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On the Parsha

Rav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik ZT”L (“Reb Velvel”) raises the following question on this week’s Parsha: “The brothers bought food from Yosef in Egypt during the famine in Eretz Yisrael. Yosef detained Shimon and sent the rest of the brothers on their way back to Yaakov with a request to bring Binyamin to Egypt. Why did Yosef place the money back in the brothers’ sacks that they rightfully paid for the food that they bought?” Reb Velvel answered, “Because Yosef wanted to ensure sure that the brothers would return to Egypt.”

Someone present at Reb Velvel’s Shiur asked him, “Wouldn’t Yosef’s brothers come back to Egypt anyway? Considering the famine, their need for more food would surely cause them to return. And besides, wasn’t their brother Shimon taken captive? They would surely return to redeem him?”

Reb Velvel answered that the brothers, who were to be the future forebearers of the tribes of Israel, had an unfathomable level of faith in Hashem (Bitachon). Yosef knew this and thought that perhaps the brothers would not return to Egypt and decide to ride out the famine, using the great level of Bitachon that they had to trust that Hashem would save them. Similarly, they would use their Bitachon to trust that Hashem would bring about Shimon’s release from prison. However, Yosef was certain of the honesty and integrity of the brothers and knew one thing for sure: They would certainly come back to Egypt to return what they believed to be an ill-gotten gain. Therefore, he placed the money back in their sacks to ensure their return. (cited by Rav Shimon Schwab ZT”L).

We also find later in the Parsha (42:13-14) the following exchange: “And they [the brothers] said, ‘We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is gone.’ And Yosef said to them, ‘This is just what I have spoken to you, saying, ‘You are spies.’”

The Siach Yaakov (Rav Blau) quotes a Rashi who cites the Midrash Rabbah (91:7) and says that there was

additional dialogue between Yosef and the brothers as follows: Yosef said, “And if you were to find him [the one that was gone], and his captors would demand an extraordinarily high ransom to release him, would you pay it? They answered, “Yes.” Yosef continued, “And if his captors would respond, ‘We shall not return him for all the money in the world,’ what would you do?”

The brothers responded, “We would either kill or be killed [to get him back].”

Yosef responded, “This is what I have been telling you. You have come to kill the residents of this city. I have divined with my magic cup that two of you alone [Shimon and Levi] have destroyed the entire city of Shechem.”

The response of the brothers is rather perplexing. Why would the brothers tell the governor and ruler of Egypt what they had planned to do, “Kill or be killed?” Such a response would quite likely cause them to be further suspect in the eyes of Egypt’s governor to prove his allegation that they are, in fact, spies (and this is indeed what happened). Why did the brothers need to admit their true intentions?

The brothers were holy individuals, and the Middah of Emes permeated their very essence. Although they must have assuredly tempered their words to Yosef with, “You seem to us to be a just ruler who would not do such a thing,” they would not lie and continued with, “...but if we were to encounter such a situation, we would either kill or be killed.” The brothers felt that they had to be truthful despite the subsequent consequences that would occur with revealing their true intentions.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Many Sefarim or books have a “corrections” section at the end. In English, these pages are called an “erratum” or a “corrigendum.” An erratum is the term for a production error, an error introduced during the publishing process. A corrigendum is the term for an author's error.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT”L wrote a fascinating Sefer entitled, “Kiryas Melech.” This incredible work is a commentary on the Rambam’s Mishna Torah that specializes in finding the actual sources for his many Halachos, where neither he, nor the commentaries provide a source for the stated halacha.

For many years, Rav Chaim would keep a small notebook in his pocket and as he would travel, he would think about the possible sources of these Halachos. Each time he would discover a source for a Halacha, he would jot it down in his notebook. That notebook ultimately became the basis for the Sefer Kiryas Melech. Upon its completion, his father, the Steipler Gaon, wrote him a glowing Haskama – a letter of approbation.

The Haskama explained how, “innumerable times, my son, HaRav HaGaon suggested sources [of the Rambam’s Halachos] to me.”

After the Sefer was printed, however, the question arose that, technically, the term “innumerable” in this context may not be accurate. Although the term is bandied about by many people – there is nothing in the daily activities of people and their interactions with others that is actually “innumerable.”

Rav Chaim, therefore, included in the corrigendum – “The words ‘Ain Sefor – innumerable’ should be erased.” We see from here how exacting Rav Chaim ZT”L was in his Middas HaEmes.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I have been inspired by this

Emes Parsha sheet to try to be more honest in my daily life. However, truth be told, being honest doesn’t come easy to me. What is the best way to improve?

ANSWER: The Rambam writes that if someone has a bad Middah, he should temporarily leap to the opposite trait and then gradually move to the mean. For example, if someone is excessively haughty, he should jump to the opposite Middah and be excessively humble, and then gradually move to a golden mean. However, the Alter of Slabodka (the “Alter”) explained that not everyone succeeds with the Rambam’s method and advised that at times one

should take a more gradual, baby-step approach to changing a Middah. That is, slowly get to the proper degree of the particular Middah you are working on and plot for yourself a gradual step-by-step process to reach your goal while allocating the proper amount of time to get there.

It is uncertain if the Alter based himself on the words of the Vilna Gaon or not, but the Vilna Gaon in Mishlei (19:2-3) says the following on the words “V’Atz B’raglayim Choteh” – one who hurries with his feet makes mistakes - that the “feet” referred to here are Middos. Meaning, if one hurries with their Middos, they are making a mistake. Rather, one should take a gradual step by step approach.

Each person should approach his own Rav or Posek to determine which approach he should take, but this author would advise the course of action that would lead to more permanent results which may be the Alter’s approach. When taking the baby-step approach of the Alter, it is important to give oneself specific time frames to complete each step.

Mussar – Introspection

We continue our translation of the third chapter of the Chofetz Chaim’s “Sefas Tamim”.

“We find similarly in regard to the Olah offering of bird [See Vayikrah Rabbah 3:4], where it states (Vayikra 1:16), ‘And he shall remove its crop along with its feathers, and cast it next to the altar on the east side, to the place of the ashes.’ The bird flies off into the air and travels the entire world. It eats from all items that it steals or brazenly robs. It shall not be offered in its full onto the Mizbayach. Therefore, it states, ‘And he shall remove its crop along with its feathers.’ However, a Behaima [a domesticated animal], that eats from the trough of its master, he may offer all of it [on the Mizbeach]. This is as it states, ‘And the Kohen will bring all of it on the Mizbeach.’

This is a remarkable point. It awakens us from a long period of sleep and tells us, ‘Whoever has in his hand stolen property, should not approach the altar of Hashem, nor shall he offer up anything nor be seen before Him, but he should be distanced until he returns the stolen item.’”