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## Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: A Shidduch (match for the purpose of marriage)

is proposed to a young man which appears to be promising. Unfortunately, the young man is not attracted to the young lady and the young man does not want to pursue the Shidduch any further. The man now has the unenviable task of informing the Shadchan (matchmaker) about his decision.

The young man wants to be honest on one hand, but on the other, does not want to hurt the woman's feelings. He tells the Shadchan vaguely, "I just do not see it working out."

The Shadchan does not give up, "But why? What is it that you just do not see?" The man responds, "I do not know... I just do not see it working out."

The determined Shadchan responds, "But what is it specifically? There has to be a reason."

What should the man do when faced with such a persistent Shadchan?

ANSWER: The Halachic foundation for addressing this situation stems from a fundamental dispute recorded in the Talmud (Yevamos 65b):

Rav Ilai (in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben R' Shimon) holds: "It is permitted for a person to depart from the truth in a matter that will bring peace." This is derived from the story of Yosef and his brothers when the brothers told Yosef, that Yaakov their father commanded Yosef to forgive his brothers for selling him (which Yaakov never said).

Rabbi Nossan maintains: "It is a Mitzvah to depart from the truth in order to preserve the peace." This is derived from Hashem instructing Shmuel (effectively giving him a Mitzvah) to say to Shaul so that he would not get upset, that he came to bring a sacrifice when he was actually going to anoint David as the king.

The Rif (Bava Metzia 23b) rules it is a Mitzvah, while the Chofetz

Chaim (Hilchos Rechilus 1:8) uses the more cautious term "Muttar" – permitted, but not a Mitzvah. Normative Halacha follows the Chofetz Chaim. Accordingly, we maintain that it is permitted, but not a Mitzvah to lie for the sake of peace.

Additionally, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 11a) clearly indicates that it is permitted to lie to save someone from embarrassment (as in our case where the man does not want to say that he finds the woman unattractive).

However, it is important to note that Rav Nachum Yavrov ZT"l (Niv Sfasayim Vol. II #6) establishes important Halachic caveats to this leniency:

1. It only applies to those who are generally careful with the truth, "If it is the person's regular habit to lie, then the leniency does not apply."
2. It should not be used regularly, "because we end up teaching ourselves to lie."

This concern is rooted in the Talmud (Yevamos 63a) which quotes Yirmiyahu 9:4 in the context of Rav's story with his son Chiya. When Chiya began regularly reversing his father's requests to solve domestic disputes between his father and mother, Rav told him to stop, citing: "They have taught their tongue to speak lies, they weary themselves to commit sins..." This is the source for Rav Yavrov's warning about "teaching ourselves to lie" (Item 2. above) through the regular use of this leniency.

The young man's honest but vague response above is appropriate and aligns with Halacha. The dispensation of departing from the truth to preserve the peace, permits avoiding the telling of hurtful specifics about physical attraction, but should be used sparingly and only by those generally committed to speaking the truth. The goal is to maintain the peace while avoiding both outright lies and emotional harm.

Saying, "I just do not see it," or, "We are not compatible," and

if pressed further, "It is hard to articulate these things," or, "I prefer not to get into specifics," avoids saying an outright lie while deflecting persistent questioning. However, there is a potential downside to providing vague responses like the ones above: Some women may remain without closure, always wondering why the Shidduch did not proceed further, which can be unsettling and potentially upsetting and therefore considered a reason to lie to settle the young woman and keep her peace.

Accordingly, if the lack of closure would cause ongoing distress to the young woman, one should consider being less truthful (and lie if necessary) while keeping in mind the Halachic caveats mentioned above.

### Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"L lived on the Lower East Side of New York. He would often shop at a local grocery store owned by a Jewish immigrant. The store owner, recognizing Reb Moshe's remarkable stature, would regularly attempt to give him discounts or refuse payment altogether for his purchases, insisting it was an honor to serve such a distinguished scholar.

Reb Moshe refused these gestures and always insisted on paying the full price. When the store owner would persist, Reb Moshe would explain, "If I accept your generosity, I create a potential problem. When other customers see me paying less, they might think your regular prices are unfair and you may be pressured into lowering your prices which will make it harder for you to make a living and support your family."

The store owner argued that he genuinely wanted to honor Reb Moshe and needed a way to do so. Reb Moshe replied, "You honor me most by allowing me to pay fairly. This way, I can shop here with a clear conscience and you can treat all of your customers equally."

### On The Parsha

"Hashem said to Moshe and Aron, 'Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the eyes of Bnei Yisrael, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them.'" (Bamidbar 20:12)

In this week's Parsha, we encounter a sobering moment in Moshe's leadership. When Bnei Yisrael needed water, Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to the rock. Instead, Moshe struck the rock. Water flowed, the crisis was averted, but Hashem was not pleased: "Since you did not have faith in Me

to sanctify Me in the eyes of Bnei Yisrael, therefore you shall not bring this assembly to the Land."

Rashi explains the missed opportunity: "For had you spoken to the rock and it had given forth [water], I would have been sanctified in the eyes of the congregation. They would have said, 'If this rock, which neither speaks nor hears and does not require any sustenance, fulfills the word of the Omnipresent, how much more so should we [Bnei Yisrael listen to the word of Hashem]!'"

Moshe's role as leader and teacher required him to reflect and teach the Bnei Yisrael about Hashem's preferences towards education and how to solve problems. When Moshe, in a moment of pressure, opted for the expedient, immediate solution - to use force over speech - the lesson that the Bnei Yisrael was to learn about Hashem's preference for patient verbal engagement, and that if an inanimate rock listens to Hashem's word, how much more so should they, was lost.

People of influence, such as parents, teachers and community leaders, often face moments like these. When pressure mounts, they may be tempted to abandon their principled solution for a more expedient solution. The lesson of the rock, teaches us that how we achieve our goals matters as much as achieving them. It was not enough that Bnei Yisrael received the water that they needed, they had important lessons to be learned by how they were to receive it, that went unlearned. This truly was a missed opportunity and the source of Hashem's displeasure.

*"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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