



SEFAS TAMIM
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The Emes Parsha Sheet

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Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: My children are eligible for Child Health Plus in New York State which is a free health insurance program for children of low-income families. I happen to know that the upper income eligibility limit for a family of four is \$126,800 per year. My current salary is just under this limit and my manager has just offered me a raise which will put me over the limit. Since I do not want to give up this family health care benefit, am I permitted to refuse the raise so I can maintain my eligibility?

ANSWER: The short answer is “Yes,” you may refuse your raise to maintain your eligibility as long as Child Health Plus, or any other government benefit program for that matter, does not have in its terms and conditions, a rule that one is not allowed to forego income to maintain eligibility.

However, the long answer is that there are three more matters to consider.

- The first, is that this information on this benefit plan’s upper income limit is not very evident, and it is likely that the reason that this is so, is because New York State officials want to conceal it to some extent. If the information was more evident, then everyone would know the upper limit and many would voluntarily choose to stay under the income limit by foregoing income, as in your case, for example.

The Child Health Plus Plan was intended to benefit those who are truly in need, and not for those that could make more money but have decided not to. So, while it would be permitted to forego the raise to stay under the eligibility limit (assuming that there is nothing in the program rules that prohibit it), it is not the highest form of Emes (truth) which is seeking absolute integrity in all that we do since one is using the benefits of the plan that were not really intended for him as an individual that chose to forego income that would have made him ineligible.

- The second matter is whether it is really in one’s self-interest to forego a raise to maintain a benefit. As an example, often people reason that it is better to not own a home so they can continue to take advantage of Section 8 housing benefits. However, those that do this, may never end up buying a house and would therefore miss out on significant capital gains as their house increases in value.

- Finally, let us discuss Bitachon (having faith in Hashem). The fact is, the more Bitachon in Hashem we have, the easier He makes things for us. Accordingly, we should always try to do the right thing, which in this case would be to take the raise and not be eligible for Child Health Plus and then have the Bitachon that things will work out for the best. We know that the more Bitachon we have, the better and easier our lives will be.

How much easier it would have been for Bnei Yisrael to take possession of Eretz Yisrael if only they had the requisite amount of Bitachon. “I have set the land before you; come and possess the land which Hashem swore to your forefathers.” (Devarim 1:8) Rashi commenting on this verse cites a Midrash, that Hashem was saying that Eretz Yisrael was there for the taking. If Bnei Yisrael would have had more Bitachon, no one would have contested their takeover, and they would not have needed to go to war. However, since they did not have the requisite amount of Bitachon and wanted to send spies to seek out how to conquer the land, then Hashem required them to fight for it.

For all of the above reasons, do the right thing – accept your raise, forego your benefits and have Bitachon that because you are doing the right thing, Hashem will ensure that things will work out for the best.

Chizuk - Inspiration

During the Great Depression, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Herman Z”TL operated a small business that was struggling financially. One day, a wealthy customer accidentally left

behind an envelope containing several hundred dollars - a huge sum at that time. Despite his own financial struggles during those difficult years, Rabbi Herman immediately set out to find the customer to return the money.

After an extended effort, Rabbi Herman was successful in tracking down the customer. After Rabbi Herman returned the envelope of money to the customer, the customer, aware of Rabbi Herman's difficult financial situation, tried to give him a large reward. Rabbi Herman declined however, saying that he was simply doing what Jewish law had required.

When the customer insisted, pointing out Rabbi Herman's own needs and large family, the rabbi smiled and replied that the Mitzvah (commandment) of returning lost property was worth more than any monetary reward.

(This story was documented by his daughter, Ruchoma Shain, in the book, "All for the Boss.")

On The Parsha

We find in this week's Parsha, that Moshe Rabbeinu, residing in the palace of Pharaoh, "...went out to his brothers and saw their burdens." (Shemos 2:11)

The Seforno explains the words of the verse in the following manner: "And he saw their burdens - He set his eyes and his heart to be distressed over them."

Within the words of the Seforno lies a deep and powerful lesson.

However, before we explore that lesson let us discuss two different levels of Emes. The first level, is to make sure to always speak the truth. Then there is a deeper level of Emes called, "Dover Emes Bilvavo" – speaking truth in one's heart. Many of us are familiar with the understanding of this level of truth as someone who keeps the commitments that were made in his thoughts, even if his commitments were not verbalized. However, some Mefarshim (commentators) go beyond this interpretation and explain the following. A Dover Emes Bilvavo, is someone that is able to evaluate a situation and if he senses injustice, it bothers him in his heart, and he feels compelled to take action.

In order to attain this level, one cannot just observe a situation from afar, but must fully engage with it emotionally and intellectually. And that is what Moshe

did, as the the Seforno says, "He set his eyes and his heart..." He became deeply engaged and invested with the plight of his brothers and attained this level of Emes. Having attained this level, he felt compelled to take action and the very next verse tells us that he killed an Egyptian who was hitting a Jew.

It should be noted that for Moshe to achieve this level, he needed to leave the comforts of the palace of Pharaoh to see, experience and feel how his brothers were being treated. This helps us understand why the Torah specifically mentions that Moshe "went out to his brothers" before seeing their burdens. Moshe had to leave the comforts of the palace and deliberately put himself in a position where he was going to be able to see and feel the injustices that his brothers were enduring.

The emphasis on "going out" also carries another contemporary message for us. Many of us may need to deliberately "go out" from our comfortable spaces - both physically and psychologically - to truly see and engage with others around us in order to perceive injustice and take action.

*"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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