

Anger in Early Mourning

רַבִּי שִׁמּוֹן בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר : אַל תִּרְצֶה אֶת חֲבִירְךָ בְּשַׁעַת כַּעֲסוֹ, וְאַל תִּנְחַמְנוּ בְּשַׁעַת שְׂמִתּוֹ מִטַּל לְפָנָיו, וְאַל תִּשְׂאַל לוֹ בְּשַׁעַת נְדָרוֹ, וְאַל תִּשְׁתַּדַּל לְרְאוֹתוֹ בְּשַׁעַת קִלְקֻלָּתוֹ.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar teaches: Do not appease your friend at the hour of his anger, and do not comfort him while his dead lies before him. Do not question him at the time of his vow, and do not try to see him at the hour of his upset.

(Pirke Avot 4:14)

Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Yose: What is the source that one does not appease his fellow in the hour of his anger? [When Moses appeals to God after the golden calf,] it is written: *My face will go before you and I will give you rest* (Exodus 33:14). [As the sages understood it,] the blessed Holy One was saying to Moses: Wait for me until my angry mood passes and then I will give you rest...

And how long does His anger last? It lasts for one moment. And how long is one moment? R. Abin (some say R. Abina) says: As long as it takes to say *moment/regā'*. And how do you know that God is angry for one moment? It is said: *For His anger is but for a moment [regā']*, His favor is for a lifetime (Psalm 30:6).

Or if you prefer you may infer it from the following verse: *Hide thyself for a little moment until the indignation be passes* (Isaiah 26:20).

And when is God angry? Abaye says that it is during one moment of those first three hours of the day, when the rooster's comb is white and it stands on one foot. But, during every hour the rooster stands like that and its comb is white! Yes, but at all other moments it has red streaks in its comb, while in this moment it has no red streaks at all.

In the neighborhood of R. Joshua b. Levi there was a Sadducee who used to annoy him very much with his scriptural interpretations. One day Rabbi Joshua took a rooster, tied it between the legs of his bed and watched it. He thought: When this moment arrives I shall curse that Sadducee. When the moment arrived he was dozing. When he woke up, he said: We learn from this that it is not proper to act in such a way. It is written: *And His tender mercies are over all His works* (Psalm 145:9).

(Berachot 7a)

If a wise person sees that his words will be effective, and will be given attention, he should speak. If not, he should keep silent. What is implied? He should not try to appease someone at the hour of his anger. He should not question someone about his vow at the time that he is making his vow, but should wait until he is tranquil of mind and calm. He should not comfort a person while his dead is lying before him, for such a one is unsettled until he has finished the burial.

(Maimonides, Ethical Ideals 5:7)

When a person's dead is lying before him, he should eat in another house. If he does not have another house, he should construct a partition and eat. If he does not have the materials to make a partition, he should turn away his face and eat. Under no circumstances should he recline and eat or eat meat or drink wine.

He does not recite the blessing before eating or the blessing after the meal. Others do not recite the blessings for him, nor is he included in the quorum of three for the public blessing after the meal. He is free from the obligation to recite the Shema, free from obligatory prayers, free from putting on tefilin and free from any other commandments stated in the Torah.

On the Sabbath, he should recline, eat meat and drink wine, recite the blessing before eating and the blessing after the meal. Others may recite blessings for him. He is included in the quorum for the blessing after the meal and is obligated in all of the commandments of the Torah except that of sexual relations.

Once the dead is buried, he is permitted to eat meat and drink a small amount of wine to help digest food, but not to drink it in an unrestrained manner.

(Maimonides, Laws of Mourning, from chapter 4)