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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

MAZAL TOV! MY PLATE GAVE BIRTH!

PARSHAS V'ESCHANAN

The Torah and its commandments were Divinely given. They weren't made by man but by Hashem Himself. They are the absolute truth. Thus, we can't make any changes in the laws of the Torah. To do so would show that we think we know better than Hashem. Had Hashem felt any changes were "necessary" then Hashem, Himself, would have been incorporated it into the Torah.

Some people may say that we can easily understand why we can't detract from the Torah. However, what is wrong with adding to the existing laws? Wouldn't they just increase the scope of the Torah? We can easily understand why the Torah tells us not to do LESS of the mitzvah that we are commanded to do. However, what is wrong if we do more?

"Do not add to that which I command you, and do not do less" (Devarim 4:2)

"give birth" then he should also believe that candlesticks could "die".

The **Dubno Maggid** explains, if we allow ourselves to add new laws of our own to the Torah then we will gradually forget that the Torah was given by Hashem. We will cease to believe in its Divine nature. Without even realizing it, we will come to stop fulfilling those

commandments that seem too difficult or inconvenient. The Torah and the commandments will not be strengthened but weakened. Therefore, the Torah says that not only can't you subtract from the Torah, you can't even add to it. (from The Maggid of Dubno and His Parables by Benno Heinemann)

In the Torah, Hashem explicitly permitted our Sages of blessed memory to enact laws to protect the Torah laws ('You shall safeguard My charge', Vayikra 18:30). One example is the laws of muktzah, enacted by the Sages to help protect us from transgressing a law of the Torah. However, the Sages had to state explicitly that the law they were enacting was merely a safeguard but not an actual Torah law (**Binyan Yehoshua** commentary on Avos Drav Nosson 1:3). The Sages had to clarify that their safeguard was not on equal footing as the Torah law.

Hashem commanded Adam not to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. When Adam told this warning to Chava, he added that they were not permitted to even touch the tree. Adam did not tell Chava that this was not Hashem's command but rather was his own safeguard. As a result, his addition which was meant to safeguard Hashem's command, had the opposite result and led to the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. (**Midrash Rabba** 19:3)

Rabbi Yaakov Kranz from Dubno, known as the **Dubno Maggid zt"l**, answers this question with the following parable:

Reuven once lent a plate to his neighbor, Shimon. When Shimon returned the plate, he gave Reuven an additional plate. Reuven asked Shimon why he gave him two plates. Shimon said that the first plate had "given birth" to the second plate and it rightfully belonged to Reuven. Reuven accepted the second plate from Shimon without another word. A few weeks later, Shimon borrowed a pitcher from Reuven. When he returned it, he gave Reuven two pitchers and gave the same explanation. The pitcher had "given birth" so he returned it to Reuven, its rightful owner. Reuven accepted the second pitcher without saying a word. A few months later, Shimon asked Reuven if he could borrow a silver candlestick. Reuven eagerly said yes. Clearly Reuven was expecting to get back two silver candlesticks. Some time passed and Shimon had not yet returned the candlestick. Reuven went to Shimon to ask for it back. Shimon sadly said that he was sorry, but the candlestick had "died". Reuven got very upset and told Shimon that candlesticks don't "die"! Shimon responded that Reuven had not complained when he was told that his plate and pitcher had "given birth". If he believed that those items could

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Following Hashem's commandments is the secret to living a happy and fulfilling life.**

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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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