

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
SHELACH

בשבת

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PREDETERMINED FACTS

Parshas Shelach narrates the story of the twelve spies who were chosen to scout out the land of Israel, with instructions to bring back a full report. With ill intent¹ they set out, specifically seeking negative information to bring back to *Klal Yisrael*.

When they returned, they proclaimed that Israel is a 'land that eats its inhabitants!' The Gemara² explains this refers to the fact that wherever they went, they saw the populace heavily involved in the funerals of recently deceased important and powerful people. The reason Hashem did this, though, was to busy the people with funeral preparations, and thus distract them from the spies in their midst. However, this point was lost on the *meraglim*, who simply took this as a fact that the land was deadly for those who lived there.

The Ben Yehoyadah³ (R' Yosef Hayyim 1835–1909) points out that the spies should have easily realized that the abundance of funerals was not a natural occurrence. The very fact that only the important and wealthy were dying, while the poor and unfortunate were untouched, should have quickly tipped them off that it wasn't the climate, air, or anything about the area. The Steipler Gaon⁴ (R'Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, 1899–1985) adds that if indeed burials were so common, the residents would have taken the deaths in stride, and they would not have been so preoccupied to not even notice the newcomers.

How did the *meraglim* miss these clues? The Steipler elaborates — a person sees what they want to see. If a person is inclined to see the good, then they will indeed see the good. If, however, they are disposed towards the negative, everything they see will be interpreted through that lens. Thus, it comes at no surprise that the *meraglim* distorted the great kindness that Hashem showed them, turning it into a reason to reject Hashem's Promised Land.

We, however, can use this lesson to strengthen our *avodas Hashem*, by recognizing that sometimes our interpretation of events is colored by our previously held opinions. Similarly, by habituating ourselves to have a positive outlook, we will be more likely to gloss over the faults in others, and instead focus on their admirable qualities.

1 Rashi on Bamidbar 13:26 s.v. וילכו ויבאו

2 Sotah 35a

3 *ibid* s.v. אמר הקדוש

4 *Birchas Peretz* pg. 56

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Sometimes we might feel that we are stuck in a catch-22 — we know our attitude may determine our feelings about events and people, but how do we change our attitude, if we're feeling lousy?

Sometimes, acting as if we feel a particular emotion will help engender that emotion itself. Pushing oneself to smile, or trying to find a funny thing to laugh about will start the ball rolling. This is based on the idea that our actions affect our inner thoughts.¹

As an example, Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz suggests that if a person isn't feeling inspired to come close to Hashem, they can find this inspiration by singing songs that talk about our desire to be close to Hashem.²

Of course, a person has to be careful not to act in a manner that is anathema to one's personality. Not only will it not be effective, but it can end up backfiring, causing more harm than good.³ Nevertheless, when done incrementally, this exercise has the ability to totally change a person's outlook and actions.

1 *Sefer HaChinuch* 16, *Mesillas Yesharim* 7

2 *Tiv HaShabbos*, *Kah Echsof*

3 See Introduction to *Cheshbon HaNefesh*



The best and most ideal way to arrive at one's goals in Tikkun HaMiddos is by diligently studying the Sifrei Mussar as well as the ethical teachings of Chazal. - R' Shmuel Kamenetzky shlit"א, Philadelphia Rosh Yeshiva, approbation to "Lifelines" by Avi Shulman, Feldheim Publishers, 1988

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AGELESS WISDOM

Yanky Zimmerman,* the oldest of six children, was ready to enter *shidduchim*. Mrs. Zimmerman asked her friends to be on the lookout for someone who would be a good fit, and after some time, the phone rang in the Zimmerman house. Mrs. Ganz was on the line; she described a wonderful young lady, Bruchie Bidderman, who had impeccable *middos*, a good head, and the list went on. However, there was a bit of an issue. Yanky spoke Hebrew and English, Bruchie only spoke Yiddish. But after looking into the matter further, the Zimmermans agreed, and Yanky and Bruchie went out.

They hit it off right away. The conversations, though stilted and halting, flowed as best as it could. After some time Yanky realized that it was starting to get serious.

"*Ima*, I meant to ask — how old is Bruchie?"

"She is... I think... Yes, she is two years younger than you. That's what Mrs. Ganz said. Why do you want to know?"

"Oh, no reason. I mean, well, things are going well, *Boruch Hashem*, but I don't think I'd feel comfortable marrying someone older than I. People say it's a silly thing, but it's not something I can get past. But I guess it doesn't matter."

Yanky and Bruchie continued going out, and with great excitement, got engaged. They held a *vort*, with family and friends invited. Yanky's friend Chezky, with cake in one hand and a drink in the other, got some one-on-one time with Yanky. "Mazel Tov! Do you have a date for the wedding yet?"

"No, not yet, though we're looking at late June."

"Very nice. Pretty amazing what a person will do when they like someone, no? Just a few months ago, you told me no way, no how, would you go out with someone older than you. And, well, here you are!" Chezky said with a chuckle.

Yanky squinted in confusion. "What do you mean? She's two years younger than me."

Chezky froze. His family had known Bruchie's for years. She was most definitely two years *older* than Yanky. Before he could think of what to say, Yanky burst out laughing. "This is amazing. I'm sure you're right, I know that you know the family. With the language barrier, it was never clear to me how old she is. And my mother must have misremembered whether Bruchie was older or younger.

"You are right, I was certain that someone older than I would be a terrible idea. And, I have to say, it would have been! I would have gone in knowing it would not work, and it would have been a self-fulfilling prophecy. But, as you said, here we are! And I guess the age thing doesn't really bother me."

Chezky wiped a bead of sweat from his forehead, and finished his drink, "Hashem knows He's doing, no? Had to bypass your mindset for you to marry the right person. He's looking out for you." Chezky shared a hug with Yanky, and with a smile, disappeared into the crowd.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Our judgement of others is colored by our own viewpoint. A true leader, though, knows how to see things from others' perspective.¹

¹ *Rashi on Bamidbar 27:16* s.v. אלקי הרוחת

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