



SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

Cutting Myself Off

Confession: I get road rage. I have been known to use my horn excessively and even yell at other drivers when I don't approve of their driving. Especially when I get cut off.

This behavior is not something that I am proud of, rather it is something that I am trying very hard to work on and work out of myself.

What is it about getting "cut off" that triggers me so much?

The Gemara, in Maseches Shabbos (105a), relates anger to *avodah zara* (serving foreign gods) and the Rambam says that "the life of an angry person is no life." Getting angry over something that happens to us is, in some way, like saying that Hashem is not in charge of the world, chas v'shalom. If everything comes from Hashem, then everything is meant to be. My anger comes from a lack

of connection to this knowledge. I am literally "cutting myself off" from the reality that Hashem is creating this situation and putting me into it to cause me to grow.

The Sefer HaChinuch tells us that anger comes from jealousy and leads to fear. Getting angry at someone for cutting me off in traffic stems from a feeling that they are taking something that belongs to me, even, in some way, negating my existence. The commentaries say that this is, in fact, one of the ideas behind Korach's rebellion. Korach saw all of the jobs that were being given out and feared that there would be no job left for him, that someone else had taken "his place."

Throughout Torah, the worst sins are punishable by *kares*- which literally means being cut off- from Hashem, from the souls of the Jewish people, from life. There are many halachic ramifications of these types of sins and of the idea of *kares*. The Alter Rebbe, in Chapter 5 of Iggeres HaTeshuva, uses the analogy of a rope with 613 strands. The rope is the means through which the constantly flowing life force from Hashem is drawn down into our souls. Every time we transgress, part of the rope is cut. When we do teshuva, realizing we were wrong and wanting to make up for it, these strands are rebuilt in an even tighter and closer connection.

Kares, however, is a different case. *Kares* would mean a severing of the entire rope, G-d forbid. Even then, though, the Alter Rebbe points out that the innermost aspect of the soul is literally a piece of G-d, and can never

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be fully cut off. The connection and energy flowing into that person from Hashem is diminished until that person does an even greater form of teshuva- a return to Hashem out of love.

In my case, reacting with anger at being “cut-off” in traffic causes me, in some way, to ‘cut myself off’ from the flow of energy from Hashem. When that happens, fear takes over and fans the flames of disconnection and self-doubt.

But perhaps dissecting this behavior chain can enable a healthier response.

In truth, Hashem’s love is in everything He puts in our way. Every obstacle and annoyance is actually an opportunity for growth. In that knowledge I bless us to have the strength to actually do the growing. In the space of love and connection there is no such thing as someone taking your place. We all have a place in Hashem’s world. Every time we remember that, we rebuild our ropes tighter and stronger than before. ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V’Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.

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