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Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Aharon Soloveitchik ZT”L would regularly commute between his home in Chicago and New York City. For many years, he made the trip to teach the advanced Talmud class (Shiur) at Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanon, stepping in after his brother, Rav Yosef Baer Soloveitchik ZT”L, stopped teaching the Shiur. In addition to his teaching, Rav Aharon also served as the Rav HaMachshir - the Rabbi responsible for overseeing the Kosher certification of Streits’ Matzoh in New York.

Despite the demanding schedule, he maintained this weekly routine, traveling back and forth between Chicago and New York. On one occasion, Rav Aharon was accompanied by his mother-in-law. When they arrived at the airport ticket counter, he requested two tickets. The ticket agent informed him of a special promotion: "Spouses Fly for Free." Rav Aharon immediately clarified, "This is not my wife, this is my mother-in-law." The agent attempted to reassure him, stating, "Do not worry. We do not check marriage licenses." However, Rav Aharon pressed further, asking, "Do you have permission to waive this promotion requirement?" The agent hemmed and hawed.

Determined to act with complete honesty, Rav Aharon asked to speak to the supervisor. The supervisor also tried to convince him, explaining, "We never check. You are a male and she is a female. Take the special." Still, Rav Aharon questioned whether this was permitted by company policy: "Do you have permission from the company to do that?" When the supervisor could not confirm that she was authorized to extend the Spouses Fly Free offer to non-spouses, Rav Aharon chose principle over expediency and refused to accept the discounted tickets.

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 and then 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, that would be permitted.

On The Parsha

In this week's parsha, one of the Malachim (angels) that visited Avrohom informs him that Sara would have a son despite her advanced age. Sara overheard the prophecy and did not believe it. The Possuk says, "Now Avrohom and Sara were old, coming on in years; Sara had ceased to have the way of the women. Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have become worn out, will I have smooth flesh...'" (Bereishis 18:11-12)

How could Sara, who was on an even greater level than Avrohom in regards to prophecy, deny the truth of the prophecy?

Rabbi Avrohom Reuvain Sofer from Prague, author of the Yalkut Reuveini, a Kabbalistic work from the 1600's, explains that Sara took stock of herself and due to her exceptional humility, could not find a merit that, in her opinion, was deserving of the miracle of having a child at her advanced age. Therefore, Sara erroneously concluded that the prophecy must not be true.

This gives us a remarkable insight into the interplay

between humility and truth. The Kochvei Ohr explains that many people entertain the erroneous notion that the trait of humility requires a person to deny the truth of where one really stands on a spiritual level. This, however, is incorrect. Truth is something that should never be obscured – not because of humility and not because of self-deception.

Humility is a great Middah. However, as great as it is, it should not be permitted to obscure the truth. Sara should have believed the truth about the prophecy and not let her humility get in the way.

Although the following lesson may not originate from the above, it's important to mention nonetheless. Humility should not lead us to undervalue our abilities; at the same time, it is essential to maintain an accurate assessment of our merits and avoid overestimation. Striking the balance between the two requires careful self-reflection and ongoing vigilance.

*"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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