

The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
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November 3, 2018

Chayei Sarah – Shabbat M'vorchim

25 Cheshvan, 5779

The Art of Self-Deception

We usually find deceit reprehensible. After all, most of the time we have to take a person's word, at least at first. Sure, for some things we'll investigate before accepting his say-so. We'll check out a doctor's credentials, for instance, or compare insurance policies. But even then at some point we trust what we're being told.

Some professions seem to thrive on deceit and so we distrust them unless proven otherwise. Enough said.

In truth, a lot of the time we know when someone is pretending. We have a gut instinct that something's wrong. We have misgivings, doubts, uncertainties. The deal is too good to be true. Or there's something we're not being told. But we put aside our suspicions. We reason away our reservations. Such a nice young man wouldn't lead us astray. She sounds so knowledgeable she must know what she's talking about.

But then when the seller, the advisor, the friend betrays our trust, we rail against the deceit. And the argument often comes down to: he knew and I didn't. He took advantage of me, because he had inside information.

And yet most of the time - the vast majority of the time - we recognize that a deal too good to be true is just that. We had a sense we were being set up. We should have known.

We allow ourselves to be fooled, to be duped, conned and tricked even though we knew better, because we deceive ourselves.

That's an unpleasant truth. As much blame as the deceiver deserves, we have opened the door and invited him in. And ironically, it's our mind - our logic and our reason - that proves our undoing. Our pride and joy - our intellect - betrays us.

We deceive ourselves about our limits and our capabilities. At the moment of greatest conceit, of greatest satisfaction, of greatest accomplishment - we stumble over ourselves. Our egos - our self - our animal soul - our yetzer hara betrays us.

The yetzer hara - the evil inclination - is called a "wise fool." Wise, because it knows its craft. It knows well our weaknesses, how to confuse and deceive. A fool, because it focuses on diverting us from Torah and mitzvot (commandments), because it thinks the Jewish soul, our very essence, can be severed from its Source.

But we've also known the satisfaction of deceiving the deceiver, of turning the tables. What irony and justice in the reversal!

Yes, we all have a yetzer hara, and so we all possess the tools of the liar, the skills of the swindler and the weapons of the fraud. But unlike so many things about which we deceive ourselves, these we can control. These we can redirect.

How? By using the technique of deceit to do a mitzva. I'm not going to keep kosher, I'm just not going to eat a cheeseburger today. I'm not going to get religious, I'm just going to put on tefilin today. I'm not going to keep all the laws of Shabbat, I'm just going to light candles or hear the blessing over the wine Friday night. I'm not some holy person. I'm just going to give a dollar to tzedaka (charity). I'm not changing, I'm just going to do this one mitzva.

And this next mitzva. And this next. Let's be the "gamblers." Let's be the con artist. Let's "deceive" ourselves and trick our yetzer hara. It's a great deal. Too good not to be true.

(by Rabbi Dr. Dovid YB Kaufmann obm from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

A Bolt of Lightning

Most of this week's parashah is devoted to Eliezer's journey to find a wife for Yitzchak. The Midrash Rabbah quotes the verse (Yeshayah 50:10), "Who among you fears Hashem, listening to the voice of His servant? Though he may have walked in darkness with no light for himself, let him trust in the Name of Hashem, and lean upon his Elokim." The Midrash comments: "Who among you fears Hashem"—this refers to Eliezer. "Listening to the voice of His servant"—Eliezer listened to Avraham, G-d's servant. "Though he may have walked in darkness"—when he went to

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bring Rivka. "With no light for himself"—but Hashem lit the way with bolts of lightning. "Let him trust in the Name of Hashem, and lean upon his Elokim"—therefore he said (Bereishit 24: 12), "Hashem, Elokim of my master Avraham, may You so arrange it for me this day." [Until here from the Midrash]

R' David Cohen z"l (1887-1972; instructor at Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'Rav; known as the "Nazir") asks: Where does the Torah say that Eliezer traveled in the dark or during a lightning storm? He explains:

There is a dispute between the early halachic authorities, Rambam z"l and Ra'avad z"l, whether Eliezer's reliance on a sign—whether the girl would offer to give water to Eliezer's camels—was halachically proper or was improper (as it would be improper for a person to cancel a journey because a black cat crossed his path). However, writes R' Cohen, this Midrash is teaching that Eliezer actually placed his trust in Hashem, and the "sign" which he set up was intended as no more than a momentary flash of light, a bolt of lightning in an otherwise pitch black "night," to give him comfort that he was on the right path.

Indeed, R' Cohen writes, shidduchim / dating is always like that. Every couple is in the dark about what to look for and whether they are meant for each other. From time-to-time, a "bolt of lightning" will light the darkness to show the parties that they are on the right path. Still, in the final analysis, one must rely on Hashem. (Zachu Shechinah Beineihem p.89)

(by Rabbi Shlomo Katz from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Community Information of Interest

November 3: Democracy, Peace, and its Discontents: The State of Israel and the Jewish World in the late 1970s. Lecture by Rabbi Dovid Katz. *Babes in Toyland: Menachem Begin and Israel's Society and Economy.* This lecture will begin at 8:30 p.m. and be held at the Congregation Shomrei Emunah.

November 4: Eastern Standard Time begins this Sunday morning at 2:00 a.m. Remember to set your clocks **BACK one hour** before going to sleep Saturday night.



"The Rav's Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men"
will take place **next** Friday night, November 9 – Parshat Toldot
at 8:00 p.m. and will be held at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Moshe Roth, 6503 Hal Court.

Seudah Shlishit
סעודה שלישית

Mr. Marvin and Mrs. Sara Itzkowitz are sponsoring
Seudah Shlishit this Shabbat
in memory of the Yahrzeit of Sara's mother,
Toba bas R' Dov Rimler z"l
that was on 20 Cheshvan.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Mitch Mayer	25 Cheshvan - Friday night / Shabbat	for mother	Freda bat Avraham
Chaya Statman	1 Kislev - Thursday night / Friday	for father	Alter Chaim ben Yitzchok Eizek

Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday, 11/02 — 24 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 5:45 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:45 p.m.

Shabbat, 11/03 — 25 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 10:11 a.m.
Berachot Gemora Shiur — cancelled this week
Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 5:35 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 6:46 p.m.

Sunday, 11/04 — 26 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m. **Eastern Standard Time**
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Monday, 11/05 — 27 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Tuesday, 11/06 — 28 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Wednesday, 11/07 — 29 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Thursday — Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 11/08 — 30 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Friday — Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 11/09 — 1 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
Candles — 4:38 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.