

SERVING G-D WITH HAUGHTINESS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's
Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 361, Bankruptcy. Good Shabbos!*

Haughtiness Which Allows Us To Serve G-d

A pasuk [verse] in this week's parsha teaches that a person is not allowed to be a false (bribed) witness [Shemos 22:1]. The Talmud [Sanhedrin 29a] describes that we frighten the witnesses so that they will be encouraged to tell the truth. One opinion suggests that we tell them (based on a verse in Proverbs) that false testimony causes drought, which ultimately causes famine. A second opinion counters that this will not scare the witnesses because they can rationalize that they are not farmers, so they are not directly effected by drought. Another opinion suggests that we tell them (based on another pasuk in Proverbs) that false testimony causes a plague, which leads to illness and death. The Talmud responds that this too might not scare them because they may have the fatalistic attitude that "everyone dies when his time is up". Finally the Gemara concludes that we tell them "you will appear to the people who hired you as despicable people of infinitesimal moral value". We tell them that selling their integrity for money will make them appear to me miserable worthless people in the eyes of those who hired them. This, the Gemara concludes, will frighten them into telling the truth.

This appears to be a very strange Gemara. How is it that their love of money might blind them to the threat of drought and plague, yet not blind them to the threat of appearing to be miserable people?

Rav Henoch Leibowitz says that we learn an interesting insight into the personality traits of people from this Gemara. A person's sense of self and personal pride in who he is may be more important to him than even his money or his very life. People cannot exist without a sense that they are people of worth and value. A person needs to feel that he has scruples and morals - and that other people recognize that fact.

He says that we see the same principle from another teaching of our Sages, found in the Medrash Rabbah on this week's parsha. The pasuk says, "If you will lend My nation money..." The Medrash comments that the most difficult type of suffering that one can ever experience is poverty. The

Medrash says that G-d gave Job the choice of suffering physically or becoming destitute. Job responded that he would rather suffer any punishment in the world other than poverty. He would rather experience anything other than the humiliation of going to the market place and not having any money to buy the basic needs of life.

Why was this so? It was not because Job loved money. It was because the humiliation of being penniless and destitute destroys a person's sense of self. That sense of self was more precious to him than his physical well-being.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in Shaar HaAvoda [the Gate of Service] that a person must realize his self worth and that of his ancestry. He needs to feel that he is a 'somebody' and that he has importance. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that when a person is confronted with the temptation to do something that is inappropriate, his sense of worth and his sense of aristocracy will stop him from sinning. He will be embarrassed to do such a thing because of his own self-worth and he will be embarrassed because of his parents.

A person can appeal to a healthy self-image to protect him from moral shortcomings. However if a person sees himself as a worthless low-life, he has nothing to which he can appeal. Dr. Abraham J. Twerski always mentions that the way his father, of blessed memory, would chastise his children was by telling them "es past dir nisht" (this is unbecoming of you). If we do not have a father around to tell us "es past dir nisht", we sometimes need to tell this to ourselves. "This is unworthy of me. I am bigger than this. This is beneath me."

Rabbeinu Yonah writes that this is "approved haughtiness", and is a primary entrance-way to proper service of G-d.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Mishpatim are provided below:

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