

Angriness to Peace With Ease

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that this middah, character trait, the ability to transcend anger and hurt in order to pursue peaceful reconciliation, was the hallmark of the previous Bobover Rebbe, Horav Shlomo Halberstam, zl. The Bobover Rebbe was a wellspring of sensitivity for all Jews. His activities during and after World War II saved the remnants of Galician Jewry, both physically and spiritually. Men of distinction, however, will inevitably have detractors who are filled with envy, glory-seekers who resent sharing the limelight with anyone other than their own shadow. Shortly after the Rebbe emerged on the American scene, a rabbi who felt threatened by the Bobover Rebbe's activities on behalf of world Jewry lashed out strongly against the Rebbe. He did not mince words in his character assassination of the Rebbe. The Bobover Rebbe did not respond. It was only after the slanderous remarks were becoming downright humiliating that the Rebbe called together all of his chassidim in his bais hamedrash.

The large shul was filled to capacity. There was not an empty seat, as everyone crammed to hear the Rebbe's response to the insults hurled at him. Everyone expected a fiery rejoinder that would put the rabbi in his place. The Rebbe entered the bais hamedrash, ascended to the lectern in front of the Aron Kodesh, and, after kissing the Paroches, cover, turned to the gathering and spoke for fifteen seconds! He said, "I am declaring to everyone assembled, as I stand in front of the Aron Kodesh, that I absolutely forbid anyone from battling on my behalf. My honor is my honor - and it will remain my honor, if everyone acts appropriately and does not take sides. Whoever does not obey me has no place in my bais hamedrash." The Rebbe descended the podium and left the bais hamedrash.

A few hours later, the Rebbe asked his gabbai, attendant, to take him to the rabbi's home. Word of the Rebbe's response had already gotten out throughout the community. The Rebbe arrived at the rabbi's home and ascended the steps to his apartment. He knocked on the door lightly until the rabbi himself answered. Ashen-faced, the rabbi realized who was standing before him. Words were not necessary, nor would they suffice. It was action that was needed. The Bobover Rebbe took the rabbi in both his arms, embraced and kissed him. He said, "You may go to any one of my chassidim and they will attest to the fact that I harbor no ill feelings towards you. As once we were friends, we will continue to remain friends."

Rav Zilberstein notes that the Bobover Rebbe left this world on Rosh Chodesh Av, the same yahrtzeit as Aharon HaKohen. They had one thing in common: ohaiv shalom v'rodef shalom; they were both individuals who loved peace and pursued peace. The common thread that coursed between them was their love of all Jews and unswerving desire to promote harmony within Klal Yisrael.

Out of a sense of hakoras hatov to Hashem Yisborach, I have taken it upon myself to present insights into our daily davening, with the hope that it will catalyze greater understanding of the Tefillos and, thereby, increase their inspiration and effect.