



DEALING WITH RESENTMENT

There are times when we are offended by the words or actions of others. We don't seek revenge, and when asked, we even forgive. But the bitter grudge remains. How can we free our hearts of those negative impulses?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT CHUKAT

Preface

This lesson is about stories: two stories from the Torah and two chassidic stories from more recent times. Each one is overflowing with meaning.

A story about two Jews who got into a physical altercation, a story about Moses dealing with the ever-complaining Jews, a story of Abraham forgiving the person who kidnapped his wife, and a story of a chassid who forgave a person who caused him a tremendous financial loss.

These four stories impart the lesson of this week's Sicha: how true forgiveness must be authentic, complete and unconditional.

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In this week’s Torah portion, G-d commands Moses to build a copper snake as a source of healing for all those who spoke against him and were subsequently bitten by snakes. Rashi says that this is a lesson in forgiveness. His comment comes from the Midrash, which also mentions the special forgiveness of Abraham (source 1). What was Abraham’s story? See source 2.

The Rebbe cites the Rashi on our verse and asks: Is this really Torah’s first lesson about forgiveness? Rashi’s very source speaks about Abraham, who lived much earlier and likewise granted forgiveness—despite being in a much more difficult situation!

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A few weeks ago, we read how G-d told Moses to fashion trumpets. Curiously, G-d said, “make for yourself,” i.e., as Rashi explains, fashion them with your own resources (source 3).

Interestingly, the Rebbe points out, our story uses the very same terminology—Moses was to pay for the copper snake himself. Why? Herein lies the special lesson in forgiveness which Rashi alluded to.

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True forgiveness is when you demonstrate that there is no grudge left in your heart; outward forgiveness is not enough. By paying for the copper snake, Moses demonstrated that he forgave the people fully, despite their offence. That is what makes this Torah portion so unique.

A Story: Sender the Tea Merchant

Introduction

Sunday was the Rebbe's Yahrzeit, and thousands of people came to New York to visit the Ohel. Often, on Gimmel Tammuz, people stand in line for hours in the heat just to get the chance to spend two minutes at the Ohel. And as always, there are people who try to jump the line or skip their turn, whether because they have a flight to catch or because it's just too hard for them to stand in line.

A group of Chasidim once stood in line waiting for an audience with a certain Rebbe. Among them was an individual who had been waiting there for three days. Obviously, he was very stressed out.

As they were standing there, the aide came up and told him that he wouldn't be able to see the Rebbe that day either. The chassid got very angry and started arguing with the aide. In the heat of the moment, he got physical and slapped the aide, and chaos erupted.

The Rebbe, who had been sitting in his study this entire time, heard the commotion and immediately called the aide in to ask him what was going on. At first, the aide didn't want to tell the Rebbe—but when the Rebbe insisted, he informed the Rebbe that a chassid had hit him.

The Rebbe became very upset and told the aide: "Tell him that a Jew who resorts to violence and who raises his hand against his fellow Jew is not a Jew that I am interested in meeting at all!"

The aide went out and gave the chassid the news.

That particular chassid had traveled for weeks so that he could meet with the Rebbe. He had been married at that point for over ten years and had not yet been blessed with children, and he had come to ask for the Rebbe's blessing for kids. But now, when he heard that the Rebbe didn't want to see him at all, he burst out in bitter sobbing, feeling like his whole world had been destroyed. He had hung all his hopes on the Rebbe's blessing, and now he was left with nothing.

The chassid's sobs deeply touched the aide's heart and he felt very sorry for him. He came up to him and said: "Listen—even though the Rebbe said that he's not interested in seeing you, I want to help you get the Rebbe's blessing. That's why I'll be bold and take the risk of letting you in to the Rebbe. I'll come in with you, and I hope that G-d will help."

The aide entered the Rebbe's office together with the chassid. He then addressed the Rebbe, saying that he was prepared to forgive the chassid with a full heart—but only on one condition: that the Rebbe give him a blessing for children.

When the Rebbe heard these words, he smiled broadly and happily blessed the chassid with children.

The source of this aid's behavior is found in this week's Parsha.

A: The Snake of Forgiveness

Source 1 Numbers 21:4-9

In this week's Torah portion, there is a tremendous leap in the storyline. Until now, we read about events that occurred in the first two years after the Exodus, but in this Torah portion, we jump to year number forty—when the Jewish people finished serving their time in the desert and were ready to enter the land.

During this period, they underwent several difficult experiences. Aaron, the very beloved High Priest, passed away, and the entire nation mourned his death for thirty days. With his passing, the Heavenly clouds of protection were removed. The Amalekites saw it as a good opportunity to attack the Jewish people, so they were forced to defend themselves in battle (which resulted in a victory).

Moses attempts to bring them closer to the Land of Israel but is forced to make a wide detour around the land of Edom, because the Edomite king refuses to grant passage and G-d doesn't allow the Israelites to attack them. Thus, the Israelites see themselves getting further and further away from the promised land, traveling quite literally in the opposite direction (keep in mind that it wasn't an airplane ticket in business class; they were walking in the desert with millions of men, women and children).

This sequence of events was too hard on the People of Israel, and they began to grumble about their fate, about G-d and about Moses. As usual, the complaint led to a punishment which led the People of Israel to apologize to Moses. He, in turn, prays to G-d on their behalf.

They traveled on from Hor Mountain by way of the South Sea to bypass the Edomite territory. The people began to become discouraged along the way.

The people spoke out against G-d and Moses: “Why did you take us out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread or water, and we are disgusted by this insubstantial food.”

G-d sent poisonous snakes against the people. They bit the people, and many Israelites died.

וַיִּסְעוּ מֵהַר הָהָר דֶּרֶךְ יָם־
סוּף לְסַבֵּב אֶת־אֶרֶץ אֱדוֹם
וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשֵׁי־הָעָם בְּדֶרֶךְ:

וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בְּאֱלֹהִים וּבַמֶּשֶׁה
לָמָּה הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם
לָמוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לָחֶם
וְאֵין מַיִם וְנִפְשָׁנוּ קָצָה
בְּלַחֵם הַקָּלָקָל:

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בָּעָם אֵת
הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשֶּׁרָפִים וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ
אֶת־הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִם־רַב
מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against G-d and you. Pray to G-d and have Him take the snakes away from us.” And Moses prayed for the people.

G-d said to Moses, “Make yourself a snake, and place it on a pole. Anyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.”

Moses made a copper snake and placed it on a pole. Whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze at the copper snake and live.

Rashi

From this story, Rashi takes a lesson for life.

Moses prayed: This teaches us that when someone is asked for forgiveness, he should not be so cruel as to refuse.

Midrash Tanchuma, Chukat 19

Rashi's comment is actually a citation from the Midrash. In the original, the Midrash brings another example of a saintly person who was willing to forgive those who offended him.

This teaches us about Moses' humility: He did not delay praying for them. It also teaches the power of repentance: As soon as they said, “We sinned,” he forgave them, teaching us that one should not be cruel and withhold forgiveness. Similarly, the verse states: “Abraham prayed to G-d, and G-d healed Abimelech and his wife.”

וַיָּבֵא הָעָם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
חָטֵאנוּ כִּי־דִבַּרְנוּ בַיהוָה
וּבְךָ הַתְּפִלָּל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר
מִעֲלֵינוּ אֶת־הַנָּחָשׁ וַיִּתְּפִלֵּל
מֹשֶׁה בְּעַד הָעָם:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לְךָ
שִׁרְיָה וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־גֹּסֶם וְהָיָה
כִּלְיֵהנָשׁוּךְ וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וְחָיָה:

וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נָחָשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת
וַיִּשְׁמְהוּ עַל־הַגֹּסֶם וְהָיָה אִם־
נָשַׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת־אִישׁ וְהִבִּיט
אֶל־נָחָשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת וְחָיָה:

וַיִּתְּפִלֵּל מֹשֶׁה. מִכָּאן לְמִי
שֶׁמְבַקְשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ, שְׁלֵא
יְהֵא אַכְזָרִי מִלְּמַחֵל (עִי'
תנחומא):

לְהוֹדִיעַן עֲנוּתָנוּתוֹ שֶׁל
מֹשֶׁה, שְׁלֵא נִשְׁתַּהֲהָ לְבִקְשׁ
עֲלֵיהֶם רַחֲמִים, וְלְהוֹדִיעַן
כַּח הַתְּשׁוּבָה, כִּינּוֹן שֶׁאָמְרוּ
חָטֵאנוּ, מִיָּד נִתְרַצָּה לָהֶם,
שֶׁאִין הַמוֹחֵל נַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם
אַכְזָרִי. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר,
וַיִּתְּפִלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים
וַיִּרְפָּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ
וְאֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ (בראשית כ, יז).

Source 2 Genesis 20:2-3, 7, 9, 14, 17-18

This is the story about Abraham and Abimelech that was mentioned in the text of the Midrash:

Abraham said that his wife Sarah was his sister, and Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent messengers and took Sarah.

G-d came to Abimelech in a dream that night and said: "You will die because of the woman you took; she is already married.

"Now return the man's wife. He is a prophet; he will pray for you, and you will live. But if you do not return her, know that you will die—you and all that is yours."

Abimelech took sheep, cattle, servants and maidservants, gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him.

Abraham prayed to G-d, and G-d healed Abimelech, his wife and maidservants, so that they were able to have children.

G-d had previously sealed up every womb in Abimelech's house, on account of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־שָׂרָה
אֲשֶׁתוֹ אֶחָתִי הוּא וַיִּשְׁלַח
אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ גֶּרָר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־
שָׂרָה:

וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹקִים אֶל־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ
בַּחֲלוֹם הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲנִנְךָ
מֵת עַל־הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־לָקַחְתָּ
וְהוּא בֹעֵלֶת בְּעַל:

וְעַתָּה הֲשִׁב אֶשְׁת־הָאִישׁ כִּי־
נָבִיא הוּא וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל בַּעֲדֶךָ וַחַיָּה
וְאִם־אֵינְךָ מְשִׁיב דָּע כִּי־מוֹת
תָּמוּת אֶתָּה וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ:

וַיִּקַּח אֲבִימֶלֶךְ צֹאן וּבָקָר
וְעַבְדִּים וּשְׁפָחֹת וַיִּתֵּן
לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֵּשֶׁב לוֹ אֶת שָׂרָה
אֲשֶׁתוֹ:

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים
וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹקִים אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ
וְאֶת־אֲשֶׁתוֹ וְאֶת־הַתַּיִם וַיֵּלְדוּ:

כִּי־עָצַר עֲצַר ה' בְּעַד כָּל־רָחֵם
לְבַיִת אֲבִימֶלֶךְ עַל־דְּבַר שָׂרָה
אֲשֶׁת אַבְרָהָם:

(Several points about the story: First of all, Abimelech may have thought that she was single, but he didn't exactly 'court' her for marriage. Even if he wouldn't do so to a married woman, he was still far from a tzaddik.

Why did Abraham declare that she was his sister? In those days, kings were all powerful. Being that Sarah was very beautiful, Abraham feared that the king would simply kill him and take Sarah into his harem. To protect himself, he would introduce her as his sister; telling the truth would only serve to end his life without any benefit to Sarah.

This story is worthy of a class in itself. Try to keep it short and focus only on the main point: despite Abimelech's horrendous behavior of kidnapping Abraham's 'sister' and forcefully taking her into his harem, Abraham still forgave him and prayed for him after he made amends.

>> The Rebbe

What is Unique About the Story of the Snake?

In this week's Torah portion, we read that "Moses prayed for the people," and Rashi comments, "This teaches us that when someone is asked for forgiveness, he should not be so cruel as to refuse."

This raises a question: In previous Torah portions, we read about several incidents where the Israelites disrespected Moses, and he nevertheless prayed for them and tended to their needs. What is unique about this story that caused Rashi to say, "this teaches us" a new, novel concept: that we should not be so cruel as to refuse forgiveness when requested? We saw Moses act similarly on several occasions before!

This question is bolstered upon reading the source of Rashi's commentary, in Midrash Tanchuma. The Midrash adds, "Similarly, the verse states: Abraham prayed to G-d, and G-d healed Abimelech and his wife." Abraham behaved the same way, choosing to forgive as soon as he was asked. Why does Rashi maintain that specifically this story of Moses teaches us this lesson?

בנוגע ללימוד פסוק בפרשת השבוע עם פירוש רש"י - נתעכב על הפסוק "ויתפלל משה בעד העם", שעליו מפרש רש"י: "מכאן למי שמבקשים ממנו מחילה שלא יהא אכזרי מלמחול".

וצריך להבין: בפרשיות שלפני זה מצינו כמה וכמה מאורעות שבני ישראל פגעו בכבודו של משה רבינו, ואף אל פי כן, התפלל משה רבינו עבורם ודאג לכל צרכיהם כו'. ואם כן, מהו החידוש בפסוק שבפרשתנו ש"מכאן" דוקא למדים ענין חדש שלא למדנו עד עתה, "למי שמבקשים ממנו מחילה שלא יהא אכזרי למחול" - הרי רואים זאת בהנהגתו של משה רבינו בכמה וכמה מאורעות שלפני זה!?

קושיא זו גדולה יותר - כאשר מעיינים במקור לפירוש רש"י שצויין על ידי מפרשים - במדרש תנחומא . . ששם מוסיף: "וכן הוא אומר ויתפלל אברהם אל האלקים וירפא האלקים את אבימלך ואת אשתו גו", ואם כן, מכיון שמצינו כבר הנהגה זו ("למי שמבקשים ממנו מחילה שלא יהא אכזרי למחול") אצל אברהם אבינו, מדוע מפרש רש"י "מכאן למי שמבקשים ממנו כו"?!?

Furthermore: The story of Abraham is a better choice for two reasons: a) The kidnapping of Sarah by Abimelech is a greater offense than the gossip spoken against Moses, and nevertheless, Abraham forgave him. b) When Abraham prayed for Abimelech, G-d healed him without any preconditions, but when Moses prayed for the people, there was a process – the bitten person needed to first look at the copper snake.

יתירה מזו - אצל אברהם מודגש הדבר עוד יותר מאשר בפסוק שבפרשתנו, ומב' טעמים: (א) הפגיעה באברהם אבינו בלקיחת שרה לבית אבימלך גדולה יותר מהפגיעה במשה רבינו על ידי זה שדיברו אודותיו, ואף על פי כן התפלל אברהם עבור אבימלך. (ב) אצל אברהם נאמר "ויתפלל אברהם גו' וירפא אלקים גו'" ללא כל תנאי, ואילו בפרשתנו הי' תנאי בדבר - "עשה לך שרף . . והי' כל הנשוח וראה אותו וחי!"

If we are looking for a story that will teach us about forgiveness, the story of Abraham and Abimelech seems much more meaningful.

Firstly, the kidnapping of Sarah is far more serious than some gossip about Moses, and serves as a much greater lesson about the importance of forgiving.

Secondly, when Abraham prayed G-d healed Abimelech immediately, but when Moses prayed, G-d gave him a process which could lead to healing. Clearly, Abraham's forgiveness and prayer was more effective.

Why does Rashi learn a lesson of forgiveness from the story of Moses and not the (more powerful) story of Abraham?

B: Make it Your Own

Source 3 Numbers 10:1-4

Several weeks ago, G-d commanded Moses to fashion trumpets which he will blow to gather the people. Rash explains, based on the terminology of the verse, that Moses was commanded to make them with his own resources.

G-d spoke to Moses, saying:

Make yourself two silver trumpets out of beaten metal and use them to assemble the community and to announce the commencement of the journeys.

When both are sounded, the entire community shall assemble at the Communion Tent entrance.

If only one of them is sounded, the princes, the leaders of thousands in Israel, shall come to you.

Rashi

Make yourself: They should be blown before you like a king, as it says, "There was a king among in Jerushun."

Make yourself: From your own resources.

Make yourself: You make them and use them, but no one else.

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שְׁתֵּי חֲצוֹצְרוֹת
כֶּסֶף מְקֻשָּׁה תַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם
וְהָיוּ לְךָ לְמִקְרָא הָעֵדָה
וּלְמַסַּע אֶת־הַמַּחֲנֵה:

וְתִקְעוּ בָהֶן וְנוֹעְדוּ אֵלַי
כָּל־הָעֵדָה אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל
מוֹעֵד:

וְאִם־בְּאַחַת יִתְקְעוּ וְנוֹעְדוּ
אֵלַי הַנְּשִׂאִים רְאֵשֵׁי
אֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

עשה לך. שִׁיְהִי תוֹקְעִין
לְפָנֶיךָ כְּמֶלֶךְ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
"וַיְהִי בִישְׁרוֹן מֶלֶךְ":

עשה לך. מִשְׁלֶךְ:

עשה לך. אֶתָּה עֲשֵׂה
וּמִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם וְלֹא אֲחֵר:

>> The Rebbe

Why Did He Need to Pay for It?

To explain Rashi's choice, we need to make the following preface:

In the next verse, G-d tells Moses, "Make yourself a snake..." Why was it important that he make it himself?

The student will remember that earlier in the Torah, when G-d commanded Moses to "make yourself" two silver trumpets, Rashi explained that Moses was commanded to make them with his own resources. Accordingly, when Moses is commanded here to "make yourself" a copper snake, he is to do so with his own resources.

It is worthy to note that the Talmud (Avoda Zarah 44a) says that the copper snake was indeed paid for by Moses, based on the wording in the verse. Rashi himself does not cite that interpretation, but the Rebbe's explanation is based on the explanation of the Talmud.

This is perplexing. Moses provided the resources for the trumpets because they were for his own use—to be trumpeted before him as a king. Rashi also writes, "You make them and use them, but no one else." But why should Moses provide the resources for the copper snake? On the contrary: If its purpose is to heal the people who offended Moses, it should be funded by the community! Why must Moses provide the funding?

הביאור בפירוש רש"י - בהקדים "קלאץ-
קשיא" נוספת:

בפסוק שלאחרי זה נאמר: "וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל
מֹשֶׁה עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף גו'". וצריך להבין: מהו
הדיוק ד"עשה לך" דוקא!?

ליתר ביאור: הבן חמש למקרא זוכר מה
שלמד בפרשת בהעלותך' "עשה לך שתי
חצוצרות כסף גו'", ששם מפרש רש"י:
"עשה לך - משלך". ועל פי זה - יפרש
גם כאן "עשה לך שרף" - "משלך", היינו
שה"שרף" שנעשה מנחושת, היה צריך
להיות עשוי משל משה.

וצריך להבין: בשלמא בנוגע לחצוצרות -
מובן הטעם שהיו צריכים לבוא משל משה
דוקא, מכיון שמטרתם "שיהיו תוקעין
לפניך כמלך", וגם: "אתה עושה ומשתמש
בהם ולא אחר" (כמובא בפירוש רש"י),
אבל בנדון דידן - אין כל סיבה לכאורה
שה"שרף" יהיה משל משה דוקא, ואדרבה
- מכיון שענינו לרפא את אלו שנפגעו
מהנחשים השרפים, כתוצאה מכך שפגעו
בכבודו של משה, הרי מתאים יותר,
לכאורה, שה"שרף" יהיה משל ציבור,
ולא משל משה, ומדוע נאמר "עשה לך",
משלך!?

C: Forgive and Forget

>> The Rebbe

How Not to Bear a Grudge

The explanation is as follows:

The very concept of forgiveness—to forgive those who offend you—is not a novel idea of this Torah portion. We learned that from Abraham and Abimelech: After Abimelech begged his forgiveness, Abraham acquiesced and prayed for him.

The unique factor in our Torah portion is how Moses forgave them. There can be instances where you claim to forgive the offending individual and you are even willing to do favors for him (such as pray for him etc.). However, you still retain a grudge.

The sages of the Talmud famously praise those who “are insulted and do not insult, who hear their shame and do not respond.” However, even if you do not *respond* to the offence, it doesn’t rule out the possibility of retaining a grudge—while ensuring that it isn’t expressed in any way.

ביאור הענין:

עצם ההנהגה שאדם שפגעו בו ומבקשים ממנו מחילה, עליו להענות לבקשה זו - אינו חידוש שלמדים בפרשתנו, שכן, ענין זה מצינו כבר אצל אברהם ואבימלך, שלאחרי שאבימלך ביקש מחילה מאברהם, נענה אברהם לבקשתו והתפלל עבורו.

החידוש שבפרשתנו הוא, איפוא, בנוגע לאופן המחילה - "שלא יהא אכזרי מלמחול": יתכן מצב שכאשר מבקשים ממנו מחילה - אומר שמוחל, ומוכן אפילו לעשות לו טובה (להתפלל עבורו, וכיוצא בזה), אבל אף על פי כן, בנוגע להרגש הלב - נשארה עדיין טינה בלבו על חברו.

אמרו חכמינו זכרונם לברכה² "הנעלבין ואינן עולבין שומעין חרפתם ואינן משיבין כו', עליהן הכתוב אומר³ ואוהביו כצאת השמש בגבורתו". אמנם, הדיוק הוא שאינם משיבים כו', אבל בנוגע להרגש שבלב - יתכן שעדיין נשארת טינה וקפידא בלבו, אף שפעל בעצמו שהדבר לא יזיק לחבירו...

(2) שבת פח, ב.
(3) שופטים ה, לא.

However, that is a cruel form of forgiveness. You don't plan on taking revenge, G-d forbid, and you are even prepared to pray for the good of the offender. If so, you may as well erase all grudges from your heart! Instead of hiding your grudge, just get rid of it! Refusing to let go is a form of cruelty.

This is the lesson of this week's Torah portion: when you are asked for forgiveness, don't be so cruel as to refuse. G-d commanded Moses to fashion a copper snake with his own resources to teach us the importance of scrubbing our hearts clean of all grudges. G-d said that Moses should pay for the copper snake to heal those who offended him—to demonstrate that he bore no grudge against the People of Israel.

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To prove that you truly bear no grudge, it is not enough to grant forgiveness or even pray for the individual. If you really want to overcome your resentment, you should pay from your own pocket to heal the person.

Many times, people bear a grudge or resentment against a friend or family member that carries on for years or even decades. They know that it's not healthy. They know that they need to forgive. And eventually, they truly do. But still, the anger finds its way to back.

The Torah gives us the tools on dealing with this anger—how to really get to the point where you truly forgive your friend and are freed from this powerful feeling of resentment:

It is through coming to that person's aid. When you hear that the person you resent is failing in business, pray for him and ask G-d to grant him success. And even more so—help him in a physical manner. Refer customers to him and spend your own money on him.

This behavior is the best cure for freeing yourself of resentment, and truly turning a new chapter.

אמנם, מחילה כזו היא באופן של אכזריות - כי: מכיון שאינו משיב לו כגמולו חס ושלום, ומוכן אפילו להתפלל עבורו שיהיה לו כל טוב, אם כן, מה איכפת לו להסיר מלבו כל שמץ של טינה וקפידא (לא רק שקפידא לא תזיק, אלא שלא תהיה קפידא כלל)?! ומכיון שכן, הרי כאשר אינו מסיר מלבו טינה זו - אין זה אלא תנועה של אכזריות!

ועל זה בא הלימוד שלמדים מפרשתנו - "מכאן למי שמבקשים ממנו מחילה שלא יהא אכזרי מלמחול": ציווי הקב"ה למשה רבינו "עשה לך שרף", "משלך" דוקא - בא ללמדנו עד כמה נדרש להסיר את הטינה מלבו מכל וכל, עד כדי כך, שהקב"ה צוה למשה רבינו שה"שרף" שנועד לרפואת בני ישראל על דיבורם אודות משה רבינו - יהיה משלו דוקא, להראות שלא נשאר אצלו כל שמץ של טינה על בני ישראל.

A Story Sender the Tea Merchant

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, once visited the city of Shklov, where he attended the shivah home of a young father, Sender, who had passed away. The Alter Rebbe made a surprising statement to the father of the deceased. Sender's soul, the Alter Rebbe said, was especially lofty, and he has a special place in paradise.

Sender had seemed to be an ordinary young man. To better understand why his soul shined with such a great light, the Alter Rebbe asked the father to tell him about his son's personality.

Sender's father shared the following story:

Sender and his father ran a tea business in Russia. They would meet their supplier at the fair in Leipzig, Germany, and take delivery of the goods at the Russian border. A businessman from their town decided to become their competitor. His motivation was jealousy, and his business ethics reflected his feelings. (This was during the height of the controversy between the Jewish establishment and the newly burgeoning Chassidic community, and the competitor was a member of the opposing camp). Basically, he entered the tea industry just to hurt Sender.

The competitor decided to involve the authorities. As everyone knows, even when business affairs are absolutely above board, a government investigation can cause trouble.

According to the deal Sender had with his supplier, the supplier remained responsible for the goods until delivery. So his competitor schemed to surreptitiously denounce Sender's supplier to the authorities as soon as the shipment crossed the border, which is where Sender would take delivery. Hopefully, the tea would be confiscated and Sender would have to bear the loss, while the seller would have to deal with the criminal prosecution.

Sender traveled to Leipzig and made his deal. He paid a large sum up front—after all, the best prices can be had for CBD (Cash Before Delivery).

Meanwhile the rumor spread that the authorities were investigating shipments of tea for evasion of customs duties. And a few days later the rumors were confirmed. A complaint was issued against a large shipment of tea.

The delivery was made, but Sender and his father kept their goods in a secret location in order to avoid suspicion. Eventually, when they felt it safe to sell the goods, they suffered a great loss because the tea simply went stale. In the end, Sender and his father abandoned the tea business because of this experience.

Meanwhile, the informer lost his fortune. After the dust settled it turned out that

the authorities had seized his tea instead! His scheme backfired and he became sick and bedridden. People took great pity on him and donated money for him and his family.

A few people were aware of his evil designs—including Sender himself. Nevertheless, because of their good nature they kept everything a secret.

During the period when the informer was sick in bed, time came to consider prospective matches for his daughter. Due to his great poverty, he had nothing to offer for a dowry. One day, Sender visited him. When the informer was told about Sender's upcoming visit, he wanted to hide under the floor from sheer embarrassment.

When Sender entered, it was evident that the sick man wanted to say something but could not. Sender comforted him by encouraging him to trust in G-d's salvation. His gentle way penetrated the man's heart. After Sender left, a packet of cash was found under the patient's pillow, enough to fund a handsome dowry for his daughter.

After hearing the story, the Alter Rebbe was satisfied. "Now it makes sense. I couldn't understand why his soul seemed so saintly."

(Sender was the great-grandfather of Rebbetzin Rivka, wife of the Rebbe Maharash and grandmother of the Previous Rebbe, who recorded the story).

Adapted from Chabad.org/635430

