

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

The *parsha* begins with Hashem informing Moshe that while He had appeared to the *avos*, it had never been by means of the name *Havaya*. Rashi explains this to mean that Hashem's trait of truthfulness hadn't been revealed to them, specifically since they had been promised Eretz Yisroel but hadn't yet received it.

Of course, in any other context, someone who breaks his promise is considered a downright liar. Could the absence of *Havaya* constitute a justification for Hashem to renege on His commitment, *chas veshalom*?

In fact, the reason this doesn't reflect badly is simply because Hashem never promised the land upfront. Rather Avraham was explicitly told that there would be an exile first and that a later generation would inherit Eretz Yisroel, which is in fact exactly what happened.

If so, what does it mean that Hashem did not reveal his trait of truthfulness to the *avos*? After all, he ultimately did exactly as he had promised!

Clearly, with regard to Hashem, "truth" means something other than just "the opposite of falsehood." This is also evidenced by the fact that one of the thirteen traits of mercy is "truth." The other attributes are surely truthful as well; the uniqueness of the attribute of truth must lie in something deeper.

TIMELESS ENDURANCE

Chassidus explains that truth is defined as consistence, as being perpetually the same, passing the test of time. An example is the Mishna which rules that "false rivers" are unfit for the water mixed with the ashes of the *para aduma*. The definition of a false river, the Mishna explains, is one where the water dries up once in seven years. The body of water is real, of course, but it cannot be considered a proper river due to its lack of permanence. While it might currently possess water due to present conditions, the fact that it will dry up later proves that it isn't inherently a river.

This can be more easily understood in the context of determining the genuineness of one's inspiration (on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, for example). The way to do this is by investigating the follow-up. If the effect is fleeting and doesn't continue afterward,

then the original emotion wasn't real to begin with. It didn't reflect the person's true state at the time; it was only a product of his environment, of the inspiring atmosphere surrounding him. If the inspiration was indeed genuine and came from within, it would have remained even once the outside circumstances had changed.

If one's inspiration is indeed genuine and comes from within, it will remain even once the outside circumstances change.

This principle as applied to time, also holds true for space. Chazal speak of certain measures which guarantee that a prayer won't go unanswered. However, that seems to be disproven by everyday experience. The explanation given is that the request may have been fulfilled, but the relief remained in the Heavenly realms, never entering this world (or even if it did descend below, it was

only applied on a spiritual level). This too demonstrates a lack of "truthfulness," since the Heavenly blessing isn't being applied everywhere equally, dwelling only in supernal realms, where conditions permit it.

A SPIRITUAL REALITY

A similar phenomenon can be observed where Hashem's promise of Eretz Yisroel to the *avos* is concerned. The Yerushalmi points out that while Hashem clearly stated that Eretz Yisroel would be given to Avraham's descendants, He used the word "*nasati*," "I have given," in the past tense. This means that on a certain level, the transfer of ownership had already occurred.

This is true to the extent that the firstborn were immediately entitled to a double portion when they arrived, even though that *halacha* generally applies only to established family property. This was because the Jewish people were regarded as owners long before they actually conquered the land.

The land was clearly theirs right away, yet this element was obviously confined to a spiritual plane. That is because the promise did not come from *Havaya*. The commitment, which originated from lower, more limited levels of G-dliness, did not possess the quality of "truthfulness," and therefore did not apply equally in the physical world.

Lot's shepherds argued that they ought to be free to graze in others' fields without retribution, pointing to the promise Hashem made to Avraham. That was because they mistakenly

understood that promise as immediately applying to the physical realm, failing to grasp its limited application.

EXILE PAVES THE WAY

Our *parsha* begins in the middle of a conversation, which Moshe began by demanding to know why Hashem was allowing the Jews to suffer, in essence asking why there's a need for *galus*. *Seforim* explain, and surely even Moshe was aware, that the Egyptian exile was a necessary preparation for *Matan Torah*. So what was bothering Moshe?

Moshe's real question was what purpose *Matan Torah* itself served. Didn't the Jewish people already have the Torah? Didn't the *avos* already observe the *mitzvos*? What was to be gained through *Matan Torah* and all the suffering leading up to it?

Hashem's response consisted of highlighting how everything prior to *Matan Torah* remained in the spiritual realms, never crossing over into this world. The Zohar describes how Yaakov channeled the energy of *tefillin* through the sticks he used for breeding his sheep. But those sticks never acquired any holiness, while the parchment we use today is transformed into a sacred object. What changed?

The previous status quo needs no explanation: It's only normal for spirituality to be confined to spirituality. A logical *sevara* cannot effect a change in a physical stone. It is the present state of affairs that requires explanation. From where do we get this incredible ability to bring holiness into this material world?

The answer lies in the opening passage of *Matan Torah*: "*Anochi Havaya Elokecha*." At *Matan Torah* an essential level of G-dliness was revealed, unlike any of the more limited manifestations of the past, enabling the greatest G-dly emanations to spread equally to the furthest reaches of our physical world.

Hashem illustrated this with the example of Eretz Yisroel, pointing out that due to the absence of *Havaya*, this element of

the land's ownership remained in the spiritual realms. "Tell the Jews that '*Ani Havaya*,' " Hashem said. "This exile is paving the way for a new revelation, to be achieved at *Matan Torah*."

THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

When Moshiach comes, an entirely deeper dimension of Torah will become accessible, compared to which the Torah of today is called *hevel*, futile. *Havaya* itself consists of dimensions of varying depth, and at that time an even more profound expression of "truthfulness" and equalization will be unveiled.

As explained above, *Matan Torah* provided the ability for parchment to be transformed into *tefillin*. What's more, when one recites a *bracha* on bread, the bread is transformed into an

entity that is more *eidel* and refined than it was before. However, this change cannot be perceived visibly; this perspective is limited only to *tzadikim*. This is because although *Matan Torah* accomplished that the spiritual should (not remain Above, but should descend and) impact the physical, the impact is still spiritual in nature.

When Moshiach will come, on the other hand, not only will the physical be transformed, but that change will manifest itself physically. "All *flesh* will perceive that the mouth of Hashem

has spoken." Our *galus* now, in turn, is preparing us for the coming revelation, and is proportionately longer in accordance with its scale.

This week we commemorate 24 Teves, the *yahrtzeit* of the Alter Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe revealed *pnimius ha'Torah* in a greater measure than before, serving as a preliminary "glow" of these deeper dimensions of Torah, which will be revealed as a result of our efforts in *galus*.

For further learning see ספר השיחות תשמ"ט ח"ב ע' 927 הע' 70

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