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## On the Parsha

*"Im b'chukosai sailechu"* - If you walk in my statutes – Rashi explains this to mean "That you shall strive with great effort in studying Torah." Rav Henach Leibowitz ZT'L explained that striving with great effort in the study of Torah means that one must use all of one's powers of reasoning to ensure that each and every piece of Torah that is said is both textually and logically compelling. The truth of a Sugya (Talmudic passage) must emerge organically, and not by, for example, randomly inserting complex structures and explanations without sufficient justification. Also, a Sugya must not be studied once – it must be learned and re-learned for days and sometimes weeks. This is the study of Torah that Rashi references above – Torah study with an absolute dedication to truth.

The Gemorah (Bava Metziah 84a) explains that when Raish Lakish passed away, Rav Yochanan was in a state of despair upon losing his long-time study partner. The Sages asked, "Who shall go study with him, so that his anxiety will be relieved? Rabbi Elazar Ben Pedas should go because he is sharp and proficient in his studies." He went and sat before him.

Whatever Rabbi Yochanan said, he would cite a proof supporting his view. Rav Yochanan exclaimed rhetorically, "You are like Raish Lakish?! Whenever I said something to Raish Lakish, he would pepper me with 24 questions – and I provided 24 responses! And through this back and forth the truth would emerge. You cite proofs to me? [I need to be challenged for the truth to emerge!]"

Rav Yochanan then ripped his clothing in agony and cried, "Where are you Ben Lakish? Where are you Ben Lakish!"

With the demise of Raish Lakish, Rav Yochanan lost his ability to plumb the depths of Torah and he no longer had the tools to enable him to find the absolute truth in the Torah that he learned. Walking in Hashem's statutes means seeking supreme and absolute truth in the study of Hashem's Torah. Rav Yochanan could no longer do that which explains his extreme reaction. This is the deeper understanding of walking in Hashem's statutes – doing so with the perspective of seeking absolute truth.

By the same token, Rav Dessler is cited in Sefer HaZikaron L'Baal HaMichtav M'Eliyahu (Vol. II p. 76) regarding the Gemorah (Taanis 23a) that discusses Choni HaM'agel. Choni fell asleep for seventy years. When he woke, he went to the Bais Midrash. He became weak of spirit when no one recognized him or responded to him. He then requested mercy and passed away. Rava explained, "That is what people say, give me friends or give me death." Rav Dessler ZT"L explains that Choni wished to die, not out of a desire for honor due him that he did not receive, but rather because he could no longer study Torah with the pursuit of pure truth that can only emerge through study partners dedicated to deriving it.

## Chizuk - Inspiration

"Sarah" a Bais Yaakov graduate from the Machon Sarah Torah Academy for Girls in Far Rockaway, had attended a pharmaceutical program at Rutgers University after her high school graduation. One of the rules in the pharmaceutical laboratory was that the lab coat must belong to the student. Sarah's lab coat was rather dirty and needed washing. Her mother readily volunteered to wash it.

On her drive to Rutgers, she realized that she had forgotten her newly washed lab coat. She thought of a

great idea. Sarah and her friend each had their labs on opposite days. Sarah asked her friend if she could borrow her lab coat on the days that she wasn't using it. Her friend agreed.

Ever cognizant of the obligation to speak Emes each day, she told her professor that her lab coat was a borrowed lab coat and not her own. The professor thanked her for her honesty but informed her that she would receive a "zero" for the lab assignment. She was nonplussed and received the news with perfect equanimity.

One would think that Sarah's academic standing would be in jeopardy on account of the zero she received in her laboratory class. However, that was not the case. The Midrash Mei Shiloach (cited in the last column in the name of Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT'L) states that one who dedicates oneself to the Middah of Emes never stumbles. Accordingly, Sarah became the valedictorian of that year's graduating class.

### Halacha – Jewish Law

There is an associated prohibition of "Midvar Sheker Tirchak" - distancing oneself from falsehood, called "Hin Tzedek" – not making honest pledges, that is discussed in the Gemorah in Bava Metziah 49a. [Most Poskim (Halachic commentaries) hold this to be a Biblical prohibition, others hold it is rabbinic.] This refers to a person who promises that he will do something but has no intention of doing so. In other words, one cannot say one thing but intend another. This is not a conventional case of "lying" since in this situation it is rectifiable, because one can ultimately decide to keep his word.

What happens if one had in mind to keep one's word, but later changed one's mind? The Poskim tell us that this is not a violation of Hin Tzedek. It is however, a violation of something else called "Chasurei Amana" – lacking trustworthiness.

The Gemorah also tells us (in Makkos 24a and Bava Basra 88a) that there is a higher level of speaking truth and that is speaking truth in one's heart which reflects a higher level of fear of heaven. Speaking

truth in one's heart is fulfilling what one had meant to do even if it was never voiced [Niv Sfasayim].

### Mussar – Introspection

Please see below for a translation of Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT'L's selection on Emes from his Mussar Sefer Orchos Yosher (courtesy of Orchotyosher.org)

One who speaks truth is careful of all sins as it states in Midrash Mei HaShiloach: "One who dedicates himself to only speak truth will never stumble. It happened once in early times that there was a young man from an important family who from the days of his youth followed after the whims of his heart and passions. The day came (see Shoftim 13:25) where the spirit of Hashem awoke inside him and he bowed before Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach and said to him, 'Rebbe, Rebbe, I have much pain from my sins that chase after me and surround me. I said in my heart that I must atone!'

And he responded and said to him, 'My son, my son. Do not cry. I can easily find a cure for what ails you and you shall arise from your ailment. However, my son, you must watch yourself from all sorts of deceit in all your matters and do not stumble. Then you shall be saved from all of your difficulties.'

He responded, 'This is a small matter to keep, and I shall perform it.'

'Swear to me that you will do it,' Shimon ben Shetach continued. He swore and went back to his home. One day, his neighbor went to the bathhouse. His passion overcame him and while the neighbor was gone, he stole everything that was in his neighbor's house.

As he left, he said in his heart, 'If my neighbor returns, she will cry out over her lost possessions and over her home. What will I say to her? If I say, I am pure and without sin, I will be deceitful and will have lied - what will be with my oath?'

He had no choice but to return everything that he had taken and he immediately appreciated the wisdom of Shimon Ben Shetach."