

"And Hashem said let us make man in our image after our likeness." (1:26)

Chazal teach us that prior to Adam's creation, a dispute arose among the angels in Heaven. Those representing the *middah*, character trait, of *chesed*, kindness, encouraged his creation since he would perform acts of kindness. Speaking on behalf of the *middah* of *emes*, truth, the angels were very negative about his creation, since man is full of falsehood. Hashem responded to this conflict by "flinging" truth to the earth and creating man. This is perplexing. Why would Hashem create man if he would be untrue? Obviously, this act of flinging truth to the earth was more of a response to the angels than a reaction to their actual dispute.

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l. offers a profound insight into the concept of *emes* which clarifies this *Chazal*. There are two levels of *emes*: the truth of Heaven and the truth of this earth. The Heavenly form of *emes* is *emes l'amito*, absolute truth, unmitigated, not influenced by any outside situation; it is pure truth, inspired by Heaven.

This form of truth inspires the prophecy of *Neviim*, prophets, as we recite in the *bracha* of *Haftorah*, *esmu ,ntv hthcbw* "prophets of truth and righteousness." This refers to the type of truth expressed by the *Navi* -- uncompromising, unequivocal, consummate truth. The *Navi* chastises man and warns him of his impending punishment, never excluding one iota of his charge, regardless of the anxiety and pain it might cause. This is unlike earthly truth which is sensitive to the feelings of people. It is an embellished truth, sometimes veiling serious allegations and realities in order to spare someone hurt. He does not lie; he merely does not state the entire truth.

The Heavenly form of truth is found only by the prophets who are Divinely inspired. Hashem "flung down" to earth a different form of truth, one with which we could live. The real *emes l'amito*, pure essential truth, remains in Heaven, the source of truth.

Horav Schwab applies this idea to elucidate the words of *Chazal* in *Bava Basra 12a* which states that, since the destruction of the *Bais Ha'mikdash*, prophecy was relegated to imbeciles and small children. How are we to understand this *Chazal*? Do children have the amazing vision necessary to assume the mantle of prophecy? They obviously do not have Heavenly perception, but their youthful innocence and naivete motivate them to speak the truth, regardless of the consequences to others. Indeed, at times they may demonstrate an insensitivity unbecoming to an adult. Since the source of all prophecy is sublime, absolute truth, on occasion, children rebuke and demand without compromise -- just as a *Navi* would.

Horav Schwab writes that he remembers a situation in which a young grandchild was in the house where his mother was "sitting *shiva*" for her father. When the child's paternal grandfather entered the house, the child in all innocence asked him, "Why did my other grandfather die and not you?" This is the essence of prophecy: pure unmitigated truth, which a wiser more astute person would

"diplomatically" shy away from verbalizing. It is essentially such an unsympathetic and unembellished statement, however, that reaches the heart and mind of the sinner, inspiring him to repent.