

תזריע - מצורע / Tazria-Metzora

Volcanoes on the Sidewalk

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

"Totty, Totty!" said Shimmy breathlessly as he ran into the house after school.

"Hi Shimmy!" Totty said with a smile, looking up from the sefer he was holding. "What's wrong? Why are you so out of breath?"

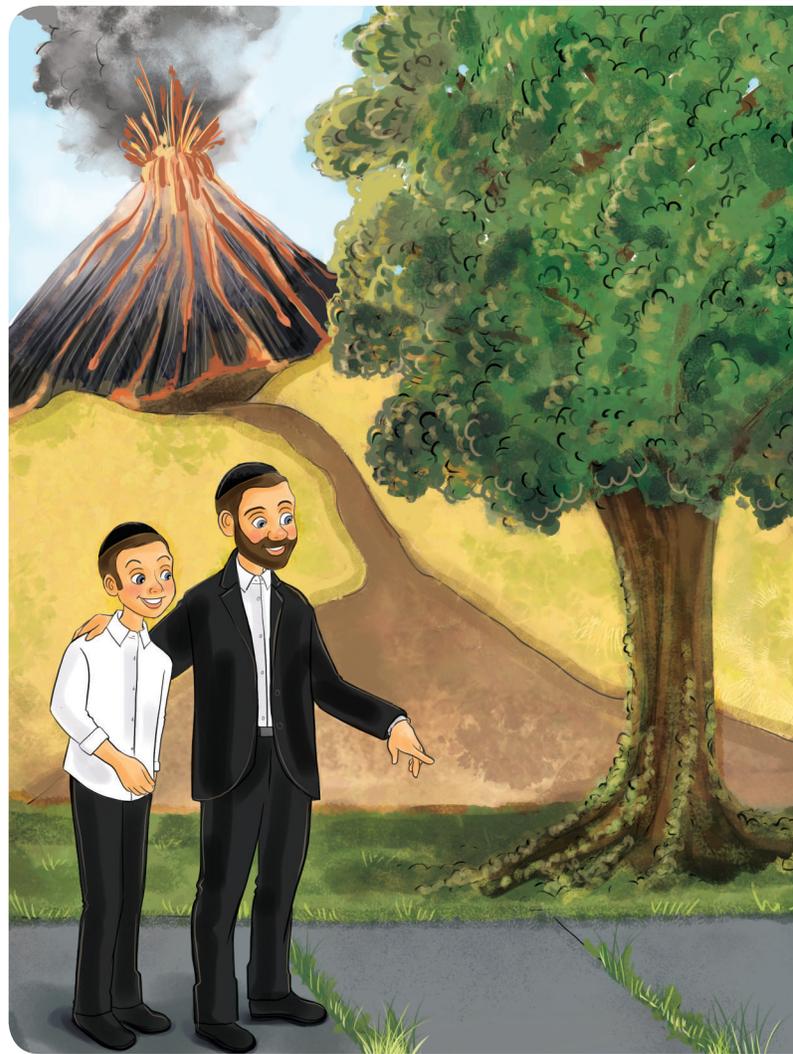
"Totty," Shimmy said, still trying to catch his breath. "We need to go to Hawaii. Can you buy tickets right now?"

Totty almost dropped his sefer. "What? Hawaii? Why? What are you talking about?"

"Ari Holtzbacher just came back from Hawaii!" Shimmy gushed. "The whole family flew there for his little brother's upsherin. And he was telling us about all of the amazing things they have there: the crystal blue ocean that goes on for miles, tropical rain forests, and volcanoes! Volcanoes, Totty! With real actual boiling hot lava flowing down from them into the ocean. Can you imagine? We have to go right away!"

"But Shimmy," Totty said, "I don't have a hundred billion dollars like Anshel Holtzbacher. And even if we did have that kind of money, why would we waste it on a trip to Hawaii?"

"But don't you always tell us how important it is to spend time looking at and admiring Niflaos



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HaBorei? Didn't Rav Avigdor Miller speak about that a lot? Something that important is surely worth spending extra money, just like buying a beautiful lulav and esrog."

"Oy Shimmy," said Totty with a smile. "I love the way you think. But let's think about this week's parsha for a minute."

"This week's Parsha?" Shimmy asked, slightly confused. "It talks about tzoraas. Oh do you mean because the Metzora has to go out of town? Does that mean traveling is only something people who talk loshon hora do?"

"Not exactly, Shimmy," said Totty. "Come, let's go for a walk."

Totty and Shimmy walked out the front door and down the street. After a minute, Totty stopped. "We don't need to go to Hawaii to see oceans and volcanoes," he said, pointing at the sidewalk. "Everything we need is right here."

Now Shimmy was really confused. There were no oceans and volcanoes on the sidewalk. There was just a faded hopscotch court that one of the neighbor kids had drawn with chalk.

"I don't see anything," Shimmy said.

"Think for a second about what the metzora brings along with his korbon." said Totty.

"Oh," Shimmy said. "He brought erez and eizov - I think that was wood from two different trees."

"Good answer," replied Totty, "but not exactly. You see eitz erez is cedar wood - and a cedar tree is indeed a big huge tall tree. But eizov is moss, just like you see on the trunk of that tree over there. Why did the Torah tell the metzora to bring these two things?"

"So Rav Miller explains that the reason the metzora got punished with the terrible tzoraas is because he forgot to stop and see the greatness of Hashem all around him. He just wasted his time with silly jokes and loshon hora, when instead he could

have been admiring all of the wonderful things Hashem put into this world.

"That's why he needs to bring erez and eizov. Because he failed to look at the wonders of Hashem's big strong trees and didn't even pay attention to how amazing these little moss plants are. Do you know that moss seeds - or spores - are so tiny that they get carried by the wind all around the world and everywhere where it's damp and not too sunny they grow? That's why the moss always grows on the north side of trees in this part of the world - because that's the side of the tree that gets the least sun, so it is wetter and has more water to support the moss!"

Totty pointed down at the sidewalk once more. "Now look again, Shimmy, and tell me what you see."

"Wow," said Shimmy. "Look at that grass poking up from the cracks in the sidewalk. I'm sure they didn't put grass seeds there - there doesn't look like there is even any soil there!"

"I know, isn't it amazing?" Totty said. "But this grass is actually from the grass you see on the field here next to the sidewalk. Grass may look small, but its roots grow super deep - grass roots can even be taller than you or me! And the roots spread out under the ground and then they push up new blades of grass everywhere. Even when there's a rock-hard sidewalk, they find the tiniest cracks and then push themselves through. And then these little tiny blades of grass help convert the poisonous carbon dioxide that comes out of our lungs back into refreshing clean oxygen for us to breathe!"

"Incredible - such Niflaos HaBorei!" said Shimmy, looking around, and for the first time noticing all of the different types of plants, trees, and birds around them. "It's like we have our very own Hawaii right here - and we only need to walk a few feet to get there!"

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!



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