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Chizuk - Inspiration

How does one become more honest? The answer is that one should practice acts of kindness (Chessed).

In Tehillim 85:11 it states, “kindness and truth meet.” The Asher L’Shmuel in Shaar HaChessed (p. 168) writes that the simple explanation of this verse is that a direct repercussion of engaging in Chessed is the development of the quality of Emes.

It is also interesting to note that people perceive those that are kind to be honest and trustworthy. In a Gallup poll (Dec. 2, 2022), a sample of people were surveyed regarding how much they trusted others in various professions. Participants had a chance to cast their votes for people in 18 different professions.

The top three professions which participants perceived as the most honest and trustworthy and were most often characterized by participants as “highly trusted” or “very highly trusted” were nurses, doctors, and pharmacists – in that order. Please note that all of these professions have kindness as their focal point. (As an aside, the three professions that were least trusted were telemarketers, members of congress, and car salespeople.)

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I started work at a local school helping special needs students. “Rachel” the teacher who I replaced, left me Shaloch Manos to deliver to “Leah” a co-worker of hers that she became friendly with during her tenure at the school. The Shaloch Manos contained donuts and a few other items that needed to be refrigerated. I put the Shaloch Manos in my refrigerator with the intention of bringing them to school the next morning to give to Leah and then I went to bed.

The next morning, I opened the refrigerator and found

that my husband had eaten half of the donuts. I was touched that my husband had left me with the other half, but I was in a quandary as to what to do now. Should I deliver the Shaloch Manos to my co-worker as is? Should I replace the donuts with something else? Do I have to tell Rachel or Leah what had happened? Ultimately, I decided to replace the donuts with cookies that I had repurposed from a Shaloch Manos that I had received, and did not tell Rachel or Leah what had happened. Did I do the right thing?

ANSWER: You did the right thing by not telling Rachel or Leah what had happened. Rachel may have felt bad that the Shaloch Manos that she intended to give were not delivered and one is allowed to deviate from the truth or in this case, withhold the truth to prevent hurt feelings. Same thing goes for Leah, she may have felt bad if she was told that she did not get the donuts that were originally intended for her.

You may still tell Leah that the Shaloch Manos came from Rachel, even though the donuts came from Rachel and were swapped out for the cookies that you provided, since the cookies are a direct and substantially similar replacement to the donuts that Rachel had provided.

As an aside, there are two reasons that are cited for the giving of Shaloch Manos. The Terumas HaDeshen (Siman 111) writes that the giving of Shaloch Manos is to ensure that the recipients have enough food to eat for their Purim Seudah (the required Purim feast). The Manos HaLevi on Megillas Esther (9:19), written by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz and cited by the Chasam Sofer, writes an altogether different reason: to increase peace and brotherly love within Bnei Yisrael through the act of giving. This is to refute the characterization of the Jewish people by Haman as a nation that was “Mefuzar Umefurad”- spread apart and fragmented, on account of strife and discord among the people.

On The Parsha

“Speak to the Bnei Yisroel, and they shall take for Me, Terumah, from every person whose heart is so moved...” (Exodus 25:2)

The words “take for Me, Terumah” would appear to be the incorrect words to use. The correct words to use would be “give to me, Terumah”.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler ZT”L in his Michtav M’Eliyahu explains that the best way that one can become close to another individual is to give something to him. When one gives to another, one forms a close bond with that person. Based upon this Michtav M’Eliyahu, perhaps we can say that when one gives Terumah to Hashem, one becomes close to Hashem and there is no greater gift that one can receive from Hashem than becoming close to Him. Therefore, when Bnei Yisrael were enjoined to give Terumah to Hashem, the correct term to use was “take” because Bnei Yisrael were taking from Hashem far more than they were giving Him, because of the benefits that they would be receiving by becoming close to Him.

The benefits of closeness to Hashem are manifold. Rav Nosson Wachtfogel ZT”L, the Mashgiach of the Lakewood Yeshiva, explains that Hashem has generously provided each person with vast amounts and various forms of wisdom, qualities, and capabilities. To access all that Hashem has bestowed, one must achieve closeness to Hashem – Devekus. This closeness is contained deep within the soul of man and is part of the nature of man. However, one does not readily feel and cannot readily achieve closeness to Hashem because there are barriers that stand in the way.

The essence of our service in this world is to remove these barriers. One of the barriers that stands in our way is caused by dishonesty. Working on our honesty and integrity is a sure way to remove this barrier and become closer to Hashem.

Perhaps this is also alluded to in the verse we quoted above, “... take for Me, Terumah, **from** every person whose heart is so moved...” The word in Hebrew for the word “**from**” in this verse is “מֵאֵת”. The Kabbalistic works say that this word refers to truth, because if you unscramble the letters, you get “אֱמֶת”. In other words, the verse could be read to mean

that one should come close to Hashem by giving Terumah (as in our first thought above – giving creates a close bond between the giver and recipient) or through “מֵאֵת” which is “אֱמֶת”.

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.

“This is the underlying intent of the Pasuk (Tehillim 34:13) ‘Who is the man who seeks life,’ meaning in the World to Come, ‘and loves his days to see good,’ also in this world, ‘restrain your mouth from saying anything bad and your lips from saying anything deceitful.’ Because if this person conducts his business in a framework of deception, even though he might be initially successful, in the end it will all disappear into oblivion, as was explained above in the Midrash, that “Losses” are on standby and are prepared to take away the excesses gained by “Lies” and he will see nothing good in his life. But when man is careful to avoid deceit, he will merit his ending days at a ripe old age, content and satisfied. Also, in the World to Come, he will experience the great ‘good’ that is stored hidden away for him as the Pasuk states (Tehillim 101:6) ‘One who walks in the way of complete wholehearted innocence (i.e. who lives a life fully trusting in Hashem), he will serve Me.’”

*“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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