

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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WHAT TRUTH REALLY MEANS

Parshas Va'eira 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 that the name *Havaya* represents Hashem's trait of truthfulness. Failing to appear to the Avos with this name meant that His truthfulness hadn't been revealed to them, as He had promised to give them Eretz Yisroel but hadn't fulfilled His word.

This seems difficult to understand. Someone who breaks his promise is normally considered a downright liar. How then could the absence of the revelation of *Havaya* constitute a justification for Hashem to default on His commitment?!

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.

In light of this, the notion that *Havaya*, and therefore truthfulness, were lacking is puzzling. Everything turned out exactly as He had promised! Clearly, "truth" here means much more than just "the opposite of falsehood."

This is also evidenced by the fact that one of the thirteen traits of mercy is "truth." This surely does not imply that the other traits are not truthful! We must say that there is a deeper meaning to the concept of truth.

TIMELESS ENDURANCE

Chassidus defines truth as consistence, something that is perpetually the same, passing the test of time. An example for this definition is the Mishnah which makes reference to "false rivers," 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.

Why does a lack of permanence reflect a measure of untruth? This can better be understood from a person's emotions. Imagine a person who gets inspired on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. How can we determine if the inspiration is genuine and a true reflection of the person's state? By investigating the follow-up. If it has a permanent influence, affecting his conduct

the next day, we know it was real. But if the effect is fleeting, then the original emotion wasn't real to begin with. It didn't reflect who the person really was, and was only a product of the circumstances and the environment he was in.

Similarly, if a particular river will ultimately dry up, it demonstrates that the fact that it is now flowing is only due to present conditions, but it isn't inherently a river.

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. Why don't we always see this in actuality?

The explanation given is that the request may have been fulfilled, but the relief remained in the Heavenly realms, never entering this world. Alternatively, although it entered this world, it was only applied on a spiritual level. This too

demonstrates a lack of "truthfulness." If it would indeed be true, it would be applied everywhere. The fact that it only dwells in certain realms, where conditions permit it, demonstrates that it lacks complete truthfulness.

Clearly, "truth" means much more than just "the opposite of falsehood." There must be a deeper meaning to the concept of truth.

A SPIRITUAL REALITY

We can now understand the lack of "truthfulness" with Hashem's promise of Eretz Yisroel to the Avos.

The Yerushalmi points out that while Hashem clearly stated that Eretz Yisroel would be given to Avraham's descendants, Hashem 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 when the Jews entered Eretz Yisroel, the land was halachically viewed as having been acquired through their ancestors. For this reason, the firstborn were entitled to a double portion of land, despite the fact that a double portion is only taken from established family property, and not from assets that were acquired later. The reason is because the Jewish people were regarded as owners long before they actually conquered the land.

The land was clearly theirs right away, yet this was obviously

confined to a spiritual plane. That is because the promise did not come from *Havaya*. The commitment originated from lower, more limited levels of G-dliness, and therefore did not possess the quality of “truthfulness,” to apply equally in the physical world. Lot’s shepherds argued that they ought to be free to graze in others’ fields, pointing to the promise Hashem made to Avraham, but they failed to grasp its limited application.

EXILE PAVES THE WAY

This idea—that the Avos had not experienced Hashem’s truthfulness—served as Hashem’s answer to Moshe’s demand, “Why have you allowed the Jews to suffer?” In essence, Moshe was asking why there’s a need for *golus*.

Sefarim explain—and surely Moshe was aware of this as well—that the Egyptian exile was a preparation for *Matan Torah*. If 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 responded by giving an example of what truth is all about. This explained the accomplishment of *Matan Torah*: *Matan Torah* achieved truth.

Prior to *Matan Torah*, everything 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. It is easy to understand why spirituality should not be able to transform physicality. What explains the incredible ability we possess today to bring holiness into this material world?

The answer is that at *Matan Torah* the level of “*Anochi Havaya Elokecha*” was revealed. This essential level of G-dliness, unlike any of the more limited manifestations of the past, was “true,” spreading 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*, the land’s ownership remained unembodied and unrealized. 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, there will be another *Matan Torah*. The Torah itself won’t change, G-d forbid, but an entirely deeper dimension will become accessible. *Havaya* itself consists of dimensions of varying depth, and therefore 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*, or even for bread to

be refined through a *brachah*. However, there still isn’t any visible change, and this perspective is limited only to *tzaddikim*. Although the physical can presently be impacted by the spiritual, the affect itself is a spiritual one, unseen by the human eye.

In the era of Moshiach, however, not only will physicality be impacted by spirituality, but the change will manifest itself physically, able to be seen with our physical eyes. Our *golus* now, in turn, is preparing us for this new revelation, and is proportionately longer in accordance with

its depth and greatness.

Already today we can have a taste of these future profound revelations of Torah, in the form of *pnimiyus hatorah* and Chassidus. Through learning and spreading this dimension of Torah, we will merit to experience the *Matan Torah* of the era of Moshiach, may it take place immediately.

For further learning see הדרן “המשולש” הע’ 17 (הדרנים על הרמב”ם ו”ש”ס ע’ תנז)

Matan Torah accomplished that parchment used for *tefillin* becomes sacred. However, there still isn’t any visible change.



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