

SAY LITTLE, AND DO MUCH

by Rabbi Dovid Green

In last week's parsha we are taught of the deeds of hospitality of Avraham. When the three "guests" who are actually messengers of G-d come to visit Avraham, he offers them a piece of bread and some water to wash their feet. In actuality, after they accepted, he brought them much more; butter, milk, meat, etc. From this the sages learn the lesson "say little, and do much." Don't be a big talker and weak in the delivery. Rather be stronger in delivering than you are in making promises.

In counter distinction to that, the Torah portrays a character named Efron the Chiti. He was the owner of the famous burial place in Hebron called the Me'oras (Cave of) HaMachpelah. Avraham came to him requesting to purchase this cave. "For full payment he'll give it to me...for a burial place" (Genesis 23:9). Efron answered Avraham. "The field and the cave in it - I've given to you (for free), go and bury your dead." Avraham politely refused, but Efron persisted. "What's a 400 silver shekel field between you and I (good friends)? (Take the field for free) and go bury your dead." Generally we remove price tags from gifts if we really don't want to be paid for it. Since Efron told him the price, Avraham understood that this was his opening to hand over the silver and make the acquisition.

The Alter of Kelm takes note of Efron's change of heart. How could he so quickly go from insisting that Avraham take the cave for free, to accepting a huge sum of silver for it - way above the field's worth? The Torah adds that the money was good money as well. It was money that was acceptable in any country - and Efron grabbed it without further protest. Rashi comments: "he said much, and he didn't even do a little (of what he promised).

There was once a debate which is famed to have taken place between Maimonides and the philosophers of his day. The philosophers maintained that the nature of an animal can be changed, and it can be transformed into a refined creature. Maimonides maintained that it could not be intrinsically changed. Challenges were made, and the training began. When the day came, a huge gathering was eagerly waiting to witness this historical event. Everyone was astounded to see a cat appear as a waiter, holding a pitcher of wine ready to be poured. Apparently the philosophers had proven their point and won the argument. Maimonides brought out a little box containing a live mouse, and it was soon scurrying across the floor. Down went the pitcher of wine, and off went the waiter after it's prey to the disappointment of all.

Efron was like the cat. He was able to act generously, but the "smell" of a large sum of money overwhelmed him, and out went "Mr. Generous." "Maybe I'll be generous tomorrow." Imagine if Efron had known that his deeds would be forever read by generations, and lessons of "how not to be"

would be learned from him. What would he have done differently? As we "write the story" of our own lives we would do well to learn from Efron.

Text Copyright © 1998 [Rabbi Dovid Green](#) and **[Project Genesis, Inc.](#)**
