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Chizuk - Inspiration

In the 14th century of Seville, Spain, there was a famous Sephardic commentator named Rabbeinu Dovid Abudraham, who wrote a classic commentary on the Siddur and Jewish liturgy. How did he come to be called Abudraham? The name is unusual, even among Sephardic Jews, and there is a story behind it.

Rabbeinu Dovid was a merchant. Whatever he sold, customers would pay him, and he would measure out the merchandise by weight. In those days, scales were much less precise than they are today, and people did not use pounds, ounces, kilos, or grams. In his country, the unit of weight was called a dram. When a customer ordered 10 drams, Rabbeinu Dovid would not weigh all 10 at once. Instead, he weighed one dram at a time, adding a little extra with each measure to ensure that he never came close to taking what was not his. He repeated this added measure for every dram he sold.

One day, a Gentile came into the store and ordered 9 drams of merchandise. Rabbeinu Dovid followed his usual practice: he weighed out one dram nine separate times, wrapped each portion, and gave the package to the customer. After the customer left, however, Rabbeinu Dovid began to worry: perhaps he had wrapped only eight portions instead of nine and had shortchanged the customer. He immediately ran out of the store to catch him and explain that he might not have received his full order. In truth, because Rabbeinu Dovid always added slightly more than the exact measure, the customer likely received 9 drams even if there had been only eight packages, and most likely he had received all nine packages as well.

The customer was so moved by Rabbeinu Dovid's honesty that he converted to Judaism.

In Arabic, the prefix "Abu" means "father of," similar to the Hebrew word Aba. Thus, the name "Abudraham" means "Father of the Dram," because Rabbeinu Dovid was so meticulous in business that he measured every order, dram by dram.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: May one praise a purchase in order to spare the owner distress after he has already bought it? For example, my friend bought a Murray MT100 riding mower ("Murray") for the same price as a Craftsman T2400 riding mower ("Craftsman"). May I falsely tell him that the Murray was a good purchase, even though the Craftsman would have been the better choice?

ANSWER: One may praise a purchase to prevent its owner from feeling distressed (Kesuvos 17a). This applies even if the owner did not ask for an opinion (Kesuvos 17a; Bais HaYehudi, Siman 4, Se'if 4). Likewise, one may praise a Kallah to the Chosson by saying that she is pleasant and pious, even if this is not literally true and even if the praise is unsolicited (Kesuvos, *ibid.*; Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer, Siman 65:1; Taz, *ibid.*, Se'if Katan Alef; Maharsha, Kesuvos, *ibid.*; Bais HaYehudi, *ibid.*).

Applied here, your friend bought the Murray—a 13.5 HP single-cylinder mower with a 42-inch deck and six-speed manual transmission—for the same price as the Craftsman, which has a 23 HP Kohler 7000 Series V-twin engine, a 46-inch deck, hydrostatic foot-pedal drive, and a five-inch tight turning radius. The Murray has also received recurring complaints about build quality, parts availability, and its brake and clutch system. Objectively, then, it was not the better purchase; the Craftsman offered greater power and maneuverability for the same price. This is exactly the type of case addressed by the Gemara's Heter (allowance): sparing a person distress over a completed

transaction that was less than ideal.

However, this permission has an important limitation. It applies only when the purchase is final and cannot be remedied; its purpose is solely to prevent unnecessary anguish. If the friend can still return or exchange the mower, some authorities maintain that one should not praise it, but should instead tell him honestly that the Craftsman was the better value so he can still correct the situation. Only after the purchase is truly final—when return or exchange is no longer possible—does the Heter permit praising it, even contrary to fact, in order to spare the owner distress.

On The Parsha

Dayan Yisroel Yaakov Fisher ZT”L was one of the leading Torah luminaries in Israel and the Raavad (head of the Rabbinical Court) of the Eida Chareidis in Israel.

Rav Yisroel Yaakov writes (Even Yisroel Moadei HaShana, Page 137) that when Bnei Yisrael is in trouble, Heaven forbid, there are two types of Divine interventions that can bring about its salvation – “Deserved Intervention” or “Undeserved Intervention”. Deserved Intervention occurs when Bnei Yisrael deserve to be saved due to their actions and pure intentions. Undeserved Intervention occurs when we do not deserve to be saved, however, Hashem judges our actions in a comparative framework with the enemy. If our actions in a comparative sense are significantly better than the enemy’s, we may be saved.

Perhaps an example of both types of interventions is in order. Our salvation on Purim is an example of Deserved Intervention, because Bnei Yisrael communally did Teshuva (repented) to merit its salvation. Our salvation on Chanukah is an example of Undeserved Intervention – Bnei Yisrael did not do Teshuva communally and was saved due to their actions being comparatively better than the Assyrian Greeks.

In this week’s Parsha, we find that Hashem explains to Bnei Yisrael why they merited to inherit the land of Israel:

“It is not because of your virtues and the straightness of your heart (your integrity) that you will be able to possess their country; but it is because of their wickedness that Hashem is dispossessing those

nations before you, and in order to fulfill the oath that Hashem made to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (Devarim 9:5)

We see quite clearly from the above, that Bnei Yisrael received an Undeserved Intervention when they conquered the land of Israel. However, the implication of the phrase within the verse above, “It is not because of your... straightness of heart...” implies that if they had straightness of heart meaning integrity (or inner integrity, according to the Ramban), then our intervention could have been switched to a Deserved Intervention – such is the power of Emes, truth and integrity.

And a Deserved Intervention is a very powerful thing indeed. Returning to our prior example, we know that Purim, as an example of Deserved Intervention, has a more profound spiritual effect on us than does Chanukah, an Undeserved Intervention. This is why Yom HaKippurim (Yom Kippur) is likened to Purim – because it can catapult us to profound heights in spirituality.

We should recognize the extraordinary strength of Emes: truth and integrity can make us worthy of a Deserved Intervention, bringing salvation and raising us to lofty spiritual heights.

*“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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