

Heroism can be expressed in a wide variety of interesting fashions. Each of us has his own heroes. For some, their heroes are brave fighters. For others, their heroes are sports personalities, musicians, motion picture performers or computer wizards. All around us we can find anonymous or little-known heroes doing small acts of heroism, which sometimes can become expressions of true heroism. Some of us know of young cancer victims who have courageously faced their illness and even conquered it. Others know of individuals with strong commitments to their ideals and principles.

Our Sages taught:

"Who is a hero? He who controls his temper". (Mishneh Avot 4:1 )

They taught us that success in overcoming the temptation to act in negative ways is called heroism.

### Text #1 The Assignment

Steven Spielberg, the well-known producer and director, has decided to produce a motion picture about a Jewish hero. He has turned to Jewish youth around the world and asking for scripts or stories describing accounts of heroism and by young Jews. The best script will be produced as a short film. You have been asked to review three scripts on Jewish heroism, and recommend the best one to Mr. Spielberg. You will be asked to defend your recommendation before a "representative" of Mr. Spielberg who will join our Eidah after your deliberations.

### Text #2 Hero Story: The Combat Soldier

An Israeli commando unit has just completed a very important mission in Lebanon. It succeeded in destroying a large number of katyusha missiles that had been used to attack settlements in northern Israel, causing considerable loss of life and property. After completing its mission, the unit was forced to retreat quickly to the Israeli border, while under continuous fire from pursuing terrorist units. Suddenly, the unit commander runs into a wide-barbed wire fence that is blocking the unit's retreat. It is in the middle of the night, and the unit has come under intense fire and is in real danger. There is no time to begin to cut the fence. Every moment is critical. Uri, the unit sergeant, takes the initiative. He throws himself on the barbed-wire fence, thus allowing all of the soldiers and officers in the unit to cross the fence on his back. The unit succeeds in quickly crossing the fence in a minimal amount of time. Uri's act enabled the force to return safely to its base. He was wounded from the sharp barbs of the wire but knew that he did the right thing. For this act of heroism, Uri was awarded a medal for bravery by the Chief of Staff.

### Text #3 Hero Story: The Basketball Player

David was an outstanding basketball player and starter on his high school varsity team. In addition to playing basketball, David occasionally read Torah in his synagogue. Seven months ago, David decided to volunteer to teach John, a 12 year old with some serious learning disabilities, to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. At first, David was going to meet John two hours, once a week, for eight months, in accordance with his teachers' recommendations. John's Bar Mitzvah is scheduled to take place in just one month. David knows that he has to be working with John three times a week. Otherwise, John will not be ready. Over the months, David has

developed a very strong emotional attachment to John. Last week, David's team qualified for the State Finals. The coach has announced that the team's practice time will begin to increase significantly. David is in shock. The Finals are scheduled for the week of John's Bar Mitzvah. He doesn't know how he will be able to help John complete his Bar Mitzvah preparations and also make it to practice at the accelerated pace. The Coach will absolutely not allow David to miss practice. For two days now, David has been in a state of total confusion. He knows that he must choose between sticking with John or with the team. He really wants both. Yesterday morning, David made his choice. He went to the Coach's office and informed him that he was resigning from the team.

#### Text #4 Hero Story: The Last Speech

Moshe, old and weathered from leading B'nei Israel to the Promised Land, stands in front of all the Jews. He begins to speak eloquently about what happened in the past forty years of wondering through the desert. As the leader of thousands of people, Moshe has huge responsibilities to the B'nei Israel. Moshe recounts the history of the 40 years from after the 2nd Luchos, until the request by the people to send the Spies. He notes the establishment of the Sanhedrin and the Judicial system. The incident of the Meraglim - Spies and its terrible punishment is related. Remember, the sin of the Spies and the decree for that generation to die out in the desert occurred today, on Tisha B'Av 2449, 3266 years ago. Then, Moshe jumps 38 years during which the decree of the 40 years was carried out and focuses on Israel's encounter with the nations of: Eisav, Moav, and Ammon. The battles with Sichon and Og and the acquisition of Trans-Jordan are retold. Trans-Jordan is given to the 2 1/2 tribes, and Yehoshua is encouraged to view these victories as a promise of future success in taking Land. All of these accomplishments were under the supervision of "super-leader" Moses.

#### Small Group Discussion Questions

1. In each of the three stories, there are expressions of heroism. Which character was the most heroic and should be chosen as the basis for a motion picture?
2. How would you justify your choice before a panel of judges?