

Pardes Yehuda

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פרשת בראשית תשפ"ז

The Courage of Emes: Walking in Truth Without Fear of the Audience

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (1:26) When Hashem dictated the Torah to Moshe, every word was received with precision. But when they reached the account of Creation in Parshas Bereshis, Moshe paused and concerned for the spiritual integrity of future generations, turned to Hashem with a agonizing plea recorded in the Midrash (Bereshis Rabbah 8:8): "Master of the Universe! Why do You express Creation in the plural **נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם**—'Let us make'? You are giving an opening to the misbelievers to claim that there are multiple divine powers in the universe! Why create room for error?"

Hashem's answer to Moshe was: **כָּתוּב וְהוֹצֵא לְטָעוֹת יִמְעָה**—"Write! And whoever wishes to err, let them err." At first glance, this response seems astonishing. Is Hashem indifferent to spiritual error? Does He not care if people misinterpret His holy word?

In his classic work *Hoel Moshe*, Rabbi Moshe Teumim Rav of Horodenka unlocks the depth of the Divine reply. There are two fundamentally different ways a person approaches reality. One who possesses authentic Emunah, a soul that truly searches for Hashem and truth, approaches the world asking: What is real? Where is the Truth? Such a person reads "Let us make man" and immediately understands that the Singular Creator is teaching a lesson in humility, consulting with His heavenly court before performing a great act.

But a person who is not looking for truth, who approaches life with self justification, will find fault anywhere. For a person actively seeking an excuse to stumble, Hashem Himself says: Even I cannot save someone who insists on seeing falsehood. Hashem was teaching Moshe a fundamental rule of existence: Truth cannot hold itself hostage to the misinterpretations of bad-faith actors.

The Talmud teaches that "The seal of Hashem is Truth Emes" (Sanhedrin 64a). Our Sages explain that the very reason Hashem used the plural phrasing—"Let us make"—was to model ultimate humility (Anavah).

Although Hashem needs no partners, He consulted the angels to teach us that a leader must consult others, regardless of stature. Humility and Truth are inseparable. A person living in absolute truth recognizes that status and pride vanish. The truth is equal for everyone. Therefore, a person of truth possesses profound humility. Moshe, whom the Torah crowns as "the humblest man on

the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3), represented this ideal. As the Talmud says, "Moshe is truth and his Torah is truth" (Bava Basra 74a). Because Moshe lived entirely with Emes, he came to understand Hashem's lesson: when you act out of pure truth, you do not calculate how the audience will spin it. You simply do what is right.

We see this exact principle play out later in Moshe's life during one of his most vulnerable moments. When his sister Miriam was struck with Tzara'at (leprosy) after speaking Lashon Hara, Moshe immediately stood in prayer on her behalf. The Torah records his famously brief five-word prayer: **קַל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ** "Hashem, please heal her, please!" (Bamidbar 12:13) Rashi, citing the Sages, asks a striking question: Why did Moshe make his prayer so brief? So that the Jewish people would not say, "His own sister is in distress, yet he lingers in long, poetic prayers!" This explanation raises a natural question. Was Moshe really making a public relations calculation while his sister was suffering? The Eison HaEzrachi (Rabbi Avraham Rapaport) offers a brilliant insight. Moshe knew that his prayer would be answered instantly; as her brother and leader, his forgiveness and simple cry would heal her. But he realized he was trapped: If he offered a lengthy prayer, critics would scoff: "Look at him lingering in prayer while his sister suffers in agony!" If he offered a brief prayer, critics would accuse: "Look at how fast he prays! He doesn't even care—he's taking revenge on her for criticizing him!" Moshe realized that no matter what he did, faultfinders would attribute bad motives to him.

Therefore, he pure Truth. Since a short prayer was all that was needed for Hashem to heal her, he prayed concisely, ignored the noise, and left the judgment to Heaven.

We constantly measure our actions by how they will be interpreted, or criticized by others. We hesitate to do the right thing because we fear someone might misunderstand our motives. We stay silent when we should speak, and we perform when we should be genuine all out of fear of the audience. The Torah comes to tell us: Stop living for the critics. When you know your intentions are pure, when your path is aligned with Hashem and His Torah, you do not need to spend your life managing the misinterpretations of others. Those who love truth will see your truth. Those who seek fault will find fault regardless of what you do. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Rebbe Yitzchak Eisik of Kaliv and the Cherries of the Dark Winter Night

In a bitter, icy Chanukka night, several young Yeshiva boys gathered together, and sat down at a wooden table and began to play cards (קארטן). The boys enveloped in warmth, were entirely consumed by the game. It was midnight when a sudden, sharp knock echoed at the door. The young men wondered: Who could possibly be wandering outside in such a freezing night? One of them rose, and opened the door. Standing there was an old Gentile stranger, his clothing dusted in white, holding in his hands a basket filled with ripe, red cherries קראשין. The old stranger looked at them with a strange glance and asked if they wished to buy his delicious cherries.

The young men replied, "Ah, we would love to buy these beautiful cherries from you! But we do not have a single coin left in our pockets. Every coin is tied up in our card game, and from that pot, not a single cent can be withdrawn."

The old man smiled and answered, "Do not let that trouble you at all! I will willingly give you all these cherries right now, and as for the money I will return tomorrow night at this exact same hour to collect my payment."

The men agreed, thanking the old man for his generous heart. With a nod, the stranger turned back into the darkness and disappeared into the raging snowstorm. The young men carried the basket over, set it upon the playing table, and immediately returned to their game. As the hours flew by, they played, continuously reaching into the basket, eating the sweet cherries, and spitting the pits onto the wooden floor.

So it continued until exhausted, they finally threw themselves onto their beds. A heavy sleep overtook them, that they overslept the entire morning, missing saying Shema and Shacharis. When they finally awoke late in the afternoon, they stepped out into the outer room where they had spent the night playing cards. There, scattered across the floor, lay hundreds of cherry pits. Suddenly, one of the young men spoke aloud:

"My brothers, a great wonder has occurred here. Who was that old Gentile who brought us fresh cherries in the middle of a winter blizzard? Where did he come from, and who sent him to our door in such freezing, terrible weather? But even more terrifying than that—where in the world did he find sweet, ripe cherries in the middle of the winter? Fresh fruit like this does not exist anywhere in our region during the winter months! And why would a total stranger trust us as if we were his lifelong friends? This is

no ordinary occurrence!" The realization dawned upon them: A heavy fear fell over them as they remembered that in a few hours, the old man would return to demand his debt. Who knew what terrible retribution or dark power he might exact upon them?

Unanimously, they resolved that their only hope was to run straight to the Holy Rabbi of Kaliv. They would relate their foolishness, confess their sin, and recount the supernatural event, praying that the Rebbe extract Heaven's mercy to save them from the claws of the lurking enemy. When they stood before him and related everything that had transpired, the Rebbe's face burned like a fiery torch. He began to cry out at them in righteous rebuke, his voice like thunderous flames of fire:

"Woe unto you!" the Rebbe cried. "Know that this old Gentile was no human being! He was a manifestation of the Kelipah (Satan)! Through your deep immersion in that impure, unholy game, you aroused these dark forces! And when you accepted his fruit and ate from his basket, you walked directly into his net! You are now trapped in his evil web, and mortal danger hangs over your very souls!"

Heartbroken and shaken, they wept, regretting their foolish actions with all their hearts. They fell at the Rebbe's feet, weeping and pleading: "Rebbe, have mercy upon our souls! Carve out for us a pathway of Teshuvah!" Seeing their genuine heartbreak, the Rebbe softened. He asked, "Do you accept upon yourselves, with a complete commitment and a whole heart, that from this day forward, you will never return to your folly? That you will never touch those cards again?" With tear-filled eyes, the young men swore with a complete and resolute heart that they would never return to such emptiness. The Rebbe instructed them: "Return to me exactly half an hour before the appointed midnight hour when the old man is scheduled to return. We shall see what Heaven will enable me to do."

When the designated hour arrived, they entered the Rebbe's holy chamber. The Tzaddik untied his gartel and handed it to them. "Hold tightly onto my gartel," the Rebbe commanded. "Every single one of you, grab hold, and do not let go until I tell you to loosen your grip!" The young men reached out, trembling, and held fast to the gartel of their Rebbe. Minutes passed in intense, terrifying silence. After some time had elapsed, the Rebbe turned to them with a smile and said, "It is done. You may let go of my gartel. Go in peace, and fear no more."

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