

values of honesty and integrity. Together they did further investigations and to their immense relief discovered that there was indeed such a machine in a particular hospital in New Jersey. The insurance company had no choice but to cover the costs. His wife was treated there and was cured.

TORAH GEMS

למה תוקה שטור כי תשטור עניני תכנונים ויסלף זבויי צדיקים וגוי (יא-כז)

The *gemara* (כתובות קח.) details the severity of punishment for one who accepts bribery. "*Because bribery will blind the eyes of wise men*" - *Even a very wise person who accepts bribes will not leave this world before his heart becomes sealed up. 'And turns away the words of the righteous*" - *Even a pure tzadik who accepts bribes will not leave this world before his mind becomes demented.*" The question is asked: the *Torah* calls these people "wise men" and "righteous" - how can one who accepts payoffs in order to skew the wheels of justice be termed a *tzadik*?

A true story that occurred years ago could be used to illustrate this point. A litigant in a *din-Torah* rightly suspected that his opponent had bribed the *dayan* - judge, in his favor. Thus, when he lost the case, he insisted that they submit the decision to one of the authoritative *Torah* scholars for concurrence. The *posek* properly reviewed the case and concluded that the *dayan* had indeed ruled wrongly, further instructing him to reverse his opinion immediately. The *dayan* refused to retreat.

"My logic and judgment is correct," he argued brazenly, "and is supported by the opinion of the **Chasam Sofer**," he continued, citing the particular source in the responsa. The *posek* then proceeded to show him that he had completely distorted the renowned sage's position to favor his "client."

The *Torah* is stressing that such a judge will himself distort the words of the *tzadikim*, twisting their holy wisdom to the benefit of one he favors. He deliberately misconstrued the words of the great Chasam Sofer, in order to suit his own interests.

עני ואמרו ודינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה וכי (כא-ז)

When the body of a murder victim is found between two cities, the Elders of the closest city must perform the *erufa*; the neck of a calf is broken as an atonement for the murder victim. The Elders must then state that they did not kill the man. The meaning of their statement is that they did not see the victim leave their city without food or proper escort. It is apparent that the *Torah* is equating negligence in feeding or escorting a guest with murder. But how could the Elders be responsible for his demise, even in the slightest way, if all they may have neglected was escorting him out of town?

R' Henach Leibowitz Shit'a gives the following analysis: Escorting someone as he leaves your home does not physically aid him. Rather, it shows sensitivity for your guest and underscores the fact that you care for his well-being. The *Torah*, with this *mitzva* of *eglah arufa*, is teaching us that merely giving moral support and displaying concern for a friend's welfare is as important as feeding him and taking care of his physical requirements. Had the Elders not escorted their guest it would have been, literally, a "life and death" issue.

We can now comprehend the awesome responsibility and tremendous power inherent in the *mitzva* of *chesed* - kindness. If the Elders of the town had not fed the wayfarer, the *Torah* would have considered it tantamount to murder. On the other hand, merely walking a block with the traveler would have instilled within him the courage to meet and beat any challenge waiting for him on his way. Showing warmth and kindness to any Jew, certainly our friends and family, is much more than a common decency - it is a responsibility.

ימי חייו" - כל יום הוא חלק מהחיים שלי, כל יום הוא תקופה שלילמה של נסינות שונים, כי יצור של אדם מתגבר עליו כל יום, מתגבר ומתחדש בו בכל יום ממש - אפילו כשהוא מלך ישראל, המושלם בנפשו. ותכלית הקריאה היומיומית היא "למען לעמד ליראה" - לא די לו בכל מה שלמד בעבר, בכל הידיעות הרבות שרכש לו בעת לימודו, אלא הוא חייב לעמוד ליראה, להתרחק כל יום מחדש ללמוד וליראה. ולא עוד,

מעשה אבות....סימן לבנים

וראו השפטים היטב והנה עד שקר העד שקר ענה באחיו וגוי (כט-יח)

A woman living in New Jersey became seriously ill. Her illness was such that it would require hospitalization and large doses of medication. However, there was a certain machine available in New York which could help alleviate her condition. This new medical marvel was not easy to come by; aside from the fact that the cost of the machine was extremely prohibitive and she would not be able to afford the cost on her husband's meager salary, their New Jersey insurance company would not cover out-of-state treatment. No amount of pleading with the obstinate insurance company could change their policy and this unique option was fast becoming a non-option. People told the couple that if they gave a New York address and quickly switched to a New York insurance company whose policies did cover use of this machine, then they would not have to pay. There was not much danger that the company would investigate whether they indeed lived in New York.

They were reluctant to proceed with a falsehood, even if the treatment was life-saving, but a friend insisted, "You are required to use that address! This is a matter of נפח נפש - a question of life and death and it is permitted to be done!"

This line of reasoning put the honest husband and wife in a predicament. The woman was still reluctant to benefit from a lie, saying, "We have always been completely honest; shall we now save my life with a lie?" She and her husband decided to consult with a Rabbinic authority and find out, once and for all, if what their friends were telling them were correct. In a case of life and death, such as this, were they permitted to bend the truth to suit their needs.

They went to see the renowned **Sammar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum ZT"L**, to present him with their dilemma. But the conversation did not last long. Upon hearing the question, he asked incredulously, "You would say a lie?"

The husband and wife looked at each other. "But *Rebbe*," the husband spoke imploringly, "it is a question of *pikuach nefesh*, saving my wife's life."

The *Rebbe* was uncomprehending. "Do you mean to tell me that people die in New Jersey and in New York they live? The *Ribono Shel Olam* has decided in advance that this is the way it should be? I can tell you right now that it's impossible!" The *Rebbe's* eyes burned bright as he spoke convincingly to the husband and told him, "I am sure that if you are faithful to the truth you will find that you can make use of this wonderful machine."

The couple left the *Rebbe* and decided right then and there that they would not relent in any way on their