

Aharon did so. (8:3)

Rashi quotes the **Sifri** that interprets Aharon *HaKohen's* meticulous conformity to the letter of the law as referring particularly to the manner in which he lit the *Menorah*. *L'hagid shevach shel Aharon she'lo shinah*, "To relate Aharon's praise, that he did not change." He did not want to deviate from the instructions that were conveyed to him. Aharon maintained a spiritual integrity that was unparalleled – a level to which we should all aspire. Seeking out loopholes and living on *heteirim*, *halachic* dispensations, leads one to ultimately disregard and blatantly abrogate Jewish law. A *heter* exists for a reason, to be implemented upon extreme necessity. Prevaricating for convenience or *l'shem Shomayim*, self-interpreted Heavenly intention, is no different than outright lying. *Chosamo shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu emes*, "Hashem's seal is truth": Why should we be any different?

People respect the truth – even if it hurts. Being brutally honest might catalyze pain, but, in the long run, it circumvents even greater and more long-lasting pain. I had occasion this past *Yom Tov* (*Pesach*, when I wrote this) to speak with the son of one of my dear friends, whose untimely passing twenty-one years ago left a tremendous void in his circle of friends. *Reb* Yosef Feigenbaum represented spiritual integrity at its zenith. He was raised with specific guidelines concerning religious observance: guidelines that were underscored by his *rebbeim*; guidelines to which he adhered without compromise. He absolutely refused to deviate from the truth – regardless of the consequences.

His son related that, following years in *yeshivah*, *Reb* Yosef went to business school. One of the courses was not a pre-requisite for a degree, but, in order to skip it, special permission had to be granted by the registrar. Not one to waste time, Yosef sought out the registrar, who was a woman, and asked her how to go about omitting this class.

The woman looked at his grades and course requirements and acquiesced to his request. As he was leaving, she asked, "Can I ask you a question which has been bothering me?" Yosef replied, "Sure, whatever you like."

"I am engaged to a fine young man, who happens to be Jewish. I am not. Our wedding date is scheduled for next week. My question is: How does Judaism view interfaith marriage? While my fiancé is clearly not observant, I would like to know what I am getting myself into."

Yosef was not one to sugarcoat the truth. A Biblical prohibition of such epic proportion was undeniably something he could not camouflage. This is a transgression that undermines the very underpinnings of our faith and has been destroying the integrity of the Jewish bloodline. Furthermore, Yosef was incapable of *shinui*, deviating from the truth. He told it like it was, and he let the proverbial chips fall where they may. He replied, "When a member of the Jewish faith intermarries, his or her parents traditionally tear their garments and sit *shivah*, observe seven days of mourning, which is customary when a death occurs within a family. A child who has intermarried

has taken the path of spiritual demise. Your fiancé's parents may not follow this tradition, but you asked how we view intermarriage. Well, now you know.”

The registrar thanked Yosef and bid him good luck with his future. Six months later, Yosef returned to the registrar to have a form signed by her. In the course of their conversation, she related that she had not gone through with the marriage. Although it was merely a week before the wedding, she could not bring herself to be the catalyst of such an anathema – even if her fiancé did not care. She once again thanked Reb Yosef for his honesty. She understood how simple it would have been to avoid the truth. Because Reb Yosef refused to mask the truth, he prevented a Jewish young man from living the life of a lie.