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Chizuk - Inspiration

Quite often, we do not see the truth because we do not have the right perspective. If we change our “glasses” then we can see the truth more clearly. Rav Shlomo Kluger ZT”L (1785-1869), the Rebbe of the Beis HaLevi, was a strong advocate of eliminating negative perspectives and biases that could obscure the truth. This would include recognizing the truth and appreciating Hashem’s kindness. He once asked a question regarding the Beracha in Shmoneh Esreh, “Barech Aleinu”. In this Bracha, we ask Hashem to bless this year, “for the good”. This Beracha is well understood when it is said in Shmoneh Esreh throughout the year. However, what about when we say this Beracha during the last Shmoneh Esreh of the year on the eve of Rosh HaShana? What “good” could possibly happen as the last moments of the year ebb away? For example, is there enough time left in the year for our crops in the field to suddenly grow or for us to suddenly get a raise at work?

Rav Kluger answers that during this last Shmoneh Esreh of the year, we daven to Hashem for a change in our own perspective. At this time, we pray that Hashem should *make us see* that the year was good – to truthfully see and appreciate all of the blessings that Hashem has given us throughout the year. Rav Kluger further notes that this explanation can apply when we say Barech Aleinu in Shmoneh Esreh at any time during the year - “Hashem, please *make us see* that the year we are having is for the good!”

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I am concerned about identity theft. Often, identity thieves obtain an individual’s name and home address and from there, begin the process of stealing an identity. Accordingly, am I allowed to create a fake home address and use it whenever I encounter a person who I need to do business with, but I suspect nonetheless? I would then work out a process with my mailman to have the mail delivered from my fake address to me.

ANSWER: I am not certain exactly how you work this out with your mailman, but assuming that you can, it would appear that you would be permitted to do this. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 153:3) rules that if a suspicious individual asks you how far you are travelling you can lie about the distance, to throw him off your trail so to speak. The Shulchan Aruch bases its ruling on the Gemorah in Avodah Zarah 25b, that cites Yaakov Avinu who told the evil Eisav, that he was traveling to “Seir” when he was really traveling to “Succos”. The Shulchan Aruch rules this way, even though there are two other Gemorahs (Bava Metziah 23b and Chulin 127a) that seem to conclude otherwise (according to some commentaries).

Therefore, as it relates to your case, if you have reasonable suspicions about an individual, you would be allowed to tell him that you live at an address you fabricated, the same way Yaakov fabricated where he was going to Eisav.

On the Parsha

Jamie R. Mill, 50, from Alabama is the next person on death row in the United States of America. He was found guilty of robbery and murder. He is scheduled to die by lethal injection on May 30th of this year.

Bryan Shawn Smith, 37, also from Alabama, was convicted of multiple felony and misdemeanor offenses, including assaulting law enforcement during the Jan. 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol. Smith’s actions and the

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actions of others disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress convened to ascertain and count the electoral votes related to the 2020 presidential election.

The aforementioned, are not being held in the same jail cell. This week's Parsha also discusses criminals who were not held in the same cell.

“And they left him [the person who cursed Hashem] under guard...” (Vayikra 24:12)

Rashi explains why the Passuk says, “left him under guard” when it should have used more conventional terms which would be, “placed him under guard.” The term, “left him” indicates that there is more to explain. Rashi explains that Bnei Yisrael, “left him” alone and did not want to place the one that cursed Hashem (the “Curser”) in the same cell as the one who gathered stones on Shabbos (the “Gatherer”). Both incidents happened at the same time, however, the Bnei Yisrael knew what the penalty was for desecrating the Shabbos (death). However, regarding the Curser, the Bnei Yisrael did not know how he was to be punished.

A brief look at the Sifsei Chachomim, one of the super-commentaries on Rashi, explains Rashi further. If the Curser had been placed in the same jail cell as the Gatherer, the Curser may have assumed that he was to meet the same end as the Gatherer. This may have caused him unnecessary, excess anxiety, as his fate was still unknown. This would be an act of injustice.

Being truthful is not limited to avoiding lying and deceptive behavior. Being truthful also means being just and fair-minded. The Torah's concept of punishment is intended to help deter further crime (“Lema'an Yishme'u V'yira'u” – so that others will listen and hear (and be deterred)). It is also to mete out justice to those who have committed a crime.

However, Bnei Yisrael is commanded to mete out justice very precisely. Any amount of excessive punishment is an act of injustice and must be avoided. We see from the above, that even to cause the Curser unnecessary, excess anxiety is an injustice and not permitted.

This sensitivity is even more astonishing when we look at the words of the Da'as Zekainim miBaalei HaTosfos. They ask why the Bnai Yisroel did not draw a Kal VaChomer, a fortiori argument, from the punishment meted out to the one who curses his parents. In that

case, the Torah specifically states that such an individual incurs the death penalty. The argument could have gone as follows: If someone that curses a parent incurs the death penalty, all the more so, one who curses Hashem (Heaven forbid) would incur the death penalty. The Daas Zekainim explain that the Bnei Yisrael did not entertain this argument because they reasoned that the Curser did something so bad that he may even be denied the atonement that the death penalty would provide – in short, death would be too good for him. And yet, even when dealing with such an evil person, we still must be concerned with the unnecessary, excessive anxiety that we may be causing him, by placing him in the same cell as the Gatherer.

Mussar – Introspection

We continue with Chapter One of our translation of the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer entitled, “Sfas Tamim.”

“One who does so (deceives another) is of those whom Hashem hates. As our Sages have said (Pesachim 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. Furthermore, the Holy One Blessed be He avenges against him on account of this evil trait. As it states in Yirmiyahu (9:7), “One speaks to his fellow in friendship, but lays an ambush for him in his heart.” The Passuk further relates, “Shall I not punish them for such deeds - says Hashem - on such a nation as this shall I not bring retribution?”

On these matters, the punishment is on two things: On the lie and the damage contained within it. For the lie, aside from the damage aspect of it, it is also an abomination before Hashem, as its states in Mishlei (12:22), “Lying speech is an abomination to Hashem, but those who act faithfully please Him.” And certainly, he that cunningly plans to damage and harm another.”

“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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