

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
MATOS-MASEI

בשבת

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

FURY AND FORGETFULNESS

Klal Yisrael had just completed a successful military campaign against the *Midyanim*, retribution for the destruction the *Midyanim* had caused against the Jewish nation. As they returned, *Moshe Rabbeinu* went out to greet them, and realized that the army had not carried out the exact instructions Hashem had given them in their dealings with the *Midyanim*. This upset Moshe, who explained to them that they had not acted properly.

After this episode, the Torah records *Elazar Hakohein* explaining to *Klal Yisrael* the laws of *kashering* and *tevilas keilim*.¹ Why is Elazar speaking; the vast majority of laws were given through Moshe, why are these laws different?

The Gemara² explains that anger has a terrible effect on an individual, it cannot reside with Torah study, and therefore causes one to forget their Torah learning. Because Moshe became upset, he forgot the laws that he was supposed to teach *Klal Yisrael*, leaving the task to *Elazar Hakohein*.

When we understand what it takes to be a *navi*, this Gemara becomes incredible and amazing. Every Jew is required to have a strict adherence to every *mitzvah*, and to refrain from every sin. This is a basic requirement of every Jewish person. A *navi* rises above by conquering all of his passions, having a total concentration on Hashem, and a complete focus on rising in spiritual understanding.³

To contrast, anger is said to “reside in the heart of fools,” increase one’s ignorance, and one who is angry doesn’t even care about Hashem’s presence.⁴

With this background, how angry did *Moshe Rabbeinu* get? And for how long was he angry? With a constant focus and attention on Hashem, Moshe couldn’t have had more than a slight and subtle annoyance. Yet, those feelings were enough to cloud his thinking, *even when the annoyance passed!*

It is important for us to understand the dangerous fire that anger truly is. We all know how harmful it is to others, we can now understand how dangerous it is to ourselves.

Yet, those feelings were enough to cloud his thinking, even when the annoyance passed!

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Once a person is angry, it is very difficult to calm down until the anger naturally dissipates. The trick, of course, is to do what we can to avoid anger in the first place. But how can we do that?

Very often, expectations are the building blocks of frustration. We expect a friend to play with us, we expect a snack when we come home, or we expect a sibling to share.

Many of these expectations are reasonable and understandable. Nevertheless, if we allow others the leeway to not follow through on our expectations we will have paved the way for smoother interactions.

This is true both for people and for things. We may have the frustration of looking for a misplaced item, or may have the annoyance of tripping over something on the floor. These things may make us angry, but again, that anger is built on the expectation that everything should go smoothly.

As with people, if we recognize that life has its ups and downs, and we will indeed sometimes stub our toe (literally or figuratively) we will be better off when life hands us challenges.

1 *Bamidbar* 31:11-21

2 *Pesachim* 66b

3 *Moreh Nevuchim* 2:36

4 *Nedarim* 22b

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This is the fruit of Mussar! Over time, a person begins to suspect himself, to wonder about his actions. And through this, yiras shamayim enters his heart. Praiseworthy are such people! - R' Yerucham Levovitz, Da'as Torah, Shemos pg. 190

ABOUT FACE

In the *yeshivah* of Novordok* there were no dormitory facilities for the *talmidim*. Instead, each student was responsible to find and maintain his own living quarters. Most of the students rented rooms in nearby buildings. Most of the owners of these buildings were happy to have them as tenants. But there was an exception.

One building, where more than twenty rooms were occupied by *talmidim*, was owned by a bitter woman who had very little use for *yeshivah bochurim*. The woman, a widow who lived with her young son, constantly ridiculed and criticized each and every one of the *talmidim* who rented from her. At times she created havoc in the building, turning off the water for no reason, for example. Soon her harassment became too much for the *talmidim* to tolerate. One by one, they began to seek new quarters. Within a short time, all of the boys moved out. All except one — Yosef Geffen. One morning as Yosef was coming home from *shul*, carrying his *tefillin* and a *sefer*, he noticed the woman walking towards him. As soon as she saw him in the distance, she started to yell. “You must be crazy! How can you still stay in my building? You see that all the other boys have moved — why do you insist on staying? Why not get out like they did?”

Yosef paused for a moment and then softly said to the woman, “I stay here for your sake. I realize that you live alone and I fear that one night you might fall or become ill and call for help and there would be no one to hear your cries. I understand that when you yell at us you are merely letting out your frustrations about being widowed and struggling to support yourself and your son. I therefore felt that it was proper for me to stay, just in case you might ever need help.”

The woman’s face turned ashen. This was not at all what she had expected to hear. She had imagined that his retort would be a sharp remark. She was so flabbergasted by the unexpected concern that she literally fell to her knees and, looking up at the *yeshivah bochur*, pleaded, “Forgive me! Forgive me, young man! It never dawned on me that that was the reason you were staying. How kind and gracious of you.”

The previously harsh-looking woman suddenly looked old, crestfallen and vulnerable. She walked away slowly, immersed in her thoughts. Later in the day she came to Yosef to apologize again. For days afterwards she never said anything but kind words to the *bochurim* she met. Slowly word got around she was no longer as bitter and nasty as she had been, and *bochurim* started moving in again. Eventually all the rooms in the building were filled.

However, even though Yosef continued to live there, he would always use a side entrance, never once using the building’s front door. For if he did, he risked the chance of meeting and inadvertently embarrassing the woman who, every time she would see him, would apologize shamefacedly again and again.

*Rewritten from “Around the Maggid’s Table” by Rabbi Paysach Krohn

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even if one gets angry for ‘justified’ reasons, the effects are devastating.¹
- A teacher who, because of their anger, causes their students to not reach their full potential, will be taken to task, even if they are otherwise a skilled and talented teacher.²

¹ *Pesach Einayim* on *Berachos* 29b s.v. לא תרתח

² *Mishnas Reb Aharon* Vol. I, p. 249