

SPEAKING TRUTH (2)

Under No Circumstances

The wife of the *amora* Rav caused him much distress. Whenever he asked for lentils, she would serve him beans, and when he asked for beans, she would serve him lentils. When his son Chiya grew older, he began to switch his father's messages, so that his father now received what he had requested. At first Rav thought that his wife had mended her ways, but then the boy told him what he had been doing. Rav was pleased with his son's resourcefulness, but he told him not to continue with it, for he would become accustomed to speaking falsely.

(יבמות סג ע"א)

Rebbi Zeira said that one should not promise something to a child and then not fulfill it, for then he would be teaching him to lie.

The *tzaddik* Reb Yechezkel of Shinova was known as the 'lover of truth.' His father, the *Divrei Chaim* of Tzanz, once said that his son would never go back on his word, even if he was given everything in the world. Once, a tailor sewed a garment for Reb Yechezkel's grandchild. After trying it on, the boy refused to take it off until the tailor promised that he would sew pockets for it. The *tzaddik* then insisted that he do as he had promised, so the child would not become accustomed to telling lies.

(סוכה מ"ו ע"ב, סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 208)

Chazal say that when questioned about a matter about which one is not entirely sure, one should respond "I don't know," so that he should not end up telling a lie and be held responsible for his words.

(מס' דרך ארץ פ"ב ה"א)

When one answers Yes or No, that answer should be completely truthful. Even nodding or shaking one's head, or any kind of expression, should indicate only the truth.

(ספר חסידים סי' תתרנח)

Exact Wording

A decree against the *Yiddishe* style of dress was placed on many cities in Poland, and the *rabbanim* differed as to whether one had to be *moser nefesh* for this or not. The *tzaddik* Reb Avraham of Chechanov held that one must have *mesirus nefesh*, while other *talmidei chachomim* in his city insisted that another opinion should be considered on such a vital subject. Therefore, despite the dangers of travel, Reb Avrohom decided to travel to Warsaw to the *tzaddik*, the *Chiddushei HaRim*. When his family expressed their concern, he assured them that there was no need to worry. After all, he was not going to settle there ('*avek-zetzin zich*'). When he arrived, the Rebbe offered him a chair, but Reb Avrohom refused and remained standing as the *Chiddushei HaRim* gave his view (which also expressed the need for *mesirus nefesh*).

When Reb Avrohom left, he explained why he had refused to sit: "I had told my family that I was not going to '*avek-zetzin zich*' (literally, 'sit'), and I did not want to go back on my word, even in its literal sense."

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 259)

One of the *talmidim* of Reb Pinchas Koritzer, Reb Refael of Bershadt, excelled in this *middah* – so much so, that if he were to walk into the *beis medrash* dripping wet and someone would ask him if it was raining outside, he would only say, "When I was outside it was raining..."

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 243)

Staying Far from Falsehood

Once, in the city of the author of *Machatzis HaShekel*, a dead man was found, and the *Rov's* knife, full of blood, was lying near him. The murderer had evidently stolen it from the *Rov* in order to implicate him. The townsmen advised the *Rov* to tell the judge that the knife was not his. In court, however, the *Rov* told the truth, admitting that it was his knife, though he insisted that he had not committed the murder, and in the end he was freed. He later

explained to his well-meaning townsmen that when the *shevatim* were told by Yosef to bring Binyomin to Mitzrayim, Yehuda could have taken another child and told Yosef that this was Binyomin, but he could not bring himself to tell a lie.

(הקדמת המו"ל למוחצית השקל יורה דעה)

Reb Aizik of Vitebsk was one of the outstanding *chassidim* of the Alter Rebbe. He lived to the age of 105. During all his 85 years as a *rov*, he abstained from eating *lekach*, and when questioned about this, he would not answer. A short time before his passing he told the following story:

Once, as a young *rov*, I participated in a *simcha*, and took a piece of regular cake from the table. One of the guests asked me why I did not take the *lekach*, since it was more special. I had forgotten about the *lekach* but was embarrassed to say so, so I answered, "I don't eat *lekach*!"

From that day on, I never tasted a piece of *lekach* again, in order to stay true to my words.

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 261)

Chazal teach that the *Yidden* were sent into *golus* only because they transgressed the *possuk*, *Midvar sheker tirschak* – "Distance yourself from falsehood."

The *tzaddik* Reb Pinchas Koritzer would tell his *talmidim* that if *Yidden* refrained from telling lies, *Moshiach* would have come long ago. The main deterrent to *Moshiach's* coming is falsehood.

(שערי הקדושה להרח"ו, שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 243)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Was it permissible for the *Rov* to deny owning the knife? How then could he admit it and put his life in danger?
- Did Reb Refael hold that it was forbidden to say "it is raining" when coming in from the rain? Why did he refrain from saying so?

A WAY OF LIFE

Rabbi Moshe Gourarie

Taking from Others

Is it permissible to ask another for a part of a piece of a cake that he is eating?

The Torah dictates the appropriate conduct for social interaction.

- *Halacha* states that it is forbidden to accept an invitation of a person who does not have enough for himself to eat ("seuda she'eino maspekes lebeleho").¹ Doing so, even upon formal invitation, is transgressing 'avak gezel' (a form of theft forbidden midarbanon). This can become practical in the case of a communal meal or kiddush in a private home. If one knows that the host needs the food for his own family and lacks money, it would be appropriate not to attend (of course, this is only on condition that doing so will not offend the host).
- The Rambam writes that this *aveiro* is one for which people do not usually do *teshuvah*, believing that they have not done anything wrong since the host invited them.
- When refusing an invitation from a host who needs the food for himself, if the host may be insulted by the refusal, it is appropriate to procure an excuse that is technically true, even though the real reason is because "seuda she'eino maspekes lebeleho". For example, one could say, "I already have other plans," even though his plans are to eat in his own home.²
- Included in this prohibition is the prohibition to ask for something if it is clear that the giver only agrees because he is embarrassed to refuse.³ This is true even when the giver has plenty for himself. Ex. Asking someone to borrow his car, knowing that the person is uncomfortable lending out his car, but will agree because he is a good friend.
- Because of the importance of not accepting a favor unless done with a full heart, it is appropriate not to accept an invitation unless the inviter urges repeatedly, for then it is clear that he truly wants him to come.⁴
- In general, it is appropriate to try not being a burden upon others. When visiting a town, one should try stay at hotel rather than be a guest in someone's home.⁵ Obviously, this does not include a case where the host is a close relative or friend and would clearly be happy to host.
- Similarly, one who collects *tzedaka* may not ask for a donation from someone that, based on his budget, should not be giving more *tzedaka* than he already gives. This is regardless of whether he will contribute because he is embarrassed to say no or because he is overly generous.⁶

Please note that the above may not be applicable for your situation. Consult your Rov for a final psak.

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OUR HEROES

כ"א מנחם אב

Reb Chaim Brisker

Reb Chaim of Brisk was born to his illustrious father Reb Yosef Dov Soloveitchik in the year תרי"ג (1853). At the age of 27, Reb Chaim was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin, and the *yeshiva* closed down, he became the *rov* of Brisk. He is renowned for his genius, sharp mind and wit, and his new and famous way of learning, known as the Brisker *derech*. Reb Chaim was very involved in communal affairs, fighting for Yiddishkeit, alongside the Rebbe Rashab and the Friediker Rebbe, who respected him greatly. He passed away on the 21st of Av, תרע"ח (1918).



In the early years of the Russian revolution, a member of the opposition party was arrested by the police in Brisk. The mother of this man approached Reb Chaim, begging him to intercede on his behalf. Within a moment Reb Chaim had his coat on and was ready to go to the police station. Reb Chaim's family protested, in face of the danger of being labeled a 'rebel' Reb Chaim responded, "There is doubt if I will be in danger, as the police know that I am not counter-revolutionary, but this man is in absolute danger. *"Ain safek motzie midai vadai,"* a doubt cannot override a certainty."

A man once came to Brisk with motive of spreading Zionist ideas, ideas that Reb Chaim adamantly opposed. When the man asked Reb Chaim to speak in the *shul*, he was flatly refused. "But tell me, Brisker Rov," the man protested, "what can you find in my speech that is not good? Is it not kosher?!" Reb Chaim replied, "Sometimes an animal can be *shechted* and checked *kadas u'kadin, glatt* kosher, but it can then become entirely forbidden because of the pot it was cooked in..."

A meeting of *rabbonim* and *maskilim* was once held in Petersburg, in which the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Chaim Brisker participated. During Reb Chaim's speech, some *maskilim* began to ridicule what he was saying. The Rebbe Rashab wrote something on a note, handed it to his chossid, Reb Mendel Chein, and left. After the speech they opened the note to find out why the Rebbe had left, and read that he could not take part in a meeting at which the words of *gedolei Yisroel* are ridiculed. Hearing this, all the *rabbonim* stood up and left as well.

(ס' הצאצאים ע' 193, קדושת הדיבור ח"ג ע' 128)

ליזכות הילד שמואל פנחס גינן שיי' שיגדלוהו הוריו לתורה לחופה ולמע"ט

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

How to Subdue Animosity to Chassidus

The Rebbe always said that with little effort, many more people would begin learning *chassidus*.

During a *yechidus* on 17 Shevat 5741 with Reb Eliyahu Landau, the son of the famous *Rov* of Bnei Berak, Harav Yaakov Landau, the Rebbe asked him to persuade his father to publish his *chidushei Torah*.

The Rebbe then said, "If only *chassidim* would not be so humble, and would publish their *chidushim*, the animosity to *chassidus* would certainly be lessened."

On another occasion, the Rebbe wrote of the great shame that historical facts are not made public. If only people would be aware of the great relationship between the *Rebbeim* and the non-*chassidische Rabbonim*, the negative approach to learning *chassidus* would surely be subdued.

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