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Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: We are Ba'alei Teshuvah (Jews who have returned to observance) and are very close to our parents and siblings who are not observant. We just had a baby last Shabbos, Boruch Hashem. The Bris is scheduled for this coming Shabbos, but we know that our parents and siblings will drive on Shabbos (Heaven forbid) to attend the Bris. We foresee three courses of action:

A) Have the Bris on Shabbos as planned, even though they will drive on Shabbos to attend.

B) Delay the Bris to Sunday so there is no Chillul Shabbos (desecration of Shabbos).

C) Tell our non-observant relatives that the Bris is on Sunday and really do the Bris on Shabbos. Then, have another (fake) Bris ceremony on Sunday that our parents and siblings will attend.

ANSWER: A similar question was posed to Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"l in Igros Moshe YD Vol. I # 151 where he advises to go with option A above. The Tzitz Eliezer Vol. VI #156 says that while option A is what most Poskim (Halachic authorities) conclude, for Migdar Milsa (as a protective measure to safeguard Shabbos observance in a community (and possibly within one's own family)) there is also the option to push off the Bris until Sunday – option B above.

Rav Shmuel Fuerst Shlita from Chicago answered that although option C seems interesting and might be preferable in theory, historically, we have never done such a thing, and it is not in-keeping with our obligations to be truthful. Accordingly, better to follow option A.

The question was also posed to Rav Shlomo Miller Shlita from Toronto and Lakewood who said that we should not lie. We follow option A as this is the established practice (we do not delay a Bris). However, he adds that in this case, because

option A involves causing one's own parents to desecrate the Shabbos, that a couple that is bothered by this (as they should be) can potentially arrange the following. They can tell the Mohel to say in advance to all the guests that are to come, that if he detects any Chillul Shabbos by anyone driving on Shabbos, he will walk out the door and come back another time to perform the Bris. This may work to dissuade the parents from driving on Shabbos to the Bris and convince them to arrive before Shabbos and sleep over on Friday night.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Moshe Feinstein Z"TL was once consulted about a complex business dispute between two observant Jews. After hearing both sides present their cases, he ruled in favor of one party. However, several days later, the other party returned with additional evidence that had not been presented initially.

Upon reviewing the new information, Reb Moshe realized it significantly changed the facts of the case. The proper ruling should have been with the other party. He immediately contacted both parties and explained that he needed to reverse his decision based on the new evidence.

The party who had originally won protested: "But Rebbe, you have already ruled in my favor! Further, the other party has already accepted the decision!"

Rav Moshe replied firmly: "Our responsibility is to pursue truth and justice, not to protect our own reputation. When I issued my first ruling, I believed it was correct based on the information that was presented. Now that I know it was wrong, how can I allow an incorrect judgment to stand, simply to avoid admitting an error? If I stay silent, I become a partner to injustice."

He reversed his ruling and publicly explained his reasoning. This incident enhanced the respect that people had for Reb Moshe. Valuing Emes (truth) requires us to have the humility to admit our mistakes and the courage to correct them.

On The Parsha

"Then Hashem said to Moshe, 'Is My power limited? Now you will see if My word comes true for you or not!'" (Bamidbar 11:23)

On this verse, Rashi provides an extraordinary dialogue between Moshe and Hashem relating to Bnei Yisrael's complaint against the Manna and their request for meat instead:

"[Moshe said to Hashem,] It is impossible to settle their argument. Since they seek only a pretext [- a reason to complain]. You cannot satisfy them, and in the end, they will find fault with You. If you give them beef, they will say, 'We asked for mutton (sheep meat).' And if You give them mutton, they will say, 'We asked for beef.'..."

Moshe's opening words are striking: "It is impossible to settle their argument." Moshe seems to be saying that it is not just hard to please the people, he is saying that it is literally impossible to do so. With these words, Moshe reveals a profound psychological truth: Sometimes, people complain because they want to complain and not because they want whatever they are complaining about resolved.

"Since they seek only a pretext." A pretext, is a false or fake reason that hides the real reason for a course of action. The people did not really want meat. They wanted to complain - wanting meat was just an excuse to do so.

Rashi's commentary challenges us to examine ourselves honestly. When we ask for something, do we actually want to receive it? When we enter a conversation with another to resolve an issue, are we really open to a solution? And when we complain, would any response actually make us happy?

If we value the truth, then we need to examine our feelings and motives to determine what is really behind them.

Mussar – Introspection

This week, we continue with translating the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer entitled, "Sefas Tamim." Sefas Tamim, from which our foundation takes its name, focuses on the importance of honesty in word and in deed.

"Intrinsic to the sin (of theft) is the power to incite the Attribute of Strict Justice against this person and to irrevocably seal the verdict against him, and more so than any other sin. This concept is taught in Gemara Sanhedrin (108a) 'Rabbi

Yochanan said - come and see just how powerful is the sin of theft / cheating. The generation of the flood violated every imaginable sin, yet their verdict was not sealed until they opened their hands to theft, until theft became ubiquitous, as the Torah states, Bereishis (6:13) - the end of everything living in the world appears before Me, etc.'

And this is one of the reasons why nowadays the wealth of Jews is consumed, and why their wealth will only remain with them for a short period of time. This is because, in our very many sins, theft and cheating / extortion has proliferated throughout the world by men who go into the secular courts and inform them on their fellow Jews and extract their money, confident in their belief that this is money is legitimately theirs, since it was awarded to them by the courts. However, this is absolute theft, since the statutes and laws of the Torah, which are the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu are not in agreement with this.

Therefore, as long as this person knows that from the perspective of the Torah, the truth is not on his side, but that he can be awarded a monetary verdict by informing against his fellow Jew in the Gentile court system, he should run away from such money, as one would flee from a raging fire, because it will entirely consume his money that was legitimately earned in the past, as we have written previously."

*"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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