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בס"ד

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Approbation

My affection for a dear friend has prevailed over the constraints of time, and I am pleased to write an approbation and extend my blessings to my esteemed friend, HaRav HaGaon R. Aryeh Dovid Wasserman, *shlita*. With Hashem's help, he goes from strength to strength, writing works which are of great benefit for the public, like his earlier books, *Hegyonei HaParashah* and *Otzar HaKippah*.

His latest book, on the *halachot* and proper conduct related to the workplace, deals with a topic that is too often neglected. These matters are not sufficiently studied and clarified on a practical level. Those who seek to support their families in a dignified manner are not aware of how much care, thought, and inquiry are required to determine the character and integrity of their employers, the modesty and propriety of their co-workers, the nature of the work, and the work environment in general, with all their halachic ramifications. Unfortunately, in our times there are many pitfalls in the workplace, ranging from the lack of modesty and insufficient separation between men and women, to exposure to the destructive influence of modern technology. These problems and many more have claimed many victims, and are a serious risk to the stability of Jewish homes.

There is no question that these issues need to be addressed and strengthened. The author, *shlita*, has invested much effort in bringing together important material related to the workplace. This distinguished book incorporates the *mitzvah* of Torah study as well as great benefit to the public.

I conclude with heartfelt blessings to the esteemed author, *shlita*. May he be privileged to write additional works, "to learn and to teach, to keep and to do." May the merit of Torah study and his efforts on behalf of our people protect and preserve him, and may he serve Hashem for many long, good and healthy years in the Holy Land, continuing his commendable endeavors for Torah, in good health, with Heavenly light and all the best, materially and spiritually, for himself and his family. Amen, so may it be His Will.

Signed in honor of the Torah and those who love its study,



Handwritten signature of Rabbi Yaakov Hillel.

Handwritten signature of Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch.



Handwritten note: זכרנו לראשון לציון

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Part One

APPEARANCE MATTERS

ACTING LIKE A BEN TORAH

1

UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Kiddush Hashem in the Workplace

As a religious Jew, I feel that there is always a pressure on me, particularly in a secular or non-Jewish environment, to be the best representative of the Torah-observant community I can possibly be. I know that if I mess up, people are not just going to say, “He is having a bad day.” They are going to say, “He is a religious Jew, and that’s what they are like.” So I know that whatever I do will be either a *chillul Hashem* or a *kiddush Hashem*. This is why I feel the pressure, and this is why I want to act in such a way that I will earn the respect of my peers—whether they are non-Jews or secular Jews—so that they will go on to have a positive impression of all religious Jews. How best can I do that without compromising any of my religious principles?

I am a certified public accountant. When I find that my fellow *frum* Jews are cheating the government—which the government is bound to find out about—what must I do?

Do I have a responsibility to prevent a *chillul Hashem* that I fear is bound to come?

AS RELIGIOUS JEWS, we inevitably attract notice when we venture out into the world. This means that our behavior will always be subject to an extra degree of scrutiny by non-Jews, and it will reflect on *all* Jews. If we work in a Jewish but secular environment—as is common in Israel—our behavior will likewise reflect on all *frum* Jews as a whole. In both cases, we will either be respected specifically as Torah-observant Jews—this is a *kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of G-d’s name, which brings honor to His Torah and the Nation of Israel—or our behavior will cause us to be disliked, also specifically as Torah-observant Jews, which could constitute a *chillul Hashem*, a desecration of G-d’s name, and reflect very badly on the entire Nation of Israel.

Yosi Heber, president of Oxford Hill Partners and former executive at Kraft General Foods and Dannon, learned this the hard way, as he writes in *The Ethical Imperative: Torah Perspectives on Ethics and Values*:

If an employee is a non-Jew, he or she can be perceived in the eyes of an employer in one of three ways: liked by people, disliked by people, or middle of the road...If the person is a frum Jew, however, there are only two possibilities: either you will be respected because you are a frum Jew (and you create a kiddush Hashem), or you’ll be disliked because you are a frum Jew (and that can lead to a chillul Hashem). You cannot and will not ever be accepted as “one of the boys.” There is simply no middle ground for you in a corporate environment.¹

These are high stakes, requiring an ongoing, conscious effort on our part to make everything we do a *kiddush Hashem*.

1 Rabbi Nisson Wolpin (ed.), *The Ethical Imperative: Torah Perspectives on Ethics and Values* (ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, 2000), p. 56.

WHAT IS A KIDDUSH HASHEM?

Practically speaking, what constitutes a *kiddush Hashem*?

The Talmud records Abaye's teaching that the Torah commandment, "You shall love Hashem your G-d,"² means, "You shall make the name of Heaven beloved."³

In other words, not only should we personally love Hashem; we should inspire others to love Hashem as well.

The Talmud goes on to spell out how our behavior will appear to those who will see us acting ethically and who will say, "Look at this person who has learned Torah—look how beautiful his conduct is, how refined his deeds are." However, if our business dealings are not honest, and our interactions with others are not pleasant, they will look at us and say, "Look at this person who has learned Torah—look how perverse his deeds are and how ugly his behavior is."

The *Aruch Hashulchan* clarifies:⁴

Doing business faithfully doesn't mean not stealing or falsifying weights and measures, for those matters don't fall into this category, and anyone who commits those sins is completely wicked. Theft and fraud are forbidden, whether the victim is Jewish or not; in both cases, one violates a Torah prohibition, as the Rambam writes⁵ and as stated in the Tur and Shulchan Aruch.⁶ Rather, the intent is that one be a man of his word. When he says that his merchandise cost him such and such and that it's good quality, he shouldn't lie, even slightly. He should conduct business pleasantly, speak nicely, and not yell or accuse or get angry. That way, even his business ethics have a good reputation, his livelihood is assured, and everyone trusts him. "Kindness will encompass one who trusts in Hashem."⁷

2 Devarim 6:5.

3 Yoma 86a.

4 *Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim* 156:3.

5 *Rambam, Hilchos Geneivah*, ch. 1.

6 *Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 348.

7 *Tehillim* 32:10.

Practically speaking, we only have two options: either we create a *kiddush Hashem* by the way we conduct ourselves in the workplace, or we cause a *chillul Hashem*. There are no other possibilities. “Neutral” is not one of the options. If the image we present is not positive, it will be negative. It can be only one or the other.

Yoni, a businessman whose work requires him to travel to Asia, South America, Europe, and Africa, has experienced challenges and anti-Semitism in the workplaces of many different cultures. But he also has experienced positive reactions to his allegiance to Torah law. In one instance, he had a long shot at a deal, but, to his surprise, he won the contract. Yoni decided to follow up and ask why he was chosen, and the owner of the company responded that it was because during their lunch meeting, every time Yoni would eat, he would bless the food first. The owner said that anyone with that much gratitude, who can understand that all good things in life come from a greater source, is someone with whom he wants to be in business.

Joe, whose family fled Nazi Germany when he was a child, encountered a great deal of anti-Semitism and unwillingness to accommodate the needs of a Torah-observant Jew in his early days as a CPA; he solved these by starting his own firm in the late 1950s. One of his important clients lived in Pennsylvania, and over thirty years, this client treated him very well—he would give Joe a private room in his house to daven *Minchah* and always treated him respectfully. Once or sometimes even twice a month, Joe would drive out to Pennsylvania, which was a three-hour round trip, to meet with this client. But then, the client’s business hit hard times and he went bankrupt. Joe didn’t want to cause a *chillul*

Hashem by having the client say, “I’ve paid this Jew on time for thirty years, but now that I hit some rough times, he dropped me. All these Jews care about is money.” So Joe made a *kiddush Hashem*—he continued to service this client, making the long drive and doing the work free of charge.

THE RISK OF CHILLUL HASHEM

We learn from Chazal that the risk of causing a *chillul Hashem* escalates depending on who we are and how others perceive us. For example, we read, “Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Any Torah scholar [*talmid chacham*] with a stain on his clothing is deserving of death.”⁸

Understood simply, this means that a *talmid chacham* should be careful to wear clean, neat clothing, in keeping with the dignity of the Torah he has learned.⁹ But if he doesn’t, why should he be deserving of death? By way of explanation, the *Meiri* writes that a “stain” includes a deficient character trait.¹⁰ He goes on to state that a tiny stain, which would go unnoticed on a piece of coarse fabric, would be very obvious on a fine, expensive garment. So, too, a greater degree of refinement is expected of Torah-observant Jews, and they cannot allow themselves even a minor character fault. In the eyes of others, they represent the Torah. So where their behavior is concerned, everything counts.

I have a tendency to forget myself sometimes and deal with people in a high-handed way. This is because I have a low tolerance threshold for people who don’t “get it,” and that brings out the worst in me. One instance in particular comes to mind. It was many years ago and I don’t recall the details,

8 *Shabbos* 114a.

9 See *Rashi’s* commentary on the above.

10 *Meiri, Beis Habechirah, Shabbos* 114a.

but I do recall the feedback I received from my manager. I was working with a diverse group of people, one of whom was Asian. In a group meeting, I took this person to task, and I did not do it nicely. Afterward, my manager talked to me about it. He pointed out the differences between the culture I was raised in (as a religious Jew) and that of the Asian employee, and how important it was for him to “save face.” That taught me an important lesson—not just that there was a cultural factor I needed always to consider, but that I had acted in violation of halachah by embarrassing this person and treating him with a lack of respect. And my behavior had caused a *chillul Hashem*.

As a senior partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, I was shocked when a non-Jewish colleague asked why another Jew—who took off early to supposedly keep Shabbos—was seen in a bar on Friday night. I answered that this was definitely not OK and that I would speak to him. I called the guy and told him that whatever he wanted to do behind closed doors was one thing, but going out to a bar on Shabbos when his colleagues were staying late working was nothing less than a huge *chillul Hashem*.

Chazal also ask, “What is considered a *chillul Hashem*?” Rav answers, “If someone like me were to buy meat from the butcher and not pay for it promptly.”¹¹

The *Maharsha* points out that Rav did not say, “If someone like me would not pay the butcher at all, it would be a *chillul Hashem*.”¹² He did not even suggest such a possibility. He was talking about a situation that

11 *Yoma* 86a.

12 *Maharsha, Yoma* 86a.

would only create the impression that he was not going to pay. Giving the butcher reason to believe he would evade paying was the *chillul Hashem*. If his actions would only arouse suspicion or concern, that would be enough to constitute a *chillul Hashem*, even if what he did was harmless and entirely legitimate. According to the *Maharsha*, then, the gauge of *chillul Hashem* is how it is viewed in the eye of the beholder.

The *Maharsha* adds that whenever religious people do something so outrageous that their friends would be embarrassed to hear of it, it is definitely a *chillul Hashem*. This is true, he writes, not only of a distinguished person, but even of an ordinary person.

We see that the *Maharsha* takes two factors into consideration in defining a given act as a *chillul Hashem*:

- Is it a major transgression or only a minor transgression?
- What is the standing of the people who commit the transgression—are they important or ordinary?

If an ordinary person commits what is only a minor infraction, it may not have the additional element of *chillul Hashem*. However, if a distinguished person is observed committing even a small transgression, his or her standing turns it into a *chillul Hashem*.

This is an extremely important point on a very practical level. In the workplace, *every* observant Jew has the status of “a distinguished individual.” In the eyes of the world, everything he or she does is relevant. Inevitably, an Orthodox Jew will be viewed under a magnifying glass, by both non-Jews and secular Jews.

People often look up to religious Jews as being motivated by ethics, so you really have to think twice before you speak and make sure that all your actions are moral and ethical. They would be very disappointed to learn that a Torah-observant Jew did something unethical or broke the law. When the Bernie Madoff scandal broke, it didn't escape anyone's attention that Madoff was Jewish. But I recall the head of

our business (a non-Jew) speaking about it, and he said in reference to me, “She is different because she is Orthodox.” This really got across to me the level of responsibility that all *frum* Jews have. People really watch what you do. You don’t realize it, but they do expect something different of you—be it in the way you treat people, the advice you give, or the words you use.

As a tax associate at KPMG, I was asked to participate in my accounting firm’s annual training workshop for summer interns. Just before lunch, I was a bit startled when a woman, who did not look at all Jewish, asked me where the kosher food was. Obviously, she approached me because my *kippah* indicated I would know. However, when I went to check, I discovered that what had been delivered did not have a proper *hechsher*. I made sure the matter was remedied, and I also learned an important lesson: you never know who is watching you. Had I eaten the supposedly kosher food without checking on the *hechsher*, this woman would have done so as well, assuming that I knew better. And if I had been rude or angry about the wrong delivery, those with whom I interacted would have walked away with an unpleasant image of a *frum* Jew. So if your dress indicates that you keep Torah, you must always behave as a *ben Torah*: you never know who is watching or what impact your behavior will have.

CHILLUL HASHEM AND NON-JEWS

Certain actions—theft being an obvious example—are Torah-ordained prohibitions. If the victim of the theft is a non-Jew, the transgression by the Jew is compounded by the additional element of *chillul Hashem*.¹³

13 See *Tosefta*, *Bava Kama* 10:15; *S’mag*, *Lavin* 152; *Hagahos Maimoniyos*, *Hilchos Gezeilah* 1:2.

If a Jew lies to or steals from a non-Jew, such actions are a *chillul Hashem* because they reflect badly on the Torah and on the entire Nation of Israel. In the eyes of the non-Jewish world, dishonesty suggests that Jews lack a moral code and raises the question, Why would G-d want a nation of thieves and swindlers to be His “chosen people”?¹⁴ Stealing from a fellow Jew is clearly forbidden—but stealing from a non-Jew casts all of Judaism in a negative light.¹⁵

This is why, when dealing with non-Jewish employers, we are obligated to exercise great care. We should refrain even from practices that are permitted if the employer might view them with suspicion.¹⁶

A few years after I left a job with a non-Jewish firm, my old boss called to ask me a few questions about when various Jewish holidays occur and at what time Shabbos begins. I answered him and then asked, “What’s this about?” His reply made me cringe. “You were one of our best employees,” he said, “so when an ultra-Orthodox Jew applied for a job, we were very happy to take him. But he wasn’t honest, so we let him go, and now he’s suing us for religious discrimination.” As he explained, this Orthodox Jew claimed he needed time off for Jewish holidays that didn’t exist, and he also insisted he needed to leave much earlier than necessary for Shabbos. At first, the company believed him, but then they caught on, so they let him go. His suit was bogus because they had his sign-in sheets, but it was costing them money to defend it. I felt so horrible hearing this. I had worked nine years for that company and everyone who came in contact with me had a positive view of religious Jews. But this guy blew it all in a couple of months. He committed a huge *chillul*

14 *S’mag, Lavin 2.*

15 *Rabbeinu Bechaye, Vayikra 25:50.*

16 *See Meiri, Bava Kama 113b and Bava Metzia 87b.*

Hashem. Afterward, my boss said to me, “Please don’t refer any of your people to us because we won’t take a chance this could happen again.”

Some of my US clients who are in *kollel*—and it pains me to say this—do not report their full income on their tax returns. Not only do they not pay their taxes, but they also claim Food Stamps, Medicaid, Section 8, Financial Aid, Earned Income Credit, etc. I see this when I complete their tax returns, so sometimes I refuse to do the work. When I do take on such a job, I feel very guilty. I know that they will inevitably pay the price because, of late, the US government has caught on to the wholesale cheating by some *kollel* couples and is auditing their returns. When it all comes out, this is going to be a huge *chillul Hashem* for the Orthodox community, if it isn’t already.

CHILLUL HASHEM AND SECULAR JEWS

The risk of *chillul Hashem* is also increased when we interact with secular Jews. Such interactions are commonplace in almost every workplace and industry, but especially so in Israel. Even those working only with observant Jews still come in contact with secular Jews in Israel—for example, the secular technician fixing the phone system or the copy machine.

Unfortunately, many secular Jews have negative impressions of the religious and vice versa. As is common of all stereotyping, much of it is simply not true, and if true, it applies only to a small subsection of people in either group who reflect poorly on the rest. Therefore, we need to take advantage of every opportunity in the workplace to make a *kiddush Hashem* and demonstrate that the negative stereotypes are not correct.