

Hadran for Seder Nezikin

Based on an Oral Tradition

Rebbe Nachman once said, "The world labors under the misconception that a tzaddik cannot make a mistake. I say this is not so. A tzaddik can make a mistake. The mistake remains a mistake and the tzaddik remains tzaddik."

It is customary upon completion of learning a tractate of Talmud, or a *seder* (order) of Mishnah, to give a *hadran* to mark the occasion. (See below for a definition of *hadran*.) Having been blessed with the privilege of completing Seder Nezikin, I offer the following.

Seder Nezikin, the fourth of the six orders of Mishnah, deals with Jewish jurisprudence. Tort law, property law, estate law, courts and justices, testimony, rendering decisions, administering sentences and ethics are some of the topics covered. The closing tractate, Horiyot, deals with the topic of rectifying judicial mistakes made by the king, the *kohein gadol* (high priest) or even of the entire Sanhedrin.

Yes. Even the most learned of scholars, people of the most refined character and of genuine spirituality - 100% dyed-in-the-wool tzaddikim - can make mistakes. Not only simple, personal mistakes, but even mistakes that affect the entire Jewish people, even mistakes of heresy (1:5). The mistakes remain mistakes and they remain tzaddikim.

It's not the end of the world. A mistake can be forgiven. We learn in Horiyot that the mistakes of the king, *kohein gadol* and Sanhedrin were forgiven and rectified by offering a sacrifice in the Beit Hamikdash (Temple). Then and now, people can make restitution for damages they caused by paying (financially) for their mistake. However, forgiveness and restitution can only happen if an individual owns up to his mistake. This is something that even the most prestigious individual must do.

Admitting guilt is an expression of the fact that we are aware that we are accountable for what we do, including what we do unintentionally. Though there are certainly instances that we can "get away" with something, that no earthly court can convict us, we must remember that the Knower of Secrets will redistribute the money appropriately (*Likutey Moharan I*, Lesson #69).

In fact, the entire *seder* deals with mistakes. The very first Mishnah tells us, "There are four archetypes of damage" (*Bava Kama* 1:1). Not only are we being taught what to do in order to undo damage we've caused, we are being taught to **prevent** damage. This is why Seder Nezikin is alluded to by the word "salvation" (*Shabbat* 31a on *Isaiah* 33:6). We are warned what the results of causing damage are, in order that we should be careful not to cause any and to not get ourselves in financial straits (Rashi).

Rebbe Nachman teaches, "If you have caused some damage, know that it is because you blemished *daat* (awareness)" (*The Aleph-Bet Book* Daat A:25). Seder Nezikin is a warning to also not damage our *daat*. Not only is it a warning. It is a guide on how to get along with others, how to be concerned about others, how to share this world with others. If people can live peacefully with one another, then "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat...the cow and the bear will graze together...an infant will play at a viper's hole...they will do no harm or damage...for the earth will be filled with *daat* of God, as water covers the sea" (*Isaiah* 11:6–9); may it be soon, in our lifetime.

The Aramaic word *hadar* relates to returning. Rebbe Nachman relates it to repentance (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #61). A *hadran* is a dvar Torah that returns to review what has been studied in order to derive from it an essential message.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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