

A GUARANTEE TO MINIMIZE FIGHTS / THE GATES OF TEARS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #969 – Burial In Eretz Yisroel II - How Important Is It? Good Shabbos!

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A Refreshing Attitude Guaranteed To Minimize Fights

After Yosef made the dramatic admission to his brothers, telling them who he was, he told them "And now, be not distressed, do not reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was as a supporter of life that G-d sent me ahead of you." [Bereishis 45:5]. Yosef tried to put them at ease and convince them that he did not harbor resentment against them, by assuring them that what happened to him was all part of Hashem's Grand Plan.

If we were to put ourselves in Yosef's position, we might not have been so generous. Yosef had

suffered horribly because of what his brothers did to him. When we read the story in the Torah between Parshas VaYeshev and Parshas Vayigash, it transpires in a mere three weeks' time. Yosef is in the pit; he is out of the pit; he is in the dungeon, he is out of the dungeon, and then he is viceroy in Egypt. It did not go so quickly for Yosef. He suffered in prison for 12 years. This was not a modern prison as we think of today – with air conditioning and cable television. This was a dungeon and he suffered mightily.

We might expect that when Yosef makes this emotional revelation and tells his brothers "I am Yosef" that he would sit there, wait, and say "Okay. Now let me hear your profuse apology." "I want you to get down on your knees and beg for forgiveness." Yet Yosef does not do this. Yosef takes a very gracious approach to them and tells them not to be upset. "Everything came out for the best. G-d sent me here to provide food for you."

How does a person have the capacity to do that? After all, Yosef is human. He is entitled to human feelings and emotions. It is perfectly understandable for a normal human being to maintain a legitimate grudge in such a situation. Not only does Yosef not bear a grudge, but also he is so gracious about it.

The answer is that Yosef is teaching us a secret about how we need to deal with people who may have harmed us in the course of our lives. If a person has a sincere and profound belief in *Hasgocha Pratis* [Personal Divine Providence] and believes that the *Ribono shel Olam* rules the world then there is really no reason to be angry with a person who may have done you harm.

Those are precisely Yosef's words. I do not have a complaint (*tayna*) against you, because this was obviously the Almighty's plan: "...for it was as a supporter of life that G-d sent me ahead of you" [Bereishis 45:5]. Had this not all have happened, the world would have starved. You would have starved and I would have starved.

"I look at all of this", Yosef implied, "as if we are all puppets in a Grand Plan in which the Master of the Universe is the puppeteer and He is literally pulling the strings". With such an outlook, a wronged individual can sincerely say to the one who harmed him "I have no complaint against you, because this was all *Hasgocha Pratis*."

The *Baal HaTanya* interprets the Rabbinic statement "Anyone who gets angry is as if he worshipped idols" as follows: We get angry because we think things are not going our way. If a person had a true belief in *Hashgocha Pratis*, he would realize that when things do not go our way, it is because the Almighty wants it that way. When we are getting angry, we are denying that the *Ribono shel Olam* rules the world. This is exactly the philosophy of *Avoda Zarah*. *Avoda Zarah* is the belief that there are other forces in this world besides the *Ribono shel Olam*.

This is obviously much easier said than done. However, fundamentally, philosophically, that is what is happening. "Why are you getting angry? This is what the *Ribono shel Olam* wants!"

The Sefer HaChinuch expresses the same idea. If we would all take his words to heart it would do a lot to improve the complaints people have about one another. In Mitzvah 241 – the prohibition against taking revenge (Lo Tikom) – the *Chinuch* writes:

"The reason for the *mitzvah* is that a person should know and take to heart that everything that happens to him whether good or bad comes upon him from *HaShem*, Blessed be He."

"Therefore, when a person causes you pain or anguish – you should know in your soul that your own sins are the cause and *HaShem*, Blessed be He, decreed upon you that this should happen. You should not let your thoughts be misplaced to take revenge against the person who harmed you, because he is not the cause of your misfortune, rather sin is the cause. As Dovid, Peace be upon him, said: "Let him curse, for G-d told him to do so" [Shmuel II 16:11]. He attributed the matter to his own sin and not to Shimi ben Geyrah."

The analogy we should think of is that if someone hits us with a stick, we do not get angry at the stick. We realize the stick is not the cause of our pain, but rather the one who swings the stick. So too – even the one who swings the stick is not the ultimate cause of our pain. Ultimately, Hashem punishes us for our sins. Hashem just uses certain individuals on earth as His "stick".

Certainly, the person who harms you is responsible for his actions and has his own *Teshuvah* to do. This is not a *carte blanche* to say, "I can get away with whatever I want – It's G-d's Will!" No. The "stick" too will have to face Divine Judgement for his deeds; but we should not direct the anger at him. It is a mistake to take out our anger upon that person.

This is what King Dovid realized – as the *Chinuch* cites above. "My problem is not with Shimi ben Geyrah; my problem is with myself." Admittedly, this is not an easy level of self-control to achieve, but if we had that attitude, we would get into far fewer fights with people than we do.

Tears of Joy? The Gates Of Tears Have Not Been Closed

The *pasuk* says that when Yosef and Yaakov finally meet "...and he appeared to him, he fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively." [Bereishis 46:29] The father and son embrace and cry. Rashi clarifies the meaning of the *pasuk*: Yosef fell on Yaakov's neck and cried, but Yaakov did not fall on Yosef's neck and cry, nor did he kiss him. Rashi quotes "*Raboseinu*" (the Rabbis) who teach that Yaakov did not do so because he was reciting *Shema*.

All the commentaries discuss this teaching. They ask – why was only Yaakov reading *Shema* at that moment and not Yosef? The premise of this question is that if it was the normal time for *Krias Shma*, they would both read it as soon as possible. There are different approaches to answer this question.

The Maharal in his *Gur Aryeh* writes that this has nothing to do with the twice daily mitzvah to read *Krias Shma*. We presume that Yaakov and Yosef each already fulfilled their daily obligation to recite *Shma*. However, the Maharal writes that Yaakov felt such overwhelming gratitude – that he now sees his beloved son - who he had given up for dead - alive and well as a righteous person. Yaakov

had such pain and anxiety for so many years thinking that Yosef was dead. The joy that a person experiences when he transitions quickly from darkness to great light, from the depths of depression to the heights of ecstasy magnified his love for the Almighty who did him this great kindness. Yaakov thus seized the opportunity to reaccept the Kingship and Reverence for the Almighty with even greater depth and intensity than he had been able to every do in the past.

Yaakov channeled his great emotion of love and reverence for the Holy One, Blessed Be He, by instinctively reciting with great emotion the proclamation of "Hear of Israel *Hashem Elokeinu is Hashem in Unity*". So explains the Maharal.

Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman, on the bottom of the printed Maharal, notes that Yaakov's joy was greater than that of Yosef. The Simcha [joy] that comes after a great pain (*tza'ar*) is superior to a Simcha that does not come because of pain but comes "out of the blue".

Therefore, Yaakov, who had suffered mightily and was now reunited with his son, experienced a greater happiness than Yosef experienced and it was therefore he who recited *Shma* and not his son.

Rav Hartman further quotes an observation of Rav Hutner in his introduction to the *Pachad Yitzchak* on Shavuot. This observation answers a question I have had for years and years. My question was "How do we explain the phenomenon 'tears of joy'?" We cry when we are sad and we cry when we are happy. This ostensibly does not make any sense. Yet, we see that people do cry when they are happy. What is the meaning of this?

Rav Hutner offers an interesting idea that I believe is accurate. If I find out tomorrow that I won the lottery and now I am \$340,000,000 richer, I will be very happy but I do not think I will start crying out of joy. Why?

Why do we cry at our children's weddings? Why do we cry at the birth of a child? Why do we cry at our son's *Bar Mitzvah*? The answer is that we put so much effort into raising a child to bring him to *Bar Mitzvah* or to bring a daughter down to the *Chuppah*. Similarly, when someone has a baby, it is preceded by months of difficulty.

Rav Hutner says that tears of joy are always the product or the offspring of the difficulties that preceded them. The "Gates of Tears" that were shed during the period of difficulty leading to this happy stage "have not been closed". They have not yet been turned off. Therefore, when in fact the *simcha* occurs, the tears continue. The *Shaarei Dema'os* of the pain and the travail are still active. However, *Simcha* that comes out of the blue is not the type of occasion that triggers tears.

Transcribed by David Twersky; <mailto:Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com>

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

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- # 750 - Will I Make Z'man K'rias Shema?
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- # 838 - Answering Kedusah in the Middle of K'rias Shema
- # 882 - Father or Grandfather - Whom Do You Honor?
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- # 969 - Burial In Eretz Yisroel II -- How Important Is It?
- #1013 - My Chumrah vs Your Hurt Feelings
- #1057 - Lashon Kodesh: The Uniqueness of the Hebrew Language
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