



STRIVE FOR TRUTH

Erev Shabbos Parashas Toldos Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5783

Dear Parents,

At the end of this week's *Parsha*, tucked away in an obscure *Rashi*, is an enormous lesson with life-long significance. In telling us how *Yitzchak* sent *Yaakov* away, to *Lavan's* house, and identifying *Lavan* as *Rivkah's* brother, the *Pasuk* concludes by mentioning that *Rivkah* is the mother of *Yaakov* and *Esav*.

כח:ה וישלח יצחק את יעקב... אחי רבקה אם יעקב ועשו. רש"י ד"ה אם יעקב ועשו: איני יודע מה מלמדנו

"...Rashi knew of several Pshatim, explanations, but couldn't decide which one was the most accurate."

Rashi, commenting on "*Rivkah*, the mother of *Yaakov* and *Esav*," says four immortal words: "I don't know what (this) is teaching us." What honesty! Why say anything? Even the *Sifsei Chachomim*, super commentary on *Rashi*, asks; what's the purpose of this *Rashi*? He further points out that *Rashi* knew of several *Pshatim*, explanations, but couldn't decide which one was the most accurate. This makes the question even stronger – why wasn't *Rashi* more discreet about his not knowing it 100%, why didn't he state his uncertainty in a less obvious, less incriminating fashion? Why not leave his thoughts unspoken – after all, *Rashi* doesn't comment on most words in the Chumash?

Rashi, the master teacher, is teaching us intellectual honesty and integrity. Our trust and reliance upon him is greatly enhanced, because we see his uncompromising yearning for truth. He is not embarrassed to admit he doesn't know what he doesn't know. This is a powerful lesson for us and especially for our children.

"He is not embarrassed to admit he doesn't know what he doesn't know." You don't always have to be right. You don't always have to know everything. Bashfulness is a wonderful *Midah* – but not when it comes to Torah learning. If you're not sure – ask for help. Most of all, we see the power and centrality of *Emes* – truth.

Learning to be a person of honesty and integrity is critical to your child's healthy development. Too often, children are tempted, and succumb, to cheating on tests because of the undue pressure they feel to succeed. In striving for a few more points on a test that will quickly be forgotten, your child may be trading away his or her good name, when honesty should be the highest value. Children are starting at a younger and younger age to act in a manner that they know is dishonest. Parents' signatures are forged on incomplete homework assignments, extra credit checklists and tests. All too often, we the parents are (unwittingly perhaps) demanding too much perfection, and possibly conveying a message of conditional love – you're loved and appreciated for your outstanding school performance – which translates in the child's mind to: if you don't do as well as your parents expect, you're not as worthy of love.

"All too often, we the parents are ... demanding too much perfection..."

Let's keep our eye on the real prize – to raise children who strive for truth over fleeting accomplishment and integrity over outward appearances. Perhaps in this way we can help restore the natural curiosity and excitement to learn with which children entered school, and which our great teacher *Rashi* demonstrated so openly and vividly throughout his illustrious life.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,

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