

You shall not withhold a worker's wage with you until morning. You shall not curse the deaf. (19:13,14)

The *Baal HaTurim* notes the juxtaposition of the prohibition against cursing a deaf person, or anyone for that matter, upon the prohibition against withholding a worker's wages. He explains that, despite one's justification for monetary claim, he may not curse him. He should take him to court to litigate whatever claim he may have against him. The Torah outlines the parameters of dispute for us. Reuven worked for Shimon. It was not easy labor. He put in his time and effort, and now he expects to be paid. He has every right to demand his wages. His children were home waiting for the food that he was to purchase with his wages. It was before *Yom Tov*, the Festival, and his children were counting on something new this year. He came home empty-handed. Can one imagine what coursed through his mind – how he feels, the hurt, the pain, the anger?

Veritably, he was justified – in taking him to court. That is all. Nothing more. The Torah does not permit us to curse someone who has cheated us, despite the justification that we might have (in our mind). There are parameters in Judaism. Hating and cursing cross the line – even when one has every reason in the world to be angry.

One misstep does not invalidate a person. Let me explain. The person who (perhaps) cheated him, or owes him money, is otherwise a decent person. He could even have been his friend for years. After all, he trusted him – so he must be his friend. He must be honest. Sadly, he became caught up in his finances and is now in arrears. Is that a reason to curse him? The Torah does not think so. Unfortunately, we get carried away when it is our money, our ego.

It is understandable to be reasonably upset. The nature of a person is that, if you give in a little, he will take more. The boundary between “upset” and “anger” is a very fine line. Then there is the cursing. Many of us have been there – and later regretted it. We become so “upset” that we lose our dignity and begin to wish the worst on the person who now has become the archetypical thief. The Torah says to take him to court. No anger, no cursing. We are Jews – and so is he.