

The following is our Tikkun Middas HaEmes Review Notes, as culled from the Sefer *MiDvar Sheker Tirchak*, by Rabbi Avraham Tovalsky, Shlita:

1. The Torah provides a Mitzvas Asei to us of *MiDvar Sheker Tirchak*--one must distance himself from falsehood. The Torah's use of the word *richuk*--or distancing oneself is unique to the horrible Middah of *Sheker*. By this, the Torah is teaching us that we should stay far from anything with even a semblance of untruth associated with it--even if one is not totally sure that it is untrue. It is similar to what Chazal teach: "*Harcheik Min HaKiyur VeHadomeh Lo*--stay away from that which is abhorrent--and anything close to it" (*Sefer HaChinuch*, Mitzvah 74).
2. Rebbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, Z'tl, teaches that when a person is engaged in a conversation or discussion, and he could say something that is not true, but is careful not to do so because of the Pasuk *MiDvar Sheker Tirchak*--then it is considered as if he is then studying Torah. Likewise, when he accurately measures that which he sells, remembering the Pasuk of *Hin Tzedek Yeheyeh Lecha*, which details the Mitzvah of honest weights and measurements--it is considered as if he is then studying Torah (Kedushas Levi, p. 105).
3. The Sefer *Chasidim HaChodosh* writes that one who truly loves himself should steer far from falsehood--because it is "*Shakul Neged Kol Ha'aveiros*--as weighty as all other aveiros".
4. The *Chayei Adam* refers to Sheker as the *Avi Avos HaTumah*, which causes great evil (Beis Avraham 19).
5. The Navi (Tzefanyah 3) teaches: "*She'eiris Yisrael Lo Ya'asu Avlah VeLo Yidabru Chazav*"--this means that to be eligible for the Geulah Sheleimah, one must be stalwart in honesty and integrity.
6. The *Menoras HaMe'or* (Chapter 35) writes that the last letter of the first three words of the Torah spell *Emes*--to teach us that everything that was created in this world stands on truth.
7. The *Kad HaKemach* (Rebbeinu Bachya) teaches that Avodas Hashem **begins with** steering clear of anything that is false, and through this it will be easy for one to overcome all other Middos Ra'os. Moreover, through the Middas HaEmes one will have true understanding of his life and the situations he is in--and he will not fall prey to thinking that an act that he is about to perform is a Mitzvah when it is really an aveira, and vice versa.
8. Hashem saves those who speak the truth--as the Navi (Yeshayahu 63:8) strikingly teaches: "*VaYomer Ach Ami Heimah Banim Lo Yishakeiru VaYehi Lahem LeMoshia*--Hashem said: 'Indeed they are My people, children who will not be false...and He became to them their savior!'"
9. Our first personal requests at the end of Shemone Esrei are: "*Netzor Leshoni Meirah U'sefasai MiDaber Mirmah*--guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully." These words are based on the teaching of Dovid HaMelech who asks: "*Me Halsh HaChofetz Chaim*--who is a person who wants life, who loves days of seeing good?", and who immediately responds "*Netzor Leshonecha Meirah U'Sefasecha MiDaber Mirmah...*" (Tehillim 34:14). From

the pasuk, we see clearly that we must exercise the same care and caution with deviation from the truth as we would from Lashon Hara. One wrong word constitutes Lashon Hara, and one untruthful word constitutes Sheker.

10. In the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash*, HaRav Yonasan Eibeshutz, Z'tl, points out that Olam Haba is the Olam HaEmes. If one is deceitful, he cannot be zoche to Olam Haba, because Emes is its hallmark--the hallmark of eternal life.

11. If one tells a child that he is going to give him something, even if it is simply to quiet him from crying--one must be sure to fulfill that which he said. Otherwise, one is teaching the child to be untruthful in his dealings as well.

12. In the Pesikta Rabasi (24), Chazal teach that Hashem created everything in the world--**except for Sheker which He did not create**, but which was created by man himself, as the Pasuk in Yeshayahu (59:13) teaches: "*Horro V'hogo MiLev Divrei Sheker*--they conceived and contemplated words of falsehood from the heart."

13. After 120 years, the **first question** that a person is asked by the Bais Din Shel Ma'alah is "*Nasasa V'Nasata B'Emunah?*" and the **second question** is "*Kavata Itim LaTorah?*" This means that the first question a person is asked about is his honesty and integrity--and only afterwards is he asked about his Torah studies. The *Pri Megadim* (to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 156) explains that if a person is not honest, then he is mechalel Sheim Shomayim with the Torah that he studies--and it accordingly serves no purpose, and is destructive. Only after a person passes the **first question**--can he go on to the **second question**! Hakhel Note: A powerful thought--to read again!

14. Rebbi Zushia MiAnipoli, Z'tl, explains the Pasuk "*MiDvar Sheker Tirchak*" as follows: *MiDvar Sheker*--because of words of falsehood, *Tirchak*--you will become distant from Hashem. Because it is our primary goal in life to draw close to our Creator, it is Emes that must be our stamp and seal--and with this we will come closer and experience *dveikus* with our Creator--achieving our *true* purpose in life!

15. The Rambam, in his ethical will to his son, taught him that he should keep the truth even if it 'costed him'--as the Pasuk in Mishlei teaches (23:23: "*Emes Knei V'Ahl Timkor*--buy truth and do not sell it!")

16. The Maggid of Slonim and Kelm, HaRav Moshe Yitzchak Darshan, Z'tl, explained that a Shakran is worse than a Ganav or a Gazlan. A Ganav steals at night when no one can see. A Gazlan steals by day and night but only from an individual who is weaker than him, being scared of the many. A Shakran, on the other hand, can speak untruth day and night, to one person or to many....

17. It is permissible to say something that is not true in order to save somebody from embarrassment. However, even when one is halachically entitled to say something that is not true, he should try to do so in a way in which what he is saying does not have the appearance of falsehood (Sahedrin 11A; *Sefer Chassidim* 6:42).

18. One should not ask a person for a loan or a favor if he believes that the person would not want to do it--for one may be causing him to speak falsely in denying the request. Similarly, one may not ask a friend to reveal something, if one suspects that it is a personal matter or a secret and the friend will not tell him the truth in order to avoid relating it. Likewise, if one realizes that a friend did not attend his Simcha he should not ask him where he was, for it may cause his friend to misstate what really happened.

19. The Sefas Emes teaches that we must daven to be saved from speaking falsehood, as Dovid HaMelech exclaims (Tehillim 120): “*Hatzila Nafshi Mesfas Sheker M’Lashon Remiyah--Hashem, rescue my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful soul!*”

20. If one needs something for ‘a day or so’ he must be careful to keep his word--and return it within ‘a day or so’--and not within a month or so--and certainly not wait until Erev Rosh HaShana or Erev Yom Kippur!

21. One should try to not even think about something that is not true or exaggerated. One can purify his thoughts by actually doing that which he mentally undertook to do--even though, when thinking about it further, it appears difficult. In this way he will train himself to be clearer and more truthful, and fulfill the words of Dovid HaMelech (Tehillim 15:2): “*VeDover Emes Bilevavo--he speaks the truth in his heart!*”

22. The wise men of Athens asked Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Chanania to tell them something that was false. They were obviously looking to define the Middah of Sheker. Rabbi Yehoshua told them that a mule gave birth. They responded: “Can a mule give birth?!” He told them that this was Sheker. The Maggid of Vilna, HaRav Yechezkel Feivel, Z’tl, explains their dialogue: The wise men were claiming to Rabbi Yehoshua that the definition of Sheker is one and the same for the Jews and the entire world. Rabbi Yehoshua told them that they were wrong. To the nations of the world, something is Sheker only if it can cause damage or hurt to someone else. To the Torah Jew, however, Sheker is prohibited in any and all circumstances, and even if clearly not true and wholly innocuous.

23. Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men, teaches us in Mishlei (23:23): “*Emes Kenei--purchase the truth.*” The Shela HaKadosh brings the example of a father who would pay his children when they spoke the truth, even when admitting that they had done something wrong--but would punish a child who denied the truth [even if what the child did was helpful to the father]. The Shelah recommends that all parents do likewise!

24. Many Chassidim came to Reb Simcha Bunim M’Peshischa for Rosh Hashana. As they were taking leave of him, he would ask each one to assure him that they would not speak Sheker--**for Emes is the foundation of Avodas Hashem!**

25. The Rebbe of Kobrin, Z’tl, advised someone who was used to fasting on Mondays and Thursdays as follows: “It would be more pleasing before Hashem for you not to say Sheker the whole week, than for you to fast two days a week!”

26. The Ba'alei Mussar teach that one should take one Middah which he believes goes to the root of his being and personality, and especially work on that Middah throughout his lifetime. Rabbi Nochum Zev Ziv, Z'tl, the son of the Alter of Kelm, Z'tl, chose the Middas HaEmes as the central Middah of his life. He would remind others that on the Yomim Noraim we recite in our Tefillos: "*Key Attah Elokim Emes U'Devarecha Emes*--for You are the G-d of truth, and Your words are truth." He would continue: "We see from this that Hashem's 'language' is truth. Moreover, in the Olam HaEmes--Emes is the only language that can be used."

27. Rabbi Yisrael Hager, Z'tl, the Vizhnitzer Rebbe known as the Ahavas Yisrael was very careful not to allow any Sheker into his speech. Accordingly, he would therefore be careful to constantly say: "I believe" or "I think", so that he would not say any untruth.

28. A person once approached the Chazon Ish and asked him if he could have a heter to change the truth on a Gemach application, in order to obtain a much-needed loan. The Chazon Ish responded that a person who accepts upon himself to go through life utilizing only the Middah of Emes will have special Siyata Dishmaya to succeed in everything that he needs to succeed in. The Chazon Ish was also makpid not to allow a person to say the word 'Sheker'--or 'lie', but rather to use the phrase 'Lo Emes'--or 'not true'.

29. HaRav Aharon Kotler, Z'tl, once went to a *g'vir* to collect for a third-party cause, which was unrelated to his Yeshiva. The wealthy person did not wish to support this cause, but felt badly that a Gadol HaDor had come to him, so he told HaRav Aharon that he would instead give a nice sum to his Yeshiva in Lakewood. To the *g'vir's* great surprise, HaRav Aharon rejected the offer--stating emphatically that he came to collect for the other institution and not his own Yeshiva. The man was so impressed by this Middas HaEmes that he became a major supporter not only of the Yeshiva--but of the institution that he originally refused to support! On another occasion, HaRav Aharon was advised by someone not to be so openly against the Eruv in Manhattan, as well-to-do individuals in Manhattan would not support the Yeshiva when they heard of HaRav Aharon's objections. HaRav Aharon responded: "It is better for my Yeshiva to close than not to advocate and pursue the Halachic truth!"

30. HaRav Eliya Lopian, Z'tl, notes that on the Yomim Nora'im we recite several times: "*Key Attah Elokim Emes U'Devarecha Emes*--for You are true and Your words are true". This is what counts on the Yom HaDin.

31. HaRav Lopian made the following takana with his Talmidim: "*LeHezaher Me'od Lehisracheik MeiHasheker*--to be very careful to distance oneself from sin." After all, Shlomo HaMelech exclaims: "*To'avas Hashem Sifsei Sheker*--lips which utter falsehood are abominable to Hashem." If one who speaks falsely is abominable to Hashem--how could he ever ask Hashem for anything--especially forgiveness?!

32. HaRav Yechezkel Levenstein, Z'tl, was against his students making different or strange motions in the course of the Tefillah, for fear that they were not truthful.

33. Closely related to the sin of speaking falsely is the sin of swearing in vain or falsely. One need not swear in Hebrew in order for it to be a shavuah. He can simply say the words "I swear" or "by G-d" this is what happened, this is what I did.