

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 53

פרשת נח תשע"ו

Dealing Honestly (1)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

Question #1

When a person passes on to the next world, the first question the *Beis Din* on high asks him is, "Were your business dealings honest?"

(שבת לא ע"א)

A certain *Yid* was so occupied with his business throughout the entire week that he only had *Shabbos* to devote himself to learning Torah. He felt so bad about this that he asked a *chochom*: "What can I do that will be equivalent to all other *mitzvos* and will bring me to *Olam HaBa*?"

The *chochom* answered, "Since you are a businessman, make sure to deal honestly with both *Yidden* and *goyim*; tilt the scale to benefit your customer; and always do your business dealings with a smile."

The *chochom* concluded, "If you do so, may my portion in *Olam HaBa* be like yours!"

(ספר חסידים אות שצה)

The **Shulchan Aruch** extensively, and in great detail, rules how it is forbidden to mislead anyone, whether a *Yid* or a *goy*, in business, even when an extremely small amount is at issue. A few examples: If a customer is expecting a certain grade of produce, or superior craftsmanship in an axe, it is forbidden to sell him something of lesser quality. One is not allowed to polish a product, or mix good quality produce with lesser ones, so that it will appear to be of superior quality when it's not. A worker must work faithfully, doing his job with the utmost diligence. If one gives his word to make a deal, he must abide by it, as one's word should be his honor. Indeed, a *yirei Shamayim* should even abide by a decision he made in thought!

(שו"ע או"ח סי' קנ"ו, חו"מ בכ"מ)

The *amora* **Rav Safra** had an item for sale. One day while he was reciting *Kerias Shema*, someone approached him and offered to buy it for a certain price. Since Rav Safra did not respond, the man assumed that he wanted more money, and offered a higher figure. When Rav Safra finished, he sold it to the man at the original price, since in his mind he had agreed to that offer.

(מכות כד ע"א ברש"י)

Honesty brings Success

The **Torah** promises that if a person deals honestly, his earnings will increase, whereas if he is dishonest he will lose his money. Furthermore, one who deals honestly will be rewarded even for business he did not do, for had he done so, he would have surely been honest.

(ויקרא רבה טו, ז, ס' חסידים אות תתרס"ב)

Once, while **Eliyahu HaNovi** was walking on his way, he was approached by *Yid* who started asking him question after question in Torah. After *Eliyahu HaNovi* answered each one, the man related the following:

"A *goy* once came to my home to buy a large amount of dates. I only had a small measuring container, and therefore needed to measure small amounts and then total all the measurements together. Because of this, and the fact that my house was dark, I miscalculated and gave him less than I was supposed to. Later, I used the money to buy a jug of oil, and put it in the same place where I had sold the dates. A short while later the jug broke, and all the oil spilled out."

Eliyahu HaNovi explained to him that the Torah forbids stealing from a *goy*, just as it forbids stealing from a *Yid*.

(תנא דבי אליהו פרק טו)

Two business partners once asked the *tzaddik* **Reb Meir of Premishlan** for a *bracha* for success in an upcoming commercial venture.

"Have you written out your partnership contract?" the *tzaddik* asked.

"No," they said.

Reb Meir wrote the letters *alef*, *beis*, *gimmel*, *daled* on a piece of paper and handed it to them.

Seeing their amazement, he explained, "In these four letters, the secret to success is hidden. Each one is an initial: *alef* is *emunah*, *beis* is *bracha*; *gimmel* is *gneiva*, and *daled* is *dalus*. If your transactions are trustworthy, they will be blessed; if you cheat, you can expect to become poor..."

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 237)

Shlomo HaMelech writes, "Treasures of wickedness are of no avail, but *tzedaka* will rescue from death." Since the word *tzedaka* is related to *tzedek*, which means "righteousness," the *Meiri* explains this to mean that money acquired in a dishonest manner will bring zero monetary benefits to that person; benefit can only come from money acquired righteously.

Another explanation: *Tzedaka* – in its usual sense of "charity" – that is given from dishonest money will bring no benefit, as it will fall into the hands of undeserving recipients. However, *tzedaka* given from righteously-earned money will find its way to worthy causes, and thereby protect the donor from death.

(משלי יב, מאירי שם, שבט מיהודה שם)

Recognizing how a favorable livelihood comes from *HaShem* will lead a person to deal honestly. For what use is there for money made dishonestly, if it will be spent on doctor bills and other unfortunate expenses?

(תו"מ ח"ב ע' 107)

Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov asked why we find that pure young children who *daven* and learn with fervor, later leave that path entirely. He explained that this is often a result of being fed food bought with dishonest money, which breeds negative *middos* and desires just like non-kosher food.

(אגרא דפרקא אות ככו)

Consider This

Why is dealing honestly more significant than all other *mitzvos*?

Is success from honest business or loss due to dishonesty a punishment or a natural consequence?

Sparks of Greatness

The Rogatchover Gaon

Reb Yosef Rozin, the **Rogatchover Gaon**, was born in Rogatchov, and served as the rov for the *chassidim* in Dvinsk. He is renowned for his incredible memory and depth in Torah. Hundreds from far and wide wrote him questions in Torah and he would answer each one. He passed away 11 Adar, 1936 (תרצ"ו).

The Gaon accounted for every second. Even though he possessed other talents, he decidedly never got involved in anything other than Torah. The Rogatchover once asked a *bochur* to translate a letter written in Russian, for him. After doing his bid, the *bochur* turned to his teacher in surprise, "Rebbi, why don't you learn the language? You could surely do it in half an hour!" The Rogatchover smiled and said, "It would take me half that time, but from where should I take fifteen minutes?"

The Rogatchover once received a tax notice from the Russian government stating that he owed two types of taxes. Hearing this he commented

that the first tax is valid according to Torah and he is therefore obligated to pay it since "*dina d'malchusa dina*" (the law of the land is binding according to Torah). The second tax is invalid and he is therefore not obligated to pay. A few days later, he received a second notice apologizing for a miscalculation and that he is exempt from paying the second tax.

In the year 1925 (תרפ"ה), a *chossid* came to Leningrad to visit the **Rayatz of Lubavitch**. While there he visited the Rogatchover who asked him, "Did you come 'to Leningrad, to the Rebbe' or did you come 'to the Rebbe, to Leningrad?'" and explained that there are seventeen differences in *halacha* if his coming was primarily for the Rebbe or not. One of them was if he would be obligated in a *Sukkah* (one who is traveling to his Rebbe is exempt from a *Sukkah*). "For the other differences," he said "break your head yourself and find them..."

Library Sparks

This week's Torah portion, *Noach*, contains the narrative of Noach and the Great Flood which covered the earth in his generation.

After many months "at sea" in his ark, Noach opened the window to check on the sodden and water-logged world, to see if it had finally dried.

"In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month," Noach found that the earth was indeed "perfectly dry."

It was then that Hashem spoke to Noach and issued the command: "Go forth from the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you."

Why did Noach need a special command from Hashem to induce him to leave the cramped quarters he had endured for so long? Why didn't Noach exit the ark joyously of his own accord as soon as he saw that the land was dry?

Noach's reluctance to leave may be understood in light of the great miracle which occurred inside the ark itself.

All the animals within it, the ferocious and the tame, miraculously co-existed peacefully with each other, contrary to their natural inclinations and instincts.

Just imagine the hundreds of different species sharing their relatively small living space (the entire ark was only three hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide) for an entire year -- yet no animal

caused harm to another the whole time!

Chasidic philosophy explains that the atmosphere in Noach's ark was akin to what will happen when *Moshiach* comes, when "the lion will lay down with the lamb" and peace will reign on earth.

Noach, his family and all the animals in the ark enjoyed a peace which will return to the world only with the Final Redemption and the Messianic Era, speedily in our day.

Understandably, therefore, Noach was hesitant to leave the peaceful environment of the ark for the natural order that had existed before the Flood.

The earth may have finally dried, but Noach preferred the Messianic existence within the confines of the ark to returning to the vast expanse of dry land which beckoned.

He therefore needed Hashem's encouragement to disembark, to begin the next chapter in mankind's history and to fulfill the purpose of creation -- the establishment of a dwelling place for Hashem down below in the physical world.

"Go forth from the ark" is likewise Hashem's counsel to every Jew.

The Jew is enjoined to go out of his "four cubits," no matter how rarefied and holy, to fill the earth with G-dliness and holiness according to Divine plan, through the learning of Torah and the observance of mitzvos.

Halacha Sparks

Bandage on the Hand

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

Does a bandage on my hand pose a problem when washing for bread?

Netilas Yadayim requires the entire hand to come in contact with the water, similar to *tevilah* in a *mikva*. If a person has an obstruction which won't be kept there permanently (e.g. a ring removed when preparing certain foods) it is a *chatzitza* and disqualifies the washing.

Some learn that if the bandage remains for over seven days (e.g. a splint) it is deemed insignificant (*batel*) and is not a *chatzitza*. However, the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* writes that since a person would rather not have the bandage on his hand, it does not become *batel* and is a *chatzitza*. If one cannot remove the bandage (i.e. it is very painful or it may become infected) the covered part of the hand is considered non-existent and one can suffice with washing the rest of the hand.

When water is poured upon a *tamei* hand, this water becomes *tamei*, which in turn is *metamei* his hands. This is why we pour a second and third time on the hands to purify the first waters. However, this only works for the water on the hand and not the water on the bandage. Thus, if the water on the bandage touches the hand it will become impure.

There are several possible options: (1) To wash the hand only until the bandage though this can be tricky. (2) While some say that a complete *revi'is* (2.9 oz) poured over the hands does not become *tamei* at all, the *Siddur HaRav* writes that one should be *machmir* that a *revi'is* also becomes *tamei*. (3) To cover that hand with a glove, though the *Siddur HaRav* writes one should not rely on this unless one does not have water at all.

In practice, *rabbanim* advise eating with a glove since practically he does not have access to water, while others add that he should wash with a full *revi'is* and then eat with a glove.

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