



Volume V Issue #5

Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Parshas Chayei Sarah, 22 Cheshvan, 5785

November 23, 2024

– Sponsored anonymously for the Refuah Shleimah of Yair Nissan Ben Sara –

## On The Parsha

"Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places." (Bereishis 23:6)

The Midrash Tanchuma says (Behar 1): "Be not alarmed by a man of evil eye." (Mishlei 28:22) This [verse] refers to Ephron the Hittite. When Sarah died, Avraham went to Ephron to purchase the cave from him. Avraham said to Ephron, 'Give me its value.' Ephron replied, 'The land is worth four hundred Shekels of silver, between me and you, what is it?' Avraham began to weigh out the silver to Ephron, as it is said, 'And Avraham listened to Ephron, and Avraham weighed out [the silver] to Ephron.'

Ben Maara said, although Rabbi Chanina said that all Shekels mentioned in the Torah are Sela'im (regular Shekels), [that is true] except for these which are Kentorin (i.e. heavier Shekels). Avraham passed four hundred Kentorin before Ephron. When Ephron saw the [heavier and more valuable] silver, he became enamored and flustered, and said, 'In the choice of the land we will bury your dead.'

The Holy One Blessed be He said, 'You were overly enamored about money? By your life, you will have a deficiency in this matter (your misbehavior will be noted).' And what was [the noted] deficiency? Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi bar Shalom said, 'Every [mention of] the name of 'Ephron' is spelled correctly, until he took the silver from Avraham... [where the verse] is [written] deficiently, 'And Avraham weighed out to Ephron' is written without the [Hebrew] letter "Vav."'

According to the Midrash above, Ephron became overly enamored with the heavier, more valuable Shekels and therefore suggested to Avraham that he could choose the best burial place for Sarah. Due to his reaction, Ephron was punished, and his name was written in the Torah deficiently, without a "Vav".

One may ask, what did Ephron do wrong? On the contrary, he seemed to have had an appropriate reaction to the heavier Shekels, he told Avraham that he would be given the best burial place for Sarah!

Rav Henschel Leibowitz ZT"l explains that it is clear from this

Midrash that the very fact that Ephron was overly enamored by the heavier, more valuable Shekels was in and of itself the transgression, even if it did not lead to an inappropriate reaction. This is because Hashem wants people to pursue spirituality and not have minds that are overly distracted with materialism.

Ephron's role in the world was to work on himself spiritually, and not to become unduly distracted by materialism. Therefore, his enthrallment with the heavier, more valuable Shekels was considered a transgression.

The lesson of Ephron teaches us that even a moment of being overly distracted by material concerns, even if nothing inappropriate follows that moment, is still a matter of concern. In our modern world, we must be especially vigilant against this tendency, as we are surrounded by unprecedented material abundance and constant invitations to consume. Each time we allow ourselves to be enamored with or overly concerned with material wealth, we, like Ephron, risk having our spiritual names written "deficiently."

## Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: It is often the case, that doctors will alter their medical case descriptions, omitting or adding details to make their cases more interesting to increase the chances of getting published in medical journals. They do this because the more they are cited in medical journals, the higher their "FWCI" and "H-Index" metrics are, which increases their chances of being hired to lucrative, high-profile roles in prestigious hospitals. The medical editors of these journals can often identify when a medical case description has been altered in such a manner. May a medical editor publish these altered cases or does this violate the prohibition against deception?

ANSWER: There is an excellent responsum from the Tzitz Eliezer (15:12) regarding publishing altered medical studies. He concludes that the prohibition of "distance yourself from a word of falsehood" applies to the spoken "word" and the written "word" (and even in informal writing). See the Yad

Rama in Bava Basra, page 172A, "Amar Lehu Rav L'Safrei" (section 8) who agrees with this view. This is also the view of Tosafos in Bava Basra, page 94B, "Hachi Hashta".

However, there may be room for discussion regarding lying in writing when there is no harm or financial loss that occurs because of it, which may be the case here. The Tzitz Eliezer brings a debate between various authorities as to the severity of this type of lying. Regardless, the medical editor should always add a disclaimer that says that some details of the medical case have been altered for purposes of anonymity and other reasons.

### Chizuk - Inspiration

Rabbonim (Rabbis) are often called to be de facto marriage counselors and mediate matters between husband and wife. A certain couple in Israel had Shalom Bayis issues (marital discord) between them. Each spouse would criticize the other for some failing – real or exaggerated. The husband or wife would justify his or her criticism by saying, "I am just being honest." This would typically prompt the other to say, "Well, once we are being honest, let me just mention that YOU always... And I, too, am just being honest."

The Shalom Bayis issues escalated to the point where the couple approached a famous Rav to arrange for a Get (a divorce).

The Rav requested that before they get divorced, they first commit to follow his advice for the next thirty days. After obtaining their commitment, he made the following inquiry to each of them, "In each of your 'honest' assessments of each other, have you ever made an honest *positive* assessment of your spouse?"

The Rav's question was met with silence.

"If not," he continued, "this is not honesty, it is falsehood. For example, antisemitism in publishing is not always about publishing false information about Jewish people. It is also about an imbalance in what is published - where only negative stories about Jews are "fit to print". When a newspaper publishes negative stories about Jews and never publishes any positive stories – this creates false impressions and constitutes a lie. When you 'honestly' criticize each other, without ever 'honestly' complementing each other, then you too are essentially lying. I know each of you well. You are remarkable people with many positive qualities and talents. My suggestion to you both is that for the next thirty days, to not to allow a criticism to leave your mouth until

you have made two honest positive assessments and have allowed 24 hours to elapse before you express an honest criticism. If you find that your sole intent for the positive assessment was just so that you may make the honest negative assessment, then let another 24 hours elapse and once again express two more positive assessments.

After thirty days, the couple's Shalom Bayis issues decreased significantly. They decided to continue this exercise for another thirty days, and then another, and then another. The Rav's advice had worked, and the couple withdrew their request for a divorce.

*Please note that in the above narrative, certain details have been altered for confidentiality purposes.*

### Mussar – Introspection

This week, we continue with translating the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer entitled, "Sefas Tamim." Sefas Tamim, from which our foundation takes its name, focuses on the importance of honesty in word and in deed. We now continue with our translation of Chapter 2, which discusses the great punishment that awaits those that are deceitful.

"And because of the many sins of society, the proliferation of lying and deceit has grown extensively in the businesses of some men who consider these sins to be permissible and they lie unhesitatingly as a matter of routine in the conduct of their business. They say to their buyers, 'I paid such and such for these goods,' or 'People have paid me such and such a price for them.' And on occasion, they will swear an oath to the lie of what they are saying. These people believe that these are clever and sharp strategies necessary for making a profit. These people say that whoever does not use these techniques, in these times will not eat bread (will go hungry). This mindset has become so pervasive that because, in our many sins, we have become a disgrace to our neighbors who commonly believe that everyone knows that some Jews are devious and lie..."

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

Call our **Emes Halacha Hotline**  
with your Everyday Emes questions at: **718-200-5462**.

To subscribe to this weekly, free newsletter or for further information about our Foundation, please visit us at [www.everydayemes.org](http://www.everydayemes.org) or contact: [info@everydayemes.org](mailto:info@everydayemes.org).