

Forgive

“Chaim, what’s wrong? You look a little upset.”

“Dad, I’m so upset that I could just cry.”

“What happened, Chaim?”

“We had a test in school last week and we received our grades today. I didn’t do so well.”

“Chaim, don’t worry about that. A low grade just means that you have to try harder the next time. Almost everyone gets a low grade eventually. The wisest of all men, King Solomon said, ‘A tzaddik falls seven times and gets up.’ Pick yourself up and try again.”

“Dad, you always have the right advice for me. However, there is more to the problem than the low grade. What really upset me was one of the boys in the class. He caught a glimpse of my paper, stood up in class, and announced, ‘Chaim got a 65 in the test!’ Dad, I was so embarrassed.”

Chaim begins to sob softly on his father’s shoulder.

“Chaim, Chaim. It will be okay.”

“No it won’t be okay, Dad. I will never forgive that boy. Never never never!”

Chaim’s father hugs and comforts him. Now is not the time to work out the problem. As the Mishna says in Pirkei Avos (4:23), “Do not appease a person when he is angry.”

The next day, Chaim is in a much better mood.

“Chaim, do you want to talk about what happened in school yesterday?”

“Sure, Dad.”

“Were you serious when you said that you would never forgive the boy who embarrassed you?”

“Yes I was Dad. You don’t know how badly my feelings were hurt.”

“Let me tell you a story that I am sure you already know. It is about Yosef HaTzaddik. His brothers cast him into a pit and left him there to die. They later reconsidered and wanted to sell him into slavery. They returned to the pit but he was already gone, sold as a slave by a band of traveling merchants. Yosef’s brothers did a terrible thing to him. Do you know how a slave was treated? Could you imagine selling your own brother as a slave? That should have totally destroyed his life. Chaim, would you say that Yosef had a right to resent his

brothers?”

“Yes, Dad.”

“Would you say that he had every reason not to forgive them?”

“Yes, Dad.”

“Read this verse, Chaim.”

“He kissed all of his brothers and wept upon them.”

“Rabbi Yishaya Halevi Horwitz, the Bible commentator who is known to us as the Shlah, (the contracted form of name of the book that he wrote, “*Shnei Luchos HaBris*”.) explained this verse. ‘Do you see how much a person needs to forgive and let things pass. They sinned against Yosef, and Yosef cried and kissed them.’”

“Is that really true Dad? Did Yosef really forgive his brothers after what they did to him?”

“He certainly did.”

“That was much worse than what happened to me.”

“It certainly was.”

“I guess that I should really forgive that boy.”

“I think you should Chaim.”

“I feel better already, Dad. When you forgive someone, you get the bad feelings out of your heart.”

“You also get at least two mitzvos: the mitzvah of not bearing a grudge against someone, and the mitzvah of loving your fellow Jew like yourself. Someone who knows how to forgive, really knows how to live!”

Kinderlach . . .

Did someone play a joke on you? Forgive him. Did someone insult you? Forgive him. Did someone borrow your favorite pen without permission? Forgive him. Did someone eat the last piece of cake in the refrigerator? Forgive him. Forgive everyone. Live a grudge-free life.

Gratitude

The air was charged with anticipation. The emotional reunion between Yaakov and his long-lost son Yosef was about to take place (Bereshis 46:29). One can imagine the feelings of Yaakov Avinu for his favorite son. He loved him so much that he refused to be consoled for the entire time that Yosef was gone. Yaakov Avinu was a *novi* (prophet). One can only experience *nevuah* (prophecy) from Hashem when he is happy. Yaakov Avinu did not receive one *nevuah* (prophecy) during the entire time of Yosef’s absence due to

his extreme sadness. We can only begin to picture how happy he must have been to see Yosef.

What actually happened? Yosef fell onto Yaakov’s neck and wept. Rashi explains that Yaakov, however, did not weep. Instead, he recited *Kriyas Shema*, the prayer by which we accept *Oi Malchus Shomayim* (the Yoke of Heaven) upon ourselves. At the height of his ecstasy, his first thought was about Hashem.

The Maharal in his sefer *Gur Aryeh* relates that when Yaakov saw his son Yosef, love and fear of Hashem came into his heart. How wonderful and complete are Hashem’s middos; see how He rewards His faithful ones! This is the trait of the pious ones, when something good happens to them, they cleave to Hashem for the kindness and the truth He has done for them.

Kinderlach . . .

What was Yaakov Avinu’s first thought when something good happened to him? To thank and praise Hashem. This hacoras hatov (gratitude) is a wonderful middah (character trait) that we can learn from. What do we do when good things happen to us? Do we say, “Boruch Hashem?” “Hodu Lashem Ki Tov?” We should. We know that all good things come from Hashem. So, why not thank Him directly? The next time we get a good grade on a test, let’s say, “Boruch Hashem!” When our Sabba and Safta come to visit us from far away, let’s say “Hodu Lashem Ki Tov!” We’re so happy that Hashem has been good to us!

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