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On the Parsha

In this week's Parsha, Ephron tells Avraham Avinu, "...I have given you the field, and the cave that is in it... **Before the eyes of my people**, I have given it to you; bury your dead." (Bereishis 23:11)

The words "Before the eyes of my people" are rather perplexing. What message is Ephron trying to convey with these words? We may also ask another question. Five Passukim later, when Avrohom weighs out the talents of silver to Ephron the Passuk spells Ephron's name without a "vov". Why is his name spelled deficiently?

To answer the first question, the Netziv explains that Ephron is, in essence, telling Avrohom, "I am offering you the field for free – 'before the eyes of my people' i.e. as a public gesture. But that is just for public display. In reality, I am not that generous, and when we are in private – I will take from you 400 talents of silver."

Generally, people have three motivations. There is the motivation that they want people to think that they have. We will call this "Motivation Number One". "Motivation Number Two" is the motivation that they themselves think they have. "Motivation Number Three" is the motivation that they actually have. This motivation is what truly propels them, and quite often, people are unaware of what their true motivation actually is.

Ephron's Motivation Number One was that people perceive him as an important person with a nobility of purpose. Motivation Number Two was that he was doing it for the money. He did not want the public to know this, but he appears to be honest with himself and he appears to even be honest with Avrohom. His thought process was, "There is nothing wrong with earning an honest living. I must feed my family and so I will sell the field for a significant amount of money."

To answer the second question above, Rashi explains that Ephron said much, but he did not even do a little and that is why his name is spelled deficiently. Perhaps a deeper meaning in the Rashi can be suggested. Ephron's name was spelled deficiently because of Motivation Number Three which was far more sinister than even Ephron himself realized. His sinister motivation was that he "said much, but did little" in order to take advantage of Avrohom and overcharge him which is truly evil.

On Shabbos morning we daven to Hashem for divine assistance and request that Hashem purify our hearts and serve Him in truth. This is to purify our motivations when we take action so that all of our motivations are noble and consistent with one another.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Part of having a personality of Emes involves readily admitting one's own mistakes. This is more difficult than it may seem.

Rabbeinu Tam, is known as the greatest of the Baalei HaTosfos. He was also the grandson of Rashi. He is described by Rabbi Yechiel Halpern of Minsk, author of Seder Hadoros (p.207) as not only the greatest of the Tosafists, but also a person unprecedented in the quality of Modeh al HaEmes – admitting a mistake. It seems from Rav Halpern's placement of these two seemingly disconnected facts – that he was the greatest of the Tosafists and excelled at admitting his mistakes, that he was the greatest of the Tosafists *because* he would readily admit a mistake.

Throughout his commentary on the Germorah and in many places throughout Rabbeinu Tam's other works, we find that he readily admitted to the position of those he debated with and accepted their interpretation of a source as more cogent than his own.

We can further see the challenge and reward of admitting a mistake from the fact that the Midrash informs us that the defining aspect that earned Yehudah the future kingship of Israel and the right to be the progenitor of Mashiach and the entire future redemption, was the fact that Yehudah had admitted his mistake in the matter of Tamar.

It may, at first glance, seem strange that there is such reward for the mere act of admitting a mistake. However, the Yetzer Harah is so strong that defeating it is no small feat. How often do we hear in public discourse, the saying "Mistakes were made" as opposed to the honest admission, "I made a mistake".

Many accomplished people and leaders have a very strong sense of self. Admitting that they made a mistake, threatens that strong sense of self. "I did something that hurt someone else! I did something that was not very

smart! I now need to revise my strong belief in myself!" It takes heroic levels of strength and valor to do so. As we see from Yehudah, if we can readily admit our mistakes, we can earn extraordinary rewards.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: My wife often asks me to do chores that involve a lot of manual labor. I am not really up to it at times. There is a corner deli about a half mile away where day laborers gather to be picked up by contractors to garden, paint, etc. Am I allowed to pick one or two of them up, have them do the work my wife asked me to do and later say, "Honey, I did what you asked" or would that be lying?

ANSWER: The Sefer Titain Emes L'Yaakov p. 314 cites a Rashbam in Bava Basra 81b that implies it is permitted to do so. The Gemorah (ibid.) discusses a case where an owner hired a messenger to take the owner's first fruits (Bikurim) to Yerushalayim and then the owner would offer them in the Bais Hamikdash. However, the messenger brought the Bikurim part of the way, but died before he finished his mission. As such, the owner had to take the Bikurim himself the rest of the way and then offer them. The Gemorah (ibid.) tells us that in such a case, the passage that one states when they offer the Bikurim is not recited because the passage implies (through a Drasha) that both the taking of the Bikurim to Yerushalayim and the offering of the Bikurim need to be performed by the same person. Rav Ashi explains that even though it was the same person in our case who took and offered the Bikurim (i.e. the owner), because the messenger did part of the taking to Yerushalayim as well before he died, it has the appearance of falsehood. However, notes the Rashbam, the Gemorah implies that there would not be a problem for the owner to recite the passage if the messenger did not die and fulfilled his mission of taking the Bikurim to Yerushalayim. We see from here that the owner can recite the passage which to paraphrase, says in part, "Hashem, I have fulfilled my obligation to take the Bikurim" even though his messenger took them. This is analogous to your question - you can tell your wife that you did what you were asked to do, even if you asked others to do it for you.

The Sefer Titain Emes L'Yaakov qualifies this ruling as only being applicable when no skilled labor is involved. However, if there was skilled labor involved, it would violate the prohibition of deception (Genaivas Daas) because your wife may assume that you have the ability

to perform the skilled labor when in fact you do not. Therefore, if your wife asked you to build her a backyard deck and you hired others to do so, you may not say "I did what you asked" because she will think that you have an expertise that you do not have. However, if she asked you to mow the lawn and you asked another to do it, then it would be permitted.

Mussar – Introspection

This week we continue Chapter Three of our translation of the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer entitled, "Sefas Tamim."

"We learn from this, (that the Gemorah in Bava Kamma 119a) attributes the death of the Givonim to Shaul HaMelech even though he was not involved with them at all, but had only killed their suppliers of water, the city of Nov, that one is accountable even for a mere indirect cause (called a "Gramma") of a loss to his friend [when it comes to dishonesty and lying]. Indeed, even more so, even when the loss was not a direct repercussion of the indirect cause (Gramma), it is just that on account of his actions another individual was prevented from making a profit, wherein he could have sustained his family, it is considered in the Heavenly realms as if he had killed that individual and his family. He will be punished severely for this. What will those dishonest people have to say when in their eyes, the sins of robbery and financial oppression have become entirely permitted?

How severe is the sin of theft! For in Heaven, they hasten to hear the cry of the victim, as it says (Bava Metziah 59a), "Says Rabbi Abahu: There are three sins of which, the curtain [the Pargod] that stands between the world and the Divine Presence is not locked; their sins reach the Divine Presence. They are: verbal abuse, robbery, and idol worship as it states [regarding verbal abuse] (Amos 7:7): "Behold, Hashem was standing on a plumb wall, with a plumb line in His hand." [The word for "plumb line" in the prior Passuk is "Anach". The Levush Choshain Mishpat 248 says that Onaah – verbal oppression, is related to Anach, indicating that just as a plumb line is used in construction to find a straight vertical line, so to Hashem strictly reacts to verbal oppression with straight-line i.e. direct punishment]; Robbery, as it is stated: "Violence and robbery are heard in her, they are before Me continually" (Yirmiyahu 6:7); Idol worship, as it states: "A people that angers Me before Me continually; that sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense upon bricks" (Yishayahu 65:3).