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SEFER VAYIKRA - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

FOR THE REFUAH SHLEIMA OF RIVKA BAS SHOSHANA

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שמיני

Anger and Self Control

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FOR THE REFUAH SHLEIMA OF RIVKA BAS SHOSHANA

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פרשת שמיוני

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Anger and Self Control

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Part I. Anger and Middos

A Day of Perfection

Vayehi bayom hashemini – And it was on the eighth day of the inauguration of the Mishkan. The Am Yisroel was celebrating a great day in our history, finally the Shechina would come to rest in the House of Hashem. On a day like that, it was the hope of the Am Yisroel that every detail of the inaugural *avodah* should be perfect – that nothing should go wrong. And so *darosh darash Moshe* – Moshe diligently inquired after every detail. The double *lashon*, “he inquired, he inquired,” is emphasizing Moshe’s utmost care in making sure that everything was being done in accordance with the exact command of Hashem.

And so, when he discovered that the he-goat of the sin offering had been burnt completely on the *mizbeach* instead of being eaten by

the *kohanim*, so he became wrathful. וַיִּקְצֹף עַל אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל אִיִּתְמָר בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן –
And Moshe was angry at Elazar and Isamar (Shemini 10:16).

The Perfect Man Reacts

Moshe was angry! Now, to our little minds that might not seem so surprising. After all, isn't that natural? When something is done against our will, something that's important to us, so we get frustrated; we're angry. Sometimes you might even explode.

But we understand that Moshe Rabeinu wasn't like us. He was the most perfect of all men, an *ish Elokim* who had complete control over his emotions. And so, it's a big question. Could it be that Moshe reacted to that base impulse of rage just like that?

And the question is only magnified even more when we study the words of the Rambam in *Hilchos Dei'os* (1: 1-3). He says there that anger is so dangerous of a *middah* that it belongs in a category separate from almost all other *middos*. When it comes to most qualities of character, the Rambam says that we should aim to avoid extremes. Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't approve of extremes; He prefers that people walk the middle road, what the Rambam calls the *derech ha'yisharah*.

Happiness and Generosity

For example, happiness, *simcha*. A man should not be too ecstatic; wild with joy. You see how in America everyone is always guffawing – loud laughing and *leitzanus* all the time. No, that's not the Torah way of happiness. But a man shouldn't be sad and despondent either, says the Rambam. He should take the middle path – he should always be cheerful; filled with a satisfaction in life, an authentic joy that never dissipates.

And it's like that with other *middos* too. Let's say, generosity and stinginess. A person shouldn't waste money; he shouldn't be a spendthrift. But he also shouldn't be a tightwad and try to save every dollar that he has. He should walk the middle path by parting easily with money for his family's needs; he should find it easy to separate from his money for what's needed in the house and other good causes, at the same time that he lives with good sense and frugality, not wasting money on foolish things.

And if you look over there in the Rambam you'll see that this is his recommendation for almost all of the character traits – it's the great principle of walking on the *shvil hazahav*, the golden path of the *derech ha'emtza'i*.

Anger Is Different

However, says the Rambam (ibid; 2:3), anger is one of the few qualities of character that are *osur* for a man even in a medium way. Anger is so perilous, so harmful, that you should aim for the extreme – there's no aspiring to walk the middle road when it comes to *ka'as*. The *chachomim* advise us to go against our nature – we should undertake an attitude in life of trying to avoid anger *no matter what*. You should train yourself not to become angry even when it would appear to be justified. Even if somebody would hit you or embarrass you, you should act like nothing happened.

It's not easy. Just listening to these words is not enough. A person must train himself for a long time until this *middah* is uprooted. “No matter what happens,” he tells himself again and again, “I'm not going to get angry even if I'm justified a hundred percent.” That's how he has to think. Could be you think you're a hundred percent right and the other person is a hundred percent wrong, but no matter, “I'm not going to be angry no matter what.” It's not easy, but it has to be done.

Coming Home

So here's a man who quarrels with his wife. Now, it's possible that both of them are to blame, but he should worry about himself now. And so, when he comes home at night, as he's holding the doorknob in his hand, let him think, “No matter what, tonight I'm not going to react. I heard Rabbi Miller say that in a lecture and so I'm going to try it out.” He steels himself for whatever may come.

And so, when he opens the door he's prepared because he already came to this lecture: “Where were you all night long?” she's yelling. “I was left with the children – they were driving me crazy!” And so on and so forth.

But instead of exploding and saying, “What do you want from me?! I'm trying to make a living!” No; he keeps quiet. He has a lot to say but he keeps his mouth closed. Maybe he opens it just a little: “Oh no; I'm so

sorry you had a difficult day. Tell me what happened,” he says in a quiet voice.

Now, you won't be able to do such a thing naturally. You have to fortify yourself beforehand. He makes himself ready while he's still standing outside the house: “No matter what happens, I'm not going to react.”

The first evening it's not so easy. His blood is boiling and it's not easy to keep his tongue locked behind his teeth (see Eirechin 15b). But he does it and the night passes by *b'shalom*. Then another day passes and then another day and after a while it comes to him easier and easier.

Anger Is Just Too Dangerous

And he should continue in this manner for a long time. The Rambam doesn't say how long, but you have to work on this until finally the quality of anger is uprooted from your mind entirely. *Shelo yargish afilu lidvarim hamach'isim* – You won't even sense those things that would cause others to anger. You'll be able to remain calm under any circumstances because it doesn't even occur to you to become angry.

And what's remarkable about the *middah* of anger is that unlike other *middos* where you're expected to come back to the *derech ha'emtazai*, when it comes to *ka'as* there's no going back to the middle of the road. He should go against his nature and continue in this way for a long time until the quality of wrath is uprooted – and once he achieves that, *he never should move away from that extreme*. Anger is too dangerous for walking the middle path.

Frothing and Foaming

And so we come back to the anger of Moshe Rabeinu in our *parsha*. **קִצְפָה** – Moshe Rabeinu was foaming. The word *ketzef* means when water is so agitated that it froths and becomes foamy. And so the *posuk* seems to be telling us that Moshe was frothing, he was foaming at the mouth.

And it wasn't only once. In the Torah we find “*vayiktzof*” again and again. When he came down from Har Sinai and found people dancing around the *eigel* he smashed the *luchos*! You don't smash *luchos* unless you're angry! And forty years later, as Moshe was preparing to say his last goodbye to the *Am Yisroel*, again: *Vayiktzof Moshe al pekudei*

ha'chayil – Moshe was angry at the officers of the army. And he was angry other times too. And that's a big question: How could it be that such a righteous man is becoming angry again and again?

Man Was Made Right

And the answer is that although the Rambam teaches us how important it is to avoid anger, still, he doesn't approve of people who don't have *kaas* either. “*Lo yihyeh k'meis she'eino margish*” he writes, – “You shouldn't be like a dead person who doesn't feel any anger.”

יְשֵׁר אֲלֵקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם יֶשֶׁר – Hashem made man in the right way (Koheles 7:29). It means that all of the functions of a person are essential to him. Not only the bodily functions – even the *emotions* of a person were purposefully placed in man. Compassion and cruelty; generosity and stinginess; envy and satisfaction – there's no end to the different character traits that Hashem has implanted in Mankind. And every *middah* that Mankind possesses is intended to be used according to the will of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The wise man learns how much of each *middah* is to be used and in which situations, so that he should achieve perfection of character *al pi hatorah*.

Part II. Righteous Anger

A Useful Weapon

And that means that *ka'as* too is a wonderful creation of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And I don't use the word 'wonderful' lightly. Anger is a miraculous faculty of the mind and body working together in tandem. What happens when somebody becomes angry? On top of your kidneys there are two small glands called the adrenaline glands. And when these glands get the signal from your brain – “It's time now for the body to get angry” – so these glands inject into your blood a certain hormone, a secretion that makes your blood full of sugar. And this surplus imbues you with excess energy – you suddenly have more energy than you normally have.

And you need this extra energy – it's a stimulant. Your entire body is reacting to your thoughts of anger now – your blood is boiling. An angry man's blood is an entirely different type of blood.

Now, why is Hakodosh Boruch Hu doing this now inside your body? What's the purpose of such changes? And the answer is that anger is an important weapon that we sometimes must make use of. It's a gift *min hashamayim*. Because many times you have to go into battle and you need that stimulant that anger provides; you need extra energy to fight back against *resha'im*.

Anger of Tzadikim

You know, when Dovid went to battle against the nations he didn't carry with him only his *tehillim*. He raised up his battle axe and he summoned the *middah* of *ka'as*: אֶרְדֹּפָה אִיבֵי וְאַשְׁמִידֵם – *I will pursue my enemies and annihilate them* (Shmuel II, 22:38). You think Dovid Hamelech destroyed his enemies with love?

Certainly anger in the midst of battle is very important. How can you be without anger? The Rambam says that a man without *ka'as* is like a cripple; he's castrated. You *must* get angry at *resha'im*; you *must* be filled with indignation at injustice. Wasn't Pinchas angry when he saw what Zimri was about to do? Wasn't Matisyahu angry when he saw the Jew who was about to conform to the request of the Greek official and bring an offering to *avodah zarah*? Certainly *tzadikim* get angry!

Anger That Is Pleasing

And that's why when Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Har Sinai carrying the *luchos* and he saw some of the Am Yisroel singing and dancing around the *eigel*, did he wait for his anger to subside? No; he took the tablets of stone and he hurled them down and smashed them to pieces! And Hakodosh Boruch Hu later said to him, *Yeyasher koichacho!* It's a good thing that you got angry and smashed them to pieces" (Shabbos 87a).

Moshe was angry and that was a great lesson to the people. The people were shocked! They were stunned! They're all waiting and finally Moshe Rabeinu is coming down the mountain with the stone tablets that Hashem had hewed and inscribed with His own script. And now this angry man broke them to pieces! וְאַשְׁבַּרְם לְעֵינֵיכֶם – *I broke them before your eyes* (Devarim 9:17). Ooh wah! That put a quick end to the party! It was an anger that cooled them off from the celebration around the golden calf; it was an act of anger that was pleasing to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The Angry Shevet

And then Moshe Rabbeinu stood at the gateway of the camp and he called out, **מי לַהֲשֵׁם אֵלַי** – “Who is for Hashem should come to me!” And who came to him? Only the angry ones. If you weren’t angry, you stayed in your tent. Not everybody was willing to do that – they were afraid. Once you go with Moshe Rabbeinu, who knows what you’ll have to do? You might have to take vigorous and very decisive action. You might have to kill your brother too!

וַיִּאָסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל בְּנֵי לֵוִי – *The Bnei Levi rallied to the cry of Moshe Rabbeinu (Shemos 32:27).* The entire shevet was burning with anger and they gathered around Moshe: “Here we are!” And so Moshe said, “Each one of you should gird your sword on your loins and begin executing everyone who worshipped the golden calf whether it’s your brother, friend or relative.” And because they were angry, they listened.

וְהָאֵמֶר לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ לֹא רָאִיתִיו וְאֵת אָחָיו לֹא הִכִּיר וְאֵת בְּנָיו לֹא יָדַע – *The one who said about his father and mother, “I have not favored him”; he did not give recognition to his brothers and he acted as if he didn’t know his children (Devarim 33:9).* Levi refused to recognize his relatives. Relatives, not relatives, it doesn’t matter – anybody who is guilty of the *eigel*, they put him to death. Three thousand were executed at that time; and it took anger to accomplish such difficult work.

Murder in the Tent

Now, we know that this is the reason that the shevet Levi attained greatness with Hashem. **בָּעֵת הַהוּא הִבְרִיל הַשֵּׁם אֶת שִׁבְטֵי הַלֵּוִי** – *At that time, Hashem set apart the shevet Levi.* “Oooh!” said Hakodosh Boruch Hu, “Such a shevet, a shevet that is angry over My honor, I’m going to elevate them.” That’s what anger was created for, to see that justice is done. The shevet Levi didn’t get angry about broken dishes or about someone blocking a driveway. But for Hakodosh Boruch Hu?! Ooh wah, did they get angry! And therefore, **וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם** – *The Levi’im belong to Me*, said Hashem (Bamidbar 3:45). And the *medrash* (Vayikra Rabbah 2:2) says, **בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וּבְעוֹלָם הַבָּא** – *If you’re a Levi, if you’re only angry about My honor, then you have a special zchus in Olam Habo too. That anger elevated them forever – they were separated for greatness because of their anger.*

Our history is full of stories of great people who utilized their anger for the service of Hashem. Pinchas was a *kana'i* – it means he was an angry man. And when he saw Zimri going into a tent with Kozbi bas Tzur, so Pinchas took his spear and pierced their bodies with it. You can't do such a thing with a calm mind! You have to have the fire of anger to drive you to do it. What type of anger? Anger for the cause of *kavod shamayim*, to put an end to *chillul Hashem*. To fight with a bully like that, someone who flouts the *d'var Hashem* in public, that's when you must listen to your anger! Pinchas understood what Hashem required from him at that moment and he mustered the *middah* of anger that Hashem implanted in his *neshama*. He said, "Ka'as, come forth for me. I need you now." And the anger that he felt when he saw the *chilul Hashem* now overflowed – it came out and he rushed forward with the spear.

Liberals and Capital Punishment

Sometimes we *want* the anger to come forth. Hakodosh Boruch Hu puts in Mankind an anger so that society should want to rise up against the criminal. Unless you were mis-educated in the colleges, you'll feel a natural anger and indignation against injustice.

That's why it's a terrible crime today when judges postpone trials and the criminal many times doesn't come into the courtroom for a year or longer – they want to wait until the anger has already subsided. No! *Ein me'anin es hadin* – *You cannot postpone judgement!* As soon as possible the criminal must be brought to judgment – *while the blood is still boiling with anger!* When the blood of the victim just recently buried is crying out from the earth and the blood of society is bubbling with anger, that's the time to judge the man because the purpose of anger is to take revenge! Certainly society has to take revenge! That's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants!

Now people in general, when it doesn't affect them personally, they have a lassitude, a feeling of negligence: "It's none of my business," they think. Sometimes a person might even have misplaced pity – "You're going to take a human being and put him in the electric chair?"

Now, I know that today you'll find *lamdanim* who'll come out with whole *teshuvos* that we don't want people to be killed today; that we should intervene with the government against capital punishment. All these things, you have to know, are triggered by liberals who go to

gedolim and finagle from them *teshuvos*. It's not true! Actually in the olden days they were happy that the government had *dinei nefashos* because when they're *danin v'horgin*, where the government kills, it's a great restraint against crime.

The Criminal Governor

Among Jews we say **חַיָּבֵי חַיָּבֵי** – *Crime surely must be avenged* (Shemos 21:20). It means that you have to be angry at criminals. Not like that criminal governor Cuomo who vetoed the death penalty. He's the criminal; he's the one who will be to blame for the murders that will take place in the future. Because now they know they have a friend in Albany – all the criminals and all their liberal lawyers know they can rely on him. It's only when the leaders of society make a display of justified anger against wrongdoing, that's when society functions properly.

And so we see now that sometimes you *must* have anger. You can't be a stoic and not let wickedness make an effect on you. And the truth is that it's not only for criminals and murderers. It's not reserved for people dancing around an *eigel* or a bootlicker who's kowtowing to the Syrian-Greeks. Even in your house! Some things a man cannot allow to go on in his house; he can't allow his house to become like an Irishman's house. *Absolutely* the home is his responsibility. Sometimes he hears what happened, things that the child did or somebody else did and he must react; he must recognize that the anger bubbling within him is there for a reason.

Part III. Dangers of Anger

Dynamite Usage

And yet, at the same time, he must also understand that anger is like dynamite – it's a useful tool that can be dangerous when misused. Dynamite, you know, is a wonderful invention. Let's say you're trying to make a road and you come to a rocky hill that's standing in the way of your new throughway. Now, it's going to be a problem if you'll have to make a detour around every mountain, so you take sticks of dynamite

and you blow the rock out of the way to make a path through the mountain.

But suppose you work dynamiting mountains for the Department of Highways and now you come home and you're locked out of the house – you can't find your key and your wife is out somewhere. So will you take a piece of dynamite that you have in your work truck and put it near the door to blow the door open? No, you can't use such extreme means – dynamite is not for that.

Now, let's say this man dynamites the door open and now he's in the house. It doesn't end there – a man like that never knows when to stop. When the door is finally opened, he explodes with emotional dynamite: *"Why did you lock the latch from the inside? I was trying to get in all this time! Of course I tried the key! Don't you have any consideration for me? I'm standing outside in the freezing cold! Don't people here think about things before they do them?!"* A man like that is the biggest failure there is. He's a terror! Nobody wants him there! His wife and his children wish he would go back to work.

The Locked Cabinet

And that's because he's using his dynamite in the wrong place. His children and his wife are not dancing around an *eigel*; and they're not the Syrian-Greeks either. Are you going to carry dynamite sticks in your pocket and every time someone tries to get in your way, you'll throw a stick of dynamite at him? No, you can't throw dynamite around indiscriminately and you can't use anger indiscriminately either – that's how a house is destroyed.

And so, once a man realizes that anger is a very powerful medium, that should only be used very infrequently, so he makes up his mind, "I'm going to put the dynamite in the basement, in the locked cabinet, and not use it except for extreme cases." He doesn't walk the middle road when it comes to anger – although it's made for a purpose, nevertheless it must be put away and taken out only for the most dire emergencies.

Now, there are many people who take their anger out of the locked cabinet all too often; some people don't ever bother closing the cabinet at all and it becomes a sickness of the soul that has terrible repercussions for a person.

The Varied Treatments of Gehenom

In *Mesichta Nedarim* (22a) we find an important statement that teaches us about the results of a person's anger: *Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: Anyone who gets angry has to know that eventually all the different kinds of Gehenom will have control over him.* Not only will the angry man inherit for himself *Gehenom*, but it will be every form of *Gehenom*! And that's because *ka'as* means every kind of sin.

Of course, *ka'as* can cause a person sometimes to be *mechalel Shabbos* and in his *ka'as* sometimes he'll do even worse things too. There have been boys and girls who ran away out of *ka'as* and they accepted a cult instead of the Jewish faith. People have bowed down to idols to spite their families because of *ka'as*. But we're not even talking about that now. We're talking now about a person who learns Torah and he performs *mitzvos* and about him the *gemara* says that every treatment in *Gehenom* is waiting for him.

Because *ka'as* brings a person not only to be angry. Every *middah ra'ah* comes as a result of anger. It brings a person also to be mean and to say hurtful words. People break other people's hearts in their anger. It brings a person to do all kinds of wicked things – to say *lashon hora*, to slander others and to ruin their lives. And for so many types of sins, you need so many types of *Gehenom* treatments.

Alternatives to Gehenom

Now, you have to know that in *Gehenom* the treatments are not as easy as the treatments in this world. In this world, if you take a *sefer* like the *Reishis Chochma* or *Shevet Mussar* and study them so you'll heal yourself the easier way. If you take the *sefer Pele Yoetz* or *Orchos Tzaddikim*, or if you'll take a *sefer* like *Mesilas Yesharim*, these *seforim* will be a salve, a balm on your blister of anger and they'll cause it gradually to go away almost painlessly. By learning the right kind of Torah, a person can change his character and remedy his faults almost painlessly in this world.

But if he neglected to do that and he goes to *Gehenom* with that blister, with that ulcer of anger; there the treatment is entirely different. In *Gehenom*, there's no more *Mesilas Yesharim*, no more *Orchos Tzaddikim*. All these good remedies are left behind in this world. And

instead they have very powerful chemicals, like burning lye, to heal your *neshama*. They'll put burning lye on that ulcer and they'll remove it. But it hurts like *Gehenom!* And this I cannot describe to you because it's indescribable. Just to heal one *middah ra'ah* a person must undergo a terrible torture – and *ka'as* is the source of many many *middos ra'os* and many many sins.

The Angry Mentality

The gemara says, *Kol hako'es* – When someone becomes angry, *afilu Shechinah eino chashuvah kenegdo* – even the *Shechinah* is not important in his mind (Nedarim 22b). Hashem doesn't matter to him!

Now, that's a remarkable statement and the angry man would deny it vehemently. "*Chas veshalom,*" he'll say. "I put on tefillin every day and I daven with a *minyán*. What do you mean Hashem doesn't matter to me?!" But *Chazal* looked into the *penimiyus*, into the subconscious mind of the *ko'es* and testified that at that moment of anger he doesn't care for anything – *even the Shechinah doesn't mean anything to him at that moment!*

Shene'emar; they quote a *passuk* in *Tehillim* (10:4): *Rasha kegovah apo* – When the *rasha* becomes highly angry, *bal yidrosh* – he doesn't care to think into anything. At that moment he loses his mind. And what's the result? *Ein Elokim kol mezimosav* – all of his *machshavos* end up in the idea that *ein Elokim*, that there is no Hashem. This is a remarkably extreme statement – that when a man becomes very angry so he tends toward the mentality that *ein Elokim*.

Disappearing Emunah

Now, we'll understand this as follows. *Ka'as* comes because something is not according to this man's will, not according to his desires. He sees some opposition or some frustration of his hopes and he becomes dissatisfied with the way things are. The thing that he wished didn't come true or the situation is not the way he wanted it to be and that causes his *ka'as* to assert itself. He's angry now with the way things are as if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had neglected to take care of things properly – as if *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* has overlooked something and was faulty in His supervision.

Now, as we said before, he wouldn't be that bold to formulate such words. He's a *frum* man and he'll never say such a thing. But actually the

idea that the world is controlled by a benevolent ruler, by an all-powerful, all-seeing G-d, whose purpose is kindness, that idea is weakened in his mind when he gets angry. And when he becomes angry frequently then Hashem is gradually erased from his mind – every time he becomes angry, his *emunah* becomes more and more pale and dim. He doesn't feel that the *Shechinah* is close anymore and he acts in his subconscious mind as if the world has no supervision and things happen by chaos and accident. Actually, he becomes a *kofer* without realizing it.

And that's why the *gemara* says there that **וַיִּדְוַע שְׁעוֹנָתוֹ מִזְכוּיָתָיו** – *He can take it to the bank that his scale is weighed down on the side of Gehenom.* An angry person doesn't have to wait for the *yom hadin* to find out what's going to be with him. He can already be assured that his sins are more than his merits. He's a *shoimer mitzvos* – no question about that. And yet, if he gets angry, it's **וַיִּדְוַע**, he should know beforehand that there's no question – his sins exceed his good deeds.

And that's what the *gemara* is telling us here – a person must take it into his head, whether he is a great *baal ka'as* or a little *baal ka'as* to think about this matter earnestly; it's one of the great issues of life because his entire place in the World to Come is dependent on that. **וְהִסֵּר בְּעַם מִלִּבָּד** – *Remove anger from your heart*, **וְהִעֲבֵר רָעָה מִבְּשָׂרְךָ** – *and thereby remove the punishments of Gehenom from yourself.*

Part IV. In Practice

Gehenom In This World

Now all of this is true – nothing could be more true than what's waiting for a man in the Next World. But still, we shouldn't forget about the *pshuto shel mikra* of this *passuk* which is just as true. Shlomo Hamelech says: **וְהִסֵּר בְּעַם מִלִּבָּד** – *Remove ka'as from your mind*, **וְהִעֲבֵר רָעָה מִבְּשָׂרְךָ** – *and remove all types of trouble from your flesh.* From your flesh in this world! Every kind of trouble comes from *ka'as*! We see it all the time, on all sides, that when people are victims of their anger, their lives are ruined in this world as well. That's the plain meaning of the *passuk*. Shlomo HaMelech is telling us that all kinds of disasters and misfortunes are waiting for a man who is quick tempered.

Now, we understand that there's a certain exhilaration in yielding to anger because it's like narcotics – it stimulates the body when the extra sugars begin flowing through the veins. But it's not so good for your health if your body is frequently and needlessly stimulated. Anger causes ill health. Sometimes you become a regular sugar producer and you'll become diabetic, *chas v'shalom*. I know people who contracted diabetes because of anger. When the metabolism is upset the body can not utilize its mechanism of extracting the starches properly so he becomes over supplied with sugar, he has sugar in his blood, and that is why a diabetic person is always in danger of his life, unless he's constantly taking insulin, and even then, anything could happen. It's a result of anger.

Death by Anger

Other people get strokes in the head from anger. Because the blood, in order to travel through the fine blood vessels in the brain, sometimes only one corpuscle can travel through at a time – in a single file they have to pass through. That's how thin some of these blood vessels in the brain are. And sometimes if the blood is a little heavy with fibrinogen it clots and it clogs up the little artery in the brain and that's a stroke *chalila*. Many people have died in a stroke of anger.

How many people have dropped dead of heart failure because of anger? Keep in mind too that even while they're still alive their lives are not lives; they're constantly disturbed because of their anger, but then they drop dead too. You know, a man who has a certain condition, his wife can kill him without a gun. If she makes him angry and he boils up, suddenly something bursts, a blood vessel in his head bursts, and he's finished. There was once a famous English physician who diagnosed his own case: "Anybody who wants can kill me because I'm an angry man," he said. "Any rascal can come and make me lose my temper – and that would be the end of me."

Dynamic Marriages

Anger ends people's marriage careers too. That's why there are so many divorces. As soon as people get married they begin dynamiting their way into unhappiness. It all began so wonderfully. There was romance and flowers and music and perfume. Everything was beautiful but then they settle down to the humdrum of daily life. And now he

needs, let's say, to brush his teeth in the morning and his beloved is occupying the bathroom a little longer than he wants, so he starts pounding on the door. His glands are pumping sugar into his blood and he's becoming more and more excited. The anger that was meant to be used for the most rare occasions is now being used because of an occupied toilet. And now she discovers who he really is. Oh no! She didn't marry a man like that! And that is the beginning of a great deal of trouble in life.

I'm talking now about a man but the same is for a woman. If she wants to spend on something and he feels that they can't afford it yet, she feels frustrated. "He's preventing me from buying something I desire!" So all her life she was a spoiled little girl whose mother waited on her hand and foot and now she's angry because she can't get what she wants. And her husband looks on in astonishment: "Is this the lovely woman that I married?" He sees a raging female – a raging female is not so beautiful anymore.

Wrong Beginnings

Now, sometimes the trouble already begins at the wedding. Everybody is hectic and nervous and so when you come out of the *yichud* room – it's a stupid custom recently instituted that the *chosson* and *kallah* when they come out of the *yichud* room, so the *kallah* displays a gift that the *chosson* gave her; a new *minhag* – *minhag America*.

And so he comes out and her mother says to her, "What did the *chosson* give you?"

She says, "Give me? *Boruch Hashem*, I'm married – that's all I wanted."

"He didn't give you anything?!" And she says it in a loud voice.

Now, the *chosson* hears these foolish words of his mother-in-law, and he never learned this *possuk* in *Mishlei*, so he gets angry and he retorts: "What's it your business what I give to my wife?" he says to the mother.

And she answers him and he answers her and that's the beginning of the end. Now there begins a long line of recriminations that end up in a divorce and a *din Torah* and a court fight and broken hearts and broken health. A tragedy; a terrible tragedy. Sometimes a child is born

in between too. And that poor child is a victim, a lifelong victim of a broken home.

Let It Pass

Now, had that boy been prepared previously so he would have trained himself to avoid anger at all costs – of course the mother-in-law should have prepared herself too – but this *chosson* is a *talmid chochom*; he can't learn the *poshut pshat* of a *possuk* in Mishlei?!

If he would have prepared himself by learning these words that Shlomo HaMelech says, 'Remove *ka'as* from your heart and you'll remove a lot of trouble from your life,' so he knows already that when people are going to say something unfair to you, it doesn't make an impression and you remain calm. He wouldn't have lost his temper at that moment, and the incident would have passed by. They would have celebrated many *brissim*, many birthdays and *bar mitzvahs*. They would have danced at *chassunas* of children and great grandchildren. Who knows how many happy occasions they would have celebrated together if not for one careless fit of anger?

Opening The Cabinet

And therefore, anger is a terrible tool; it's dynamite that must be locked away in a cabinet. And yet, sometimes you must open that anger cabinet. A man must show that *ka'as* sometimes. You can't have a stony heart like the Greek stoics and not let wickedness make an effect on you. So what should one do?

So the Rambam advises that you should make *ka'as haponim v'lo ka'as haleiv* – *Train yourself to make a face of ka'as even though inwardly you are in control*. The little fire of anger you feel inside is a warning signal that you might have to react but you make it your business beforehand to say, "I'm just a play actor and in my heart I have no resentment at all." Try it sometimes. You're in control – you're only *acting* like you're angry.

That's an important point. There is such a thing as anger for a just purpose, but even then it should be *ka'as haponim v'lo ka'as haleiv*. It should be just an externality, an act. And this is something that parents and teachers must learn. It's something everyone must learn. You're putting on a show. When you recognize the anger against wrongdoing welling up within you, you quash it; you smother it and you begin to act.

Anyone who is guiding others must learn how to put on an act of anger. He's just doing his duty by behaving as if he were angry while inwardly he's full of composure. You can be very angry outwardly but inwardly you should attempt to be calm.

Personal Recollection

Only you have to be careful, because sometimes from the face, it permeates down to the heart too. Sometimes it's not possible for a person to do a good job and once he assumes a mask of anger, his interiority follows his exteriority. That happens too. But the ideal is that you should be only outwardly angry. You steel yourself beforehand, you'll insulate your heart against it and say, "I'm only play-acting." In your heart you are as calm as could be.

I once went to a meeting. I was sent by a Rosh Yeshiva to a Board of Directors meeting for the yeshiva. We had to ask them for money to employ another person, another rebbe. But the Board of Directors didn't have any money and they said that they couldn't hire another person. So I was angry at them! When I came back and told the Rosh HaYeshiva what the Board of Directors said, so the Rosh Yeshiva asked me, "Were you angry at them?" and I said, "Yes, very angry; we need that Rabbi." So the Rosh Hayeshiva said, "Oh no; you should have shown just a face of anger. You shouldn't have been angry. It's *ka'as haponim* you show – but there shouldn't be *ka'as haleiv*.

Foamy Anger

Now, Moshe Rabeinu, you have to know, didn't need any Rosh Yeshiva to remind Him. Moshe was a master over his emotions – he wasn't overcome by grief or joy. You think Moshe Rabenu lost his temper, *chas v'shaolm*? If anybody thinks that, he's making a fundamental error. Moshe Rabenu was the most perfect of men – he had trained himself in the awareness that he was always standing before Hashem and he was therefore able to turn on his anger the way we turn on a faucet.

And so when this greatest of men deemed anger a necessity so he donned the mask of wrath. וַיִּקְצֹף מֹשֶׁה means he put on a face of anger. *Vayiktzof* comes from the root *ketzef*, like in the words "*kiketzef al pnei mayim*" – like a foam, a froth, upon the water (Hoshea 10:7). The *ketzef*

is only *al pnei hamayim* – it's only superficial. That's enough! *Ka'as hapanim, v'lo ka'as haleiv.*

And that's the explanation for all the instances where you find that Moshe Rabenu became angry. When he saw something that he thought was wrong, something that was against the will of Hashem, and he felt the anger in his heart that was telling him something must be done, so he put on his mask and frightened them. Moshe Rabenu showed them a mask of anger and it frightened them into submission.

And that's the great lesson of *Vayiktzof* – that sometimes you have to show a face of anger. But it's only a *ketzef*; it's only a superficial bubbling on the surface. Sometimes you have to put on the mask of anger in your house; you have to show your children. "You can't do that!" Let's say sometimes a child insists on running out into the street where it's dangerous and you have to give him a *potch* and warn him not to do it again. Even the fondest parent needs sometimes to recognize the anger bubbling within him as an important stimulus – and then he'll feign wrath for the benefit of the child. But as much as possible, it's always "anger of the countenance but not of the mind."

Apply Judiciously

Now, I couldn't tell you all the details, when yes, when no, how much yes, how much no. The situations that we face are endless and therefore the words you're hearing now, they need to be applied judiciously. Everything that you hear in this place is like good meat; I hope it's good meat. But even good meat you can't eat by itself. You need to have a little bit of onions. You need a little bit of salt and pepper. You need some condiments. If you'll buy a piece of meat in a butcher shop and try to eat it straight from the butcher's block, then you won't enjoy it much.

Everything you hear needs to be explained and applied in practice. You need a great many other things besides these words alone. What you're hearing are just generalities or generalizations. We're not talking about waving a magic wand and suddenly everything is transformed. You expect that by hearing this lecture, you're going to be transformed? You can't expect to hear something once and just walk away and now you're all ready now to face the world.

And so, you'll have to hear these ideas over and over again and think into them. Only by dint of studying, so you'll come to know how to keep far far away from anger, and how to use it when needed – when yes and when not and how much. And so you have to get to work changing yourself. Certainly it takes work – nothing good comes easy. Everything comes as a result of work! You'll have to go out from here and practice again and again and again; and finally in the course of years and years, you'll discover that you'll be rewarded richly for all the effort that you invested in *tikkun hamiddos*. You'll become a more and more perfect *eved Hashem* every day of your life, fulfilling the purpose that you came into this world to achieve.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Anger of the Countenance, Not the Mind

Anger is a creation of Hashem and it's a useful tool, but also a very dangerous one. Sometimes we need to use anger, but it must be a superficial anger; *ketzef*, like foam atop water.

Bear in mind that we cannot expect to change in one day and transformation must be the result of study. This week I will review this booklet, underlining whatever speaks to me most.

I will spend a few minutes each day reviewing these lines.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

447 - Anger, Middos and The Afterlife | **732** - Gems from Mishlei 2 | **E-10** - Rambam Laws of Opinions 2 | **E-177** - And Behold It Is Very Good

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

On *Shabbos Mevorchim* we ask Hashem for a *עושר וכבוד*, a life of wealth and glory. But didn't we learn that glory is something that is inappropriate to run after in this world?

A:

Good question. Why do we ask for a life of *osher v'chavod*, a life of wealth and glory? The answer is this: We are not looking for glory – but we hope Hashem will help us behave in such a way that we *deserve* glory. If people will honor us because of our good character, we don't mind. We want to succeed in behaving in such a way that we deserve *kavod*, yes. I would like people to say, "Miller – he's a nice fellow!" I would like that, yes. Because that means that most likely I did something that would please people.

So you should do things in such a way that people should approve of you – but you're not living for *kavod*. And so, in that *tefilah* we ask Hashem, "Please, give us a life of *kavod*; please help us this month so that we should behave in a dignified manner; decently and *Torah'dik*, and then we deserve to get *kavod* from people." Oh, if we succeed in doing that this upcoming month, then we'll be very happy because that means that we've had a successful month.

TAPE # E-244

_____ This week's Q&A is sponsored: _____

In honor of my wife Rivka Rochel Bas Daniel HaLavi