

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.

Challah

"Boruch Atto Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ho'olam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ho'oretz. (Blessed are you Hashem, our G-d, King of the world, Who brings forth bread from the earth)." "Amen. What a wonderful blessing, Chani."

"We learned all about this blessing in

school today, Abba. I wanted to make sure that I said it correctly."

"What else did you learn, Chani?"

"We place our ten fingers on the bread while we recite the blessing, because there are ten mitzvos associated with the making of bread." "I'm impressed. Now I have a question for you. Which one of those ten mitzvos is in this week's parasha?"

"That's easy, Abba. *Hafrashas Challah* (separating a portion of the bread dough). In the days of the Beis HaMikdash, this dough was given to the Kohanim. They had no land and could not grow their own grain, so this was their bread."

"Excellent Chani."

"Abba, our teacher told us that the Sefer HaChinuch has a beautiful



explanation of this mitzvah. Can we learn it together?"

"My pleasure, Chani dear."

"The Sefer HaChinuch writes that a person's life is sustained by food. Most of the world lives upon bread. Hashem wanted to give us a mitzvah in our bread, so that we may receive the blessing of abundance in our food and merit of the mitzvah for our soul. The dough then becomes nourishment for both the body and soul."

"That is beautiful, Abba. Hashem really loves us."

Kinderlach . . .

How many times do you eat bread each day? Each time is an opportunity to get close to Hashem. Think about the challah that was separated from the dough. That brings blessing to the bread. Hashem loves you. He blesses you with delicious bread to eat. He also blesses your precious neshama (soul) with this wonderful mitzvah. Who else can put so much into a yummy piece of bread? Only Hashem.

Life's Tapestry

The mitzvah of *tzitzis* (tying strings onto the corners of our garments) is unique. It has the power to remind us of all of Hashem's mitzvos. As the verse states, "That you may see it (the *tzitzis*) and remember all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them" (Bamidbar 15:39). What gives the *tzitzis* this special capability that no other mitzvah has? The Meshech Chochma zt"l has a beautiful parable to describe this precious mitzvah.

The Almighty created His world unfinished. He placed mankind, creatures with free will, here on this planet. When we exercise our free will properly and follow the Will of the Creator, we perform constructive deeds known as mitzvos. These mitzvos fix up the world, and elevate it to a holy status. And so, the world is compared to an unfinished garment. Similar to our *tallis* (four cornered garment) which has two finished sides and two sides left with unwoven strings. The Creator gave us a mitzvah to tie *tzitzis* (strings) and fix up the garment. And so, this is a parable to fixing up the world. We do our little part, by tying the strings, and we receive Divine Assistance the rest of the way.

Everything that Hashem created in this world has a mitzvah associated with it. When we perform the mitzvah, we "tie" that thing to Hashem. That allows the wellsprings of nature to open up and pour out their blessings. And so, the universe comes to perfection. If you, mankind, will weave together the threads of this world, you will become partners with Hashem in *maase bereshis* (the creation of the universe).

Kinderlach . . .

Have you ever created something? Built a model? Drawn a picture? Thought of a chiddush (original Torah thought)? Written an essay? Baked a cake? Didn't you get a tremendous feeling of satisfaction? You can help create something bigger than all of those things put together. The universe. Do a mitzvah. Perfect the world. The next time you look at your tzitzis, remember all of the mitzvos. Weave them into the tapestry of life.