



Volume VI Issue #5  
Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Parshas Toldos, 2 Kislev, 5786  
November 22, 2025

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

## Chizuk - Inspiration

Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman ZT"l (the Ponovezher Rav) was once approached by his son with a question regarding a personal custom that the Ponovezher Rav had observed for years: eating alone on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. The son, curious about the origins of this practice, asked, "Is there some place that this custom is stated in Halacha? I looked everywhere and I could not find it."

The Ponovezher Rav explained that this Halacha is not recorded anywhere. He shared with his son the origins of his custom, which dated back to his youth. As a young boy studying in a town away from home, he had received an invitation from someone to join him for a meal on Rosh Hashanah. The Rav was unsure about the host's level of Kashrus observance which made him uncomfortable accepting the invitation for a meal, especially one that would be eaten on Rosh Hashanah.

At the same time, the Ponovezher Rav did not want to embarrass his host by telling him the real reason for declining his invitation. Searching for a thoughtful and sensitive way to turn the man down, he said, "Thank you very much for the invitation. I have a custom that for the first night of Rosh Hashanah, I eat alone." The host, unaware that no such custom existed, accepted this explanation and went on his way.

The Ponovezher Rav concluded his story to his son by explaining, "Since that day, in order that the words which came out of my mouth should not be a lie, for the past 50 years, I have eaten the first meal of Rosh Hashanah alone."

This personal practice became a lifelong custom, serving as

a testament to the Ponovezher Rav's commitment to truthfulness and sensitivity toward others.

## Halacha – Jewish Law

**QUESTION:** I am a salesperson. There are some product lines that my company sells that are more profitable for our company than others. There are also product lines that may be more efficient or more economical that are carried by our competitors. My company, of course, would prefer that I sell our customers the more profitable product line, and the product line that we carry rather than the line of a competitor, even if the competitor's product may be better or cheaper. My question is, "Is this permitted, or am I deceiving my customers (a form of Geneivas Daas) by selling what is good for them even if it is not what is best for them?"

**ANSWER:** The Halachic authorities (Poskim) have ruled (Choshen Mishpat, Chapter One) that when the customer has reason to assume that you are giving him the best advice that there is – then it is forbidden to promote a product that is not best for him. The Poskim have mentioned that if a seller is only selling one product or brand, then there is a tacit assumption that the customer is aware that the business tends to promote their own products and that there may be a better deal somewhere else. For example, if you are a salesperson for Toyota, then the customer assumes that you are naturally going to promote a Toyota, even though a Honda may be a better deal for him. However, even in this case, it is "best practice" to tell him that he should make himself aware of all the other car makes and models and make the decision that he feels is best for him.

Of course, it is always forbidden to promote a product to a customer that the customer does not really need. The

underling prohibitions of doing so are Geneivas Da'as (deception) and Lifnei Iver Lo Sitain Michshol (do not place a stumbling block before the blind).

### On The Parsha

The first verse in this week's Parsha tells us that Avrohom fathered Yitzchok. (Bereishis 25:19)

Rashi addresses the question as to why the Torah points out this seemingly superfluous detail since there are many previous verses that have told us this already. Rashi explains (in his second explanation) that there were scoffers in that generation who insisted (Heaven forbid) that it was actually Avimelech who had fathered Yitzchok, since Avrohom had gone so long without children (and Sara's pregnancy came after she was taken captive by Avimelech).

To counter this assertion, Rashi explains that Hashem (changed the course of nature) and fashioned the form of Yitzchok's face to make him look unquestionably like his father. As such, no one could possibly question that Avrohom was his father. The Torah alludes to this by stressing that Avrohom fathered Yitzchok – and it was unquestionable because of the way Hashem made Yitzchok appear.

Rav Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik ZT"L author of the Beis HaLevi poses two questions: The first question is, why are they called the "scoffers of that generation" and not the "evil doers of that generation"? If they were unjustly tarnishing the lineage of one of our holy Avos (forefathers), then they should be called "evil doers" not mere scoffers. The second question is, Sara herself was 90 years old when she gave birth to Yitzchok. The fact that Sara was able to give birth at that advanced age was miraculous. The scoffers should have realized that just as a miracle occurred which enabled Sara to give birth after such a long time of being barren and at such an advanced age, a miracle had occurred for Avrohom to father a child after such a long time and at such an advanced age. Accordingly, why did the scoffers suspect that Sara became pregnant from Avimelech?

The Bais HaLevi answers both questions by saying that the scoffers really believed that Avrohom fathered Yitzchok

and they did not mean to tarnish Yitzchok's lineage. Rather they were "scoffing" – they made a joke about something that indeed was true - it was in the merit of the pain that Sara suffered as a captive in the home of Avimelech that she earned the merit to have children. Their joke was that it was "Avimelech who fathered Yitzchok" - not literally, but in the merit that came about through Avimelech, Yitzchok was born. The Bais HaLevi likens the pain that Sara suffered and the merit that was born from it, to the case of a woman who is accused of infidelity (Sotah). If it turns out that the Sotah was falsely accused, she merits to have special children because of the pain and indignity she suffered.

Based on the answer above, the following question may be asked. If indeed the scoffers did not really mean to say that Avimelech fathered Yitzchok and were just joking as described above, why did Hashem feel the need to make Yitzchok look unmistakably like Avrohom? The Bais HaLevi says that Hashem was concerned that, in the future, it was possible that people would forget that it was just a joke and think that Avimelech actually had fathered Yitzchok. That is why Hashem changed the course of nature and made Yitzchok look unmistakably like Avrohom.

Illustrated here, is the value that Hashem places on the truth and the intolerance He has for falsehood. Hashem changed the course of nature which He does not readily do, to ensure that a lie regarding Yitzchok's lineage would not take hold even if that was only a remote possibility.

*"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](http://www.everydayemes.org)**  
or contact: **[info@everydayemes.org](mailto:info@everydayemes.org)**.