



## True Strength

The Chet HaMeraglim (Sin of the Spies). A terrible sin, whose effects we still feel to this day. The night of the sin was Tisha B'Av, a night which became earmarked for disasters all throughout Jewish history. Due to the magnitude of the sin, Hashem wanted to wipe out the entire Jewish people except for Moshe Rabbeinu. He would then make a new nation with Moshe as its patriarch. Moshe pleaded with Hashem to save our people. "And now, may the strength of the Lord grow" (Bamidbar 14:17). What type of a plea is this? A show of Hashem's strength sounds like the opposite of what Moshe Rabbeinu wants. He would use His strength to annihilate us. Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that we must read the next verse. "Hashem, Slow to Anger, Abundant in Kindness, Forgiver of Sin, and Negligence" (Bamidbar 14:18). This is Hashem's strength. He has patience (Slow to Anger) which is a tremendous power to break the trait of wrath.

Kinderlach . . .

How do we measure strength? Do we say that a strong person is one who can lift up a heavy weight? Or can kick a soccer ball very far? What about the commander of a massive army? Or the ruler of a powerful nation? Ben Zoma has a different measure of strength (Pirkei Avos 4:1) Who is a strong person? One who conquers his desire. As it says, "He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man. One who rules over his spirit is better than one who conquers a city" (Mishlei 16:32). We know who the strongest enemy is. The yetzer hara (evil inclination). Conquering him is a real feat of strength. Whenever you feel yourself getting upset, take a few deep breaths. Speak in a low voice. Perhaps walk away until you calm down. By doing this, you are exercising your "patience muscles". With enough exercise, you will become the strongest person around! Nothing will get you upset.

## The Spiritual Eye

"This is a very difficult Tosafos, Tzvi."

"I see, Meir. Come; let us say a tefillah to Hashem to help us understand it. Then we'll try learning it again."

"Hashem, You favor a man with knowledge, understanding, and intellect. Please grant us the wisdom to understand this difficult Tosafos."

Tzvi and Meir begin learning the Tosafos again. They reach the difficult point, and Tzvi concentrates deeply; closing his eyes very tightly. He thinks, and thinks, and thinks. Suddenly, his face lights up, and he opens his eyes.

"I think I have it!!!"

"Please, share it with me, Tzvi."

Tzvi

proceeds to explain the Tosafos. Everything makes sense and fits together perfectly.

"I think you have it, Tzvi."

"Boruch Hashem! Thank you Hashem for giving us the p'shat (simple explanation) in this Tosafos!"

"Amen! May I ask you something Tzvi?"

"Go ahead Meir."

"Why did you close your eyes so tightly while you were thinking?"

"Hmmm. I never thought about it. I guess it helps me concentrate better."

"A short time ago, I heard a drasha from a prominent Rav in Yerushalayim. He spoke about the eyes and what they see."

"That sounds like an enlightening subject."

"Yes. The physical organs of the body have their spiritual counterparts. The eyes of flesh and blood see physical objects in this world. The 'spiritual eyes' see thoughts, ideas, and images from the brain's memory. When a person wants to turn his eyes inward to his thoughts and concentrate deeply, he closes his physical eyes to shut out any images that will distract him."



"That is fascinating. We want to concentrate on a particular thought; therefore we must close out all other thoughts."

"He went on to explain how stray thought and images enter our minds thru our eyes. The eyes are more sophisticated than the world's top digital camera. They see everything in their field of vision. The brain, which has more memory than the biggest hard disk, stores every image that the eyes see. We try to control the particular thought or image that our brain focuses on at any given moment, however, this is not easy and takes much practice. One way to help our minds focus on the proper thoughts is to limit the intake of unnecessary, counterproductive, or forbidden images."

"Guarding your eyes!"

"Exactly, Tzvi. The source is a verse at the end of this week's parasha, 'And you must not go searching following your heart and your eyes, after which you stray' (Bamidbar 15:39). The verse refers to things that are forbidden to look at. However, the Rav broadened this concept considerably."

"Let me guess, Meir. He spoke about looking around too much in general."

"Exactly. Even when a person is in the

Beis HaMedrash, his eyes can go astray. The Rav explained it quite comically. He looks up and down, left and right. He looks to see who comes in and who goes out. He looks at the clock, then he checks to see if the window is open or closed. He picks up a sefer that he is not learning, and looks at the title, table of contents, approbations, index, and introduction. He looks at everything there is to see, except the sefer which he should be learning."

"Oy vey. What a waste."

"Yes. The Rav then went on to counter the claims of those people who say that they do not have a good enough memory to learn all of Shas. He said that if a person were to write down all of the thoughts and images that are stored in his mind, they would fill up more pages than all of Shas, including Rashi and Tosafos!"

"Wow! That is quite a compelling statement, Meir. Controlling our eyes is very important. It helps our learning, which affects the spiritual quality of our whole lives."

"Exactly. My father had the zechus (merit) to sit directly behind an Odom Godol (prominent Talmid Chochom) in the Beis HaMedrash for many years. He told me that the Odom Godol's eyes were either in the sefer that he was learning, or on his chavrusa. He did not look anywhere else. That is one of the reasons that he became an Odom Godol. He only put pure Torah thoughts and images into his mind and soul. He shut out the waste."

"Amazing. You have really inspired me to watch my eyes, Meir. I want to learn and remember the entire Shas, Rishonim, Tur, Shulchan Auruch, Poskim, and Tanach with meforshim - Kol HaTorah Kulah (the entire Torah)!"

"Tzvi, with Hashem's help you will succeed!"

Kinderlach . . .

Keep your eyes focused on the right things! Do not look around! Look at the sefer that you are learning. Look at the person that you are talking or listening to. Look at the food that you are eating. If you are writing or doing something else with your hands, look at what you are doing. Do not look around aimlessly. Do not fill your mind with irrelevant, silly, or forbidden sights. Keep your memory card free of the "spiritual viruses" that can cause the whole system to crash, chas v'shalom (Heaven forbid)! Keep your mind and soul pure, running at high efficiency. "Lo sosuru!"

Parasha Question:

- Did Klal Yisrael have a mitzvah of chalah in the Midbar? (15:18-21)
- What did Klal Yisrael attempt to do the morning after the Meraglim returned? (14:40-45)
- How did the meraglim die and why? (14:37 and Rashi)