

BIG TALK

by Rabbi Dovid Green

The Creator understandably is an expert on the topic of human nature. Through His Torah He exposes us to various personalities and their character traits. Through the eyes of G-d and multiple-times magnification which His view provides, we learn about the true essence of these personalities and the life lessons therein.

"The righteous minimize their words and maximize their actions. From where do we learn that? From Avraham. Evil people promise a great deal and don't even do a little of what they say." From where do we learn this? From Efron. (Talmud, Bava Metzia 87)

The Yalkut Lekach Tov writes in the name of Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz how far these two traits are from one another. He goes as far as to say that making promises is hateful in G-d's eyes. Regarding minimizing making promises, one could say that it is positive because it makes the chances better that one will fulfill his word and accomplish even more than he said. But Rav Yerucham writes that there is more to it than that. He explains that psychologically, making promises satiates the need to act, and minimizes the desire to carry the deed into action. Talking about acting actually quashes the inspiration to act. Making offers and promises can actually be an obstacle to proper actions.

How do we know that the righteous conduct themselves in this way? We know it from Avraham.

"...And he was sitting at the doorway of his tent...and he saw...three men standing near him...And he ran to greet them...and he said...'please don't pass by your servant...let a little water be brought...and rest...and I'll take a piece of bread and you'll satisfy your heart'."

Just two days after the 99 year old Avraham circumcised himself we find him sitting outside on the lookout for guests to bestow kindness to. After guests come and he offers them a piece of bread and a little water, we find him literally running to prepare not bread and water, but a sumptuous meal with cakes and meat among other foods which he served them.

Reb Yerucham said that one who knew the Chofetz Chaim saw this trait in him. He was never known to say "I'm going to do this or that." When one came to him for a letter of recommendation, he would begin writing immediately. By the time the petitioner would finish asking, the Chofetz Chaim would hand it to him saying "here is your letter prepared for you."

On the other hand we meet Efron the Chitti. In next week's parsha when Avraham comes to him asking to buy the Cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah, Efron offers it for free. In the end, after a

"display" of great generosity, Avraham manages to get Efron to tell him the price of the field, and he pays him top dollar for it. -Even a little bit they don't do.

In Pirkei Avos (Chap. 1, Mishnah 14) there is a statement. If I am not for myself, who is for me? When I am only by myself, what am I? And if not now when? Rabbi Yitchok Meir Alter explains this to mean that every person has his own unique contribution to make to this world. If I won't do mine, who will? However, my contribution fits into a bigger picture, and I must recognize that I am not alone in this world. Lastly, each moment is unique, and has its own contribution to be making. If I don't work on this moment's job now, when will I do it? The next moment is unique with its own job that needs to be done.

This also illustrates the importance of action to the exclusion of talking about it more than necessary. This trait is the way of our forefathers and the righteous men who followed them. This is what the Jewish nation meant when they said "we will do and we will hear," when they received the Torah. This is our heritage.

Good Shabbos!

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