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Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

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## On The Parsha

"We will build sheep pens for our livestock here, and cities for our children." (BaMidbar 32:16)

The tribes of Gad and Reuven ("Tribes") were certainly on a high spiritual level. They were part of the Dor De'ah, the generation that left Egypt and saw Hashem's numerous miracles - the greatest generation that ever lived. And yet, on a subtle level, the Tribes were driven by an apparent drive for material possessions. After having arrived at land that was directly east of the land of Israel, they noted its fertile quality and expressed a desire to settle there instead of Israel, to benefit their flocks. Additionally, Moshe, at first, suspected that they wished to stay there and let their brethren continue on to battle alone for the land of Israel, and he accused them of such.

The Tribes clarified their position as follows, "We will build sheep pens for our livestock here and towns for our children. Then we will go quickly at the very head of the army and fight until the land is conquered and apportioned. Only then will we return to our homes."

Moshe agreed to their request. He responded, "Build cities for your children and sheep pens for your flocks, but do what you have promised." (BaMidbar 32:24)

Notice in his response to the Tribes, Moshe emphasized the importance of their children's safety and future before their material possessions, reversing the order of the Tribes request. He first urged them to build "towns for your children," and then, and only then, to build "pens for your sheep."

The Ksav Sofer questions the last part of the verse, "... but do what you have promised." Why did Moshe find it necessary to tell them to keep their promise. If the Tribes already said they would fight with their brethren to conquer the land of Israel, why did Moshe feel the need to press the matter further and adjure them to keep their word?

The Ksav Sofer answers that those who do not have their priorities straight and over emphasize the value of their material possessions are often not to be trusted to keep their word. The drive for money can blind them. Therefore,

Moshe felt they needed additional encouragement to keep their commitment.

Returning to the matter of Moshe reversing the order of the Tribes request, it is interesting to note the opportunity that Moshe provided to the Tribes to correct their perspective.

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 16) explains the idea of, "Achar HaP'ulos Nimshachim Halevavos – the hearts follow the implementation of actions." This idea is also found in Chapter 23 of the Mesilas Yesharim – that the actions that a person takes outwardly, slowly but surely, affect how they feel inwardly.

Moshe instructed them to provide for their children first, and then for their possessions. By complying with Moshe's instructions, they would be taking an outward concrete action which would affect how they would feel on the inside and would change their perception about what really should come first.

This is the model that we must follow to help ensure that we follow in the ways of Hashem – that to perceive and feel the right things inwardly, we must take the right actions outwardly.

Lofty concepts and ideas are not enough – they must be accompanied by actions to develop and imbed them into our hearts and minds.

The prophets of Israel speak of the noble ideals of universal peace, brotherhood, seeking truth and justice, and walking humbly before Hashem. However, this is insufficient. Judaism requires that these noble ideas be solidified internally within us through external actions such as through the performance of Mitzvos.

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## Halacha – Jewish Law

**QUESTION:** My son is on a trip overseas. He has inquired about his grandfather's health. The truth is that he was in poor health, and he recently passed away. We had the Levayah (funeral) and did not tell him. Telling him now will only ruin his trip and there is nothing he can really do about it anyway. However, I know that when he eventually finds out, he will be angry at me for not telling him. What should I do?

**ANSWER:** This is a very good question, and it may be that the answer provided here should be taken as advice on a possible course of action rather than strict Halacha. If your son is the type of person who, when he finds out on his own, will be angry at you for (perhaps 2) weeks or more for not telling him, then you should tell him the truth at this time, even if it may ruin his trip. This is because one is not allowed to cause the wrongdoing of another. In this case, when he finds out on his own, you will be causing him to be angry at you, the parent, for a significant period of time and being angry at a parent could be an abdication of the Mitzvah of Kibud Av V'Eim (honoring one's parents).

However, if your son will be angry at you for less time, then the overall benefit of not having him ruin his trip outweighs the short amount of time that he would be angry at you when he eventually finds out on his own. However, this assumes that you would forgive him for being angry at you. If your son will be completely understanding (i.e. he won't be angry at all) if you do not tell him and he finds out on his own, then it is a Mitzvah not to tell your son about his grandfather's death and thereby save him from unnecessary pain.

(The rulings of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach cited in Shalmei Mo'ed, page 536, and that are orally known to this author, are in line with these parameters.)

## Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Binyomin Steinberg Z"l was a remarkable Torah educator who served as the Menahel (principal) of the Bais Yaakov in Baltimore for many decades. He was able to imbue in his students a remarkable dedication to life-long integrity and a love of Torah Judaism. There is no question that the city of Baltimore has been remarkably affected by this one individual. His actions and thoughts have made an indelible impression on the city.

On one occasion, he revealed to his students what it was that caused him to dedicate his life to the service of Bnei Yisrael. He remarked, "I was a child in Shanghai, China, having escaped the inferno that was Nazi Germany. We had

no toys, no clothing and no food. We had nothing. And then, there arrived care packages from Torah Jews in the United States. These people had so generously devoted their time and money to prepare these loving care packages for us - perfect strangers halfway around the world. Their kindness had a profound effect on me. I felt that there was a certain integrity at play here – I would only permit myself to benefit from these care packages if I too would be willing to care for Bnei Yisrael with similar devotion.

## Mussar – Introspection

This week we continue with 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 continue to translate Chapter 1, "Defining Deceit".

"Also, even if within the framework of the speaker's deceit he isn't actually stealing anything from his fellow Jew that was not already his, and there is no element of extortion, but the speaker wants a future "good" that is intended for his fellow Jew, and thus the speaker stalks him to take it for himself with his lying words, or the speaker uses his lies to cause his fellow Jew to give him something intended for someone else, this too is considered 'deceitful'. In so doing the essential punishment he will receive is for the lie, but here his punishment is amplified since he caused, 'bad' to someone else.

How hateful and disgusting is this character trait (Mirmah – deceit) before HaKadosh Boruch Hu? That He withdraws His providence from this person, as the verse states (Tehillim 101:7) 'Those who deceive will not sit in the midst of My house.' Chazal have illustrated this concept with the following parable: 'A king proclaimed throughout his entire country, "Whoever is not loyal to my monarchy must leave this country and if not, his head will be severed from his body."' In a comparable sense, this is what HaKadosh Boruch Hu said, 'Whoever has a passion for lying is not fit to exist in My universe, since I have created the universe with 'truth'. For without truth, the universe cannot continue to exist, and lies cannot coexist with truth."

*"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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