

# DO NOT TAKE REVENGE OR BEAR A GRUDGE PART 1

*by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen*

*"Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge against a member of your people.. "<sup>1</sup>*

It is inevitable in daily life that we sometimes feel slighted by other people - how should we react to such incidents? The Torah tells us that we may not take revenge or bear a grudge: The Talmud gives examples of these transgressions: John asks Brian, "can you please lend me your spade?" and Brian, for no apparent reason says "no". The next day Brian asks to lend him something and John replies, "Just like you did not lend me what I asked for yesterday, so too I will not lend you what you want today."<sup>2</sup> "

Bearing a grudge is slightly different - after Brian refused to lend John his spade, Brian asks John to lend him something the next day/ This time, John says that "I will lend you it not like you who refused to lend me what I asked for yesterday." Taking revenge is reacting with actions to our fellows refusal to help us. Bearing a grudge is merely feeling resentful to the person for his actions even though we do not actively take revenge.

The commentaries discuss whether the prohibitions of taking revenge and bearing a grudge apply in all circumstances: Based on the case of the Talmud, they all agree that the command applies with regard to property and money - that is that it is forbidden to avenge a refusal to give or lend items or money. It is less clear whether this command also applies with regard to the realm of emotions, for example if someone caused us emotional pain by embarrassing us or wronged us in some other way. Many commentaries argue that there is no actual prohibition of avenging such actions<sup>3</sup> . Others claim that it is forbidden to take revenge or bear a grudge even in these circumstances.

Since most commentaries take the lenient approach, the basic law is that it is technically permissible to take revenge or bear a grudge when someone genuinely wrongs us by hurting or feelings or causes us pain in some other way unrelated to money or property. However, it is certainly highly praiseworthy to strive to avoid taking revenge or bearing a grudge in all instances<sup>4</sup> .

What is the explanation for why it is only forbidden to take revenge or bear a grudge when someone does not provide us with money or property? When someone upsets us by embarrassing us or causes us pain in some other way, there may be an element of justification in wanting to right an obvious wrong that was done to us. However, when a person chooses not to give or lend us something then we have no right to be upset with that person - we may be tempted to feel that he

should have lent us that item and that he was wrong not to. The Torah tells us that this is an erroneous attitude - we do not have a G-d given right to the use of other people's property and we must accept when a person does not want to perform kindness with us then that is his prerogative.

<sup>1</sup> Parshas Kedoshim, 19:18.

<sup>2</sup> Yoma, 23a.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, even according to these opinions, there are significant limits to what form the revenge can take.

<sup>4</sup> This ruling is based on the opinion of Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits Shlita.

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