



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### *My Own Space, Man!*

If I were to ask you to conjure up in your mind's eye a picture of the archetypal untrustworthy salesman, you'd probably imagine a greasy-looking character with enough oil on his hair to fry chips. He'd be wearing an outlandish check suit loud enough to be heard from the middle of next week. His mouth would be dripping with superlatives. And what would he be selling? Probably a used car. My apologies to the legions of upright used-car salesmen in the world, but gentlemen, your trade has a bad rap.

"No, no, sir, that brown color is not rust. It's the original paint-work. It's called French Ochre. No, no, the tires aren't bald! These are special treadless treads. They cost a fortune new... No sir, 100,000 miles on a ringer like this is practically brand new! They go on forever!"

Nothing goes on forever. We're

in this world for a very short time, and while we're here we have to make some pretty important decisions — and I don't mean where to spend this year's summer vacation. If we're Jewish, we're going to have to decide if our Jewishness will define our lives and our relationship with G-d, or will it be just another cultural affinity on par with belonging to the Seattle Large Format Camera Club.

One of the clarion calls of my partly misspent youth was that everyone wanted "their own space (man)."

It may come as something of a surprise to the "Love" generation (and its current spiritual heirs) that, on an ultimate level, G-d created the world for us to have our own space.

In this week's Torah portion it seems that G-d lets the Jewish People make a terrible blunder. He tells them "Send forth people, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan." The journey of the spies led to the biggest debacle in Jewish History when Israel

spurned the Land of Israel and were punished so severely that we feel the repercussions of that blunder to this day.

In fact, G-d never told Israel to send spies. The opening of this week's Torah portion is a response to the request of the Jewish People to Moses at the beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy. There it clearly shows that the Jewish People instigated the idea. They clamored around Moses in confusion and concern. He told them that the Land was a good land, an excellent Land. The Jewish People then treated Moses like the first used-car salesman in history. Not content with his word, they demanded to send spies to verify his claims. And G-d acquiesced. He didn't command them to send spies, but He acquiesced. Why? Because G-d wants to give us the space to succeed.

But being able to succeed also means that we must have the possibility to fail.

That's what having "our own space" really means.

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### *Machaneh Yehuda*

The name conjures up the image of Jerusalem's massive and colorful outdoor food market, but it is

actually the name of one of the city's oldest Jewish neighborhoods, dating back to 1888. Only a couple of blocks from the modern downtown area of King George, Jaffa and Ben Yehuda, this neighborhood is also home to the famous Yeshiva Eitz Chaim and the Zoharei Chama compound of synagogues where non-stop prayer services are available almost the entire day for market stallkeepers, shoppers, and travelers.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving people the benefit of the doubt

*When things go wrong, we may misjudge one person; worse yet, we may misjudge many people in...*

### *A Package Deal*

**M**y daughter's teacher was going on an extended vacation. Just before she left, I gave her money to order a special piece of equipment for my daughter. The teacher promised me she would take care of it before she left. Weeks went by, and the package never came. I was sure the teacher forgot, and I was angry at her apparently nonchalant attitude towards this important matter.

Eventually, the package arrived, badly damaged.

"Oh," I thought, "so I misjudged her! She did order it, but it was damaged and delayed in transit."

Now I had the correct party to blame; I called the shipping department. The shipping clerk was surprised because the tracking number on the box didn't match the original shipment. The clerk then made a claim to the package delivery company, who agreed to accept responsibility for the damage and delay.

I was satisfied the matter was finished, until the shipping clerk called back — it wasn't the delivery company's fault. The clerk originally sent the package to an incorrect address; it was then returned to the company, remailed, and damaged in transit only a few days before I received it. The clerk apologized and sent me a replacement by overnight mail.

Just think — first, I blamed the teacher for forgetting to place the order, then the package delivery company for mangling the box, and it turns out the whole thing started with a typographical error by the shipping clerk.

## Response Line

### Addiction to Mitzvot

*Ethan Greenwood wrote:  
Since Judaism opposes addiction because it implies a loss of self control, is it therefore also forbidden to be addicted to the observance of mitzvot?*

Dear Ethan,

Just a minute...I can't answer your question yet....I've got this uncontrollable desire to...to...stick this dollar into that charity box!..There, I feel much better now.

Now, what was your question again? Does Judaism oppose "addiction" to *mitzvot* (command-

ments)? Judaism encourages behavior which enhances physical and spiritual well-being, and opposes behavior detrimental to physical and spiritual well-being.

If a person accustoms himself to proper behavior, and as a result he is uncomfortable doing what he feels is wrong, that's healthy. Call it an addiction if you want.

On the other hand, if a person falls into a depression because his observance is not up to par, or if his observance expresses itself in counter-productive or destructive behavior patterns — such as obsessive compulsive behavior — that's not healthy. Call it a negative addiction.

This is true of almost any activi-

ty or lifestyle: Almost anything can be expressed in either a healthy or an unhealthy way. Take eating, for example: When was the last time you went a day without eating a bunch of food? So, you're a food addict, are you? You decide whether to stuff your face with chocolate cake ten times a day, to eat three nutritious meals, or a compromise between the two, but either way, you must eat.

So, you might be right: We Jews are *mitzvah* addicts. We must do the *mitzvot*! Done properly, the *mitzvot* enhance our lives and nourish our souls.

In fact, the Sages have taught us over and over again that unless you approach Judaism with a passion and an intense desire — unless you are "addicted" to Judaism — you'll never scale its heights and grow!