

A Taste of Torah Stay Cool

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Have you ever gotten mad? Lost your cool? Blown your top? Then you know that when you are in a state of rage, you tend to say and do some pretty irrational things. Things you will certainly regret later (no matter how many times you say, "I had a right to get angry"). In short, anger leads to mistakes.

Our Sages made this observation millennia ago, and they based it on an event in this week's parsha. The Jewish People, in the middle of the desert, suddenly discover that the Well of Miriam, a rock that miraculously provided them with water, has turned dry as a stone following Miriam's death. The people angrily accost Moshe and Aharon and demand water. Hashem instructs Moshe to speak to the rock, whereupon it will give forth water once more. Moshe errs and strikes the rock instead of speaking to it. Water gushes from the rock, but Moshe is taken to task by Hashem for not following His directions precisely and thus failing to sanctify His Name. The penalty for Moshe's error: he, along with his brother Aharon, who was party to the incident, will die in the desert, never to enter the Land of Israel.

Our Sages inform us that Moshe's tragic mistake was a result of his show of anger to the Jewish People when they complained, for when one gets angry, he

is prone to err.

The question begs itself: How are we to understand that Moshe, one of the greatest people to ever walk the face of the earth, lost his temper? We must conclude - as many great Rabbis throughout the ages have - that the anger he displayed was a mere show, one he felt necessary to put the Jews in their place following their impudence.

Which leaves us with another problem: If Moshe's anger was not genuine, why did it cause him to blunder so egregiously?

Rabbi Elyahu Dessler (1892-1953) explains that anger is an inherently negative trait. And while evil can be used in a positive fashion, one must use extreme caution; despite the good intent, one is still tapping into evil. As a result of connection to evil, there is still room to slip up, great as the individual may be. This, says Rabbi Dessler, is what occurred with Moshe. His utilization of the negative trait of anger brought him into contact with evil, and this brought about his error.

The lesson for us all is quite obvious. If someone the likes of Moshe, the greatest of all prophets, the humblest of all men, could be led astray by merely displaying anger, what have we to say for ourselves if we allow our tempers to get the best of us?

Ask the Rabbi Stripes Forever

Aaron Goldman wrote:

I enjoy your postings immensely. Could you please tell me the reason

for stripes on a tallis? I Imagine that not having them would not disqualify the tallis, but how did the black stripes come about? I know that the Sefardim

Stories For The Soul

Let Yourself Soar

It is said that when Hashem created the world, he created birds without wings. The birds complained, "Hashem, You have put us at a disadvantage compared to all the other animals. They have powerful muscular legs, enabling them to run fast and far. We have only these scrawny legs. The other animal predators can easily pursue us and feast on us. We don't stand a chance."

Hashem performed a miracle and gave the birds an amazing gift. He gave them wings.

Now the birds really complained, "Ribbono shel Olam, it was bad enough before, when we had to evade our pursuers with our scrawny legs. Now You have made things much worse by giving us these huge, clunky things on our sides. Now we can barely waddle, much less run. We will be at the mercy of all the other animals, who will prey on us, catch us and kill us."

"My dear children," Hashem replied, "these wings are not a burden. You just don't understand how to use them. If you use your wings properly, you will be able to soar to the greatest heights. You will achieve that which was thought to be unachievable."

When we look at halacha it can seem staggering. Some might even think that the mitzvos are hindering their lives, preventing them from eating, speaking, or doing what they want. The opposite is true. By understanding and observing the mitzvos, we will be elevated to levels beyond our comprehension.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek, by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers for "Trust Thy Father", a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into vital Jewish concept of Bitachon. The classes are held on Tuesdays, 7:55-8:25 a.m., at Aish. For info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



HEART OF THE TORAH - AT AISH OR ANYWHERE

Join Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab and Rabbi Yechiel Erlanger to learn the Ten Commandments - the Heart of the Torah - in depth. This 14-part series will complete the study of the Ten Commandments just in time for the August 1st national and local Grand Siyum Hashas celebrations. Classes are held at Aish & broadcasted via gotomeeting.com. For more information, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



COMMUNITY WIDE SIYUM HASHAS CELEBRATION

The Denver Jewish Community will gather on August 1st, 2012 to honor local Daf Yomi participants and celebrate Torah study in Denver. Celebrate with Denver's own devoted Daf Yomi participants, people who have taught us the meaning of commitment over the past 7 1/2 years. To register, or for more information, visit the Kollel's website, www.denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2800 ext. 7.

Interpersonal Issues

If A Lost Item Has No Valid Identifying Marks

If one found an item with no valid identifying feature, doesn't know who the owner is, and isn't sure whether the owner has already discovered his loss, then he must hold on to the item until Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet)

comes (just prior to the coming of Moshiach) and informs him who the owner is.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

Continued from front

have white stripes on their Tallis - and modern ones have different colors. But I am interested in the traditional ones. Thank you very much.

Saul wrote:

Here's a poser: Why do taleisim have stripes? Regards

Ruth Marcus from Hyde Park wrote:

Why don't cotton tzitzis have stripes?

Dear Aaron Goldman, Saul, and Ruth,

The stripes on the tallis remind us of the 'strand of techeles' once worn as part of the tzitzis.

Techeles is sky-blue wool. It is dyed with a special dye made from the blood of a fish/snail called the chilazon. The Torah says that if we wear a four-cornered garment, we should put strings on the corners, and one of these strings should be a 'strand of techeles.'

Over the centuries, the exact identity of the chilazon became forgotten. Hence, the 'strand of techeles' became a mitzva we are unable to fulfill (according to most authorities).

The idea behind tzitzis is that they

serve as a reminder. Like royal subjects who wear special insignias to symbolize their loyalty to the king, we wear tzitzis to remind us of our duty to Hashem and His commandments. The beautiful blue reminds us of the sky, which in turn inspires us to ponder Hashem's greatness. Now that we no longer have techeles, we have the stripe on the tallis to remind us of the techeles.

Some people used to have a blue stripe. I don't know why ours is black.

It makes sense that only a woolen tallis has stripes, since techeles is made from wool.

According to some authorities, the tallis should be the same color as the tzitzis - white. That would explain the Sefardic custom to have white stripes.

Sources:

Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 9:4
Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 9:6
Ta'amei Haminhagim 15

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