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On The Parsha

In the beginning of this week's Parsha, Hashem says to Moshe: "And you shall draw close to you, your brother Aharon... from among Bnei Yisrael to serve Me as Kohanim..." (Shemos 28:1)

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 37:2) explains the need for Hashem to tell Moshe to draw Aharon close to him. The Midrash states: "When Moshe descended from Sinai and saw Bnei Yisrael engaged in that act [with the golden calf], he looked at Aharon striking it [the golden calf] with a hammer. Aharon intended to delay the worship of the golden calf (by working on it himself to slow the process) until Moshe would descend the mountain. However, Moshe believed that Aharon was a partner with them [assisting them to worship the golden calf] and he was upset with him. Hashem said to him: 'Moshe, I know that Aharon's intentions were for the best.'"

This Midrash is telling us that Moshe was upset with Aharon initially. He had believed that Aharon was assisting Bnei Yisrael in their acts of idol worship. Moshe was corrected and told of Aharon's true intent, but nevertheless, some feelings of displeasure towards Aharon remained. Accordingly, Hashem commanded Moshe to draw Aharon near to him and mend his relationship with him.

We may be familiar with Pirkei Avos (1:6) that states, "Appoint a teacher for yourself, acquire a companion and judge all men favorably." We also see in the Gemorah (Shevuos 30a): "Our Rabbis taught: In righteousness shall you judge your neighbor - judge your neighbor toward the scale of merit."

Further, the Chofetz Chaim writes in the introduction of Sefer Chofetz Chaim, that judging your neighbor favorably is more than advice, but is an actual Torah commandment.

That being the case, how could Moshe have become upset

with Aharon. Shouldn't Moshe have given him the benefit of the doubt and assumed that Aharon was trying to delay, and not assist, the worship of the golden calf? Surely someone as righteous as Aharon was worthy of being judged favorably.

We must therefore assume, that Moshe did in fact give Aharon the benefit of the doubt and judged him favorably. However, he did not do so completely. On some small level, he didn't completely believe that Aharon was not involved in helping Bnei Yisrael serve the golden calf. And because of that, on some small level, Moshe was "upset" with Aharon. And that is why Hashem had to tell Moshe to draw Aharon close to him – do not be upset with Aharon, even on a small level.

An additional point that we see from this incident, is the persistence of first impressions. On some level, Moshe initially believed that Aharon was complicit in serving the golden calf and was upset. Even after being corrected, that initial impression persisted and that is why Hashem felt the need to tell Moshe to draw Aharon close.

We see that first impressions can linger and affect a person's judgment or emotions even after those impressions have been proven wrong or corrected as was the case with Moshe. If this is true regarding someone as great as Moshe Rabbeinu, how much more so is it true with us. Accordingly, we should be vigilant when we form our first impressions and ensure that our perceptions of situations change as warranted and do not persist unnecessarily.

Chizuk - Inspiration

A certain Rosh Yeshiva was in the process of moving from one apartment to another. He was charged a flat fee for the move and even though two movers could have done the job, he was told by the moving company that three movers would be working to make the move go faster.

As the move got underway, the Rosh Yeshiva noticed that only two workers were carrying boxes and furniture upstairs. He inquired about the whereabouts of the third mover and was told that the man was downstairs by the moving truck.

The Rosh Yeshiva went downstairs and found the third employee leaning against the truck - not doing much work at all. He gently asked the young man what he was doing. The mover explained that he was watching the illegally parked truck so that the movers would not get a parking ticket which would need to be billed to the client.

The Rosh Yeshiva expressed his appreciation to the young man for his kind gesture. Then, in a measured and respectful manner, he advised the young man that there was a matter of integrity to be considered. He said that even though he was paying a flat fee for the move so from a pricing perspective it did not matter how many movers were on the job, he was told that there would be three workers who would be moving his belongings. If one of those workers was stationed outside, leaning against a truck and not doing any moving, then he would not be receiving what he was entitled to. Even if that worker was well-intentioned, good intentions, while admirable, would not be sufficient if he did not receive what had been promised to him.

The Rosh Yeshiva's words made an impression on the mover. He promptly went upstairs to join his fellow movers who were hard at work.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I am a high school girl, who, like other girls my age, often leaves class to hang out with my friends in the hallway or the bathroom. The teachers are often strict with me and do not allow me to leave class without an acceptable reason. I found that if I hold my hand on top of my nose, the teacher will allow me to leave – thinking that I desperately need a tissue. I feel that this is not actually lying as I have not said anything. Is this permitted?

ANSWER: This is not permitted. Rav Yavrov ZT"l in his Niv Sfasayim (1:6) writes that even alluding to a lie with a physical action is forbidden. Therefore, placing your hand on top of

your nose to deceive your teacher would not be permitted. Rav Yavrov bases his ruling on a Sefer Chassidim (1:46) which says that even if one does not say a word, but merely engages in an action that implies a falsehood, it is still not permitted. It seems that the Sefer Chassidim does not base his ruling on the prohibition of "Midvar Sheker Tirchak" – distance yourself from the word of a lie, because by engaging in a deceptive action, one has not spoken a word. Rather, he bases his ruling on a separate prohibition called "Hin Tzedek." This prohibition is explained in Bava Metziah 49a which derives from the words "Hin Tzedek" (Vayikra 19:36) that when we say "Hin" which is similar to the word "Hen" which means "Yes" to something, it needs to be "Tzedek" - true. This means that our words must be true and when we say "Yes" to something, we must mean what we say. Since the charge of "Hin Tzedek" is said in the Torah in the context of keeping honest weights, where one may deceive or cheat another without saying a word, the Sefer Chassidim learns that this prohibition extends to deceptive actions that are engaged in, even without the utterance of any words.

Even if one would argue that your action is relatively harmless, elsewhere, the Sefer Chareidim quotes the Rashbatz (Mitzvos of the mouth #26) that even if the falsehood does not cause any harm, it is still a Torah prohibition according to the Rashbatz (and others concur with the Rashbatz as well).

*"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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