

## And Avraham weighed out to Efron the silver... four hundred Shekalim of silver. (23:16)

Avraham *Avinu* is confronted with one of the greatest challenges of his life. Perhaps it was not a spiritual challenge as much as it was emotional in nature. His wife- his partner in life- the mother of Yitzchak *Avinu*, had just died. The Patriarch had to deal with the funeral arrangements. It was not easy. He wanted a specific burial site, one which had already been used by Adam *HaRishon* and Chavah. He was determined to obtain this specific site. Efron owned it, and he was asking an exorbitant sum of money for its purchase. Avraham paid. No problem. It was for his Sarah. End of story.

The **Ramban** relates the story of the sale and adds the following: "With the generosity of his heart," Avraham settled with Efron. How does "generous" apply to a business deal? Efron was ripping him off. Avraham was pushed against the wall. There was no dissuading Efron. The Patriarch had no other choice but to pay. Why call him "generous"?

**Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl**, explains that Avraham's generosity was expressed in the manner in which he paid for the burial site. It is not what he did, but how he did it. No haggling, no *kvetching*. Efron stated a price – albeit extortionate – Avraham paid with a smile. The Patriarch needed the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*. Thus, it was necessary to purchase it at any price. Efron was being a petty cheat by taking advantage of the aged widower, but, unfortunately, he had the keys. He could charge whatever he wanted. Avraham paid – and he did not complain. Efron's profit had no bearing on Avraham's decision to pay.

There are those of us who, when faced with a financial proposition, back out from laying out the money. This is despite the awareness that it is necessary, important – even profitable. We instead choose to be without it, because, although the price may be within reach of our ability to pay, we have a problem with allowing the "other fellow" to make such a profit. Avraham *Avinu* was not affected by this pinheadedness. He gave Efron the funds with a complete heart. This is the meaning of generosity – no holds barred, no attitude, pure and simple wholeheartedness in giving.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* derives from Avraham's approach what is to be the proper attitude we should maintain towards our material bounty. Money is a gift from the Almighty, but with strings attached. He wants us to use it properly to stimulate and enhance *mitzvah* performance. Thus, we have no right to spend foolishly, to live beyond our means. Money exists for a purpose. When the purpose emerges, we should spend the money with no qualms. The **Chazon Ish** once said that if we decide that it is necessary to purchase a certain object, then parting with one million dollars should be no problem. Likewise, we should be as meticulous in guarding every dollar that could later be used for a *mitzvah* performance. This explains why certain people whom we know are quite wealthy, at times come across as being miserly, when, in fact, they give *tzedakah*, charity, as if there is no tomorrow. They are just careful with their G-d-given gift. The **Chafetz Chaim** would say: "People

say that time is money. I say money is time.” Every penny a person earns represents precious time that he invested. Time/life is G-d's greatest gift. We may not squander a moment. Spending money frivolously reflects a callous attitude towards the gift of time.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* concludes with the notion that our financial success in life and our material wealth have no intrinsic value, other than the good deeds they enable us to execute. Having money and not spending it wisely undermines one's success. When we begin to fall in love with money, when it becomes something we hoard for its own sake, we become trapped in what will become a life of misery and dissatisfaction. It will never be enough. We will always want more and refuse to share. The obsession will drive us to the point that we will lose whatever relationships we have developed, because our money will supersede them. We will never have enough, as our desires far exceed our wealth. If we remain objectively aloof, however, detached from our money, realizing that, in fact, it is not our money, but Hashem's money, which He has lent to us to use for a specific purpose, then we remain its master – not vice versa.