**HONESTY I: Honoring Your Word**

*Over winter break, you told your friend you would go with him on a road trip over the summer. Now the summer is here, and you realize that between work and studying, you just don’t have the time. Are you obligated to honor your word?*

**Bava Metzia 44a , MISHNA**

**MOVABLES ACQUIRE COINS, BUT COINS DO NOT ACQUIRE MOVABLES. THIS IS THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE: ALL MOVABLES ACQUIRE EACH OTHER. E.G., IF [A] DREW INTO HIS POSSESSION [B'S] PRODUCE WITHOUT PAYING HIM THE MONEY, HE CANNOT RETRACT. IF HE PAID HIM THE MONEY BUT DID NOT DRAW INTO HIS POSSESSION HIS PRODUCE, HE CAN WITHDRAW. BUT THEY [SC. THE SAGES] SAID: HE WHO PUNISHED THE GENERATION OF THE FLOOD AND THE GENERATION OF THE DISPERSION, HE WILL TAKE VENGEANCE OF HIM WHO DOES NOT STAND BY HIS WORD. R. SIMEON SAID: HE WHO HAS THE MONEY IN HIS HAND HAS THE ADVANTAGE.**

**Bava Metzia 49a , Gemara**

R. Kahana was given money [in advance payment] for flax. subsequently flax appreciated, so he came before Rab. ‘Deliver [the goods] to the value of the money you received,’ said he to him; ‘but as for the rest, it is a mere verbal transaction, and a verbal transaction does not involve a breach of faith.’ For it has been stated: A verbal transaction: Rab said: It involves no breach of faith; R. Johanan ruled: It does involve a breach of faith.

An objection is raised: R. Jose son of R. Judah said: What is taught by the verse, A just hin [shall ye have]: surely ‘hin’ is included in ‘ephah’? But it is to teach you that your ‘yes’ [hen] should be just and your ‘no’ should be just! — Abaye said: That means that one must not speak one thing with the mouth and another with the heart.

An objection is raised: R. Simeon said: Though they [sc. the Sages] ruled: [The delivery of] a garment acquires the gold denar, but not vice versa: that, however is only the halachah, but they [also] said: He who punished the generations of the Flood and of Dispersion, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah,and the Egyptians at the [Red] Sea, He will exact vengeance of him who does not stand by his word; [and he who makes a verbal transaction effects no title, yet he who retracts therefrom, the spirit of the Sages is displeased with him]!

— It is a dispute of the Tannaim, for we learnt: It once happened that R. Johanan b. Mathia said to his son, ‘Go out and engage labourers.’ He went, and agreed to supply them with food. But on his returning to his father, the latter said, ‘My son, should you even prepare for them a banquet like Solomon's when in his glory. you cannot fulfill your Undertaking, for they are children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But, before they commence work, go out and tell them, "[I engage you] on condition that you have no claim upon me other than bread and beans."’

Now, if you should think that words involve a breach of faith, how could he say to him, ‘Go and withdraw’? — There it is different, for the labourers themselves did not rely [upon him]. Why? Because they knew full well that he himself was dependent upon his father. If so, even if they had [already] commenced work, it is also thus! -Once they have commenced work, they certainly rely [upon him], for they reason: He must have reported to his father, who agreed thereto.

Now, did R. Johanan say thus? But Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in R. Johanan's name: If one says to his neighbour. ‘I will make you a gift’. he can retract therefrom. ‘He can [retract]’ — but that is obvious! Hence [he must have meant], He is permitted to withdraw! — R. Papa replied: R. Johanan admits in the case of a small gift, because he [the recipient] relies thereon.