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This week's Dvar Torah was sponsored L'iluy Nishmas R' Yisroel ben R' Yaakov

## IS SEEING, BELIEVING?

### PARSHAS TETZAVEH

*This morning I was at a staff meeting of all the nurses of the ward. As we sat around the table, I saw to my dismay that one of the nurses was wearing a pair of earrings that I had been missing for two months. The earrings were a gift from my mother-in law. They were expensive and were very unusual in design. How could she just wear them? Why hadn't she posted signs and tried to find the owner? How could I get my earrings back without embarrassing both of us? The meeting ended and I glanced at "my earrings" again. It was then that I noticed a tiny gold ball on the tip of each earring. My earrings did **NOT have that**. Clearly, they were not my earrings. (from The Other Side of the Story by Yehudis Samet).*



**We can be so certain that we are right-seeing is believing. Yet, we can be wrong!** Sometimes, we only see a partial picture and make an incorrect evaluation. That is why we are commanded to judge people favorably. It is meritorious and sometimes even obligatory to imagine an unusual scenario if that will help us judge a person's actions in a favorable light (assuming the person is not inherently evil).

*"You shall bring near your brother Aaron, with his sons, from among the Israelites, to serve Me as priests..."  
(Shmos 28:1)*

Moshe Rabbeinu was descending Mount Sinai with the 10 Commandments that Hashem Himself had written. Moshe saw the terrible sight of some Jews dancing around an idol in the form of a living calf made from gold. Then Moshe saw his brother Aharon. **The Midrash says** that Moshe saw Aharon knocking on the calf with a hammer. Moshe couldn't believe what he was seeing! His brother, Aharon, was participating in making this idol! Moshe's heart felt upset at Aharon for doing this. Sometime later, when Hashem wanted Moshe to appoint Kohanim, Moshe wanted to distance himself from Aharon until Hashem commanded him to bring Aharon close and choose him. Hashem put in Moshe's heart the ability to totally understand what really happened. Hashem told Moshe, "I know that Aharon's intentions were for good [and that you misunderstood]." All of Aharon's actions were done to protect the Jews. He tried to stall those few Jews who were pushing for an idol, until Moshe returned.

How could Moshe have made such a mistake even though it "seemed" that Aharon was involved? Aharon was a totally righteous person. The love between them was so great. In fact, when Hashem asked Moshe to lead the Jews out of Egypt, he initially refused. He felt that Aharon who led the Jews in Egypt, should be chosen. Moshe didn't want to slight the honor of his

older brother, Aharon. Why didn't Moshe judge Aharon favorably? If a person is righteous and he appears to have sinned, you are obligated to picture a scenario that depicts this person as totally guiltless. Why didn't Moshe do this?

We see from here how difficult this mitzvah is. **A person reacts to what he sees superficially.** A person may be able to create a strange scenario in his mind, enabling him to understand that the other person acted in a just manner. **But it is very hard for the heart to believe what the mind invents.** Intellectually, Moshe may have not had a problem with Aharon's actions- he was able to formulate a scenario that Aharon acted faithfully. But to a very slight degree, deep in Moshe's heart he didn't feel that this scenario was accurate until Hashem helped him to feel it.

It is difficult to give a person the benefit of the doubt, especially if we personally witnessed what they did. We must realize that **truth is often stranger than fiction** and that there might have been more to the story than the small part that we saw with our own eyes.

**Giving the benefit of the doubt will help us avoid speaking badly of others. It will also help us to be happier people. In addition, if we give the benefit of the doubt to others, then Hashem will also give us the benefit of the doubt.**

*Based on a dvar Torah by Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l,  
Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim*

Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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