

“In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth.” (1:1)

The foundation of any structure determines its strength and permanence. The Torah is a spiritual structure which is founded and sustained on the union of a number of positive attributes. There is no room for any negative trait in the Torah's foundation. This idea, cited by Rabbi Paysach Krohn, is expressed by Rabbeinu Bachya in his Sefer Kad HaKemach. He notes that in the first pasuk, verse, in the Torah, every vowel sound is present except one. The komatz, patach, segol, tzeirei, cholem, sh'vah and chirik are all present. There is only one missing sound: the shuruk, the "ooh" sound. He explains that the word "shuruk" is comprised of three letters: shin, reish, and kuf, the same letters which compose the word sheker. Sheker, falsehood or deceit, has no place in the Torah's foundation. The viability of any structure or endeavor is based upon its basic integrity. The Torah places before us its standard for the lifestyle we should choose to embrace: one of truth, honesty and integrity.

In his inimitable manner, Rabbi Krohn relates a compelling story which portrays the positive effect of honesty. A number of years ago, while Mrs. A. was spending the summer in the Catskill Mountains, she gave birth to a premature baby boy, who weighed a little more than two pounds. The child was immediately rushed to the nearest medical center which was located in Valhalla, New York.

The infant's life hung in the balance as the specialists did whatever was in their ability to sustain the child. His heart was weak, his lungs were frail, and he was in serious need of blood. Rabbi A. came daily to visit with his wife and son. He consulted with the doctors, and constantly expressed his profound gratitude. Knowing that the infant had already been the beneficiary of a number of blood transfusions, the father wondered if he could donate blood directly to him. While he could not donate directly to his son, he was able to donate to the hospital's blood bank and have the blood designated for his son. On the appointed day Rabbi A. arrived at the hospital together with his son, Shimon, who, himself having been born premature, also wanted to donate blood for his baby brother.

"It will make no difference. You are not of age, and if you get a heter, dispensation, this one time, you will be looking for opportunities to bend the law all of your life! I will not permit it. The subject is closed!" Rabbi A. stated emphatically.

With great reluctance, Shimon acceded to his father and did not give blood. A few days later, Shimon was a passenger in a car that was involved in a serious traffic accident. It took some time for the medics to extricate him from the crash. During this time, he lost so much blood that it was necessary to give him concentrated blood to keep him alive until he arrived at the hospital.

Upon hearing that Shimon had almost given blood a few days earlier, the doctor said, "Had he

given blood on that day he would now be dead, because there would not have been sufficient time for his body to replenish its blood supply which he needs to stay alive."

When we look back, it was all due to Rabbi A.'s integrity. His sterling character did not permit him to bend the truth, even though it meant putting his sick infant in danger. It would not have been an outright lie, and it was for a good purpose. What we sometimes forget is that a falsehood is a falsehood regardless of the reason and the amount of good that can emanate from it. One is branded a liar whether he cheats a "little" on his income tax or is an outright thief. In this situation, speaking the truth saved a life.