

HaShem commands Moshe to “take revenge for the people of Israel against the people of Midian” (31:2). When Moshe transmits this command to the people he says “Arm yourselves and prepare for war against Midian in order to inflict HaShem’s vengeance against Midian.(31::3). Was the act of revenge meant to avenge HaShem or to avenge the people of Israel? Rashi resolves this issue by stating that “one who wrongs Israel is regarded as if one had wronged G-d Himself”

Revenge could be very sweet, yet revenge is strictly prohibited. In parashat Kedoshim we are taught (Vaikra 19:18) “Lo Tikom veLo Titor”, (Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge, Revenge means retaliating against someone who has harmed us, by attempting to do them harm. According to the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 241) at the root of this Mitzvah lies the purpose that a person should realize and reflect that whatever happens, good or bad, is caused by “The One Above”, nothing can occur without HIS will of approval. Therefore, should a person inflict suffering or pain upon us, let us understand, that HaKadosh Baruch Hu decreed this upon us; and let us not set our thoughts on revenge.. I would add that the person who inflicts harm on us is not guiltless for he (or she) was not commanded to do so. He did it willingly and voluntarily, for which he will pay the consequences. As we learn in Pirkei Avot (2:7) “Because you drowned others, they drowned you; and those who drowned you will be drowned eventually.”

So much for personal revenge. However, taking revenge on behalf of the people of Israel (as Pinchas did) is considered a noble deed. Indeed, G-d Himself praises Pinchas, stating that “he zealously avenged Me” (Bamidbar 25:11). So taking revenge on behalf of HaShem or on behalf of the nation of Israel is permitted, but not commendable as our Sages did not approve of what Pinchas did; they even considered placing him in cheirem (excommunicate him) The proper approach of action against those who want to harm us is to pray to HaShem that He should take the full measure of revenge against our enemies. Dovid HaMelech said it in Tehillim 91:1- “*Keil Nekamot HaShem*” *O G-d of vengeance.*

Also in 149:5-“*La’asot Nekama Bagoyim*” *To execute vengeance among the nations.* In the Av HaRachamim that we recite on Shabbat before Musaf, we say, “May He, before our eyes, exact retribution for the spilled blood of His servants”

With this in mind, Rabban Gamliel II, the Nassi of Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple in Yavneh, instituted the 19th Beracha of Shemoneh Esrei. It was a response to the rise the early Christians who used their political power to oppress the religious Jews. The Beracha asks HaShem to avenge us against them and to destroy them. It can and should be used today against our enemies who threaten to destroy us. That is the Torah way of Nekama,(revenge). It is sweet, it is desirable, but we beseech G-d to do it for us, and preferably before our eyes, when we are alive and can enjoy the pleasure of seeing it happen.

Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

PRAYERS

Our prayers are with all the members of the **Israel Defense Forces**. HaShem should protect them and help them succeed in their holy mission of protecting our people.

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QUESTIONS FOR THIS WEEK

- A- Name the two Sidrot in sefer Bamidbar that have NO Mitzvot.
- B- Hatarat Nedarim is not found in the written Torah. From where did Chazal Derive this concept?

- C- What is the fundamental difference between Hatarat Nedarim and Hafarat Nedarim, regarding the neder?