

LOVING HASHEM MEANS LOVING HIS CHILDREN AND GETTING INVOLVED!

PARSHAS V'ESCHANAN

Sholom lost his job. When his friend, Menashe, heard about it, he arranged for food to be delivered to Sholom. Then Menashe helped Sholom find another job. When Sholom's car would not start, Menashe gave his car a boost. When Sholom had to go to the hospital, Menashe arranged childcare for Sholom's family. Menashe cared so much for Sholom and took care of him. Sholom truly loved Menashe. At every opportunity, Sholom would tell others how special Menashe was.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l says that it is a positive mitzvah to love Hashem with all your heart, soul, and resources. The **Rambam** says that this mitzvah comprises bringing others closer to Hashem; to serve Hashem and to believe in Hashem. The Chofetz Chaim continues that, when you love someone, you praise him and encourage others to love him as well. This what our forefather Avraham did. Avraham loved Hashem and spent his life trying to bring others to an awareness and love of Hashem.

The **Talmud** (Gittin 55B) quotes a famous story. There was a wealthy man who lived at the time of the Second Temple. The Talmud does not tell us his name. This man had a close friend, Kamtza, and a bitter enemy named Bar Kamtza. He was having a party and instructed his servant to deliver an invitation to his good friend Kamtza. The servant mistakenly delivered the invitation to Bar Kamtza. Bar Kamtza assumed that he was purposely invited in an attempt at reconciliation (see the **Maharsha**). Thus, he went to the party. When the host saw Bar Kamtza, he flew into a rage and wanted to know why he had the audacity to come to his party, as they were hated enemies of one another. Bar Kamtza explained that the host's servant had mistakenly invited him. The host did not care and ordered Bar Kamtza to leave immediately. Bar Kamtza, seeking

to avoid humiliation, offered to pay for whatever he would eat at the party. When this offer was refused, he offered to pay for half of the party. When this was refused, Bar Kamtza offered to pay for the entire party! The host angrily turned this down as well, physically grabbed Bar Kamtza, and threw him out!

As the story continues, Bar Kamtza became very upset that the rabbis who were present did not intervene when he was humiliated. (The **Maharsha** gives two reasons explaining the rabbi's inactions). Bar Kamtza responded by visiting the Roman Caesar and falsely accusing the Jews of rebelling against Rome. That led to a chain of events which ended with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, along with the destruction of the Temple.

The Talmud blames the destruction of Jerusalem on the actions of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. Bar Kamtza was the person who falsely informed on the Jews. Rabbi Yaakov Reischer zt"l, in his commentary **Iyun Yaakov**, asks, **what did Kamtza do!? Why was his name included as a villain?** Furthermore, the party's host was quite nasty. Why wasn't his name recorded, together with Bar Kamtza, as the ones who caused the destruction?

During this era, the Jews learned Torah and performed mitzvos. Unfortunately, they had *sinas*

"And you shall love Hashem, your G-D with all your heart..." (Devarim 6:5)

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chinum. They felt unwarranted hatred to one-another. There was too much divisiveness. That hatred caused the destruction of the Temple.

Chacham Yosef Chaim Ben Yehoyada zt"l, known as the Ben Ish Chai, answers the Iyun Yaakov's question. **Rashi** explains that Kamtza and Bar Kamtza were two people who were not related. The **Talmud** says that Kamtza was a "beloved friend" of the host of this party. As such, when he observed Bar Kamtza being publicly humiliated, he should have said something to his friend. He could have explained that this was an honest mistake. He could have said that Bar Kamtza only came because he thought that the host invited him to make peace (see **Maharsha**), so maybe

the host should accept that offer of peace. Or perhaps he could have told the host that he was 100% correct but that he should not embarrass Bar Kamtza publicly. The point is that he was able to prevent this outrage, yet he did nothing! According to the **Maharsha**, Kamtza and Bar Kamtza were father and son. If so, Kamtza must have known the hatred that this host had for his son. Even before this party, he was obligated to try to end the strife and promote peace. Had he done so, then Bar Kamtza would not have been humiliated at the party and the catastrophic, ensuing events would not have occurred. Therefore, Kamtza **was** culpable and the devastating episode is also called in his name.

We often find ourselves in a position where we can be a peacemaker or help guide others to do the right thing. If we shirk our opportunity/responsibility, then we, too, are accountable for what happens. When we actively work at creating peace and bridging happiness, we are showing how much we love Hashem and His children.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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