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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

HAVE I GOT A DEAL FOR YOU!

PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

Let's eavesdrop on a private conversation between two friends.

Reuven – "Shimon, Rosh Hashana is next week. "

Shimon – "Yes, I know, Reuven. And I am planning on davening with a lot of concentration."

Reuven – "Good idea. Remember to daven to Hashem for your livelihood."

Shimon – "You are so right! Hashem decides on Rosh Hashana how much money we are going to earn for the year."

Shimon – "By the way, Reuven, can I share a secret with you? "

Reuven – "Sure."

Shimon – "You know the expensive, brand-name clothing that I sell?"

Reuven – "Yes."

Shimon – "Well, they are not really brand-name. They are counterfeit."

Reuven – "But don't you sell them for the cost of real, brand-name clothing?"

Shimon – "True. Let me tell you about my dilemma. There are two other stores in the neighborhood that sell the same clothing that I do. They claim that they sell "brand-name" clothing, but they are counterfeit. I have no choice. The only way I can compete with those stores and stay in business is if I do the same as they do and sell counterfeit brand-name clothing."

Listen to everything that Shimon said. He feels that he has to be dishonest in business to compete with his competitors. But didn't Shimon also say that Hashem decides on Rosh Hashana, what a person will earn for the year? If Shimon truly believes that and will have complete faith and trust in Hashem, then

he will not feel the need to be dishonest in business. He will understand that Hashem provides his needs. He will earn whatever amount Hashem decided this past Rosh Hashana. It will make no difference how many competitors he has. And, of course, Hashem wants him to be honest in business.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah) says that the source of Shimon's dilemma is the trickery of the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination. The *yetzer hara* will tell a person that he is not the only dishonest seller in his community. The person will then rationalize that he, too, must be dishonest to

"You shall not have in your pouch different weights, larger and smaller. You must have completely honest weights and completely honest measures, if you are to endure long on the soil that the Eternal your G-d is giving you.... everyone who deals dishonestly, is abhorrent to the Eternal your G-d."
(Devarim 25:13, 16, 17)

succeed in business. The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l says that this behavior shows a lack of faith in Hashem. Hashem sustains the entire world and decides on Rosh Hashana how much a person will earn in the upcoming year. One's efforts don't determine what one will earn. No matter how much effort a person makes,

ultimately, it is Hashem who decides how much he will earn.

The Torah exhorts us to be honest in business. The example that the Torah cites in this parsha is that one should have honest weights and measures. The Torah spells out both extremes. If one is dishonest, then it is an abomination to Hashem. If one is honest, he will be rewarded with long life.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah) says that a person DOES NOT GAIN BY BEING DISHONEST! Any money that a person earns dishonestly will eventually be taken from him. Either

the money will be taken from him during his lifetime, perhaps because of medical bills or other unexpected bills, or he will die before he can benefit from the “extra” money. The Chofetz Chaim zt”l continues and says that one who is dishonest will be judged and punished accordingly.

The **Talmud** (Bava Basra 89A) learns this from the words of the pasuk, “*You shall not have in your purse different weights*” (Devarim 25:13). The words, “*You shall not have in your purse,*” mean that you will not have money, you will become a pauper, who has nothing in his purse. Why is that? It is because you used different, dishonest, weights. But if you possess only “a perfect and just weight,” then “you shall have” wealth.

The **Kli Yakar** (Devarim 25:13) quotes a pasuk from Mishlei (Mishlei-Proverbs 20:10) from King Solomon. “*A [large] stone and a [small] stone; a [large] measure and a [small] measure, also both of them are the abomination of Hashem.*” The **Kli Yakar** asks if both the small measure and large measure are false, then what does the pasuk mean by the word “both”? Why would the pasuk distinguish between them? Furthermore, what is the meaning of “also”? The **Kli Yakar** answers that one of the weights is inaccurate and false and the other one is accurate and true. Even the true, honest weight is called an abomination because the accurate and honest weight enables the seller to cheat, using the false one. He will be honest

with some of his customers, using the accurate weight. He will cheat the rest of his customers using the false weight. When the buyers who were cheated return home and weigh their purchases, they will notice the discrepancy in the weight. Many of them will complain to the courts, saying that they were defrauded. The dishonest seller will claim that his weights are accurate. He will prove that by citing the other customers to whom he sold, using the honest weight. Consequently, the judge will conclude that the weights were accurate and that the lack must have happened in the complainants’ homes. Since the seller only maintains the honest weight to validate his falsehood, the honest one is also considered an abomination.

Kli Yakar concludes that because of such dishonesty, Amalek came to fight against the Jews. Similarly, **Rashi** says (25:17) if we use false weights and measures, then we should be concerned about the provocation of the enemy.

Rabbi Avrohom Pam zt”l ([Messages from Rav Pam](#) by Rabbi Sholom Smith) points out that the prohibition against cheating in business is not limited to the seller. It also applies to the buyer. Rabbi Pam zt”l cites two examples. (Choshen Mishpat 232:3). If the buyer discovers that the item that he purchased is damaged, then he is permitted to return it. However, if he saw the damage and then used the item, he is then prohibited from returning it. He also must make sure he did not cause the damage.

Part of faith in Hashem is to internalize that Hashem takes care of every aspect of our lives. Hashem provides for our needs. Every Rosh Hashana Hashem decides how much money we will earn that year. We don’t gain anything extra by being dishonest in our business dealings.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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