



Light Lines

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Light Insight

Forever

"Ascend to the top of the cliff, and raise your eyes westward, northward,..... and see with your eyes, for you shall not cross this Jordan [river]." (Deuteronomy 3:27)

Imagine the feelings of longing that Moses must have felt as he stood on top of the cliff, gazing out over the land that he had given so much to enter.

There it was, stretched out in front of him like a map. The Land of Israel. So close and yet so far. G-d knew how much Moses wanted to go into the Land of Israel, so why did He 'tantalize' Moses by telling him to go up and gaze at the land that he knew he was never going to enter?

Furthermore, our Sages tell us that by prophetic insight G-d showed Moses every single square inch of the

Land of Israel — which only must have increased his longing!

What was G-d's purpose? Each of our great Forebears represent a specific quality: Abraham embodies kindness, Isaac personifies strength/self-control and Jacob truth. The quality that Moses represents is eternity.

Everything that Moses did was forever. G-d gave the Torah through Moses because the Torah is eternal.

If Moses had entered the land of Israel with the Jewish People, then their entry would have been an 'eternal entry' — everything that Moses did had that touch of eternity. Had Moses taken the Jewish People into the Land of Israel, they would never have been able to be removed from the Land. G-d knew that eventually the Jewish People would be forced to go into exile, since they would be unable to maintain the high spiritual standards that the Land

requires. If they could not leave, and they could not stay, they would be caught, as it were, in a spiritual vise — with the very real danger of annihilation.

Thus, Moses *could* not enter the Land of Israel.

However, G-d made Moses's non-entry into the Land serve a positive purpose: G-d wanted to sear the memory of the Land of Israel into the collective psyche of the Jewish People. By showing Moses every blade of grass, by 'taking him' to see every corner of the land he was never to enter, G-d planted in Moses's heart a longing for the Land of Israel *which would be eternal*.

Throughout the long, long night of exile, the Jewish People have never lost that same longing for the Land of Israel that Moses felt when he stood on the top of the cliff and gazed into the Land he would never enter.

.....Light Update

Turning the Black Sea into "Blue and White"

Hundreds of boys and girls from the upper grades of the Ohr-Dessa Schools of Ohr Somayach in the Black Sea port city of Odessa enjoyed a recreational-educational experience this month in summer camps organized for them in a beautiful Ukrainian pastoral setting.

Over fifty of them will be coming to Israel this fall to continue their studies at Ohr Somayach's Ohr-Dessa High School and an affiliated girls school, bringing the number of youngsters who have been given such an opportunity to over one hundred.

A team of Israeli girls studying in Jerusalem high schools, who

traveled to Odessa during their summer break to volunteer their counseling services in the girls' camp, returned with glowing reports of the success which the Ohr Somayach staff of Israeli educators and local personnel have achieved in turning the Black Sea into a "Blue and White" opportunity for Jews robbed of their Judaism by Communism, to return to their people and their faith.

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The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

“Abracadabra! Hocus Pocus! Now you see it! Now it’s out of focus!” At a magic show we expect to be fooled — we’re not surprised when a pigeon emerges from an empty hat. But optical illusions are limited to magic shows. In real life, our perceptions present us with a true picture of reality. Or do they....

ahead.

At that moment, a police officer happened along. What sight met his eyes? A woman running after a man who had just ‘snatched’ her handbag from her shoulder. The alert officer grabbed the alleged purse-snatcher and put him in a vice-like arm lock. “Lady! Is this your handbag?” he called.

The woman was too out of breath to

A man and his wife were out jogging in Central Park. As they neared an incline the husband took his wife’s handbag in order to make it easier for her. Then he sped

answer, she could only watch in horror as the policeman proceeded to arrest her husband. She finally caught her breath and explained to the officer what really happened, but not before their son’s best friend Benny had wandered past and witnessed the embarrassing ‘arrest.’

The Creator wants us to use our perceptions — in the above incident, the policeman acted dutifully. Yet our senses trick us over and over again, and nevertheless we continue making superficial assessments to judge people negatively. How might Benny report what he saw? How might others react to his report? Less than favorably, unless they’ve been trained in the art of looking at the Other Side of the Story.

Response Line

Alan from Orlando asked:

Dear Rabbi,

I recently hired a magician for my son’s birthday party only to be told by a well-meaning friend that Jewish Law forbids Magic. Is this true?

Dear Alan,

First let’s separate between two fundamentally different forms of Magic, that of the “Occult” and that of the “Birthday Party.” Any conjuring or manipulation using occult practices is strictly prohibited by the Torah.

Although seemingly innocuous, pure sleight-of-hand is also Biblically prohibited. When listing forbidden practices associated with the seven Canaanite nations, the Torah mentions “Me’onen.” Our Sages explain that “Me’onen” means “illusions performed by sleight-of-hand” and it is prohibited. The problem with

powers.

I asked a leading halachic authority about magic tricks, and he began by saying that this is not a simple issue, but that there is a way to avoid any possible prohibition. The magician should:

1. Show some people how he does one of his tricks. These people do not have to be the actual participants at the birthday party. It is just to make known publicly that the “magic” tricks is sleight-of-hand.
2. Tell each audience that all of the tricks are clever sleight-of-hand.

After following both of the above steps, the magician may perform the magic show in the normal way. I remember the professional magicians Penn & Teller did this during their Refrigerator Tour show on Broadway. They demonstrated a “magic box trick” with see-thru boxes so the audience knew how the “trick” was done. However, when David Copperfield “vanished” the Statue of

sleight-of-hand seems to be that the magician leaves some people with the impression that he has supernatural

Liberty, I don’t quite remember him stressing that his trick was “clever sleight-of-hand,” which one must do to make the trick permissible.

So sit back and enjoy the birthday party magic show. In fact, you might mention to the magician that he owes a debt of gratitude to the Torah for all his tricks. Just explain to him what “Abra K’dabra” means: it is an expression in Aramaic, the language of the Talmud and whose roots come from Biblical Hebrew, meaning “I will create (A’bra) as I speak (k’Dabra).”

Coincidence of coincidences a friend called me up to tell me the following joke while I was writing this column: There was a magician that performed on a cruise ship. However, every time he did one of the shows, the captain’s parrot would give away the tricks. As you could imagine, his shows weren’t doing well.

During one cruise (it should never happen to us) the ship hit an iceberg and sunk. The magician was one of the survivors. While he was in the life raft, the parrot landed next to him. It stared at him for several minutes, and finally said: “OK. I give up. Where did you put the ship?”