

# DON'T TAKE REVENGE...

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

Amazing! Moshe pronounced to each and every member of Klal Yisroel that every single person not only has the potential but is commanded: K'doshim tiyu {Be holy}!

What is this holiness? The Kli Yakar explains that all Ten Commandments are alluded to in the many (51) mitzvos {commandments} contained in this parsha. Hashem is revealing to us that through these mitzvos incredible heights of kedusha {holiness} can be reached.

What heights? "Ki kadosh ani Hashem Elokaichem {because I, Hashem your G-d, am holy}!" Hashem breathed into Adam Harishon {Adam, the first man} a soul of life. A 'chelek Eloka mima'al', a 'part' of Hashem Himself. Every single person has such a soul--such a 'part' of Hashem. As the Kli Yakar writes: That which was formed (man) can be similar to that which formed it (Hashem). The reason that such a dizzying height can be reached is "Ki kadosh ani Hashem Elokaichem {Because I, Hashem your G-d, am holy}."

At this point we're ready for those mitzvos! Hit us with some real lofty stuff... Some pure, unadulterated, not from concentrate spirituality. We're poised at the edge of the cliff. Knees bent, hands extended, ready to soar. What's on the list?

"Lo tikome!" Don't take revenge! You asked to borrow your neighbor's lawn mower and he didn't lend it to you. A few weeks later he approaches you to borrow your lawn mower. The Torah commands us: Don't tell him that you won't lend it to him just like he didn't lend it to you. As a matter of fact, don't tell him anything. Just lend him the lawn mower.

BAMM! Nose-dive! Ouch! The bottom of the cliff hurts! That's the holiness? Where's the spirituality...

The Sefer HaChinuch offers a beautiful explanation. He writes that a person must realize that whatever happens to him, be it good or bad, is actually coming from Hashem. No person can do anything to another which is not Hashem's will. Therefore, if someone is causing pain or anguish, realize that it has been decreed by Hashem. Don't focus your thoughts on taking revenge because he is not the cause of your predicament.

When Dovid HaMelech {King David} was fleeing from his son, Avshalom, who had usurped the throne, Shimmi ben Gerah threw stones at Dovid and cursed him. One of Dovid's men wanted to kill Shimmi as rebelling against the king is punishable with death. Dovid refused saying: "Let him curse because Hashem has told him to."

The Chofetz Chaim compares one who wants to take revenge to a dog who growls and grapples with a stick that is thrown at him while ignoring the thrower himself...

Of course, Hashem will hold the person who uses his free-will to decide to harm you accountable for that decision. Though there was a heavenly decree that you had to endure that degree of unpleasantness, there wasn't a decree that that specific person had to be the perpetrator. He will therefore be held responsible. However, that is purely between him and Hashem. It has nothing to do with you.

There is a beautiful story related in "The Maggid Speaks" about Rav Chizkiyahu Medini, who later became known as the S'dei Chemed.

Shortly after he was married, Rav Chizkiyahu was accepted into an exclusive kollel (yeshiva for advanced Torah studies, consisting of married men). This was funded by a wealthy philanthropist named Rav Zorach. He provided them with funds so that they were able to study Torah while knowing that their families would be cared for.

A young man who lived in the neighborhood had a deep hatred for those who studied Torah. He devised a malicious scheme to humiliate Rav Chizkiyahu, the most prominent member of the kollel, and thus to bring disgrace to the entire kollel.

Rav Zorach had a maid who tended to his household chores. Part of her responsibility was to tidy the synagogue where the kollel studied. She would do this very early in the morning before the kollel members would arrive. The only one who was there at that time was Rav Chizkiyahu, who seemed to be learning all of the time.

The schemer planned that one morning, as the men would arrive for Shacharis (the morning prayers), she'd run out screaming that she'd been abused by Rav Chizkiyahu. She was promised a handsome sum of money for this shameful hoax.

On the chosen morning, just as the men were arriving for shacharis, she ran out screaming that she'd been abused by that vulgar kollel member. As the commotion began, the schemer began to scream that Rav Chizkiyahu should be thrown out of the kollel as he was a disgrace to the whole community. He then led the angry mob to the house of Rav Zorach to tell him what had happened.

Rav Zorach wasn't home but his wife promised them that she'd appraise him of what had happened as soon as he arrived. When Rav Zorach heard the story he rushed over to the kollel where he found no evidence of the earlier uproar.

He quietly walked around without saying a word. For half an hour he observed Rav Chizkiyahu sitting and studying, totally oblivious to anything else besides his learning. By now a crowd of townspeople had gathered, wondering what Rav Zorach would do. After a while Rav Zorach announced: "Rav Chizkiyahu is a holy human being. I don't believe one word of the maid's vicious accusation. She will no longer work for me and anyone who discusses this matter shall not put a foot into this building."

The maid was paid in secret for her role, and it seemed unusual to many that within a week of the incident, the person who had led the mob to Rav Zorach's house suddenly died.

After a few months, when the money she'd been paid had run out, the now unemployed maid was in dire need of a job but was unable to find one. One early morning, she came to the kollel to speak to Rav Chizkiyahu.

"I need your help," she pleaded. "I have no money and I need a job." She then proceeded to tell him the entire story. "I'm willing to go to Rav Zorach and admit to him the truth but I need you to intervene and help get my job back. Please help me."

Rav Chizkiyahu was shocked but quickly began to consider his options. On one hand, there were certainly some people who believed that he had abused her. That constituted a chilul Hashem [desecration of Hashem's name]. However, while the maid's admission would certainly clear his name, it would nevertheless cause another chilul Hashem that one Jew could commit such an act against another. Since either way there would be a chilul Hashem, why should he bring everlasting shame to the dead young man who had planned the hoax?

Rav Chizkiyahu told her that he'd certainly help her but that he had a plan of his own. He knew of another wealthy man who needed a maid. He convinced him to hire her.

Forget about a thought of revenge. His concern was solely for Hashem's honor. A glimpse of true, pure holiness. K'doshim tihyu [Be holy]... Lo tikome. Don't take revenge...

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

---

Copyright © 1999 by [Rabbi Yisroel Ciner](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

---

The author teaches at [Neveh Tzion](#) in Telzstone (near Yerushalayim).

---