

## You shall not bear false witness against your fellow. (20:13)

*Chazal (Pesikta Rabbasi 21)* teach that each of the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, corresponds to one of the Ten Utterances, through which Hashem created the world. (Understandably, this concept is beyond the scope of this paper.) The *Midrash* goes on to identify which commandment coincides with which equivalent utterance. Interestingly, the prohibitive commandment, *Lo sa'ane b'reiacha eid shaker*, "You shall not bear false witness against your fellow," corresponds with Hashem's declaration that mortal man should be created, *Naase adam b'Tzalmeinu kidmuseinu*; "Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness" (*Bereishis* 1:26). How do these two (commandments) parallel one another?

*Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, explains that when Hashem said, *Naase Adam*; He was intimating that man would be an elevated, holy creation – so holy that the Ministering Angels were prepared to sing *Shirah*, a song of praise before him. Adam *HaRishon* had a very G-d-like image. Since we have established that man is a sublime creation, representing the image of G-d in this world, man's primary essence, his defining nature, his identity in relationship with Hashem must (on a mortal level) maintain parity with the Heavenly Image. What about man allows him to rise above all other creations?

Clearly, since man was created in the likeness of the Divine, it is vital to focus on the identity (so to speak), the defining essence of Hashem. *Chazal (Shabbos 55A)* teach, *Chosamo shel HaKadosh Boruch Hu emes*; "The signature of G-d is truth." Just as an artist affixes his signature to his painting, so, too, has Hashem ingrained His signature in the universe, His creation. This concept is reiterated in the *Zohar HaKodesh* in its commentary to the last three words of the story of Creation: (*Asher*) *bara Elokim laasos*, "Which G-d created and made." The final letters of these words: *bara – aleph; Elokim – mem; laasos – saf*, spell *emes*. Hashem's artistry, His universe, is imbued with His signature of truth. As such, Hashem's identifying essence with which He signs His work is *emes*. His *mahus*, essence, is truth. He is, in fact, the only Absolute Truth; the only Reality, because He is eternal.

Therefore, reason dictates that man's endeavors/speech and activities must be characterized by truth as close to unvarnished, unembellished truth as is humanly possible, if he is to maintain this human parity with the Divine. Thus, one who bears false testimony, who prevaricates, essentially defames and destroys the Heavenly Utterance of *Naase Adam*. To lie is to contradict the *Tzelem Elokim*, Heavenly image. To put it in everyday normative vernacular: One who lies removes himself from the realm of humanity as intended by Hashem. He created us in His Image, which demands that we be the paragons of integrity. When we fail to live up to our Heavenly mission, we undermine our humanity.

An added caveat concerning *emes* provides food for thought. We hear the term, "hidden truth," commonly used to stress that there is more to what we hear and see. (As the saying goes, "Hidden truths are unspoken lies.") Perhaps we might explain the idea of hidden truth as truth, which, at

times, requires time to be revealed, to be understood. Our Sages observe that the final letters of the words, *Bereishis bara Elokim*; “In the beginning of G-d’s Creation,” spell the word *emes* (similar to the words of the *Zohar* quoted earlier), alluding to Hashem’s signature as *emes*. We wonder why, if *emes* is so important, Hashem’s signature is alluded to only at the end of the word. Hashem should have commenced the Torah with words whose opening letters comprise *emes*.

We must say that the essence of truth – or what we would suggest is the meaning of “hidden truth” – is determined at the end of a journey, not at the beginning. (It happens more often than we are willing to concede.) We begin a project, an endeavor, but the path of truth appears to be riddled with holes and obstacles – not very pretty. Yet, as time goes on and we persevere, we realize that at the conclusion, the end of the journey, the path of *emes* was the only way that we could have arrived safely and successfully at our destination. Truth often remains elusive and hidden, leaving us to raise questions and wonder if we have made the correct decisions. If we patiently persevere, we will see that Hashem’s “signature” always prevails.