

The Weekly Farbrengens



למען ישמעו • בראשית תשפ"ו • 849
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

DEALING HONESTLY (I)

QUESTION #1

When a person passes on to the next world, the first question the *Beis Din* on high asks him is, "Were your business dealings honest?"

(שבת לא ע"א)

A certain Yid was so occupied with his business throughout the entire week that he only had *Shabbos* to devote himself to learning *Torah*. He felt so bad about this that he asked a *chochom*: "What can I do that will be equivalent to all other *mitzvos* and will bring me to *Olam HaBa*?"

The *chochom* answered, "Since you are a businessman, make sure to deal honestly with both *Yidden* and *goyim*; tilt the scale to benefit your customer; and always do your business dealings with a smile."

The *chochom* concluded, "If you do so, may my portion in *Olam HaBa* be like yours!"

(ספר חסידים אות שצה)

Although Lavan tricked Yaakov Avinu countless times, Yaakov Avinu remained honest with him, never taking anything he was not entitled to. He watched over Lavan's sheep in the sweltering heat and bitter cold, and replaced any lost sheep even when the loss was entirely not his fault.

(ויצא לא, לב-נז)

The *Shulchan Aruch* goes into great detail when it *paskens* that it is forbidden to mislead anyone, whether a *Yid* or a *goy*, in business dealings, even when an extremely small amount is involved.

A few examples: If a customer is expecting a certain product, it is forbidden to sell him something of lesser quality. One is not allowed to polish a product so it will appear to be of superior quality. A worker must work faithfully, doing his job with the utmost diligence. If one gives his word to make a deal, he must abide by his word of honor. Indeed, a *yereh Shamayim* should not only keep his word; he should even abide by a decision he made in *thought*!

(שור"ע אדמו"ר הזקן בכ"מ בחור"מ, ובאר"ח ס' קנ"ו)

The *amora* Rav Safra had an item for sale. One day while he was reciting *Kerias Shema*, someone approached him and offered to buy it for a certain price. Since Rav Safra did not respond, the man

assumed that he wanted more money, and offered a higher figure. When Rav Safra finished, he sold it to the man at the original price, since in his mind he had agreed to that offer.

(מכות כד ע"א ברש"י)

HONESTY BRINGS SUCCESS

The Torah promises that if a person deals honestly, his earnings will increase, whereas if he is dishonest he will lose his money. Furthermore, one who deals honestly will be rewarded even for business he did not do, for had he done so, he would have surely been honest.

(ויקרא רבה טו, ז, ס' חסידים אות תתרס"ב)

CONSIDER

Why is dealing honestly more significant than all other mitzvos?

Is success from honest business or loss due to dishonesty a punishment or a natural consequence?

Once, as Eliyahu HaNovi was walking on his way, a man approached him and asked him many questions in Torah. After Eliyahu HaNovi answered each one, the man related the following:

"A *goy* once came to my home to buy a large amount of dates. I only had a small measuring container, and therefore needed to measure small amounts and then total all the measurements together. Because of this, and the fact that my house was dark, I miscalculated and gave him less than I was supposed to. Later, I used the money to buy a jug of oil, and put it in the same place where I had sold the dates. A short while later the jug broke, and all the oil spilled out."

Eliyahu HaNovi explained to him that the Torah forbids stealing from a *goy*, just as it forbids stealing from a *Yid*.

(תנא דבי אליהו פרק טו)

Two business partners once asked the *tzaddik* Reb Meir of Premishlan for a *bracha* for success in an upcoming commercial venture.

"Have you written out your partnership contract?" the *tzaddik* asked.

"No," they said.

Reb Meir wrote the letters *alef, beis, gimmel, daled* on a piece of paper and handed it to them.

Seeing their amazement, he explained, "In these four letters, the secret to success is hidden. Each one is an initial: *alef* is *emunah*, *beis* is *bracha*; *gimmel* is *gneiva*, and *daled* is *dalus*. If your transactions are trustworthy, they will be blessed; if you cheat, you can expect to become poor..."

(סיפורי חסידים זיון תורה ע' 237)

Shlomo HaMelech writes, "Treasures of wickedness will not avail, but *tzedaka* will rescue from death." Since the word *tzedaka* is related to *tzedek*, which means "righteousness," the Meiri explains this *possuk* to mean that money acquired in a dishonest manner will not bring benefit to a person; benefit can only come from money that is acquired *righteously*.

Another explanation of the above *possuk*: *Tzedaka* – in its usual sense of "charity" – that is given from dishonest money will bring no benefit, as it will fall into the hands of undeserving recipients. However, *tzedaka* given from righteously-earned money will find its way to worthy causes, and thereby protect the donor from death.

(משלי יב, מאירי שם, שבט מיהודה שם)

The Rebbe added that recognizing how a favorable livelihood comes from HaShem will lead a person to deal honestly. For what use is there for money made dishonestly, if it will be spent on doctor bills and other unfortunate expenses?

(תו"מ ח"ב ע' 107)

The *tzaddik* Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov asked why we find that pure young children who daven and learn with fervor, later leave that path entirely. He explained that this is often a result of being fed food bought with dishonest money, which breeds negative *middos* and desires just like non-*kosher* food.

(אגרא דפרקא אות קכו)

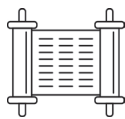
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AUCTIONING ALIYOS

Why is selling *aliyos* allowed on Shabbos and *yom tov*?

Pledging a specific amount of money for non-mitzva purposes is prohibited on Shabbos under the rubric of *daber davar* (discussing mundane matters). However, when pledging money by a *mi shebeirach*, the Rama and Alter Rebbe record the accepted *minhag* to allow stating a specific amount, as it is permitted to pledge *tzedaka* on Shabbos.¹

However, *poskim* question the permissibility of auctioning *aliyos* to the highest bidder, which resembles a bona fide sale. *Mekach umemkar* (buying and selling) is prohibited *miderabanan* on Shabbos, and it is not allowed even for mitzva purposes. While they justify the practice by noting that no tangible object is being sold, they advise a *yerei shamayim* to donate his bid to *tzedaka*, regardless of whether he wins the auction. In this way, it is essentially a *tzedaka* pledge and not a sale.²

Some communities are particular not to mention the currency, just the number or multiples of *chai*, to make it noticeably different.³ Yet, the accepted custom is to sell *aliyos* even with mention of currency, and *poskim* write that the *minhag* of Yidden is itself Torah.⁴ Additionally, the bidding expresses the honor of Torah on Simchas Torah and Shabbos Bereishis.⁵

An auction for tangible items, such as seats in shul, is not allowed according to all opinions (unless all bidders commit to pay their amount regardless).⁶

1. רמ"א א"ח סי' ש"ו ס"ו. שו"ע"ר לקנות עליה בדמים ב"ה ויה"כ שם סט"ו. בלי להזכיר הנהגת יר"ש. וע"ע משנ"ב סי' ש"ו סקל"ג. פסק"ת שם הע' 119.
2. ראה מג"א שם סקט"ו. שו"ע"ר שם סט"ו.
3. צדקה ומשפט פ"ד הע' י'. ערוה"ש סי' ש"ו סט"ז. ובמשנ"ב סי' תקפ"ד סק"ח מביא גודל הענין.
4. ראה שו"ת מהר"ק סי' ט. ולהעיר מתו"מ חכ"א ע' 133.
5. ראה שו"ע"ר סי' ש"ו סט"ז.

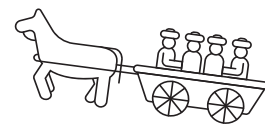
לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

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Our Heroes



R. NOCHUM THE CHOIZER

A chossid of the Mitteler Rebbe in his youth, R. Menachem Nochum Chanin was the main choizer for the Tzemach Tzedek. He was known for the great precision of his *chazara*. He passed away on 18 Kislev, 5629.

After an incident with the previous choizer, the Mitteler Rebbe chose R. Nochum to replace him. R. Nochum was not a great *maskil* in Chassidus, he just had an exceptional memory and would chazer every detail, including the Mitteler Rebbe's cough and "sha sha" (which he would sometimes say to slow his train of thought).

One Shavuot morning, on the way to the mikvah, the Rebbe Maharash met R. Nochum and asked him how many times he *chazered* the Tzemach Tzedek's recent *maamar*. R. Nochum replied that this was his 60th time. He could be seen repeating the *maamar* to chassidim in the middle of the marketplace.

(סה"ש קי"ח ת"ש ע' 101, רשימות הרב"ש ע"ה)

R. Nochum once told the Tzemach Tzedek that a certain local doctor was suspect of adultery. The Tzemach Tzedek told him, "Your not being sufficiently careful with *netilas yodayim* is worse than his immorality."

(ליקוטי רשימות ומעשיות ע' 12)

Once, the Tzemach Tzedek asked R. Nochum to sleep the night in his room. R. Nochum told the Rebbe that he would not be able to sleep in the Rebbe's presence out of awe, and then he won't be able to learn the next day. The Rebbe then promised him "*imi bimchitzosi*," to be with him in Gan Eden, and R. Nochum acquiesced.

(R. Boruch Shalom, the Tzemach Tzedek's son, related this story on 19 Kislev 5629, the day after R. Nochum's passing, and concluded that we can only imagine how great R. Nochum is and the level at which he is now.)

(ליקוטי רשימות ומעשיות ע' 39)

R. Nochum would relate: "The first time that I was in *yechidus*, the Mitteler Rebbe concluded with instructing me to learn Agaddah and 'thereby you will recognize the One who spoke and brought the world into being.'

"When I joined the '*kodesh hakodoshim tentzil*' after *yechidus*, the Rebbe's words rang in my ears, and his final words about learning Agaddah penetrated my mind and heart.

That night, I began learning both Midrash and Ein Yaakov from the beginning."

(דברי ימי החזירים ע' 16)

A Moment with The Rebbe

לזכר נשמת מרת חוה לאה בת ר' שמשון הכהן ע"ה



RAMBAM AND CHITAS HEALING POWER

Reb Zusha Feldman, an active member of Oholei Torah faculty, fell ill. That Simchas Torah, since Reb Zusha couldn't make it to *hakafos*, Reb Pinye Korf, also working at the time in Oholei Torah, approached the Rebbe as he walked to the library, and asked for a *bracha*. The Rebbe responded, "*omein*."

However, Mrs. Feldman would not be satisfied with that. She wrote to the Rebbe, describing in detail how bad the situation is, and implored the Rebbe to beseech on high for her dear husband.

The Rebbe responded with a clear directive:

"*Yilmod Rambam vechitas, upekudei Hashem messamchei leiv. Azkir al hatziyon, viyehei behatzlocha rabbo, veyavaser tov.*" He should learn Rambam and Chitas, and Hashem's Torah gladdens the heart. I will mention his name at the Ohel. It should be with much success, and you should deliver good news.

Indeed, as soon as Reb Zusha strengthened his Rambam and Chitas commitments, things took a turn for the better, and he merited to report to the Rebbe the much-awaited good news.

(As heard from Reb Zusha)