

עדת אש קודש

Adass Aish Kodesh



PAINFUL DOUBT

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

I receive many phone calls during the day. That's not surprising I guess given the nature of my position. One day, I would like to write a book about all the calls over all the years, you know, the ones that really changed things, or at least helped others in a meaningful way. Don't worry, I won't mention names (no need to stop calling me yet) but the pageantry that is the human condition is often played out over the phone line.

Recently a yingerman who was obviously overwrought called. His voice was quivering, and I could tell I'm in for a long shmooz. He spewed out a tale of woe, his best friend, someone he grew up with, had insulted him in public, screaming at the top of his lungs. The poor soul was in pieces, you could feel his pain thru the phone. I tried to calm him, hoping I could somehow talk him down from the heights of his anguish. I asked if this was something his friend was prone to do, did he ever act this way before? 'No, it came out of nowhere'.

I shared with him a vort I learnt in Parshas Ki Sisa. After the sin of the golden calf Moshe went to Hashem to plead for the Nation. He sought forgiveness for their horrendous sin and acted, if I may, as their defense attorney. As such you would expect him to try to tone down what had actually happened so as to present the situation in some sort of a better light, instead it seems Moshe ramps things up.

The passage says,

"Moshe returned to Hashem and said, I pray, this people has committed a great sin, and have made for themselves gods of gold." (32:31)

'Great Sin' words never used before, the attorney for the defense is telling the Ultimate Judge, not only have they sinned, but this one was Huge! What kind of defense is this?

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The Rebbe of Vorke, Rav Yitzchok'le Zt"l was known as the Barditchever Rebbe of Poland because of his great compassion and love for all Yidden. On this passage the Rebbe explains:

Moshe Rabbenu sought to show kaveyuchle the Eibishter that it wasn't possible for the Jews to do such a desecration on their own. They would never do such a thing, it was just yesterday that they stood at Har Sinai accepting the Torah directly from Hashem. It was beyond the realm of reason for them to commit such a crime. 'This was A Great Sin,' and there must have been something beyond their control driving them, therefore they had suddenly lost their ability to choose right from wrong. The Medrash tells us that when the Yidden didn't see Moshe Rabbenu returning after forty days on Har Sinai, the Yetzer Hora created a scenario wherein the people were led to believe that their cherished leader had passed away on the mountain, they even saw a 'vision' wherein the body of Moshe was being taken by angels up to the heavens. This sudden shock threw them into deep doubt and despair, and it was at this moment that depression took hold. This was the tailor made situation that the Yetzer Hora created so as to cause them to sin.

Thus, explains the Rebbe, Moshe Rabbenu demonstrated that since their actions weren't coming from their own free will, the Eibishter just must forgive them.

Now back to my phone call. I shared with my distraught caller this Torah insight and explained that deviant behaviour can come from several places, some criminal others, psychopathological. Those Yidden were holy, they had been closer to the Eibishter than humanly possible, yet they acted out of character. There must have been something going on here beyond all understanding. That sudden depression, orchestrated by the Yetzer Hora caused that moment of madness.

When a loved one kicks off and attacks you for no apparent reason, you should stop and think, 'this isn't my friend, something else is going on here.' He just may be under severe pressure, or something has happened in his life that is making him act out of character. It is the only sensible thing that can make sense for the sudden change. Instead of holding a grudge, being forever unforgiving, think for a moment. Good friends are just that, good, because they are trusted to watch out for you. If there is a sudden action that belies this, perhaps their Great Sin is being caused by elements that you can't begin to be aware of.

We all must be more understanding of one another, marriages must be built on this, as well as friendships. If a loved one does or says something completely out of character, stop before lasting damage is done, catch your breath and think. Is this really that person I love? Then, forgive that moment, just as Hashem forgave us.

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