



READING THE FINE PRINT

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Life marches on, things change and we try to adapt. As a result of my recent cataract operation my eye sight has blossomed into a life of clarity without the need to wear spectacles. It's a new experience, walking around without specs, I can't remember when I didn't wear them, I used to joke that I was the only baby to wear glasses at his bris.

The one fly in the ointment is my need for reading glasses. I can see that which I never could before, but I can't read the "small print". Learning, davening, all such vital life enhancements have me reaching for Reading Specs. Without them it's all a blur, with them the world is in sync with my new clarity. Of course, all this taking them off, putting them on is time consuming, which could be seen as a detriment in this hectic society. However, for me it's a positive addition to my lifestyle, simply put, it forces me to think before I read or sign anything. That pause to concentrate can be a life saver, well at least it is in ones Avodas Hashem.

Please bear with me as I illustrate my point and 'clarify' what I mean.

The Torah starts this week's parsha with the following:

"And these are the Mishpatim (ordinances) that you shall place before them" (Shmos 21:1) Our holy Tzadikim taught us to read this passage in a unique way. They tell us that a Yied has to think into what he is doing in life. Before we envelope our minds with the daily stress of our life, we are told to take a moment and allow ourselves to consider what it is we are doing and where it is leading us. Many disasters of the soul come from moments of impulsive action, while if we would but think for a moment, we would know what is the correct path.

The Torah tells us, "These are the mishpatim," this word can also express the act of judging, "before them", before you do something. Weighing our actions, taking the time to think them through, this is of paramount importance. Fumbling along may seem all you can hope for, but that is not true. Our environment has programmed us not to think things out, the information onslaught has rampaged into our lives, hurrying us to the next task with no time to consider what it is we are actually accomplishing. Try rifling through your pocket for your glasses before you send that important email, it may just give

בס"ד



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you time to reconsider.

I remember when I was about to become engaged, we awaited a telegram from America with a brocha from the Bobover Rebbe Rav Shlomo Ztl.

A TELEGRAM!

I venture to say that many if not most of our readership have never even seen such a thing. We were in Eretz Yisroel and phones were extremely rare. For yeshivah bochurim to call "home" one usually went to the post office and made an appointment to use a public pay phone. We had sent a telegram asking for the Rebbe's brocha and were waiting with great anticipation for the Rebbe's reply. (suffice to say the Rebbe's brocha was fulsomely given) Such was the state of communication back "in the day." Now, we tap on the phone and have our answer immediately. Has this made things all that easier, certainly, but with this comes drawbacks as well. We have no time to think. You receive an email, and are expected to reply ASAP. How many times have you pressed "send" only to scream out "Wait! I made a mistake!" Too late, in the world of immediacy your recipient has already read your blunder.

I learnt from the previous Amshinover Rebbe Ztl that one should never sign a document unless it has laid on one's desk overnight. No matter how vital the subject was, the Tzadik would not be dissuaded. Things of importance could not be decided without careful consideration and due diligence. For such a tzadik there were no 'app's' that could supplant the clarity of calm forethought, and I know there are none now.

The Torah is telling us that before we do anything, especially mitzvos, we should take time to collect our thoughts and act with a sense of serenity.

Part and parcel of this world of hast is the trap set by the yetzer horah called denial. We think we are living deliberate lives that are well thought out and meaningful, but if we are honest such is not the case. Our parsha tells us:

"Distant yourself from a false word" (23:7)

The Chiddushei HaRim Ztl pointed out that he had heard from his Rebbe, the Rebbe Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa Zt'l that nowhere else in the Torah do we find the expression "Distant yourself" regarding any mitzvos. We find the words, 'muter', and 'asur' regarding our actions, but never 'Distance yourself'. Said the Rebbe, when it comes to lying, one must stay well away and beware of it at all cost. Sheker is so toxic, that the Torah uses a unique phrase in expressing this warning.

We are often guilty of lying to ourselves when it comes to our thoughts and motives. It is all too easy to deny our true situation and just kid ourselves into living a pretend world. We may go to Shiurim, daven in a proper shul, live in relationships with others, and all the while live a lie.

How can we break through this make-believe world? By taking our time to think into what and where we hold in our lives. Take time, breath in, and connect with your reality, and yes, if need be, straighten your glasses.

Yiddishkiet thrives in the fertile soil of truth. Patience and forethought can give you the oxygen to see you through the mist of the make-believe web of sheker.

We are all grasping onto the threads of what is true Yiddishkiet, hold on, breathe in and learn your truth.

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