



Forgive and Forget?
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Maimonides' Mishne Torah, Laws of Torts and Damages, chapter 5, laws 9 and 10

One who has inflicted bodily injury upon his fellow, even if he has paid him the five payments (required by Jewish law: damages, medical expenses, compensation for pain, compensation for embarrassment, loss of earnings), he will not have his sin atoned for and will not be forgiven, even if he sacrificed all the sacrifices in the world, until he requests forgiveness from the injured party and the latter forgives him.

It is forbidden for the injured party to act cruelly and to refrain from forgiving. Such is not the way of the Seed of Israel. Rather, when the one who has inflicted bodily injury requests and begs for forgiveness once and then again, and thereby (the injured party) knows that he has repented for his sin, and regrets his evil, he must forgive him. One who is quick to forgive is praiseworthy, and is acting according to the spirit of the sages.

Maimonides' Mishne Torah, Laws of Repentance, chapter 2, laws 9 and 10

Repentance and the Day of Atonement atone only for sins, such as eating a forbidden food, having prohibited intercourse, et cetera, which are committed against God. Sins such as injuring another person, cursing him, stealing, et cetera, which are committed against one's fellow man are never forgiven until he has paid any necessary payments to the person against whom he sinned, and has made peace with the injured party. Even though he may have paid back any due money he still has to make peace with him and request that he will forgive him. Even if he merely sinned against the other verbally, he still must appease him and entreat of him, until the other party forgives him. If the person against whom he had sinned did not want to forgive him then he must bring three of his fellows to (together) entreat of him and request of him (that he forgive). If he still didn't want to forgive him then he must bring him (the three) a second and a third time, and if he still didn't want to forgive him he may leave him and go his way. In such a case the one that refuses to forgive is the sinner. If the injured party was his teacher, he must ask for forgiveness even a thousand times until he receives forgiveness.

It is forbidden to be harsh and non-appeasing. One should rather be easily appeased and slow to anger, and whenever a sinner asks one for forgiveness one should grant it wholeheartedly and willingly. Even if the sinner had distressed one considerably and sinned against one a lot, one must not take revenge or bear a grudge. Such is the way of the Seed of Israel whose hearts are proper.

Maimonides' Mishne Torah, Laws of Character Traits, chapter 7, laws 7 and 8

One who takes revenge on someone else is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "You shall not take revenge". Even though committing this sin does not make one liable to flogging, it is nevertheless a very bad characteristic. It is fitting to wipe away his hurt concerning all things of this world, for in truth the enlightened understand that all personal affronts are meaningless and are simply not worth taking revenge over. What is revenge? If [for example] his fellow came and said please lend me your axe, and he responded that he will not lend it out, and then later the second one went to the first and asked to borrow his axe and he responded by saying: Just as you did not lend me your axe so I will not lend you my axe, then he is taking revenge. Rather, when one comes to request, he should lend wholeheartedly, and not recompense the other in the way that he was treated. Similar situations have the same law.

Similarly, anyone who bears a grudge against another Jew is also transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "...nor bear any grudge against the children of your people". What is a grudge? If [for example] Reuben asked Simon to rent him his house or lend him his ox, and Simon refused, and then after some time Simon asked for a loan or a rental from Reuben, and Reuben gives it to him but tells him: I'll lend it to you; I am not like you and neither am I going to play tit for tat, then Reuben is transgressing the injunction against bearing a grudge. Reuben must rather erase the matter [of having being refused] from his heart and must not bear a grudge ...but rather must totally erase the matter from his heart and not remember it at all. This is the proper temperament.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesachim, page 113b

The Holy One, blessed be He, loves three kinds of men, viz.: Those that never become angry, those that never become intoxicated, and those that do not nurse their hurt.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta'anit, page 25b

Another time it happened that Rebbi Eliezer prayed in front of the congregation and recited the twenty-four benedictions (of the special prayers for drought), but he was not answered. Rebbi Akiva led the congregation in prayer after him, and said: "Our Father our King we have no other king but Thee. Our Father our King for Thine own sake have mercy upon us!" And the rains fell. The people then began to murmur (and say that Rebbi Akiva must be a greater scholar than Rebbi Eliezer). A heavenly Voice went forth and said: Not because Rebbi Akiva is greater (in scholarship) than Rebbi Eliezer was his prayer answered, but because he accustomed to wipe away his hurt, while Rebbi Eliezer was not accustomed to wipe away his hurt."

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh haShana, page 17a

Rava said: All who wipe away their hurt, their sins are all wiped away, as it is said [Micah, vii. 18]: "He pardoneth iniquity and forgiveth transgression." For whom does He pardon iniquity? For him who forgiveth transgression (committed against him by his neighbor). Rav Huna ben Rav Yehoshua fell sick, and Rav Papa went to visit him. The latter saw that the end was near, and said to those present: "Make ready his provisions (shrouds)." Finally he recovered, and Rav Papa was ashamed to see him. "Why did you think him so sick?" said they. "He was so, indeed," he replied, "but the Holy One, blessed be He, said that since he never nursed his hurt, hurt will not be nursed against him," as it is written: "He pardoneth iniquity and forgiveth transgression." For whom does He pardon iniquity? For him who forgiveth transgression.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megilla, page 28a

The disciples of R. Nechunya ben HaKana asked him to what he attributes his longevity, and he answered: I never sought honor through the disgrace of my neighbor, and the curse of my neighbor never remained in my heart upon my going to bed, and I was liberal with my money "The curse of my neighbor never remained in my heart upon my going to bed": As Mar Zutra, who upon going to bed used to say: I pardon all those who have vexed me. ... Rebbi Akiva asked Rebbi Nechunya the Great the reason for his longevity. ... Never in my life did I accept presents, I never nursed hurt, and I was liberal with my money ... "I never nursed hurt": As Rava said: Whoever wipes away hurt has his sins wiped away. As it is written [Micah, vii. 18]: "Pardoning iniquity and forgiving transgression": For whom does He pardon iniquity? For him who forgives transgression (committed against him by his neighbor).

Bedtime Prayer

Master of the universe, I hereby forgive anyone who angered or antagonized me, whether against my body, my property, my honor, or against anything of mine, whether he did it accidentally, willfully, carelessly, or purposely, whether through speech or deed – No man should be punished (by Heaven) because of me.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megilla, page 12b

By the standard that one judges others, is he himself judged