

You shall not accede to him and not hearken to him; your eye shall not take pity on him, you shall not be compassionate nor conceal him. (13:9)

“With prejudice” is legalese for dismissing a case/plaintiff permanently. The case is over and done with. No one is interested in rehashing it or listening to any appeals for clemency. Concerning the *meisis/meidiach*, one who entices others to go astray, the Torah goes to great lengths to underscore its disdain for anyone who would entice another Jew to worship idols. Regardless of the victim’s relationship with the enticer, he must turn him in and see that he is brought to justice. Although the Jewish court is to manifest utmost compassion and seek every avenue to look for extenuating circumstances that would have caused the sinner to act as he did, this sin is different. Hashem does not absolve the one who hurts his fellow Jew by leading him astray. The first *meisis* in history was the *nachash ha’kadmoni*, serpent, who persuaded Chavah to eschew Hashem’s command. She did not realize that she was being used; thus, she sinned. When it came time for punishment, Hashem did not look for any reason to mitigate the serpent’s sin. He punished him immediately, with prejudice.

The *Alter, zl, m’Kelm* derives a powerful lesson from the immediate unmitigated punishment meted out to one who would lead another Jew astray. If this is the punishment that Hashem visits on one who entices others to sin, can we even begin to imagine the reward for one who reaches out to bring his alienated brothers and sisters in from the “cold”? This is true even if he is not successful! Trying, making the attempt, is worth it all. Even if one does not succeed, he has at least planted the seed.

The *meisis*, enticer, acts surreptitiously, concealing his malicious intentions, careful to cover his vitriol against Hashem and His People. While it is often difficult to counteract and contend with those who act under the guise of sham piety and well-meaning intentions, should we ignore those who vilify us publicly, who have no shame with regard to their true subversive intentions? We have suffered throughout the millennia at the hands of demagogues who defamed us and inflamed others against us. The Torah teaches us that we do not show any form of compassion toward those who seek to destroy us, since hatred does not warrant leniency nor mitigation. No extenuating circumstances license such behavior.

As an aside, we should not view these vilifiers as depriving us of our destiny. On the contrary, their animus towards us only increases our ultimate reward. The following Torah thought from *Horav Yehoshua, zl, m’Belz* (quoted by *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*) emphasizes this idea. The Torah writes that when Rivkah *Imeinu* was suffering pain during her pregnancy, she went to seek advice. Something was clearly not right. When she walked by the *bais ha’medrash* of Shem and Ever, Yaakov pushed hard to “leave”; and when she passed an *avodah zarah*, idol, Eisav pushed to leave. She asked, *Im kein, lamah zeh anochi?* “If so, why am I thus?”

The *Rebbe* wonders: This was not the first time one of our great women gave birth to a son who was evil. Chavah had Kayin; Noach's wife gave birth to Cham. These women carried both *tzaddik* and *rasha*. Yet, we do not find them questioning their pregnancies: "What do I need this for?" The *Rebbe* explains that their previous pregnancies had been normal. Nothing was unusual about their pregnancies. Rivkah *Imeinu*, however, was originally not destined to have a child. It was only as a result of her extraordinary prayers that she merited to have her twins – two brothers that battled one another in the womb. She did not bargain for this. This is not what she had prayed for.

Hashem replied to her, "This is not a normal twin pregnancy. These infants will become two powerful nations, and one will become stronger as a result of the other. Yes, as a result of Eisav's reign of terror and persecution against Yaakov, the Patriarch's descendants will become stronger. This is why, as early as in the womb, it was critical that they contend with one another. From day one they would have to become accustomed to their adversarial roles, and the constant battles which they would have to fight. This is the *metzius*, essence, of the Jewish Nation: struggle, contention, adversary, all of which temper our character and strengthen our resolve and commitment. Every trial, every vicissitude, makes us stronger – until that glorious day on which we will succeed in the ultimate battle and emerge triumphant.