

פרשת נח

DEALING WITH ANGER

67

לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי ש"י בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE CALAMITY OF ANGER

In the times of Elisha Hanavi the Yidden had a king Yehoiram who was a rasha and served Avoda Zara. When the king of Moav rebelled against him, he invited Yehoishofot the righteous king of Yehudah to join him in battling Moav. On their way to war, they were without water for seven days, so when they found out that Elisha Hanavi was nearby, they rushed to see him. When Elisha saw Yehoiram, he said angrily, "What do we have with one another? Go to the Nevi'im of Avoda Zara!" Yet, when Elisha agreed to Nevuah in honor of Yehoishofot, he was unable due to his anger, so he asked for a musician to play for him and then the רוח הנבואה rested upon him.

(מלכים א' פ"ג)

Chazal say, "כל הכועס כאילו עובד עבודה זרה" (one who becomes angry, it is as if he has served Avoda Zara). The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya that if a Yid would believe with complete emuna that what has befallen him is from shamayim, he would not be angry at all. His anger is a sign of his belief that there is something else in the world other than Hashem.

(שבת ק"ה ע"ב, אגה"ק סי' כ"ה)

Once, after a week of continuous efforts, the Baal Shem Tov succeeded in collecting the amount necessary to redeem a family imprisoned by a stubborn Poritz, who had refused to free the family until he received every penny that they owed him. The family was set free only a few short hours before Shabbos. The Baal Shem Tov offered them to stay with him for Shabbos, for they would not be able to make it back to their town in time. The family willingly agreed. At the Seudas Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov turned to the Yid, and asked, "So, what news have you heard today?" The Yid looked up in wonder. "But Rebbe, what news could have reached the pit in which we were imprisoned?" "Then tell us something of your past," encouraged the Baal Shem Tov. The Yid replied, "I can't think of anything worthy of telling about my life, but I have just remembered a strange experience I had while imprisoned.

"In the pit at a distance from us there was a group of people that would cry and moan all week long, melting my heart. However, erev shabbos after chatzos, they would begin dancing and shrieking with laughter, and I too would burst out laughing. This went on for weeks, but this week,

the crying and screaming was louder than usual, as was the roaring laughter and the wild dancing which took its place. During the entire time, I was terrified to approach and speak to them and ask the reason for all this. We just huddled together in our corner. Yet, knowing that we were to be freed shortly, I gathered enough courage to shout a question in their direction, 'Who are you?'

A voice, from the far end of the pit responded, 'We are klipos whose existence depend on the Aveiros of a certain Tzaddik. He doesn't eat all week long, breaking his fast only on Erev Shabbos. He prepares a mug of milk in the morning, putting it aside to drink when he finishes davening Shachris. All week long, we are overwhelmed by the power of his tzidkus, so we cry. Every Erev Shabbos, however, we cause someone in his family to accidentally spill the milk, causing him to become angry. From this anger, we get our chayus. This week, he was determined to overcome his anger, realizing that by getting angry, he could lose all of the Ruchniusdike achievement that he had reached during the week. He decided to lock the closet where he put the milk and not to give anyone the key. That's why we were so upset this week,' the voice explained.

'We did not know how we would be able to make him angry, but we were not prepared to give up so easily. This morning, one of us appeared as a woodcutter, knocked on the Tzaddik's door, and offered his wife a bundle of wood at a cheap price. Her purse was in the same closet as the milk, and she asked her husband for the key. Anxious not to keep the woodcutter waiting, she knocked over the milk jug. Sure enough, the Tzaddik exploded into a rage and thus, we had much to celebrate today.'" The crowd of Chassidim at the Baal Shem Tov's seudah listened in amazement to this strange story. Suddenly, one of his Chassidim fell down in a faint. He was known to fast the entire week.

(רשימות דברים ה"א ע' יב)

REMAINING CALM

The Rambam writes that although with most middos the chachomim say that one should take the middle path, not following either extreme, with regard to anger, they say that a person should keep a great distance, never getting angry.

(רמב"ם הלכות דעות פ"ב ה"ג)

Reb Mordechai of Neshchiz of course already owned at

least one Tallis Katan, but he yearned to have one that came from Eretz Yisroel. After much effort, his Chassidim finally managed to bring him a piece of white lamb's wool cloth all the way from the Eretz Hakodesh. One of his talmidim asked for the zechus of cutting it to size and sewing its hems. In his excitement, however, he made a false fold and discovered to his horror that while cutting a hole for the head, he had made another wide hole right in the front of the Tallis Katan! "What would the Rebbe say?" The chossid thought, "After waiting for this cherished object for so long, and after all the effort that had gone into getting it, it was now completely ruined." When the Rebbe next saw him, and asked him whether the garment was ready, he sadly stammered out his story. "Reb Yid, why are you afraid?" said the Rebbe. "Don't you realize that a Tallis Katan really needs two big holes? One, as usual, to put one's head through, and the other to test whether Mordechai will 'lose his head'..."

(סיפורי חסידים זיין תורה ע' 457)

Reb Yitzchak of Vorki loved all his fellows so warmly, that he never got angry at anyone. Once, however, a certain woman bothered him so much, that he was forced to rebuke her. "In order to become angry," he said, "I must first put on a different kapote." So he asked Feivel, his Meshareis, to bring him his other coat. When he had put it on, he said, "Feivel, now rebuke her for me, please."

(סיפורי חסידים זיין מועדים ע' 210)

Once the Ba'al Shem Tov sat with his talmidim for the festive meal of Rosh Chodesh, and his face was serious. The talmidim knew from previous occasions things that would put their Rebbe in a more joyous mood, and they tried, but with no success. Then, a certain village-dwelling Yid entered, named Reb Dovid. Immediately upon his entry the Ba'al Shem Tov was full of joy - he treated him warmly, gave him a place to sit, and also gave him a piece of his "hamotzi."

This matter caused the talmidim to have questioning thoughts the whole Holy Society were not able to rouse joy, and only a village-dwelling Jew was able to do so?

The Ba'al Shem Tov sensed their questions, and sent Reb Dovid off to do something, and when he left he said to them:

"This Reb Dovid works hard, by the sweat of his brow, for every penny he earns. During the year he saves a penny at a time to buy an esrog for Sukkos, until he assembles the sum and travels to the city and buys an extremely fine one, and he has great joy from it. Since he is poor, and his wife is of bitter spirit, it angered her considerably that he does not

care about the condition of his household, since he spends money on an esrog and rejoices over it. In her bitterness she broke the pitom of the esrog.

"Now, besides the money that he spent on the esrog, there were many obstacles to bringing it, water to cross, bad roads, so that it all added up to much hard effort. Yet, when he saw what his wife had done he was not angry, but said 'It appears that I am not worthy of such an esrog. Truly, does a simple Yid like me deserve such a fine esrog?'"

"From the time of the Akeidah," concluded the Ba'al Shem Tov, "there was not such a test of character, and therefore I treated him so warmly."

(ספר השיחות תרצ"ו ע' 148)

## THE KEY TO TRANQUILITY

One of the things that Reb Boruch Batlan (the Alter Rebbe's great grandfather) noticed about Chassidus, is that it taught a person to control himself. As he observed the heated discussions between his friend Yitzchok Shaul (the chossid) and his brothers-in-law (misnagdim), he noticed that whenever Yitzchak Shaul's anger was stirred up, he would suddenly close up, as if with a lock and key, and his anger would disappear. He explained this to Baruch one day, saying, "My father used to say to me in the name of the Baal Shem, that anger is a foreign and unworthy thing, even when it comes from Yiras Shamayim. He taught me that whenever I get into a temper, I should just seal my lips and not utter a word!"

(ספר הזכרונות [בתרגום אנגלית] ח"ב ע' 15)

The Rebbe Maharash had a Meshareis, Bentzion, who was a great קפדן (short-tempered man). The רז"א used to say, "When I see a wrongdoing, I get angry just as he does. The difference between us is, that I put aside the anger for an hour and a minute, and then I realize that it is all a שטות."

(ספר השיחות תש"ו-ה'שי"ת ע' 107)

In dealing with anger the Rebbe would advise: Learning thoroughly the above mentioned portion of Tanya explaining that everything comes from Hashem, not speaking for a while (at least a few minutes) and thinking about how Hashem is standing over you at that moment. The Rebbe writes in a letter, "This that you write to me, concerning anger, etch in your mind that which is written in Tanya in

beginning of פרק מ"א that Hashem stands over the person and searches his heart. When you will remember while you're angry, that Hashem is literally standing over you, surely the anger will pass immediately."

(אג"ק חכ"ו מכ"ט'תשצד)

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