

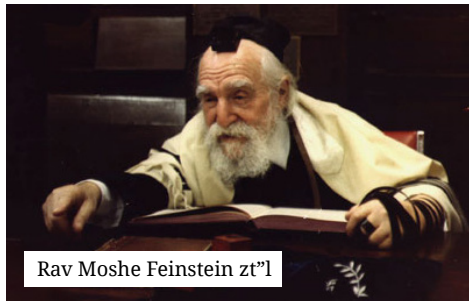


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Momentary Momentum

It was a moment of high tension; the spies had riled up the people against Moshe Rabbeinu, and bedlam was in the air. At this moment, Kalev steps forward and silences the people. He calms them down, allows them to see all the wonderful things that Moshe Rabbeinu has done, and shifts their vision. Yet in the end, his words fall on deaf ears, and the *Meraglim* convince the people that it is impossible to conquer the land. The Torah praises Kalev for his words, and he is given a great reward. The question is obvious; Kalev was not successful in his endeavor to convince the people — why is



Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l

he given such a great reward?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, in *Darash Moshe*, teaches us an important principle. There is a halachic obligation to do whatever is necessary to save a person's life, even if one must desecrate Shabbos in order to do so. This is true even if the person's life will only be extended for a short time. Likewise, one is obligated to try and influence

others to do *teshuvah*, even if the effect of those efforts will be brief. It is clear that Kalev did, in fact, impact the people for a short time, since the *Meraglim* had to redouble their efforts thereafter to convince

the people that indeed, it was impossible for them to enter the land. Thus, for even a momentary element of *teshuvah* that Kalev engendered, he is greatly rewarded.

Rashi teaches us that Kalev's ploy was asking the people, "is this all that ben Amram did for us?" This got the attention of the people. Then, Kalev mentioned all the wonderful things that Moshe Rabbeinu did for them. Rav Chayim Zaitchick zt"l, in *Ohr Chadash*, notes that these words did, indeed, impact the people. The nation at this moment was in a state of high emotion, riled up against Moshe Rabbeinu. Kalev's words allowed them to calm down, even for a brief time, and their rebellious state was slightly subdued. Therefore, when they

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were punished, the full wrath of Hashem was not measured against them to the same extent.

It is well known that Rav Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* taught that one who sins with a sigh and a feeling of regret is not punished the same way as one who sins with the fullness of their being. The story is told of a merchant who ordered all of the *sefarim* of the Chafetz Chayim *zt'l*, except the *sefer* on the laws of *Loshon Hara*. He explained that since he is a merchant, and interacts with people all day, there is no way he can observe these laws. The Chafetz Chayim told this man that he had raised this issue with Rav Salanter before publishing the *sefer*. Rav Salanter responded that it was worth publishing the *sefer* if even one Jew, while still speaking *Loshon Hara*, would feel an angst when doing so. This feeling of remorse will dramatically change the nature of the sin.

Two important lessons from one small act. Our responsibility is to try to save another, even for a brief period, from their 'spiritual demise.' One is considered successful if one is able to bring down the intensity of the level of the sin. ■

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