

"Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue." (16:20)

The only virtue which the *Torah* demands that we pursue is righteousness - the equivalent of *emes*, truth. On the other hand, *sheker*, falsehood, is the only negative quality from which the *Torah* admonishes us to distance ourselves. The *Torah* in *Shemos 23:7* says, *ejr, rea rcsn*, "*From a false word you shall distance yourselves.*" The **Chidushei Ha'Rim** infers a profound lesson regarding the compelling importance in our lives of turning away from falsehood and turning toward truth. The signature of Hashem is *emes*. Thus, every Jew should strive to be like G-d - by shirking away from any endeavor that has even the slightest vestige of deceit surrounding it.

What is the meaning of "pursuing truth"? We suggest that to pursue truth is to confirm it. We must be vigilant regarding every activity we undertake, every endeavor in which we involve ourselves, with whomever we have dealings, that the truth shines forth with clarity. We must confirm that it is true. To distance oneself from falsehood is to remove oneself from any questionable endeavor. The instant that an "ambiguity" arises regarding the veracity of a given undertaking, or the integrity of the individual involved, we should become extremely cautious regarding maintaining a continued relationship with that particular endeavor or individual. First we must remain distant so that we can examine the situation - either in order to confirm or to reject the evidence.

This does not mean that we should accept every rumor which impugns the integrity of a person, organization or endeavor. If the truthfulness of a person or endeavor comes into serious question, we should distance ourselves from it/him. The power of falsehood is remarkable. Indeed, the longer we stay attached to a questionable person or situation, the harder it becomes for us to perceive the reality.