

Torah Musings II Samuel 10

אֶעֱשֶׂה-חֶסֶד עִם-חַנּוּן בֶּן-נָחָשׁ

I Will Show Kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash

In II Samuel 10 King David learns of the death of Nahash, Hunan's father and decides:

אֶעֱשֶׂה-חֶסֶד עִם-חַנּוּן בֶּן-נָחָשׁ, כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אָבִיו עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד

I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me.

David dispatches envoys to console and comfort Hanun, however the princes in Hanun's inner circle convince him that David's men are spies on a reconnaissance mission. The envoys are abused by having their beards partially shaved and clothing cut, exposing their buttocks. When David learns of their mistreatment, a bloody war ensues and more than seven thousand men are killed. David intended to bless Hunan but Hunan assumed the worst. What a tragedy! I wonder if this sad outcome would have been averted if Hunan knew of a teaching of Malcom X? In a 1963 interview conducted by Alex Hailey, Malcolm X said;

"I say, sir, that you can never make an intelligent judgment without evidence."

Alex Hailey and Malcolm X were discussing whether Caucasian people can genuinely have the interest of black people at heart. Malcolm X chides Hailey to examine the evidence of history and then make the judgement. Perhaps if Hunan had heeded Malcolm's advice and examined the evidence, the outcome could have been different. Even if Hunan were suspicious of the motive for the visit, he could have chosen to closely watch and guard David's men, examine the evidence and then arrive at a conclusion concerning David's real motive. What evidence did Hunan have for suspecting the worse?

Do we also make judgments concerning people and situations without obtaining all of the evidence? Our outcomes may be fractured relationships, hurt feelings and family feuds. How often do we come to conclusions or make judgments without carefully examining the evidence?

If you assume a negative motive you will react to the situation as if it were true. Have you been accused of insincere or less than stellar motives when you know that was neither your intent or in your heart? I have. Perhaps if the person had spoken directly to me and obtained more information, miscommunication and hurt could have been averted. With only a cursory or no examination of the evidence some things are not as they appear and intentions, thoughts and motives can be misconstrued. Joshua ben Perachiah [second set of the Zugot and Nasi (head) of the Sanhedrin (rabbinic court)] said:

הַיְי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת וְיִשְׁפֹּט בְּכַף חֶסֶד "and judge all men with the scale weighted in his favor" (Pirkei Avot 1:6).

We can choose to imagine that others have the best of intentions until we examine the evidence. Whenever negativity pursues us, and we question motivations, let us remember what Malcolm said and **examine the evidence** and act as did David and **show חֶסֶד chesed/kindness**.

May David's words have the final say...

אֶעֱשֶׂה-חֶסֶד

I Will Show Kindness

שבת שלום מביתנו לביתך
Shabbat Shalom From Our House to Your House

Rabbi Malchah

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