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On the Parsha

In this week's Parsha, we find that Hashem commanded Moshe to appoint judges and officers. The verse in Devarim 16:16 states: "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates [settlements] that Hashem your G-d is giving you, Lishvatecha - **for your tribes**, and they shall govern the people with due justice."

The word "Lishvatecha" – for your tribes – seems to be misplaced. The Pasuk would read more smoothly and would appear more grammatically correct if the word had appeared right after the word "officers" earlier in the Pasuk. The Pasuk would then read "You shall appoint judges and officers for your tribes..." Why does the word appear later in the Pasuk?

Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg ZT"L (1785-1865), a student of Rabbi Akiva Eiger ZT"L and the author of HaKsav V'haKaballah, explains the juxtaposition of this word in a manner that teaches us an extraordinary lesson. Judges and officers stand for the ideals and principles of truth and integrity.

The Torah is telling us here that to vouchsafe these ideals "Lishvatecha" for our tribes - for our people, it is not enough to merely treat judges and officers with respect only in court and while they are enforcing the law. Rather, we must do so all of the time. One of the reasons for this is that judges and officers serve as role models of truth and integrity. If we want our role models to have the proper effect on us, we in turn need to treat our role models with respect and regard all of the time. When we fail to maintain this respect, our own moral growth and that of our society declines.

One of the reasons for court fines and in contemporary society, the assignment of bail, is not only to ensure that the person returns to court for judgement, but also to build respect for the law and its authority.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Craig Newmark is the founder of "Craigslist" which was established in 1994. Nineteen years later, Craigslist became the cause of a widely reported and remarkable incident involving Everyday Emes. Rabbi Noach Muroff needed a desk for his home office. He found a suitable listing on Craigslist, purchased the desk and drove it home.

When Rabbi Muroff tried to squeeze the desk through his front door, he noticed that the top of the desk protruded beyond the bottom part of the desk which made it difficult to fit it through the door.

To make it fit, Rabbi Muroff unscrewed the top of the desk. Upon doing so, he found a bag behind the file drawers. Rabbi Muroff opened the bag and found \$98,000 in cash! It was past 11:00 PM but nevertheless, the Rabbi and his wife called the previous owner and told her about the found money.

Rabbi Muroff and his wife took their four children for the drive to return the money. To maximize the Kiddush Hashem, when he returned the money, he told the owner, "Both my wife and I were raised as Orthodox Jews, and this is what we were taught from a young age - to do what is right."

The incident happened in New Haven, Connecticut. Now the Rabbi and his family live in Scottsdale, Arizona. He and his wife both work at the Torah Day School of Phoenix and Rabbi Muroff is also the Associate Rabbi in an outreach shul. Both he and his wife continue to be shining examples of Torah and Everyday Emes.

This story is reminiscent of another story recorded in the Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 3) where the great Rabbi, Shimon Ben Shetach, had purchased a donkey from an Ishmaelite. His students had found a precious stone that had been obscured during the purchase, hanging around the donkey's neck. Rabbi Shimon Ben

Shetach said, “I purchased a donkey. I did not purchase a precious stone.” Upon the return of the precious stone, the Ishmaelite responded, “Blessed be Hashem, the G-d of Shimon Ben Shetach.”

The Rabbi Shimon Ben Shetach incident entered the annals of the literary oeuvre of Torah She’Baal Peh. L’Havdil, the Rabbi Muroff incident made the rounds of newspapers and internet sites across the world. Both stories are inspirational and reflective of the value of Everyday Emes. We must recall that Emes is the signet ring of the Creator Himself and being honest is a fulfillment of “Walking in His path”.

Halacha – Jewish Law

An anesthesiologist in his residency was in the middle of a labor and delivery when he heard the obstetrician call out, “Cord prolapse!” The umbilical cord was compressed, and the mother needed an emergency C-section. The anesthesiologist told the mother at the operating table, “We have to put you to sleep,” The mother cried out, “No!” Thinking that she wasn’t serious, he started to apply the black oxygen mask to inject the sodium pentothal. She responded, “No! No! I don’t want to go to sleep!” The obstetrician roared at him, “Put her to sleep! What are you waiting for?!”

The attending anesthesiologist walked in and reached for the sodium pentothal and instructed the resident to put the oxygen mask on her. The resident anesthesiologist responded that she refused consent and was therefore reluctant to place the oxygen mask on her.

All doctors sign a certification that they will follow hospital protocols and not perform procedures without consent. What should the resident anesthesiologist have done? As a hospital doctor, he certified that he would follow hospital procedures which include not performing procedures without patient consent. Is it a violation of Midvar Sheker Tirchak to put the patient to sleep when the client has clearly not consented?

Halachically, generally speaking, we do not force a

medical procedure against the will of a sick person unless we are dealing with the provision of necessary oxygen or nutrition. We are, however, obligated to make every effort to convince the person to agree to the treatment. Rav Yisroel Dovid Harfenes Shlita, one of the leading Poskim in the United States, ruled that the case above is Pikuach Nefesh and we ignore all else when it comes to Pikuach Nefesh. Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT”L ruled that when it involves serious medical matters, one may even at the outset agree to things which one may not necessarily honor later.

Mussar – Introspection

This week we continue with Chapter Two of our translation of the Chofetz Chaim’s Sefer entitled, “Sefas Tamim.”

The rest of the work (Tanna D’Bei Eliyahu 3:2-3), I have copied below.

In a similar vein, we find in the Medrash Shocher Tov (Yalkut Shimoni Noach 56) a metaphor: They came two by two to Noach. Sheker wished to enter the ark. Noach said, “You may not enter unless you take a partner.” Sheker bumped into Damage. She said to him, “Where are you coming from?” He responded, “I came from Noach and I wanted to enter the ark. He did not let me, but rather said to me, ‘If you have a partner then you may enter.’ If you wish, you can be my partner.” She said, “What will you give me?” He answered, “I conclude with you that whatever I earn, you may take.” They came to an agreement, that whatever Sheker brings in – Damage would receive. They both entered the ark. When he left, Sheker would go out and make money, but Damage would first take everything. Sheker came and said, “Where is everything that I had earned?” She responded, “Was it for nothing that we agreed that anything you bring in I get to keep!?” Sheker had nothing to answer. Therefore, the verse in Tehillim (7:15) says, “Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.”

[The essence of this metaphor is that lies perforce come with damage tagging along with them and that one who lies will always lose out.]