

THE HEAVENLY TRUTH AND THE EARTHLY TRUTH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 388, The "Kedushai Ketanah" Controversy. Good Shabbos!

The Heavenly Truth and the Earthly Truth

The pasuk [verse] says, "Let us make man" (Bereshis 1:26). The Medrash comments on that G-d "consulted" with the ministering angels in Heaven before creating Adam. G-d wished to teach us "Derech Eretz" [ethical behavior] that it is appropriate for people in power to consult with their subordinates even though the decision making power rests totally with the one in power.

The Medrash then relates that the "feedback" which G-d received from the angels was not unanimous. Some argued that man should be created and others argued that he should not be created. The Attribute of Kindness (Chessed) advised that man should be created for he would be a kind creature who would do acts of benevolence. The Attribute of Truth (Emes), on the other hand, advised that man should not be created -- for his character is entirely false in essence. He is the antithesis of truth.

The Medrash continues by relating that G-d took Truth and threw it to the ground. The pasuk in Daniel alludes to this incident when it says, "...and You threw Truth to the ground..." [Daniel 8:12]. The simple reading of the Medrash is that G-d had a "problem" with the objection raised by Truth, so He eliminated Truth -- throwing it to the ground -- and then proceeded to create man, despite the objection.

What is the meaning of this Medrash? Does "Truth" cease to exist just because G-d threw it down to the ground?

There is a metaphor here. Rav Schwab explains this Medrash in a way that also interprets a Gemara in Bava Basra that has always bothered me. There are two types of Truth -- the Heavenly Truth and the Earthly Truth. The Heavenly Truth is the pure unadulterated hard truth. Truth in Heaven pulls no punches and tells it exactly as it is. That is why when the Prophets spoke to the Jewish people, the words were harsh. They were delivering a message of Truth that came from Heaven. There is no

sugar-coating or compromises in the Heavenly Truth. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the (sometimes painful) truth. The expression "the truth hurts" is referring to the Heavenly Truth.

In this world, we also have truth. But human beings are not always capable of dealing with pure unadulterated truth.

A friend asks, "do you like my tie?" Am I going to say, "No. It doesn't match your suit?!" In fact, the choice of a tie may indicate that the wearer has very poor taste or very bad eye sight. But one does not tell him that.

"Interesting... Creative... Very nice... Original..." We come up with all sorts of adjectives, but we can not bring ourselves to say the unadulterated truth. We sugar-coat the truth. We bend the truth. This is the Earthly type of "truth."

"How was your day?" "Fine." Am I going to respond with a detailed description of how my day really was? This is the way we speak. Is "fine" the truth? No. But it is the "Earthly Truth."

This is the meaning of the Medrash. G-d took Truth and threw it down to the ground. G-d said that the truth that human beings will experience will be the Earthly Truth. They will hear the Heavenly Truth from the Prophets -- from the likes of Yeshaya and Yirmiyahu. The Prophets will tell it like it is.

The Gemara says in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "From the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given over to fools and to young children" [Bava Basra 12b]. What does this mean? The Rambam describes the qualifications for becoming a prophet [Yesodei HaTorah 7:1]. A prophet must be wise and of strong character, outstanding in his intellectual and moral credentials, and so forth. How could it be that all of a sudden, after the destruction of the Temple, the village idiot or the three year old can be the prophet?

The Gemara means that nowadays, the truth comes from the mouth of babes. Pure unadulterated truth, truth that hurts, is not spoken by mature people with social graces. Cultured people will not tell me what my tie really looks like. But sometimes, from the mouth of babes who have no inhibitions and from the fools who do not know better, truth is still heard. This is sometimes how G-d delivers the message of truth to us.

Rav Schwab writes that he was once at a mourner's house. The maternal grandfather of a three year old boy had just died. The paternal grandfather walked in to pay a shiva visit to his daughter-in-law. The 3 year old said to his paternal grandfather "How come that grandfather died and you did not die?"

Perhaps that was a message. The 3 year old was perhaps delivering a message spoken with Divine Inspiration -- "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of drinking for this is the end of every man and the living should take it to heart." [Koheles 7:2]. Whenever a person goes to a funeral or to a mourner's house, he should be thinking "there, but for the grace of G-d, go I". This grandchild put it into words -- "How come not you?"

This is the meaning of the Gemara "From the time the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was given to fools and to young children". We are afraid to say Truth the way it sometimes needs to be said. That only comes from people who are not yet "wise enough to the (deceitful) ways of this world" and who can tell it like it is. From the mouth of babes, comes the truth.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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