

## **D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Achrei Mos-Kedoshim 5775 (2015)**

In this week's Parshios, Acharei Mos / Kedoshim, we find the following instruction that Hashem told Moshe to convey to the B'nei Yisroel:

**"Ushmartem es chukosai v'es mishpotai, asher ya'aseh oh'som ha'adam, v'chai bahem" [You shall observe My decrees and My judgments, which man shall carry (THEM) out and live by them] (Vayikra 18:5).**

The Degel Machane Ephrayim, a grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, made the following observation. He notes that the word "OH'SOM," meaning "THEM" (the decrees and the judgments), is spelled without the letter VOV, which one would normally include when writing this word. Without the letter VOV there are only three letters in this word instead of the usual four. These three letters (aleph, sof and mem), when slightly rearranged, are the same letters used to construct the word EMES, meaning "TRUTH."

From this he makes an allegorical deduction that the Torah is sending us a subliminal message intertwined with the obvious interpretation of this verse. According to the Degel, the Torah is also teaching us that, if a person lives their life with EMES as the underlying foundation of everything they do -- they admit to truth, they speak the truth from within their hearts and they constantly walk within the path of truth -- they are then guaranteed to be the recipients of the Beracha found at the end of the Pasuk, the beracha of "v'chai bahem," and they shall "LIVE" by them. An absolute commitment to truth carries with it a "segulah beduka," a "tested assurance" for a quality-filled elongated life.

I would humbly like to add to the p'shat of the Degel Machane Ephrayim that we have a right and an obligation to demand the truth from others as well. We can no longer sit back and pretend that we are "not being lied to" on a daily basis by people all around us who have nothing more than their own personal agenda in mind. And it continues only because WE TOLERATE IT! We need to start promoting TRUTH despite some inevitable consequences. In the long run, everyone comes out ahead.

We tend to rationalize others' intentions as "not such a big lie," or as a "necessary evil for the greater good".

If we do not expect more or demand more from the people with whom we interact, we are then continuing on a path of self-destruction.

All of this starts at home. Being true to oneself is probably the hardest resolution to undertake. Yet, if we can't do something so basic for ourselves, how can we ever expect anything different from others?

With "chosenness" comes responsibility. As Jews we have an advantage, a guarantee from Hashem of "v'chai bahem." A chance not just to set an example for those around us, but an added BONUS in knowing that we will have extended years of life with which to do so.

Start small and start close to home, but start.

Truthfully yours,

Good Shabbos