



YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vayeishev

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Yosef, The Flame to Fight Edom

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The Chronicles of Yosef Were Reflective of Yaakov

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A Calculation Indicative of Rational Thinking

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1. Yosef was the most beloved son of Yaakov because he was most similar to him.
2. He was acknowledged by his father to be most special by giving him a special tunic.
3. Yosef, due to his immaturity, shared with his father what he believed to be negative about his brothers.
4. This caused great strife and animosity between Yosef and his brothers.
5. Yosef dreamed two dreams he believed to be prophetic & therefore shared them with his brothers.
6. This only intensified the hate and strained the relationship to a greater degree.
7. In the second dream he dreamed the sun, moon and 11 stars bowed to him.
8. The sun being his father, the moon his mother, and the 11 stars his brothers.
9. Yaakov scolded Yosef for sharing this because it was obviously nonsense since his mother had passed away.
10. Midrash: The moon was Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, who raised him as a mother.
11. When Rachel passed away, Yaakov put his bed in the tent of Bilhah, rather than the tent of Leah, who was a Matriarch.
12. Yaakov loved Yosef more than all his sons – he saw Yosef as his equivalent with similar abilities.
13. Bilhah, as Rachel's maidservant, was mentored by Rachel, understanding how to raise Yosef.



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What the Name Yisroel Represents

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The Brothers Thought They Understood Yosef's Objective

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The Worthiness of Achieving Clarity

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1. Midrash: Because Yaakov wanted to be in a state of tranquility the strife of Yosef was ignited.
2. Why the claim against Yaakov for wanting a respite from his sufferings and have a tranquil moment?
3. Rashi: It is not enough what the righteous have awaiting them for them in the world to come they also want tranquility in this world.
4. Although one's contribution to a mitzvah is only initiative, despite this, one receives full credit for the mitzvah.
5. Mishna: One's reward is determined by one's pain and degree of effort.
6. If not for the struggle aspect of a mitzvah, the mitzvah is not commensurate with the reward: the return is endlessly greater than the effort.
7. Since it appears that reward for a mitzvah is basically a gift, G-d creates a context of difficulty.
8. Yaakov's merit did not protect his children from struggles among themselves.
9. Yosef: The most beautiful person to ever subjugate the physical to the spiritual.
10. Yosef functioned as a spiritual being regardless of the setting and dictates of the material.



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The Exactness Of Justice Nullifies Mercy

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1. Yosef was sold as a slave to Potiphar, a Minister in the court of Pharaoh.
2. Because of his unusual ability, he rose to oversee all the financial affairs of his master.
3. After being acknowledged for his success he focused on being physically attractive.
4. Rashi: G-d said, "Yaakov is grieving over your loss & you're coiffing your hair; I will set the bear upon you."
5. Potiphar's wife took notice & attempted to seduce him.
6. If not for Yosef's insensitivity to his father he would not have been subject to this challenge.
7. It was necessary for him, as the son of Rachel, to subordinate his physicality for the sake of G-d.
8. Yosef tale-bear against his brothers.
9. One of the things he said was that they had illicit relations with women.
10. G-d said: "Because you slandered your brothers your master's wife will attempt to seduce you."
11. Yosef definitely repented for his slander after being sold into slavery.
12. Based on the Attribute of Mercy, Repentance is sufficient to absolve one of sin.
13. However, if the Attribute of Justice should be activated, there is still a level of liability.
14. Not being sensitive to his father's mourning, activated the Attribute of Justice.

An Embodiment Of Clarity To Dispel Distortion

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1. Yosef the son of Rachel is the most beloved child of Yaakov because he is his Ben Zekunim.
2. Ben Zekunim has 3 interpretations: A. born to him in his old age B. wisest son C. his facial features were identical to his father.
3. One would think he was most beloved because he was the eldest son of Rachel.
4. Gemara: The progeny of Esav will only fall into the hands of Rachel.
5. Yosef was the flame that reaches out to consume the house of Esav.
6. Yosef, the wisest of his sons, was taught all the Torah that Yaakov had learned in Yeshiva Shem V'Eiver.
7. Yaakov enacted Arvis, the evening service.
8. Evening is a representation of exile; ominous and lacking in clarity.
9. Yaakov is the Patriarch who represents exile.
10. Despite the overwhelming challenges of exile, Yaakov is able to retain his spiritual persona to its fullest.
11. Yosef was endowed with the capacity of Yaakov to contend with the negative issues of Egypt as Yosef Hatzadik.
12. Yosef as Viceroy of Egypt was therefore able to create a setting for his family to survive the Egyptian exile.

HAPPY CHANUKAH

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YadAvNow.com Audio Series: Chanukah

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Debunking The Myth Of Chanukah

1. Chanukah: The 8 day holiday commemorates the victory over the Greek armies & burning of oil with the seal of the High Priest.
2. The vial was sufficient to burn 1 night & burned 8 nights.
3. The last of the revealed miracles of 2nd Temple Period done for the Jewish People was the miracle of the oil.
4. If oil burned another 7 days, the Holiday should be a 7 day commemoration.
5. Meiri: The 1st of the 8 days commemorates the victory & the others are for the miracle of the oil.
6. Al HaNissim is inserted in the Amida to thank G-d for the miracle of Chanukah.
7. There is no mention of the miracle of the lights of the Menorah in Al Hanissim.
8. Maharal: The primary miracle of Chanukah is the victory the Greeks as described in Al HaNissim.
9. The miracle of the oil was a revealed miracle not to be understood out of the context of miracle.
10. The victory of the Chashmonaim could be attributed to their physical prowess and strategy in battle.
11. The miracle of the oil was only present to reveal that just as the burning of the oil is the hand of G-d, so is the victory over the Greeks.

The Machiavellian Approach to Acculturation

1. Al HaNissim: "They attempted to cause the Torah to be forgotten & remove them from your statutes of will."
2. The Greeks forbade Torah study, circumcision, and sanctification of the new moon.
3. 1st paragraph of Shema: the mitzvah of loving G-d.
4. Juxtaposed to loving G-d the Torah states you must engage in Torah study wherever you may be.
5. Chazal: How does that bring one to love G-d?
6. A statute is a law that cannot be understood on a rational basis.
7. Laws, i.e. stealing, damages, and injury, can be processed within a rational context but are statutes.
8. The Torah doesn't offer a rationale for its dictates.
9. Seforno: When one observes a statute it is a display of love for G-d.
10. One doesn't understand its value & adheres to it due to love of G-d.
11. The Greeks intended the Torah to be forgotten thus causing the Jews' love for G-d to wane.
12. Consequently they will be removed from the statutes.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayeishev

Launching The Destiny Of The Jewish People



Yaakov, Setting Exile in Motion

Torah: The relationship between Yosef and his brothers was tenuous. Yosef's brothers despised him because they believed that their father's unique love for Yosef was due to his tale bearing. Yosef shared with his father all of his criticisms that he had of his brothers. They believed that Yosef received the special tunic from their father because he had diminished their status in Yaakov's eyes. Their hate for Yosef was intensified when he shared his dreams with them, which communicated to them that one day they would all bow to him.

Torah: After Yosef had shared his dreams with his brothers, "His brothers said to him, 'Would you then reign over us? Would you dominate us?'" If Yosef understood that his brothers already bore hatred for him, why would he share with them his dreams which caused them to hate him even more? It is clear that Yosef believed that his dreams were prophetic. Thus, he was obligated to share his prophecy with his brothers, despite their reaction and consequences. Because he shared his dreams with his brothers, it ultimately led them to sell him into slavery.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: A father should not openly demonstrate favoritism among his children. Yaakov, our Patriarch made a mistake in this area by giving Yosef a special tunic.

Torah: "Now Israel loved Yosef more than all of his sons since he was a child of his old age, and he made for him a fine wool tunic...so they hated him..." Yosef's brothers believed that their father Yaakov loved him the most, not because he was special; but rather, because he had spoken negatively about them.

The *Torah* quantifies Yaakov as, "The perfect man who dwelt in the tents (of *Torah*)."*Yaakov*, being the Patriarch that embodied the *Torah*, had the perspective of the *Torah* and continuously understood how to apply it in every aspect of his life. As a result of his *Torah* mind, Yaakov should have had a special level of clarity to understand how to deal with his children. If this is so, how could have Yaakov made such a grave mistake, by favoring Yosef, that led to catastrophic consequences? Why did Yaakov not merit Divine Assistance that would

have protected him from making such a mistake? G-d only provides the proper perspective of truth through the *Torah* when one is worthy of it.

Torah: When *Rachel* saw that she was barren she said to *Yaakov*, "Give me children-otherwise I am dead." The *Torah* continues, "*Yaakov's* anger flared up at *Rachel* and he said, 'Am I instead of G-d Who has withheld from you fruit of the womb?'"

Chazal: Because *Yaakov* had reacted to *Rachel's* request in a harsh manner by not being sensitive to her pain, G-d said to *Yaakov*, "Is this the manner in which you speak to one who is in a state of distress? Because you responded to *Rachel* in this way, I swear that your children will bow to her son." It was because *Yaakov* did not respond to *Rachel* with sensitivity, it was deemed that his sons should bow to *Rachel's* son. This only came about because of the mistake that he differentiated between his children. The special tunic that he had given to *Yosef* precipitated the hate and all that followed. In essence, due to *Yaakov's* initial sin (regarding *Rachel*) all that followed was orchestrated through *Yaakov's* involvement.

Gemara in Tractate *Gitten*: *Reb Yochanon Ben Zakai*, who was the leading *Torah* sage of his generation, was asked by the Roman Emperor, "What do you want me to spare?" *Reb Yochanon Ben Zakai* told him, "You should spare *Yavnei* and its Sages. You should not destroy the family of *Rabon Gamliel* (which would guarantee the continuation of the Davidic line). He should provide medical attention to *Rav Tzadok* who had fasted for forty years to prevent the destruction of the Second Temple."

Gemara: "Why did *Reb Yochanon Ben Zakai* not ask that the Roman Emperor spare the Temple itself from destruction?"

Proverbs: "There are times that G-d causes even the wise to be backwards." Clarity of mind and perspective is due to Divine Assistance. Because G-d wanted the Temple to be destroyed, *Reb Yochanon Ben Zakai* was denied clarity at that moment. Despite *Yaakov's* unique dimension of spirituality and vision, he did not merit the clarity to avoid the tragic events that unfolded regarding *Yosef*, due to his insensitivity to *Rachel*.

The Prophetic Confirmation of *Bilhah's* Importance to *Yosef*

Torah: "He (*Yosef*) dreamt another dream...Behold! The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing to me..."

He related it to his father and to his brothers; his father scolded him, and said to him, 'What is this dream that you have dreamt! Are we to come – I and your mother and your brothers- to bow to you to the ground?'"

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "*Yaakov* said to *Yosef*, 'How is it possible that your mother should bow to you? She is no longer alive!' Rather the dream is referring to *Bilhah* (*Rachel's* maidservant), who raised *Yosef* like a mother." After *Rachel*, the primary Matriarch, had passed away, *Yaakov* had taken his bed from the tent of *Rachel* and placed it into the tent of *Bilhah*, the maidservant of *Rachel*. *Reuvain*, feeling slighted on behalf of his mother, chose to take his father's bed and placed it in the tent of *Leah*, without consulting with his father.

Reuvain believed that although *Leah* was secondary to *Rachel*, she was not secondary to *Rachel's* maidservant, *Bilhah*. Thus, *Yaakov* should have put his bed in *Leah's* tent after *Rachel* passed away. The act of removing *Yaakov's* bed from its designated location, without permission, is considered to be such a grave sin that the *Torah* equates it to *Reuvain* cohabiting with his father's concubine *Bilhah*. Why was *Reuvain's* action considered so extreme?

Chazal: The location of the Holy Patriarchs was considered to be the location of the Divine Presence. As it states, "*Hein, Hein haMerkavah* (they are the chariot)." Relocating *Yaakov's* bed from the location that he had chosen, was the equivalent of moving the location that was designated for the Holy of Holies to another location. If in fact *Leah* was the Matriarch, why did *Yaakov* choose to situate his bed in the tent of the maidservant of *Rachel*?

Yaakov understood that *Bilhah*, the maidservant of *Rachel*, was crucial to the upbringing of *Yosef*. Without her involvement in *Yosef's* life, as a surrogate mother, he would not develop, as he should. *Yosef*, being the son of *Rachel*, was essential to the survival of the Jewish people. He would ultimately be the caretaker and provider for the Jewish people when they would come to Egypt. He would be the one to enable them to survive physically and spiritually in exile.

Yaakov, therefore chose the tent of *Bilhah*, because of her importance to *Yosef*. *Yaakov* himself initially did not understand to what degree *Bilhah* was the equivalent of *Yosef's* mother, *Rachel*, regarding his upbringing. After hearing the dream, *Yaakov* said to *Yosef*, "How could your mother bow to you if she is no longer alive?"

Chazal: The bowing of the moon to Yosef after the passing of his mother was an indication that *Bilhah* would bow to him. This confirmed, through prophecy that she was the equivalent of *Rachel* regarding Yosef. *Yaakov* had said to Yosef after hearing the dream, "Just as this part of the dream regarding your mother is nonsensical, the entire dream has no validity." Thus, there was no reason Yosef's brothers should consider his dream in a serious manner.

Reuvain, when he removed his father's bed from *Bilhah*'s tent, did not initially understand her importance to Yosef. He reacted to his own pain that he had felt that his mother was being disgraced. However, later *Reuvain* realized the wrong that he had done and appreciated that it was not *Bilhah* that was bring valued to a greater degree than *Leah*, but rather it was for the sake of Yosef and the Jewish people.

Reuvain, Rising Above His Own Conflict

Torah: After Yosef had shared his dreams with his brothers which caused their hatred of him to become intensified. They chose to distance themselves from him. When Yosef was sent by his father to see how they and their flocks were faring, he was attacked by them. "*Reuvain* heard (what his brothers were planning), and he rescued him (Yosef) from their hand; he said, 'We will not strike him mortally!...Shed no blood! Throw him into this pit in the desert...intending to rescue him from their hand, to return him to his father.'"

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "The *Torah* is communicating through Divine Vision that when *Reuvain* told his brothers to throw Yosef into the pit, rather than killing him, his intent was not that he should die there, but rather so that *Reuvain* could go back later and rescue him from the pit. *Reuvain* said (to himself), 'I am the first born and eldest of all of my brothers. If Yosef were to die, I will be held culpable for this tragedy.'" Seemingly, *Reuvain* had a vested interest in rescuing Yosef from the pit. It was not altruistic reasons, but rather he would have been held personally responsible for the death of his brother's death.

Torah: When *Leah* gave birth to her first born, she named him *Reuvain* because "*Hashem* has seen my plight for I am disliked (by *Yaakov*), for now my husband will love me."

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: When *Leah* named her first-born son *Reuvain*, there was a hidden meaning contained within the name "*Reuvain*." She had also

meant to communicate– "*R'eu'h ma bein binee l'ben chami* – look at the difference between my son (*Reuvain*) and the son of my father-in-law (*Esav*)."

Although *Yaakov* had legally purchased the birthright from *Esav*, he vowed to kill *Yaakov* for taking his blessings. *Reuvain*, the firstborn (bechore) of his father *Yaakov*, who was naturally deserving of the birthright, rescued Yosef from his brothers – despite the fact that Yosef had received the double portion that was rightfully *Reuvain*'s.

Midrash cited by *Rashi*: The motivation for *Reuvain* to rescue his brother Yosef was because of self-interest. It was purely for the sake of not being held culpable to his father for not behaving responsibly. If so, there is nothing admirable about *Reuvain*'s intervention to prevent Yosef from being killed. If this is so, why did *Leah* pride herself regarding the behavior of *Reuvain* as it compared with *Esav*?

Torah: "*Bilaam* arose in the morning and saddled his donkey."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "From here we see '*ha'sinah mekalkesh hashura* – hate disrupts protocol.'" Although *Bilaam* was a self-centered and egotistical person with an insatiable desire for honor, he nevertheless hitched his own donkey. One would think that a person of *Bilaam*'s renown and level of self esteem, he would have had a servant prepare his donkey for riding. However, because of his all consuming hatred for the Jewish people, with the intent cursing and destroying them, his perspective at that moment was only the objective of his mission. At that moment, *Bilaam* was completely negated to his objective. His sense of self did not exist.

Yosef's brothers wanted to kill him because of their intense hatred for him. *Reuvain*, on the other hand, chose to save him. The basis for *Reuvain*'s initiative was that he would be held culpable to his father for Yosef's death. *Reuvain*, being able to make this calculation and assessment at that moment was an indication that he did not share their position of hatred towards Yosef. If *Reuvain* had had the same level of hate as his brothers, his rational approach could not have been considered, based on the principle of "hate disrupts protocol." If *Reuvain* would have hated Yosef because he had forfeited his birthright to him, all that would have mattered to him would have been Yosef's death and not the consequences to his father, *Yaakov*. However, because he did take this into consideration, it was an indication that he did not hate Yosef, which is something praiseworthy.

The Ramifications of Not Concealing One's Belief

Torah: After Yosef's brothers sold him into slavery, he was purchased by *Potiphar*, who was one of Pharaoh's ministers. "*Hashem* was with Yosef, and he became a successful man; and he remained in the house of his master the Egyptian. His master saw that *Hashem* was with him, and whatever he did *Hashem* made succeed through him." If the *Torah* previously stated that Yosef was purchased to be a slave in the house of *Potiphar*, why does it need to state, "...he remained in the house of his master the Egyptian?" Seemingly, it is superfluous.

Chazal: Egypt was a location that was the most devoid of spirituality in the world. It was an advanced civilization that was steeped in paganism. Before the *Torah* tells us that G-d was with Yosef, it predicates this by telling us that Yosef was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. The *Torah* tells us this to communicate that despite the fact that Yosef was under the domination of his master, who was an Egyptian, he remained to be an example of righteousness and holiness. His connection to G-d was so evident that even his pagan master was able to understand that "*Hashem* was with him...." If *Potiphar* was a pagan who had no relevance to spirituality, who could he see that G-d was with Yosef?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "It was because the name of heaven was continuously in his mouth."

Midrash: "Yosef was constantly murmuring under his breath. His master initially believed that he must be evoking incantations of witchcraft. *Potiphar* asked him, 'What are you saying?' Yosef responded, 'I am acknowledging my master G-d.'" One would think that being a slave in the house of a minister of Egypt, who was a pagan, Yosef would conceal his monotheistic beliefs for fear of his life. One would think that minimally Yosef would acknowledge *Potiphar* as his master and not G-d in order not to be punished. Yosef, however did not conceal in any way his belief in G-d or his acknowledgment of Him as being his Master.

To Yosef, his predicament of being a slave of a minister of Egypt was only a circumstance that was Willed by G-d. By revealing his belief and continuous cognizance of G-d to his master, Yosef communicated to *Potiphar* that everything emanates from the one true G-d. Due to Yosef's unusual level of success, *Potiphar* understood that this success was because G-d was with him. Because Yosef

attributed everything to G-d, including his circumstance of being a slave, *Potiphar* realized "...whatever he did (and would do) *Hashem* made succeed through him."

Torah: "Yosef found favor in his eyes, and he attended him; he appointed him over his household, and whatever he had he placed in his custody." *Potiphar*'s trust and faith in Yosef was complete.

Chazal: Even after the wife of *Potiphar* accused Yosef of unconscionable behavior, *Potiphar* did not actually believe her. He understood with certainty that a man of Yosef's integrity and spiritual dimension could not behave in this manner. He had Yosef incarcerated in the dungeon only to not disgrace his wife.

Torah: Although Yosef was in prison for twelve years, when he was released to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, he did not seek to ingratiate himself in his eyes. He did not conceal that the one who dictated his life was G-d Himself. Yosef did not even consider to attribute the ability to interpret dreams to his own abilities, which would have been beneficial to him. When Pharaoh asked him to interpret his dreams, "Yosef said to Pharaoh, 'That is beyond me; it is G-d Who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare.'" Even in the presence of the pagan king, who was the monarch of the greatest civilization in existence, Yosef did not conceal his belief in G-d.

Rabbeinu Bachya: Yosef's expression and declaration of G-d impacted upon Pharaoh to such a degree that even he as a pagan acknowledged that there is a monotheistic Being. As the verse states, "Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Could we find another like him – a man in whom is the spirit of G-d?'" We see that if one is consistent in demonstrating his belief in G-d through his behavior, it can impact upon others. As we find, even Pharaoh, who was the ultimate pagan, was affected by Yosef's open demonstration of his beliefs and convictions. If it was effective with one who was rooted in impurity and depravity, how much more so will it impact upon the average person.

Refinement, A Reflection of G-d's Characteristic (From *Vayishlach*)

Torah: After *Shimon* and *Levi*, the sons of *Yaakov* destroyed *Shechem* to avenge the defilement of their sister *Dinah*, they had taken all of the spoils of the

city, which included the idols and garments of the community. “G-d said to Yaakov, ‘Arise– go up to *Beth-el* and dwell there...discard the alien gods that are in your midst; cleanse yourselves and change your clothes...’”

Midrash: “We see from the verse that G-d does not want something that is evil to be associated with Him. Something that is profane does not emanate from the Mouth of G-d. As it states in *Psalms*, ‘All the Words of G-d are pure...’ Where do we see this? When G-d had commanded *Noach* to gather the kosher and the non-kosher species into the Ark, He referred to them as ‘the pure animals and the not pure animals.’ The *Torah* does not use the term ‘contaminated’ or ‘unclean’ regarding the non-kosher species.

“The *Torah* goes out of its way to add words, so as not to express itself in a manner that is unrefined. For example, there are two species that share some of the signs of the Kosher species but they are not Kosher. The camel, although it chews its cud, it does not have split hooves. On the other hand, the pig has split hooves but does not chew its cud. When the *Torah* identifies these two species, although it indicates that they are not kosher, it refers to their kosher characteristic...Why is the *Torah* so adamant about using terminology that is pure and proper? It is because G-d does not associate Himself with anything that is evil/impure.”

Mishna in Tractate *Pesachim*: The night of the rabbinical obligation of searching for the chometz (leavened products) can be called “*ohr* (light) of the fourteenth.”

Gemara: “If in fact the *Mishna* is referring to the night time period, it should use a more obvious term for night such as “*lail* – night. It is because ‘night’ has a negative connotation. Since at the beginning of the night there is still some degree of light, the *Mishna* chose to use a term that is more refined.”

The *Gemara* is teaching us the proper standard of conduct for a Jew. A Jew must speak in a more refined manner rather than in a manner that is unbecoming

Similarly, we find that *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, had expressed himself to his father in a more refined manner. We see from the *Midrash* that the principle of expressing oneself in a refined manner is unrelated to maintaining a refined standard of behavior.

Positive commandment in the *Torah*: “You shall walk in His (G-d) ways.” A Jew is obligated to emulate G-d.

Gemara: “Just as He is Merciful, you should be merciful. Just as He is Gracious, you should be gracious, etc.” Similarly, the reason the Jew must express himself in a refined manner is because G-d expresses Himself in a refined/pure manner. When one chooses to speak in a more refined manner, he is emulating G-d’s Ways and is fulfilling a positive commandment. Just as G-d does not associate Himself with anything evil so too should one distance himself from impurity– even impurity of speech.

When *Chazon Ish* *z’tl* would want to say that something was false, the term that he would use was “it is not true” rather than saying that it is “false (*sheker*)” because the term “false (*sheker*)” is more negative.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: At the battle of *Aeiya* there were thirty-six Jewish casualties. G-d had said to *Yehoshua*, “The Jewish people had sinned.” Someone had taken from the spoils of *Jericho* when they were not permitted to do so. *Yehoshua* asked G-d, “Who was the individual who had sinned?” G-d responded, “I am not one who speaks *lashon hara* (tale bearing). Thus, I will not reveal the name of that individual.”

Chofetz Chaim: If one is careful regarding his purity of speech, he will fulfill the commandment of “You shall walk in His ways.” Just as G-d does not speak negatively about an individual, so too should one not speak negatively.

Chazal: The relationship between G-d and the Jewish people is the equivalent of the relationship of a parent to his child. Just as the child reflects the behavior of his parent, so too must the Jewish people reflect the ways of G-d. It is through this reflection that the Jewish people will merit to have an intimate relationship with G-d.



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