

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 34

פרשת נשא תשע"ה

## Forgiving Another (II)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

### Repaying with Love

The Midrash says: One must take a lesson in forgiveness from **Avraham Avinu**. When Avimelech took Sarah away he caused Avraham tremendous suffering; yet when Avimelech asked to be forgiven, he forgave him immediately. Moreover, he *davened* for the wellbeing of Avimelech and his family.

(מדרש הגדול וירא כ, יז)

When **Yosef HaTzaddik** was in the pit, his brother Shimon had him stoned. Nevertheless, when Shimon fell in his hands in Mitzrayim, he took good care of him and had him served the best delicacies. The *Zohar* writes that like Yosef, one should repay evil with good.

(ילקוט שמעוני וישב קמ"ב, זח"א רא, א)

The *tanna* **Rebbi Abba** was once sitting near the entrance of Lud and witnessed the following scene. A weary traveler sat down on a boulder protruding from the edge of a mountain, and fell asleep. Suddenly a snake came out and was making its way towards him, when suddenly another creature attacked the snake and killed it, saving the man's life.

When the man woke up, he walked away, and at that moment the protruding boulder broke off the mountain and tumbled down the cliff. **Rebbi Abba** approached the man and said, "Tell me what special deed you have done to merit these two great miracles. They must have been *earned*."

The man replied, "When anyone wrongs me, I immediately make up with him. At any rate, I do not go to bed before forgiving him. I then try to be extra kind to them in the future."

**Rebbi Abba** said: This man's actions are greater than those of Yosef, for this man forgave people who were not his brothers, on whom one is inclined to have mercy.

It is for this reason that before *krias shma al hamitah*, we recite *Ribbono shel Olam*, forgiving anyone who may have hurt us throughout the day.

(זהר מקץ רא ע"ב, וראה מגילה כח ע"א)

The King of Spain respected **R. Shmuel HaNagid** so highly that he appointed that brilliant and righteous *talmid chacham* his second in

command. However, in the shadow of the king's palace stood a store belonging to a goy who envied the sage. Whenever he saw him passing by, he would go outside and curse him, but **Reb Shmuel** never paid any attention. Once, when **Reb Shmuel** was taking a walk with the king, the goy came out and, as usual, cursed him. The king was furious and commanded **Reb Shmuel** to cut off the storeowner's evil tongue.

After some investigation, **Reb Shmuel** found out that this goy was a pauper, so he began sending him money regularly, and this softened his heart. After some time, when **Reb Shmuel** again took a walk with the king, the goy came out and began to praise him. The king, who had not heard what the goy had called out, asked **Reb Shmuel** why he had not followed his instructions to cut off that man's tongue.

"I did do as you commanded," answered **Reb Shmuel**. "I cut off his bad tongue and replaced it with a good tongue..."

(כצאת השמש בגבורתו ע' קל)

When **Reb Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller**, the author of *Tosfos Yom-Tov*, was chosen to be the *rov* of Prague, he instituted a fair system for collecting the tax which the government imposed. Previously, the wealthy citizens would unload the whole burden on their poorer townsmen and free themselves from the obligation. Little wonder, then, that they were angered by the new system, which required every individual to pay according to his means.

The most violent opponent of the *rov* was a magnate called **Refael**, who constantly contrived schemes to have him removed from his position. Since many of the king's courtiers owed him money, he offered to reduce their debt to him on condition that they help him execute his plan. He then asked two *lamdonim*, who were strongly opposed to the *rov*, to use excerpts from a *sefer* of his, to prove that he was harmful to the kingdom. Their libel was successful, but more severely than they had ever imagined: the *rov* was arrested and sentenced to death. In addition, it was decreed that all the *Yidden* be expelled from the city.

However, Hashem had already prepared the cure for this calamity. During that time, the *rov*'s son, **Shmuel**, who was studying in a *yeshiva* in Metz, saved the French ambassador's wife and

son from death. Out of gratitude, the ambassador intervened and had **Shmuel's** father released, though he was forced to pay a fine that threw him into heavy debt. He fully forgave the individuals who had concocted the libel, but nevertheless they were punished from Heaven.

At this time, **Refael** fell ill and realized that his turn for punishment had come. The *Tosfos Yom-Tov* debated with himself whether to visit the wealthy man or not, for perhaps **Refael** would think that he had come to celebrate his downfall. Just then, **Refael's** servant came and requested that the *rov* come quickly: his master had something important to tell him. As soon as he arrived, **Refael** apologized profusely and assured him that he had not intended his libel to go so far. Bursting into tears, he begged the *rov* to forgive him and asked that he daven for him – which of course he did with all his heart.

(מגילת איבה לבעל התוס' יו"ט)

The *chossid* **Reb Berke Chein** was imprisoned and exiled in Soviet Russia for his efforts in spreading *Yiddishkeit* in the underground Lubavitch network that defied Stalin's religious suppression. Those who had him arrested were fellow *Yidden*, informers faithful to the regime, who had unfortunately been influenced by the communist beliefs and created the *Yevsektzia*, a "Yiddishe" branch of the NKVD.

Years later, at a *farbrengen*, **Reb Berke** shared his story with a group of *chassidim*, and upon mentioning the share of those *Yidden* in his imprisonment, he muttered to himself, "May HaShem forgive them! They are still *Yidden*." He bore no grudge against them for all the pain they had caused him.

(מפי הרב אהרן דוד שי' גאנץ)

### Consider This

In reality, did **Reb Shmuel HaNagid** 'cut off the man's evil tongue'?

How can one bring himself to repay good to one who wronged him?

## Sparks of Greatness

### Rebbi Chanina ben Tradyon - כ"ז סיון

Rebbi Chanina ben Tradyon was a *Tanna* who lived during the third generation of *Tana'im*. He was the *Rosh Yeshiva* in the town Sichni and a contemporary of Rebbi Chalafta. He was the father of the famous woman Berurya, the wife of Reb Meir. Reb Chanina was one of the 'Asarah Harugei Malchus' who was burned alive with a *Sefer Torah* in hand on the 27th of Sivan.

Even after the Romans forbade the *Yidden* to learn Torah, Rebbi Chanina continued teaching Torah in public. When Rebbi Yosei ben Kismah fell ill, Rebbi Chanina went to visit him and asked, "Rebbi, will I have a share in *Olam Habba*?"

Rebbi Yosei asked Reb Chanina to tell him of some special *mitzvah* he had done. Rebbi Chanina answered, "On Purim, I was collecting

money for the poor and the money I collected got mixed up with the money that I had put away for my own Purim meal. I decided to distribute the entire sum to the poor, without reimbursing myself." Rebbi Yosei responded, "If so, let my portion be part of yours, and let my lot be part of your lot!"

The **Alter Rebbe** explains that though Rebbi Chanina put his life in danger to teach Torah, he was nevertheless concerned about his lot, for perhaps he was acting so only due to his nature. When he told Rebbi Yosei of his excess contributions to *tzedakah*, a contradictory nature to his dedication to learning, it became clear that he was acting *l'sheim shamayim*, to serve *HaShem*.

(ע"ז יח ע"א, תורה אור יט, ב)

## Library Sparks

The Torah reading, *Naso*, contains the portion of the *sota* -- a wife whose behavior is indiscreet. A deeper examination of the concept reveals the symbolism behind the Torah's words, alluding to G-d as Husband, and the Jews as His wife.

On the verse, "If the wife of any man goes aside," our Sages comment: "One does not commit a sin unless the 'spirit of folly' has entered him."

The Hebrew word for "folly" is related to the word that means straying from the path.

With this statement our Sages sought to explain the seemingly incomprehensible phenomenon of a Jew who commits a sin.

How can such a contradictory state of affairs occur? Is not every Jew, by virtue of his G-dly soul, connected to G-d on the very deepest level? How then can he possibly allow himself to commit a transgression which separates him from his Source Above?

The answer to this is the "spirit of folly," an outside, external force that temporarily gains control and obscures the Jew's faith.

Because of this "spirit of folly," the Jew cannot perceive the true consequence of his actions -- the disconnection from G-d that his sin actually causes. Were he properly aware of this at all times, the Jew could never bring himself to disobey the commandment of G-d under any circumstances.

What exactly is this "spirit of folly"?

Nothing but the desire for physical gratification, which causes a lessening in spiritual perception.

Consequently, a person imagines that nothing will happen if he commits the sin, and that he will remain just as connected to G-d as he was before. His desire for gratification blinds him to the fact that even the tiniest of infractions is detrimental to his bond with G-d.

The reverse side of this principle is that even when a Jew does sin, G-d forbid, it does not mean that the Jew himself is bad; rather, every Jew is inherently good, and his innermost desire is to obey G-d's will. It is the "spirit of folly" that is to blame, an outside factor that is incongruent with the Jew's true nature.

In the symbolic sense, G-d is referred to as the "Husband" of the Jewish people.

A Jew who commits a sin is likened to a wife whose indiscreet conduct arouses the suspicion of her husband.

The *sota* has not committed a sin with certainty; she has merely behaved in a manner which raises doubts. And just as the *sota* is rewarded when she is found to be innocent -- "but if she is pure she shall conceive seed" -- so too does G-d promise that every Jew will ultimately repent and return to Him, for the Jew's inner essence always remains untouched by sin.

## Halacha Sparks

### Sharing Names of Contributors

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

**May a fundraiser share the name of a generous contributor with a fellow fundraiser of another organization, prompting him to approach him too?**

The *Gemara*<sup>1</sup> applies the *possuk*<sup>2</sup> "If one blesses his friend loudly... it will be considered a curse to him", to a beneficiary of someone's hospitality praising the host in public. *Rashi* gives two explanations for the concern: (1) Unscrupulous individuals will gather that the host is wealthy and rob him. (2) Many will request the host's hospitality and he will be ashamed to turn them away, and thus use up all of his finances.

While the first concern is not relevant in our scenario, the second concern is applicable, since the man may be unable to support other *mosdos*. Therefore it would seem to be forbidden. However, **Rav Moshe Feinstein**<sup>3</sup> points out several reasons why this concern does not apply to a fundraiser sharing his success:

(1) The *Gemara*'s concern that too many people will seek his hospitality would only refer to food, where he might be embarrassed not to feed his guests though he doesn't have the financial means to do so. However, declining to donate money cannot be compared to the embarrassment of hosting guests without feeding them.

(2) The *Gemara*'s concern (even in according to the second understanding of *Rashi*) must be referring to uncouth people who wouldn't consider that the host may not truly be able to provide for them but is embarrassed to tell them. However a well-mannered person would make sure not to place a host in an uncomfortable position. Therefore if the other fundraiser is an upstanding individual the *halacha* would not apply.

(3) It is applicable only to a man of average means, whose entire fortune can be easily finished.

(4) People are not embarrassed to decline making a sizable donation (larger than is normally given to a poor man).

(5) We need not be concerned that a person is giving out of shame. A proof for this: It is forbidden<sup>4</sup> to solicit from a miserly person who would only donate out of embarrassment. Were we concerned lest a person be embarrassed to say no, it would be forbidden to solicit from anyone at all. We must therefore conclude that if a person is not known to be a miser we need not suspect that he is giving out of shame.

1. ערכין טז ע"א.

2. משלי כז, יד.

3. אג"מ יו"ד ח"ג סי' צה.

4. שו"ע יו"ד סי' רמח סעי' ז.

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