



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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Being truthful, speaking the truth, and conducting oneself honestly, is one of the fundamental ideas of Jewish life.

Our Chazal teach us:

"חֹתָמוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא "אֱמֶת" *The seal of HaKadosh Baruch Hu is truth...* (Shabbat 55a).

Indeed our Sedra this week, Parshat Mishpatim, introduces us to this very fundamental concept:

תִּרְחַק מִדְבַר שֶׁקֶר וְתִרְחַק *Distance yourself from a word of falsehood...*(Shemot 23:7)

Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa zy'a famously pointed out that for no other transgression does the Torah stipulate to distance oneself from the transgression, rather simply do not transgress! This comes to teach us that the attribute of truthfulness is so vital, that one must stay far away, and keep distant from even the appearance of a lie!

In his beautiful commentary on the Chumash, **Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztvl** asks a fundamental question on this verse:

"Just what is meant by 'Distance yourself?'

It means that one should act in a way that there will be no need to lie!...The Talmud (Tamid 32a) says that a wise person is one who can envision the outcome...Wisdom consists of seeing the long term consequences of one's actions rather than just the immediate effects.

Distancing oneself from falsehood not only prevents one from transgressing the prohibition of lying, but also results in behavior that is both ethical and profitable..." (Twerski on Chumash, pgs 154-155)

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Horowitz, the Patiker Rav, zy'a, points to the statement in the last mishna in Eduyot, to further explain our verse:

"The mishna in Eduyot states: Elyahu will come to make distant those that are close, and to bring close those who are distant..."

This is an allusion to our verse midvar sheker tirschak- since the letters in the word sheker (false) are close to one another, while the letters in the word for truth-emet- are distant from one another sequentially. Elyahu will come and push aside, and make distant all the falsehood in the world, and bring close-bring us all closer to see the ultimate truth....

Yehi Ratzon, may we each merit to strive to take to heart each of these beautiful insights, and may we soon merit to see the day when indeed the world will be free of falsehood, and we will all come together to embrace the ultimate truth and goodness that the world so desperately needs. ■

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