

Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיזוק (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כהו (רש"י)

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382

Truthfulness Breeds Gain; Lying Breeds Loss

The *middah* of *emes*, truth, and the *middah* of *sheker*, falsehood, both exist — *zeh le'umas zeh*, Hashem creates everything in the world with an equal balance, and there is a *yetzer hara* to lie. However, “falsehood does not have feet” (*Shabbos* 104a). **One will never gain from lying! Even if it seems to a person that he is profiting, in the end he will not gain a thing from his lies.** The Midrash tells us (*Yalkut Noach Remez* 56) that falsehood is the mate of *Pachta*, the force of loss and deficiency — whatever falsehood gains, *Pachta* takes and loses.

This is similar to *chillul Shabbos*. I know about a taxi driver who worked on *Shabbos*, *Rachmana litzlan*. Someone persuaded him to stop working on *Shabbos*, and told him that he'd see for himself what he'd gain. The taxi driver agreed. He noticed that his weekly earnings were identical whether or not he worked on *Shabbos*. He realized that he was not earning anything from working on *Shabbos*. The same is true regarding falsehood. Whatever one gains through falsehood will subsequently be lost.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to truth and falsehood, it also is true regarding all good *middos*. One will not lose from acting with good *middos*. A taxi driver told me about the dispatcher in his taxi company who keeps track of which driver is next on line to get a call. Whenever a call comes in, he sends the driver who's first on line to take the job. Once, the dispatcher skipped him and gave another driver the job instead of him. He kept quiet; he did not react. Right afterward, another call came in. It was a long trip with a substantial financial gain. The dispatcher couldn't skip him a second time, so he secured this long trip, with its financial gain, in the *zechus* of keeping quiet and being *mevater*.

The general rule is that one who acts with good *middos* is *zocheh* to see fruits in this world, as we say in the *mishnah* at the beginning of *Peah*: “These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this world.” Many matters regarding good *middos bein adam lachaveiro* are then mentioned, such as: *kibbud av va'eim* and *gemillus chassadim*. One merits the fruits of these *mitzvos* in this world. [See the Rambam's commentary on *Mishnayos* for his explanation there.] In the same vein, one does not gain anything from falsehood; whatever one gains from falsehood, he will eventually lose. On the other hand,

acting truthfully yields benefit, and one merits seeing fruits in this world.

The Reward for Acting Truthfully and the Gravity of Falsehood

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 97a) relates a famous story that took place in the city of *Kushta*. This is not the same city as present-day *Kushta* (Istanbul); it was a different city where all the inhabitants only spoke the truth. In the *zechus* of this, the city's residents lived till a ripe old age, no one died prematurely. Once, a visitor knocked on one of the resident's door and asked to speak to the man's wife. The woman could not come to the door, and her husband was embarrassed to say the true reason for this, so he lied and said that she wasn't home. Immediately, two of his sons died. When the residents of *Kushta* heard what had happened, they investigated the story. When they found out that he had lied, they banished him from their city so that he would not bring death upon them.

Let us understand why he was punished so severely, that two of his sons died for his little lie. He didn't cause anyone a loss; he didn't gain anything on someone else's account. He only deviated from the truth because he was uncomfortable. So why was he punished for this?

We must answer as follows: Chazal tell us (*Yevamos* 121b) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is exacting with *tzaddikim* like a strand of hair. This is special *hashgachah* for the benefit of the *tzaddikim*. They receive Heavenly supervision to cleanse them of all sin, to remove even the smallest blemish. They are punished in this world even for [things as tiny as] a strand of hair, so that they'll arrive in the World of Truth complete and free of all sin.

Even in *Kushta*, which was a place of total truth — since everyone was so careful in the *middah* of *emes* — Hashem was exacting with them in this matter, and they were punished severely for lying. That is how *hashgachah* works, every person is judged according to his *madreigah*, and in every place, the people are judged according to the *madreigah* of the population there. Therefore, since that man was a resident of *Kushta*, he was punished and two of his sons died.

This shows us how grave falsehood is, and on the other hand, how great is the reward for *middas haemes*. In this *zechus*, they lived a long time. The residents' longevity was the “fruit in this world.”

I think I saw written somewhere that if someone is a truthful person and is careful only to speak the truth, he develops a special sense and can feel truth or falsehood. So when he hears something that is not true, he can feel that it isn't true.

Tefillah and Recognizing the Truth

The *middah* of *emes* is a *madreigah*, and as a result of this *middah*, many *maasim tovim* can become even more special, such as davening with the *middah* of truth. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 19) that when a person with proper (true) intelligence davens, he feels that he is standing and speaking with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu hears him speaking. Even if he can't actually see this, he understands through his intelligence that it is true, that he is standing in front of the King and speaking to Him.

It's well known that both the Chazon Ish and the Brisker Rav *zt"l* would daven with true *hisbatlus hagashmiyus*, nullification of their physical senses, as is written in the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 98:1)* about the pious men from previous generations who, through their *tefillah*, would reach nullification of their physical senses and come close to attaining prophecy. This was due to their feeling that they were standing before the King.

And that is actually the reality — HaKadosh Baruch Hu's "glory fills the entire world" (*Yeshayahu 6:3*), and there is "an eye that sees and an ear that hears" (*Avos 2:1*) — except our dulled senses don't feel it. One must understand it in his heart and mind. And when a person reaches the level of understanding and recognizing that there is "an eye that sees and an ear that hears" and behaves accordingly, he has reached a very high level.

It's obligatory to have this knowledge while davening, as the *Shulchan Aruch* writes, "And he should consider as if the Shechinah is facing him" — each person according to his ability — until reaching the level of nullification of his physical senses, like the Chazon Ish and Brisker Rav whose senses were inactive when they davened. They didn't hear when people spoke to them. Most probably all *gedolei Yisrael* also davened like this, **and this comes from the *middah* of *emes*, as they recognize the truth that they are standing in front of the King and speaking to Him.**

Recognizing *Emes* in Every Action

The above is true in every single action. In the first section of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Rema cites the Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim: Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid hu klal gadol baTorah...* — "'I place G-d before me always' is a fundamental rule in the Torah and of the attributes of the righteous ones who walk before Hashem. For when man is alone in his home, his sitting and his movements and his business cannot be compared to his

sitting and movements and business when he is in front of a great king... All the more so, when a person takes to heart the knowledge that the great King, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Whose glory fills the land, is standing over him and is watching his deeds, he will immediately be filled with awe and submissiveness as a result of his fear of *Hashem Yisbarach* and his constant shame in front of Him."

This also is dependent on one's *middah* of *emes*. One must recognize that there is an eye that sees and an ear that hears, and that it is a "great principle" governing our behavior. As a result, our behavior will be completely different. We've already spoken recently (*Darkei HaChizuk 373*) about the *Shulchan Aruch* we quoted above, how the "*Shivisi*" influences every single detail of our behavior, and this is all dependent on a person's *middah* of *emes*.

Toras Emes* Transforms Man into an *Ish Emes

In *Birkas HaTorah*, we say: "Who gave us the Torah of truth." Perhaps one explanation of this is that the Torah is truth and it also turns a person into a man of truth. Every single word in Torah is true, for example, *dinei mamonus*, and whatever is written in the Torah, it's all true! And one who is involved in Torah becomes a true person!

This is because ***esek haTorah* is clinging to the Torah and HaKadosh Baruch Hu, as Chazal say, "Kudsha Brich Hu, Oraysa and Yisrael are one." This *deveikus* gives us the *middah* of *emes*, for the Torah is *emes* as it states (*Tehillim 119:142*): "And Your Torah is truth"; Hashem's seal is *emes* (*Shabbos 55a*); and at the end of *Krias Shema* we say: *Hashem Elokeichem Emes*, based on: "*VeHashem Elokim Emes*" (*Berachos 14b*). One who is involved in Torah is attached to the Torah and to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and this is the true reality. And as a result, he becomes an *ish emes*, a man of truth!**

The *pasuk* says about Yaakov Avinu (*Bereishis 25:27*), "And Yaakov is an *ish tam*, dweller of the tents." Rashi explains the words "*ish tam*": His mouth is like his heart. This *pasuk* describes two of Yaakov Avinu's good attributes: 1) His heart and mouth were equal, which is the *middah* of *emes*, 2) He was a dweller of tents and learned Torah a lot. Each of these two attributes are dependent on the other, for Torah is *Toras Emes*, and one who is involved in Torah becomes an *ish emes*, a man of truth, and subsequently his mouth reflects what's in his heart and he can't utter any falsehood.

L'Ovdecha B'Emes* — *Tefillah

Davening, too, must be done with the *middah* of *emes*, as we ask: *Ve'taher libeinu l'ovdecha b'emes* — "And purify our hearts to serve You with truth." [And in *Tehillim 145*, *L'chol asher yikra'uhu b'emes* — "To all those who call out to Him with truth."] Serving Hashem

“with truth” means with the truthful feeling of “an eye that sees and an ear that hears,” and when we say “*Baruch Atah*” we feel the “*Atah*,” that is, the mind understands that there is an eye that sees and that we are standing and speaking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

In the *berachah* of *Atah Chonein*, we ask: *Chaneinu me’Itcha deiah binah v’haskel* — “endow us graciously from You with knowledge, insight, and understanding” — these are three levels of understanding. There are two explanations whether this is referring to understanding Torah or general intelligence. Asking “*b’emes*,” truthfully, means that a person believes *b’emunah sheleimah*, with total trust, that his intelligence level is dependent on what Hashem wants. He personally feels that he is lacking intelligence, and Hashem will only give it to him if He so desires. Such a person will beseech Hashem with heartfelt prayers and will wait for his request to be fulfilled. This is called “asking *b’emes*.”

We ask *v’chaneinu*, “give us graciously,” in the plural form, as we are beseeching on behalf of all of Klal Yisrael. This too, must be “*b’emes*” — he must truly care about those who don’t have knowledge, insight, and understanding, and he must really want them to acquire it. So he asks “*Chaneinu*” on behalf of everyone.

The same is true regarding the next *berachah*: *Hashiveinu L’Torasecha* — Bring us back to Your Torah, and bring us close to Your service, and return us in complete *teshuvah* before You,” as well as all the other requests in davening, are in plural. We are supposed to ask for all of Klal Yisrael — and all of these requests are dependent on whether they are “*b’emes*.”

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85b) relates that once Rabbi Chiya and his sons davened at the *amud*. When Rabbi Chiya said “*mashiv haruach*,” gusts of wind blew immediately, and when he said “*u’morid hageshem*,” it began raining right away. The power of Rabbi Chiya’s davening as a *shaliach tzibbur* was so strong, that the world immediately reacted to his requests. This is the power of *tefillah* when it is “*b’emes*.”

A Truthful Person’s Words Are Fulfilled

If someone is an *ish emes*, he merits that his words come to fruition [as is written in *Sefer Chasidim (HeChadash* 1195), “All those who speak truth and don’t want to think about falsehood or speak falsehood... all his thoughts and speech will come to fruition, as it says, ‘You will make a decision and it will be accomplished for you.’”]. All forces of nature will be subservient to a person with the *middah* of *emes*! At first he controls himself, making himself subservient to *emes*, and then it influences the entire Creation, as all forces of nature become subordinate to his utterances.

Of course, this level of the power of *emes* can only occur if a person fulfills all his obligations, whatever is in his

power to do — each person according to his abilities. In *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 26) it says that even a person involved in lowly labor can merit attaining the highest *madreigos* and can even attain *ruach hakodesh* — as long as he utilizes his time *b’shleimus* to fulfill his obligations, in other words, with the *middah* of *emes*.

Taking Care Not to Alter the Truth

Meriting the *middah* of *emes* depends on each person himself. Every person can be truthful and be careful not to utter any untruth.

Regarding Chazal’s statement (*Yevamos* 65b) that it is permissible and even a mitzvah to alter the truth in order to keep the peace, I saw (*Aruch LaNer* on *Yevamos* 65b; see also *Orchos Yosher, Emes*) that this is not referring to outright lies. Rather, it’s talking about changing one’s speech in such a manner that it can have a double meaning, such as when Yaakov Avinu said (*Bereishis* 27:19): “I am Esav your firstborn.” You would think that this is a lie, but Rashi already explained that there’s no falsehood there. Rather, he said: I am the one bringing this to you, and Esav is your firstborn.

Likewise, when Esav suggested to Yaakov (*Bereishis* 33:12–14) that they should travel together, Yaakov told him that he could not because he had young children. He also said that the sheep and cattle didn’t have the strength for such a journey, so he had no choice but to travel slowly, “until I’ll reach my master in Seir.” The Midrash comments on this (*Bereishis Rabbah* 78:14): “Rabbi Abahu said: We reviewed the entire Torah and didn’t find any mention of Yaakov Avinu ever going to Esav in Har Seir. Could it be that Yaakov, who was so truthful, tricked him? However, when would he go visit Esav? In the future. As the *pasuk* states: ‘The saviors will ascend Har Tziyon to judge Esav’s mountain.’” This is the way one is allowed to alter his words in order to keep the peace — in a way that the comments can be interpreted truthfully as well.

Altering the Truth for the Sake of Eternal Life

Maran the Mashgiach of Mir, HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav Yeruchem *zt”l*, had a *talmid* who had come from a distant place to learn in yeshivah. After a while, the *talmid* wanted to go back home and devote his time to other fields. Rav Yeruchem wanted him to stay in yeshivah and learn, and he told him, “If you stay in yeshivah, I’ll have a steady *chavrusa* with you to learn *mussar* together.” That *talmid*, who had seen and recognized Rav Yeruchem’s towering personality, agreed to stay in yeshivah for this. He waited a very long time for Rav Yeruchem to learn with him, but Rav Yeruchem kept pushing him off time after time, and did not keep his word.

The *talmid* asked Rav Yeruchem, “You promised to learn with me. Why aren’t you keeping your promise?” Rav

Yeruchem answered, “I would have told you a thousand lies to keep you learning in yeshivah!” The purpose was to keep him in yeshivah, and this was the greatest favor for him, to merit eternal life and Olam HaBa, in addition to “*ashrecha b’Olam HaZeh*.” Rav Yeruchem altered the truth for the *bachur*’s personal benefit, because this was what he needed and it was for his own good. It is permitted to act this way for this purpose, just as it is a mitzvah to alter the truth for peace — and what is peace? Doing good for others. Therefore, for the purpose of such a great favor of eternal life, as well as “*ashrecha b’Olam HaZeh, v’tov lach l’Olam HaBa*,” it is permissible — and a mitzvah — to alter the truth. There is no prohibition at all.

The explanation of this is that Rav Yeruchem said he’d learn *mussar* with his *talmid*. The very fact that he stayed in yeshivah is like *mussar*, as *mussar* is not simply learning — there’s a purpose to *mussar*, and that purpose is that one’s behavior should be guided by the *mussar*, that the *mussar* should influence his behavior. And this goal was attained just by the fact that he was sitting and learning in yeshivah.

Here’s another story about the *middah of emes*: There was a fire in someone’s house. Usually, when this happens, people hire a lawyer in order to get the most they can from their insurance company. This man did not

hire a lawyer, he filed the claim himself, writing down exactly whatever he remembered, without altering the truth one iota. He only wrote exactly what he was sure about. He brought this claim to the insurance company and they were so impressed by his *middah of emes* that they gave him everything. And this is without hiring a lawyer and without exerting effort. His *middah of emes* made a favorable impression on them. The rule is, one only gains from telling the truth; one does not lose from truth.

This *middah of emes* is something one must get used to. In order to get used to being truthful, one must learn Torah, for Torah is *Toras Emes*, and one must serve Hashem with truth, *l’ovdecha b’emes*. One’s daily behavior should be in line with the *middah of emes*; this provides *zechuyos*. One needs *zechuyos* to be truthful. If a person wants to be truthful, he will have *siyatta d’Shemaya*, as “one who comes to be purified is helped” (*Yoma* 38b). If someone wants to be truthful, Hashem helps him be a truthful person. *Ashreinu*, how fortunate we are, that we can all merit the *middah of emes*!

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להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
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