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On the Parsha

In Bereishis 3:3, the Passuk tells us that Chava told the snake that Hashem commanded them (Adam and Chava) not to touch the Aitz HaDaas (the tree of knowledge). Rashi (ibid) tells us that this was not entirely correct. Adam, according to Rashi, added to Hashem's command and told Chava that Hashem said not to touch the Aitz HaDaas as a protective measure, to help ensure that Chava would not eat from it which was Hashem's actual command. Chava's assumption was that the reason Hashem had commanded them not to touch it was because it had contained something poisonous to the touch (See Sifsei Chachamim to 3:4). Rashi then explains that the snake pushed her into the Aitz HaDaas and said, "Just as you did not die by touching it, so you will not die by eating it." It was at this point that she concluded that Hashem was not being truthful as to the consequences of touching or eating from the Eitz HaDaas and so she ate from its fruit.

The question is, why didn't she realize that it was her assumption that could be wrong? Perhaps the reason why Hashem said not to touch it was not because it was poisonous to the touch or perhaps, it was only poisonous to the touch if one touched it intentionally (and not by being pushed into the tree as the snake had done to her)?

The answer lies in the idea that no one wants to be wrong. We are imbued with a profound love of ourselves and a high degree of Gaavah (hubris). These two factors combine to lead us to distort truths – and sometimes with devastating consequences. Since Chava did not consider that her assumption about the Aitz HaDaas could be wrong, she ate from its fruit and a different reality for mankind took hold – if it wasn't for Chava's sin, we would have lived in the Garden of

Eden forever. What we can learn from Chava is the need to temper the self-love and the hubris that we all have and concede that our assumptions and perceptions can be mistaken. That will lead us to better decision making and will lead us to live life more honestly and responsibly.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: A Shadchan (matchmaker) wanted to set up a date between a taller woman and a shorter man. The Shadchan wanted to buy the man elevator shoes because he could not afford them himself. This would make the man appear taller and ensure that the taller woman would not be put off by the shorter man's appearance. The Shadchan did not wish to reveal that he would be buying the elevator shoes for the man so as not to embarrass him. He told the man that there was a G'mach (free loan society) in Lakewood for elevator shoes, and that he just needed to know the man's shoe size so he could pick the shoes up from the G'mach and bring them to him.

- 1) Was the Shadchan allowed to lie and say that he was obtaining the shoes from the G'mach when he, himself, was in fact buying the shoes for the man?
- 2) In general, what is the Halacha with regards to wearing elevator shoes on a date? Is it Geneivas Daas (a Halachically prohibited, deceptive practice) to appear taller on a date?
- 3) Also, is there a difference between men and women on a date in this regard? It seems that generally, people know when women are wearing elevator shoes (e.g. high heels), however it is relatively easy to fool people when men are wearing elevator shoes.

ANSWER: Regarding question 1) the Shadchan was permitted to say that there was a G'mach in Lakewood for these situations to avoid embarrassing the young man who could not afford the shoes on his own. As for the other questions, we reached out to contemporary Poskim (Halachic authorities) for responses. Before we share them, let us take a look at some classical commentaries on a relevant Gemorah.

The Gemorah in Yevamos (45a) discusses a young man that came from a Kosher, but questionable lineage. He was having trouble finding a suitable marriage partner because many were hesitant to date him. He asked Rav Yehudah what to do about his difficult situation. Rav Yehudah told him to go seek a marriage partner in a place where no one knew about him and his questionable lineage. The question arises as to how Rav Yehudah could have given him this advice that would seem to be Geneivas Daas?

We find the following answers cited by Rav Yaakov Unsdorfer from Montreal in his Olalei Yaakov Vol. III:

1. Many Poskim are of the opinion that when there is no monetary matter involved, the prohibition of Geneivas Daas is of Rabbinic origin. In order to fulfill the Mitzvah of Pru U'Rvu (the commandment to have children, a primary aim of marriage) the Chasam Sofer (Yevamos 45a "Dekulo Amorai") writes that a measure of Geneivas Daas is permitted.
2. The Steipler Gaon, writes that Chazal never enacted the prohibition of Geneivas Daas when it comes to Pru U'Rvu so a measure of Geneivas Daas is permitted (See Kihilas Yaakov Siman 44 "V'Gam Efshar").
3. Rav Yoseph Chaim Sonnenfeld in his Salmas Chaim (Siman 242) writes that from the woman's perspective [perhaps at that time] the woman wishes to be married so much, that as long as others cannot recognize the fault, a measure of Geneivas Daas would be permitted to conceal the fault.

Applying the opinions above to the question of whether one may wear elevator shoes on a date - according to the Chasam Sofer, it would be permitted

as one goes on a date for marriage purposes and to fulfill the commandment of Pru U'Rvu, a primary aim of marriage. As we stated above, the Chasam Sofer writes that for Pru U'Rvu, a measure of Geneivas Daas is permitted. According to the Steipler Gaon, it would also seem to be permitted. According to Rav Yoseph Chaim Sonnenfeld, however, it would be forbidden, since everyone will recognize that the man is shorter when he is not wearing his elevator shoes.

What do the contemporary Poskim rule? Rav Yisroel Dovid Harfenes Shlita ruled that it is permitted. Rav Hershel Ausch Shlita forbids it for men but permits it for women. He permits it for women because elevator shoes are readily detectable for women (e.g. high heels). However, when men wear elevator shoes, it is not readily detectable and therefore not permitted.

Chizuk - Inspiration

There was once a wealthy Hassidic Jew in the town of Yanovitz in Poland. From his youth, however, he had a bad habit of telling tall tales. After a period of time, he came to regret his behavior and resolved to try and change his ways. He took it upon himself that for every untruth he told, he would give 25 rubles to Tzedakah (charity).

In that Hassid's home, there was a Melamed (a tutor for Torah studies) that earned a meager living through his tutoring. When the Melamed heard the words of the wealthy Hassid, he told him, "In my humble opinion, from this point onward, it is permitted for you to lie. Why is this so? Because through your frequent lying, you will be giving 25 rubles many times over and take the Mitzvah of Tzedakah to enormous heights!"

A while later, the Melamed entered the Hasidic court of Reb Shmuel, the son of the Tzemach Tzedek. He confidently related to Reb Shmuel what he had told the wealthy Hassid who was trying to change his ways. When Reb Shmuel heard what the Melamed said, he cried out, "Even if a person would fulfill many Mitzvos and acts of Chessed (kindness) – there is no Heter (Halachic dispensation) to allow a lie to come out of one's mouth!"