

*Fascinating* **INSIGHTS**

## פרשת נצבים-וילך

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## Worthwhile Work Wages

The Cheishev Sofer<sup>1</sup> (1902-1962) brings the following question from the Ksav Sofer: We say משכים אני עמל והם משכימים אני עמל...אני עמל וזהם עמלים אני עמל והם משכימים אני עמל...אני עמל וזהם עמלים אני עמל...ומקבל שכר...<sup>2</sup> I arise early and they arise early: I arise early for words of Torah and they arise early for idle words. I toil and they toil: I toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward. Why is it that when it mentions arising early it says arising early for Torah in contrast to toiling where it doesn't say toiling in Torah? Just as it says it by arising early it should say it by toiling?

When a Jew awakes for Torah, he sets the tone for the entire day and so when he is working he conducts himself properly and deals honestly,<sup>3</sup> in accordance with the Torah.<sup>4</sup> When it says in this tefila עמל, toil, it doesn't refer to toiling in Torah, rather it means when you toil at your job. So even though you are toiling at work and not in Torah you still receive reward as the tefila continues אני עמל ומקבל שכר, I toil and receive reward, because you live the teachings of the Torah in all your dealings throughout the day.

Although that refers to reward in the next world, one gains in this world when he acts in accordance with the Torah. A Jew that had an important business meeting during the Nine Days asked R' Moshe Feinstein whether he may shave his beard. He explained, "There will be non-Jews at the meeting, and they will look at me strange

with my unkempt, shabby beard. This meeting has the potential to earn me a lot of money, but without a shave, it might not happen.” R’ Moshe told him that he must not shave. In the end, the person didn’t listen and he shaved. The day of the meeting came and it began very well. However, when they were about to finalize the deal, one of the non-Jews there asked how do we know we can trust you? He replied, “I am a religious Jew, and the Torah obligates us to deal honestly in business. Our word is a word...” The non-Jew retorted, “You’re a Jew? So where is your beard? I know that during these weeks, Jews don’t shave their beard. I see that you aren’t loyal to your own religion. How can we trust you to be honest in business?” And in the end the deal fell through.<sup>5</sup>

In 2016, Mr. Shlomo (Sol) Werdiger, CEO of Outerstuff, a company that produces sports apparel, received a phone call from Mr. Oh Joon, the South Korean U.N. Ambassador, asking to meet him for lunch at a Kosher restaurant in Manhattan. Although Shlomo didn't know the purpose of the meeting, he agreed to meet with Mr. Joon. When they met, Mr. Joon told him the following, "I have always heard negative stereotypes about Jews and Israel, and I took it at face value. Then, my daughter took an internship working on design in your company. Throughout the year, she has been telling me how wonderful it is to work at your business." Mr. Joon continued, "There are four areas which stood out and impressed my daughter. 1) Every day, at 1:30 p.m., no matter what was going on at the office, all the men including those from neighboring offices, retreated into a room to pray with sincerity and calm. 2) Every Friday the office shut down early in the afternoon in preparation for your holy Sabbath and is closed on the Sabbath – this includes all workers no matter which faith or religion they maintain. 3) My daughter observed that each petitioner for charity – and there were many – were treated with respect and left with a check in hand. 4) My daughter was treated with the utmost respect and dignity." Because of the amazing experience and lessons the company taught his daughter, Mr. Joon took out his checkbook and was ready to write a check returning all his daughter's earnings! Mr. Werdiger wouldn't hear from it. "Your daughter worked and earned her salary and rightfully deserves her pay, and I will not accept any remuneration." Then the ambassador relayed the following: "As you know, I have voting privileges at the U.N. Because of my renewed appreciation of the Jewish people, I abstained from voting on resolutions against Israel on three occasions. At one resolution I was the ninth vote needed to pass the motion and resolution against Israel and because I abstained, it didn't pass!" Mr. Werdiger said that no one at the office had any idea that this girl was the daughter of an ambassador and no one ever imagined what type of impact their typical conduct at work had on her or how this impacted the votes against Israel.

When R' Shmuel Vosner counseled people about honesty in business, he would cite the *Be'er HaGolah*<sup>6</sup> that says:

<sup>1</sup> This was authored by R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, who was a descendent of the Chassam Sofer and the oldest son of the Da'as Sofer. He taught in the Pressburg yeshiva from 1925 and served as a substitute for his father in the city rabbinate. Together with his father, they established the Pressburg yeshiva in Yerushalayim.

<sup>2</sup> In the tefila after learning and at a siyum.

<sup>3</sup> The Klausenberger Rebbe once said that there has never been a time that it was so easy to be an honest Jew (an *erlich yid*). And there was never such a time that it was so hard to want to be an honest Jew.

<sup>4</sup> R' Pam once told an accountant that to be successful at work you need to be honest, friendly and a hard worker.

<sup>5</sup> It has been said that non-Jews respect Jews that respect Judaism and non-Jews are embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed by Judaism.

<sup>6</sup> Choshen Mishpat, 348:2. This was authored by R' Moshe Rivkash (1596-1672). In 1655, when crowds of Cossacks came upon Vilna and committed widespread massacres, R' Rivkash fled the city along with R' Shabsai Kohen (author of the Shach), R' Aharon Shmuel Kaidanover (author of Birkhas Hazevach) and R' Efraim Hakohen (author of the Sha'ar Efraim). [In the introduction to his sefer Be'er HaGolah, R' Rivkash describes the terrors of that experience. He writes that he fled

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<sup>18</sup> In light of this we can understand why *אשת חיל* is said upon the entry of Shabbos.