

Mussar HaTorah

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Parashas Behar

The ultimate definition of financial honesty

How is this different than any other competent judge?

We can maintain opposite feelings

“WHEN YOU SELL ... DO NOT VICTIMIZE YOUR FRIEND.” (VAYIKRA 25:14)

RASHI EXPLAINS THAT HASHEM is commanding us, in this *pasuk*, to refrain from taking advantage of our fellow Jews in monetary matters. The Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 5:3) gives us an even greater insight into the ultimate definition of financial honesty. Hashem told Dovid HaMelech that he was not destined to build the Beis HaMikdash, but rather his son Shlomo would build it after Dovid's passing. People would taunt Dovid, the Midrash continues, in effect asking when will Dovid die and thereby allow the construction of the Beis HaMikdash to commence. Hashem responded to these taunts by telling Dovid, “The *tzedaka* that you do and the laws that you make, are more precious to Me than the Beis HaMikdash” as it says in the Navi (Shmuel II 8:15), “And Dovid did justice and charity.” What is the meaning of “justice and charity”? asks the Midrash. The answer: when Dovid would judge a case, he would make the innocent party victorious and make the guilty person pay.

The Yidei Moshe asks the obvious question: How is this different than any other competent judge? He answers that Dovid would go out of his way to explain the law to both parties until the responsible party would be happy to repay and do what is right. Once he truly understood the wrongfulness of his actions, the guilty person would be elated that Dovid was saving him from sin. He actually felt that Dovid was being kind and charitable to him by deciding against him! In a subsequent comment, the Yidei Moshe asks: Shlomo also did acts of justice and of charity, what was so unique about Dovid? He explains that Dovid's actions were special in that he performed this *tzedaka* simultaneously with his acts of justice. Shlomo, apparently, did them separately.

What is so special about Dovid combining the two actions together? Is there greater reward for two *mitzvos* done together than separately? Furthermore, even according to the Yidei Moshe's explanation, how is Dovid's blend of justice and *tzedaka* greater than the building of the Beis HaMikdash?

When a judge adjudicates a case, he must focus solely on a love of the truth and a hatred of deceit. At the same time that Dovid felt revulsion for the deceit that the thief standing before him was trying to perpetrate, Dovid was able to feel an intense love for the thief as a brother – as a member of *Klal Yisrael*. This love motivated Dovid to encourage the thief to do *teshuvah* and to pay back what he owes with *simcha*. Dovid's ability to feel these conflicting emotions, in their totality, towards the same person at the exact same moment, and use each one to act according to Hashem's will, was an incredible accomplishment. This is the reason why Dovid's capacity to balance the two is more praiseworthy than building the Beis HaMikdash.

The magnificence of the human being includes this remarkable potential: we can, and often must, maintain opposite feelings and use them both at the same time. For example, we often have to disagree with others, sometimes vehemently, and yet we are expected at the same moment to maintain a fierce love to the very same person we are fighting so strongly. May we appreciate the astounding gifts that Hashem has granted us, and utilize these abilities to overcome the challenges of the *yetzer hara* and serve Hashem with all our hearts, our minds and our souls.