

Dealing with Difficulties

PARSHA INSIGHTS - AIKEV (5759)

LIKE A PARENT

“The trait of joy is essential in order to fulfill a positive command, that one must justify all that happens to him...” (*Orchos Tzadikim*, chapter 9). We are hereby informed that at times, a person must actively put himself in the right frame of mind to deal with life’s challenges. How do we handle occurrences that are out of our control? Some incidents are not as pleasant as others, and we are humanly incapable of doing anything about them... or so we think.

We CAN accomplish something in the face of hardship. Our REACTION to those happenings is in our control. As the above mentioned *Orchos Tzadikim* explains, we need certain *middos* [emotions and traits], to respond properly to life’s difficulties. Experiences and circumstances do not dictate our **reactions**; we have total ownership of that aspect of our existence. We do have the right to remain “*bisimcha*” [in a positive mindset], despite the daily annoyances, which might come our way.

A *pasuk* [verse] in today’s *parsha* [Torah portion] reminds us of this. “You should know in your heart that just as a father will admonish his son, so Hashem your G-d admonishes you” (8:5). On these very words, the *Orchos Tzadikim* comments about the importance of maintaining a cheerful demeanor no matter what we go through in the form of “*tzaros*” [troubles]. This is achieved by keeping in mind the genuine love Hashem has for all His children.

The *Pirush Hatur Ha’aruch* remarks on our *pasuk* that a parent rebukes a child for the good of the child, not to express anger or to take revenge. The famous *pasuk* in *Mishlai* [Proverbs] 29:17 demonstrates this concept: “Reprimand your child, and he will give you rest.” *Ralbag* remarks that discipline administered to a child when he is young will lead to tranquility later on, since his behavior has been modified. The purpose of this discipline is totally constructive. So it is with Hashem when he seems to “give us a hard time”. It is solely for our well being.

How was this true in the wilderness? *Tur* explains: The (perceived) lack of comforts and conveniences during our journeys in the desert can be called “Hashem’s discipline” of *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel]. Also, the challenge of *mon* [manna], only receiving enough for one day, having nothing to store for tomorrow, and the fact that it always looked the same - this was considered Hashem’s affectionate chastisement. What was the pleasant purpose for all of this? *Tur* interprets it beautifully: Hashem wanted us to appreciate the contrast of *Eretz Yisroel* [the Land of Israel] against the *midbar* [wilderness]. After the wilderness experience, the richness of the land and its fruits would be fabulously gratifying for us. That is why we “suffered” in the desert.

We see that Hashem treats us like a loving parent treats a child.

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

Text © 1999 Rabbi Moshe Heigh. Main title, formatting and definitions © 2011 Jewlight Inc. This Essay may only be printed unaltered in its entirety with copyrights displayed and given out free-of-charge. Linking allowed if your topic is relevant. Posting online is strictly prohibited.