

## An Honest Trainer and His Horse

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### Chizuk - Inspiration

Monty Roberts found himself at a crossroads. As a skilled horseman in California, he carried the responsibility of supporting his wife and children, but with only four horses to train, his income barely covered their basic needs. The opportunity to apprentice under the legendary trainer Don Dodge offered not only the promise of learning from a master but also the hope of greater financial security in the future.

However, the apprenticeship soon brought an unexpected test of character. After ten weeks, Don Dodge delivered a harsh assessment regarding one of Roberts's horses. He advised Roberts, "Call the owner of Panama Buck. Tell the owner that he is wasting his money paying you to train his horse—that horse will never amount to anything." The weight of this advice was heavy—losing the training fee for Panama Buck would mean sacrificing a quarter of Roberts's already meager income.

Roberts hesitated, acutely aware of the financial risk. But Dodge offered a principle to guide him: "If you always tell owners the truth, you'll get more business down the road than you can handle." With this advice in mind, Roberts made the difficult call to the horse's owner, Lawson Williams. Williams reacted with anger, declaring, "You useless son of a gun! That's the last horse you'll ever train from me!"

In the days that followed, Roberts's situation seemed even more precarious. But then the phone rang. On the other end was Joe Gray, who explained, "I had lunch with Williams yesterday. He was complaining about you—but from what I heard, you are the only honest trainer I have ever come across. I know Panama Buck was no good. I'm taking a chance on you. I have a horse called My Blue Heaven I want to send him over for you to train."

This moment marked a turning point for Roberts. His reputation for honesty began to spread, and soon he was in demand as both a skilled and trustworthy trainer. Ultimately, his commitment to integrity would lead to prestigious opportunities, including training horses for the Queen of England. All of this success began with the difficult decision to

follow his mentor's advice and uphold the value of honesty—even when it came at a personal cost.

The Talmud emphasizes the importance of recognizing good character traits, even among non-Jews, precisely to inspire us to elevate our own standards of conduct. The story of Monty Roberts illustrates that unwavering integrity can transform one's life and reputation, serving as a powerful example for us all.

### Halacha – Jewish Law

**QUESTION:** Unfortunately, there are times when we may see an unsettling phenomenon. We see people who are generally Shomrei Mitzvos (observe the commandments) and learned in Torah, yet they have children who go off the Derech (become irreligious) when they grow up. Can you explain why this may happen?

**ANSWER:** Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov (the, "Rimanover Rebee") is cited by Rabbi Mordechai Leifer in his Piskei Oraisah (p.97) to answer this question. He explains that just like non-Kosher food is MeTamtem HaLaiv – that eating non-Kosher renders a person less intelligent in Torah study (see Tractate Yuma 39a), the same is true with eating all prohibited foods (e.g. food cooked on Shabbos according to many). The Rimanover Rebbe extends this idea of "non-Kosher" foods to also refer to foods that were purchased with money obtained dishonestly or by illicit means. Since the child is eating food purchased with prohibited funds, the food is "non-Kosher" and has a detrimental effect upon the spiritual development of the child which could lead the child to go off the Derech.

**QUESTION:** There is a food delivery app that delivers food for a certain charge. One charge is for the food itself, and one charge is for the delivery fee. The app works with many restaurants – including Kosher ones. The app's policy states that if an order is filled incorrectly, there is no charge for the food (but there is still a delivery fee).

Once, "Rachel" ordered an Açaí Bowl from a Kosher restaurant through the app and asked them to leave out the coconut

shreds. The restaurant made a mistake and failed to remove the coconut. Rachel snapped a picture of the Açai Bowl with the coconut shreds included, and sent the picture to the app. Per the app's policy, she received a credit for her order (and then proceeded to remove the coconut herself).

Rachel started to realize that this restaurant made the same mistake more times than not, whenever the Açai Bowl was ordered. Can Rachel continue to place the same order (Açai Bowl, but hold the coconut) over and over again, knowing that this is often a path to a free lunch?

ANSWER: Although technically permitted assuming it is the app that is eating the loss each time the order is wrong and a credit is issued and not the Kosher restaurant, the restaurant will eventually catch on and this can lead to a possible Chillul Hashem (desecration of Hashem's name). It goes without saying, that we should always strive to ensure that we are never the cause of a Chillul Hashem.

### On The Parsha

When Hashem was about to create Adam, the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 8) tells us that the angels divided into opposing camps. Chesed (kindness) argued, "Let man be created - he does kindness!" Emes (truth) countered, "Do not create him - he is completely false!" The debate intensified until Hashem took Emes and cast him to the earth, declaring that man would indeed be created.

This seems puzzling. Isn't Emes right? Don't we all struggle with dishonesty, with presenting ourselves differently than we truly are? Why would Hashem dismiss such a legitimate concern and cast the one who raised it to the earth?

Rav Yeruchem Olshin cites the Alter of Kelm, in his Sefer, "Chochmah U'Mussar", who unlocks a profound insight. He asks: Why is "Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro" - bearing the burden of (and helping) others, listed among the forty-eight ways to acquire Torah in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers)? The ways to acquire Torah should relate to the qualities needed for Torah study such as a sharp mind, diligence, attentiveness, etc. Rav Olshin asks, "What does helping others have to do with acquiring Torah wisdom?"

His answer transforms our understanding of truth and falsehood. The Torah itself declares "Kenei Emes" - acquire truth. Torah is truth, and only someone connected to truth can truly acquire Torah. However, Ahavas Atzmo - self-love,

self-absorption - is the "Tachlis Koach HaSheker," - the ultimate source of all falsehood.

Individuals are often most prone to dishonesty when their personal interests are involved. In such situations, it is common to rationalize behavior, manipulate facts, or interpret circumstances subjectively in order to protect or further one's own interests. The Sages observe that a person is "Karov Eitzel Atzmo"—naturally inclined to favor oneself—which suggests that inherent self-interest can obscure objective truth.

When Emes argued that man is "Kulo Shekarim" - completely false and should not have been created - he wasn't merely saying that people tell lies. He meant something far deeper: humans are inherently self-absorbed, consumed by Ahavas Atzmo. From morning to night, man thinks primarily about himself. This self-focus is fundamentally incompatible with Emes, with seeing reality clearly and objectively.

Now we understand why Chesed won the day and man was created while Emes was thrown to the ground - it makes perfect sense. Yes, Chesed acknowledged that man is self-absorbed and therefore full of lies. But man has a remedy! Through Chesed, through genuinely caring for others and bearing their burdens, a person can gradually break free from the prison of self-interest. When man thinks about someone else's pain, feels their struggles, and actively seeks to help another – he is tearing himself away from that blinding self-focus and thereby becoming a more objective, honest person.

Integrity goes beyond honesty or keeping promises; it means recognizing and overcoming our self-interest. True integrity emerges when we consider others' perspectives, empathize with their struggles, and offer to help. These actions reduce self-absorption and lead us toward objectivity and honesty.

*"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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