

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Yechiel Spero

Defending the Kodesh Hakodashim

If we look at the structure of the human eyeball, we will discover a great revelation and secret as to the power we have every time we look at something.

The Seforim HaKedoshim tell us that the white part of the eye—the sclera—refers to the oceans and waters of this world. The brown or blue part of the eye is called the iris, and represents the dry land of this world. The pupil of our eyes is the Kodesh Kodashim, the Holy of Holies of this world.

During the times of the destruction of the Second Beis Hamikdash, the wicked Titus brought a promiscuous, immoral woman into the Holy of Holies and committed immoral acts with her. What would we have done if we were offered an opportunity to prevent him from doing so? What if we could have defended the Kodesh Hakodashim with our lives?

We all would have been willing to stand with our chests open, ready to defend the Kodesh Hakodashim. We understand what the Kodesh Hakodashim is, and we know that

to protect Hashem's holiest place on earth, we are willing to do anything, even sacrifice our very life.

This is what we are given an opportunity to do when we prevent an immoral and inappropriate image from entering our eyes, our Kodesh Kodashim.

Imagine you are in the dark privacy of your home. You are behind closed doors, and in the most secret of chambers. You are in a room all by yourself and no one knows it, except Hashem. When you turn away from the screen and you guard yourself, even in the most private moments, you are telling Hashem, "I am yours, and I am willing to defend your Kodesh Kodashim at all costs."

You are a hero in the eyes of Hashem. How great does that feel? When we think of it this way, we are empowered with unbelievable strength. The gematria (numerical value) of gevurah, strength, is 216, and is equivalent to the gematria of re'iyah (seeing) and also yir'ah (fear).

When we realize this, we become the strongest people in the world.

Rabbi Yosef Palacci

Napolean's Cigar

One of the most famous stories told about Napoleon involves the time he commanded one of his top generals to conquer an entire region. "And," Napoleon added, "I want you to conquer this adjacent

region too." Now, both Napoleon and his general knew the obvious problem. "Napoleon, my dear king," interrupted the general, "that region is so far out. It will take our army much effort and resources to travel there." "They have good cigars," responded

The TorahAnyTimes is a publication of



Compiled and Edited by Elan Perchik

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 Manish ben Esther
 Meir Eliyahu ben Yaakov Dov
 Bechor ben Rivkah
 Shlomo Zalman ben R' Mordechai Yisroel Tzvi
 Esther bat haRav Avraham Halevi z"l
 Moshe Simcha ben Doniel Dov Ber
 Miriam bat Yeshayahu
 Malka Bracha bat Shimon Chaim
 L'refuah Sheleima
 Deena bat Shoshana
 Chaya Raizel bat Dena
 Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva
 Reuven ben Rochel
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Napolean, wryly. The tobacco in that area was at its finest, and Napolean knew that there'd be great benefits coming to him and his men should they rule the area. Any effort to conquer it was well worth it.

The general rallied his men and proceeded to overtake the whole region they originally had planned on. And then, in line with Napolean's executive command, he ordered his men to make way to the neighboring region.

The war efforts were a success. Napolean's army carried out their strat-

egies and subdued the resistance, and within time, the region known for its premier tobacco was Napolean's. Excited, the general prepared a cigar for Napolean, ready to hand it off to him at his meeting the following day.

Accompanied by an entourage, the general approached Napolean. "My dear king, I hereby present to you a gift from our newly conquered region." He then pulled out the fine-looking cigar. Placing it in Napolean's mouth, he struck a match and leaned in to light it.

Before anything further, Napolean

took the cigar out of his mouth, and in front of all those present before him, cracked it in half. The general's jaw dropped. "What is the king doing?" he cried in a spasm of confusion.

"Let me tell you all," Napolean said, quieting the gasps and disbelief. "Napolean controls the cigar; the cigar does not control Napolean."

We all have emotions. We must think and remind ourselves, "Who is a strong man? He who conquers his evil inclination." The yetzer hara doesn't control you. You control it.

Rabbi Yaakov Shwekey

Joy of Purity

Not too long ago, I agreed to a job. It was a very modern party. In my contract, however, it stipulated that there must be a mechitza and the men and women would need to dance separately.

Before my time to go on stage, the party coordinator approached me and let me know that I'd be on in fifteen minutes. "Okay," I replied, "thank you." And then I made sure everything was set and arranged. "Did you make sure that there is a mechitza?" The woman looked at me, troubled. "This is not a party where we are going to introduce mechitzas," she said. "It's not really the place. They're used to dancing together. They've been throwing big parties here for years, and they're not going to change it.

They're not on that level." "Listen," I said, "first of all, as you know, that is the agreement. Secondly, you'll see that the simcha of doing the right thing will be even greater."

We went back and forth, until finally, they put out a mechitza.

I then came out to sing. I'll never forget the simcha. All the Rabbonim stood up and everyone felt comfortable doing the right thing.

Afterwards, the father who had put on the party sent me a message. "I've had many parties before, and I've spent a lot of money on parties. But when you came out and sang the right messages and we put a division between the men and women, and all the rabbis joined and everyone started to close their eyes and enjoy a kumzitz,

that was the greatest investment I've ever made."

This father, who had gone with the flow for many years and hadn't attended many parties where there had been mechitzas, did the right thing. And when you do the right thing, even though it's hard, the results are beyond. Not only in the Next world is there immense benefit, but in this world too. Your life here becomes elevated and the happiness becomes a simcha of purity.

It had been difficult, but we did what was right and we made a Kidush Hashem. And when we do the right thing, we are presented with tremendous opportunities.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

Celebrate the Opportunity

The Baal HaTanya in his masterpiece (Tanya, Ch. 27), discusses the verse in the Shema: "And you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, which you stray

after" (Bamidbar 15:39). Sometimes, writes the Baal HaTanya, people are so perturbed by the fact that they have to deal with and struggle with instincts, proclivities, cravings, and challenges and trials, both internal and external.

They feel that it is below them, as the Yiddish expression goes, "Ess past nisht." How can this happen to me? It makes them feel so guilty and horrible about themselves. This, of course, only contributes to our downfall be-

cause once we feel that we are disgusting and despicable, then we'll do anything to feel good about ourselves or we'll just think to ourselves, "Who cares? If I'm garbage, so garbage can pursue garbage."

The Baal HaTanya says that this is a form of misplaced arrogance. The feeling that it can't be that we'd be dealing with this unless we are completely messed up or we are just pure evil, or we must repress the urge and deny it is misunderstanding what a human being is. The fact that the Torah tells us, "And you shall not follow

after your heart and after your eyes, which you stray after" means that our heart and our eyes can go astray. That is inherent in the fabric of the human condition, specifically part of the personality the Baal HaTanya calls 'Beinoni,' the ordinary human being.

On the contrary, the Baal HaTanya writes, celebrate the opportunity the fulfill the mitzvah of, "And you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, which you stray after." When you experience such a deep instinct, and at that moment you can acknowledge it, you can say, "I'm going

to choose to follow my values and my truest, deepest calling and the path that is going to bring me closer to the people and the life that I really cherish."

Celebrate that moment. Celebrate that opportunity. Don't get upset at yourself that you have this struggle. Celebrate the fact that you have the opportunity to introduce moral clarity, holiness, and infinite power into a world of fragmentation and temptation.

Rabbi Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin

A Place Called Prison

In prison, people sat around for hours watching television shows and movies. It was something that I didn't do at all. One of the inmates there, however, attempted to coax me into watching on several occasions.

"Why don't you want to watch?" he asked me. He understood that if the content was not appropriate, that was one thing. "But what if it's a family show?" he asked. "What's wrong with that?" I thought of a way to explain it to him, and Hashem gave me the following thought.

Hashem gives us five senses with which we are able to live in this world. We can see, hear, smell, touch and taste. Amazingly, of the five senses, the one sense Hashem gives us through which we can discern what is true and reality or un-

true and not reality is sight. If we see something, we can perceive that it is true and real. The only way to certainly believe something is through the means of seeing it with your own eyes. You see Reuven give Shimon a hundred dollars, and you know it is true. If you had just heard about it, it may not be true.

One of the ways media entertainment draws a person in is through showing things which are not real. Special effects can make people appear as if they can fly or lift a building or animals can talk. These acknowledged impossibilities are seen by us.

When we watch these shows, we tell ourselves, "It's not true. I see it, but it's not real." The harm done, though, as a result of this conclusion is significant, because the next time you see something and it is true, you

will doubt it. You have already trained your mind that when you see something, you say, "That's not true."

When you walk into a shul or see a Rosh Yeshiva or Rebbe and you are drawn to be inspired, you have already conditioned yourself to be exposed to things and not believe it. Taking in awe-inspiring and holy sights will be more difficult when our power of sight has been conditioned to question if what we see is true or not.

"I'm living in a dangerous place," I told this inmate. "I need to see someone and establish if he's someone good and trustworthy or not. I want to keep my eyes focused on that which is the truth and reality. And I can accomplish that by ensuring that what I look at reflects exactly the same—that which is truthful and real."

who we are destined to be.

If we accept responsibility for who we are and who we can become, nothing can stop us. If we don't, nothing will ever move us. Use the power of your deci-

Dr. David Lieberman

It's Your Decision

Life comes down to decisions. The power of making a decision is the most

powerful gift we have. Bechira, free will, grants us the ability to decide who we are and become

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sion-making to change your life. If you don't, there is only one reason why: it's painful. It's hard to look into the mirror and say, "This is who I am and this is what has become of my

finest intentions, and I got it wrong. But I want to be better."

If you don't want to be better, then ask Hashem for the ratzon (will) to be better. And if you don't even have

the will to ask for the desire, then ask to have the will to ask for the desire. Do something. Open a small opening, and Hashem will build you a bridge closer to Him.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter

The Storage of Parnassah

There I was, donating money on the telephone for tzedakah, and though I knew I wasn't very good at multitasking, it was a surprise to me when I heard the computerized voice saying, "You have donated 6 quadrillion, 5 billion, 3 million, 222 thousand dollars. Please press pound to accept." All I could think to myself was, "What did he just say?"

Then I realized what my mistake was. I wasn't listening to the instructions. When they had said, 'Punch in the amount,' I put in my 16-digit credit card number. Now, I could have said, 'I accept the payment,' but it wouldn't have helped them much. But I never knew there really is a number 'quadrillion.' I thought kids just made it up. You know how they say it, "A quadrillion times I told you!" Is there really a quadrillion, a billion, a million and a thousand? Is there really a reward in this world that is beyond the numbers that we can imagine?

My father was in Shanghai during the war, and they had human taxis that would carry passengers around. It was designed with four poles and runners ahead that would pull you along. The yeshiva bochorim didn't like using these taxis, however, because they felt it was akin to exploiting human labor. But the laborers there said, "No, use us! This is our parnassa!"

The local currency in Shanghai was dismal, worth pennies of pennies. My father once went out onto the street, but without any of the local currency on him, he took out an American dollar, which was six weeks of wages for the local workers. He handed it to them, but they refused to take it because they didn't know what it was.

Hashem has a reward for us that is beyond our imagination. It cannot be that we lose because we don't pursue a certain pleasure. The reward must be not only ten times the amount or twenty times the amount,

but in a totally different league.

If you're struggling with your parnassa, Yeshaya HaNavi tells us, "And he who closes his eyes from seeing evil, he will dwell on High, in a fortress of stones he will be protected, his bread and water will be available" (Yeshaya 33:15-16). Rashi explains these words to mean that when you close your eyes from seeing the wrong things, all of your needs will be taken care of.

Rav Tzadok says that we all descend to this world with parnassa for our life, but the Satan attempts to penetrate the storage tanks and have our parnassa leak out. When a person solidifies his shemiras einayim, his storage tank becomes waterproof. Not only that, but you also take back what was lost because Hashem replenishes it. The source of our parnassa is in our eyes.

And you know something? There are numbers out there that we can't even imagine.

Yes, a quadrillion.

Rabbi Igal Cohen

Guaranteed Success

David Hamelech tells us, "One who trusts in Hashem, kindness will surround him" (Tehillim 32:10). You will have good in your life. Anytime you encounter a difficulty in your life, don't deal with it by yourself. Thrust it upon Hashem. He is the true source who has

all the strength in the world and can shower upon you all the goodness you need in your life. If you need money, place your burden and worries on Hashem. Do not be anxious about it. If you worry about it, Hashem will not worry about it. He'll leave you to your own human methods and efforts. But if you don't worry about it, Hashem

will worry about it.

This is a simple formula in life. If you want guaranteed success, tell Hashem, "I am unable to manage all these things. You manage them all. I know You will give me everything I need."

And He will. If you trust in Him fully, you will get what you need.

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