



Fascinating excerpts and intriguing discourses from the works of the great Gaon and kabbalist Morainu HaRav Shimshon Chaim ben Reb Nachman Michael Nachmani
Author of *Zera Shimshon* and *Toldos Shimshon* who lived almost 300 years ago.

HE PROMISED THAT WHOEVER LEARNS HIS WORKS WILL SEE HELP WITH CHILDREN, LONG LIFE, AND PARNASSAH. MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEST TO THEIR PERSONAL SALVATIONS!

This week's *d'var Torah* is being sponsored *liluie nishmas* Alexander Ziskind ben Menashe. The merit of people learning the *divrei Torah* of *Zera Shimshon*, should be a great *z'chus* for him.

Parshas Breishis

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (בראשית א/א)

In the beginning *Hashem* created the heavens and the earth. (*Bereishis* 1:1)

The first letter in the Torah is the letter *beis* and there are many opinions in *Chazal* why *Hashem* chose specifically this letter to begin the *Torah*. One of the opinions in the *Medrash* is that it is because the letter *beis* represents *beracha* (blessing).

Zera Shimshon asks that in *Tehillim* (119:160) it is written, "*Rosh devarecha emes*" ("The beginning of Your words is truth). Since the *Torah* is *Hashem's* word, "Your words" in this *possuk* refers to the *Torah*. The *possuk* therefore seems to be saying that the *Torah* should begin with *emes*. If so, shouldn't it begin with an *alef*, the first letter of *emes*, rather than with a *beis*, which represents *beracha*?

It is written in *Devarim* (25:14-15): "You shall not have in your house varying measures, large and small. A fully accurate, just weight, you shall have; you are to have whole and honest measures in order that you live long on the land that *Hashem*, your Lord, is giving you." The simple understanding of these *pessukim* is that the *Torah* prohibits even owning inaccurate weights and measures in our homes and businesses, even if we don't actually use them when buying or selling, because having them around could eventually cause us to cheat. Rather one should own only precise weights and measures. The reward for this honesty is that *Hashem* will give you long life on the land that He gives you.

The *Medrash* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 15:7), however, reads it differently: when there is, "a fully accurate, just weight",

meaning when a person deals honestly, then "you will have", meaning *Hashem* will bless you with abundance. And the contrary, "You shall not have", meaning you will lose all of your belongings, if there is, "in your house varying measures, large and small."

According to the *Medrash* the *Torah* is teaching that the result of being honest is the *beracha* of long life and the punishment for being dishonest is poverty.

Zera Shimshon learns from this *Medrash* that *beracha* and *emes* are interconnected. Blessing comes through honesty, so the *beracha* represented by the *beis* has its source in the *emes* that preceded it.

The *Torah's* opening with *beis*—the letter that represents *beracha*—does not, then, contradict "*Rosh devarecha emes*." Since *emes* is the source of *beracha*, beginning with *beis* is, in a sense, also beginning with *emes*.

Yet a question remains: even if *beracha* results from *emes*, why not begin with *alef* itself, the first letter of *emes*?

Zera Shimshon answers that the *Torah* is teaching us an important practical lesson: a person doesn't lose by being honest; he only gains. It may take time, but in the end it is always worth it.

There are times when a person may feel that telling the truth or dealing honestly will cost him money or cause him to lose out. Someone else may seem to come out

ahead precisely because he was less careful about *emes*, while the honest person appears to be left behind.

The *beis* of *Bereishis* teaches us not to judge the outcome by what we see in the moment. The *Torah* begins with a *beis*, the symbol of *beracha*, in place of an *alef*, the letter of *emes*, because the *alef* was the source of the *beis*, which represents *beracha*. Right from the very beginning of the *Torah*, we are taught that *beracha* flows from *emes*. What may at first appear to be a loss caused by honesty can ultimately be the very thing that brings *beracha*.

Zera Shimshon asks that a *Gemara* in *Yoma* (75a) seems to contradict the second part of the *Medrash*, which says that if a person is not honest in his business dealings, he will lose all that he has.

The *Gemara* there teaches that *Hashem's* ways differ from those of man. When a person is angered by someone, he may try to deprive him completely; *Hashem*, however, even when He curses, still leaves some element of good. The *nachash hakadmoni* (the primordial serpent) was cursed, yet its food is always readily available; *Canaan* was cursed, yet he eats and drinks what his master does; woman was cursed, yet men pursue her; and the earth was cursed, yet everyone is sustained from it.

From this *Gemara* it appears that even when a *klalah* remains in force, there can still be some type of good and *beracha*. Yet from the *Medrash* concerning false weights it appears that once a *klalah* applies, all good is taken away. How can these two teachings be reconciled?

Zera Shimshon resolves this with a *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* (4b). In matters of *Torah*, about which it is written

emes, *Hashem* does not act *lifnim mishuras hadin*, beyond the letter of the law. But in matters of *din*, about which *emes* is not written, *Hashem* does act *lifnim mishuras hadin*. According to this, there are two types of curses. A curse that comes through the *Torah* and its *mitzvos*, such as the curse for false weights, has no element of *beracha* at all. The *Torah* is *emes*, and *Hashem* does not go beyond the letter of the law.

However, the curses of the earth, the *nachash*, *Kenaan* and *Chava* did not come through the *Torah* and its *mitzvos*. They came as a penalty and punishment (*knas v'onesh*). That is *din*, where *Hashem* does go beyond the letter of the law, and therefore some element of *beracha* remains.

Most of us do not need to be convinced that honesty is right. We were brought up with that truth and it is part of us. The difficulty comes when honesty seems to cost us something. We do not immediately see the *beracha* that is supposed to follow; on the contrary, what we often see first is the loss. At such a moment, it can be hard to truly believe that being honest will eventually pay off.

That is precisely why the *Torah* places this lesson in its very first letter. The *beis* of *beracha* comes after the *alef* of *emes*. We may see the *emes* first and have to wait before seeing the *beracha*, but the *Torah* is teaching us from its very beginning that the *beracha* will come.

(Adapted by Rabbi Shevach Pepper from *Zera Shimshon Parshas Bereishis Derush* 1)

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