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On The Parsha

As Yaakov Avinu nears the end of his life, he makes a request of his son, Yosef: "Place your hand under my thigh and deal with me with kindness and truth; please do not bury me in Egypt." (Bereishis 47:29)

The Midrash Tanchuma (3:1) raises an intriguing question about this verse. Why does Yaakov specify to be dealt with both "kindness and truth"? Is there such a thing as "kindness and falsehood"? The Midrash explains further by offering a folk saying that reflects a false kindness: "When your friend's son dies, share his sorrow (be kind to him); but when your friend dies, cast off your sorrow."

The saying means that when one's friend loses a child, one should console that friend out of self-interest, because one day one might need that friend for consolation should one suffer a similar loss. However, when one's friend dies, there is no need to maintain the pretense of grief out of self-interest, because the friend's children will not reciprocate one's sympathy should one find themselves in a similar circumstance. This interpretation suggests that Yaakov was asking Yosef for "true" kindness - kindness that would persist even after Yaakov's death, when there would be no reason for Yosef to be kind out of self-interest as there would be no opportunity for reciprocation.

To provide additional color on what Yaakov was asking of Yosef, we offer the interpretation of the author of Marei HaBezek (Vol. I p, 221) Rav Benyamin Zev Krauss ZT"L, a distinguished 19th-century scholar who served as the Av Beis Din (Head of Halachic Court) in Debrecin and previously taught in the prestigious Ksav Sofer's Yeshiva.

Regarding the following verse in Mishlei (20:7): "A righteous person walks in his integrity; fortunate are his children after him," Rav Krauss explains the following. He says that the ultimate indicator of someone who is genuinely righteous, is whether, "his children [are fortunate] after him" – i.e. whether his righteousness is past down to his children. When parents live with authentic virtue - not merely performing good deeds for show, but embody them genuinely with

true conviction - they create a legacy that takes root in their children's hearts. Their values become a living inheritance, flourishing in the actions of future generations.

With this in mind, we have a deeper understanding of Yaakov's request. When he asks Yosef for "kindness and truth," he isn't merely seeking a promise from Yosef that he will show him true kindness even when there is no self-interested reason to do so, and he is not just giving Yosef direction about his burial location for that matter. He is asking for something more profound - evidence that his life's values have truly taken root in his son's heart. Will Yosef maintain these principles even when Yaakov is no longer present to witness them? Will Yaakov have been successful in passing these values to his own children?

Rav Krauss supports this interpretation by connecting it to a fascinating Midrash about the giving of the Torah. When Hashem asked for guarantors that Bnei Yisrael would uphold the Torah, He rejected the suggestion to have Bnei Yisrael's forefathers serve as guarantors. Only when Bnei Yisrael offered their children as guarantors did Hashem accept. Why? Because children who maintain their parents' commitment to Torah serve as living testimony to the authenticity of their parents' devotion. Their continued adherence proves that their parents' commitment wasn't merely external or superficial, but was so genuine that it could be successfully transmitted to the next generation.

This understanding deepens our understanding of Yaakov's request. His request is not just about where he wants to be buried, but about the perpetuation of a spiritual legacy. When Yaakov asks Yosef to deal with him in "kindness and truth," after he has died, he is essentially saying: "Show that you have truly internalized my values. Prove that my righteousness was genuine and authentic."

Accordingly, Yosef's careful attention to fulfilling his father's requests after his death was more than just a fulfillment of filial duty - it proved that Yaakov's values had been transmitted to Yosef and therefore served as testimony that Yaakov's righteousness was pure and genuine.

Chizuk - Inspiration

One winter evening in Vilna, Rav Yisrael Salanter ZT"l was walking home late at night after teaching at the Yeshiva. He noticed that a store's exterior rolling shutter had been left open, likely forgotten by the shopkeeper. It had started to snow quite heavily, and the precipitation was beginning to seep into the store, threatening to damage the merchandise.

Many people would have simply continued walking - after all, it was late, cold, and the shopkeeper's carelessness wasn't their responsibility. Not Rav Salanter though, he spent several hours that night carefully removing merchandise from the areas of the store that could become wet from the snow.

The next morning, when the shopkeeper arrived, he was surprised to find that his merchandise was not damaged and that a note had been left explaining what had happened, signed by Rav Salanter. As an aside, Rav Salanter left a note detailing what he had done, likely to fulfill the Halacha that if one does a kindness to his friend without him knowing, he should inform his friend that he did the kindness. This serves to foster peace and harmony within Bnei Yisrael.

What makes this story particularly notable, is that the shopkeeper was known in the community (and to Rav Salanter) as one who had previously spoken negatively of Rav Salanter and his teaching methods. Despite this personal slight, Rav Salanter chose to spend hours in the cold to protect this man's merchandise and livelihood.

When later asked about his actions, Rav Salanter simply explained that protecting another person's property is not dependent on how he treats you - it is simply the right thing to do.

This story, which is well-documented in Jewish historical accounts, exemplifies the integrity in doing what is right regardless of personal feelings or convenience. It would become a teaching moment that his students would reference for generations to come about how true ethical behavior means doing what is right even when no one is watching and there is no personal benefit to be gained.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: There is a new trend happening at the Shabbos meals of an Aufruf (at the meals eaten together with friends and family on the Shabbos before the groom is to be married). A friend of the groom will speak, and in an extremely laudatory "over-the-top" manner, tell a story of the groom's extreme kindness, generosity, etc. and then issue a retraction statement at the end where he admits that the

story was made up, "...but they don't say such stories about you and me." Even though the stories are manufactured, it still manages to add additional appreciation for the groom's character and introduces a touch of harmless levity into the atmosphere as well.

Recently, after such a story was told, things took an unexpected turn. A story such as the following was relayed: "Shloimy (the groom) has such a good heart, that once, he was driving during the pouring rain, and he saw an older woman with a shopping cart. He stopped his car and had her sit in his warm car, while he carefully put her bags in his trunk and folded up her shopping cart. He then drove her home and brought up the packages himself so that she would not slip. Further, the elevator was broken so he carried the packages up two flights of stairs." While the story was being told, the parents of the groom were so emotional about the story that they cried tears of gratitude and joy for the good fortune of having such a son. Noticing the emotional response of the parents, the speaker could not bring himself to end the story with the traditional retraction that the story was fabricated. Was the speaker Halachically obligated to issue the retraction and advise that the story was fabricated?

ANSWER: This would be a situation of "Muttar Leshanos Mipnei HaShalom" – one is permitted to lie to keep the peace or to avoid hurting another's feelings. Therefore, the speaker would not need to mention the retraction. However, the speaker should not have told the untrue story to begin with. The reaction of the parents is not unforeseeable, and their reaction should have been anticipated. Now that the speaker has learned his lesson, he should not tell such false stories again. This trend at Aufrufs is the needless cause of Sheker (falsehood) and should be discontinued. Further, even though as discussed, issuing a retraction is not necessary, if he later has the opportunity to issue the retraction and the parents are the type of people that would not be upset by the realization that the story was fabricated, then he should do so.

*"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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