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## On the Parsha

In Parshas Massai we read about the journeys of Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar (desert). It begins with the words, "These are the journeys of the children of Israel who left the land of Egypt in their legions, under the charge of Moshe and Aharon." (Bamidbar 33:1)

Later in the Parsha, we read about the following journey: "They journeyed from Dibon Gad and camped in Almon Divlasaimah." (Bamidbar 33:46)

The word "Almon" means "deprived" and the word "Divlasaimah" means "dates". The Targum Yonasan explains that the name of this town hints at the fact that Bnei Yisrael were "deprived" of the well of Miriam (where they received water in the desert from), because they left the Torah which is as sweet as the honey of "dates".

The Meforshim explain that they did not really abandon the Torah – rather, they lost their appreciation for the sweetness of Torah (see Rashi in Bava Metzia 85b where he states similarly that they did not appreciate the gift that was Torah). Due to this lack of appreciation for Torah, they lost the well of Miriam.

Rav Mordechai Chevronei ZT"l (1938-1986), the Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron in Benei Brak, connects this Targum Yonasan to the concept expressed in the words of Dovid HaMelech in Tehillim (119:163), "Falsehood – I hate and detest; Your Torah I love."

He says that Torah is the highest of all truths and a love and appreciation of Hashem's Torah increases our love of truth. This is the connection between Torah and the building of the Middah of truth that Rav Chevronei establishes from this Passuk in Tehillim – the more that one appreciates and loves the Torah, the more he will hate falsehood and love truth.

The Gemorah in Chagigah 14a states, "Rava said: Jerusalem was not destroyed until trustworthy men ceased to exist in it, as it is stated: 'Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, see now and know, and seek in its broad places, if you can find a man, if

there is any that acts justly, that seeks truth, and I will pardon her.' (Jeremiah 5:1)." The Gemorah continues to explain that in actuality, there were trustworthy men during that time, but only when they spoke words of Torah. However, they were not trustworthy and honest in business.

Rav Chavronei explains how it is possible that they were trustworthy when they spoke words of Torah but not honest in business? His answer is the same point referenced above – they did not really appreciate the Torah that they learned; therefore, they did not hate falsehood and love truth and that is why they were not honest in business. As the Gemorah explains according to Rava, had there been those who truly loved Torah and appreciated its gifts – they would have loved honesty and been honest in business and Yerushalayim would not have been destroyed.

Let us increase our love and commitment to truth by fully appreciating the gift that is Torah.

About 3,300 years ago, our entire nation experienced and witnessed divine revelation at Mount Sinai when we received the Torah. It was a monumental event and a monumental gift.

The giving of the Torah changed us and changed the world forever. For the first time in all of human history, mankind had been granted a Divine moral compass, a guide for how to best live one's life. Even more than a moral compass, Torah is life itself. We say this daily in the Birchas Krias Shema (the blessings of the Shema prayer) – "Ki Haim Chayeinu" – for Torah is our Life. The Torah guides us as to how to perfect both ourselves and our world. We pray for the final perfection of the world with the coming of Mashiach, three times a day in the Aleinu prayer, "L'Sakain Olam B'Malchus Shakkai" – to perfect the world through the kingdom of Hashem.

However, the final perfection of the world with the coming of Mashiach for which we daven for so fervently, can only come when we adhere to truth and justice. As it says in Zechariah (8:19) that with the coming of Mashiach, Hashem says that "...the fast of

the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month shall become occasions for joy and gladness, happy festivals for the House of Judah; but you must love honesty and integrity.” As discussed above, loving honesty and integrity only come about with a full appreciation of the gift that is Torah.

The Parsha of Massai always comes out during the Three Weeks (annual mourning period for the destruction of the Temple) and with it, the message that we have discussed that is tied to this week's Parsha - appreciate Torah and you will appreciate truth. As the Passuk in Zechariah tells us, we can bring Mashiach, rebuild the temple, and turn our fast days into happy festivals, but we must love honesty and integrity.

### Halacha – Jewish Law

**QUESTION:** I work at an auto repair shop. There is a practice in my shop that I find concerning. Customer A has a Honda Odyssey and is told that his car will be fixed and ready for pickup by Monday. Customer B also has a Honda Odyssey and is told that his car is supposed to be fixed and ready for pickup by Tuesday. While the repair shop is working to repair Customer A's car, Customer A calls up and asks if the shop can also replace the power window motor on the passenger side of his car and still have it ready by Monday. My boss tells Customer A that he will make the additional repair and still have the car ready by Monday.

Since there is not enough time to order the new window motor and keep his commitment to Customer A to have the car fixed on time, my boss asks me to take out the window motor on Customer B's car and install it in Customer A's car. He then instructs me to order a new window motor for installation in Customer B's car.

I told my boss that I am concerned about this unethical practice. My boss got mad at me and said that all auto repair shops engage in this practice. If my boss insists that I engage in this practice, do I have to quit my job?

**ANSWER:**

There are a number of issues here. First, there is an issue of possible theft in taking Customer B's window motor without his permission. At times, new items do

not work as well as old items, and one cannot just assume that Customer B would be amenable to it – his window motor was working fine as it is; he never asked for a new one. On the other hand, there are items where the tacit assumption might be that one would be amenable to it. A new light bulb or a car battery, for example, might very well fall into the latter category as something that we could assume that Customer B would be comfortable with even if he did not ask for it. Second, is the repairman informing Customer A that the window motor is a used part? If so, is he charging him a fair price for it?

We relayed your scenario to four Poskim (Halachic authorities). Three of them thought this practice is prohibited because it is definitely Geneivah (theft) and you should quit your job if the boss insists that you engage in it. The other Posek thought that this practice is Mechu'ar (ugly) and should not be engaged in but was uncertain if it was considered out-and-out theft and was therefore uncertain if you would need to quit your job. If it is true, as the boss says above, that this practice is rampant throughout the auto repair industry, it may be possible to rely on this more lenient view.

### Chizuk - Inspiration

**Rav Tzvi Hirsch Brody ZT"L (1865-1913)** was the Rebbe of Rav Yeruchem Levovitz ZT"L, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein ZT"L and Rav Yoseph Nenedik ZT"L, three Mussar giants in the holy Yeshiva of Kelm where they had studied. Rav Tzvi Hirsch imbued his students with strong Yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven) especially when dealing with issues of Bain Odom L'Chaveiro (appropriately treating one another).

Rav Chatzkel recalled that the nail clippers that were used in those times were not as effective as the ones that came into use in later years. Rav Tzvi Hirsch would be careful to file down the edges of his nails after he used the clippers. When asked why he did so, he replied that he often used Seforim (Jewish religious books) that were owned by others. He said that it was not in good faith to use them if, Heaven forbid, damage could come to any of them through a nick in one of his nails. Therefore, he was very careful to file down the edges of his nails so they were smooth and would not inadvertently damage the Seforim he would use.