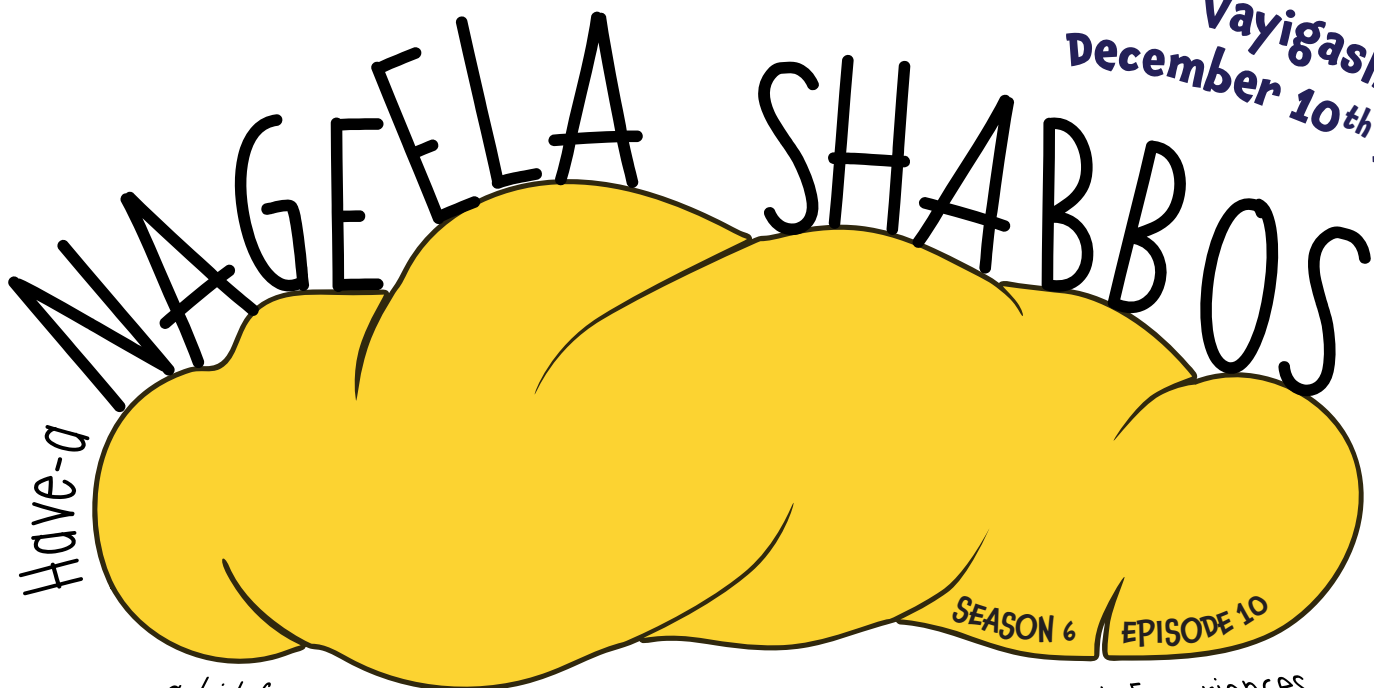


Vayigash 5782
December 10th 2021



a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences



Just Face It

by Rabbi Dani Locker

At a nursing home, somewhere in the American south, an old man named Mr. Gold spent all of his time studying Torah. A Rabbi of mine once met Mr. Gold. He had spent over 50 years completely out of touch with any Jewish communities, Rabbis, or synagogues. Yet somehow, he was motivated to spend all day on his beloved studies. Why?

Mr. Gold explained that when he was young, he met a great man called the Chofetz Chaim. Mr. Gold never heard any classes from the Chofetz Chaim, never studied with him or received that Rabbi's blessing. He just saw him. So inspired was he by simply seeing this great man, that for more than 50 years he kept Torah as the primary part of his life. What did he see? I can understand if a magnificent orator, a silver-tongued

elocutor, eloquently pontificating with great facundity would inspire that kind of life change. But what can you SEE that can have an effect? A white beard? If that was all it took... Let's leave Mr. Gold for a bit and take a glance at Jacob. When our ancestor Jacob met King Pharaoh, the king asked how old Jacob was. He responded that he had lived 130 years, and that they had been bitter years. The Midrash criticizes Jacob for this statement. How could the great Jacob have so little trust in God's goodness to say that he had bad years? Because this conversation had 33 words in it, Jacob lost 33 years of his potential life. Instead of living to 180 as his father did, Jacob died at 147 (I know, that doesn't seem very young to me either). Well, I can understand Jacob



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Candle lighting

Henderson 4:08
Las Vegas 4:08
Reno/ Tahoe 4:17
San Diego 4:24
Irvine 4:25
Los Angeles 4:26
Oakland 4:32
Park City 4:40
Scottsdale 5:01
Honolulu 5:32

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getting in trouble for his words complaining that his life was rough. He should have trusted God more. But I did the math (ahh-hh! Math! Noooo!) and something doesn't fit. The 33 words include Pharaoh's words. Why does Jacob get in trouble for Pharaoh's words?

What do people see when they look at your face?

Pharaoh noticed Jacob's age and commented on it. That means Jacob looked worn out and aged. Had Jacob been full of the proper trust in God, Pharaoh's first impression would have been, "Wow, you look young for your age." It reminds me of a story. A few tourists are passing through a small town when they see a man sitting on a rocking chair in front of an old ranch house. He's so shriveled he could pass for a mummy. They approach him. "Excuse me sir, would you mind telling us, what's the secret to your life? Is it exercise? Healthy eating?"

The man squints at them and answers in a raspy voice, "Actually, I never, ever eat vegetables. I smoke 6 packs of cigarettes a day, don't do any exercise and I drink too much."

The tourists are amazed! "Thank you sir!" They exclaim. "Would you mind telling us exactly how old you are?" "I'm 26." He replies.

Jacob probably did not smoke and I'm sure he lived a healthy lifestyle (we know he won at least one wrestling match), yet his attitude made him

look older than he was. That is the criticism. The full extent of a person's feelings, traits and personality can sometimes be recognizable just by looking at a face. I'm not sure exactly what Mr. Gold saw when he looked at the Chofetz Chaim, but something stood out to him. Something that changed his life forever. Sometimes you can learn and experience so much, just by looking at someone's face. Their hopes, their thoughts, what skin cream they use. What do people see when they look at your face?

What do you want people to see?

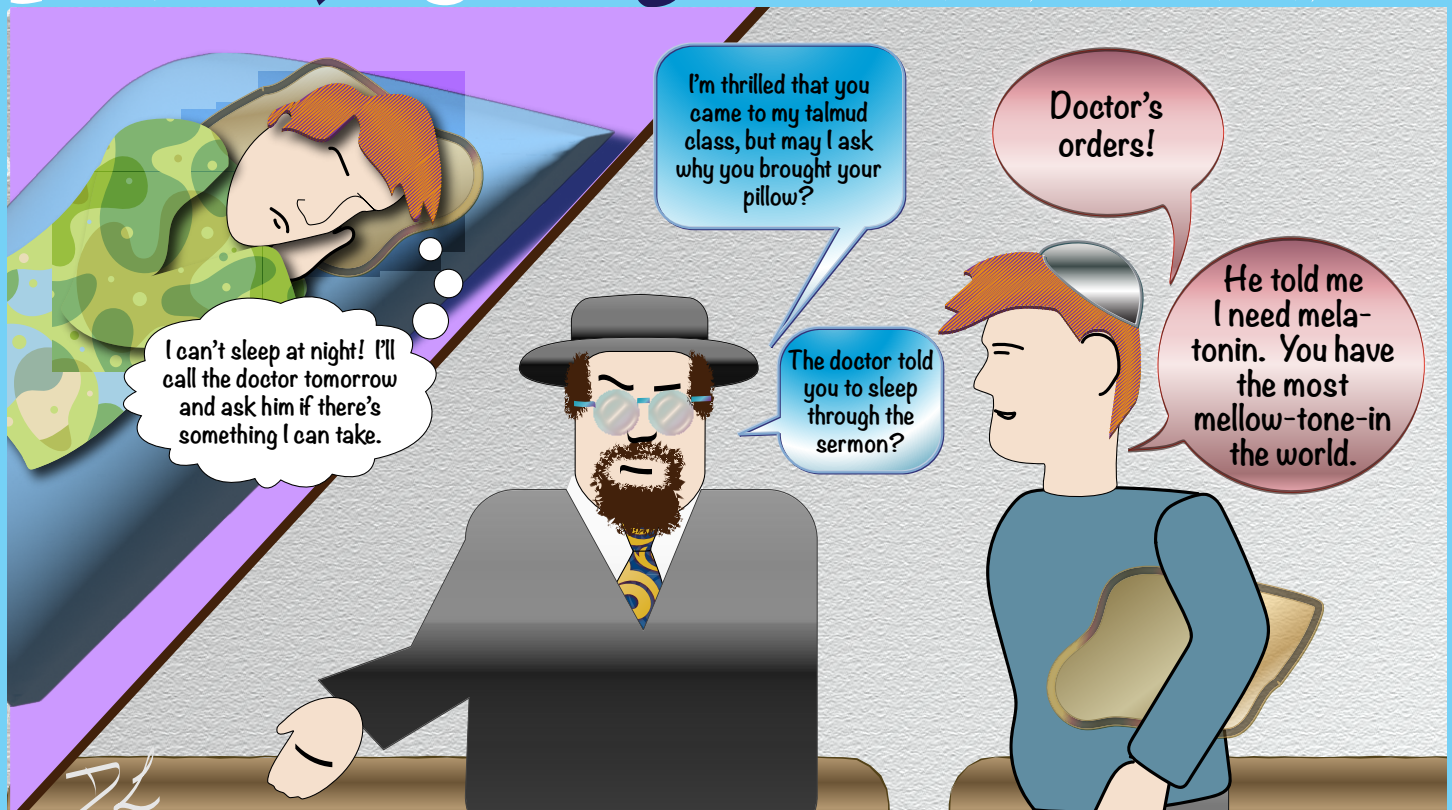
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HAD HE BEEN BORN 50 YEARS LATER, DR. SEUSS MIGHT HAVE BECOME THE WORLD'S GREATEST RAPPER

PICKLE JEWS

GALACTICALLY SYNDICATED COMIC STRIP



Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

Note: We call this 'Stump The Rabbi' for fun, but that's not really the point. The goal is to learn something important in an interesting way.

Stump the Rabbi



#188 Accepted or Excepted?

Hi Rabbi,

Do people with disabilities have to do the mitzvot? Is there a difference between physical disabilities and mental disabilities? What about IQ?

Thanks,

Dewey Needtoo

Dear Dewey,

This is an extremely complex and sensitive topic. Please do not use anything I write below as practical halacha without first discussing it with the right people, personally.

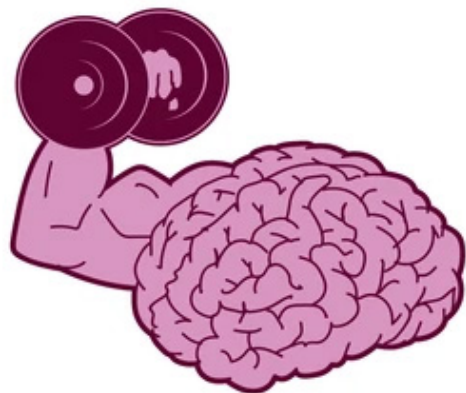
Let me start by asking you this. Does it make sense that all people should have the same obligations and requirements? I mean, in school, 3rd graders don't have the same responsibilities as 10th graders (because the third graders are usually more mature, but I digress). The great Jewish thinker Ramchal explains that the mitzvot in the Torah are really a minimum baseline (gulp). Every capable Jew should be able to accomplish those. People who have greater abilities (more brain power for Torah study, more natural generosity for kindness, more physical strength to help carry friend's packages, more money for charity, more patience for prayers, less sensitive eyes to fry more potato latkes (that was a joke- just sayin)... those people should strive to raise the bar and accomplish more than the basic 613.

However there are exceptions even to the basics. We know that we are never blamed for what we have no control over (onesh). So if, for example, a person is sick and can't perform a mitzvah, they're cool. If someone is missing their arms, they are exempt from putting on arm Tefillin (they should still get someone to help them put on head tefillin. If they're missing their head, then they can skip the head tefillin).

But what about other disabilities and deficits? The Talmud discusses three types of people who are exempt from all commandments. I'll list and then explain them. They are:

1. A minor (under bat or bar mitzvah). I am not referring to an A minor chord.
2. One who mentally or emotionally incapable.
3. One who is both deaf and unable to speak.

A minor is exempt from the commandments because they are not considered to have a fully developed intelligence or maturity. Even though you can have incredibly smart 12 year olds who understand more than any adults.



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from 2021 at nageelawest.org**

Defining mental capability is a little trickier. It is certain that someone who is completely unable to care for themselves, communicate and reason is not obligated in mitzvot. People who are functional but suffer from mental illness should have their individual cases evaluated by a competent Rabbi in communication with a mental health professional. As a general rule, people with conditions like depression, paranoia, or eating disorders are obligated in all commandments they're capable of performing. If they feel unable to perform a particular action, they may be exempt as an oness, as mentioned above, but that doesn't make them an incompetent person. People with low IQs who are functional in society are obligated to perform any commandments they're capable of.

What about people who are deaf? In ancient times, people who were unable to

hear or speak were unable to communicate, were cut off from the world and were mostly unable to be educated. With modern advances in communication and education technology, many authorities rule that deaf mutes are fully capable of integration and therefore obligated in the mitzvot. Once again, individual cases should be discussed with knowledgeable authorities. Stump the Rabbi is not meant to be a source for authoritative halachic decisions. My understanding is that if, due to medical advances a deaf person can speak intelligibly, then they are considered fully functional and are obligated in all mitzvot, can count toward a minyan and everything else.

Have a Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi

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Mazel Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. Shua Rose of Los Angeles NCSY on the birth of a baby girl!



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They are people too!

OUCH! GROAN!

Do you have a better joke? I sure hope so!
Send it to dlocker@nageelawest.org