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Emes Ve-Emunah

A Forum for Orthodox Jewish thought on Halacha, Hashkafa, and sociological issues of our time.

About Me

NAME: HARRY MARYLES **LOCATION:** CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Much of who I am is based on the philosophy of my primary mentor, Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik from whom I received my rabbinic ordination. It is also based on a search for spiritual Truth from various sources that I have studied. Primarily it is a reflection of my understanding of two great philosophic works, "Halachic Man" and "Lonely Man of Faith" by the pre-eminent Jewish philosopher and theologian, Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Of great significance to me is Dr. Norman Lamm's conceptualization and models of Torah U'Mada. Another individual who helped shape my thinking was Dr. Eliezer Berkovits who introduced me to the world of philosophic thought. My early religious education was most influenced by two pioneers of American Elementary Torah Chinuch, Rabbis Shmuel Kaufman and Yaakov Levi. The Yeshivos I attended were Yeshivas Telshe for early high school and more significantly, the Hebrew Theological College where for a period of ten years my Rebbeim included such great Rabbinic figures as Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, Rabbi Mordechai Rogov, and of course Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik.

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charliehall: " if you are commanded to live a lifestyle and a way of life that will force you to be desperate"...

O.: "I disagree strenuously. Jews are obligated to live by the law of the land _save where it contradict..."

SephardiLady: If the Spinka Rebbe is guilty of what he has been accused of and cooperates with the government,

Yehoshua

Mandelcorn: "Both in this world and probably in the next." Death along with repentance can atone even for desce..."

Anon: If the Spinka Rebbe is guilty of what he has been accused of and cooperates with the government,

YoelB: Most Chasidim

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2007

Cheating the Government

I have been told by several sources that the investigation of the Spinka Rebbe is just the tip of the iceberg. And I have reason to believe that. If the Spinka Rebbe is guilty of what he has been accused of and cooperates with the government, there are going to be a lot more indictments of those people who took advantage of his scheme.

Assuming that the charges against the Rebbe are true then it wasn't just a momentary lapse in judgment on his part - he did not in a moment of desperation decide to offer a wealthy donor an illegal tax deduction. He actually planned an elaborate scheme involving many people in many countries. And then had the arrogance to think he'd get away with it.

It is truly sad that a man who probably did not personally gain from this Chilul HaShem and only wanted to fund his charities and schools has to now being made to pay such a heavy price for it. Both

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in this world and probably in the next.

But he is not the only one responsible for this Chilul HaShem. It takes two to tango. There are probably a lot more people on the other side of this transaction who participated in this scam. Any Jew, especially if they are observant, who laundered their money this way to evade taxes on it are just as guilty of Chilul HaShem as the Spinka Rebbe is if the charges in the indictment are true.

Why do otherwise Frum people do such things? There are many reasons having to do with money power, influence and just plain greed. The attitude is often one that sees an illegal tax deduction as a victimless crime. And they believe that their ends justify their means. Plus there is an arrogance that many have that they are much smarter than a bunch of bureaucratic hacks!. They will therefore never get caught!

But it isn't only a personal rationalization. There are too many people with this attitude to make it a random one. The cause is bad chinuch. Any institution that fails to instill in their students the importance of being honest in all their dealings with all of mankind is failing in its mission.

I have heard the same thing from so many different people about what their Rebbeim taught them when they were in various Yeshivos... that cheating the government is just fine as long as you don't get caught. Just yesterday, a former student of a very prominent Yeshiva in New York told me that this is how the Talmidim in his school were indoctrinated by Rabbeim there! And that Yeshiva isn't one that you might have expected it from. He told me that, based on conversations he's had with friends who attended similar institutions... that it was the rule in the more right wing Yeshivos to teach their students this way.

I know that this is not the way it is taught in every right wing Yeshiva. And by the same token the phenomenon of cheating on taxes is not a RW one. There are all kinds of 'observant' Jews who do that. And I'm sure there will be many people who will testify that their RW Yeshiva didn't teach people to be dishonest to anyone but instead to be scrupulous in their dealings with everyone!

But at the same time, there is enough testimony from those who haven't been taught this way to that allow something like the Spinka



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Rebbe's indictment happen.

There is no doubt in my mind that both types of Chinuch are taught. The only question in my mind is how wide spread is the teaching of young people that it's OK to be unethical in their financial dealings with the government... if they can get away with it.

Don't they know what the consequences of such Chinuch will be? Don't they realize how wrong they are in doing this? How can it be that a Judaism that is supposed to have the highest system of ethics in the world and is supposed to be a light unto the nations teach its people it's OK to cheat if they can get away with it?

What will it take to turn things around so that Rebbeim who teach these kinds of things are disabused of those notions?

This must become a high priority for all rabbinic leadership, no matter what their Hashkafos. If it doesn't, things the resultant Chilul HaShem will be so great it will make what the Spinka Rebbe is accused of look like child's play.

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