

THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION
IN MEMORY OF CLARA CHOPP A"H

TORAS AVIGDOR

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RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

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PARSHAS TOLDOS

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE TRUE TRUTH

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Part I. The Crooked Truth

Eisav's 'Crooked' Pshat

When Eisav discovered that his brother Yaakov had snuck in and taken the brachos from their father Yitzchok, he cried out צַעֲקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה – a great and bitter outcry. And what did he say as he wailed? הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב – You see that he was rightfully called Yaakov! וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה פַּעַמַּיִם – Because he deceived me twice. אֶת בְּכֹרְתִי לָקַח – First he took away my birthright, וְהִנֵּה עַתָּה לָקַח בְּרִכְתִּי – and now he took away my brachos (Bereishis 27:36). And so it's a perfectly fitting name for him," Eisav said, "Yaakov the Deceiver."

Now when Eisav said that, he wasn't just saying something that was his own fanciful interpretation. Because we know that the word 'yaakov' comes from the word *eikev*, a heel; when Yaakov was born אִחֲזָת בְּעֵקֶב וַיְדֹוּ עָשָׂו – his hand was holding the heel of Eisav. The heel is round like a hook.

It's not straight—it's bent like a hook—so Yaakov means 'somebody who is not straight.' That's how Eisav explained the word; *akev* means crooked and Yaakov is 'the one who acts crookedly.'

Now, we think that Eisav is saying something, a form of *lashon hara* that he invented out of his anger. Because we have a different *pshat*; we know that Yaakov was called that name because he's going to come *eikev*, 'at the end'; Eisav may come first in this world but at the end Yaakov will be the one left standing. Like the heel that comes after the person; when you're walking, your heel comes after you.

And so, according to the plain *pshat*, Yaakov was called that name because in the end he's going to be victorious. Even though in the meantime the gentiles have big empires and they seem to be the conquerors, but when all is said and done, they'll all go down in the dust and Yaakov will be supreme. That's what the Torah says. The end will be **וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֶשָׂה הָיִל** – *Yaakov will be the one that will succeed* (Bamidbar 24:18).

The Difficult Shver

But let's pay attention, however, to Eisav's *pshat*. After all, he wasn't a nobody, and when he said that *peirush* on Yaakov he knew what he was talking about. Because actually, Yaakov *wasn't* a straight man; he was a man of cunning.

Yaakov Avinu was a shrewd man, no question about it. That's why he knew how to deal with Lavan. To get along with a Lavan, you have to know, is not an easy job. Twenty years he was together with that gangster! Any other *eidem* would have given his father-in-law a punch in the eye. Any other *eidem*! After being cheated by your father-in-law so many times! Absolutely! That's called being straight—"I had enough of you, so here's an uppercut to your chin." But Yaakov didn't do that. No, Yaakov used other methods, wiser and trickier methods.

And when he wanted to leave finally, he was tricky too. Just like he had snuck in to his father to get the *brachos*, this time he snuck away. He ran away.

So a fool says, "That's not right. He should come to Lavan like a straight shooter." He could be truthful. "Look, my *shver*. I have to leave you. I have to go back home."

"Nothing doing!" Lavan would have said. **הַבָּנוֹת בָּנָתִי** – *These are my daughters*, my family. You're not going anywhere." And then he would have had a much harder time leaving; because now Lavan was forewarned.

So he didn't tell him anything. He stole away.

“Oh,” Lavan said. “That’s a cheat! He cheated me! He ran away with my daughters.”

The Honest Nation

That’s what the *goyim* always say, that the *frum* Jew is dishonest. It’s one of the biggest errors the world could ever have, maybe the biggest, to think that the *frum* Jew is dishonest. If you say the Italians, maybe. The blacks, maybe. The Poles, whoever it is, maybe. But the *Am Hashem*?

The *Am Hashem* are the most honest of all people. Which nation compares to us? Which nation teaches their little boys not to do harm to other people’s property? Bava Kama and Bava Metzia and Bava Basra are all talking about *mamon acheirim*, about how important other people’s money is, about *hashavas aveidah*, and about not cheating, not swindling.

That’s what it is if you know Torah. But a *goy*? Where does he learn honesty? On the street corners? Just by chewing gum and playing baseball, he’s going to pick up the ideal of regarding the other man’s property as sacred? From the TV and movies he’ll become honest? Be serious. It’s ridiculous! Nobody can compare to the Jewish nation.

The Korean’s Apricots

Let me tell you. I go in the streets every day and I watch the people at the fruit stores, the gentile customers. They stop and they eat cherries, just to taste them. They don’t buy them. They taste them and walk away. They pick the grapes, eat them, and don’t buy them. They pick peanuts and eat them, and don’t buy them. Apricots too! So the Korean who owns the store comes out and looks at them with a sour face. He doesn’t say anything; he doesn’t want to lose customers.

I tried telling it to them once. Even if it’s less than a penny, a *goy* is not *moichel* even less than a *perutah*. “You’re stealing,” I said. But it’s like talking to a wooden head. Go talk to a wood mannequin—nothing goes into their heads. A *frum* Jew, he has a *hargashah*. He has *emunah* in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that’s how you learn to be a *mentsch*.

So the non Torah world is a world of crooks. They are *mamash ganavim*. So don’t make any mistake about it. No question about it, the *Am Yisroel* is the truest, most honest of all nations. Only that sometimes you must be dishonest in order for the truth to be carried out.

With Crooks, Act Crooked

Now, don’t go home now and tell your friends that Rabbi Miller said you have to be dishonest. You have to listen first to the Torah; to understand the details, *vu ein* and *vu ois*.

For example. The Gemara says a story about a Jew's dishonesty, about when to be dishonest. A man was walking down Ocean Parkway alone at night—I'm saying Ocean Parkway; that's not in the Gemara—from Boro Park in this direction, and suddenly a queer, suspicious character came out from the dark and started walking with him.

And the character says, "Good evening sir. How far are you going down Ocean Parkway?"

So you say, "I'm walking all the way down to Brighton."

So this character is thinking, "I have time to make my move. There's a lonely spot near Avenue V and Ocean Parkway. Then I'll do what I want with him." And he continues walking with you. When you come to Avenue U you make a sharp turn in, where the stores are, where it's well-lit.

"Hey! Where are you going? I thought—"

And you wave and say "so long" to him.

That's a Gemara, an *eitzah* from Chazal. Sometimes you have to deceive the criminal.

Yaakov is our Model

Now, you know where we learn that trickery from? From Yaakov! When Eisav came out to welcome him back to Eretz Canaan, so he said to Yaakov, "נִסְעָה וְיָלְכָה וְאֵלֶיָּהּ לְנִגְדָּךְ – *Let us start journeying, and I'll proceed along with you* (ibid. 33:12). I'll accompany you."

Now, that's the last thing Yaakov wanted. He wanted to reconcile with his brother, but only from a distance. It would be a *sakanah* if his family would mingle with Eisav's family. And so he acted with cunning, with dishonesty. He found excuses. "Look, I would love to, but I can't go with you because we walk too slowly." וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו – *And Yaakov said to his brother, אֲדֹנָי יָדַע – My master knows* that the children are young and if I'll press them that they should be able to keep up with you—after all you're traveling on horseback—then all the sheep will die out. It's not good for us. We can't keep up with you. So let my master—that's how a cunning man speaks to an Eisav; he says 'master'—"let my master pass before his servant. And I'll go slowly until I come to you, to your place in Se'ir. I'll keep walking all the way to Seir and I'll meet you there."

Missing the Appointment

Now, that's an appointment he never kept. He made an appointment to meet him in Har Seir, but he didn't keep it—he squirmed out of it.

And our Sages ask: How could he make an appointment and not keep it? What about honesty? So they say that he'll keep the appointment. וְעָלוּ מוֹשְׁעִים בְּהָר צִיּוֹן לְשִׁפְט אֶת הָרָעָשׁ. Oh yes, we'll come there someday. In the

days of Dovid they came to Edom and they conquered Edom. They did it a second time in the Bayis Sheini when Yochanan Horkanus came and conquered Edom again. And *l'asid lavo* we're going to conquer all of Eisav. We'll keep the appointment when it's profitable for us to keep it. But that's *drush*—that's not what Yaakov was saying, and most definitely it's not what Eisav was thinking.

And so you can be sure that Eisav considered Yaakov Avinu a real dishonest character. “My crooked brother doing the same thing again.” And he looked down on him. Because Eisav, you know, was an ‘honest’ man. He didn't do such things.

So this criminal, when he sees you're not keeping the appointment to walk with him all the way to Brighton, and instead you're turning in on Avenue U, where he won't be able to mug you, so he says, “Feh! These *frum* Jews are crooks. They're so dishonest.”

But of course we understand, however, that the shoe is on the left foot. The straight man was Yaakov; only he was as crooked as he had to be because that was part of his training. In order to be straight you have to be crooked sometimes—if you're going to be only truth, only *emes*, you won't succeed.

Eisav's Pshat Justified

And so **הָכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב** – you rightfully called his name Yaakov because he is a cunning man, not a straight man. You know, people think **יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם**, *tam* means *ah tamevater*, a straight, naive fellow. No; *tam* means he was a perfect man and to be perfect you can't be straight. To be perfect you have to be crooked at times. That's the lesson we're learning here. **וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי** – Yaakov *was* a crooked man. That's why he's called Yaakov. Because he didn't do things straight. A fool does things straight, but an *oived Hashem* is *b'ormah*. You have to learn how to twist things.

Sometimes that's how you have to deal with people. And that's the *ratzon Hashem*. You must be diplomatic with everybody. A *rebbe* has to be cunning with his *talmidim*. A father and mother have to be cunning with their children—and each child with a different twist. You have to be diplomatic with your neighbors—you can't always say what you feel. You have to be cunning with your wife and your husband. And that's the *ratzon Hashem*. And therefore, Yaakov actually was not a straight man. You cannot be an *oived Hashem* if you're straight. You can't always be truthful.

Part II. The Real Truth

Defining Truth

I remember once in Slabodka, we had a *Histadrus Hamussar*. The *kollel* people and others, former *talmidim* of the yeshiva, came together, and every half year they worked on a certain *middah*. They would meet before the *zman* and choose a *middah* to work on.

So I remember we were all sitting together there, and the subject came up, what *middah* should we work on for the next *zman*?

An old man, he wasn't a *baal mussar*, but a *frum* old man stood up. He was the *mashgiach* once in Volozhin. He said, "*Lomir arbeten oif emes*. Let's work on *emes*."

So Rav Avraham Grodinzky, the *menahel* of the Slabodka yeshiva, was unhappy with that proposal. "No," he said. "To work on *emes* is to work on *shtus*." Rav Avraham was vexed. He said, "If you have a principle to say only truth, you'll be saying foolishness. You could work on *chessed*, not on *emes*."

And later it was explained to me what he meant. Because people think that truth means to say the facts, but it's not so. *Emes* means to say what's worth saying, what's beneficial to say. To say facts—unless you learn how to say it—is *shtus*. You have to make people happy. But once people embark on a career of only saying what's factual, they're going to wound a lot of people and cause a lot of harm. *Emes* means saying the truth, and always saying the truth is absolutely wrong!

And therefore, it was vetoed, to work on *emes*. It's a remarkable story. Work on *chessed*, alright, but *emes*, that's a much more complicated subject. Because a Jew, an *oived Hashem*, has to know when yes and when no. He has to know what *emes* really means.

Simchas Chosson V'kallah

The Gemara in Mesichta Kesuvos (17a) says this. It's an open Gemara. תָּנוּ הַכֹּהֵן רִבְנָן בֵּיצֵד מְרֻקָּרִים לְפָנֵי הַכֹּהֵן – How do you dance before a *kallah*?

How do you dance?! What's the question? You dance with your feet, whatever you're capable of.

So Rashi says it means, מָה אֹמְרִים – *what do you say?* That's what counts. The words you say by dancing, that's what counts most.

So what should you say? בֵּית שַׁמַּי אֹמְרִים כֹּלָּה כְּמוֹת שְׁהִיא – Beis Shammai says, "Whatever she is, that's what you should say."

But Beis Hillel says, no you can't do that. You can't just say the truth; sometimes the truth is not so complimentary. And so, בֵּית הִלֵּל אֹמְרִים – Beis

Hillel says, כְּלָה נְאֻה וְחַסִּידָה – “A beautiful and graceful kallah,” that’s what you have to say.

Now, Beis Shammai was scandalized when they heard that. How can you say that? What if she’s blind or lame or ugly? The Torah says מְדַבֵּר שֶׁקֶר – *you have to keep far away from falsehood* (Shemos 23:7).

Final Sale

So Beis Hillel said no, that’s a very big error. And he explained it like this: מַשָּׁל לְאָדָם שֶׁלָּקַח מִקָּח מִן הַשּׁוּק – *It’s like the man who bought something in the store and now he comes home. What should you do? Should you praise it? Should you belittle it?*

By the way, this *mashal* is a very important *mashal* for ladies to learn, so pay attention. If your husband comes from the street, let’s say he wanted to do a favor so he did some shopping without being told. He passed by a fruit stand and bought a box of strawberries. So the wife says, “What do you need strawberries for?” Or, “Oy vey, you overpaid. I could have bought it cheaper on the corner.”

No. A smart wife says, “Oh, perfect. Strawberries. Very good. It’s a bargain!”

That’s what a smart anyone says. If somebody bought something, tell him how good it is. “Oh, you made a very good buy.” You have to praise it. He can’t take it back, so you’re *mechuyav* to make him feel good.

And therefore, Beis Hillel says that if a man purchased a *kallah*—the invitations were sent out; he’s already in the hall. He can’t back out now. So you’re *mechuyev* to tell him, כְּלָה נְאֻה וְחַסִּידָה – *a beautiful and graceful kallah.*”

A Better Truth

You’re worried about the *emes*? So Beis Hillel says, “Never mind that.”

Never mind?! What did Beis Hillel mean ‘never mind’? Beis Shammai is making a good point.

The answer is Beis Hillel is *telling us what is meant by truth*. Beis Shammai says the truth has to hurt sometimes. Who cares what the emotions are? You have to say the truth. But Beis Hillel says if it hurts, it’s not the truth. Pay attention to that! *If it hurts, it’s not true!* Anything that you say that hurts people’s feelings is not true. It’s *sheker*. You must speak words that make people feel good.

And so, what’s *emes*? When you tell him that his *kallah* is beautiful. If you’re a lady in the women’s section, you tell the *kallah*, “Your *chosson* is a wonderful young man.” Even though she’s not beautiful and he’s not wonderful, you should say it anyhow.

That's the teaching of Beis Hillel. The words that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to say, that's *emes*. Otherwise, the man of 'truth' comes to a wedding and he looks at the *kallah* and he says, "That's the *kallah*? I'm surprised you took her. She's cross-eyed." So he's a straight man. But that straight man is not straight in the eyes of Hashem—he's crooked in the eyes of Hashem. You have to say, "She's a beautiful *kallah*! A catch!"

The Crooked Tzaddik

You're being crooked? Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to be crooked when it comes to doing good things. And that's a tremendous principle. When you say *חֻתְמוּ שֵׁל הַקֵּב"ה אִמֶּת*, that the seal of Hashem, His trademark, is *emes*, so now you know *emes* doesn't mean truth. *Emes* means what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to say.

I'll tell you a little story. A man I know got married and after a while he began to feel that this is not his *basherta*; whatever that means. Now, it could be a person feels that—it's probably nothing but foolishness, but he felt that. Only he made a greater foolishness than just feeling that. He told her! And he explained to me that he knows *al pi* psychology that it's best to say what he feels. He knows. He's a *frum* man, by the way, but he's educated in the wrong way; he listened to the wrong people. The psychologists said you have to be open with your wife, open with your husband. Open hearted. You have to tell the truth to each other and not hide any secrets.

So I said to him, "That's *sheker*!" It's the opposite of the truth. He was saying a very great *sheker*. He could have said the opposite. "My wife, I am so happy I married you. You're the only one in the world for me." That's how he should have said that. If he wanted to say anything, that's the way to talk.

Now you young fellows, pay attention. That's the way to talk to your wives. Your wife is the best wife. You have to learn what to say. *מִשְׁכָּבְךָ פִּיד חֵיקְךָ שְׁמֹר פִּתְחֵי פִּיד* – Even from your own wife you have to guard your mouth (Michah 7:5). You can't be honest with your wife. You have to say what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to say. Only compliments! Compliment her.

The Lying Fool

There was a foolish man. His wife complained to me. A big *shoteh*. A nice man by the way but a *shoteh*. He told his wife, "You know, I see women on the street who are better looking than you are." Vey iz mir, I thought. What a *meshugene*! A *shoteh* he is. First of all, it's not even true. *מִיָּם גְּנוּבִים יְמִתְקוּ* – Stolen water is sweet (Mishlei 9:17). It's only because it's somebody else's wife, that's why it looks good to him. Just because it's forbidden, that's all. His wife walks in the street, and other people say that she's beautiful. So it's *sheker*!

And even if it was true, should he tell his wife such words?! That's not *emes*. And not only is he a *shakran*, but he's a *rotzeach* too! He's a nice man, by the way, a very fine man. *Frum* and everything else. But he's a *frum meshugene*! Why? He didn't learn. He never learned the *sugya* of *emes*. You have to learn what to say.

And so when you come home from work and you see that your wife is tired from a long day with the children and with the home—she's wiped out—so you say, “Oh, you're beautiful tonight.” That's *emes*. You're getting Olam Haba for that.

Or if she gives you a supper—it's not really a supper; it's not even leftovers from last night. It's a cold piece of fish from last week, and you expected a hot piece of chicken. So you tell her, “It's exactly what I needed tonight. I was full from lunch and this is perfect.”

A Life of Deception

Keep on deceiving her! If you can deceive your wife for the next seventy years into thinking that you're a nice fellow, then deceive her. You do whatever you can to make her think that you're a gem of a person. You're not, but you learned what *emes* means, and so she thinks you are.

And don't worry that you're deceiving her. When it comes to the Next World, she'll say, “Oh, he was such a wonderful husband.”

So they'll say, “He wasn't such a fine fellow.”

And she'll say, “No! He was wonderful! I can testify that he was a wonderful husband!”

And Hashem will take her word for it. Hashem will say, “I'll take your word for it.”

By the way, you'll deceive yourself too. Little by little, you'll become good. You'll get into the habit of speaking nice words, words of *chessed*. You'll speak well about your wife's brothers and sisters too. You'll speak well of her father and mother. You'll deceive not only your wife, but you'll deceive yourself into being a good person too.

Truthful With Everyone

Not only your wife. With everyone you have to be that way. With a spouse it's more important because your interactions with your wife or husband are more than anyone else—it's like a hundred people in one day—and so you'll be judged more for that. But it applies to anyone. Neighbors, friends, your boss, your mother and father. Tell people, “Oh, I'm so happy to see you.” You're not so happy, but you're saying the truth the way Hashem wants.

Now, of course we understand that a person can't be a liar. It's a big sin! Some people exaggerate and tell stories that never happened. Or when they tell the story that they saw in the street, they add details and make it a little more exaggerated than it was. That's a very wrong *middah*, to be in the habit of saying falsehood for no reason. No. As much as possible, a person should train themselves not to exaggerate, not to bend the truth. Everybody should train themselves in *emes* as much as possible. However, if the *emes* hurts, don't say it. You can't speak straight *emes* all the time—it's *chessed v'emes* that counts. We walk in the ways of Hashem: **וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת**.

Part III. The Truth Hurts

The Soul Doctor

Now, once we understand what *emes* means, how careful we have to be with the words that come out of our mouths—we have to twist ourselves like a pretzel in order that the 'truth' shouldn't hurt—so we come now to the big problem of healing ourselves of our *aveiros*. Because we're sick and we need doctors. We need to hear diagnoses. Not diagnosis—plural, diagnoses. We all need to hear the truth.

You know why? Because there will be a Day of Judgment. And **אָמַר אָבָא** **אוי לָנוּ מִיּוֹם הַדִּין אוי לָנוּ מִיּוֹם הַתּוֹכָה** – *Aba Kohen Bardala said, "Alas for us on the Day of Judgment because we're going to be terrified. לְכַשְׁיָבוֹא הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְיוֹכִיחַ כָּל אָדָם וְאָחָד* – *Because when Hashem comes to rebuke, you'll be dumbstruck with terror."* (Bereishis Rabbah 93:10). We'll stand in front of Him, and He'll say to us, "This is you! You did this and that! You were this and that!" And all of a sudden we'll see who we really are. We'll be shocked. Me?! All our lives we thought we were something better.

Preparing for Judgment Day

So the question is, how are we going to be prepared for that day? If all you ever hear is the soft babbling brook of compliments, you'll never discover anything about yourself. You'll live all your life in error. And so we should *want* people to come and to tell us the truth that hurts; we want to know about our faults now, not when it will be too late.

But actually, who wants to hear it? Almost nobody. It means us—we, the ones sitting here, we don't want to hear the truth. We want people to caress us. "You're a nice fellow." "You're a good boy." That's what we want to hear all the time. That's honey to us. But as soon as somebody tells us a criticism, we know he's our enemy.

When a person seeks the truth, he's willing to hear the true truth. He goes over to his *rebbe* and says, "Rebbi, I want you to tell me the truth whenever you see something wrong in me."

That will happen once, maybe, in a thousand years. Once in my whole career a boy in the *mesivta* where I was *mashgiach* said to me, "I want you to tell me all my faults whenever you see something wrong." I nearly fell off my chair. I didn't do it, by the way. Because he wasn't ready for it. But it's a good gesture at least. At least it should creep into our minds this idea that when it comes to ourselves, we should want to hear the true truth, the truth that hurts.

The Chessed V'Emes of Criticizing

And so we come to a very important subject. Because that's for ourselves—that's what we should be willing to endure. And even if the art of criticism has died out (see Arachin 16b), what can we do? In order to improve ourselves we're willing to have amateurs criticize us. That's why you're lucky if you have a father and a mother who criticize you—you should feel that you're a fortunate child indeed. If you have a wife who criticizes you, you should feel it's a big break. And even if they're amateurish in their criticism and it hurts, no matter. At least you have somebody to tell you the truth.

But what about others? What about the mitzvah of *tochacha*, of telling others? Because according to what we're saying now, it's the biggest *chessed* for everyone to know the truth about themselves. Is he justifying himself? How many sins does he have that he could still rectify in this world before it is too late? How many *middos* could he change? How many wrong attitudes, *hashkafos*, does he have that are contrary to the Torah?

How good it would be if he could create for himself a Torah mind in this world. Because there will someday come a time when the truth will be shown to him, and the truth will hurt more than the biggest kind of punishment that's in Gehinom. The truth he sees then will be his biggest Gehinom! He'll be faced suddenly by the truth that strikes him between the eyes like a bar of metal! And just when it's too late to do anything about it! Ach! We'll cry out a **זעקה גדולה ומרה** bigger than Eisav.

And therefore, even though it's a *gemilus chassadim*, a great kindness, to tell people the truth they have to hear, we have to come back to what it means 'emes.' Because *emes* means to tell it in such a way that they'll accept it. It means to do it in such a way that they'll be willing to listen.

Crooked Criticism

Suppose you're dealing with somebody who has a crooked mind. And the truth is, the mind is the most twisted thing. The *navi* Yirmiyah said that: עֵקֶב הַלֵּב מְכֻלָּ – *Man's mind is more bent than anything else* (Yirmiyahu 17:9). So how are you going to put a straight thought into his crooked mind? Let's say you want to put a straight bar into a crooked place. You can't do it. You have to take the bar and twist it so it should fit into his crooked mind. That's all you can do. So עֵם עֵקֶשׁ – *with a crooked mind*, הִתְפַּתֵּל – *make yourself crooked* (Tehillim 18:27).

If somebody will come today and tell us straight from the shoulder this and this and this, something we can't accept, we'll never listen to him. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "I don't want you to say that. It's not *emes*." You twist it a little and then put it in.

So when you want to talk to somebody—let's say here's a man who has a TV in his house. So you can't tell him, "TV?! It's a *moshav leitzim*, a house of *rishus*. In such a house everybody is *yordei Gehinom*, no question about it."

Now, actually that's the truth. To listen every night to gentile *leitzim* and *reshaim*, the whole house becomes defiled with wickedness. No question what's going to happen in such a house. It could be they'll lose their *chelek* in Olam Haba. But you can't say that. Once you say that then you'll never see that person again. Because he has a crooked mind.

The Fine TV Man

So what should you do with him? You have to talk to him in a way that he understands, a different type of truth: "I have to tell you," you say. "You know you're a fine man. You have a fine house. You're a *shomer Shabbos*. You have *kashrus*, *taharas hamishpacha*. A house like yours, I think you can accomplish a great deal in your house. It's a *kli*, a receptacle for greatness. Such a house should strive now to get more Torah attitudes."

Oh, he's willing now. When he hears such things, he's willing to listen. Don't mention anything about the TV. That's a half year later. You have to be a Yaakov! Eisav was a straight shooter; that's why he became a failure.

Of course, it depends where you're speaking, if you're talking in Williamsburg or Flatbush. In Flatbush you'll have to twist more than in Williamsburg. And if you're talking let's say in a small town in Connecticut, so there you'll twist a little more. But whatever it is, to a great extent with everyone, it's עֵם עֵקֶשׁ הִתְפַּתֵּל. A straight bar in our crooked minds wouldn't fit in. So today we need to deal with people in the way their minds are—with a twist.

And today that's the truth. It doesn't mean you don't say anything. You must! You have to help your fellow Jew. But if it won't be effective to say the

truth then don't say the truth—say a half truth. Say a *sheker*. מוֹתֵר לְשִׁנוֹת מִפִּי. דְּרַכֵּי שְׁלוֹם – You can say a falsehood as long as it's going to have a good effect and lead people gradually and slowly to the truth.

Career Mistakes

That's why in the beginning of Mishlei what does he say there? What's the purpose of Mishlei? לָתֵת לַפְתָּאִים עֲרָמָה – *To give to the fools cunning* (1:4). The purpose of Mishlei is to teach cunning. You have to learn how to handle people with diplomacy. You have to be a diplomat, and diplomacy means *rama'us*. You have to be *akev*, cunning, to deal with people. Everybody needs diplomacy today. Nobody can be given straight from the shoulder a punch, a jolt. Once you do that, it's all over. You'll never see him again.

I look back on my career. I made mistakes like that too. Once a man came here with his son. His son was a *ba'al teshuvah*. He had a beard, a fine young man.

The father said, "I have a complaint against my son."

"What's the complaint?"

So he tells me that the son refuses to kiss his mother-in-law.

I said to the father, "Of course he can't. It's *assur al pi Torah*."

The father said, "Who cares what the Torah says?"

"Oooh," I said. "Then get out of here."

I made a mistake. I made a big mistake. The son never came again. He was coming week after week and he was making very much progress. Now he never came again.

You can't talk that way. You have to use diplomacy. That's the *ratzon Hashem*. עִם עֵקֶשׁ תִּתְּפֹל – *With a crooked mind you have to make yourself crooked*.

Emes L'Yaakov

Now, it's with this thought in mind that we have to approach everything because everybody is an *ikesh*. Everybody is stubborn. We especially, but also our friends, our children, our spouses, our neighbors. Now, you can't keep quiet all the time. Sometimes you must speak up. But you have to be careful—you might have to speak words that are not truthful words.

Children, *talmidim*, they all need training. עֵיזֵר פָּרָא אֶדָם יוֹלֵד – *A man is born a wild donkey*, and so he has to hear the truth. But the truth means what Hashem wants you to say. Saying words that hurt somebody without having the desired effect, no. That's insanity, to say whatever you feel in your heart. You have to say what's beneficial, what's effective.

You can never gain your point by a head-on collision. דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנִיחָה – נִשְׁמָעִים – When are the words listened to? When it's said gently. But not only the tone; the words too. You have to use a certain amount of perspicacity, a certain amount of judgment.

And that's called *emes*. That's *emes l'Yaakov*, the ways of truth that we learn from Yaakov. Because it's the enduring ideals of the Torah, the ideals of Torah and mitzvos and *middos tovos*, that's considered the greatest *emes* there is.

And that's one of the important principles of successful living. It's the true truth! Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "I want you to be truthful according to My *emes*, and by Me it has to be an *emes* of *chessed*—an *emes* that produces *chessed* and produces results."

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Let's Get Practical

Speaking the Truth

Eisav accused Yaakov of being a crook, of speaking deceitfully. But we know that sometimes an untruth is a form of *chessed*, a true *emes*. This week, I will try my best to be tuned in to this lesson. At least once every day, before opening my mouth to speak to someone else, I will *bli neder* pause to consider my words: Are they *emes*? Are they words of *chessed*? And I will be careful to speak only words that are positive and constructive and bring more light into the world.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

E-45 – The True Truth | E-230 – The Artificial Man | 752 – Adorning Our People

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Shabbos Inspired

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Living Shabbos

What should we do on Shabbos? How can we utilize this day and make it meaningful? In truth, this is a broad topic, but we'll mention just two points:

1. We need to guard Shabbos, taking care not to desecrate it.
2. Above all, we need to remember that today is Shabbos.

On a long Shabbos evening or afternoon, if we just sit and idly chat, we desecrate Shabbos. The very fact that we forget today is Shabbos is a desecration of Shabbos! All the more so if someone reads a book—even stories of tzaddikim—just to pass the time, for he is unaware that today is Shabbos. This person is not living Shabbos, and that's considered desecrating Shabbos.

Now let us discuss guarding the Shabbos. We can understand this concept by comparing it to the Beis HaMikdash. There was a lot of guarding in the Beis HaMikdash. There were partitions and curtains, and all the doors were guarded, lest strangers entered. This was an important aspect of the Beis HaMikdash and is a very interesting point. How many hours a day were *korbanos* actually being offered there? From the morning until the early afternoon. At two o'clock the Beis HaMikdash was already closed. The service of the *korbanos* did not last the whole day, and the Beis HaMikdash was not just a place for bringing *korbanos*.

So what did they do there twenty-four hours a day? They guarded. They lived within the Beis HaMikdash, in partitions within partitions, guarding it day and night. A Jew who entered there knew very well that he was now in the Beis HaMikdash.

And so it is with Shabbos. This is the time to sit in the *beis midrash*, to learn, to daven, to say Tehillim, to do various other things that show appreciation and honor of Shabbos - not to engage in empty activities and sit around talking nonsense. That ruins the beauty of it all. We must guard the *kedushah* of Shabbos as the Kohanim guarded the Beis HaMikdash.

For these twenty-four hours, let us try to live with the Shabbos as much as possible. Let us be *Shabbosdik*, filling the time with learning, with *kedushah*. This doesn't mean we have to jump to high *madreigos*—there's no need for that. The *madreigos* come from Hashem, from Shabbos itself. All we have to do is, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Tehillim 81:11) If we just live with the reality that now it's Shabbos, and we realize we're drinking from the great fountain of Shabbos, everything will be as it should. Someone who lives *Shabbos Kodesh* is penetrating the world of *kedushah*, as if he had entered into the holiest places of the Beis HaMikdash!

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Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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QUESTION

What's your opinion of Jews eating turkey on Thanksgiving?

ANSWER

What's my opinion of Jews going to church on Thanksgiving? I consulted three encyclopedias—they're not written by Gedolei Yisroel, but they weren't written by *kana'im* either. They were written by *goyim*. And each one states as follows: "Thanksgiving is a church holiday". Forget about a legal holiday; forget about an American holiday. It's a church holiday! And it's made for the purpose of going to church and holding services.

Now, when Jews say, "Well, what's wrong with us doing it?" so you have to know that in the Torah it says that if you'll say **אֵיכָה יַעֲבֹדוּ הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֵלֶּיךָ וְאֶעֱשֶׂה כֵּן גַּם אֲנִי** – *How do these nations serve their gods and let me do likewise*. So the Gemara says it means not likewise to serve idols. Likewise means to serve Hashem the way they serve their gods. Oh no! That's forbidden.

We should serve Hashem like they do?! To hold Thanksgiving services, that's *abizrayhu d'avodah zarah*, it's something like *avodah zarah*.

And therefore any symbol of that day, like eating turkey, is *abizrayhu d'avodah zarah*. And a person should do everything in his power to avoid such things. The fact that in America you have butchers or restaurants that sell and serve kosher turkey on Thanksgiving or even Modern Orthodox rabbis who give a *hechsher* on eating turkey and celebrating Thanksgiving, they are the victims of ignorance.

Even an old *talmid chochom*, he doesn't know what Thanksgiving is all about. So when the question comes to him, he asks his grandchild, "*Chaim'l, vus iz Tenksgiving?*"

So the little boy says, "It's just an American holiday, that's all. It's like Election Day."

I don't ask old *talmidei chachomim* about Thanksgiving. I ask *goyim* what Thanksgiving is. And three kosher *goyim* wrote in encyclopedias that Thanksgiving is a church holiday! They're my *poskim*.

November 22, 1984

Life Questions?

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