

**STORY**

**The Blessing and the Bottle**

**An inspiring story of what the power of self-control can accomplish, in both heavenly spheres and in this world!**



With terrifying ferocity, the plague began to strike the country and felled many without remorse. Townspeople turned to prayer, yet despite their tear-choked voices, there was no cure. A delegation was sent to Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuz to seek his intercession in Heaven.

“You will travel to such-and-such town,” instructed Rabbi Baruch. “There, you will find a certain man. Beg him to declare, ‘G-d will remove this calamity from you.’ Do not leave before the man does.”

As they set out on their journey, the delegation couldn’t deny their impatience to meet with this man, whom they believed was undoubtedly righteous and famous. When they arrived, however, the townspeople answered their inquiries about the man’s whereabouts with empty looks and shrugs. Confronted with this unexpected development, doubt began to dim the men’s spirits. Yet, they persisted in their search, combing the town as though with a fine-toothed comb, until, finally, the delegation received its first lead.

“Him?” replied a villager, affording the delegation an incredulous look. “That man’s a drunkard. Perhaps when he can tell the difference between his right and left hand, he then may be useful.”

It would’ve made more sense to abandon

their search right then and there rather than seek out this drunkard, but the delegation, fueled by faith, found his hovel and crowded around the door, as one of them gave it an apprehensive rap. The door was promptly opened by a puzzled-looking woman.

“We are here at the behest of Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuz,” said one of them slowly to the woman, whose confused look only deepened. “He has told us to speak with your husband, as he may be able to reverse the horrible decree threatening us.”

The woman reacted as though slapped. “Is this your idea of mocking me? Come in, for perhaps you’d like to see him for yourself, lying there on the floor in a drunken stupor.” The woman paused to take a shaky breath before continuing. “It wasn’t always like this. My husband was a wealthy man, happy and full of vigor. But he found solace in the bottle and tore our life apart, together with all his financial ventures, chaining him to an injurious cycle—one he is unable to break out of till today. His daily routine goes as such: he wakes up, staggers around just to find more alcohol, and drinks himself asleep again. If you still wish to speak with my husband, wait for him to wake up and do so quickly—before he drinks again.”

It was the delegation’s turn to act as though slapped; the man upon whom they had pinned their hopes was a bona fide drunkard. As they requested the woman to disclose more details of the man’s life (perhaps she had missed something), it became very

*Story continued on next page...*

**SMILE!**

**IT'S CONTAGIOUS**



Many heimishe Yidden don't say *Tachnun* on the *Yartzeit* of a *Tzadik*, and many times they will try to find the *Yartzeit* of a *Tzadik* on every single day of the year. Maybe that was the *machlokes* between Korach and Moshe in this week's parsha. Korach said "*Kulam Kedoshim*" - they are all holy, there's always a *Yartzeit* of someone holy - so we never need to say *Tachnun*! But Moshe disagreed, as it says "*Vayipol Moshe al Panav*" - Moshe said *Nefillas Apayim (Tachnun)*!



It's now 7 months since I joined the gym and nothing has changed. Maybe it's time I go there personally and find out what's wrong.



Congradulations to my dear children on their conclusion of study on the human central system. They successfully found my last nerve!





apparent that he didn't possess any sort of resemblance to a righteous life. In the end, they decided to wait for the drunkard to wake up.

Indeed, the drunkard began to stir and groped around for a bottle. He seemed unaware that a group of men surrounded him and were watching him carefully. "Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuz has sent us," said one of the

men loudly. "He claims you are the only one who can bring an end to the plague that is currently decimating our numbers." He regarded them with bloodshot eyes. "Can I have just one swig before I do so?"

"No. We will not move from here and you will not receive your drink," said the man firmly, shaking his head. "You will bless us, and we will be on our way." Adopting a look of defeat, the drunkard said, "May G-d in His infinite mercy nullify this decree."

The delegation thanked the drunkard and immediately departed for Mezhibuz. A wonderful sight met their eyes upon their arrival home: unbelievably, the plague had died out. After asking some of the townspeople, it appeared that the decree had lifted exactly in those strange moments of the drunkard's blessing.

"He was an absolute drunkard," reported the delegation when they later met with Rabbi Baruch, "who probably doesn't know even a single letter of Scripture. He slurs when he talks. He is a disgrace to himself, his wife is completely clueless about his behavior, and the town considers him a stain on society. How did this man halt the plague?" Rabbi Baruch gave them a knowing smile. "Allow me to tell you a story. Oh, the things a single mitzvah can accomplish . . .

"The drunkard you met was once, as you probably already know, a wealthy man, good-looking and quite well-regarded. He used it to his advantage, propelling himself up the social ladder and augmenting his business. Once, he paid a call to a non-Jewish widow, who had been the wife of a well-known noble. She was immediately impressed by her visitor.

"Imagine us as a couple," she said. "It could do you and your business wonders. Why live with that woman back home? Alongside me, consider yourself as a noble among nobles, and with your wisdom and my wealth, there's nothing we cannot achieve. Think about it.'

"I hear you,' said the man, nodding. 'But before I commit, could you please arrange a grand banquet and introduce me to the upper crust? Many nobles and princes will undoubtedly show up, and before that day is over, my name will be quite known. Our stature will grow.'

"The noblewoman was only too happy to comply. "A date was set, and the invitations were sent. The man steeled himself for perhaps

the most important day of his life; he, too, fancied the woman and all the glory she represented. "The banquet took place at the noblewoman's estate. Many important guests had indeed arrived, with whom the man was delighted to mingle and chat. Around the early morning, as the festivities were finally winding down, the two set out for a walk around the expansive lawns surrounding her estate. Their stroll, however, was interrupted when a series of groans and sobs drifting in the fading darkness reached the man's ear, and he immediately followed them, dragging the noblewoman after him, until he stood before a miserable pit. Inside, clawing at the walls, were his fellow Jews. The man could only stare, horror-struck at the scene. "'Save us, sir, please!' "'Have mercy on your fellow human beings!' "'What is this?' he managed to yell over their wails. 'What is your crime? What have you done?!

"They described their crime of failing to pay the taxes imposed on them. The man begged the noblewoman to free the poor souls imprisoned on her estate, which she did. The man then hired a coach and paid the driver to bring the prisoners home.

"Of course, any mitzvah is closely tailed by another one. As relief washed over the man in waves, a new uneasiness crept into his heart. "What have I done?" he asked himself. "How could I have left my faithful wife to marry a gentile?!" The man then ordered himself a coach and fled the noblewoman and her promises without a glance over his shoulder.

"A tumultuous storm erupted in Heaven at the man's act of self-restraint. What reward should this man deserve? The Heavenly Court decided that man would be capable of annulling any decree from Above. This, however, prompted another outburst in Heaven, one which now concerned Heaven itself, as its decrees were no longer relevant while this man roamed the earth—naturally, he would always revoke everything. Thus, a caveat followed: the man was to be subjected to a life of alcoholism, so drunk he would be unable to follow the events surrounding him and reversing them.

"Indeed," finished Rabbi Baruch, "it's quite risky having the man force Heaven's Hand. Seeing as this plague wouldn't have stopped until countless more have died, I had no choice but to employ his blessing."

**FOR THOSE WHO STRUGGLE WITH SHMIRAS EINAYIM, NOW IS HARDER THAN EVER!**

Being confined to home without work, feeling anxious and stressed, as well as constantly checking our computers and phones, are breeding grounds for the Yetzer Hara.

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## Don't be like Korach - ולא יהיה כקרח



Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler zt"l (Michtav Me'Eliyahu vol. 4) explains how it happened that a smart man like Korach acted

so foolishly. What he says, applies to each of us as well - so listen carefully!

He quotes Rav Hai Gaon (in his responsa), who brings the following story:

A lion wanted to tear apart a fox. So the fox says to him, "Why settle for a skinny body like mine? Over there is a fat man." Replied the lion, "I am fearful of his prayers - I may be punished through him." Said the fox, "The punishment will not come upon you, only on your children or grandchildren." The lion went towards the fat man, and fell into a trap - a pit covered with branches and leaves. The fox went and peeked at the lion in the pit. Said the lion to the fox, "But you said that the punishment will not come upon me, but on my children or grandchildren!" Replied the fox, "You are not being punished for your sins, but for the sins of your forefathers." Said the lion, "If my forefathers sinned, why should I be made to suffer?". Replies the fox, "Did you not agree that your children should be punished for your sins?!"

Concludes Rav Hai Gaon, "How much mussar lies in this parable!"

Explains R' Dessler: This is the power of 'taivah' (desire) - it blinds the eyes of one's mind. Same with the Korach. He was a wise man, so why did he act so illogically? Because the 'taivah' for honor corrupted the eyes of his mind.

May Hashem help us that 'taivah' should never cause us to act illogically.

## From the Depths of She'ol



The Pasuk says that the children of Korach didn't die. The Medrash says that as the children of Korach were falling into 'she'ol' they said to Hashem, "Hashem, it is known that Klal Yisrael

won't achieve redemption until they 'hit bottom'. We have hit bottom, PLEASE SAVE US!" And Hashem replied, "You have won me, my sons. It is all in your hands. If you turn your hearts to Heaven you will be saved". And they turned their hearts to Hashem and Hashem lifted the ground up under them and

they were saved. And from them came Shmuel Hanavi, the head of the Nevi'im. As Chana praised Hashem, "*Morid sho'el vayo'al* - (Hashem) takes down to she'ol and uplifts"...

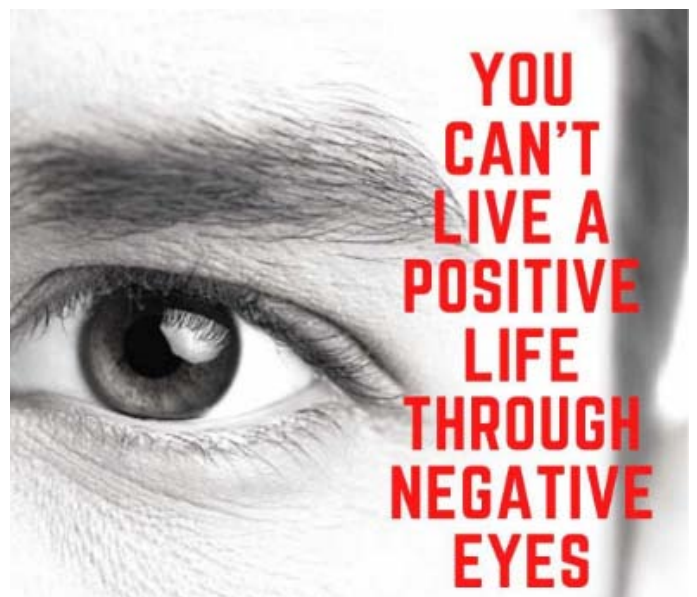
What can we learn from this? That davka when we feel we "hit bottom", we have the ability to turn it all around and achieve personal redemption. When we recognize that we are in the depths of "she'ol" and turn our hearts to Hashem, He will uplift us.

But why indeed does it take "hitting bottom" to achieve redemption? Perhaps because it is at that point that we recognize CLEARLY that we have no one to rely on but Hashem. And sometimes that is what Hashem is waiting for us to feel - with our entire being.

If that's the reason, then it follows that if we want to avoid "hitting bottom", the eitzah is to recognize already NOW that whatever success we have is not through our own strength, but only because Hashem is helping us. We need to pour out our hearts to Hashem every day and say, "Hashem, I know I can't do this alone, please help me succeed today"...

Those who think they are "strong" never merit true personal redemption. Hashem doesn't desire "strength". He has enough powerful Malachim in Heaven. As the pasuk says, "Not in the strength of the horse does He desire.... (maybe because those who think they are strong on their own are no better than a horse)... [but rather] Hashem desires those who fear Him; those who hope to his salvation".

## INSPIRATIONAL IMAGE OF THE WEEK



## HIS EYES FOOLED HIM!

TRUE  
FALSE

This week's Parsha tells the story of the personal destruction of Korach. Korach, as we all know, was no small street fighter; he was a *Gadol* of great proportions.

Rashi says that Korach was a *pike'ach* - a smart man; why did he choose this stupidity?

Rashi explains that it was jealousy and says, "*EINAV HITAASO* - his eyes fooled him".

Korach was a wise man. But even a wise person can be fooled by what he sees. The issues we face in the area of

lust almost always begin with *HISTAKLUS* - GAZING.

So why don't we take a lesson from Korach? One little peek... one click... is *EINAV HITAASO*!!!! We are fooled into thinking that we must lust. Yes, we are duped into thinking that someone else's is better than mine. And once that happens, we can use all the *mussar* and all the *sechel* and all the psychology in the world, but it won't work against "*shtuss zeh* - this stupidity". Why? Cuz our eyes fool us!!!

So... as we say in business, "If you were ripped off once, nu, it was a mistake. But a second time? You're a fool!"

Let's not give in to the desires of our eyes; they are the greatest tricksters at fooling us!

## Desires are an Illusion

**You'd never believe me if I told you that box A and box B are exactly the same color, would you? Well, they are!**

Our eyes are a tremendous blessing that allow us to perceive the world around us. However our eyes can trick us as well, making us believe that we need things that in reality it may be very bad for us. Let's train ourselves to use our eyes for good and not let them trick us to turn after our hearts desires!

עיניו הטעתו  
"His eye fooled him"

