



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT MATOT / MAS'EI

Jewish Association

R' Yisroel Besser related an astounding and uplifting insight. R' Avraham Moshe of P'shischa, who would constantly read Tehillim, was once met by R' Yitzchak of Vurka, who asked him a query on a certain *pasuk*. In Tehillim 85:5, David HaMelech writes "הפר כעסך עמנו" – *[please Hashem,] remove Your anger from us*. Grammatically, however, this seems to be problematic; shouldn't it say "הפר כעסך מעמנו" (*from upon us*)? Why does he write just "עמנו" (*us*), making the phrase translate to: "take away your anger 'with us'"? For a prayer beseeching Boreh Olam to cast aside His attribute of strict judgment and anger from upon us, the wording seems to be somewhat off.

R' Avraham Moshe of P'shischa explained beautifully with a parable.

There was a very powerful king, who was also a very moody king. Everyone around him knew that once the king was angered, there was no way to calm him down. However, there was one trick that his wise advisors knew. The king had a little son – his only child, born after many years of childlessness – who delighted him. Whenever the king caught sight of this child, he started to smile; any time the child would enter the royal chambers, the king found himself endeared and pleased by his charm.

The rebbe then elaborated: we aren't just asking of HaKadosh Baruch Hu that He should remove His anger from us; we are pleading for something much more profound. "Ribono Shel Olam, הפר כעסך עמנו! Remove Your anger THROUGH us! When you see a Jew, let that alone be enough to push away any anger or negativity from the world. Let the thought and sight of a Jew arouse so much love within You, and let us grow to such great heights that we are what brings incredible *berachah* and mercy to the world."

Do we fully comprehend what a Jew really is? "הפר כעסך עמנו" doesn't just apply to a Jew on the night of Shavuot or a Jew in the midst of ne'ilah on Yom Kippur – it refers to a "regular" Jew on a random Monday just going about his day and putting in his effort. We each have such unlimited power to create mercy in Shamayim and pour blessings down into this world, just by being Jews. We can't even begin to fathom how much potential lies in even the most "simple" and "ordinary" of Jews...

Hearing or Listening?

One summer day in the Catskill Mountains, a young boy approached R' Moshe Feinstein with a question. At the time, R' Moshe was immersed in writing his Torah insights – something he rarely paused from, which helps explain how he was able to produce such a vast body of scholarly work. The question likely wasn't a complex one for someone of his stature – perhaps something as simple as, "What beracha do you make on pretzels?" Yet despite the simplicity of the question and the importance of his writing, R' Moshe immediately set down his pen, turned to the child, listened carefully, and answered with a warm smile.

This story reflects not only his greatness in Torah but also his greatness in character. He embodied the belief that every person, even a young child, deserves genuine attention and respectful engagement.

In a world where distractions are many and constant connection often comes at the cost of being fully present, this moment from R' Moshe's life is a powerful reminder. It's easy to find ourselves responding to messages or scrolling through our phones even as someone close to us is speaking. But taking a moment to pause, be present, and truly listen can make all the difference. It shows that we value the person in front of us, and that, like R' Moshe, we appreciate the importance of kindness, presence, and respect—even in the smallest interactions.

Whether it's a child asking a quick question at the dinner table, a spouse sharing something after a long, tiring day, or a friend opening up while you're out for a walk – these little moments matter more than we often realize. It's not about having the perfect response or turning it into a deep conversation – it's about showing the other person that they matter and that you're really listening. When we take the time to be fully present, we're not just talking—we're building connection. That kind of quiet attentiveness is something R' Moshe embodied effortlessly, and it's something we can all strive to bring into our own lives.

(Based on a thought shared by R' Yissachar Frand)

"If you could erase all the mistakes of your past, you would also erase the wisdom of your present. Remember the lesson, not the disappointment."