

# THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

ת"וב

## REFLECT, RENEW, REBOOT

*Rabbi David Ingber*

“One who has sinned against [another] must say to him [or her], ‘I’ve acted wrongly against you’.” (Talmud; Yoma 45c)

“Forgive an insult done to you. If you’ve done another a small wrong, let it be great in your eyes...If another has done you a great wrong, let it be small in your eyes.” (Avot Rabbi Nathan; ch. 41)

Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 20a-b: “The Rabbi and The Ugly Man”  
The Sages further taught in praise of the reed (*kaneh*):  
A person should always be soft like a reed, and he should not be stiff like a cedar.

An incident occurred in which Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, came from Migdal Gedor, from his rabbi’s house, and he was riding on a donkey and strolling on the bank of the river. And he was very happy, and his head was swollen with pride because he had studied much Torah.

He happened upon an exceedingly ugly person, who said to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, but Rabbi Elazar did not return his greeting. Instead, Rabbi Elazar said to him: Worthless [*reika*] person, how ugly is that man. Are all the people of your city as ugly as you? The man said to him: I do not know, but you should go and say to the Craftsman Who made me: How ugly is the vessel you made.

When Rabbi Elazar realized that he had sinned and insulted this man, he descended from his donkey and prostrated himself before him, and he said to the man: I have sinned against you; forgive me. The man said to him: I will not forgive you until you go to the Craftsman Who made me and say: How ugly is the vessel you made.

He walked behind the man, trying to appease him until they reached Rabbi Elazar's city. The people of his city came out to greet him, saying to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, my rabbi, my master, my master. The man said to them: Who are you calling my rabbi, my rabbi? They said to him: To this man, who is walking behind you. He said to them: If this man is a rabbi, may there not be many like him among the Jewish people. They asked him: For what reason do you say this? He said to them: He did such and such to me. They said to him: Even so, forgive him, as he is a great Torah scholar. He said to them: For your sakes I forgive him, provided that he accepts upon himself not to become accustomed to behave like this.

Immediately, Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, entered the study hall and taught: A person should always be soft like a reed and he should not be stiff like a cedar, as one who is proud like a cedar tree is likely to sin. And therefore, due to its gentle qualities, the reed merited that a quill is taken from it to write with it a Torah scroll, phylacteries, and *mezuzot*.

תנו רבנן לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז מעשה שבא רבי אלעזר (בן ר') שמעון ממגדל גדור מבית רבו והיה רכוב על החמור ומטייל על שפת נהר ושמח שמחה גדולה והיתה דעתו גסה עליו מפני שלמד תורה הרבה מזדמן לו אדם אחד שהיה מכוער ביותר אמר לו שלום עליך רבי ולא החזיר לו אמר לו ריקה כמה מכוער אותו האיש שמא כל בני עירך מכוערין כמותך אמר לו איני יודע אלא לך ואמור לאומן שעשאני כמה מכוער כלי זה שעשית כיון שידע בעצמו שחטא ירד מן החמור ונשתטח לפניו ואמר לו נעניתי לך מחול לי אמר לו איני מוחל לך עד שתלך לאומן שעשאני ואמור לו כמה מכוער כלי זה שעשית היה מטייל אחריו עד שהגיע לעירו יצאו בני עירו לקראתו והיו אומרים לו שלום עליך רבי רבי מורי מורי אמר להם למי אתם קורין רבי רבי אמרו לו לזה שמטייל אחריו אמר להם אם זה רבי אל ירבו כמותו בישראל אמרו לו מפני מה אמר להם כך וכך עשה לי אמרו לו אעפ"כ מחול לו שאדם גדול בתורה הוא אמר להם בשבילכם הריני מוחל לו ובלבד שלא יהא רגיל לעשות כן מיד נכנס רבי אלעזר בן רבי שמעון ודרש לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז ולפיכך זכה קנה ליטול הימנה קולמוס לכתוב בו ספר תורה תפילין ומזוזות:

1. "If one has received an injury, then, even if the wrongdoer has not asked for forgiveness, the receiver of the injury must nevertheless ask G-d to show the wrongdoer compassion, even as Avraham prayed to G-d for Avimelech, and Ayov [Job] for his friends. Rabbi Gamliel said, 'Let this be a sign to you, that whenever you are compassionate, the Compassionate One will have compassion on you.'" (Mishnah; Baba Kamma 9:29-30).
2. "Whoever forgoes retaliation [and forgives wrongs done to him/her], his/her sins are remitted..." (Talmud; Yoma 23a)
3. "When the Chazon Ish lived in Europe, he once walked in a forest with a disciple. Some people walked behind them and mocked them. The disciple insulted them back. 'You're not a ben Torah (serious Torah student),' the Chazon Ish told him. 'How would a ben Torah reply?' the student asked. 'He would not reply at all' answered the Chazon Ish." (based on Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; Gateway to Happiness; p. 302-3)