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Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I work in a catering hall and I am often told by the caterer to announce that the Chosson and Kallah have requested that everyone should silence their cell phones during the Chuppah. However, I know this to be untrue and that the caterer just wants me to say this as he believes it is the most effective way to get people to listen. Even though I know it is a lie, may I make the announcement, nonetheless?

ANSWER: I agree with your assertion that generally, Chossons and Kallahs do not make this request. Since the lie does not regard any monetary issues, Rav Elyashiv ZT”L would say that it is a Rabbinic prohibition (as stated in the Sheker section of Piskei HaGrish Choshain Mishpat). The Chofetz Chaim implies in Sefer Chofetz Chaim that it is a Torah prohibition. Regardless, the Gemorah in Yevamos 65b tells us that, “Mutar Leshanos Mipnei HaShalom” – it is permitted to lie to keep the peace. Lying to keep the peace may only be done occasionally, according to Rav Yavrov ZT”L in his Niv Sfasayim Section II (#5 and #6), because if done regularly, we may be unintentionally training ourselves to lie.

Applying this concept to your situation, if there is a strong chance that those at the Chuppah would take issue with the phone ringing during the Chuppah, then it is permitted to make the announcement, assuming there is no other way to get people to listen. However, making the following announcement, which is not a lie, would also get people to listen. Therefore, this is the announcement that you must make instead: “In deference to the honor of the Chosson and Kallah, please make sure to silence your cell phones.”

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rabbi Moshe Sherer Z”L (1921-1998) was a remarkable individual whose skills and abilities helped shape the Torah world in America, as we know it today. His selfless devotion to Bnei Yisrael and to Agudas Yisrael of America fashioned the organization into a champion of Torah values, respected by the highest offices of

American government for its influence and integrity. In addition, Rabbi Sherer was also known as a man who personified integrity. He would often help individuals who faced difficulties and challenges and he would never accept any remuneration for his assistance.

There was an individual who wanted to obtain an export license from a foreign country to bring goods into America. Rabbi Sherer helped him contact the right person in Washington D.C. to assist him. The individual received his export license and was very grateful. The man asked how he could show his appreciation to Rabbi Sherer. He responded that he did not need or want anything for his assistance. Suspecting that the man may donate more than he had in the past to Agudas Yisrael to show his gratitude, he added emphatically that he would be checking the books of Agudas Yisrael and if he discovered that the man gave a penny more than he had given last year, he would return the difference. (As cited in the summer issue of The Jewish Observer - 1998)

On the Parsha

“You shall observe My statutes - You shall not crossbreed your livestock with different species. You shall not sow your field with a mixture of seeds, and a garment which has a mixture of Shaatnez shall not come upon you.” (Vayikrah 19:19)

There is a fundamental debate between Rashi and the Ramban on what Hashem’s, “statutes” represent. Rashi believes that all the statutes (Chukim) mentioned in the

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Torah refer to the decrees of the Divine King, which have no rationale that a human being can comprehend.

The Ramban argues and says that only the prohibition of Shatnez (wearing wool and linen together) should be understood this way. However, other Chukim mentioned in the Torah should be taken as laws that may have reasons that some people can understand, however they are given without reasons nonetheless, so that they will be observed out of a sense of awe and fear of Hashem.

The Ramban then provides the reason for the prohibition of crossbreeding different species and mixing seeds (Kilayim). He says that it is for the sake of preserving the species and that one who combines two different species changes and defies the work of Creation. It is as if he is thinking that Hashem has not completely perfected the world and he desires to help the creation of the world by adding new kinds of creatures. However, if Hashem would have given this reason, some people may have found fault with this reason due to mistaken impressions (e.g. he may see the waning of the population of certain species) and therefore conclude that the reason is faulty and that the Torah itself is lacking or wanting.

The Ramban appears to be saying that a person's Yetzer HaRah (evil inclination) would tell him that Hashem's Torah is lacking because of a mistaken impression. How is it possible that one would come to question the integrity of the Torah from not understanding one of the reasons given for a commandment? Namely, instead of believing that the reason for Kilayim is wrong, one should rather believe that his impression is mistaken or perhaps he does not fully understand the reason of the Creator?

It is obvious to every intelligent individual the depth of understanding of the Creator, and that there are unfathomable things that He has created that may never be understood. Examples abound! How and why does the sun generate its periodically reversing large-scale magnetic field? What is dark matter and what is its origin? How exactly does the trigeminal nerve in birds, combined with the metal in their beaks, allow them to orient themselves? And just as these unfathomable things exist in the physical world, they should surely exist in the spiritual world regarding the reasons for Mitzvos in the Torah!

We must conclude that a person certainly knows and understands that Hashem's knowledge is above his own. He surely knows that his own intellect cannot understand the knowledge of Hashem. Yet, his faith may be impaired when he does not understand. The explanation is that he feels in his heart that there cannot be a deficiency within his own intellect. Rather than admit to himself that he is wrong or that his intellect is limited, he concludes that the reason in the Torah is wrong, Heaven forbid.

It goes without saying that a person may have trouble admitting that he is wrong when he is corrected by his friends, family or Rav. Accordingly, to be able to serve Hashem properly, we must humble ourselves and admit when we make mistakes to be able to rectify them and serve Hashem properly.

Mussar – Introspection

This week we begin translating the Chofetz Chaim's sefer entitled, "Sfas Tamim." Sefas Tamim, from which our foundation takes its name, focuses on the importance of honesty in word and deed. We begin with Chapter One – Defining Deceit.

"Deceit is defined as all speech that man makes with the intent of misleading another, including all matters of fraud and financial abuse in trade and in partnerships. Even if, within a lie, there is no actual damage or loss, but a possibility of bringing about damage or harm [it is still forbidden]. An example is one who misleads another so that he will further trust him, since he likes him or is his trusted friend. His intent is so that he will trust him and not be wary of him so he can eventually take advantage of him. This is also a serious sin.

One who does so is of those whom Hashem hates. As our Sages have said (Psachim 113b): There are three [groups of people] who the Holy One Blessed be He hates, and one of them is one who speaks one way through his mouth and another way in his heart."

*"May I back out of a school carpool that I have already committed to?"
"Should I report a co-worker who is acting dishonestly?"*

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