

The Emes Parsha Sheet

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Chizuk - Inspiration

It was Friday night on the Shabbos before Tisha B'Av and the congregation was in a somber mood. The Chazan (prayer leader) had a beautiful voice; however, the congregation was not able to appreciate it. They were too anxious and scared for their brothers and sisters in Israel. Iran had threatened to attack Israel as revenge for Israel's assassination of the political head of Hamas on Iranian soil.

The mood continued through Kabalas Shabbos (prayers said on Friday night to greet the Shabbos) and through most of the Lechah Dodi prayer until the following happened. Towards the end of Lechah Dodi, the Chazan decided to change the tune that he was singing the prayer to and with that, he changed the congregation's mood. The tune that the Chazan now used was the same tune commonly used when singing the verse:

"Utzu Aitzah Vesufar; Dabru Davar Velo Yaku; Ki Imanu Kel -- Hatch a plot, it shall be foiled; Agree on action, it shall not succeed; for Hashem is with us!" (Isaiah 8:10)

Sensing the connection to the tune now used by the Chazan and the meaning of the above verse to which it is traditionally sung, the congregants became inspired and their mood brightened. At the conclusion of the davening, the Rabbi approached the Chazan and commended him for switching tunes. "Infusing the Lecha Dodi with the thought that Iran and other enemies plan our demise, but Hashem will save us, was a brilliant act!" remarked the Rabbi.

Instead of taking credit for something he did not do nor have in mind, the Chazan responded honestly in a simple act of "Everyday Emes". He admitted, "In full disclosure, I did not have this intention in mind, nor did I know that this tune was generally associated with the uplifting words that you mentioned. I just thought that it was a beautiful niggun (tune)."

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: One of the more successful supermarkets in Boro Park is, "KRM Kollel Supermarket." This is a Jewish-owned supermarket that has earned a

reputation for its no frills, deep discount pricing. A few blocks away, near the edge of this heavily Jewish neighborhood is a gentile-owned shoe store named, "Kollel Shoes" (not to be confused with "Kollel Shoe Repair" in Williamsburg).

I paid a visit to Kollel Shoes and discovered that, store name notwithstanding, Kollel Shoes is not a Jewish-owned store. It would appear that the owners wanted to make it seem as if the store was Jewish-owned and when they saw the success of the KRM Kollel Supermarket, decided to use the term, "Kollel" in their store name in the hopes that it would bring them similar success. I am wondering whether this is a violation of Genaivas Daas (prohibition of deception). If it is, is there anything I should do about it?

ANSWER: We tried locating the shoe store you referenced but were not successful. However, we were able to verify that such a business did exist a few years ago. But on to your question. The Chashukei Chemed on Kesuvos 15b cites the Gemorah in Chulin 94a, which tells us that it is forbidden to mislead a Gentile. The same prohibition applies in reverse, according to Rabbi Shimon Sofer, author of the Hisorerus Teshuvah and grandson of the Chasam Sofer (see Vol. I Siman 118) – gentiles are commanded not to steal and included in this prohibition, is misleading customers. Although the concept of Arvus (meaning that Jews share a mutual responsibility to ensure that each Jew is doing the right thing) does not apply to a Gentile, it seems that if it would not cause any anti-Semitism, one should nicely try to uphold the eternal value of honesty by convincing the owner that it is not ideal to mislead the public – especially in a case where it may cause damage to others (see Ramah responsa #10).

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On The Parsha

It was one of the highest-profile crime stories of the early 1990s.

Gregg Smart, an insurance agent, was found dead in his New Hampshire condo on May 1, 1990. The 24-year-old man had been murdered.

The police investigation soon zeroed in on his wife, Pamela. She was a 22-year-old media coordinator at a nearby school, and she had been having an affair with a student, William "Billy" Flynn.

Flynn ultimately admitted that he committed the crime but maintained that the crime was committed at the direction of Mrs. Smart. He said that she had told him, that she would completely end the affair if he did not kill her husband. Billy was caught up in his desire for Mrs. Smart and did the unthinkable.

There would appear to be a parallel to be found in this week's Parsha. In this week's parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu warns Bnei Yisrael not to be blinded to the potentially devastating consequences that can come with rationalizations and faulty thinking. He says, "Do not add to the word which I command you, nor diminish from it, to observe the commandments of Hashem which I command you. Your eyes have seen what Hashem did with Ba'al Peor, for every man who went after Ba'al Peor, Hashem has exterminated from your midst." (Devarim 4:2-3).

Ba'al Peor was an idol that the Moabites worshiped. The Moabite women enticed Jewish men to worship the idol by seducing them, and right before they were to have marital relations, the women would say, "If you want to continue, you just need to serve this idol."

The Seforno says that the Torah testifies that Bnei Yisrael's first sin was to engage in promiscuous behavior with the Moabite women. (BaMidbar 25:1) Once they were filled with desire, that led to idol worship. When referring to the idolatrous women of the nations that populated Israel prior to being conquered by Bnei Yisrael, the Torah states that marriage with these women will lead to idol worship (Shemos 34:16).

However, every Israelite who indulged his lust for a Moabite girl likely rationalized to himself that he was immune to the Torah's warning. This had devastating consequences as there were 24,000 people who ended up serving Ba'al Peor and Hashem wiped out every single one of them.

How could this be? Were they not the Dor De'ah - the greatest generation that ever lived? How could they have fallen so deeply into this abyss? They fell the way they did, because they were caught up in desire, and once that happened, even idolatry was possible.

And this is what Moshe is warning Bnei Yisrael about when he warns them as referenced above, to remember what happened with Ba'al Peor. His warning to them, and by extension to us is, "Do not rationalize and say to yourself that it won't happen to you. Stay away from indulging your desire, because once it takes hold, virtually anything is possible."

Indeed, the Seforno says that even Shlomo HaMelech thought that he would not sin by marrying many wives, even though the Torah specifically forbade it. At the end of it all, he did come to sin as his many idolatrous wives continued to serve their idols, which introduced idol worship back into Israel which had devastating repercussions.

The Torah and Shulchan Aruch have given us boundaries and protective fences to ensure that we remain on the straight and narrow. There is the directive in the Shema not to be led astray by following the desires of our eyes and hearts. There is a prohibition of Yichud (the requirement for a man and woman who are not married to each other, to not seclude themselves with each other). But all this is not enough. We also need to see a vivid example of what can and indeed did happen, to those who thought that it would not happen to them. That is why Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael and by extension us, to remember what happened with Ba'al Peor.

(It would be remiss of us to not mention the ready applicability of this lesson to internet access. Some of us may think that we will not fall prey to the dangers of the internet. However, human frailty being what it is, some of us have succumbed, Heaven forbid.)

*"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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