

# Mussar HaMadda

A Chofetz Chaim of Manitoba Publication

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Little Miss Muffet

“LITTLE MISS MUFFET SAT ON HER TUFFET, EATING HER CURDS AND WHEY; ALONG CAME A SPIDER AND SAT DOWN BESIDE HER, AND FRIGHTENED MISS MUFFET AWAY.” (MUFFET 10:4)

**You can't drive me  
crazy; I'm close  
enough to walk!**

**Always remember  
you're unique, like  
everybody else.**

**For every action there  
is an over-reaction.**

**Do talking fish like to  
carp?**

There are many stories from Chazal in which we have a “kindergarten pshat”, and we never revise it as we get older. Take, for example, the classic story of Little Miss Muffet. We all assumed when we were younger that Little Miss Muffet was simply scared of the spider. When we get older, however, we must re-examine this story with the carefully trained mind of a Chofetz Chaim guy, and are immediately hit with a glaring question- If she was really scared of the spider, why did the spider have to sit down before she was scared away? The obvious implication is that she was NOT, in fact, scared of the spider. She could have managed quite comfortably with an adjacent arachnid. Once, however, the spider sat down, then it was a question of propriety. It was a lack of *tznius* to be seen next to a spider. What if someone walked by and assumed the spider was a talking spider *gilgul*? She had no alternative but to vacate her tuffet, frightened by the appearance of impropriety. What we all assumed was a story of a little girl afraid of spiders turns out to be a heroic story of a girl who's *makpid* on even the slightest bit of *tznius*.

An additional insight into her tremendous character can be gleaned by the fact that at the time of the aforementioned incident, she was occupied with eating her curds and whey. Why is this fact important? We see from here that when we engage in a materialistic act, even a necessary one, our *yetzer hara* has more sway than when we are engaging in more purely spiritual pursuits. She was praised for having her wits about her to avoid even the appearance of a violation of *tznius*. Could it be she avoided the appearance of a lack of *tznius* even while eating curds and whey? No whey! Whey! The fact she's praised for it shows us how difficult this action was. At the same time, we are still obligated to do our best to maintain a spiritual control even while the materialistic side is active. We also should be on the lookout for talking fish or spiders- we never know when a *gilgul* will turn up.



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