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Thought Tools

## Believe It or Not

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17th day of Av, 5770

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[Forward to a Friend](#)

“What do you do for a living?” asked my seatmate on the flight to Dallas. “Well,” I responded, “My wife and I create unique and terrific products that make ancient Jewish

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wisdom accessible and useful to everyone. How about you?" He answered, "I'm an accountant and I can't wait to retire." I told him how sorry I was to hear that and why I wrote a book starting off with why one shouldn't describe one's occupation as "making a living" and ending with why one shouldn't retire. We both enjoyed the remainder of the flight discussing how important are the beliefs you hold about your work.

Extracting a Bible from my briefcase, I showed him the following account from the book of Judges, chapter 16: When Delilah entreated Samson to share the source of his strength, he lied to her saying that if the Philistines shackled him with wet string his strength would fail him. When she persisted, he lied again. If only she would bind him with new ropes, he explained, he would be like other men. She continued nagging and Samson explained that if his hair was braided he would weaken. For the third time he lied to her.

Delilah persevered. Finally, exasperated, Samson truthfully said that if his head was shaven, his strength would leave.

*Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart...*

(Judges 16:18)

Why did she believe him? After being lied to three times, she should have been highly suspicious. Yet, Delilah was so confident, that she summoned the Philistine officers to witness Samson's fall.

Contrast Delilah's credulity with Jacob's reaction to his sons: *And they told him that Joseph was alive and that he ruled over*

*all Egypt but his heart rejected it, for he did not believe them.*

(Genesis 45:26)

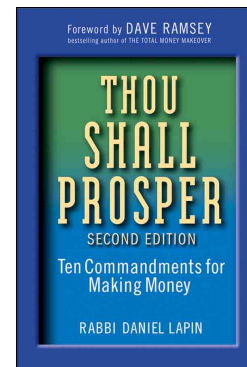
Earlier in Genesis 37, the brothers misled their father into believing that Joseph was dead. Not surprisingly, when they returned from Egypt to announce the astounding news that Joseph was alive, Jacob was skeptical. After lying, most people are not believed.

Yet, the question remains. How did Delilah recognize that Samson was finally being honest while Jacob did not believe that his sons were telling the truth even though they were? Ancient Jewish wisdom points out the most important distinction between the two examples. Samson knew he was lying when he gave Delilah three false explanations for his strength. However, when Joseph's brothers allowed Jacob to draw the conclusion that Joseph was dead, they actually believed that to be true. After all, what chance of survival did Joseph have upon being sold as a slave in Egypt?

There are two kinds of liars: those who know they are lying and those who believe their own lies. Joseph's brothers believed their own lie thus Jacob had trouble discerning when they spoke truth.

Samson knew that he was lying to Delilah those three times,

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## Ask the Rabbi



which made his truthful statement sound quite different. Polygraph machines or lie detectors are used by law enforcement agencies because people who know they are lying have physiological reactions which can be detected. These subtle body signals can also be sensed by some people. However, it is almost impossible for polygraphs or sensitive individuals to detect a lie when the liar believes what he is saying to be true. Belief is so powerful that it can even make a lie behave like the truth. Happily, the power of belief can be harnessed for good. A coach uses it before a game when he helps his team believe it will win. To be successful, sales professionals must believe in the quality and value of their product or service. To thrive in our professions, each of us needs to believe in the value and morality of how we spend our days. Work is not simply what we do as we aim for retirement. You can effectively impact and boost your income by transforming your beliefs. This is of many strategies in my book [Thou Shall Prosper: Ten Commandments for Making Money](#) which is on sale right now. Harnessing your thoughts and actions will yield abundance.

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## Susan's Musings

This week's musing - [One Can't be Undone](#)

Earlier this month one more article extolling smaller families hit the newsstands – it was titled, “One and Done.” It claimed that the notion of the only child being spoiled and maladjusted was unsubstantiated; just a deeply held myth. While conceding possible societal and individual costs if one child families became prevalent, the author argued that in tough economic times, limiting family size offered great benefits.

Only relatively recently has family size become a choice...

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Watch Ancient Jewish Wisdom with Rabbi and Susan Lapin

Dear Rabbi,

What do you mean about an eating disorder being a soul sickness? My sister has an eating disorder and I'm trying to understand it.

Thanks

Donna M.

[See Rabbi Lapin's Answer](#)

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