

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Bitachon Pays Off

Reb Hershel Berkowitz of Ashdod related the following story.

He had recently married off a child. There is a “minhag” to travel to New York to give Jews there an opportunity to perform the mitzvah of hachnosas kallah, helping support a bride with the resources to get married. He too went to New York to raise funds for the wedding. The way it works in New York is that you hire a driver to take you around to raise money. He was staying in Boro Park and he hired a driver for 5:30 a.m. to take him to Williamsburg to go around to the different shuls and raise funds of which the driver would take a commission.

Reb Hershel was up and waiting at 5:30, but the driver did not show up. The time soon was 6:00 a.m. and the driver still hadn't come. Naturally, Reb Hershel should've gotten angry. After all, he didn't travel to America to meet friends and drink coffee, but rather to raise much needed funds. As they say, “Time is money.” He sat and waited, and the driver didn't show up. He should've gotten frustrated that the day started on the wrong foot, but Reb Hershel had a different attitude. He decided to go into the Munkatcher Beis Midrash in Boro Park and sit down and say Tehillim. “I believe with complete faith that Hashem runs everything...” The fact that the driver didn't come wasn't by chance.

No more than a few minutes went by and he felt a pat on his back. A

man who saw him saying Tehillim gave him \$500. \$500 is a sum that isn't common for one to just give out like that in a beis midrash, and even when you meet someone in their home. It's only with reciting Tehillim that you receive such a sum. But this man gave him \$500 just like that.

A few minutes later, this man approaches him again and tells him his name and his mother's name. He tells Reb Hershel, “I need a big yeshua (salvation) today; please daven for me. Give me your telephone number; I'll keep you updated.” Reb Hershel responded, “No need to call me. It seems that my driver isn't coming. I'll be here saying Tehillim...”

A few hours go by and this man calls Reb Hershel and asks, “Where are you?” He says, “I'm still saying Tehillim. My driver hasn't shown up.” The man came over to the beis midrash and told Reb Hershel what happened.

“I had a serious court case today. Normally, one hires a lawyer to represent him in court. One who comes to court without a lawyer is usually judged in a harsher manner. It's a display of disrespect and embarrassment to come to court without a lawyer. But my lawyer didn't show up. I kept on calling him, but I couldn't get a hold of him. He didn't pick up. I didn't know what to do!

“It was time for the court case to begin. I walked into the court room and the judge asked me, ‘What do you have to say for yourself?’ So I told him what I had to say. The judge immediately said, ‘The fact that he's

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here without a lawyer shows how confident he is in his argument and what he's saying must be true.' The logic the judge used was exactly the opposite of the norm. The judge gave the verdict that he is totally innocent. Case dismissed! In my wildest I hadn't dreamed that something like this would happen. I was hoping that the court would push off the case to another date and on that later date we'd come to a compromise. Here, however, the judge let me off the hook completely based on the fact that I'd come to court without a lawyer..

Later on the lawyer called his client and excused himself for his absence. "I've been a lawyer for 40 years and I've never overslept. Please forgive me!" The man responds, "I was given the verdict that I am completely innocent!" "Totally innocent?" The lawyer was hoping for a settlement to be reached at a later date too. "What do you mean totally innocent?" So the man told him the logic the judge used. The fact that he came to court without a lawyer showed that he was speaking the truth. "I've been a lawyer for 40 years," said the lawyer, "and I've never heard this logic being used. Either the judge went mad or you misunderstood what he said." The client tells his lawyer that he'll fax the transcript of the court case over to him. He faxed him

the transcript and the lawyer was dumbfounded.

This man then tells Reb Hershel Berkowitz, "Take this envelope, which was meant for the lawyer. It contains \$5,000. I don't need to pay the lawyer, so this is for you." So Reb Hershel now had \$5,500 in his pocket." The man then asked Reb Hershel, "What brings you to town?" Reb Hershel said that he is marrying off a child and he is raising funds. "When is the wedding?" asked the man. The man took down the date of the wedding and said that he will send him something for the wedding.

On the day of the wedding, a messenger of the donor came and delivered an even thicker envelope than the one which contained \$5,000.

Now, we still need to hear about someone else who needs to wake up... The lawyer already woke up, but the driver needs to wake up. The driver wakes up and calls Reb Hershel and excuses himself. "I'm so sorry... To appease you, I'll take you around tomorrow for free without taking a commission." "It's alright," said Reb Hershel. "Baruch Hashem, I was able to raise funds without being driven around. Hashem sends me the funds through saying Tehillim."

Let's think through what happened in this story. Two people woke up

late. Reb Hershel should've gotten angry. He came from Israel, left his wife and children behind and now his driver isn't showing up. But Reb Hershel had a different attitude. He knew that Hashem runs the world. The good must be hidden somehow in the fact that the driver didn't come. He opened a Tehillim and merited to see the good that was hidden. It worked out for his good that the driver didn't come. Five and a half thousand dollars, plus the additional money that was sent to him on the wedding day, plus a free driver for a day.

The same is true with regard to the court case. The client should've gotten angry that this lawyer didn't show up. How can I go into the court room without a lawyer? But that actually ended up supporting his innocence.

The Torah tells us that Noach waited five hundred years to have children. Why? He was a tzaddik and he needed to wait five hundred years? Rav Yudan in the Midrash says that the reason was to save his children from the Flood. Everything is for the good. Everything has a story and reason to it.

We must have faith and trust in Hashem.

Rabbi Shaya Cohen

Answered First

The Gemara (Bava Kama 92a) tells us of the principle, "Someone who prays for his friend, and he is in need of the same matter, he is answered first." If Person A prays for person's Person B's problem to be taken care of, then if Person A is going through the same challenge, Hashem will answer Person A first. It's a win-win situation for everyone. We can help our friend

by feeling his pain, because Hashem wants to relieve our pain, and we also have the zechus of davening for our friend, which is reason for our needs to be answered first.

In February 1995, Rabbi Dovid Shenker, who runs the Jewish Education program (JEP) organization, was using offices in the upper floor of a building on Columbia Avenue, while I was using the bottom floor. He approached me one day and said,

"I'm having a problem getting a yerusha from a relative of mine. A woman passed away and she left fortunes of money to her six cats." It's hard to believe. But this is what it was. "I need help. Maybe you'll come with me to the lawyer. Their lawyer has been giving us some problems. You can tell them what type of person I am, and what type of job we do with the youth and the community." I told him that it would be my pleasure. He told me that

it could be upwards of \$100,000 that would be awarded to him.

Two hours later, I received a call from a friend of mine in California. He had just completed a large business deal and he decided that he would send a check to the yeshiva for \$100,000.

Two days later, Rabbi Shenker and I were on our way to the lawyer's office and it hit me. This is really what Chazal say. If a person prays for his friend, and he is in need of the same mater, he is answered first. Rabbi Shenker needed the money, and I also could use the money for the yeshiva, and with my extending myself to help him, I was answered first.

The problem was that two and a half years went by and Rabbi Shenker did not really get anything. But I kept on telling him and his lawyer that Rabbi Shenker was going to get the money, because Chazal say that someone who prays for his friend, and he is in need of the same mater, he is answered first. He is answered "first" implies that the other person will also be answered. The first needs to be the first of a series. If Rabbi Shenker would not get it, then I wouldn't be the "first" one to get it; I would be the only one to get it. Rabbi Shenker looked at me as if I was talking strangely. But I kept to what I had said.

Three years, almost to the day, in February 1998, Rabbi Shenker came to me and said that the judge signed off on the inheritance. The total amount was \$250,000. "If that is the case," I immediately said to Rabbi Shenker, "then I still need to get another \$150,000."

Sure enough, I shortly thereafter received a call from someone in Los Angeles, who said, "Remember that the yeshiva owed me \$155,000? Well, I just did some good business and I am mochel (forgive) the money. The yeshiva can keep it." Calculating it in my mind, I realize that \$150,000 and \$155,000 equaled \$255,000. I headed over to Rabbi Shenker. "There's another \$5,000 out there that you're going to get," I said to him. If Rabbi Shenker couldn't believe what I had told him before, he couldn't believe this.

The next day, Rabbi Shenker came running down. "When the judge signed off on the \$250,000, there was another side project that came through from the inheritance and was worth another \$5,000."

I asked him if I could see a copy of the check for \$250,000. I looked at it and saw that it said, "\$252,600." This bothered me because the numbers were slightly off. Here he was getting another \$2,600. Where did that come from? "Well, the other parties were taking too much time, so the judge

tacked on another kind of a penalty." The numbers were close enough, but not exact.

The following week, I received the paperwork from my friend who had submitted paperwork with regards to the \$155,000 that he forgiving to the yeshiva. As it turned out, we didn't owe him \$155,00 but \$157,500." The original amount on top of the \$155,000 had been \$2,600 (for a total of \$157,600), but I had originally forgiven \$100 in my back-pay, so the total numbers were now exactly the same. And the yeshiva received all the money before the others received it.

Our words of Chazal are true and tested. And exact. It's for real.

If we can look at our friend and feel his disappointment and pain, and pray to Hashem, "I feel so bad for him. Please help him." This feeling and prayer has such ramifications that it will help him, even if he didn't deserve it, and Hashem will give it to you too. And in that process also, you will have invoked that you will get it first. You can't get a better deal than that.

Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

A Literal Pitfall

This week, we read in the fourth chapter of Pirkei Avos an insightful teaching of Rabbi Elazar HaKappar. "Ha'kinah, v'hata'avah v'hakavod

motzi'in es ha'adam min haolam, Jealousy, lust and the pursuit of honor remove a person from the world." (Pirkei Avos 4:28). Strong emotions that can bring a per-

son to his downfall. Feelings that not only preclude a person from enjoying life, but prevent one from interacting normally with others. A destructive appetite that can cause one to think irrationally and make poor, even harmful, self-destructive decisions. An all-encompassing state of mind that

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can make one physically ill, creating unnecessary stress and anxiety, even bringing on an untimely death, literally being removed from this world. Feelings so powerful, that they can have spiritual, emotional and physical consequences.

The above teaching is intertwined with this week's parsha, in which we learn of the downfall of Korach due to his insatiable envy and desire for honor. Korach was a first cousin to Moshe and Aaron. He was a prominent figure, a member of the tribe of Levi, and was honored with carrying the Aron, the Holy Ark. He possessed much wealth, which gained him status and prestige. But for Korach, that wasn't enough. He was totally consumed with a craving for power, and feelings of jealousy towards Moshe and Aaron. He questioned their leadership... why them and not he? Korach's desire for leadership was wasn't about his concern for the good of others, but rather he pined for a position of glory.

Jealousy. Envy. Greed. Emotions so detrimental that HaShem included in the Aseres HaDibros, the Ten Commandments, "Do not covet". Not to be jealous of another's possessions, wealth, good fortune or power.

I recently attended a school play of my 7-year old granddaughter, Tehilah. Following the children's performance, I went over to the teacher to thank her, and introduced myself – Tehilah's bubby.

"I must share a story with you about Tehilah," the teacher said. "I was teaching the class the Aseres HaDibros. When we got up to the tenth commandment, not to be jealous, Tehilah raised her hand. 'It's so, so hard' she said, 'what should I do when I go to my friend's house and she has so

many toys and games that I don't have, and I want them too.' "

Wow, I thought. Tehilah internalized the lesson. Not only did she connect it to her life, but she shared her inner thoughts and feelings with the teacher and her classmates.

The teacher told me that she threw the question back to Tehilah, asking her to come up with an answer.

After contemplating about her dilemma for a minute or two, Tehilah had her solution. "I would think of something nice about my friend, and give her a compliment. It will help me be happy for her, so I wouldn't be jealous."

The teacher told me that Tehilah's response floored her. Sometimes, we can take a lesson or two from a 7-year old.

Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, in *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, writes about how one can avoid the pitfall of jealousy. He cites the words of Ibn Ezra on the commandment of not being jealous. Ibn Ezra acknowledges that envy is a human emotion, part of our psyche, that at times takes on a life of its own.

Ibn Ezra explained his thought with a parable. Imagine a peasant who knows that the king is in search of the perfect prince for his daughter. The peasant would never consider himself worthy of being chosen by the king, for he understands that he is part of a different world. So too, says Ibn Ezra, another's belongings should not even be on our radar. We should view them as part of a different universe. To make a conscious effort to really want what we have.

Korach was a masterful orator and used his power of speech to spread his seditious message amongst a larg-

er group of followers. As he opened his mouth to express his rebellious feelings, HaShem performed a miracle with the earth opening "its mouth" to swallow up Korach and his cohorts. It was a literal pitfall, perhaps the greatest sinkhole of all time. A powerful lesson to absorb. How careful one must be with both actions and words.

HaShem doesn't task us with the impossible. If there is a commandment not to harbor feelings of jealousy, it's doable. Not always easy, but attainable. If, instead of looking at what others have, one looks inward, thinking of what he can accomplish with his life, and the good he can do with his G-d-given gifts, he will be a much happier, healthier person.

There is, however, an important exception to the principle of avoiding jealousy. The Talmud teaches, "kinas sofrim tarbeh chochmah, the (proper) envy of scholars, increases knowledge." (Bava Basra 21a) Our sages explain that there is one kind of jealousy that can have powerful, constructive results, kinas sofrim, to be envious of a scholar, for that will ultimately bring one to gain knowledge. A craving, a desire that can be channeled positively.

We are HaShem's am kadosh, a holy people, designated to be an ohr lagoyim, a light unto the nations. As we begin the month of Tamuz, a time when so much pain befell our people due to unnecessary machlokes, arguments, divisiveness, jealousy and ill feelings, let us make an effort to bring true shalom, unity and understanding, not only between us and our families, neighbors and friends, but to the entire world. To be a true ohr lagoyim, a light unto the nations.

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