

**STORY**

**Who wants this bill?**



A story is told of a lecturer who spoke to an audience and took from his pocket a \$20 bill. "Who wants this bill?" he asked. Naturally, everybody in the audience emphatically exclaimed that they would want the bill. The speaker then crumpled the bill and opened it again, so that it appeared wrinkled. He repeated his original question: "Who wants this bill?" Once again, the entire room shouted to express their desire to have the money. The speaker then placed the bill on the floor and trampled on it. When he finished, he lifted it and showed the audience how dirty and dusty it looked. For the third time, he asked, "Who wants this bill?" Of course, the question elicited the same response that it had on the previous two occasions.

The lecturer then explained the meaning behind this exercise. No matter what a person does to a \$20 bill, it remains valuable, it does not lose its worth, and everybody is as eager to own it as they were when it was clean and fresh. The same is true about God's feelings towards every individual. As we grow through life, there are times when we become "crumpled" or "dirty," when we act inappropriately and make mistakes. But even when this happens, we are still as valuable in God's eyes as we were initially. He believes

in our potential for Kedusha regardless of our past, and we should therefore believe in ourselves and strive for holiness, without being discouraged by our past mistakes.

The Mitzva of "Kedoshim Tiheyhu" serves as a powerful expression of how much the Almighty thinks of each and every individual, how He believes in every Jew's potential for greatness.

People often look back in despair at their past mistakes and improper behavior. They think to themselves, "Holiness can't be for me; anyone who knows the things I did would never expect me to become 'Kadosh'." But the Torah tells us that nothing can be further from the truth. "Kedoshim Tiheyu" is an obligation that the Torah casts upon each and every one of us, irrespective of what we have done in the past.

In fact, the Talmud teaches that "the place where Ba'alei Teshuva [repentant sinners] stand - completely righteous people cannot stand there." People with a history of sin face a much greater challenge than those who have been sheltered and protected from sin their entire lives. Having already enjoyed the forbidden pleasures of the world, it is far more difficult for them to withdraw and commit themselves to a life of observance. In a certain sense, then, their potential for "Kedusha" is even greater than that of perfect Tzadikim!

**SMILE!  
IT'S CONTAGIOUS**



On a Korean kitchen knife. WARNING: KEEP OUT OF CHILDREN. (Who are they to tell me what to do with my kids?)



On a string of Chinese-made lights. FOR INDOOR OR OUTDOOR USE ONLY. (As opposed to use in outer space?)



On packaging for a Rowenta iron. DO NOT IRON CLOTHES ON BODY.



On an Airlines packet of nuts. INSTRUCTIONS - OPEN PACKET, EAT NUTS. (I'm glad they cleared that up.)



On a child's superman costume. WEARING OF THIS GARMENT DOES NOT ENABLE YOU TO FLY. (Go ahead, destroy a universal childhood fantasy!)



**My rebbe told me I would never have a gemara cup. Well who's laughing now?**



## 40 Crazy Years! Why should I Change NOW???



Addiction-free life is in your hands - This is the lesson of Parashat Shelach and it's Haftora.

Parshas Shelach describes a Jew's inability of breaking out from "Victim" - aka Egyptian (\*1) Slave Mentality - into survivor - aka "Freedom" Mentality - when they accepted the report of the spies negatively. This sealed their fate in the desert.

In contrast, the Haftora relates Rachav's strength of character in breaking free out of 40 years of prostitution from the (\*2) young age of 10, and the temptations of her renowned beauty (\*3). She made a turn around to the point that she became the wife of the leader of the Jewish nation - Yehoshua!

Her entire nation was in a state of terror with the news of the pending attack from the Jewish nation, where lust activities virtually ceased and closed down her immodest store (\*4).

She then made a moral inventory - and accepted the true G-d of the Jews, at risk of death. Her neighbors could have done so too. They did not. She chose life and G-d granted it to her.

Rachav's message to us is that no excuse should impede our ability to change. Whatever our life circumstances, we are free either to take responsibility or ignore opportunities for our own self-growth.

Rachav ultimately marries Yehoshua and our sages tell us that from her came eight high priests, who were also prophets - among them Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel. How did she merit such offspring, when in fact there have been others through history who saw G-d and committed to Him, yet did not merit such rewards? The answer lies in the fact that Rachav saw G-d in a situation where others might have asked, "Where is G-d?" Consider Rachav's position: she is attached to 31 Kings and knows their secrets; she lives on the border the Jewish people are about to overrun; she has no idea whether the two men she hides will accept her. Nonetheless, she sees G-d's hand in these tribulations, and to this she commits everything.

Rachav understands that good or bad, everything that happens points the way to G-d.

To be in a difficult situation and make the best of it - to see G-d in the midst of uncertainty and chaos - is a quintessentially Jewish trait, whose foremother is the great Rachav.

----- **Notes:** -----

\*1) See Ibn Ezra Shemos 14:13 re: the slave mentality of the Jewish people

\*2) See Tractate Zevachim 116b

\*3) See Tractate Megilla 15a

\*4) Kesef Mezuak - Parshat Shelach

## Grasshoppers and Giants



Have you ever faced a new opportunity or a big challenge? Did you ever really want to change but something always seemed to get in the way? You may be asking, what is keeping me from taking the steps needed to break free of my bad habits?

The BIGGEST OBSTACLE to ALL change is FEAR!!

Check out Bamidbar Chapter 13 Verse 33 - which appears after the Spies were sent to tell Klal Yisroel about the "Promised Land":

ונהי בעינינו כחגבים וכך היינו בעיניהם

"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes!"

Don't forget that when Klal Yisroel got this report, we had just spent 13 months at the foot of Mt Sinai, having seen G-d defeat the most powerful nation in the world, taken us out of Egypt, defied all laws of physics by splitting a Sea, revealing Himself at Mt Sinai, and then He fed us and protected us miraculously. We were told that He was going to take us to the "Promised Land" overflowing with milk and honey within days! You would think that by now, we would have a strong sense of faith and trust in the Almighty.

But no!! We bought into a story by men who perceived themselves as "small" and justified their negative self image by declaring that others must see them the same way! If we feel small, weak, incompetent, stupid, ugly or lowly (in our eyes)...then we are going to assume that everyone else is seeing us the very same way!

Psychologists define FEAR as an emotional response to a real or PERCEIVED danger - and they acknowledge the major role that our IMAGINATION plays into the amount of FEAR we have. Have you even been taking a walk at night through your neighborhood and all of a sudden you hear some noise behind the bushes? What did your imagination tell you what was lurking behind those bushes... perhaps some axe murderer waiting for his next victim, or a big dog with rabies? Do you remember how you reacted...how you freaked out and assumed the worst?

One of the biggest causes of failure in our struggles, is the FEAR we have that we can't win over the Yetzer Hara - the "GIANT" - known in our Parasha as the "Nephillim." Notice that the root of this word is נפל to fall - as Rashi points out is because they fell and caused others to fall... Step 2 (in the 12 Step program) offers us a solution..."We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity!" And in Step 3, "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d."

If only the Spies would have practiced these Two Steps, we would all be enjoying Olam HaBah in Olam HaZeh!!

## A Lesson from the Mapilim

וַיִּעָפְלוּ לְעֵלוֹת אֶל-רֹאשׁ הַהָר; וַיֵּאָרוֹן בְּרִית-ה' וּמִשָּׁה לֹא-מָשׁוּ מִקֶּרֶב הַמַּחֲנֶה.



*But they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain; nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.*

It happens all the time; we have a nasty fall and we finally get back up, and all of the sudden we act like big tzaddikim. In a way, we are acting no different than the mapilim. The sin of the meraglim was a tremendous fall that we are still paying the price for today. Yet, what happens? They realize they made a mistake and they do what they think is teshuvah, and the next day they are tzaddikim in their own eyes and they're off to Eretz Yisroel!

The Torah teaches us that this is not the way. We need to slowly, slowly work on ourselves. Forty years in the desert and with all of the connotations of what a desert is. And even then, we may not see the fruit of that labor in ourselves but sometimes only in our kids (like the children of the Yidden in the desert who entered Eretz Yisrael). There are no shortcuts in life. But if we do the work, we'll get there in the end!



## Kindness of your youth

We read this week about the Meraglim. The sin of the Meraglim was that they believed "it could not be done". It is so

easy to be guilty of the same sin, especially when dealing with the powerful desires of the Yetzer Hara. We must realise that even if someone could think that it's not physically possible for him to break free of his addictions, G-d is not limited to his abilities. Many people who originally thought it was impossible, learned to put their full trust in G-d and give over to him their addiction and desires.

Just like a child trusts his father and jumps into his waiting arms--even from a height--without the slightest fear, we need to be able to just "let go" of our desires and trust fully that G-d will take care of us. If we do this, then he will indeed bring us through the desert and into Eretz Yisrael.

As it is written: "Zacharti Lach Chesed Ne'urayich - Lech tech acharai Bamidbar..." - "I remember the kindness of your youth (i.e. how you gave over your trust) [when I said to you:] "follow me into the barren desert"...

## PRACTICAL TIP OF THE WEEK

### The eye sees, and the heart desires

*Rashi, Numbers 15:39*



People cannot help when an improper impulse comes to mind, but they certainly can stop themselves from harboring the thought and allowing it to dominate their thinking. Yet, sometimes one may be responsible even for the impulse itself.

While some impulses are completely spontaneous, others arise out of stimulation. If a person reads, hears, or sees things which can provoke improper thoughts and feelings, he or she is then responsible for the impulses that are the consequences of that reading, listening, or observing.

This concept is especially important in our era, when not even a semblance of a code of decency exists as to what may or may not be publicly displayed. All varieties of media exploit our basest biological drives.

Given the interpretation of the right of free speech under which such provocative displays occur, the government has no way to restrain them. However, each person has not only a right, but also an obligation to be his or her own censor. No one has to look at everything that is displayed nor hear everything that is broadcast. Those who fail to exert their own personal censorship are tacitly stimulating immoral impulses, and for that alone they are liable.

**Today I shall ...** *try to avoid looking, hearing, and reading things which can have a degenerating effect.*

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

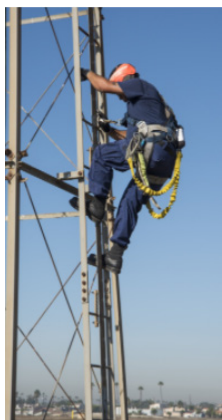
Being confined to home without work, feeling anxious and stressed, as well as constantly checking our computers and phones, are breeding grounds for the Yetzer Hara.

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## When He Removes His Help, We Fall



R' Yeruchum explains a Rashi in parshas Shelach (by the Meraglim). Rashi brings down that Hashem said, "I will give them room to make a mistake." R' Yeruchum explains that Hashem didn't MAKE them do an aveirah - He just took away the help that he always provides, and once that help was gone, it was inevitable that they would fall. \*(see bottom for an explanation of why Hashem took away his support).

The Gemara says, "A person's Yetzer attacks him every day, and wants to kill him... and if not for Hashem's help, we wouldn't stand a chance." R' Yeruchum explains that in general, Hashem is constantly helping us out, and without that constant support, we wouldn't be able to succeed. Remember, the meraglim were among the greatest, holiest people, and Yehoshua Bin Nun was listed 5th - implying that everyone above him was even greater than he was! And yet, without Hashem's help, they fell. Yehoshua and Kalev were both saved by an extra dose of Hashem's help, each in their own way (that's another whole discussion).

R' Yeruchum goes further to point out that when a person wants to purify themselves, Hashem "helps" (misa'ayin lo) - but when a person wants to make himself impure, "poschin lo", Hashem just opens the way. He doesn't help the person fall, He just "allows" them to. Exactly the same point.

He then brings down that R' Yisroel Salanter used to say that he wouldn't trust himself to be in a room with an uncounted box of money unless there were people constantly going in and out.

He emphasizes that when we go through a day without doing an aveirah, instead of congratulating ourselves, we should realize that it's a wonderful favor and chesed from Hashem. If we think it's all because of us, we're mistaken.

Why did Hashem remove His help from the Meraglim? Well according to many, if not most commentaries, when Klal Yisroel decided to send the meraglim, they were making a choice that was a mistake of doing too much hishtadlus (obviously, on their own level, which we can barely understand). Since they wanted to do things on their own, midah k'neged midah, Hashem allowed them to be on their own.

## INSPIRATIONAL IMAGE OF THE WEEK



## DESIRES ARE AN ILLUSION

**You mean to tell me these lines of black and white are all perfectly straight??**

**It seems insane but it's true!**

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!

