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## On the Parsha

“You saw with your own eyes what Hashem did in the matter of baal-peor, that Hashem wiped out from among you every person who followed baal-peor; while you, who hold fast to Hashem, are all alive today.” (Devarim 4:3-4)

These Pesukim tell us that those that worshipped baal peor (an idol) were wiped out, but those “who hold fast to Hashem, are all alive”. The words “who hold fast to Hashem” are a translation of the word “הִדְבַקְתֶּם” which is the word used in the Passuk above. “הִדְבַקְתֶּם” has a deeper meaning in the Torah than what the English translation conveys. “הִדְבַקְתֶּם” really refers to a cleaving onto Hashem – a special, close relationship between Hashem and an individual. The Pesukim however, do not tell us how to achieve that special relationship, the one that spelled the difference between worshiping baal peor (death), and following Hashem (salvation). How does one achieve this close relationship with Hashem?

The Chida in his Sefer entitled, “Yoseph Tehilos” offers the following insight. The Chida explains that the words in the Passuk do indeed inform us how to achieve this relationship. It is alluded to with the word that proceeds “הִדְבַקְתֶּם” in the Passuk which is “וְאִתְּם”. If you take this word (minus the prefix “וְ”) and rearrange the letters you get “אמת” (truth). The Passuk is telling us that the way to achieve “הִדְבַקְתֶּם” that special closeness and cleaving to Hashem, is through “אמת” - by being truthful people.

It bears mentioning that the Chida also writes that the way to Teshuva (repentance) is also through truth. In his explanation of the Passuk, “You, Hashem, are near, and all Your commandments are true.” (Tehillim 119:151) he cites the Sefer Chassidim which discusses a certain evil person who approached a Gadol (a wise, pious individual) and asked him how to do Teshuvah, but not to burden him with excess requirements. The Gadol

responded to him with only one requirement: “Grab onto the Middah of truth. Agree to be honest in all of your undertakings.” The person agreed and went on his way. One day, his Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) took hold of him. He planned to steal every item from the home of a certain wealthy person. While he was on his way to commit the crime, someone asked him where he was going. Since he had agreed to tell the truth in all of his undertakings, he would have to tell the truth about what he was about to do. However, this would have caused him great embarrassment. He therefore decided that he would not steal. This repeated itself in different contexts with different sins that he wished to commit. When he contemplated to himself, “If someone were to ask me what I have done, I will have no choice but to tell the truth which will embarrass me.” Since he committed to always tell the truth he could no longer sin and he did Teshuva.

## Halacha – Jewish Law

### QUESTION:

After a long drive with no restroom in sight, I entered a Dunkin Donuts off the highway to buy a drink and to use the restroom. The bathroom was blocked with a sign that said, “Restroom is Out of Order.” When this sign is on display, it is often not the truth. The restroom is working, but for one reason or another, the management does not want customers to use it (e.g. it hasn’t been cleaned recently). May an employee put out such a sign if his employer asks him to do so? In addition, which is worse – putting out the sign (lying through the written word) or telling the customer (lying through the spoken word) that the restroom is out of order?

**ANSWER:** Tosfos in Bava Basra 94b writes clearly that the prohibition of lying also exists through the written word. This ruling is also found in the Yad Ramah (Chapter entitled “Get Pashut”) and the Tzitz Eliezer rules this way as well. (Volume 15, Siman 12)

The Maharshah (in Bava Basra 15a) asks how it could be that Moshe Rabbeinu who wrote the Torah

could write the words “And Moshe died there...” (Devarim 34:5) – when he had not died yet. This should not be allowed because it is “Mechzei K’Shikra” - it appears to be a lie (but not an actual lie because Moshe was indeed going to die). He concludes that there were two differences that occurred when these words were written in the Torah. The first difference is that with the other words in the Torah, Hashem would tell Moshe what to write, Moshe would repeat the words and then he would write them. These words however, he did not repeat – he heard them from Hashem and then he wrote them. The second difference is that he did not write these words in ink like the other words. Rather he wrote the words with his tears. Writing with tears is not real writing because the writing is not permanent - tears are temporary and get washed away. Therefore, what Moshe did was permitted since he did not speak these words – and therefore never said anything that could have the appearance of a lie; nor did he write something that could have the appearance of a lie, because the words were written in tears. Parenthetically, Moshe wrote these words in tears because he was mourning his inability to continue to serve Hashem after his death.

Regarding whether lying through the written word is worse than lying through speech, there are some Poskim that indeed rule this way (see the Debreciner Rav in Shailos u’Teshuvos Be’er Moshe from the Ksav Yad Vol. IV (published in 2021) who quotes the Chedvas Yaakov and the Bais Efraim who rule this way). This is because lying with the written word involves a tangible “action” – taking pen to paper and writing a lie, while lying through speech is ephemeral and intangible.

Accordingly, an employee may not put out a sign that the restroom is out of order if that is not true and some Poskim (Halachic authorities) believe that it is worse than telling a customer that the restroom is out of order if that is not the truth.

In addition, there may be another element at play here. It is generally understood that people agree to pay higher prices for gas, refreshments, etc. at rest stops off the highway, for the conveniences that the

rest stops offer. This typically includes the use of a restroom. If that convenience is withheld by an untruthful claim, people may have paid the higher prices under false pretenses and the rest stop may be guilty of Gezailah (theft).

### Chizuk - Inspiration

Amsterdam Centraal Train Station is the true heart of Amsterdam. It is central not only in name, but it is also the biggest public transport transfer spot in Amsterdam, serving both visitors to Amsterdam as well as its city inhabitants.

Every day, 250,000 people go through Amsterdam Centraal Station. Local trains to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport depart every ten minutes from platform 14a and platform 15. It is also where a main Amsterdam tourist office as well as a money changing location are based.

Rav Moshe Aharon Stern ZT”L (1925-1998), the Mashgiach of Kamenetz would often arrive there along with a close acquaintance. In August of 1998, two months after the Mashgiach’s passing, his acquaintance was at the money changing location in Amsterdam Centraal Station, and the gentile woman working there recognized him as Rav Stern’s travel companion. She asked where Rav Stern was. When she heard of his passing she burst into tears.

She explained that years earlier, when she first started her job, the Rabbi came back to her after she had already changed his money and he had left the store. She was incensed. “You should have counted your currency before you left! You cannot come back now to complain!”

Rav Stern explained that he believed that she had given him far too much money in the exchange of currencies. She was so amazed at his level of integrity that she told her manager. The manager was so impressed that he announced over the loudspeaker for all to hear what the Rabbi from Israel had done.

The story is inspiring in two ways: Rav Stern’s integrity in returning the money, and the woman’s integrity in relating the story to her manager even though it could have upset her manager as it highlighted an error that she had made.