Forgiving Another

The Need to Forgive

One is forbidden to refrain from doing good for another because he dislikes them. The Rebbe explains that although in the generally given, the first person who does not share is not mentioned as doing זעמה, because his intention was out of concern for his tool and not out of spite. If however, one does not lend something because of his hate for the other, he explains that since such a person is not so particular with others, Hashem is not so particular with him.

The Medrash relates a story which he personally heard from the א SEQ 2  רבי חיים בן אתא: There was a wealthy man with powerful influence in the kingdom who embarrassed a Talmid Chochom. Fearing the repercussion, the רבי חיים ben אתא asked the Talmid Chochom to forgive the rich man. The Talmid Chochom replied that he had done so immediately afterwards, and explained, "The Rebbe says, that the בעיות of the Yidden are a burden for the wings of the Shechinah. Not wanting to burden Hashem, I quickly forgave him." The רבי חיים ben אתא was very pleased with this reply. In his seforim, the Rebbe repeats this story numerous times, "Being that it is precious to me, and it is a fundamental in עבירות,"

Rava said: Whoever is forgiving, all his עבירות are forgiven. Rashi explains that since such a person is not so particular with others, Hashem is not so particular with him.

The Medrash relates that although when יוסף הצדיק entered the pig that he let into the שפרון, his brother Shimon had him served the best food. The Medrash explains: A person must know that all that happens to him, whether positive or negative, comes from Hashem. Therefore, when someone does something bad to him, he should not have thoughts of taking revenge, for it is his own_EXTRAWARE that caused it.

At a farbrengen, the Friediker Rebbe spoke about the importance of bringing the understanding of Chassidus into affecting the מडות of the heart. The Friediker Rebbe added that only through עבירות, can one reach the level of a 'חסיד', which implies a forgiving person.

Repaying with Love

The Medrash relates that although when יוסף הצדיק was placed in the pig, his brother Shimon had him stoned, nevertheless, when Shimon fell in his hands in Mitzrayim, he took care of him and had him served the best food. The Medrash explains: One should repay bad with good, just as רבי חננה did.

In Spain, one of the רבי חננה, Reb Shmuel Hanagid, had the position of second to the king, and because of his great intelligence and righteousness, the king loved him and gave him much respect. Near the king’s palace was a store belonging to a goy who greatly embarrassed by another, that he should accept upon himself extra כערותorning the heart in mitzvos, because through him an עבירה was brought upon his friend.

The Rebbe writes in a letter that the appropriate way to respond to a verbal attack is by acting ignorant, as if it was not noticed. In another letter, the Rebbe directed the person who was embarrassed by another, that he should accept upon himself extra כערות(carefulness) in mitzvos, because through him an עבירה was brought upon his friend.

"I did do as you commanded," answered Reb Shmuel. “I cut off his bad tongue and replaced it with a good tongue…”
Chosen to be the Rov of Prague, the Reb Yom Tov Lipman Heller (Reb Yom Tov Lipman Heller) led the community on a path of proper behavior and set a fair system to collect the taxes which the government imposed. Previously, the rich of the community would require the general public to pay the tax and free themselves from the obligation. The Rov's new method, which required each to pay according to their means, angered the wealthy people.

Refael, a very wealthy community member, was the Rov’s strongest opponent, and he constantly schemed of ways to remove Reb Yom Tov from his position. He remembered that many of the king’s officers owed him money, so he offered to reduce their debt to him on condition that they help him remove the Rov from his position. He then went to two comrades who were strongly opposed the Rov, and asked them to use parts of the Rov’s sefer, חידושי מלך, to prove that the Rov is harmful to the kingdom. Their libel was successful and brought about stronger consequences than they had imagined. The Rov was arrested and sentenced to be killed, and a decree was enacted that all the Yidden leave the city.

Hashem had already prepared the cure for this terrible calamity. During that time, the Rov’s son, Reb Shmuel, who was learning in Yeshiva in Metz, saved the French ambassador’s wife and son from death. As gratitude, he promised to try releasing his father. He succeeded and the wealthiest and richest was freed, though he was forced to pay a fine, which made him go into heavy debt. Although the Rov fully forgave the ones who had made the libel, Hashem punished them, causing them and their children to die.

At this time, Refael fell ill and realized that his turn for punishment has come. The Reb 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 to come quickly, for Refael has something important to tell him. Upon the Rov’s arrival, Refael apologized profusely and said that he had not intended for the outcome of his libel to go so far. Bursting into tears, he begged the Rov for forgiveness and asked that he daven for him. The Rov told him that he forgave him wholeheartedly and davened for him.

The Reward for Insult

Our sages say: It is written regarding those who receive insults, yet are not offended, they hear their denigration and do not reply, they act with love and rejoice in their own suffering, that they will merit the revelation of the Shechina.

The Tanna Rebbe Elozar would say that suffering from insult is the most effective way to bring a person to repentance, more than all other types of punishment. If people would realize this, they would ask others to insult and embarrass them.

Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchok hired a number of workers to flatten a mound of dirt in his vineyard. As they were digging the earth, a man suddenly jumped out from the ground and asked if the workers served food and drink, had denigrated him. Hearing this, cheered him, and he said, “Now, we’ve received a good reward!”

On Kol Nidrei night, Reb Yaakov the shomos, led the tefillos in the shul of Yanova, and davened for the wealthy for a lengthy period of time. Annoyed and impatient, the wealthy went over and slapped his cheek. Reb Yaakov did not respond, finished davening calmly, and continued davening as if nothing had occurred.

After Yom Kippur, one of the wealthy members of the community approached Reb Yaakov and offered to buy his portion of the land that he had merited by quietly accepting the public embarrassment put on him. Reb Yaakov said, “I have nothing to sell, for I had forgiven the man before taking three steps back when finishing Shiras haYam. If I would have still had a grudge against him, I would not have continued as it is improper for the Rosh haKoheyn to have to wait for a shamash.” The simplicity and righteousness of Reb Yaakov aroused a tumult in the shul, and they decided to give him the zechus of having a son, Reb Aharon from Karlin, one of the great talmidim of the Mezrichtcher Maggid.