

Kindert Torah

Parashas Shelach

Learn a Lesson from Everything

"How are you Pete?"

"Great, Chaim. Do you want to hear some great news?"

"Yes, Pete."

"I have a part time job at a grocery store in the afternoons helping the customers pack their goods in bags and restocking the shelves. I always make sure that I come on time and don't take any breaks. I even try to come early, stay a little late, and figure out ways to work more efficiently. I smile at the customers and am happy to serve them. Today my boss gave me a big bonus for all of my extra effort."

"Wow, that's great, Pete!"

"Thanks, Chaim. Have a great day."

Chaim arrives at home. His mother greets him warmly.

"Chaim, Shalom! How are you?"

"Shalom, Imma. I'm fine. I just met our neighbor Pete, who works at the grocery store. He told me that he received a big bonus from his boss for being so conscientious on the job."

Chaim's mother recognizes an opportunity to teach her son something very important.

"Very nice, Chaim. What did you learn from that?"

Chaim is a bit surprised. He never expected such a response from his mother.

"I didn't learn anything, Imma. I just was happy for Pete."

"I see, Chaim. Think about it for a moment. Perhaps you can learn something from Pete's experience."

Chaim begins to think. However, a thought is troubling him.

"Imma, why do I have to learn something from Pete?"

"That is a very good question, Chaim. Take a look at the first Rashi in this week's parasha. The Torah recounts the sin of the *meraglim* (spies) immediately after the sin of Miriam. We know that nothing is haphazard in the Torah. Why are these two events placed next to each other, Chaim?"

"Rashi explains that Miriam was punished for speaking badly about her brother. These evil people (the *meraglim*) saw what happened to her and did not take *mussar* (a moral lesson) from it."

"Very good, Chaim. Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l, the Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva, makes a statement that is so simple, and yet so compelling, that it can change your entire outlook on life. He says that everything that we see and everything that we hear has a purpose. What is that purpose? To learn from it. To apply what we learn to ourselves. To take action. Take the new insight that you gain from your experience and turn it into a constructive action. This is the wisdom of *mussar*. 'A wise man hears, and increases his learning' (Mishlei 1:5). He takes *mussar* from everything that happens to him."

Chaim thinks for a moment.

"Hashem arranged that encounter with Pete in order for me to learn something from it."

"Exactly, Chaim."

"If Pete gets rewarded by his boss for being conscientious at his job in the grocery store, how much more so will I be rewarded by my Boss - Hashem - for doing my job conscientiously."

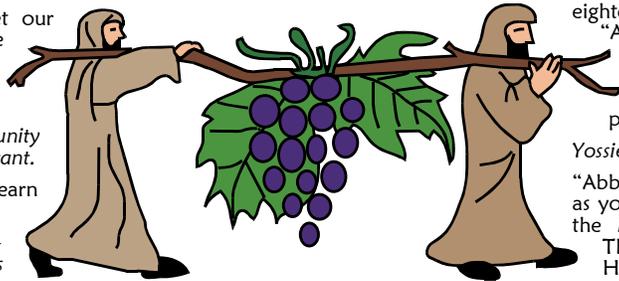
"Now you're on the right track, Chaim."

"Pete comes early to work. I can come early to *tefillah* (prayers) and learning sessions. Pete doesn't waste his boss's time. How can I waste the precious time that Hashem gave me? Pete works with happiness and enthusiasm. How much more so I should serve Hashem with great *simcha* (happiness) and *zerizus* (enthusiasm)!"

"Chaim, you have really learned the lesson. I am so proud of you!"

"Thank you, Imma. You have taught me a valuable lesson. I hope to grow from it my entire life."

"B'ezras Hashem!"



Kindertlach . . .

Rav Yerucham's wisdom is more valuable than diamonds. Someone who learns from every experience is like a worker who gathers riches all day. He sees something, learns from it, and adds the lesson to his treasury of wisdom. He hears a statement, and realizes that he must change his ways based on what he heard. His days are a paradise, filled with acquisition of spiritual valuables. Become rich, kindertlach. Take mussar from everything. Add the lessons to your spiritual storehouse. Grow from every experience. B'ezras Hashem you will become great people.

Do As You Are Told

"What did they do wrong?" This is the famous question asked by the Ramban about the *meraglim*. They were sent to spy out the land. What are the people like - strong or weak? Few or many? How is the land - good or bad? How are the cities? Open or fortified? Is the land fertile or lean? Does it have trees? Bring back some of the fruits. (From Bamidbar 13:18-20). They brought back the answers to the questions, as well as the fruits. What did they do wrong?

The Shelach answers, in the name of the Baal Akeida, that they gave advice. The spies were only capable of seeing and reporting what they saw. They were not on the *madrayga* (spiritual level) to advise Klal Yisrael what to do. They added the word,

"*effes*" - "however" - followed by their opinion (Bamidbar 13:28). The nation is strong and we will not be able to overcome them. Who asked for their opinion? Hashem promised the land to the Jewish people. He knew better than they did. The following true story brings out this point.

"How was the matza baking, Yossie?"

"Great, Abba."

"Did you work hard?"

"Yes, very hard."

"What job did you do?"

"I pounded out the dough. After the 'mixer' mixed the flour and water together in the bowl, it became a mass of dough. My job was to pound that dough with a heavy stick until the next stage, when it was rolled into a loaf and cut into pieces."

"Let me ask you something, Yossie. Did you pound out the dough to work out any pockets of flour and water that might not have mixed well, or did you keep working the dough to prevent it from becoming *chometz* if the process took more than eighteen minutes?"

"Abba, I kept pounding the dough because if I stopped, the *Mashgiach* (supervisor of the *kashrus* of the *matzos*) would yell at me to keep pounding."

Yossie's father chuckled.

"Abba, I also thought of the same question as you. However, there was no time to ask the *Mashgiach* while we were working.

There was only time to follow orders. He knows the halachos of *matza* baking much better than I do. He needs workers who will do the job. Therefore, I did what he said without asking."

"Yossie, you are a very smart young man. You know when to express your opinion, and when to follow orders. For example, when you are in the Beis HaMedrash, we want to hear your opinion. We want to see if you understand the material that you are learning. We look for *talmidim* (students) who will ask good questions. However, when you are baking *matzos*, we want you to work. There is no time for questions. Everyone must quickly follow orders, no questions asked."

"That's exactly what I did, Abba."

Kindertlach . . .

We all have to learn when to offer our opinion, and when to follow orders without question. When is the time to ask questions and offer our opinion? When we are learning, or when things need clarification. However, there are times when everyone must follow instructions without asking. For example, the school has certain rules that everyone must follow without exception. The administration knows better than you do. Don't ask questions. Don't add your opinion. Do as you are told.

Parasha Questions:

- When did they begin observing the mitzvah of *challah*? (15:18 and Rashi)
- Which *aveyra* is the Torah speaking about in verses 22-23? (Rashi 15:22)
- Which death penalty does a *mechalel Shabbos* receive? (15:35,36)

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