

CONCEIT AND ANGER

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November 27, 2022



Life doesn't exactly bother to read the transcript we prepared for them. Our ideas are turned upside down, our dreams become nightmares... what is left of all our plans? Anger!

When things are not going according to plan, this is a sign of conceit and arrogance (*Likutey Moharan II*, 82).

It's natural for us to make plans. We make schedules for today, map out our tomorrows, design entire blueprints for the future. But, as we all know only too well, things don't always work out the way we planned, scheduled, mapped out or designed. True, sometimes pumpkins do turn into fancy carriages. Sometimes our plans do work out the way we want them to, the way we expect they should. But more often, it

seems that Life doesn't bother to read the script we have written for it. Our ideas are upset, our dreams become nightmares, our hopes are shattered. What of our plans then?

When things do work out the way we want them to, it's called *k'seider*. When they don't work out, it's called *shelo k'seider*. Literally, the word *seider* means order. Are things ordered and going according to my will? Or are they out of order and going against my will? But, wait one minute. Who is it that makes things happen, anyway? Who is it that determines how things will or won't go?

There is God's will. There is my will. They should coincide, but don't always. What happens then? When I desire something and God desires something else, there can be no doubt that God's will is going to prevail. He is the one that makes things happen and His will determines how they will happen. Then the logical question is: How do I accept this? Or, at least: Am I willing to accept it? Can I accept that God created me and knows the paths and directions – the plans, schedules, blueprints – that my life must follow. Can I say this is from God, it's His will, and I will do my best with the present situation? Or, do I reject the situation? Do I say this is not what I want and look for ways to change what has happened against my will?

The way I ultimately choose to deal with what happens when my will and God's are not in perfect agreement is going to influence how I get along in life. It will have a lot to do with whether I'm at peace with myself and the world, or not. Rebbe Nachman explains that our choosing to accept or not accept God's will has to do with the concept of "*ana emlokh*" (I rule). If I always accept God's will, then whatever happens, positive and negative – is according to my will. By looking for the Godliness in whatever occurs, I believe everything that happens to me is God's will and therefore *k'seider*. God rules! But if I do not accept everything as God's will, if I do not look for the Godliness

in everything, then there will always be things happening which are against my will. I will see things as *shelo k'seider* and try to change them. I rule! (*Likutey Moharan*, II, 82).

When things do work out the way we want them to, it's called k'seider. When they don't work out, it's called shelo k'seider. Literally, the word seder means order...

The desire of those who do not accept God's will, but seek to change things, is the epitome of arrogance and conceit, which constitute a major deterrent to peace. When a person is arrogant, God departs from him. As our Sages teach: God says of the arrogant, "He and I cannot dwell together in the same world" (*Sotah* 5a). In other words, God abandons him to his own machinations and lets him solve his problems on his own. What happens? Simple: his arrogance leads to frustration; his frustration leads to anger; his anger destroys his peace.

Everything is okay until an "I rule" person encounters a hitch in his plans. It's a *shelo k'seider*, and his arrogance won't allow him to accept that it's coming from God. Now he really does have to come up with a solution, because God has left him to solve his troubles on his own. He'll come up with a solution and map out a plan of action, no doubt still believing he controls his own destiny. But, as has happened to every man since the First Man tried to solve life's problems without God, he soon discovers that no matter how many plans, schedules and blueprints he comes up with, things continue to go against his will – *shelo k'seider*. Sooner, rather than later, this leads to his becoming frustrated. He wonders why he can't succeed, why he can't get things right. Inevitably, this frustration causes him to lose patience and become angry with what he sees as his own ineptitude. Question: Can such a man know peace? Can he ever be at peace with himself?

This gives us an idea of how conceit – and its partner, anger

– are obstacles to peace.. If you truly believed that everything comes from God, you'd never get upset. You'd accept any situation, any unexpected disruption of your daily routine or long-term plans, and make the best of it. At the very least, you would try to control your emotions; never become frustrated with yourself or lash out at anyone else. Not the arrogant person. He thinks he's in charge, in control. Then, when something occurs against his will, it upsets him. He gets angry. The *shelo k'seider* shows him that he's not really in control of his life, and this upsets him. Each *shelo k'seider* is yet another reminder of his lack of control, yet another proof of his defeat. How does he compensate for this? What does he do? He takes his frustrations out on others. They suffer. He screams at his wife, his children or he shouts at his partner, his friends and neighbors – all because things did not go his way. Question: Can such a man know peace? Can he ever be at peace with others?

Obviously, humility is the key to banishing one's arrogance. It is also a solution to anger. If I consider myself lowly and distant from God what is there to get angry about? About a *shelo k'seider*? About not having succeeded? Because others don't listen to me? Who am I, anyway?

At the same time, it is important to understand what humility is and, more precisely, what it isn't. Rebbe Nachman teaches: Look how hard we work and pray to attain *mochin d'gadlut* (an expanded awareness of God). Then, because we think that humility requires our seeing ourselves as nothing, we submit to *katnut* (a constricted awareness of God) and insignificance (*Likutey Moharan* II, 22). Humility does not mean walking around with your head down, feeling depressed and dejected. It does not mean thinking of yourself as small and of no value. The only way to attain true humility is to pray to God for His guidance in discerning what true humbleness is (*Likutey Moharan* II, 72). Basically, humility is recognizing our insignificance *vis-a-vis* God. This produces modesty which then

filters down to our relationships with people. Much more can be said and yet nothing more can be said, because the particulars and situations which govern the true nature of humility are endless. As the Rebbe says, only prayer will take us there.

And of course, prayer helps. We must ask God to grant us proper control over our arrogance and anger. We have to plead with Him for the ability always to be conscious that “He rules!” Actually, praying in itself is a sign of our acceptance. When we pray, we acknowledge His control over all our plans, schedules and blueprints. It is proof that, to whatever degree, we recognize that He is in control of the *sefer* and that we reject our own arrogance. Why else would we be praying to Him?!

(Taken from the book [Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings](#) – chapter 10 – Peace)