



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Behar 5776

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A Taste of Torah

Business Ethics: A Paradox?

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

Some would posit that so long as you don't steal or cheat, all is fair in business. The way to strike it rich is to find a cheap way to provide something which people need and market it at a high price, while hoping that nobody else finds out your secret formula. A savvy trader will look for an undervalued commodity, which he can buy up in large quantities and make a fortune. Would anyone consider a home-flipper unethical for not informing the owner of the house that if he himself would invest \$25,000 into fixing up the house, he could get an additional \$50,000?

Yet the Torah tells us, "And when you make a sale to your fellow or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow, you shall not aggrieve (cheat) each other." (Behar 25:14) The Talmud (Bava Metziah 49b-60b) elaborates at length on this law. Neither a buyer nor a seller is allowed to take advantage of information that the other party is not privy to regarding the true value of the item. An ethical business transaction, according to Torah law, is when both the buyer and the seller are equally aware of the true value of the item. It is also forbidden to dress up your merchandise to make it look better than it is; examples given in the Talmud include combing out the hair of your animal to make it look larger or soaking your meat in water to increase its volume. The minutiae of these laws are beyond the scope of this article and would fill a few books. (In fact, they fill many.) However, I would like to share with you a story to drive home the message of what the Torah expects of us.

One of the greatest *Roshei Yeshiva* (Yeshiva Deans) of pre-WWII Europe was Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz (1862-1939). His writings, which contain amazing explanations of some of the most complex areas of the Talmud, are

studied by countless yeshiva students around the world today.

As a young rabbi, he applied to a prestigious yeshiva for a teaching position. After much deliberation by the yeshiva, he was invited to give a sample lecture before the entire student body and faculty. The discourse he delivered was a rather impressive one which provided much food for thought to all those who had attended, but it was missing the "wow factor." After the lecture, one of the rabbis who taught at the school approached Rabbi Leibowitz, rather puzzled. "Just last week I attended a discourse you gave which was an absolute masterpiece. I sat there from start to finish with bated breath for the next brilliant yet unexpected twist of logic which would make sense of everything. I can honestly say that I had never heard a lecture like that in my entire life. Why didn't you just repeat that lecture? Had you done so, you would have been guaranteed the position."

Rabbi Leibowitz's reply was something we can all learn from. "I know that the lecture which you are referring to was truly extraordinary. I must have had special Divine assistance when I was composing it. But that is not the typical discourse I would give. I am not capable of producing something like that on a regular basis. Therefore, I chose a class which would represent my standard level of teaching, one which I can expect to deliver to the students every day."

This does not seem to be common business practice. When a teacher provides a model lesson or a manufacturer provides a sample product, it is a given that you can never expect them to maintain that level of quality in the long run. A wise potential client will always look at the sample

Continued on back

Stories For The Soul

Watch Out

based on a story on revach.net

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821) was once delivering a lecture to his students on the subject of *bitachon*, trusting G-d. At one point during the lecture, he stopped and asked if anyone had the time. Nobody was able to provide the information, as not one of the students had a watch. Rav Chaim continued his lecture.

Suddenly, Rav Chaim interrupted himself and said, "I feel as if we have not yet acquired true *bitachon* in our hearts. If we had the proper trust in G-d, He would have sent us a watch - even a gold watch!"

Just then, a knock was heard on the door, and a Russian soldier entered the room. The soldier looked hesitantly around the room, and then turned to Rav Chaim and said, "Rebbi, I'm a Jew, a lone Jew among many non-Jewish, anti-Semitic soldiers. I'm afraid that the other soldiers will steal the valuable watch which I received as a present from my father."

With that, he handed the watch to Rav Chaim. "I would rather give this watch as a gift to a great rabbi than have it stolen from me by anti-Semitic thugs."

In this week's parsha, the Torah teaches that we must trust that Hashem will provide for us even as the lands of Eretz Yisrael lie untouched during the *Shemittah* year. Though we may not reach the sublime level of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, we, too, must strive to inculcate the attribute of trust in Hashem within ourselves.

Kollel Happenings

ENSURING YOUR PHILANTHROPY ACHIEVES ITS GOALS AT JUNE 1ST TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Bruce DeBoskey, J.D., Philanthropic Strategist with The DeBoskey Group, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they generate an approach for your generosity. June 1st, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON JUNE 5TH

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of Tractate Sotah with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up and attend a special study session. The siyum will be part of the completion of an entire order of Talmud, Seder Nashim, that is being completed by Daf Yomi participants around the world. Sunday, June 5th, 3:30-5:30 pm at the Ethel A. Beren Auditorium, 1261 Zenobia. Visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855 to sign up or for more details.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: After every *amidah* prayer, we customarily add an additional prayer beginning with “*Yehi ratzon*.” When else is this recited?

A: A: 1) The source of this prayer is a mishna in *Pirkei Avos* (end of Chapter 5). *Pirkei Avos* is recited by many during the summer months. 2) After counting *Sefiras Ha’omer*, the custom is to pray for the building of the Temple. The medieval Ashkenaz custom was to recite this *Yehi*

Ratzon prayer. The Sephardic custom was to recite an alternate, similar prayer beginning “*Harachaman*.” During the past few centuries, most Ashkenazic communities adopted the Sephardic custom. (Sources: *Tosafos Megilla 20b*, *Siddur Aizor Eliyahu*)
This week’s question: Which *perek* (chapter) of *Pirkei Avos* is not actually part of the Mishna, and why is it included?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Rambam Part II

The Rambam was born toward the end of what is often referred to as the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. During the early 8th century, most of Spain was conquered by Moslem Arabs from North Africa. Many Jews from North Africa settled in the Moslem-controlled parts of Spain. The Jews in Spain were tolerated by the Arab rulers, and, over time, the Jewish population flourished. Many Jews moved into positions of economic and political power, and, as long as they knew their place vis-à-vis their Arab masters, they continued to be successful.

In 1149, the Almohads, a group of fanatical Moslems, conquered Spain from their more moderate co-religionists. They offered the Jews under their rule three choices: exile, conversion or death.

In 1150, the Almohads arrived in Cordova. Most Cordovan Jews fled, including the Maimon family. Initially, they went to Southern Spain, but the Almohads arrived shortly thereafter. They then fled to Northern Spain, where the Christians ruled. In 1160, Rabbi Maimon, his two sons Moshe and Dovid, and their families left Spain and arrived in Fez, Morocco.

At the time, Fez was also under Almohad control. However, the Almohads had not offered Fez’s Jew the option of flight; it was convert or die. Many Jews there made a superficial conversion to Islam, while continuing to practice Judaism privately. The Almohads looked the other way, and a strange situation arose: the Jews lived externally as Moslems, but there existed a flourishing Jewish society just beneath the surface.

A Taste of Torah

Continued from front

and create a downward estimate to what he believes is a maintainable level. With this in mind, we can question, why, indeed, didn’t Rabbi Leibowitz give the knockout lesson, with the expectation that the management would make a realistic evaluation of what his long-term abilities were?

The answer to this can be found in the Torah at the end of the discussion of this law. “And a man shall not aggrieve his fellow, and you shall fear your G-d; for I, Hashem ,am your G-d.” (ibid.:17) Part of the business

ethic which is supposed to permeate our every business dealing is, “I am Hashem Your G-d.” True, man is required to perform his due diligence in supporting himself and his family. However, we must constantly remember that our sustenance is not the fruit of our own labor, but, rather, comes from Hashem. Business ethics are not a paradox; business is just a façade behind which hides the loving, giving hand of Hashem that is providing for us. You can never lose from being honest.

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