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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
 רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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Parashat Kedoshim

Hashem Makes Man Poor and Wealthy

Our *parasha* states (19:36), "You shall have correct scales, correct weights ... I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt."

Questions:

1 - In *Bava Metzia* (61b), our Sages ask why the reason given by the Torah to be honest in business is because Hashem took us out of Egypt. 2 – We must ask a question, the relevance of which will be explained shortly: Our Sages state in *Masechet Shabbat* (31a) that when man stands trial before the Heavenly Tribunal, he is asked if he was honest in business, set fixed times for Torah study, had children, hoped for the future salvation, and deeply analyzed the Torah's wisdom. Why is man first asked whether he was honest in business? There is no doubt that Torah study is the most important thing – therefore, he should first be asked if he set fixed times for Torah study!

The Way of the World

When man descends to the world, the greatest trial that stands in the path of his Divine service is earning an ample livelihood. Some businessmen think that the secret to success depends on exerting the maximum effort to increase their profits and they charge an inflated price for their product or service. A businessman may therefore take advantage of an unknowledgeable customer by telling him that an item he wants fixed has a very big problem, when it really has only a small one. This applies to all different types of merchandise as well. The consumer lacks the understanding of the professional, and he is relying on the kindness of the seller to act with integrity. For example, someone may go to purchase a diamond. Most individuals cannot tell the difference between one diamond and the next, but, in truth, the quality of one diamond may far exceed the other. The seller takes advantage of this by charging the consumer ten times more than the diamond is actually worth, and he rejoices over his profitable sale. Another example is someone who brings his car to the mechanic. Since most people do not know much about the various problems that can arise with cars, they rely on the mechanic's expertise. However, sometimes the mechanic may do very little work and nevertheless charge a fortune of money. Sometimes a seller may add water to certain foods so that they will weigh more on the scale. Sometimes he makes a product slightly lighter or gives a slightly less amount, and the buyer does not notice. For example, a package of tissues used to be 20 x 21 centimeters. But then they reduced the length, and then the width. A reduction of two centimeters is twenty percent of the tissue! People do not realize that they essentially raised their prices in a dishonest way. There are many other examples, and the buyer should beware of this. There are also businessmen who do not pray or study Torah, because they feel that they must utilize their time to earn profit. However, our Torah teaches us that any money which is earned dishonestly will ultimately be lost in a variety of ways. A Jew must strengthen his faith and know that wealth is not a result of his efforts, but rather, it is from Hashem. Once he internalizes this, he will not squander time that should be spent learning and performing mitzvot.

There is an Eye That Sees From Above

In *Bava Metzia* (61b) our Sages ask why *yetziat Mitzraim* is mentioned when the Torah prohibits charging interest and commands one to wear *tzitzit* and to use correct scales. It answers that Hashem says that just as He discerned between who was a firstborn and who was not, so too will He punish the one who charges interest on a loan, saying that the money belongs to a gentile and that he is simply his messenger. He will also punish the seller who makes his weights heavier by lining them with salt. He will also punish one who claims that he is wearing *techeilet* but is actually wearing *tzitzit* that are dyed with a color that is similar to *techeilet*. The *Torah Temima* quotes the *Torat Cohanim* which states that Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt on condition that they accept the mitzvot relating to weights and measures. It continues that all those who accept the mitzvot relating to honest measures are considered as if they accept the entire Torah, and all those who deny the mitzvot relating to weights and measures are considered as if they deny the entire Torah. We see then, that the Torah's intention in mentioning



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yetziat Mitzraim is to warn an individual that he will be punished for his deeds even if people don't see him do it. For there is an eye that sees and an ear that hears, and all of man's actions are written in Hashem's book. Nowadays we can an example of this, as man can see the entire world in an instant. Everything is seen, heard, and written in a number of seconds. This is despite the fact that what man sees is taking place thousands of miles away.

Wealth and Honor are From Hashem

We can add that the Torah also wishes to teach us that acting deceitfully in business stems from a lack of faith in Hashem. He therefore attributes his success to his intelligence and efforts. However, one who believes that it is Hashem who decides whether man will be rich or poor will not act dishonestly. This is why the Torah mentions *yetziat Mitzraim* when it prohibits dishonesty in business. Our foundation in *emuna* was learned from the Exodus, as the *pasuk* states, "I am Hashem, your G-d, who took you out from the land of Egypt." It is *yetziat Mitzraim* which taught us to believe in Hashem, and it therefore ensures that we will act honestly in business. This is why it was stated next to this mitzva. [See *Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Matot siman 6*].

Hashem Makes Man Poor and He Makes Man Wealthy

Shlomo HaMelech, in his great wisdom, wrote in *Mishlei* (22:2), "*Ashir ve'rash nifgashu oseih chulam Hashem*, The wealthy man and the pauper meet, Hashem makes all of them." In his *sefer Chomat Anach (Mishlei, ibid.)*, *Maran the Chida* reveals an allusion in this *pasuk*. He quotes the *Arizal* as teaching that the *pasuk* states (*Yeshaya 32:17*), "*Ve'haya [היה] ma'asei ha'tzedaka shalom*, And the product of *tzedaka* is peace." He teaches that the word *היה* hints to the fact that through the act of giving *tzedaka*, there is a unification of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* Four-Letter Name [*הוי"ה*]. The arm that is outstretched to give is similar to the letter *Vav*. The five fingers on the hand are hinted to by the first *Heh* in Hashem's Name. The coin hints to the *Yud*, the first letter of Hashem's Name. The five fingers of the pauper hint to the final *Heh* of Hashem's Name, and this completes the Name. This is the intention of the *pasuk*, "The wealthy man and the pauper meet" – the wealthy man gives and the pauper receives; "Hashem makes all of them" – in other words, from both of them results the unification of Hashem's Four-Letter Name. On a simpler level, we can explain that in his heart, a wealthy man thinks that a pauper is unintelligent, *He must be a fool*, thinks the wealthy man, *why else would he not know how to profit in business like me?* On the other hand, the pauper thinks, *A wealthy man is apparently very wise and intelligent; that is why he has been so successful*. However, when a wealthy man and pauper meet, they are finally forced to converse. Suddenly, they realize that they were wrong, and the opposite is true. The wealthy man sees that the poor man speaks with great wisdom, while the pauper discovers that the rich man is truly a fool. They then ask themselves how it is possible that he is rich while the other one is poor. It is then that they reach the conclusion that it is not intelligence which is the catalyst for wealth, nor is it foolishness which causes one to be poor. Rather, it is Hashem Who is responsible for it all. This is as the *pasuk* states (*Shmuel 1 2-7*), "Hashem makes one poor and rich, He lowers and raises." This is as the Gemara expounds in *Temura* (16a), "The wealthy man and the pauper meet, Hashem makes all of them.' The One Who made this one wise, makes him foolish. The One Who makes this one foolish, makes him wise ... The One Who made this one wealthy, makes Him poor. The One Who makes this one poor, makes him wealthy. It is therefore taught in *Masechet Nidda* (70b) that the way to become wealthy is through engaging in business excessively and conducting business dealings honestly. The Gemara asks that there were men who did so but did not grow wealthy. It answers that one must pray to the One Who is in control of wealth. This is as the *pasuk* states (*Chaggai 2:8*), "To Me is the silver and gold." The Gemara continues that this teaches us that without prayer, engaging in business will not be enough to grow wealthy. We see, then, that prayer and uprightness are integral if one wishes to succeed in business.

A Lesson Taught to a Kohen

The *Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria 6)* relates a story about a *kohen* who used to look at marks and rule if they were leprous ones or not. His livelihood took a turn for the worse, and he wished to go to *Chutz La'aretz* to try and earn a living. He called his wife and told her, "Since people come to me to look at their marks, it is difficult for me to



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leave them. Come and I will teach you how to rule on such marks. If you see hair whose source has dried out, then you know that the individual is afflicted. This is because Hashem created each hair a source from which to draw sustenance. If the source dries up, then so has the hair." His wife responded, "If Hashem created each hair a source from which to draw sustenance, you – a human being who has many hairs and children whom he supports – won't Hashem certainly send you a livelihood in *Eretz Yisrael*?" He therefore decided not to travel to *Chutz La'aretz*. This teaches us that a person should not think that his livelihood depends on travelling to faraway places or making other extreme efforts. Rather, it is dependent on the Creator of the World. Therefore, even if he exerts effort in earning a living and is successful, he should know that all if from Hashem. He should pray fervently to Hashem that He provides him with a comfortable living so that he can spend his free time studying Torah.

Story About the Baba Sali zt"l

We will mention a story from the *sefer Ma'asei LaMelech*: There was an extraordinarily wealthy man who came to the Baba Sali zt"l to ask for a blessing that he should succeed in business. The Baba Sali knew that this man was indeed wealthy but not honest, and the *pasuk* states (*Yirmiah 17:11*) "So is the one who earns wealth dishonestly; in the middle of his days it will leave him, and he will be considered a degenerate." The Baba Sali told the man to listen and began to tell him a story. There was a wealthy man who owned much sheep and cattle. He also employed a team of workers who milked the animals and sold the milk. One day, he decided that he wished to set sail and see the world. He took a pouch full of gold coins and boarded a ship. There he found a wide variety of people. Some were sailing to help Torah institutions and there was also a showman traveling with his monkey; he wished to find new arenas in which to perform. The rich man sat on a bench and opened his pouch to enjoy the sight of his shiny gold. But suddenly the monkey saw the gold and grabbed the pouch, shaking his head in excitement! The wealthy man screamed, but the monkey jumped and climbed up to the sail of the ship, pouch in hand. It climbed up to the very peak of the sail, looking down with amusement at the bedlam it created. The wealthy man was literally pulling out his hair. His entire fortune was being stolen from him! He requested the sailors to climb and pursue the monkey, but they refused. "Even if we reach him," they said, "he will skip to the ropes. Even if we risk our lives to crawl after it, it will just skip away, meter after meter. It will make us look like fools, and we will gain nothing." In despair, he turned to a *rav* on the boat and asked for advice. The wise man took a sack of coins and opened it wide, so that the monkey would see the shiny coins. The monkey bent over and peered at it with curiosity. The wise man took a coin from the sack and threw it to his feet. The monkey copied him, also taking a coin from the pouch and throwing it to the floor. The wealthy man smiled, as he understood the wise man's plan. He waited to see what would happen next. Once again, the wise man took a coin and threw it to his feet. But then the monkey took a coin from the pouch – and threw it into the sea! A cry emanated from the mouth of the wealthy man. The wise man then took a third coin and threw it to the ground, and this time, so did the monkey. However, the fourth time resulted in the monkey tossing yet another coin into the sea, much to the wealthy man's sorrow. The same pattern continued, one coin returned the other lost. Seeing this, the wealthy man asked the wise man to stop. He could not decide: if the wise man would stop throwing coins to his feet, the wealthy man might lose all of his money or he may get all of it back. But like this, he would certainly lose half! "But why is the monkey doing this?" he cried out. "Why is it throwing one to the floor and the next always in the sea?" "How can I know?" responded the wise man. "Tell me," he continued, "how did you earn your fortune?" "I have a chain of dairy farms and I sell milk," he answered. "Do you dilute the milk by adding water to it?" inquired the wise man. The man admitted that he did, just like everyone else. "Do you sell it at regular price, claiming that it is all-natural milk?" he continued to ask. The wealthy man remained silent and the truth was discovered. "If so," said the wise man, "do you expect your money to be returned to you in full? The half that you are losing is what you stole from others. It does not belong to you." Smiling, the Baba Sali concluded, "I am prepared to bless only half of your money."

Words of Mussar



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We have learned from our *parasha* that one who wishes to succeed and grow wealthy will only do so by conducting his business honestly and with integrity. This is as David HaMelech stated, "For everything is in Your hand, and to raise and uplift everything is in Your hand." Hashem is the one Who makes man poor or wealthy. Anyone who grows wealthy through dishonest means, *rachmana litzlan*, "in half his days it will leave him." Either **he** will leave his wealth, or his wealth will leave **him**. He causes both himself and his children misfortune and illness, since they are sustained with such impure money. He will also not succeed in raising his children in the ways of the Torah. One must remember the words of our Sages, who say that man enters the world with a clenched fist, because he wishes to take everything for himself and conquer the world. However, when he passes away, his hand is open, since he leaves everything behind. One who takes care not to cheat his friend even the slightest amount, will merit that all his mitzvot are performed properly. He will thereby merit blessing and success. *Amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka