



TRICK OR TRUTH

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vaera 5783

Dear Parents,

The ability to properly understand other people's motives and intent is a life skill that can make an enormous impact, even spelling the difference between life and death. We can impart that ability to our children if we ourselves are discerning and are careful not to jump quickly to conclusions.

The seventh *Makka*, the plague of hail, was preceded by a warning. *Moshe Rabbeinu* told *Pharaoh* that it was coming, and therefore, "the one who fears Hashem will shelter his livestock inside a structure." On the other hand, "one who pays no attention to the word of Hashem, will leave his animals in the field," unprotected (*Shemos 9:20-21*).

"...how is it possible that there were Egyptians who did not listen to Moshe's warning?"

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin, zt'l, in *Sefer Ozneyim LaTorah (Shemos p. 80)*, asks how is it possible that there were Egyptians who did not listen to *Moshe's* warning? *Moshe* had been precisely accurate in predicting the first six *Makkos* that struck *Mitzrayim* with devastating force! Perhaps it is understandable that they continued to resist giving in to *Moshe's* request to let the Jewish People leave, since they had so much to lose if the Jews were no longer around. However, when he advises them to protect themselves and their animals from destruction because of what was coming, how can it be that they would not give sufficient credence to *Moshe* and bring their livestock and slaves indoors?

Rav Sorotzkin answers that from their perspective of poor *Midos* and low character, they simply could not believe that *Moshe* was sincere in sharing information that would save them from ruination. It must be some sort of trick...

The Egyptians had a simplistic, generalized view of people and events and therefore saw things as black or white. *Moshe* was their adversary, so therefore he was undoubtedly evil and would never speak or act in their best interests. Their poor *midos* blocked them from seeing things with a nuanced eye, and thereby misjudged *Moshe* with catastrophic consequences for them.

"Our children need to learn to be discerning." Our children need to learn to be discerning. Young children don't understand nuance and therefore see the world in a way that categorizes people, places and events as either good or bad. However, as a child makes his way through the elementary school years, parents must help guide them to understand people and events, always acknowledging the innate potential for goodness within each person, the potential for change and growth in people who have made mistakes, while still teaching the child of the need to be careful and precautionary when confronting a new or even already familiar person or place.

A Torah Jew knows that people cannot be taken at face value and there is a need to stop, think and analyze situations and try to understand other people. The childish perspective that all things are either good or bad must be discarded like a pair of overgrown *tzitzis*. Only by modeling and teaching our children to be discerning and nuanced when dealing with others and new situations, will we have given them an indispensable tool for a successful, happy life.

If you are open, loving and accepting of your children and non-judgmental about what they share with you, your children will open up to you and you will have the opportunity to show them how to analyze and think deeply through a circumstance or dilemma. You will help them become insightful in sizing up other people and their intentions, thereby giving them the self-confidence to navigate the stormy seas of life, under their own power.

"...thereby giving them the self-confidence to navigate the stormy seas of life..."

May the Torah be our guide as we practice the important principle from Chazal of – *תתן כבוד וחסד* – give respect while being suspicious – be on your guard, but at the same time open to the possibility that the person is genuinely here for your good. Your, and your children's well-being is dependent upon it.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,

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Principal