

THE FINAL LETTERS SPELL 'EMES'

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Bereishis

The Final Letters Spell 'Emes'

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #784, The Beautiful Esrog - How Much More? Good Shabbos!

Our Rabbis point out that the final letters of the words "Bereishis Barah Elokim" [In the beginning G-d created] [Bereishis 1:1] form the word Emes [Truth], which alludes to the idea that the "Signature" (chosamo) of the Almighty is Truth.

One might ask why only the end of these words that contain the Signature of the Almighty. Why did He not begin the Torah with words whose beginning letters spell Emes?

I saw an insightful answer to this question: The Truth of the Almighty can sometimes only be recognized at the "end". Often times, while a person lives through certain events and life circumstances, he is unable to see the "Truth" of the Almighty. However, in the end, in retrospect, a person can sometimes see and appreciate the "Truth" of Hashem's Ways, which he could not see or appreciate earlier.

All of us should have pleasant and carefree lives. But unfortunately, life is not always like that. A person sometimes goes through very difficult periods in which he might question why G-d is doing these things to him. Such occurrences happen all too frequently. We must always bear in mind that the Signature of the Almighty is Truth. We might not see it ahead of time, we might not see it when events unfold, but hopefully we will see it in the end.

In Czarist Russia, people were drafted into the army for a 25 year tour of duty. Often this was a death sentence. Certainly, no one ever came out the same as the way he went in. People tried to do whatever they could to see to it that their own children would not be drafted into the Czar's army. There was a Jewish butcher in a small village, whose son was supposed to be drafted. He bribed the authorities that instead of taking his son into the army, they should take an unfortunate orphaned Yeshiva bochur, who had no one to protect him from the draft.

The unfairness of the situation caused great turmoil in the community. People questioned G-d's justice at allowing such a thing to happen. The reaction of the Chofetz Chaim (Rav Yisrael Meir haCohen Kagan) was one word: "Wait."

Five years went by, ten years went by, twenty years went by and nothing happened. The butcher prospered, his son prospered, everything seemed to be going well for them. Thirty years later, this son of the butcher, who was spared from the Russian army, came down with cholera, a very serious and infectious disease. The son died. The Chevra Kadisha refused to bury him because they were afraid they would be contaminated by the infectious cholera germs. The father was forced to bury his own son with his own hands and his own shovel, because no one else would touch him.

This is what the Chofetz Chaim meant when he said "wait." This is what is meant by the statement that the "Signature" of the Almighty is Truth via the "final letters". While things are occurring, the "Signature" of "Truth" may not always be revealed. The Rock, His works are perfect [Devorim 32:4].

Hevel's Dog Gave Kayin A Lesson In Loyalty

This week's parsha contains the famous quarrel between Kayin and Hevel. They each brought offerings to Hashem. Kayin's offering was rejected and Hevel's was accepted. Kayin, out of jealousy, approached Hevel and killed him. This is the simple narration.

Chazal teach that Hevel was the stronger of the two brothers. When Kayin attacked him, Hevel defended himself and was about to kill Kayin in self-defense. Kayin looked up at his brother, who was then on top of him and said, "Hevel, how can you kill me? It is going to destroy our father. Have mercy upon me; have mercy upon him." Hevel agreed. He released Kayin. Kayin then arose and killed Hevel.

This Medrashic elaboration of the story certainly magnifies Kayin's crime. It is bad enough to kill one's brother, but to do so after he found himself at his brother's mercy and his brother allowed him to escape is worse than murder. It is perfidy. It is a traitorous act which greatly compounds the crime of killing one's brother.

The Rabbis further tell us that Hevel (who was a shepherd) had a dog. Following Kayin's murder of his brother, the Almighty told Kayin to take his dead brother's sheep dog and have it accompany him wherever he went. It was as if to say that G-d told Kayin: "I want you to learn from a dog." As the popular saying goes, a dog is a man's best friend. Dogs exhibit tremendous loyalty to their masters. A dog understands "An ox knows his owner and a donkey his master's trough..." [Yeshaya 1:3] That is why people have dogs.

Sometimes, a person will turn against their spouse. Sometimes a child will turn against their own parent. But a dog always remains loyal. He will never turn on his owner. A person can come home from the office and find the children and wife all complaining, but the dog is always happy to see

you! Dogs provide unconditional loyalty.

This is what G-d told Kayin. 'What you did was so treacherous! Killing your brother after you played to his heartstrings and he released you from his grip! This is inexcusable! I want you to learn proper loyalty etiquette from the dog.'

Bob Woodward was CEO of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia for some 30 years. He had no children, but he had a dog. When the dog died, Mr. Woodward put up a tombstone for his dog with the epitaph, "Loyal to the end."

Regarding how many people can it be written on their tombstone "Loyal to the end?" This is the lesson that the Almighty wanted Kayin to hear: The dog is loyal. You are not loyal. HaShem rewards loyalty. He detests disloyalty. That is why Kayin had to walk around for the rest of his life with Hevel's dog.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bereishis are provided below:

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