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Chizuk - Inspiration

When Rabbi Meir Shapiro ZT"l (1887-1933) was establishing his famous Yeshiva in Lublin in the late 1920s, he traveled extensively to raise funds for his ambitious project. During one fundraising trip to Belgium, a wealthy donor offered to make a very large contribution, but with one condition - that the Yeshiva be named in his honor.

Despite desperately needing the funds to complete the building, Rabbi Shapiro declined the contribution. He explained that he could not name the building after the donor even if he made the large contribution, because many smaller donors had already contributed, often giving beyond their means. He felt that it would be dishonest to give the naming recognition to a single large donor and give the impression that the Yeshiva was primarily funded by the large donor, when the Yeshiva was truly built through the collective sacrifice and dedication of hundreds of smaller donors.

The Belgian donor was so impressed by Rabbi Shapiro's integrity that he ended up making his contribution anyway, without the requirement to have his name on the building.

This story appears in several biographical works about Rabbi Shapiro and demonstrates how his reputation for absolute integrity helped build trust in his initiatives, including the Daf Yomi program that he established which continues to this day with hundreds of thousands of participants worldwide.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: Parking lots in Manhattan are very overpriced. For example, they charge ten dollars more for a minivan to be parked than a conventional car. I know that there is no rationale for this other than to make more money for the lot owners. When I park my minivan, may I tell "Dave" my passenger to say to me:

"You should not have to pay more just because you are parking a minivan." And then tell the parking attendant, "Dave said that I should not have to pay more just because I am parking a minivan." A few minutes later, I will let the attendant in on the joke and tell him that in reality, Dave is not a person of authority, but just an ordinary passenger of mine. Appreciating the humor in my little joke, the parking attendant may forgo the extra fee.

Am I permitted to deceive the parking attendant temporarily into thinking that Dave is an authoritative person who should be listened to, or would this be Genaivas Daas (deception) and be prohibited?

ANSWER: It seems that this is not a violation of Genaivas Daas since the deception was temporary and you let the parking attendant in on your joke before the transaction was completed (i.e. before the parking fee was assessed and paid). Similarly, the responsum Levush Mordechai #24 permits a job applicant to have a gentile dye his hair to make him look younger and make a positive first impression, if the applicant tells the employer his true age when he later fills out the job application. This supports the idea that temporary Genaivas Daas such as making oneself look younger and then telling one's true age later would be permitted (assuming it is before the transaction is completed – in this case, before one is hired).

One further important note. To be permitted, in addition to the above, according to most Halachic authorities, one's objective may not be accomplished through the actual deception even if that deception was temporary and even if the deception was revealed prior to the consummation of the transaction. In your case above, the parking attendant waived the extra fee not because of the deception, but because of the appreciation of the humor involved. Accordingly, because the deception

was temporary and revealed prior to payment and because the ruse worked not because of the deception, but because of an appreciation of the humor involved, you are permitted to engage in your ruse as you have described.

On The Parsha

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe and said to him, 'I am Hashem.'"

(Shemos 6:2)." The Daas Zekainim addresses the meaning of "I am Hashem." He explains that even though Hashem had told Moshe previously, "I have made you like a god to Pharaoh," this did not mean that Moshe was truly a god, even to Pharaoh. Rather, Hashem was emphasizing "I am Hashem" – meaning, Hashem remains the ultimate authority, even over you, Moshe.

This raises a question that the Torah commentaries grapple with: Since Hashem Himself appointed Moshe as a ruler over Pharaoh, why was it necessary to remind Moshe that Hashem remained in charge of Moshe? After all, as the Torah testifies about Moshe, "he was the most faithful in all My house." (Bamidbar 12:7). Further, the very act of Hashem appointing Moshe as a leader should have reinforced, not diminished, his perception of Hashem's authority over him. Accordingly, why did Hashem need to remind Moshe of His authority?

We learn from here a profound lesson about truth and human nature. Even though Moshe completely believed in Hashem's ultimate authority intellectually, there was still a concern. When someone acts as a leader day after day, even if it is someone as great as Moshe, his everyday experience of giving orders and being obeyed might subtly affect how he feels about another's authority over him - even if that other authority, is Hashem Himself. This is not about conscious beliefs, but about subconscious feelings that develop through one's actions and experiences. Of course, since we are talking about someone as great as Moshe, those feelings will be on a very small, subtle level, but nevertheless they are there, and we see that Hashem still felt the need to address the matter with Moshe.

A similar dynamic can occur with us as well. On a conscious level, we may know something to be true, but unconsciously, the roles that we play and the day-to-day actions that we take can gradually shift how

we perceive that truth, sometimes even without us noticing. That is why Hashem specifically emphasized "I am Hashem" to Moshe - not because Moshe did not know it consciously, but rather to remind him and ensure that even on a small subconscious level, his position of authority would not alter his perception of Hashem's authority over him.

The Gemara in Horayos (10a) provides a related story of Rabbi Gamliel and his appointees. When Rabbi Elazar Chisma and Rabbi Yochanan ben Gudgada (the "Appointees") initially refused their appointments as community leaders, Rabban Gamliel told them: "Do you think I am giving you authority? I am giving you servitude, as it says (Melachim I 12:7) 'If today you will be a servant to these people.'" Rashi explains on this Gemara: "Authority is servitude to a person, as the burden of the many rests upon him." Rabbi Gamliel was telling the Appointees, I understand that you wish to refuse these leadership roles because you are concerned that the authority you will be given, may corrupt you or, "go to your head," however, if you realize that I am offering you servitude rather than an honor, you will have nothing to fear.

This teaching is not just about staying humble, it is about recognizing the fundamental truth of being a leader in Klal Yisroel which is that the authority that one has as a leader, stems from the fact that one has many burdens and responsibilities to the ones that he is leading – he is beholden to them like a servant to a master. Keeping this in mind, will not lead one to abuse one's power.

*"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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