

# CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED ONE

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin*

Have you ever gone on a really exotic trip to a foreign land that is filled with mysterious and wondrous sites? A place so strange that in your wildest dreams you never thought such creatures existed, huge beasts lurking in its thick jungles, and ferocious sea serpents in its seas? Well I can offer you such a voyage and you need never leave the warmth and safety of your own home. I know that in today's fast moving and ever shrinking globe, people can book passage to almost anywhere their heart desires. In fact, Jews are great at taking such trips. Did you know that the largest *seder* in the world is held in Kathmandu every year? Yes thousands of Jewish backpackers find there way to the Himalayan Mountains seeking adventure.

There is no place that Jewish feet have not trodden, yet, I offer you a destination that is even more obscure than any mountaintop. I speak of the one place that no one can visit except you yourself, the place so hidden that you may be near it your whole life but you may well never enter its portals. Where is this hidden gem? It is in your own heart.

We are great at visiting other people's hearts; deciding and judging them according to our own self perceived perfect values. We know what is best for everyone else, everyone except our own selves. This is because we will work tirelessly trying to surmise what makes the next person tick, but we are frightened to discover what lurks within our own souls. You may think this a bit of a blasé thing to be saying, *Of course I know myself, after all I am me.* True, you are who you think you are, but is that the real you?

I find myself asking this question more and more of late; perhaps it has something to do with getting older. People seem so quick to condemn the next one, the other's *frumkeit*, their *middos*, and yet, they themselves are so short of perfection. Are they blind, don't they see? The answer is, no, they don't see and that is their real misfortune.

It is tragic to live your whole life without ever knowing the real you, firstly because you have wasted so much energy trying to be someone else, and secondly because you never really are able to accept others. If you build a worldview predicated on false assumptions about your own reality, then you judge others in the light of those self same distortions. You don't face yourself, and therefore you can never truly face those around you. "Well," you may tell me, "who cares, why all this deep introspection, let's just get on with life." Perhaps you are right, but something tells me that much of the pain people carry is caused by the self denial of who they are. You cannot grow; you cannot prosper if you don't know what your potential is. Each soul is created in Hashem's Image and is

hence special and beautiful; it is a shame when the soul's carrier isn't aware of this. Life's tests are about our realizing what we can aspire to. Unfortunately, time and again we just subsist, growing old without any insight into ourselves.

I fully accept that there are places in our individual hearts that we really cannot face, places that are dark and full of our mistakes. However, it helps to acknowledge that those places exist, and that therefore we should allow for the same allowance in others as well. Those who read my attempts at relating *Tehillim* to our daily lives will be used to some sweet little story and then perhaps a bit of hopefully well meaning advice. However, I make no attempt to sugar coat what I feel must be said here, because we are causing too much anguish by using double standards in our lives. *David Hamelech* speaks in this *kapital* about his total abhorrence of evil and hypocrisy. However, he does this only after he has looked into his own soul, attempted to clarify who he is and what his true connection is with *Hashem*. It is only after such an exercise that one can presume to understand others.

*Yidden*, we are living in difficult times, we find ourselves surrounded by our enemies. The Torah Jew needs all the *chizuk* he can gain, just to keep on going. Yet, we find darkness coming forth from the mouths of brethren who should know better, and to be honest, this hurts the most. This judgemental darkness may well stem from a mistaken awareness of what its purveyors see in their own souls.

*Askila Bederech Tamim* ... "I will concern myself in the way of integrity, when will [the opportunity] come to me, I will walk in the integrity of my heart within my house."

When David wants to concern himself with the integrity of the world, he first seeks it in his own spirit. He walks in his personal space, his own heart, "within my house," cleansing, understanding, and yes, accepting his own self before stepping outside to look at others.

The *Piaseczner Rebbe*, zy"l, wrote in his monumental *sefer*, *Chovos Hatalmidim*, quite a lot about self knowledge. Let me share with you his Holy words about those who deceive themselves:

"Listen my child, as we reveal the foundation of their sickness. Understand, strengthen yourself, guard yourself, and live. What they are missing is the Jewish sense of worth, the "I," this is their illness. This "I," which is a spark from the "I" of I am *Hashem* your G-d' spoken when the Jews received the Torah, has somehow disappeared. Because of this their whole self has been broken and trampled on. They are like a ship without a captain, which is tossed in the waves by every gale, and in the end sinks to the bottom of the sea. So too every evil wind in the world affects their course, as if they are drifting and directionless, and every plague and disease in the world infects them. If a foolish spirit of sin, haughtiness, arrogance, or hatred of the holy should pass through the world, they are broken by its force.

"Awaken the Jewish "I" that is within you, and be saved from this kind of fate ..." David walks in his own house, seeking his Jewish "I" before embarking on deciphering the ills of the world. We too seek, but must do so with our self knowledge as Torah Jews who weigh and measure according to

our true Jewish "I."

*Lo Ashis Leneged Einai ...* "I will not set before my eyes works of wickedness the doing of crooked things I hate; [thus] it will not cleave to me."

Mud sticks if you walk in it. When the Jewish "I" is paramount in your eyes, then the filth of the material world will not cling to you. You will be sensitized to what is true and will give evil a wide birth. In this manner you will not falter, your steps will direct you onto a proper path.

*Melashni Baseiser Rei'eihu ...* "He who slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I cut down; he who is haughty of eye and proud of heart, him will I not tolerate." When you are sensitive to your own Jewish identity, then you won't be able to tolerate those who are so arrogant that they peddle slander in the shadows.

*Lo Yeisheiv Bekerev Beisi ...* "He will not dwell within my house, one who works deceit; he who tells lies will have no place before my eyes."

The world of deceit has no place in the heart or the house of the Torah Jew. However, and this is difficult but nevertheless vital, the banishing of deceitfulness must start within your own self. Before you go off to rid the world of all those who lie, you must destroy the liar that may well be gnawing within the very foundations of your own being. When that liar is put to rest, well then, you may just find that those around you weren't all that bad after all.

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