SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

בס"ד

A Parent's Duty

Volume VII Issue #5
Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Parshas Chayei Sarah, 27 Cheshvan, 5787
November 7, 2026

– Sponsored anonymously for the Refuah Shleimah of Yair Nissan Ben Sara –

To sponsor a week of the Emes Parsha Sheet in honor of a loved one email us at info@everydayemes.org.

On The Parsha

Eliezer, Avraham Avinu's servant, sat at Besuel's table in Charan and recounted his journey. He described his prayer at the well, the sign he had asked Hashem to provide to identify the right girl for Yitzchak, and the positive identification of Rivka as the right girl to marry him. Then he asked: "And now, if you will do Chessed (kindness) and Emes (act truthfully) with my master (Avraham), tell me (whether you will let Rivka come with me to marry Yitzchak); and if not, tell me, and I will turn to the right or to the left." (Bereishis 24:49)

The Sforno explains that Eliezer used two terms—Chessed and Emes—because the same request of asking Rivka to return with him, had two matters for Rivka's family to consider. First, they should consider the Chessed that would be done for Avraham: they would have to set aside their wish to keep Rivka and her future family nearby and send her to a distant land to fulfill Avraham's wish of obtaining a fitting girl to marry Yitzchak. Second, they should consider the Emes that should be done for Rivka: they should seek what was truly beneficial and honorable for their daughter, as Emes, doing the right thing and as their duty required, by allowing her to enter Avraham's household and marry Yitzchak.

Rav Henoch Leibowitz ZT"L raised an obvious question: In giving Rivka away, the family must surrender its own wishes for someone else's benefit. When doing it for the sake of Avraham, Eliezer calls it a "Chessed," however, while doing the same for Rivka, Eliezer calls it "Emes?"

The Rosh Yeshiva explained that the Sforno teaches a fundamental Torah principle about a parent's obligations. Whatever good a parent can provide for a child—even at personal cost—is a responsibility, not a favor. It is therefore called Emes rather than Chessed: the fulfillment of a solemn obligation and duty.

A child is like a Pikadon—an entrusted charge placed in the parent's care. The parent is responsible for seeking the child's best interests in every area of life. When something is truly best for the child, the parent's own benefit has no place in the calculation; the parent must devote himself fully to that responsibility. A parent who neglects this Pikadon and fails to do what is proper and best for the child has not withheld Chessed, he has withheld Emes - acted falsely and betrayed his duty.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: Computer hackers use increasingly sophisticated tactics, including posing as recruiters or employers hiring for specialized positions. Their phishing emails lure employees into clicking links or downloading files that introduce computer viruses and bypass security firewalls.

May a company send its employees simulated recruiter emails to test their responses and teach them to recognize phishing attempts, thereby protecting its computer systems?

ANSWER: The threat is real. Just last week, hackers linked by the FBI to North Korea's government stole about $6.3 billion from Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange. One tactic involved a fake job offer: a thief posing as a recruiter contacted a Binance engineer through a legitimate job website. After several "interviews," he emailed a test assignment to download. The file contained malicious code that helped enable the theft. Training employees to recognize this tactic could prevent a substantial loss.

Deception to prevent theft ordinarily targets the thief. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 133:3), together with the accounts in Sanhedrin (25b) and Yoma (83b), permits misleading someone who is trying to rob you. In Yoma (83b), Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yossi deceived the untrustworthy innkeeper Kidor to recover their wallets. A phishing test, however, deceives honest, loyal employees rather than thieves. Accordingly, the sources referenced above cannot establish whether such a test is permitted.

Under normative halacha, the Chofetz Chaim in Ahavas Chesed rules that "Midvar Sheker Tirchak"—distance yourself from falsehood (Shemos 23:7)—prohibits lying even when no harm results, as in this phishing test. Geneivas Da'as, creating a false impression, is a separate prohibition

that would apply here as well. Because a simulated recruiter email deliberately creates a false impression, it requires a Heter, a Halachic dispensation to permit it.

First Reason to Permit: The Truth is Revealed Promptly

The Levush Mordechai (#24) permits a job applicant to dye his hair to appear younger, provided he states his true age on the application. Since the employer learns the truth before making a hiring decision, the false impression does not persist. This permits temporary Geneivas Da'as when the truth is disclosed before the other person acts on the impression or retains the mistaken belief.

Rabbi Meir's case in Chulin (94a) supports the same principle. One may not open a wine barrel to make a guest feel honored unless one promptly explains that it would have been opened anyway. A phishing test that reveals the truth as soon as the employee clicks follows this model: any false impression is dispelled promptly.

Second Reason: The Purpose Is to Protect Property

Halachic authorities have allowed mild deception to protect another person's property. Rav Elyashiv ZT"L permitted labeling a package "GLASS" to help ensure the safe handling of another's package even when it contained none, but not "GLASS INSIDE." He distinguished misleading wording used to protect another's financial interests from an explicit lie. Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT"L, citing Yevamos (115b), allowed the use of "GLASS INSIDE," while Dayan Fisher ZT"L disagreed. A security test has an obvious protective purpose: it safeguards the employee being tested, the company, its coworkers, and customers.

Third Reason: The Employees Are Often Notified in Advance

Many companies notify employees that periodic phishing tests are likely to occur as such tests have become standard in the industry. Accordingly, there is a tacit agreement by the employee to be subject to these tests from time to time.

The Limits of Permissibility

The above considerations suggest that a company may send phishing emails to test employees. However, there are certain limitations

First, the phishing test must not cause emotional distress. The Mishna in Bava Metzia (4:10) and the Gemara (58b) prohibit asking a merchant's price without any intention of buying, because doing so raises false hopes and causes distress. This is Onaas Devarim—oppression through words. Similarly, sending a test e-mail promising an employee an attractive job, raise, or bonus creates false hopes about his livelihood and causes the kind of pain the Mishna forbids. Fake "holiday bonus" phishing tests have hurt employees and provoked public anger.

Yet fake job offers are precisely the threat employees need to recognize in this case. The test should therefore resemble an outside recruiter's initial inquiry, without promising a specific position, salary, or bonus. In that way, employees can still learn the same lesson, without making them believe they have received an actual offer and raising their hopes unnecessarily.

Second, no one may be publicly shamed. Employees who fail the phishing test and click when they should not have, must never be named in announcements or posted lists. Public embarrassment is a serious transgression. Training to avoid such e-mails in the future should be given in private.

Third, the truth should be disclosed promptly. The Levush Mordechai's Heter depends on promptly correcting the false impression before it takes hold. Employees should be informed as soon as they click that the e-mail is not genuine and is part of a test that the company is conducting.

Fourth, limit the number of tests. Rav Nachum Yavrov ZT"L cautions against repeated deception as one should not accustom oneself to deception which can become habitual. This is not a game, and Rabbeinu Yonah warns against taking pleasure in telling a falsehood (even when permitted). Tests should occur only as often as necessary.

"May I back out of a school carpool that
I have already committed to?"
"Should I report a co-worker who is acting dishonestly?"

Call our **Emes Halacha Hotline**
with your Everyday Emes questions at: **718-200-5462.**

To subscribe to this weekly, free newsletter or for further information about our Foundation, please visit us at **www.everydayemes.org**
or contact: **info@everydayemes.org.**