

Honorable Mentchen Judging Favorably Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

Rabbi Yitzchok Berkowitz interprets judging justly as just being fair. More often than not, when you judge favorably you judge correctly. The Talmud in Shabbos teaches, if you judge a fellow person favorably, the Almighty will judge you favorably. As the Talmud often does, it quotes a law and then tells a story to highlight the point.

There was a man who descended from the upper Galilee who got a job working for an employer in the south. After 3 years of assiduous work he said to his boss, "Please pay me so I can return to my family." The employer said, "I have no money." The employee then asked, "Give me fruit." The employer said, "I have none." The employee then asked for land or animals or linen. Each time the employer said he had none. The worker resignedly took his meager possessions and went home. When *yom tov* was over, the employer took the person's wages and loaded up three donkeys with food, drink, and delicacies. He paid his employee and then asked, "What did you think when I said I had nothing?" The employee answered, "I thought you had just invested in a great opportunity and had no liquid cash. Maybe you had hired out your animals and the land to people who could sharecrop it. Maybe you hadn't tithed your fruit yet..." The employer said, "It is all true. Just as you judged me favorably, may Hashem also give you the benefit of the doubt." If the Gemara is so frugal with its wording. Why does it recount this story in such detail? The Torah wanted to teach us that judging favorably can only work if you really believe what you are saying. If you see something questionable you have to

come up with a feasible reason for it, otherwise it's not worth anything.

The Chofetz Chaim says that in the world to come Hashem will scrutinize our actions. If we will not judge favorably, Hashem will do the same. Instead of looking at the deeds we did, he will look at why we did it. And who can stand up to Hashem's scrutiny? Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin gave a guarantee, if one gives the benefit of the doubt one will never transgress the prohibition of *loshon hara*. The best defense is judging favorably. We are taught don't judge your fellow Jew until you stand in his shoes. We can never do that because we are all different. Therefore, we can never judge. The Alter of Kelm taught, if a teacher gets angry with a student after the child continues to disobey, the teacher should ask himself if he too sometimes acts this way. Does he too continue to do the wrong thing after being rebuked countless times? If we bear in mind that we might sometimes be guilty of the same offence, we'll be that much more inclined to give the benefit of the doubt.

Let us say you gave someone the benefit of the doubt and you made a mistake. You thought they had good intentions, but they didn't. You haven't lost out. You've still fulfilled the mitzvah of judging favorably. There's no other mitzvah in the Torah like this. If you shake a *lulav* after Sukkot or keep Shabbat on Tuesday it's all for naught. With judging favorably, you can only win.

It says in Pirkei Avot, "*Hevei dan et kol ha'adam l'kaf zechut*" What does kol ha'adam mean? There is a plethora of factors that make up each individual that has to be taken into

account. People have sensitivities. Sometimes you might say something and the person will react in a bizarre way. You might have unknowingly hit him at his raw spot. Judge him favorably.

If you missed one detail you've missed the whole story. If you don't know the whole picture, you cannot judge. A mother came to a meeting and they were discussing a child who had caused a lot of trouble. Suddenly the mother realized they were discussing her child. It was very easy to find all the reasons to defend her. That's the perspective we're supposed to have. Every Jew is a child of Hashem. We don't want to speak or think bad about anyone. It's important not to jump to conclusions. I was attending the wedding of a student of mine and I got a ride back with a wonderful boy named Uri. I said to him, "I see you won a *bekiyus* award." He answered, "One of many." I thought this was strange. He was such a modest person. Finally, I began to laugh. He was trying to belittle what he had done and I thought he was engaging in self-aggrandizement. He meant- one of many people to win the award and I thought he meant one of many awards.

I was once sitting in the Mirrer Yeshiva in New York and two Syrian businessmen were discussing where they wanted to be when they died. One said he wanted to be at his desk. The other said he wanted to be in bed. Then the first person said, "I want to be at my desk because it will testify I never took a penny falsely. I was a man of integrity." I was about to condemn him. Now I felt chastised.

Megilat Kohelet: Perek 7 Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

"Anger is better than laughter for with a severe face the heart will rejoice." Sometimes showing disapproval can rectify someone's heart. This refers to anger that must be expressed in the face of injustice. We often prefer to be nice and we don't always stand up for what we should. Part of the reason may be that we like the approval of people who don't like the kind of people we should have stood up for. Think of the times you knew something was wrong and you were not the one who stood up, someone else did, you have to wonder- where was I? I could have said that or been there. A serious face can impact people's hearts. Anger when the situation demands it is praiseworthy. But as soon as there's a little patronizing and enjoying the other person's mistakes, then it becomes something evil.

"The heart of the wise are in the house of mourning while the heart of the fools are in the house of partying." The heart of a wise man will be in the house of mourning, desiring to learn something about life, while the heart of the fool will be lost in senseless celebration.

There are three different fools mentioned in Mishlei: *peti*, *letz*, *kesil*. *Peti* is the kind of fool who is easily convinced of anything. A *letz* is a cynic, someone who enjoys tearing things down because the confrontation with anything serious is overwhelming to him. *Kesil* is impulsive, someone whose attitude towards life is experiential. He lives in the moment, not in the sense of using it in a positive way, but in just experiencing it. He doesn't question its goodness or badness or morality.

"Better to hear the rebuke of the wise man than the song of the fool." We want to hear we're perfect as we are. One of the eulogies at the funeral of the Holtzbergs in Mumbai was delivered by Rabbi Grossman, the Rabbi of Migdal Haemek. When they went into the Chabad house they saw there had been a lot of shooting and bullets had entered the Sefer Torah but were stopped by the phrase, "*Bnei Avraham*," the children of Avraham. This takes us back to the story of Nadav and Avihu. At the end it says, "*B'krovei a'kadesh*," I will be sanctified through those who are holy. Hashem oftentimes will show who He really is through the expectations he has from holy people. Rav

Grossman said that this could also be in a certain sense, as Rashi says, that the death of *tzadikim* are similar to a sacrifice in that it brings an atonement for everyone. Maybe we should stop needing so much atonement. Maybe it's time to look at who we really are. All the fragmentation, *loshon hara*, and nonsense only lead us further away from Hashem. It's time to repent. Better to hear rebuke than the songs of the fools which will always be affirmative.

"The laughter of the fool is like the sound made when thorns crackle under a pot." In earlier times, people would gather dry thorns and acorns to get a fire going. The heat caused by the crackling thorns is like the noise of the fool's laughter. It's destructive, it burns itself out, it's everything laughter shouldn't be. There's a place for laughter such as taking the nonsense of the world and reducing it to nothing. That's the laughter of Yitzchak. True joy is the place for laughter. It isn't tearing down things of value which is the agenda of the *kesil* but reveling in what is true and eternal.

Derech Hashem: Divine Intervention Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Intrinsic complexity characterizes all of us. There are people who appear respectable yet may make bad choices. The influence of good or evil that Hashem sends down to people is related to their actions. There is a lot of intricacy in the way that Hashem causes His light to come down. Generally, it is measured according to what that person can receive and according to what his roots are. All we see is the result of Hashem's judgment and it has many different variations and limitations. A human being cannot grasp it. Reality is inexplicable and will be different for every person.

The sages refer to the era before the giving of the Torah as two thousand years of confusion.

In our present time, we have the Torah and are aware of Hashem but we don't have prophets or divine inspiration. What we could achieve through our human minds and endeavors, compared to what the prophets achieved spiritually, is the difference between body and soul. A classic example of this would be the law concerning the red heifer. How could the same thing that caused impurity to one cause purity to another? Moshe knew the answer but King Shlomo didn't. King Shlomo is described as the wisest of all human beings while Moshe was the greatest of all prophets. Human logic is limited. It stems from *chochma* (wisdom) which is *koach mah*, the power to question, "What is this?" Then you can measure it and make conclusions. But that first question

makes you dependent on the outside. Conversely divine inspiration comes from the source of all things. It's not dependent on knowledge. During the First Temple there were tens of thousands of prophets, but there were lots of people who were not. Although they were on a much higher level than we could fathom, there were still factors preventing people from reaching their potential. The prophets predicted that at the end of time all humankind would merit divine inspiration without difficulty. Our spiritual reality is delineated by time and place. It's Hashem's plan that there should be an order to revelation. The progression will proceed slowly but ultimately it will all be revealed.