

# **Fidelity to the Truth**

**Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz**

We are meant to learn lessons from current events. Today's headlines connect to the first Rashi in this week's parsha.

A new president took office three weeks ago, promising to tackle waste and fraud in government while returning power to the people. Since then, he has worked forcefully to root out corruption and inefficiency in government spending. Taxpayers, stunned and disgusted, are learning the full extent of how billions of their hard-earned dollars were squandered.

Despite these revelations, the mainstream media continues to ignore these disclosures and maintains its relentless criticism of the president, who is fulfilling the will of the people. His efforts to shrink the bloated government and reduce the excessive expenditures that contributed to a staggering \$37 trillion deficit are met with resistance from those who benefit from the status quo.

The Democrat Party and its representatives, who turned a blind eye to the mistakes and failures of the previous administration and its ineffective, incoherent leadership, have now turned their ire on the president. They attack his attempts to clean up government and restore American greatness.

President Trump and his administration are being vilified for exposing the lies and deceptions that allowed the government to operate under a veil of corruption. For this crime, he faces daily ridicule. Last week, Vice President J.D. Vance traveled to Europe, where he delivered a sharp critique of European nations, calling out their hypocrisy. The response was swift and predictable, as the vice president committed the cardinal sin of breaking with the norm of diplomatic complacency, challenging the idea that global leaders must always play along with the prevailing narratives, as fictitious as they may be.

Two weeks ago, the president exposed the hypocrisy of the Arab world and those who harbor animosity toward Israel when he proposed relocating the residents of Gaza from the land, which has become a grim and desolate place under Hamas control. After more than a year of Israeli bombardment, it has become uninhabitable for human life. Rather than receiving praise for offering Gaza's residents a chance at a normal life by changing the status quo, the president was harshly condemned by those who claim to be concerned about so-called refugees. In reality, they revealed that they don't genuinely care for this population. Instead, they use them as pawns in their ongoing battle against Israel.

In the world in which we live, truth is rare. Fiction, deviation, misinformation, and half-truths pervade across the world. The only way to have a connection to the truth is by following the Torah. Consequently, the laws that govern financial interactions between people must have a

basis in the Torah for them to be truthful and just. Relying on other sources will lead to improper outcomes.

Parshas Mishpotim follows Yisro, because the dramatic and awe-inspiring majesty and glory of Maamad Har Sinai were an introduction to the laws governing how we deal with each other.

The depth of the connection between the two parshiyos is discussed by the Sefas Emes, who explains that “Ve’eileh hamishpotim asher tosif lifneihem” is the natural consequence of “Anochi Hashem Elokecha.”

The posuk states, “...asher tosif lifneihem,” teaching us that even though these laws appear to be rational, Jews are forbidden to adjudicate their disputes in secular courts. Even if the secular laws seem to equal those that appear in the Torah, we must know that they are not. There are truths and then there is the Torah’s truth, composed and transmitted by the One who created the world. We don’t live our lives in accordance with social mores and customs of the world around us. We live with His truth, the real truth.

Chazal teach that Hashem created the world according to the Torah. Therefore, it follows that the rule by which Hashem designed us to live is that of the Torah. The halachos are based on the logic of the Torah, not the logic of human beings. If our logic happens to conform with the Torah, that is because we have studied the Torah and it has affected us. It is also because the Creator created us to follow the rules of the Torah and implanted in us those concepts. The reason why a person who injured someone else pays him damages is not because it makes sense, but because the Torah mandates us to do so. Since that is the rule of the Torah and the world was created according to the laws of the Torah, people have those concepts embedded into them.

When people veer from the Torah, when people are corrupted, their mindset also changes and becomes corrupted. While they acknowledge the obligation to be truthful, they view truth differently in order to justify their way of life. Truth remains a value, but it becomes subservient to their agenda and objectives. They justify lying for what they view as the common good. They hew to a veneer of fidelity to the law coupled with kindness and goodness as they convince themselves that they are good people. Eventually, those around them and those who deal with them and study them recognize that it is all a ruse.

Study the leaders and administrators of communist and socialist countries and you will find that those who claim to be leaders of a worker’s paradise where all people are treated equally are, in fact, sadist butchers, who could care less about people’s rights, possessions, and lives. The same is true, though not on the same level, of the full gamut of politicians who care for themselves and their own power and wealth, viewing the people as pawns they must use to help them fulfill their desires. These people appoint judges and bureaucrats who will carry out their will and help advance the desired agenda. They speak of fidelity to truth, justice, and fairness, but, in truth, veer far from their stated goals.

The world runs on a form of fiction, a lie that is compelling and enticing and bears all the similarities to the truth. But it is still a lie. The system of justice presents itself as honorific and precise, but all too often, we find that the people who administer justice are lacking in fidelity to a just code.

From outside appearances, it seems that the laws are similar, but they are not. There are some things that you think you can accept at face value, but even those are often fiction. The yeitzer hora tempts us with different guises. Some are transparent and obvious enticements, while others are more cleverly devised to fool and entrap us. Societal mores are presented as truths, and those who don't accept them are made to feel that they are out-of-fashion and irrelevant vestiges from a different time.

It's all a game. Some people play baseball, some play football, and some play the truth.

There is no truth outside of the Torah. Leadership is about acting, about sincerity and compassion, about intelligence and presence. Facts and numbers are stubborn things, but they are either ignored or spun by those in power to create and foster the narrative necessary to promote their agenda.

The Torah is eternally true and relevant. We are not affected by today's trends and fads, for we know that they will not stand the test of time. To compromise on truths is to engage in a fictitious momentary pursuit. To compromise on what we are and what we stand for to appeal to the world is a foolish endeavor.

The transparent attempts to betray the life-giving vision and mission of the Torah are to untether our vital links in exchange for temporal and fleeting societal standards that are in constant flux.

Chazal refer to this world as "alma deshikra," meaning that everything around us is a lie. It's all fake. The sooner we realize that, the sooner we can have a connection to the truth of the Torah. When we recognize that the nations of the world are governed by lies covered by a veneer of integrity, we learn a valuable lesson in how to navigate its roads and avoid its pitfalls.

Much of what happens in the world is akin to a Potemkin village, a deceptive or superficial facade created to give a false impression of prosperity, success, or well-being for the purpose of misleading others or hiding what is going on. So often, appearances are not what they seem, having been deliberately manipulated to conceal undesirable realities.

It's one thing when marketers craft illusions of an ideal scenario while concealing the often less flattering reality. But it's an entirely different matter when a government, particularly an American government, does the same. For four years, a man was propped up as president, while everyone in his administration, his party, and the media knew that he was physically and mentally incapable of fulfilling his duties.

Now, we're learning that the funds we were told were being allocated to charitable projects worldwide were, in fact, funneled into a massive slush fund for Democrats, their allies, and their associates. The public was deceived for years, but it was all supposedly for the greater good—to advance the liberal progressive agenda in this country and around the world, and to enrich those connected to the political elite.

Anyone whose neshomah was at Har Sinai must learn this parsha and realize that if we study Parshas Yisro and accept the Torah and its truth, but we fail to study and properly observe the laws contained in Parshas Mishpotim, our acceptance of the Torah is lacking. Yisro is contingent on Mishpotim. One who doesn't properly carry out the laws of Choshen Mishpot can be neither a ben Torah nor a mokir Torah. Someone who lacks respect for the property of others is lacking in faith. Those who engage in fraud and disrespect are not only dishonest and uncaring, but have failed in their commitment of naaseh v'nishma.

Sometimes, people neglect or bend the laws of Choshen Mishpot because they place the pursuit of finances above all other values. In so doing, they demonstrate their human frailty as well as a lack of faith in the Divine order. At times, man's vision becomes clouded. We must endeavor to always be honest and upstanding in our dealings, not permitting our own interests to subconsciously cause us to err.

The Torah that we follow is comprised of emes and its paths lead to peace. In order to achieve proper lasting relationships and friendships, they must be based on honesty and fidelity to the truth. If we are evasive or deceptive, as charming as we try to be and as hard as we try to mask our differences, we will ultimately fail.

Armed with strength and truth, and guided by the Torah, we can build bridges to make the world a better place and prepare it for the coming of Moshiach. By being honest, facing up to our differences and surmounting them, we can reach accommodations that last over time.

Just as life has no meaning without the Torah, so is the order of creation interrupted by a lack of mishpot. When the baal korei reads the Aseres Hadibros, everyone pays close attention, for we know that the Torah is the song and foundation of life, and these hallowed words are the foundation of Torah and a Torah life.

But we must know that the pesukim of Mishpotim are also verses in that song and form the foundation of Torah life. The Torah is not a theoretical and philosophical book. It is the very foundation of the world, of life in general and our lives in particular. Those who live by it are blessed and live a blessed life.

May we study these laws of mishpotim of Choshen Mishpot as well as we study the laws of Orach Chaim, so that we know them and follow them as second nature. Doing so will earn for us the brachos of the Torah and help us merit the geulah sheleimah bekarov.