

You have decomposed me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land. (34:30)

Although the men of Shechem were collectively guilty of Dinah's violation, either for harboring the perpetrator or for not preventing the outrage, Yaakov *Avinu* felt that the actions of his two sons had disgraced him. To the average unlearned student of the "Bible," this would be another "example" of Jewish obsequisness, fear of retaliation, of taking a stand for what is right. *Baruch Hashem*, there are those who understand the depth of Yaakov's shame as being related to his position as the *b'chir ha'Avos*, chosen of the Patriarchs. *Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl*, observes that Yaakov's *middah*, attribute, was *emes*, truth. Thus, *Titein emes l'Yaakov*, "Grant truth to Yaakov" (*Michah 7:20*), the attribute of truth in its pure and unembellished form is endemic mostly to Yaakov. *Avraham Avinu* personified the *middah* of *chesed*, lovingkindness. *Yitzchak Avinu* exemplified *gevurah*, strength. *Emes*, however, achieved its epitome through Yaakov. Thus, even if it was permitted and proper that the people of Shechem receive their due – if it had the slightest taint, the most minor vestige of impropriety, if it was not one hundred percent truth – it was not up to Yaakov's standard. To Yaakov, this was disgraceful.

What was untruthful about their actions? If the people of Shechem deserved punishment and Yaakov's sons executed it, they were doing what was proper. Why was Yaakov cross with them? What about their actions lacked in propriety? *Rav Ilan* explains that, while they may have been correct in their objectives, violence is not a Jewish concept. For a Jew to take a sword and kill – even if the person is guilty – indicates a lack of *emes*, truth. Yaakov represents unembellished, unmitigated truth. Thus, his sons' actions constituted a breach of truth, because, as an absolute, truth may not be fractured. It must be complete and pure.

We derive from here a new understanding of truth. There is speaking the truth, which for the most part, we attempt to discharge to the best of our knowledge. There is also living the truth. This means not portraying oneself as someone that he is not, or not implementing false media to execute the truth. Jews are non-violent. When we employ violence to carry out the truth, then we are acting falsely. When a Jew's demeanor does not reflect the highest standard of integrity – *achartem osi* – we have disgraced Hashem. We are His agents in this temporal world. By acting in any manner less than the highest level of rectitude, we defame Hashem.

In *Horav Shimon Schwab's* "Selected Essays," the *Rav* cites an insightful *Midrash*. In *Parashas Vayishlach*, the Torah relates the incident during which Yaakov *Avinu* was left alone. At this time, a "man" appeared, who fought with our Patriarch throughout the night. *Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* that identifies this "man" as Eisav's archangel, his prince in Heaven. His name is given as Samael, none other than the *Satan*. *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* states that, when the angel asked Yaakov to permit him to leave, Yaakov insisted on inquiring into his name. The angel gave a strange response: His name was the same as Yaakov's; Yisrael was his name. What does this mean?

Rav Schwab explains that Yaakov's visage, his image, is engraved upon the *Kisei HaKadosh*, the Heavenly Throne. The Almighty's Throne is synonymous with the *middah* of *emes*, truth – which also happens to be Yaakov's *middah*. On the other hand, Samael represents *sheker*, falsehood. As the master of deceit, Samael is identified with subterfuge, duplicity and disingenuousness. In fact, *Chazal* (*Chullin* 91a) teach that when Samael appeared to Yaakov in the guise of a human, he came disguised as a saintly sage, a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar. Why? Because he sought to use his guile to deceive. This, explains Rav Schwab, is why Samael calls himself "Yisrael," specifically because his essence is falsehood.

Having said this, both Yaakov – the exposition and personification of integrity – and Samael, the guardian of falsehood, both go by this name. This is because Samael must live a life of falsehood. What greater lie can there be than Samael cloaking himself in the guise of Yaakov, falsehood cloaked in veracity. This is the greatest lie!

This is what confronts us today: *sheker* cloaked in the guise of *emes*. Rav Schwab offers a number of examples. In summation, when *sheker* disguises and presents itself as *emes*, it not only represents the greatest *sheker*, it also creates the greatest obstacle and challenge for the unknowing and uninitiated, who think that as long as one dresses the part and "talks the talk," then "walking the walk" is not mandatory.

Rav Schwab concludes by reminding us that the world of *emes* is personified in the *pasuk*, *Atah hareisa ladaas ki Hashem Hu haElokim – ein od milvado*; "You have shown us to know Hashem, He is the G-d – there is none beside Him" (*Devarim* 4:35). This means that there is one *Ribono Shel Olam*, one Torah *miSinai*, and He alone dictates and guides the world. Sadly, there are those who do not follow this criterion for determining *emes*. They have followers who one day will wake up and realize that they have been misled. Apparently, they believed that they were following the *emes* without observing that the name of the engine that was driving the *emes* was *sheker*.