

The Grouchy Astronaut

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

Moishy and Yossi's eyes opened wide as the car turned towards the front gate of Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. On their right they saw a huge Boeing 747 jet with what looked like a space shuttle on top of it!

"Totty, is that an actual space shuttle on top of that plane?" Moishy asked in wonder.

"No, it's just a replica," Totty said. "But that airplane is real and it used to carry actual space shuttles back to Florida when they sometimes landed in California."

"That's amazing," breathed Moishy.

"This is like a whole city!" Yossi said after Totty presented his ID badge to the guard and they drove into the space center. There were buildings everywhere, and there were even actual rockets on display.

It took about three minutes of driving through the massive complex until they reached Building 30 and Totty parked in front. On the side of the building was a large sign which read "Christopher C. Kraft, Jr. Mission Control Center".

"Is this the building you work in?" Moishy asked.

"It is," smiled Totty. "Come, let's go inside."

In the lobby of the building was a large colorful banner which read "Bring Your Child to Work Day".

"Welcome to Space Center Houston," said a smiling worker, who handed each of the boys a NASA activity packet.



“Thank you,” Moishy and Yossi said to the worker as they walked past and followed Totty to three steel doors under a sign which read “Mission Control Center”. Totty swiped his keycard next to one of the doors and the three of them walked inside.

“Welcome to the flight control room,” Totty said as the boys took in the scene of the many mission control specialists sitting at the desks which were all facing the front of the room.

On the huge screens on the wall they saw two astronauts in space suits. The boys had never seen anything like this before!

“This is my desk,” Totty said. “As you can see on the monitors, two astronauts are about to begin an ‘EVA’, which stands for ‘extravehicular activity’ - otherwise known as a ‘spacewalk’. It is my job to monitor the data that is transmitted from the astronauts’ spacesuits to ensure that they are safe when working in the vacuum of space.

Totty logged into his computer and the boys watched as two other astronauts dressed in regular clothes finished inspecting the space suits. A few minutes later, a voice came over the loudspeaker: “Houston, station. Suit checkout complete.”

A man sitting near Totty with the title ‘CAPCOM’ on his desk pressed a button on his microphone. “Roger, station. You are go for airlock transition.”

The boys watched eagerly as the suited astronauts were helped by their partners into the airlock. It took some time before they finally exited the space station and went out into space, but it was fascinating to watch.

The screen switched camera angles and now they could see a view from outside the station as the astronauts made their way outside. The mission controllers were in constant radio communication with the astronauts as they began working on fixing a solar panel which had been damaged by a micrometeorite strike.

“Houston, EVA-1 with request.” cackled a voice over the radio.

“Go ahead with request, Brad.” replied CAPCOM.

“Do you guys know that there is no phillips screwdriver in my toolbag? Who wrote the checklist for this EVA? Do you know how much more time it will take me to get this panel open with a flathead screwdriver?”

“We copy your statement,” CAPCOM replied. “We will look into it.”

The astronauts continued working, but the astronaut named Brad seemed to keep having things to say over the radio. Next he said his space suit was too cold, and after that he said he didn’t like the size of the handle on his wrench. It seemed that every few minutes there was something else that he was unhappy with.

At the end of the day, the boys walked with Totty back to their car.

“Totty,” Yossi said. “I don’t understand what that astronaut kept complaining to you guys about. Weren’t you all working hard to keep him safe while he was working outside the space station? I didn’t even hear him say thank you once.”

“Yes, it was sad to see that,” Totty answered. “It is such a terrible *midah* to have, to complain against Hashem.”

“Complain against Hashem?” asked Yossi, confused. “He was complaining about the people at NASA. He didn’t even mention Hashem once.”

“Well think about it,” Totty said, as they drove past the space shuttle replica on top of the plane. “Who is the one who decides what we will have and how our day will go? It’s Hashem. So when someone complains, who are they actually complaining about? It’s not only a lack of *hakoras hatov* to other people - it’s also not recognizing what Hashem does for you.”

“Oh my, I never thought about it like that,” Yossi said. “I always try not to be a complainer, but I didn’t realize that any complaint is also a complaint against Hashem.”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

Whenever we complain it’s a complaint against Hashem. People who trust in Hashem know that the world is a good place full of happiness, and there is no reason to be a grouch.



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