

The Cube Solver

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

"Tully," Mommy called from down the hall. "Have you finished cleaning your room yet?"

"I almost started!" answered Naftali from his bedroom where he was diligently working on solving his newest Rubik's Cube. Among the various items strewn about his room were countless Rubik's Cubes of various shapes and sizes. He even had posters of them on his wall! Naftali had already figured out how to solve most of them, but he was always trying to solve them faster and faster. Who knows? Maybe one day he could hold the world record for the fastest solving of a Rubik's Cube!

"Almost?" Mommy said. "You mean you're still sitting there playing with that toy? I asked you to clean your room an hour ago!"

"I know, I know, just one more minute!" Naftali replied, as he finally figured out how to get the red corner into place. "Yes!" he whispered to himself, and started working on the green corner.

Ten minutes later, Mommy appeared at the doorway to Naftali's room.

"Tully!" she said loudly.

Naftali jumped in surprise and looked over his shoulder.

"What's wrong, Mommy?" he asked.



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“What do you mean, ‘what’s wrong’? You’re just sitting there, when I expected you to be cleaning.”

“I know, just one more minute, k? I just need to position this last square. See? I’ve just about got it where I need it.”

“Tully, it’s been ten minutes since you said ‘one minute’,” Mommy said sternly.

“Ten minutes?” Naftali looked back at Mommy, surprised.

“Yes, ten minutes.” Mommy repeated.

Naftali looked at the clock. “I don’t understand how that could be,” he said confused. “Let me just get this last piece into place and I’ll start cleaning - just one more minute.”

“Naftali Moshe Tabachnik!” Mommy said, causing Naftali to jump again. “I want you to hand me every single Rubik’s Cube puzzle you have. I will give them back to you tomorrow.”

“But Mommy!” Naftali started.

“No ‘but Mommy’ - hand them over now.”

“Okay,” Naftali said reluctantly, handing Mommy all of his puzzles and starting to pick his clothes up off of the floor. “It’s just that I love playing with them so much - I never want to stop. I want to be a professional Rubik’s Cube solver when I grow up!”

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“Naftali,” Totty said after dinner. “Come, let’s go for a walk.”

Naftali was about to protest since he had just come up with an idea for a faster way to solve one of his cubes, but then bitterly remembered that Mommy had taken all of them.

“Okay,” he said without much enthusiasm.

“So, have you had a chance to look at this week’s Parsha yet?” asked Totty, as they walked down the block.

“A little bit,” Naftali replied.

“You know there’s a possuk that says **בְּיַעֲקֹב הָיָה אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ צִיָּוְנֵי מִצְרַיִם**... - They are my servants whom I took out from Mitzrayim, they shouldn’t be sold as slaves.”

“So the Torah is saying that because of Yetzias Mitzrayim we won’t be slaves again?” asked Naftali.

“Not exactly,” said Totty. “The possuk is talking about an Eved Ivri and how he has to go free at Shmittah. Hashem wants us to be His servants and not to be slaves to anyone else.”

“I guess it’s good we don’t have avodim anymore,” Naftali said thoughtfully. “One less aveirah to worry about.”

“Now one second, Naftali,” Totty said. “We still have to be careful about this Mitzvah to only be servants to Hashem.”

“Really? We can still have a slave?”

“Well no, we can’t have slaves, but we can be slaves if we’re not careful.”

Naftali’s eyes darted around the darkening street.

“Like right here in Chicago?” he asked nervously.

“Anywhere, actually,” Totty said. “You see, we can be slaves to things other than people. For example, some people think about sports all day - it’s all they talk about. Everything in their life revolves around it. And some people are obsessed with other things. Like Rubik’s Cubes, maybe?”

Naftali stopped walking and looked at Totty.

“Wait, what?” he said.

Totty put his hand on Naftali’s shoulder.

“There’s nothing wrong with playing with a toy from time-to-time. Every child needs to be able to have fun and relax. But when you become so infatuated with something that it’s all you want to do all day - and it keeps you from serving Hashem and doing mitzvos like kibbud eim, perhaps it’s time to wonder if you yourself might be becoming an eved.”

Naftali thought about this. Totty was right. Why, ever since he got his first Rubik’s Cube, he barely even spoke to his friends anymore. Right then and there, Naftali decided that he would try to limit the time he played with his Rubik’s Cubes every day. “I won’t be a slave,” he thought. “I am a servant of Hashem and no one else!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

Many of us may be slaves to eating good things like nosh or to playing with certain toys all the time. If this interferes with our service of Hashem we must learn the lesson that we are servants of Hashem and no one else.



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