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Chizuk - Inspiration

As “Reuvain” stood on the threshold of graduation from law school, an unexpected summons from the dean interrupted the ordinary rhythm of his final days. A distinguished Wall Street law firm, the dean explained, had taken notice of him and was sending a representative to interview him.

Then came a word of caution from the dean, “We welcome all students here. No one has caused you difficulty because of your Yarmulke,” he said, pronouncing the word correctly, “or because of those strings coming from your pants,” referring to Reuvain’s Tzitzis. “Nevertheless, for the interview, you may wish to consider removing your Yarmulke.”

For Reuvain, the only student who had worn a Yarmulke openly throughout law school, the request struck at his very identity. Removing it felt like betraying who he truly was. Yet, anxious about his career and his future, he wavered, composed himself, and entered the interview without it.

The moment he entered, Reuvain froze. Seated before him was a man wearing a large black velvet Yarmulke—the unmistakable “soup-bowl” style—with his Payos tucked neatly beneath it. The interviewer’s eyes settled on him, and the first words he spoke cut straight through the room: “Where is your Yarmulke?”

Reuvain had no answer. The lawyer shook his head with unmistakable disappointment and said, “Do you understand why we were interested in you? We had heard that you were the only student with the courage to wear his Yarmulke throughout four years of law school. You are not suited for this firm. This is a firm of leaders, not followers. You compromised your principles. This interview is over.”

Reuvain did not get the job, but the encounter became a defining moment in his young career. In time, he transformed the pain of rejection into renewed resolve, a resolve to remain true to himself

and to his values no matter the circumstances.

On The Parsha

In this week’s Parsha, we read about the process of how the Bikkurim, the first fruits, were brought. The Mishna (Bikkurim 3) explains that there was a grand and festive procession for those who were bringing their first fruits to Yerushalayim and then onto the Beis HaMikdash.

On the way, those who brought Bikkurim were led by flutists and were greeted by dignitaries. There were stations (Ma’amados) with deputations representing the people of all the cities in the district assembled in the open squares to greet them.

When they arrived at the outskirts of Yerushalayim, messengers were sent ahead to announce their arrival. The officers of the Beis HaMikdash came out to meet them, and all the artisans along the streets of Yerushalayim rose before them, greeting them and hailing them as brothers from this area or that area. When they reached the outer court and hall of the Bais HaMikdash, they were welcomed by the Leviim who were singing Tehillim.

The Bikkurim were brought in gold, silver, or willow baskets to which live doves were tied. The doves that were tied to the baskets were given as a Korban and a declaration would be made in front of the Kohain in the Bais HaMikdash.

As we can see, this was a very elaborate and celebrated process that culminated in the declaration in front of the Kohain. What was said in this declaration?

The Pasuk says as follows, “You shall go to the Kohain in charge at that time and say to him, ‘I acknowledge this day before Hashem that I have entered the land that Hashem swore to our fathers to give to us.’” (Devarim 26:3).

The Ramban explains that the point of the declaration is to state that Hashem keeps His word – He gave us the land that he

promised to our fathers.

We must note that the entire celebration and elaborate procedure of the bringing of the Bikkurim culminates in a declaration that begins with the recognition of Hashem's Middah of Emes - He keeps His word.

So important is the Middah of Emes that it is reflected in our very name. The people of Bnei Yisrael are called "Yehudim." This is after Yehuda, the son of Yaakov Avinu. Why are we named after Yehuda? Chazal explain that Yehuda admitted the truth when he admitted that Tamar was in fact righteous and it was he that had erred (see Bereishis 38). Therefore, it is fitting that Bnei Yisrael should be named after him.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I am a Yeshiva student who is studying in

Yerushalayim. Every time I go back to Eretz Yisroel, there is a non-religious Israeli man or woman at the airport who asks me security questions such as what Yeshiva I attend, who the Rosh Yeshiva is, and what Mesechta I am learning. I believe that they have no idea what they are really asking about and what a proper response would be, so I am quite tempted to have some fun and make up the most preposterous responses I can think of such as, "I am studying in the Volozhin Yeshiva under Reb Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin and we are studying Meseches Bava Genush. Am I allowed to do so?

ANSWER: You should definitely not do so. The reasons are as follows: 1) We should first and foremost demonstrate Hakaras HaTov (gratitude) for the fact that airport security is on guard for us to help ensure our safety. We should not tease them or take them for granted. The Orchos Tzaddikim (Midas HaSheker) explains that our propensity to lie is predicated upon our Middos and we must be sure that we develop the Middah of Hakaras HaTov. 2) The Chofetz Chaim in the 7th chapter of his Sefer "Sfas Tamim" cites the Sifre on the Passuk of "VeHalachta BiDrachav – and you shall walk in His ways" that since Emes is one of the ways of Hashem, you are not "walking in His ways" when you lie and it is therefore a negation of a positive Mitzvah in the Torah. This is called a "Bitul Assei" and is a serious matter. Many people are entirely unaware of this ruling of the Chofetz Chaim. 3) There is a three-way debate regarding the Passuk in the Torah that states, "Midvar Sheker Tirchak – stay far away from a false matter" (Shmos 23:7). Some say that it only applies to Dayanim (judges) involved in adjudicating a ruling

(Orech Meisharim 9:1). Others say that by Torah law, it applies to everyone – but only when harm can come to someone through the lie (Sefer Yereim Mitzvah #235). The third opinion, which is generally considered Halacha L'Maaseh (the practiced law) and the conclusion of most Halachic authorities is that by Torah law, it applies to everyone - even when no harm will come from the lie. (Chareidim Mitzvas Assei 4:26) This would apply in our case where you are "harmlessly" lying to the security guard about your Yeshiva studies.

In addition to refraining from lying even when it does not harm anyone, there is also a higher level of truth that one should aspire to. It is a concept found in a Rashi at the end of Makkos (24a): "And speaks truth in his heart". This is referring to one such as Rav Safra. Rashi explains that Rav Safra was reciting Kriyas Shema when a customer approached him to purchase an item. The customer stated his price to purchase the item and Rav Safra intended to accept the offer. However, he was unable to respond to the customer because he was in the middle of Kriyas Shema when interruption is not permitted. The customer misinterpreted Rav Safra's silence as an indication that the price offered was too low and raised his offer (and continued to raise it due to Rav Safra's continued silence). When Rav Safra completed the Kriyas Shema, he insisted on selling the item for the original price offered since he spoke "truth in his heart" and in his heart, he intended to accept the original offer.

*"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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