



A Taste of Torah Concession Stand

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Writing up a contract can be a harrowing experience, especially if there are a lot of issues that need to be ironed out. But, hey, that's the whole point of the contract; to make sure all the terms and conditions are clearly delineated, specified, detailed, itemized, quantified, enumerated, recorded and documented, so as to avoid any misunderstandings or disagreements down the road. Which is why Avraham's claims to Avimelech, the king of the Philistines, seem to make a lot of sense.

Avimelech comes to Avraham and requests that they sign a non-aggression treaty that will apply to them, their children and their grandchildren. Avraham acquiesces, but, before making the pact, complains to Avimelech regarding the fact that the Philistines were stuffing up the wells he had dug. Seemingly, Avraham wants his rights to the wells to be included in the treaty, and that is why he is raising the issue.

But here's where things get fuzzy. The Torah, when

discussing Avraham's claims against the Philistines, states that Avraham "rebuked" Avimelech regarding the wells. If this is a negotiation, how does rebuke end up in the picture?

The Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez (a classic compendium on the Torah, written in Ladino by Rabbi Yaakov Kuli [d. 1732]) says that Avraham's intent was, in fact, to rebuke Avimelech. Why did Avraham choose this time to rebuke the king of the Philistines? The Me'am Lo'ez explains that when two people seek to make a long-lasting agreement, it is imperative that they resolve any issues that exist between them. If the issues are not resolved at the time of the agreement, they will inevitably surface later, and the pact is doomed to fail. By laying everything on the table, resentments, grudges, disputes and problems can be laid to rest now, before the treaty is signed, thus creating a stable foundation upon which the pact can be built.

Stories For The Soul

Life-Changing

David Hyman of Seattle was the type of person who was always looking to help others, to dispense some friendly advice, to give someone a boost when he really needed it. One day, a salesman knocked on his door. While Mr. Hyman had no interest in purchasing the item being offered, he nonetheless invited the fellow in, offered him a seat and a drink, and began talking with him.

Seeing, during the course of the conversation, that the salesman was having a hard time in life, Mr. Hyman pulled a book off of the shelf near his seat, and said, "I want to give you this book. This book absolutely changed my life! Read it well, and it will offer you a whole new perspective on life." The salesman departed with the book, and the two men never saw each other again.

Mr. Hyman passed away in 2009, and the family he left behind moved to Baltimore. But, several years ago, the Hymans' neighbor in Seattle received a knock on the door - it was the salesman who had visited the neighborhood years earlier. The fellow told the neighbor about his meeting with Mr. Hyman, and related, "My family immigrated from Vietnam, and we had a hard time here in America. One of my brothers became a professional hit man, another a drug dealer. I was trying to scrape by as a salesman, when

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Kollel Happenings

RAV SCHWAB ON CHUMASH AVAILABLE FROM KOLLEL

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Interpersonal Issues

The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

Although it may not necessarily be permitted to inform a potential business partner of his would-be partner's financial instability, as discussed last week, that does not mean that one may advise someone to go into business with another whose financial situation could be

a liability. There is a big difference between sharing information which can be damaging, and giving advice which can be damaging. Once again, competent Rabbinical advice must be sought to clarify what should and should not be said.

Ask the Rabbi Dress Rehearsal

Ira Widman from Widman, NJ wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is it prohibited to put on and take off two garments at the same time? It seems that it comes from a kabbalistic idea that I don't quite understand.

Dear Ira,

The Ben Ish Chai explains that this is because a certain spiritual existence is situated around the human body and between the layers of garments he wears. It is a sort of

shielding against any spiritual mishap. One has to remove pieces of clothing one at a time for this entity to depart, and to put them on also one at a time for it to take its place again. If one removes two pieces of clothing at once he is "trapping" this entity which, after being submitted to such a humiliation, will not return again. Subsequently, the human will be unguarded against spiritual mishap, i.e., forgetfulness.

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your former neighbor gave me encouragement and a book that he said would change my life. Well, I read that book, and it was, indeed, a game-changer. I put my life together, and today I am a successful manager in a prominent company. All thanks to Mr. Hyman's encouragement."

Avraham Avinu was the paradigm of *chessed*, loving-kindness. The Torah details how his *chessed* included all people, regardless of their station in life. We, too, must follow his example and help those in need, regardless of their stature or prominence.