

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 199

Mishpatim | The Virtue of Truth and The Perils of Falsehood



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת משפטים | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
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500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666



en@h-l.org.il



www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en



HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel



(954) 800-6526



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Parshat Mishpatim

Meet Your Inner Critic

There are certain figures and characters whose impression on their surroundings does not fade even after many years.

You can surely imagine such individuals, who, whether for the good or otherwise, remain etched deep in our memories.

One such figure, who everyone can relate to, is the inner critic, whose business it is to cynically find faults and failures at every turn, and in each of the corners of our persona.

The nickname 'Mr. Critic' that has stuck to him over the years proved itself over time.

"Mr. Critic" does not let anyone pass by his judging eye without receiving scathing critique. Sometimes it remains only in our thoughts, but all too often, it also is expressed in our speech.

I personally tried my best to avoid him. Criticism was never my 'thing.'

But one day, I encountered him when I was alone with my thoughts.

As usual, he fixed upon me his predatory gaze and began at once to hurl criticisms at me.

My first thought was that I simply would ignore the inner cynic, "If I try to prove him wrong, he will get angry and disgrace and belittle me even more."

But afterwards, I mustered courage and challenged him with a question: "Tell me, please, why do you always lie?"

He stared at me with astonished eyes and remained silent. But after a few moments, he said: "Many people have reproved me over the years for my constant criticism. They have claimed that it is a bad trait that stems from limited thinking and a distorted perception of reality."

Parshat Mishpatim - Distance Yourself From Falsehoods

But no one has ever told me that I am a liar. It's my first time hearing that accusation."

"How did you arrive at this conclusion that I'm guilty of lying?" asked 'Mr. Critic' in astonishment.

I replied, "I see that we are not conversing on the same wavelength, and I suggest that we, first of all, clarify matters. Please tell me what you know on the topic of lying, and

I will see if I have anything to add to your words. Then, I will demonstrate the lies you embody."

Surprisingly, "Mr. Critic" agreed and began to explain all that he knew, which was no small amount of knowledge.

In addition, to my great surprise, he spoke extensively on the topic without once voicing any criticism.

Thus, he explained:

Distance Yourself From Falsehoods

This week's Torah portion, Parshat Mishpatim, states: "Distance yourself from a false matter and do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I will not justify the wicked" (Shemot 23:7).

In this verse, we are commanded with a positive commandment to distance ourselves as far as possibly can from falsehood.¹

To quote from Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 74):

"Falsehoods are abhorrent and vile in the eyes of all.

There is nothing more despicable than it, and a curse and evil exist in the house of all who love it, but G-d is a G-d of truth, and all that is connected with Him is solely truth.

Blessing is found only among those who resemble Him in their deeds, being truthful just as He is a G-d of truth, being merciful just as He is known to be merciful,

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

1. Rabbi Yisrael Meir of Radin, of blessed memory, writes (Chafetz Chaim, Petichah - Positive Commandments, Be'er Mayim Chaim section 13): "Through falsehood, one also transgresses a

positive commandment, according to the SeMaG (Positive Commandment 107), and in any case, according to all opinions, it is a negative commandment from the Torah.

Parshat Mishpatim - Truth - Absolute and Unchanging

and being doers of kindness just as He is abundant in kindness.

But anyone whose deeds are the opposite of His good attributes - those who are masters of falsehoods, which exemplifies the exact opposite of His attributes - will receive the opposite of His attributes, the opposite of the blessing that is within Him: a curse and harm, and the opposite of joy, peace, and delight that are bound with Him - namely worry, quarrel, and distress.

Therefore, the Torah warned us strongly to distance ourselves from falsehoods, as it is written: 'Distance

yourself from a false matter.'

Notice that the Torah uses the language of 'distance,' not merely avoidance, because of the great disgust it arouses, something that is not stated in any other transgression of the Torah.

Because of this commandment to distance, our Sages have warned us to not even incline our ear to anything that we suspect of being false, even if we do not know for certain, similar to what our Sages of blessed memory have said (Chullin 44b): 'Distance yourself from ugliness and impropriety and from what resembles it.'

Truth - Absolute and Unchanging

We bring an excerpt from Rabbi Yochanan Salomon of blessed memory ("Ayin Yehudit," Part 5 - p. 449):

"G-d is true and His name is truth, and falsehood is an abomination to Him.

G-d created all existence and reality, and He maintains and gives life to all of His creatures with His unlimited power.

Falsehood is the opposite of reality, and it misleads a person with an incorrect report about reality.

Every untrue statement stands in stark opposition to reality, in opposition to G-d, whose seal is truth.

The greatest example, as well as the source of all falsehoods, is described by the prophet as 'hevel' (futility) and 'ma'aseh

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ta'atuim' (acts of deception) and refers to idolatry, which denies the all-powerful Creator.

Every statement of falsehood inherently affirms idolatry and denies the true G-d.

G-d made man upright, while one who has a lying tongue and a mouth of lies has corrupted the natural foundations of his soul.

No wonder, then, that G-d despises him: 'He who speaks lies shall not stand before My eyes' (Tehillim 101:7). The eyes of G-d 'roam throughout all the earth' (Divrei HaYamim II 16:9), so where can a bearer of falsehoods possibly hide?

A person who does not pay attention to what comes out of his mouth will usually produce all sorts of justifications and rationalizations for his acts.

He may use justifications and say, 'It is just a small lie; it won't

harm anyone. True, it might not be entirely accurate, so what?'

According to this view, the criterion defining what is falsehood is solely measured by the damage it has caused. Thus, if the claim is not sustainable in court for financial compensation, it may not qualify as a 'lie.'

But this is wrong and is a warped view of things.

The standards of truth we are obligated to uphold are fundamental principles of the soul; they encompass every word that comes out of a person's mouth.

It must conform to the external physical reality around us,² as well as to the internal psychological reality that is within us.

This is what is demanded and expected of every person.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

2. We bring an excerpt from Rabbi Moshe Klatzkin ('Beini LeBni, Part 2 - page 132):

It states in the Gemara (Sukkah 46b): "Rabbi Zeira said: A person should not say to a child, 'I will give you something,' and then

not give it to him, because he thus teaches him to lie, as it says: 'They have taught their tongues to speak falsehood' (Yirmiyahu 9:4)."

Our world is a world of falsehood (alma d'shikra), not a world of truth (alma d'keshot),

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and therefore, before we examine the state of falsehood in our children, we must first examine our own standing in this matter.

It is highly likely that we will discover that we ourselves are often caught in various falsehoods toward our children: telling the child that it is late so that he will go to bed quickly, and then suddenly we discover that he knows how to read the clock perfectly. This can happen in endless variations and instances from small inaccuracies to outright lies.

Before we proceed to instill any values in our children, we must first define our own boundaries in that particular area.

Hence, we must ask ourselves: Is it perfectly clear to us how far we are permitted to deviate from the truth for the sake of peace? How do we define this boundary? Does a slight discomfort also count as 'for the sake of peace'?

We might be surprised to discover that in this area it is very difficult to define boundaries, everyone's subjective feelings are different.

For one person, a slight tickle is considered a great need, while for another, a small sting is already 'unbearable.'

Moreover, in this matter we must also estimate the other party's reaction upon hearing the truth - how much it will pain him and how offended he will be.

It follows that the difficulty in defining the boundaries of falsehood exists for us adults as well. Thus it happens that we

promise children various things - but then we forget to keep these promises, or we simply rely on the fact that the child will forget. But the child does not forget easily; we may forget long before he does.

Some people face this issue only rarely, but yet there are other parents who, when they face disciplinary problems, promise the children prizes right and left, and are unable to fulfill these promises. Needless to say, this causes great educational damage.

Even worse is when our children discover outright lies on our part:

A friend calls and expresses the desire to visit Chaim - and the mother tells him that Chaim is already in pajamas, when at that very moment he is still playing and hasn't even had dinner. The mother merely intended to say he is getting ready for bed - but the child heard a blatant lie.

Or consider when he hears his mother telling his father about certain delays she had before getting to a certain task, when instead he saw his mother talking with the neighbor in the stairwell for two hours.

Or the familiar phone response: "Daddy asked to say that he's not at home."

How then can we hope to see the fruits of our efforts in educating to the traits and values of truth when we demonstrate to them the opposite and instead "dwell in the midst of deceit"

(Yirmiyahu 9:5)?

Truth in All Conduct of Life

My father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Argabel of saintly memory, said the following in a talk he delivered:³

“In Parshat Behar the mitzvah of ge'ulah (redemption) is mentioned, where a close relative is commanded to redeem the sold property to keep it within the family inheritance.

The verse there states: "If your brother becomes impoverished and sells some of his inherited property" (Vayikra 25:25).

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, the holy Ohr HaChaim of blessed memory, explained:

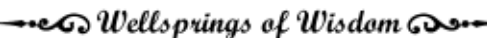
“This verse alludes to a great and wondrous matter and serves as a lesson for mankind: "If your brother becomes impoverished" – When those who dwell in the world down below deviate from the good path, and the spiritual influences from above are withdrawn, and the pillar of

holiness becomes feeble - being that everything depends primarily upon the deeds of those below.”

According to the interpretation of the Ohr HaChaim, the words "If your brother becomes impoverished" refer to the Holy One, blessed be He, who is called the "brother" of the Jewish People, so to speak, as it is stated: "For the sake of my brothers and friends" (Tehillim 122:8).

The verse teaches that when the Jewish people deviate from the good path, G-d, as it were, becomes poor and destitute, and it is as if He lacks the power to assist them (Rashi - Megillah 11a).

Since all the upper influences in the spiritual worlds depend on the good deeds of the people of Israel here in this world, when, G-d forbid, the Jewish people are weak spiritually, the influences from above withdraw, and the pillar of



3. We have taken these ideas from two essays in Imrei Noam (Behar - Essay 3, Shelach Lecha - Essay 3).

Parshat Mishpatim - Truth in All Conduct of Life

holiness becomes impoverished and weakened

From the words of the Ohr HaChaim, "When those below deviate from the good path," we learn that not only when a person commits severe transgressions does he cause the withdrawal of the upper influences and the impoverishment of the pillar of holiness, but even when he merely inclines slightly from the good path to a negative one - such as becoming immersed in various worldly desires, neglecting diligence in Torah study, not making a proper effort to guard the holiness of his eyes, and so on - these too cause the withdrawal of the upper abundance and prevent G-d from bringing salvation to Israel.

G-d commanded us in His holy Torah: "You shall do what is right and good in the eyes of the L-rd" (Devarim 6:18), which implies that doing what is right in the eyes of man is also the objective 'good' in the eyes of G-d.

In light of this, we can understand that "deviating from the good path"

includes deviation from the path of truth to the path of falsehood.

Unfortunately, most of mankind do not seek and are not interested in the path of truth.

The reason for this is as the Meiri writes (Beit HaBechira - Avot 4:12):

"Truth is heavy, therefore its bearers are few," meaning, by nature, people do not like to carry heavy loads, and the truth is a very heavy burden.

Throughout a person's life, he may encounter many situations where, through uttering a lie or falsely reporting details to the authorities, and so forth, he could profit a great deal of money.

In all such cases, one must choose the path of truth, even though doing so may lead to financial loss.

Most of the world chooses the path of falsehood because it is easy and comfortable and yields large profits, at least at the beginning.

But herein precisely lies the emphasis - the path of falsehood may yield large profits only at its start, but its end is bitter.

As brought in Reishit Chochma (Shaar HaYir'ah, Chapter 12:34): "He who deceives in his ways will ultimately mourn in the end."

This was demonstrated by Lavan the wicked, who exploited the innocence of our forefather Yaakov and deceived him in every possible way.

As Yaakov said to him: "For twenty years I have been in your house: I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times" (Bereishit 31:41).

Apparently, by cheating Yaakov, Lavan earned a lot of money at Yaakov's expense and became very wealthy. But what did he gain in the end?

The Sages in the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah, Parasha 74:16) say that after Yaakov left Lavan's

house, night robbers came to Lavan's home and plundered and destroyed all his possessions, leaving him bare and destitute.⁴

In contrast, Yaakov, who always acted with utmost honesty and integrity, was blessed by Heaven with immense abundance, as it is said: "And the man became exceedingly prosperous, and he had many flocks, and maidservants and slaves, and camels and donkeys" (Bereishit 30:43).

In truth, the punishment of those who deceive and lie is not only limited to them becoming destitute, unfortunately.

Regarding the path of falsehood, it is said: "There is a path that seems straight before a man, but its end is the ways of death" (Mishlei 14:12).

Moreover, the verse states: "He who makes wealth unjustly,

~~~~~ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ~~~~~

4. As it is stated: "Lavan arose early in the morning; and Lavan went and returned to his place" (Bereishit 32:1). The Midrash explains "'to his place' - to his evil ways. robbers entered Lavan's

house that night and were 'dancing' and leaping in joy and celebration over the plunder. As a result, Lavan became poor, as he had been before Yaakov came to him."

in half his days it will leave him" (Yirmiyahu 17:11), meaning if a person was decreed to live one hundred years but behaves deceitfully and falsely toward others, he will tragically leave the world at the young age of fifty, G-d forbid.

Is it not a pity on this shortened life?

In truth, it is a great kindness for them that G-d takes them from the world in half of their days, sparing them terrible and bitter suffering, as befitting the great suffering that they caused others.

However, the above applies only in this world. In addition, in the World to Come, they will be surprised to realize that their actions have consequences.

As it is stated: "He who speaks lies shall not stand before My eyes" (Tehillim 101:7), and our Sages have said (Sanhedrin 103a) that four groups do not receive the Divine Presence: the scoffers, the liars, the flatterers, and the slanderers.

Therefore, a person must always take utmost care to speak

only words of truth, and when required to report information to the relevant authorities, one must report only accurately, even if by doing so he may sustain losses of money or benefits; there is absolutely no permission to steal money from the state. One who does so will ultimately have to answer for it in Heaven.

One who is accustomed to speaking lies thereby disconnects himself from G-d, whose attribute is truth, as it is said: "But the L-rd G-d is truth" (Yirmiyahu 10:10), and G-d's seal is 'truth' (Shabbat 55a).

One who is careful to never utter words of falsehood merits to cleave to G-d, while one who is accustomed to lying is distanced from G-d.

This is what is meant by: "Distance yourself from a false matter" (Shemot 23:7); as Rav Zusha of Anipoli, of blessed memory, explained, through one word of falsehood a person becomes distant and far from G-d, and in the World to Come, he will not stand before G-d, as it is said: "He who speaks lies shall not stand before My eyes."

**Parshat Mishpatim - Honesty Begins At Home**

This is what Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, of blessed memory, writes in "Sefer HaMiddot" (Truth:21): "It is better for a person to die than to live and be a liar in the eyes of Men."

When G-d desired to create the world, He sought something firm and solid upon which He could establish the entire creation, and He found nothing stronger and more stable than the attribute of truth, and upon

it, He established His entire world.

G-d alluded to this by beginning the Torah portion of creation with the verse: "בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים" (Bereishit 1:1), whose final letters form the word 'אמת' (truth), and He concluded the portion of creation with the verse: "לַעֲשׂוֹת" (Bereishit 2:3), whose final letters also form the word 'אמת' (truth).

All this further teaches us that the entire creation stands on the attribute of truth.

**Honesty Begins At Home**

Rabbi Yoram continued, "The attribute of truth must guide a person in every segment and matter throughout his life; this starts within one's own private home:

First and foremost, truth and honesty must be maintained between husband and wife.

A husband and wife must be genuine and honest with each other, and every step in life should be taken with full cooperation and mutual agreement. Neither should conceal anything from the other.

As long as husband and wife act in this manner, their home will be pleasant and blessed, and their relationship will flourish and thrive for many long and good years until a ripe old age.

But when the couple begins to hide things from each other and take steps behind each other's back, over time, their love dwindles until it might even disappear completely, and from that point on, the path to the destruction of the home is, sadly, very short.

**Parshat Mishpatim - Honesty Begins At Home**

Additionally, parents must instill the attribute of truth in their children, training them to never utter even a single word of falsehood.

They should explain to their children that even if, in some instances, telling the truth might cause them some loss, they must nevertheless say only the truth; the main objective in life is to remain attached to G-d, and it is, therefore, better to tell the truth and lose out some financial gain and remain attached to G-d, than to lie and profit, but become disconnected from G-d.

Children often tend to tell stories about themselves or to their friends that never occurred.

They do not do this with the intention to lie but simply because their imagination is very active, and they are so immersed in it that it seems real to them.

Even so, it is preferable for parents, to some degree, to reduce this over imagination and occasionally remind the child and insist on the accuracy and veracity

of the details he relates so that he does not become accustomed over time to fabricating things that have never happened.

Similarly, in other areas of life, sometimes a person must report his personal details and monthly income to the authorities. He knows that if he lies slightly and gives incorrect information or produces false pay slips, he could obtain a discount in taxes or the like; this is nothing more than the counsel of the evil inclination, which wants to distance one from G-d by the means of falsehoods. Therefore, one must not heed to these ideas, but rather, one must report only accurate facts, even if, as a result, he will have to pay much more money, for through doing so, he remains closer to G-d.

Likewise, with honesty in one's business dealings, one must remember that on the Day of Judgment, the very first question they are asked in Heaven is (Shabbat 31a): "Did you conduct your business dealings faithfully?"

Therefore, one's dealings must always be conducted with truth

## Parshat Mishpatim - Honesty Begins At Home

and honesty. If one has something to sell, he must not conceal its defects from the buyer, nor should he charge an exorbitant price much higher than its true value.

Similarly, the buyer must not press the seller unduly to give him an overly large discount, for just as it is forbidden for the seller to deceive the buyer, so too it is forbidden for the buyer to deceive the seller.

If one sees others lying and cheating in business and apparently succeeding and becoming very wealthy, he should not be impressed or perturbed at all, for firstly, through such behavior, they lose a connection with G-d. Additionally, any money earned through falsehood and deceit does not hold blessing and will eventually be lost one way or the other, as it is said: "He who makes wealth unjustly, in half of his days it will leave him" (Yirmiyahu 17:11).

But anyone who conducts his business with faith and honesty and is careful not to utter even a single word of falsehood merits that G-d sends angels to

accompany him and assist him. He will be protected from anyone who tries to deceive him. He will also be able to sense when a deal is not worthwhile and refrain from it, thereby cutting losses.

Similar honesty is required in matters of matchmaking: one must disregard the advice of those who advise him to hide critical shortcomings and flaws from the other side until after a strong bond is formed or until after the wedding.

Such practice causes displeasure to G-d and distances him from G-d. In the end, when all the hidden flaws are revealed to the other party, they will pay dearly for the lies and deceit.

The correct conduct is to instead strictly adhere to the attribute of truth and disclose all of one's critical and major shortcomings to the other side in the match, without fear that it may annul the match.

A person must have complete faith that forty days before the creation of a child, it was announced in Heaven who his spouse will be (Sotah 2a).

**Parshat Mishpatim - Honesty Begins At Home**

Likewise, our Sages declare (Moed Katan 18b): "From the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, we learn that a woman is matched to a man by the hand of Heaven.

In the Torah, it is written: 'Lavan and Betuel answered and said, "The matter originated from the L-rd"' (Bereishit 24:50).

In the Prophets, it is written: 'His father and mother did not know that it was from the L-rd' (Shoftim 14:4).

Likewise, in the Writings, it is written: 'A house and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the L-rd' (Mishlei 19:14)."

Thus, since one's intended spouse is indeed decreed from Heaven, even if you tell the other side the flaws that you're required to disclose, they will still seek and pursue the match at all costs.

Over the years, I have encountered many people from all strata of society: Rabbis, businessmen, military personnel,

high-ranking government officials, and simple people from across the country.

Time and again, I have seen clearly that anyone whose way of life was to "cut corners," to conceal things, to lie and deceive and take "shortcuts" - even if at first success smiled upon them, in the end, they lost everything.

On the other hand, those for whom truth was always their guiding light - even if they were initially far from the observance of Torah and mitzvot - G-d assisted them and made them succeed most wondrously.

Whenever I identified people of this honesty and upstanding type, I immediately connected with them, and together with them, I succeeded as well.

By virtue of a person always adhering to the path of truth, he merits that G-d rests His holy Presence in his home.

As Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, of blessed memory, wrote (Likutei Moharan I, Torah 9 section 3):

**Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon the Mighty**

"Through the attribute of truth, G-d from Above longs to dwell with man."

And when one merits having the holy Shechinah reside in his home, he will naturally be blessed with every form of goodness, materially and spiritually. For wherever the Divine Presence dwells, the blessing of G-d also resides, as stated: "In every place where I cause My name to be

mentioned, I will come to you and bless you" (Shemot 20:21).

"You must understand," concluded "Mr. Critic," "falsehood is only when one speaks or behaves contrary to the truth."

"But when I offer my sharp analysis and criticism," he continued, "on the contrary, I am adhering to the truth; I do not flatter anyone; I tell each person exactly what I think about them."

**Shimshon the Mighty**

"Is that all? Are you finished?" I asked the thoughts that my inner critic channeled.

"Yes. I finished, and you cannot dispute the veracity of my words," he stated definitively.

"Well, listen," I said, ignoring him, "I agree with your definition: Falsehood is when one speaks or behaves contrary to the truth."

"But I do not agree," I continued, berating "Mr. Critic," "with the praise you gave yourself. I do not agree that there is any connection between your criticisms and adhering to the trait of truth."

"Why don't you agree?" I heard "Mr. Critic," ask in surprise in my thoughts.

"I will give you a common example so you understand," I said.

"One of the things you often criticize is how much others talk in the synagogue. Now, it is indeed very, very serious to speak in the synagogue during prayers, but when you criticize it in others, you speak inside my mind words of falsehood."

"I don't understand what you want from me," "Mr. Critic," said.

Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon the Mighty

"Two weeks ago," I said, "I was myself talking in the synagogue with an elderly Jew. You, the one who is always reprimanding others - didn't have any criticism to say about my speaking in the synagogue."

"Mr. Critic" burst out laughing: "And this is how you decided I am a liar? What does my failings have to do with my honest and fair critique of others?"

"Well," I sighed, "As I already said at the start, we are not on the same wavelength. Nevertheless, I will try to explain.

With your permission, I will discuss, for the sake of our conversation, the tale of Shimshon the Mighty:

In the city of Tzar'ah, near Beit Shemesh, lived a Jew from the tribe of Dan named Manoach: "And there was one man from Tzar'ah, from the family of the Danites, and his name was Manoach, and his wife was barren and had not given birth" (Shoftim 13:2).

The Midrash extolled the virtues of Manoach:<sup>5</sup>

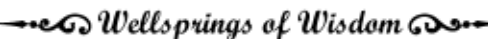
"Va'yehi" - every place it says "Va'yehi" (And there was) regarding the righteous, it teaches us that this particular righteous person was equal to thirty-one righteous people (like the numerical value of 'Va'yehi').

"Ish echad" (one man) - every place it says "echad" (one) in reference to someone, they were truly great individuals.

"U'shmo Manoach" (and his name was Manoach) - in the Tanach, when mentioning a righteous person, it says, "and his name was.." followed by his name, whereas when mentioning the wicked, it states their name first and only afterwards "was his name." For example: "Galyat shemo" ("Galyat was his name," Shmuel I 17:4), "Naval shemo" ("Naval was his name," Shmuel I 25:25).

Thus, Manoach was a spiritual giant and among the most holy.

When it came time for marriage, Manoach merited to marry a woman



5. Bamidbar Rabbah (Parsha 10 - section 5), much of this segment is from there.

## Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon the Mighty

of esteemed lineage from the tribe of Yehuda, named Tzlelponit, as she is named in Divrei HaYamim (Chronicles): "And these [are the sons] of the father of Eitam: Yizre'el, Yishma, and Yidbash, and the name of their sister was Hatzlelponi" (I Chronicles 4:3).

The wedding ended, and Manoach and his wife returned home. They began a long period of waiting for a child to come as the years passed.

Tzlelponit often said to her husband Manoach: The fault is with you; it is because of you I am not able to conceive, and Manoach would reply: It is, in fact, your fault, for you are barren.

In Tzlelponit's heart, a slight resentment sprouted against her husband; she truly felt that "because of him, I am not with child."

One day, Tzlelponit went out to run errands in the city.

As she walked through the streets, behold, there appeared to her "a man of G-d, and his appearance was like the

appearance of an angel of the L-rd, very awesome" (Shoftim 13:6).

"And he said to her: 'Behold, you are barren and have not given birth, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son'" (ibid. verse 3).

That is, the angel informed her that she was indeed barren, and her husband Manoach was not at fault, and therefore, she had not given birth, as it explicitly says: "Behold, you are barren."

The Midrash reveals that the reason the angel revealed this was to remove the resentment from her heart toward her husband, thereby ensuring true peace in their home.

The woman ran to her husband excitedly and told him about the divine vision she had merited. "Then Manoach entreated G-d and said: 'Please, my L-rd, may the man of G-d whom You sent come again to us and teach us what we shall do with the child who will be born'" (Shoftim 13:8).

The sages said in the Midrash: "The word "Va'ye'etar" (he entreated) is a unique term for prayer, from the root word 'eter.'

**Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon the Mighty**

Why are the prayers of the righteous compared to an "eter" (which also means a pitchfork)?

To teach you that just as a pitchfork turns over the grain on the threshing floor from one place to another, so too the prayers of the righteous turn over the divine Attribute of Judgment to the Attribute of Mercy.

G-d heard Manoach's prayer, and the next day, his wife went out to the field, and while there, again, the angel of G-d appeared to her.

Tzlelponit saw him and quickly ran to call her husband: "The woman hastened and ran and told her husband: 'Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me'" (ibid. verse 10).

Manoach went after his wife to meet the angel.

The Midrash asks: Tzlelponit had already received detailed guidance from the angel, but for Manoach, this was insufficient, and he lacked this divine guidance, and therefore he prayed.

But if so, why did the angel appear again to Tzlelponit and not Manoach? The Midrash answers: to make her cherished in his eyes and so that his esteem and love for her would strengthen since it was through her righteousness that she merited a second angelic revelation.

Manoach arrived and turned to the angel: "My master, you appeared to my wife and instructed her how to behave with the child who will be born to us, but I am concerned that perhaps because of her excitement, she did not fully grasp your words. Therefore, I want you to tell me the instructions again," "Now let Your words come true; what shall be the ruling for the boy and his actions?" (ibid. verse 12).

The angel answered him: If you only knew what kind of blessed woman you have merited to have. Know that everything she told you is perfectly accurate: "The angel of G-d said to Manoach: 'Of all that I said to the woman, let her be on guard'" (ibid. verse 13), and as the Midrash states: "What I said to

**Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon the Mighty**

the woman" - to give honor to the woman and endear her in his eyes.<sup>6</sup>

Manoach heard the angel's guidance and said to him: You have brought me joy and revived my spirit, and I want to invite you for lunch. I will slaughter a choice young goat for you.

The angel answered him: "If you delay me, I will not eat of your bread, and if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to G-d" (ibid. verse 16).

Manoach took the young goat, slaughtered it, and placed it on the rock.

The angel brought forth fire from the rock, and "As the flame ascended from upon the altar toward the sky, the angel of G-d ascended in the flame of the altar, and the angel of G-d no longer

appeared to Manoach and his wife; then Manoach knew that he was an angel of G-d" (ibid. verses 20-21).

In a year's time, "The woman gave birth to a son, and she named him Shimshon; The boy grew, and G-d blessed him" (ibid. verse 24).

Shimshon was completely removed from all worldly desires; he was holy, pure, and detached from all aspects of this world to the utmost degree.

Due to the intensity of his holiness and separation from physical matters, Shimshon was almost abstracted from the body entirely, possessing wondrous, exalted, and rare spiritual levels.

In addition to all his qualities, he merited having the ability to elevate and uplift many lost souls - including souls that had been held captive by the powers of

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**6.** The Midrash thus reveals to us that a large part of the angel's mission was to increase love between Manoach and his wife.

The reason for this is that it arose in G-d's will that Shimshon be born from them, and it is not possible for a child to be born when there is strife between the

couple, and therefore He sent an angel to make peace between them.

Only after there is true unity between husband and wife is there a possibility that holy children may be born to them. The opposite is sadly true as well..

Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon the Mighty

evil for years and generations - he knew how to bend down to them, lift them from the refuse, cleanse and polish them, and return them back to their true place, to the light of G-d.

However, after twenty years, the Philistines eventually overcame him,<sup>7</sup> capturing him, blinding him, and imprisoning him.

Then it happened one day when the Philistines held a wild celebration in a large theater:

"When their hearts were merry, they said: 'Call for Shimshon and let him entertain us.' So they called Shimshon from prison and he amused them, and they placed him to stand between the pillars.

Shimshon said to the lad who held his hand: 'Let me rest and let me feel the pillars on which the house is set, and I will lean on them'.

The house was full of men and women, and all the Philistine masters were there, and on the

roof were about three thousand men and women, watching while Shimshon amused them."

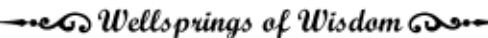
Shimshon called out to G-d and said: 'G-d, L-rd, remember me now and strengthen me now, only this once, G-d, and I will be avenged against the Philistines for one of my two eyes.'"

G-d accepted his prayer, and Shimshon regained his strength:

"Shimshon grasped the two central pillars upon which the house rested and leaned upon them, one with his right hand and one with his left. And he pushed mightily, and the house fell upon the masters and upon all the people in it, and those whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed throughout his life" (ibid. 16:25-30).

"Truly a holy man," "Mr. Critic" murmured to himself.

"But what does this story have to do with the subject of criticism



7. As it says: "And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years" (Shoftim 15:20).

**Parshat Mishpatim - Shimshon's Merits in Hour of Need**

that is 'dishonest' that we were discussing?"

"Wait," I answered him, "I am not done formulating my thoughts yet."

**Shimshon's Merits in Hour of Need**

As mentioned, Shimshon prayed to G-d that He would remember him and restore his strength for his last act of heroism.

The Gemara (Sotah 10a) asks: What merit exactly did Shimshon ask G-d to remember for him?

Rav said, Shimshon said before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe. Remember for me the twenty years that I judged the nation of Israel, and I never told anyone even once to pass me a staff from one place to another."

Thus, Shimshon mentioned two good deeds in his words of prayer to G-d:

1. For twenty years, he judged the nation of Israel with honesty and dedication.

2. He never derived any personal benefit from anyone - not even the slightest benefit, like having someone hold his staff for a single moment. It goes

without saying that he never once took a bribe from anyone.

These points of merit that he chose to mention on his behalf provoke wonder. Shimshon the righteous merited to all his life serve his Creator on lofty, exalted spiritual levels, to the extent that the Gemara said of him (ibid.): "Rabbi Yochanan said: Shimshon was called by the name of G-d, as it says: 'For a sun (shemesh, root word of Shimshon) and its shield is G-d' (Tehillim 84:12). Just as G-d protects the entire world, so too, Shimshon protected the nation of Israel in his generation."

If so, why, when he was in distress, did he ignore his tremendous spiritual levels and exalted achievements (as explained at length in the inner aspects of the Torah) and choose instead to focus on merits that seem, at first glance, peripheral in comparison?

"Mr. Critic" nodded his head silently.

## One Who Speaks Truth in His Heart

Before we finally answer this question, let us preface:

The year was 5698 (1937).

The students of the "Knesset Yisrael" – Slabodka Yeshiva gathered together in Slabodka, Lithuania, for an assembly of inspiration and Mussar.

On the steps of the study hall stood Rabbi Avraham Grodzinski of blessed memory, expounding and teaching and passing on the flame of the Torah to the future generations. Among the words he spoke is the following excerpt:<sup>8</sup>

“We are accustomed to defining the trait of falsehood as deviating from the truth, whether in speech or action.

But this definition only fits the externality of man’s actions; it does not address the true essence of the matter.

Truth and falsehood lie within a person’s innermost being.

If a person’s inner heart aligns with the deeds he does, it is then the truth, but if not, it is falsehood.

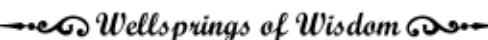
We will elaborate:

The alignment of the heart with one’s actions has many levels. It is not enough to have intent accompany the action, or to even understand the action intellectually, or even more to feel it emotionally in the heart; rather, one must have his will fully aligned with the action as well - and not partial will, but rather the entirety of his will.

One cannot call a person’s good deeds the "truth" unless all of the forces of his soul, all of his character traits and the tendencies of the heart, all his wisdom and knowledge, are all be aligned with what he does.

Any slight deficiency in the will of the heart, whether direct or indirect, is a deficiency in truth.

Truth encompasses a great expanse, for it includes all a



8. ‘Kuntres Knesset Yisrael (Nissan of the year 5698 (1938), page 23).

**Parshat Mishpatim - One Who Speaks Truth in His Heart**

person's deeds and thoughts, his speech, and all his movements. There is no gesture of hand or foot in which there is no aspect of truth or falsehood, according to the alignment of the movement with the heart's aspiration and desire.

This truth is very deep, as deep as the depth of the human heart and its hidden recesses. The more hidden the heart's secrets and inner intentions, the deeper this truth reaches, and it is almost impossible to fully grasp its ultimate depths.

Our holy Sages expressed this desired truth concisely in their expression: ""his inside, like his outside."

"That means there is no difference between a person's inner self and his outer self, his actions and expressions.

"Now, do you understand?" I turned to my dear "Mr. Critic" and asked.

"Truth is a level that shines and illuminates one's entire heart and being.

But if you are capable of talking in the synagogue, in utter

hypocrisy, it is a sure sign that the 'holiness of the synagogue' does not shine in your heart.

Consequently, when you give rebuke, you are speaking falsehood.

Moreover, every time you cause me to rebuke someone, if that level does not shine in my heart, you are causing me to transgress with falsehood."

Our Sages have revealed to us that a person's words are born from their intellect, but the melody of the words, the tone, and the manner with which they are spoken is born from the truth shining in the heart.

Since my heart is far removed from any genuine level of truth, the tone that emerges from my mouth at the time of rebuke causes discomfort and aversion in the hearts of those who hear me. Therefore, they confront me, asking why I'm rebuking them.

"Certainly," I continued, "there are countless levels in refining one's heart's purity, and each person must make an effort according to his strength and powers.

**Parshat Mishpatim - One Who Speaks Truth in His Heart**

Concerning the righteous Shimshon, he attained a level of truth so perfect that there is no greater perfection than it.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, when he was in distress, he chose to recall his most exalted quality - the trait of truth."

**Shabbat Shalom!**



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**9.** This greatness was revealed when he judged the people of Israel, as the Gemara (Sotah 10a) says: Rabbi Yochanan said, Shimshon judged Israel

like their Father in Heaven, as it is stated: "Dan (Shimshon's tribe) shall judge his people as *one* etc." (Bereishit 49:16).

## Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. When G-d desired to create the world, He sought something firm and solid on which He could establish the world as a whole and found nothing stronger and more solid than the trait of truth, and upon it, G-d established His entire world.

G-d hinted this to us by beginning the tale of creation in the Torah with the verse: "Bereshit bara Elokim" ("In the beginning G-d created"), whose final letters spell "emet" (truth).

Similarly, in the verse concluding the tale of creation: "bara Elokim la'asot" ("G-d created to do"), whose final letters also spell the word "emet" (truth).

This teaches that the entirety of creation stands and is founded upon the trait of truth.

Therefore, pure truth must illuminate a person's path and guide them in every aspect of their life.

2. Every person encounters situations where, by uttering a falsehood or reporting false details to the

authorities, they might earn a great deal of money.

In such instances and similar situations, one must follow the path of truth, even though this may cause significant financial losses.

3. Most people prefer the path of falsehood because it is easy and comfortable, and it yields larger profits, at least at first.

However, precisely here, it is essential to emphasize that the path of falsehood may yield large profits at its start but is ultimately the wrong and bitter path.

4. One accustomed to speaking falsehoods disconnects himself from G-d, so to speak, since G-d's attribute is truth, and G-d's seal is truth.

Therefore, one must be extremely careful never to speak even a word of falsehood to merit to remain firmly attached to G-d.

However, one accustomed to speaking falsehoods is immediately distanced from G-d.

5. First and foremost, the trait of truth must be maintained between husband and wife.

A husband and wife must be sincere and honest with each other, taking every step in life with full cooperation and mutual agreement, and neither of them may conceal anything from the other.

As long as the husband and wife behave in this manner, their dwelling will be pleasant and praiseworthy, and their relationship will blossom and flourish for many long and good years, even into old age.

But if a couple begin to hide things from each other and take steps behind the other's back, the path to downfall begins, G-d forbid.

6. After a couple has built amongst themselves the foundation of truth, they must pass on this trait to their children, training them not to utter words of falsehood.

They must explain to their children that even if, in some instances, telling the truth might cause them some loss, they must still speak only the truth; the main goal is to merit staying attached to G-d, and it, therefore, better to tell the truth and lose financially and remain attached to G-d, than to lie and gain a bit, but become disconnected from G-d.

7. By virtue of constantly adhering to the path of truth, a person merits that G-d rests His holy Presence in his home.

When a person exemplifies and embodies truth, G-d desires to dwell with man.

When one merits having the divine presence rest in his home, he will naturally be blessed with every good thing, materially and spiritually; wherever the Shechinah is present, the abundant blessing of G-d is found.



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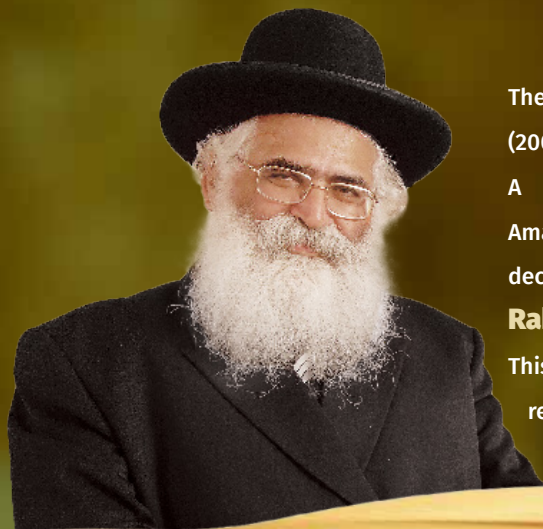
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|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| New York    | 5:20 pm         | 6:20 pm      | 6:51 pm      |
| Miami       | 6:00 pm         | 6:53 pm      | 7:31 pm      |
| Los Angeles | 5:25 pm         | 6:22 pm      | 6:56 pm      |
| Montreal    | 5:12 pm         | 6:16 pm      | 6:44 pm      |
| Toronto     | 5:38 pm         | 6:41 pm      | 7:10 pm      |
| London      | 5:09 pm         | 6:19 pm      | 6:40 pm      |
| Jerusalem   | 5:15 pm         | 6:06 pm      | 6:45 pm      |
| Tel Aviv    | 5:12 pm         | 5:04 pm      | 6:41 pm      |
| Haifa       | 5:10 pm         | 5:05 pm      | 6:42 pm      |
| Be'er Sheva | 5:13 pm         | 6:07 pm      | 6:44 pm      |

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