

Jewish Anger Management (Shelach)

“Whoever is out of patience is out of possession of their soul.” -Francis Bacon

In what seems like an almost incredible statement, Moses tells God to calm down. In the notorious story of the spies, the Children of Israel have upset God one time too many and He is ready to destroy them. Moses jumps into the fray and beseeches God to show “strength”:

And now, I pray Thee, let the power of the Lord be great, as You have spoken, saying: The Lord is slow to anger, and plenteous in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, and according as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.’ And the Lord said: ‘I have pardoned according to thy word.’ - Numbers 14:17-20

According to the sages, and well-codified by Maimonides, anger is one of the worst traits possible and we must work hard to mitigate its expression.

Ibn Ezra explains how God was able to “overcome” His anger and what He needed to “strengthen”. God, among His infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and other omni-traits is extremely patient (infinitely patient? Not sure about that one).

According to Ibn Ezra, God, because of the great level of patience that He possesses was able to “break” his anger by strengthening further, with Moses’ cajoling, His patience. His anger was abated (somewhat) and instead of wiping out the people of Israel, He instead castigated the spies directly and doomed that generation to die slowly in the desert over the course of forty years of wandering, prohibited them from entering the promised land, leaving it instead for a less infuriating generation.

May we learn to strengthen our own levels of patience and break our anger whenever it rears its ugly head.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To Kama Tech for their efforts in bringing the charedi community into the workforce.
<https://www.jpost.com/business-and-innovation/tech-and-start-ups/article-897921>