

As we study these *parshiot*, we see a recurring theme of *mida keneged mida*. Yaakov deceived his father with goatskin. Yaakov himself was deceived by his sons with goat's blood. Yaakov was away from his father for twenty-two years. His son Yosef was distanced from him for twenty-two years.

Yosef said that his brothers ate meat without properly slaughtering it. As a result, they covered up for his sale by slaughtering a goat. Yosef accused his brothers of taking an unwarranted interest in maidens of the land. Therefore he was tested by his master's wife who tried to seduce him to sin. Yosef claimed that Bnei Leah called Bilhah's and Zilpah's sons "slaves." So Yosef himself was sold as a slave.

After selling Yosef, the brothers sat down to eat. They had sold him to Ishmaelites carrying fine-smelling scents. They caused their father to tear his garments in distress. As a result, they were brought to dine with Yosef, which they found most disturbing and uncomfortable. They found money in their sacks, something which threw them into a frenzy. They felt compelled to bring a gift to the viceroy; their gift also contained some of those very same fine-smelling perfumes. They, too, rend their garments upon being caught with the viceroy's goblet. Right then and there, they offer themselves to be taken as slaves.

Do you see any similarities?

Let us not forget Yehudah. He was the one who brought Yosef's coat, dipped in goat's blood, to his father and asked him if he recognized it. Later on, in an embarrassing setting, Yehudah sent a goat and shortly thereafter was asked if he recognized certain articles which he had given as collateral.

Disgrace Revisited

In the days of the Maharsha, there was a wicked fellow who passed away. As his body was being prepared for burial, a *ben Yeshiva* passed by and took the opportunity to bang the dead man on the nose as a sign of disapproval for his wayward actions. The assembled giggled at the scoffing.

The night following the burial, the deceased came to the *bachur* in a dream. He demanded that the *bachur* appear before the *Beit Din* in Heaven because he had a case to settle with him on the account of the disgrace he had done.

The *bachur* awoke and told his father about the dream. His father told him to forget about it. But what could he do? The man kept on coming back to him each time he fell asleep. He was so disturbed that he became deathly ill. The matter was then brought to the attention of the Maharsha.

The Maharsha told the *bachur*, "Next time he comes to you, call for me immediately, even in the middle of the night!"

Sure enough, in the middle of the night, the *bachur* began screaming. The family called for the Maharsha, who came at once. The Maharsha began conversing with the troubled soul.

He asked, "What do you want from this boy?"

The dead man said, "He disgraced me."

The Maharsha asked, "You were a *rasha* your whole life. Did you not deserve this disgrace?"

The dead man said, "You think I was a *rasha*. You should just know that one time, I saw a *Talmid Hacham* drowning in a river and I saved his life.



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After that, we became close friends, and I generously supported him for the rest of his life. I came to this world and I received a warm welcome, the likes of which are reserved for *Talmidei Hachamim*. I saved his life so I have a portion of his Torah. No one says a word about my misdeeds.

"Therefore, I launch a court case against this young man for having disgraced a *Talmid Hacham*, for here I am considered such!"

The Maharsha responded, "Listen well. You yourself know that you have a heavy load of sins on record. Due to your good deeds, those sins are currently not being reviewed. But they also have not been erased, for you never repented.

"You should be aware that if, as a result of your standing up for your honor, this young man dies, you will then be brought to task for each and every one of your sins. If you demand justice against others, you yourself will be brought to a full judgment. I strongly advise you to forgive him."

The Maharsha concluded his dialogue and the young man received no more scary visits.

We see how careful we must be not to disgrace anyone in any way.

On the Other Hand

Until now, we discussed and gave numerous examples of *mida keneged mida* on the negative side. Certainly the same holds true with reward, all the much more so.

Indeed, our Sages delineated details of Yosef's rise to power and how he was so utterly deserving of each grant. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel teaches: All Yosef was given was due to his own doing: His mouth did not kiss a married woman, so his word became the final word in Egypt. His body steered clear of sin, so he was dressed in royal garments. He did not allow his neck to bend over to get anywhere near sin, so he was given a golden chain to wear around his neck. His hands did not touch a married woman,

so he received the royal signet ring upon his finger. His feet did not step towards sin, so he was given a ride upon the royal chariot. He did not even allow his thought processes to wander to sinful terrain, so he was given a title which means, "Young but wise."

Hanukah and Aharon HaKohen

Here we are, on Hanukah, a wonderful holiday which is much to the credit of Aharon HaKohen. How so? At the inauguration of the *mishkan*, the *nesiim* of the twelve tribes each brought a special offering. Aharon felt bad that he did not participate. Hashem consoled him, "Yours is greater than theirs. You light the *menorah*. Their gifts last only as long as the temple. Your part lasts forever."

How does Aharon's contribution last even when we do not have a *Beit Hamikdash*? The Ramban explains: Aharon was so eager to be part of the inauguration of the *mishkan*. So Hashem allowed his descendants, the Kohanim, to be victorious over the Greeks and establish the holiday of Hanukah, with its special *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* in all generations.

In Conclusion

Let us internalize this truth, that Hashem continues to run the world with the *mida keneged mida* policy. If we are subject to difficult circumstances, let us pay attention to their details and see if we find in them hints as to in which areas we ought to improve.

Let us realize that life is not haphazard, that there is a Great Supervisor, always in control, dishing out reward and punishment in very exact portions.

May we merit to be among those who bring a greater awareness of Hashem's involvement in our lives, to more and more people.

Fondly,
Mordechai Malka