

פרשת משפטים

This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my wife, Devorah.

ולרפואה שלימה ל' זעלדע ברכה בת חוה לאה רחל

”וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשֶׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם” (כא, א)

“And these are the ordinances that you shall set before them.”

Why does *Parshas Mishpatim* immediately follow the Ten Commandments? Rebbe taught that just as Hashem is meticulous about the Ten Commandments – He is also fastidious about judgment. Why? Because it is what the word depends on – “A king establishes the country on justice”¹ and upon it Zion is built - as it says, “Zion shall be redeemed through justice”² and through it *tzadikim* are extolled - “Fortunate are those who keep justice.”^{3 4}

”מִדְּבַר שֶׁקֶר תִּרְחֶק” (כג, ז)

“Distance yourself from a false matter.”

We must flee from falsehood. A Jew must distance himself from even a shadow of dishonesty, of pretending, of duplicity. Only truth. If we wish to be close to Hashem – we must be genuine. “Hashem is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him with sincerity.”⁵ Hashem does not desire liars, He does not seek those who publicize deceit – like those who try to display themselves as better than they really are. “Who speaks lies, will not be established before my eyes.”⁶ Therefore, there are *tzadikim* who spend all of their days working on the attribute of truth, and go to extremes to remove themselves from falsehood. As Rebbe Nachman taught in *Sefer Hamidos*, “One who wishes to cling to Hashem,

¹ מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ (משלי כט)

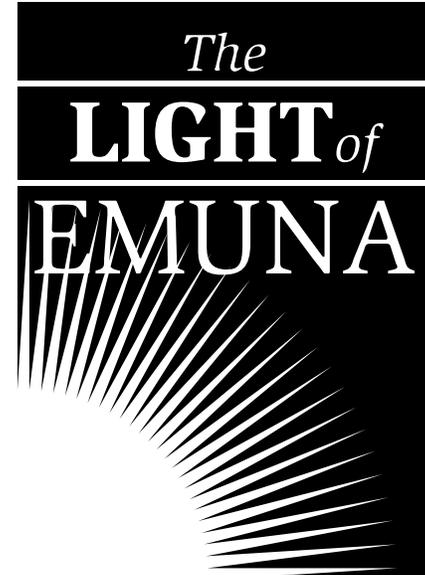
² ציון במשפט תיפדה (ישעיה א)

³ אשרי שומרי משפט (תהילים קו)

⁴ שמות רבה (ל, טו)

⁵ קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו, לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת (תהילים קמה)

⁶ דובר שקרים לא יכון לנגד עיני (תהילים קא)



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

should guard himself from speaking falsely, even inadvertently.” If someone asks for charity, we reply: “I don't have anything” and then we are reminded that we do indeed have, we simply forgot – that is falsehood – even if it was unintentional. So much joy is experienced by a Jew who fulfills the words of the Ramban in his famous letter - “think about words before emitting them from your mouth and thereby you words, actions and thoughts will be guileless.”

Truth illuminates the darkness. Truth is Hashem Himself and Hashem is light. If a person finds himself in darkness, where he cannot catch his breath and everything is difficult for him – he can say one true sentence, and Hashem's light will illuminate the darkness and he will begin to breathe. Therefore, in Heaven, they long for honesty. HKB”H longs for honesty. For that is what draws human beings to Him – the more honest a person is, the more he merits Hashem's light shining within him.

Truth has amazing power. If a person proceeds with sincerity - he witnesses Divine Assistance in every step and in every move.

Truth is the basis for all of the inner service that we perform. When we initiate our inner corrections, we encounter obstacles to our desired behavior. Where do these obstacles begin? Why do I get angry? Because I am arrogant – I cannot understand why people do

not do as I say. Only once we understand can we begin to correct. Every word that ignores the “there is nothing aside from Hashem” is already a lie. When we attribute successes to our own efforts, when we become proud, when we believe that we can accomplish anything without HKB”H – it is all false.

The task of honesty begins, as all things, in the home. Parents want their children to become accustomed to speaking truthfully and not be overly pedantic – children must feel secure to speak honestly. If they are fearful, they begin to lie. As Rebbe Nachman taught in *Sefer Hamidos*, “Dishonesty stems from fear of other people.” The same is true for married couples. When we are afraid of each others' reactions, we get used to lying. But, when we feel that we can tell each other anything, that even our mistakes will be received with understanding and forgiveness – then we get used to telling the truth.

It is so impressive when a person proceeds with genuineness and does not overly fret about what others do, say or think. Avraham Avinu conducted his life as if he was the only one in the world. He did not look at others or what they had or did. He was not concerned with the fashion of the times. He was not interested in the fact that most of his generation were idolaters. Avraham was unparalleled – if the majority worldview was false, he was content to serve Hashem all alone. One's bond with Hashem must be stronger than any other connection. From Avraham Avinu, we inherit the strength of conviction to remain steadfast in the minority, the resolve not to drift after whatever is fashionable at the moment. Our personal trials from Hashem are above all else. A Jew must concentrate his endeavors in compliance with the way that Hashem orchestrates his life - with joy, wholesomeness, without comparing himself to anyone else – just doing his part and being happy with his lot.

We wish to live lives of truth. “Send Your light and Your truth, that they may lead me.”⁷ The light

of truth will lead us. To attain that light, we must discard all matters that prevent us and confuse us – our self-importance, our egos, our honor - all of these superficial traits that transform us into angry, dissatisfied, finicky and deprived people. When we manage to neutralize their effect on us and recall that everything is from Hashem and everything is for the best – we merit living a life of truth. When a person connects to truth – he is necessarily happy. The light of Hashem shines within him.

The element of truth includes everything. It is made up of the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (א-מ-ת). We desire and seek absolute truth. We wish to know, definitively, what exactly Hashem desires of us at every moment – in connection with our mission towards ourselves and those around us. When we manage to understand – we find joy.⁸

Living honestly means that everything we do must be for Hashem's honor instead of our own. We must place ourselves to the side and Hashem in the center. We are so confused as to what to do – yet, there is only one answer to our every question: we must think about our motivation. If we act for Heaven's sake - we are pointed towards truth. If we act for our own honor, so that others will be impressed by our successes – we are deceiving ourselves.

When a person understands that everything, whether he is more successful or less, is all from Hashem – that we are merely pipelines and messengers – he must *daven* to Hashem that he merit doing good, that he may provide Him with pleasantness. Then, we will not be stressed and/or broken if things do not go exactly as we wanted. We will be happy, we will be relaxed – because we act for Hashem's honor.

Hashem does not want “truth” that distances His children from Him. That type of “truth” is rejected. Hashem desires closeness. The Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf and were deserving of destruction, G-d forbid. But, Moshe

⁷ שלח אורך ואמיתך המה ינחוני (תהלים מג:ג)

⁸ באור פני מלך

Rabbeinu understood that Hashem was not interested in that type of "truth." He cast the *luchos* to the ground, *davened* to Hashem and, in that merit, Hashem forgave us and we received the second *luchos*. Hashem's true will is to draw every single Jew near, to reveal the point of truth that radiates within us – that point of desire and yearning for Hashem. The soul of every Jew pines for Hashem and our mission is to help every Jew connect to that element that is found inside.

Tzadikim sacrifice themselves to restore the Jewish people. One day, when the Steipler Gaon was very old, his grandson closed the door to his house so that people would not enter and disturb his grandfather. His grandfather was frail and weak and he did not want him to be bothered. The Steipler, noticing that the door was closed, got up and opened it back up. When the grandson noticed that it was open again, he closed it - and again the Steipler opened it. This happened several times until the grandson realized that it was his grandfather who kept opening the door. He asked the Steipler why he didn't take it easy for a little, to save his strength. The Steipler replied, "Who knows in what merit I am still alive? Maybe it is because I receive people and do *chesed* for them."

A person who has internalized the attribute of honesty is one upon whom others can rely. His word is trustworthy – there is no reason to suspect that his actions or deeds are driven by ulterior motives. Such a person is capable of drawing so many others close – for people generally recognize sincerity when they encounter it. What is dangerous and drives a rift between us and Hashem – is contention and dispute. When we argue with friends, it appears to us, in our "true" view, that the other party has veered from the authentic – and we thereby distance ourselves from Hashem. All disputes in the world stem from this same attitude. When controversy burns in our hearts, the disputants are incapable of recognizing Hashem. They only see themselves. A person stubbornly holds on to controversy because the desire to win consumes him. Rebbe Nachman taught that the quest to be

victorious cannot tolerate the truth.

A dispute once arose in the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva towards the end of the Chofetz Chaim's life. He gathered the relevant parties together and, despite his very weakened state, stood to full posture and screamed "I built this yeshiva on the basis of peace." And then yelled three times, "arguments get out – conflicts get out – disputes get out." Many years later, one of his students testified that he still clearly saw his Rebbe's face ablaze and therefore, he had avoided strife for the rest of his life - at all costs.

Truth means bringing close, judging favorably and looking benevolently.

Moreinu Harav: Every Jew is a piece of G-dliness from above. Even the most wicked Jew burns for HKB"H. We are not animals – we descend directly from the Throne of Glory – even if we have millions of layers of dirt covering our souls – there are coals burning hot within – even if they are very dim. There is no such thing as evil people amongst Jews – there is no such thing as non-*frum*, Some people keep the Torah 80% completely, others 70%, 20% or 10% - but all do at least something – fast on Yom Kippur, eat *matzah* on Pesach – everyone does something. Every Jew is holy and pure. It is forbidden to refer to any Jew as evil – we must refrain from speaking as such. How could we possibly label another Jew as evil – have we stood in his place, do we know how he was raised, who his parents were, what he has endured – how could we possibly designate any Jew as evil? We must look with generous eyes – we must not think: "I did *teshuva*, I keep Shabbos, I learn Torah – why can't he be more like me, why doesn't he keep Shabbos like me, why can't he follow in my footsteps – I took these steps – why can't he?" Rebbe Nachman taught "A short while longer and there is no wickedness"⁹ means that if we give them a little time – they will no longer be sinful – they will come around tomorrow or the next day – we cannot meddle with Hashem's order of Creation – the progress of *teshuva*. The path of *teshuva* -

⁹ עוד מעט ואין רשע (תהלים לז:י)

when each person repents, how each person atones – is hidden from us – it is a process that every Jew must go through – every one of us will have a day of *teshuva*! We can accelerate the process, quicken it! But, that can only happen with benevolent attitudes and unity. If we would only recognize the benefit of judging favorably, not gazing begrudgingly – there would be no more wicked people – they would all do *teshuva* in the blink of an eye.

Sometimes we prosecute ourselves by thinking that we are so damaged and very distant and that brings us to despair and further distance. That is not truth – if it separates us even more it cannot be truth. Truth cannot detach – it only connects. Instead of blaming – we must fortify ourselves. We are connected to Torah and *yiddishkeit*, even if we are not *davening* or learning properly at present. We are Jews and we must experience

joy in that – even if we are not exactly what we think we should be. We must not try to be someone else – we must be ourselves.

R' Elimelech of Lizensk once asked his students who they wished to be. One said he'd like to be Avraham Avinu, another chose Moshe Rabbeinu, while a third answered Dovid Hamelech. They then asked the Rebbe who he aspired to be and he replied: "R' Elimelech – HKB" already had an Avraham Avinu, Moshe Rabbeinu and Dovid Hamelech – he doesn't need another – He wants me to be R' Elimelech." The same is true for every single Jew. Each of us is an "only child" to Hashem – each of us is entirely unique to Hashem. There is no such thing as "just another Jew" – each of us has specifically unique qualities – and that is precisely how Hashem wants it – each one with his own successes, challenges and difficulties.

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me be precise – not to exaggerate or inflate. So often when I relate things to others, I alter the facts, adding or subtracting – all to make a better impression. Help me, Father, to be exact, not to change at all – to recognize that all deviations are one big expression of arrogance – a desire to show ourselves as superior to what we truly are.

Master of World! Help me to not alter. So often, I veer from accuracy – for peace, to avoid offending, to dodge something – and all other manner of self-serving justification. Often I say one thing while intending something else – and even it is not false, it is also not quite true. When people misrepresent their age – even if it is not a lie – it is still somewhat deceptive.

Master of the World! Help me truly care about others. For example, if I notice a familiar young man that is so faraway that I am shocked by what I see – the most that I currently do is refrain from repeating it to my family so as to avoid *loshon hora* and *rechilus*. But, why do I not raise my head to You and beg You to help him return to You, Father? Help me really care about others. When I *daven* for the things I need – help me pray for everyone else as well, help me worry about them too.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov Elias

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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