

## And He will give you mercy and be merciful to you and multiply you, as He swore to your forefathers. (13:18)

When someone is charged with carrying out an execution, it can have a strong negative effect on his sensitivities. After all, it means taking the life of another human being. This emotion is exacerbated when it involves the mass execution of an entire Jewish city of men, women, children -- even livestock. Such action takes its toll on the most compassionate person, rendering him callous to suffering. Thus, Hashem promises the nation that the executioners, who carry out this most difficult punishment, will be infused with a Heavenly-sponsored dose of compassion to counteract the soulless nature of their work. Once the people have achieved an unusual level of compassion, Hashem will treat them mercifully. The Almighty responds to our initiative. When we act with mercy towards others, He acts with mercy towards us.

We would think that this is a cause and effect response. We act with mercy towards others – Hashem responds to us in kind. It actually goes much further. **Horav Yaakov Meir Shachter, Shlita**, quotes the *Zohar HaKadosh* that says, “When Hashem seeks to ‘stimulate’ His compassion for a person, He sends him a gift. What is the gift? He ‘arranges’ for a poor man to approach him, to petition his support on his behalf. By acting mercifully towards the poor man, he ‘activates’ Hashem’s compassion, so that this person will become the subject of Hashem’s sympathy.”

*Rav Shachter* quotes a similar idea from the *Likutei MaHaran*, who writes: “When a person is in need of Heavenly compassion, Hashem sends him compassion by enabling him to demonstrate his compassion for another person. Thus, he will personally receive Hashem’s Mercy. This is what is meant by *Chazal* in the *Talmud Shabbos* 151b, ‘Whoever is compassionate to others, they (Heaven) will be compassionate to him.’ This is what is meant by the Torah, ‘And He will give you mercy and be merciful to you.’ By granting you the opportunity to demonstrate your mercy to others, He will show mercy to you.”

It is almost a *quid pro quo* in which Hashem gives us the opportunity to earn His mercy, by showing what we can do. *Rav Shachter* extends this concept to every good endeavor which Hashem wants to make available to us. He will create a situation in which the individual who is in need of a specific Heavenly favor will be allowed to show his own proclivity to perform a similar deed. For instance, a person is censured by Heaven and is to become the subject of Heavenly-anger. Hashem will arrange for someone to anger him, and, if he controls his response by not allowing his indignation to get the better of him, he will warrant Hashem’s forbearance. By controlling his personal anger (especially in a situation in which he could have been justified in becoming angry), the individual has given Hashem reason to pardon his sin.

This applies to every opportunity which presents itself for us to exhibit self-control, forbearance, patience, decency and sympathy. A person should think twice before allowing his base nature to

prevail over the proper way to respond. In all probability, this challenge is a gift from G-d to enable him to earn points and garner merit – a merit that will quite possibly avert a Heavenly punishment that He is holding back due to His love and compassion. So, what we think is a terrible challenge, an overwhelming obstacle, might actually be a gift in disguise.