

May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem illuminate His Countenance... and be gracious to you... May Hashem lift His Countenance... and establish peace for you. (6:24,25,26)

The *Kohanim* are enjoined with blessing the Jewish People with a three-fold blessing, petitioning Hashem: to safeguard the nation (*shemirah*); to shine His Countenance on them and grant them *chein*, graciousness and favor (*v'yechuneka*); and to grant the third, and greatest blessing of peace (*shalom*). Obviously, the sequence teaches us an important principle; peace follows after one is protected, both from without and within, from internal enemies and even from himself. Favor is the result of Hashem's blessing which we earn through the light of Torah. Without Torah, life is very dim; we do nothing but grope from one obstacle to another. Last, once we are secure and embrace the Torah, we are worthy and capable of true peace. One cannot be at peace with others unless he is first at peace with himself. Unless one adheres to a Torah lifestyle and is subservient to Hashem, he is neither safe, nor is he capable of achieving a life of harmony, satisfaction and peace.

V'yishmirecha, "and safeguard you." *Chazal* add: *Min ha'mazikin*, from those who would injure you. *Targum Yonasan* does not accept the usual definition of *mazikin* as referring to demons and injurious spirits. He explains that there are two forms of *mazikin*: *bnei tihareirei*, the sons of dusk; and *bnei tzafrirei*, the sons of dawn. There are two kinds of demons, those who present themselves in their true colors: either black as night, or those who camouflage themselves to appear as light as day. Have no fear, they are one and the same. The harsh *mazik* who comes at us with his true colors showing is an evil and injurious *mazik*. Is he worse, however, than he who disguises his injurious character beneath a façade of fake sweetness? He may conceal his evil intention, but he is no less injurious. Both of these *mazikin* are dangerous, and, without Hashem's protection, we are unable to protect ourselves from their malevolence.

We have enemies who brook no compromise concerning their evil intentions. They neither have shame, nor do they have true intentions. They hate; they vilify. At least, they come at us with a frontal attack. We can prepare ourselves by moving out of harm's way. What about those who appear as sweet as the early morning rays of sun, breaking through the dark night? Are they for real, or is it all a disguise? They posture themselves as our friends, but, in truth, they would turn against us the moment that they could derive benefit from such a move.

Perhaps we might take this analogy a step further. By their very natures as harbingers of change, dusk and dawn present themselves as periods of ambiguity. At dusk, the sky is beginning to darken, as the rays of sunshine begin to wane. Nonetheless, the sky still has rays of light left; it is not yet black and bleak. Dawn presents a similar scenario, as the first rays of the morning sunshine begin to pierce the darkness of night. The dark night gives way to daylight, with its hope for a new beginning.

A negative attitude can bring about a most self-destructive downfall. Success requires positivity and self-esteem. One who is negative tends to be downbeat, disagreeable and skeptical. He always expects the worst, and he is surprised when it does not occur. The flipside is positivity, which could be equally damaging when misplaced in opposition to a realistic vision of a person's attitudes and potential for success. In other words, expecting too much can be equally as destructive as expecting nothing at all.

Let me demonstrate how the *mazik* of misplaced (light) positivity or its contrasting ambiguity (represented by dusk) plays itself out by subtly putting down one's passion for success, under the guise of "I do not want him to get hurt."

A fellow aspires for success in a given field of endeavor. He has potential, but is not eminently capable of achieving his dream. Life is not a bed of roses, and one must be prepared to surmount various obstacles in his rise to success. A positive attitude is not only helpful, it is an absolute requisite if one is successfully to address the various crises which can – and often do – arise. On the other hand, optimistic bias might cause one to view things in a less than objective manner, often ignoring the warning signs to which our own negative emotions are pointing. Thus, we cause ourselves to lose our grip on reality. Psychologists refer to this as "illusion of control," when, as the result of the natural outcome of optimistic bias, one begins to delude himself into thinking he has greater control over the outcomes of events than is the reality. Psyching ourselves with positive thinking can cause us to become overly optimistic, to the point that we overestimate our ability to succeed. Hence, the *mazik* of "dawn," the ambiguity that comes with misplaced positivity, is acting in full force.

The ambiguity of dusk is more subtle, as it seeks to pour cold water on the fiery passion and drive of he who is driven to succeed. This *mazik* can present itself as a "friend" who does not want us to "fail." The mere mention of failure to a person who is driven to succeed can destroy his drive. It creates doubt: "Can I really make it?" "Do I have a chance?" "What if I fail?" This covert *mazik* with its "well-meaning" intentions has destroyed many people, causing them to give up before they ever start. One can fight the *mazik* that presents its true colors. It is the more nuanced, "well-intentioned" *mazik* that is so difficult to overcome, because it is difficult to detect.