



To the Edge Parshas Matos

The Magid Rabbi Yechiel Michal of Zlotshov, a student of the Baal Shem Tov and the Magid of Mezritch, was known for his piety and his strong beliefs. He was a leader in his day in the dissemination of G-d's name to all.

He was also known for his giving of charity. He would always say that "if G-d gave me – it means that I must give to someone else, for if not so, he would have given to someone else who would have given to me, and I prefer to be a giver and not a receiver."

The Magid had a pair of beautiful and expensive tefillin which he received from his holy fathers, and which he held dear to his heart and wore on a regular basis.

As the custom of Magidim, he would travel from place to place and teach the word of G-d. However, he had no real means to support his family.

His wife would chastise him: "Every time you get a few coins you give them away! What about your family?" he would respond that he was sure that his family would be taken care of, but who would care for others?

One day, his wife remembered the precious tefillin and offered that the Magid sell them for food, but the Magid refused and would not hear about it.

And then Sukkos came. The Magid sat in his room and thought about building the sukkah and the four Minnim, as he could not afford to buy them. Tefillin can be borrowed from another person, but one is required to own his four Minnim, he reasoned, and therefore decided to sell the tefillin and buy the four Minnim.

When his wife saw him returning from the market with the four Minnim she asked where he got the money to buy them.

"I sold my tefillin as you advised," he responded.

"That was not what I had in mind," she exclaimed angrily, taking the precious Esrog and biting into it with rage, thus rendering it unkosher to use on the holiday.

The room became silent. The Magid smiled and returned to his preparations for the holiday.

Our Sages teach us that on three occasions G-d was displeased with Moshe for being angry, and as a result Moshe did know the answer to a Halachic question. In our weekly parsha it is written that the warriors who returned from the battle with Mediyah: "The children of Israel took the Midianite women and their small children captive, and they plundered all their beasts, livestock, and all their possessions... Moshe became angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had returned from the campaign of war. Moshe said to them, "Did

you allow all the females to live? They were the same ones who were involved with the children of Israel on Bilaam's advice to betray the Lord over the incident of Peor, resulting in a plague among the congregation of the Lord." Because of his anger Moshe did not know the laws regarding the purification of the vessels plundered during the war. Elazar taught the laws in his place.

This is odd; for Moshe's anger was justifiable - "Take revenge for the children of Israel against the Midianites" – the soldiers did not complete their mission properly. The Torah teaches us that the Torah wisdom is not like all other wisdoms. Torah wisdom is celestial, and when there is anger, even if it is justified, it negates Torah wisdom, and therefore laws are forgotten.

On the verse King David wrote in Tehilim: "But his desire is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" the Talmud says: "Raba also said: At the beginning of this verse the Torah is assigned to the Holy One, blessed be He, but at the end it is assigned to those who study it, for it is said, 'his desire is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.'" Only when does one completely dedicate himself to the Torah does it become **his** Torah. The wisdom of the Torah is not his, and anything he acquires is a gift from G-d.

On the three occasions that Moshe became consumed with anger, even if the anger was justified and was intended for educational purposes, the anger itself was a blemish. Therefore, after the war with Mediyah it is written: "Eleazar the Cohen said to the soldiers returning from battle, "This is the statute that the Lord commanded Moshe...whatever is used in fire you shall pass through fire and then it will be clean; it must, however, also be cleansed with sprinkling water, and whatever is not used in fire you shall pass through water." Rashi explains the verse: "Since Moshe came to a state of anger, he came to err, for the laws of purging gentile vessels eluded him." As a result of his anger Moshe was unable to continue the teaching of the Torah.

The Magid was very upset during those moments. On one hand he had lost his precious tefillin, and on the other hand, the Etrog was of no use. He had lost everything.

He raised his eyes to the Heavens and declared: "King of the Universe, I don't have tefillin, and don't have an Etrog. Now you don't want me to have peace at home as well? I will not be angry nor sad, and I will fulfill your will."

The righteous say that the second trial of accepting G-d's will was harder than the first, in which he was forced to sell his tefillin.

Thus, the Magid later taught: "one should refrain from anger and sadness until the final limit."