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A Prayer For Peace Upon The World

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם וְכוּ' - In the final blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we pray for *shalom*: peace.

This includes [praying for] peace between man and his friend, and peace between husband and wife. Chazal state, "Hashem did not find a vessel that can contain blessing, except for *shalom* (peace)." Thus, Hashem wants there to be *shalom* in all of *Klal Yisrael*, not just between man and another and between husband and wife.

Even more so, we find that there must be a concept of *shalom* between the Jewish people and the rest of the world. The Talmud says that there we must do certain things out of "*darkei shalom*" (ways of peace), in order to be at peace with the gentile nations. This is because it is written of the Torah's ways, "*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all of her paths are peaceful*", thus the Sages established certain rules out of "*darkei shalom*". The Torah's way is called "*shalom*".

On a more esoteric level, the power of *shalom* (peace) is the spiritual light that is contained in the Torah, which Hashem looked into when He created the world. The light of peace that is found in the Torah was drawn onto our own world, for the world has been created from the Torah itself, which contains *shalom*.

In the future, there will there be total peace in Creation; it is written of the future that "*the wolf will reside with the lamb*". Nowadays, however, there cannot be total peace with the rest of the world. If we try to make total peace with the nations, it is only dangerous to us.

Emes\Truth Vs. Shalom\Peace

We had two great leaders who led the Jewish nation: Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen (who was in Moshe's stead when he ascended to Har Sinai to receive the Torah). The strong points of Moshe and Aharon were very different. Moshe mainly emphasized *emes* (truth) - as opposed to *shalom* (peace) - whereas Aharon emphasized *shalom* (peace) over *emes* (truth).

Aharon HaKohen is called by our Sages as the one who "pursues peace and loves peace". [Moshe, however, did not relent from the *emes*. When he came down from the mountain and he saw the people sinning with Golden Calf, he immediately shattered the *Luchos*, for he knew that this is what the *emes* demanded right now.]

Shalom (peace) and *emes* (truth) are contradicting forces within our soul. When a person has too

much *emes*, he cannot have *shalom*. When one has too much *shalom*, he cannot reach total *emes*.[\[1\]](#)

Emes Is More Important Than Shalom

We must know that in the world we live in today, our main *avodah* is to emphasize ***emes*** over *shalom*. If a person today emphasizes *shalom* over *emes*, by trying to be at peace with every person in the world, he is trying to attain the level of the future where there will be peace with the entire world, and this is currently impossible. He will end up connecting himself with those who are far from *emes*, as he tries to “make *shalom*” with all those who behave wickedly.

Making *shalom* with the wicked causes the wicked to negatively influence us. Although the spiritual light of the Torah can influence the wicked and cause them to return – for the power of good can influence evil – so can evil overpower good. Therefore, there is a great danger in trying to make *shalom* with wicked people.

In the times we live in, which are called *ikvesa d'meshicha*, (“the heel of Mashiach”), the Sages said that *emes* will be very concealed.[\[2\]](#) In other words, if one does not connect himself with *emes*, he will not survive the *ikvesa d'meshicha*. (On a deeper note, when *emes* is concealed from us, so is *shalom* concealed from us, because there cannot be true *shalom* unless there is *emes*.)

Examining The Sin With The Golden Calf

We see a time in our history where *shalom* overrode *emes*, and we can see how much destruction it caused; it caused total destruction to the fabric of Creation. This took place by the sin with the *Eigel* (the Golden Calf). When the people saw that Moshe wasn't returning from Heaven, they grew afraid, and they demanded from Aharon that a new god be made. The depth of this is that because Moshe was temporarily gone from the world, the trait of *emes* which he so personified had gone with him, thus the people could not see the *emes*.

It wasn't just Moshe's body who had gone; the *emes* had gone with him. So the *emes* was concealed from them at that time. But Aharon was present with them, and Aharon's trait was *shalom*. They listened to Aharon – meaning, they followed the path of *shalom* rather than follow the *emes*.

Had there been *emes* present there, Aharon could have never have helped with the idea of the Golden Calf. But since Moshe's *emes* was not present, the people ended up being influenced by the “*Eirev Rav*” (the Mixed Multitude) who thought of the idea to make the Calf. Once the people connected with the “*Eirev Rav*”, the sin with the Calf was allowed, which brought so much destruction to Creation for all generations to come.[\[3\]](#)

The most sanctified time in our history was when we stood at Har Sinai. There, *emes* presided over *shalom*. It was clear to all that Moshe was the leader and that Aharon was second in greatness to him; it was clear that *emes* overrides *shalom*. This represents the ideal state of Creation, where *shalom* is connected with *emes*, where Moshe is the leader and Aharon is the mouth who speaks for him; where *shalom* is connected with *emes* and represents it.

But with the sin of the Golden Calf, the people fell from the level of Har Sinai; they fell from the perspective of *emes*, of Moshe, and instead they were led by *shalom*, the trait of Aharon. But this led to a total destruction to the fabric of Creation.

Priorities: Placing Emes Before Shalom

This idea is apparent from our history, but it is also applicable to each personal soul. We are supposed to put *emes* before *shalom*.

The Torah is called *Toras Emes*, a “Torah of truth”; the main trait revealed through Torah is *emes*. The trait of *shalom* is a secondary aspect of Torah, for the Torah’s ways are called “ways of pleasantness” and peace”. When a person instead gives more importance to *shalom* over *emes*, it is always a catalyst for spiritual destruction. The *emes* becomes concealed, and then people become connected with the dangerous mixture of good and evil that fills Creation.

If we reflect into this deeply, we must understand, that the trait of *shalom*, by itself, must certainly be unlimited. In Heaven, there is total peace, for fire and water are allowed to co-exist there; as we see from the word “*Shomayim*” (Heaven), which is from the words *aish* (fire) and *mayim* (water). So too, we must have a trait of *shalom* in which we have boundless peace toward others. There must be *shalom* with the entire world; that is the very concept of *shalom*.

When one feels the need for *shalom* from the depths of his soul, he can realize the deep contradiction between *emes* and *shalom* which we are faced with on This World, and how we must decide and choose between *emes* and *shalom*.

But what usually happens with most people is that they are “either, or.” Some people do not care much about either *emes* or *shalom*; we won’t address this here. But there are people in the world who are very strong when it comes to either *emes* or *shalom* – and usually, this kind of person will act extreme, either when it comes to *emes*, or when it comes to *shalom*.

One kind of person is very passionate when it comes to pursuing *emes*, and because he is so much for the truth, he is far removed from the trait of *shalom*. Instead of “choosing” between *emes* vs. *shalom*, this kind of person won’t even consider *shalom* to be an option. His belief is that there must only be *emes*, and that there is no place at all for *shalom*. A person with the opposite kind of personality will have a powerful feeling for *shalom*, but he does not strive for *emes*.

We must clearly understand that we are capable of revealing unlimited *shalom*, and we are also capable of following absolute truth. But only when a person is clear about what the truth is (when it comes to matters of “*hilchos de’os*” – matters of *hashkafah*^[4]) can he know how to have *shalom*. The slightest divergence from the truth is already a breach in the way of the Torah. The trait of *shalom* should not be allowed to cause any laxity in the *emes*.

Soon we will explain how we actualize this idea, but the first thing we must know is that we have to first be very strong about what the *emes* is, before we pursue *shalom*.

Living In A World of Falsity: Sticking To The Truth

In the more recent generations, and in especially in this generation, there is a great amount of falsity in the world. Most people do not know what the *emes* is, due to all the confusion that the falsity of the world has caused, a result of this deep exile we are in. But no matter how much falsity fills the world, one must strive to have the proper and truthful perspective towards this world; to know what the *yoisher* (straight and truthful path) is.

Although we are faced with so many things on this world that are not *emes*, we must not allow this to make us think that perhaps we can distort the *emes*. The trait of *emes* doesn’t allow for any divergences from truth. Therefore, no matter how much falsity and misconception we see on this world, we must still remain clear about what the truthful perspectives are.

Not only are we surrounded by falsity on this world from all sides. There is another misconception we are surrounded with, which is what we are mainly discussing here: there are people who want *shalom* with the world, and they pursue *shalom* so much that *emes* is ignored.

We can see this problem manifest both in the communal sense as well as in the individual sense. Certain communities emphasize '*shalom*' to the point that they are all-embracing, with no bounds. On the individual level, it can manifest as a nature in a person to be leaning towards being all-embracing rather than being truthful.

Nothing should be ever be allowed to make us even slightly diverge from the *emes*, whether it is the falsity that comes from the surroundings, or whether it is a certain good personality trait (including the trait of peace, which is a most praiseworthy trait).

The Balance Between Emes and Shalom

At the same time, one must be able to feel a demand in his soul for *shalom* with all people, to the point that a lack of *shalom* feels painful to him. Although *emes* demands that we not follow *shalom*, we must still feel a demand for more *shalom* in the world. It must bother us whenever *shalom* is sorely lacking, such as when we encounter arguments that are not for the sake of Heaven. Even when *emes* demands that we not give in to *shalom*, we must still wish deep down that there could be *shalom*.

Usually when there is a demand for *shalom*, the *emes* is ignored, and when *emes* is emphasized, *shalom* is ignored. This is because the power of *emes* must be firmly developed before we exercise *shalom*, and then these two abilities will function properly and be in balance with each other. There will still be issues of *emes* vs. *shalom* even after this, but first we must make sure that our *emes* is developed, before we pursue *shalom*. When desiring that there be *shalom* in the world, we should wish for a kind of *shalom* that fills the whole world; a boundless and unlimited kind of peace.

When one feels a demand for *emes* as well as for *shalom* - when he feels a desire for absolute truth and he also wishes there could be peace throughout the world - it is then that a person arrives at a very great contradiction of the soul: *emes* vs. *shalom*.

Emes must dominate over *shalom*, as we said. That is the first step. But we must be aware that in the future, *shalom* will rule over *emes*. Why? Because in the future, the falsity of the world will vanish, thus there will be no problem with a dominance of *shalom*.

In the world we live in today, if *shalom* would rule over *emes*, the falsity of the world would be total. There would be absolutely no kernel of truth, and then Creation would not survive, for Creation depends on the existence of *emes*, the trait of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was the emissary that gave to us his "*Toras Emes*".

But in the World To Come, where the spirit of impurity will be removed from the world and falsity will vanish, we will be left with just *emes* and *shalom*. The *emes* will demand that there be division in the world, and the *shalom* will demand that there be *achdus* (unity) in the world. This is the depth of "*On that day, Hashem will be One and His Name will be one.*" The power of *echad* (oneness) will be fully revealed upon Creation and it will overpower all disparity. It is another angle of understanding how *shalom* will preside over *emes*.

This is the general difference between our current world and the future, the World To Come.

Emes and Shalom In The World Today

In the world we live in today, where *emes* must come before *shalom*, the issue we face is: How far should *emes* go and how far should *shalom* go? What are the limitations of *emes* and *shalom*?

Again, as we said, we first need to develop a strong *emes* before we wonder about how to use the

power of *shalom*. But after we have developed a strong sense for *emes*, the question is: In the actual sense, when should we let *emes* dominate, and when should we let *shalom* dominate?

It is a matter which depends on one's personal *shoresh haneshamah* (soul root). Some souls are closer in their soul root to *emes*, and others are closer in their soul root to *shalom*. This is a general answer. But what is the clear answer to this issue?

As long as following *shalom* will cause a person to diverge from *emes*, it is forbidden to engage in trying to make *shalom*. If we can pursue *shalom* in a way that won't take away from the *emes*, from the mitzvos of the Torah, then *shalom* can be pursued. But if pursuing *shalom* will cause even one iota of divergence from the *emes*, such *shalom* should not be pursued.

When *emes* and *shalom* are balanced together properly, this is a proper way of life which many of the great leaders of our past lived. Other leaders of our past were rooted more in *emes*, and they emphasized the *emes* over *shalom*. But in any case, there was never a place to allow *shalom* where it will take away from the *emes*.

Today there are misconceptions when it comes to the concept of *shalom*. Those who are of the Torah world must not try to make *shalom* with the outside, secular world. The proper and inner way to approach life is to make sure that we never budge from the Torah as we pursue *shalom*.

Strife and Falsity In The End of Days

If pursuing *shalom* will result in a breach of the *emes*, perhaps this can be allowed temporarily, such as in a situation of making marital peace or in making peace with others, where there is some room for *shalom* over *emes*. But even then, it is spiritually dangerous, because once the *emes* is pushed aside in favor of *shalom*, the *shalom* will overpower the *emes*, and then we are left with no *emes*, and eventually with no *shalom*.

The results will be nothing but *machlokes* (strife) and *sheker* (falsity) on this world, two evil forces of mankind which will band together in the End of Days. It all starts from a breach in *emes*, all in the name of "*shalom*". The pursuit of *emes* becomes weakened as time goes on, getting weaker and weaker, and instead strife overpowers peace. Then peace and truth become concealed totally, and then we find ourselves in the prophecy of our Sages mentioned in the end of *Tractate Sotah* in the Talmud^[5]: the truth becomes concealed.

Along with this concealment of truth comes strife and wars in the world. The Sages state that in the generation where the son of David will come, there will be wars in the world; strife between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law; and strife between son and father. This is a complete opposite of the situation of *shalom*: a situation of total *machlokes* (strife), and *lashon hora* (gossip), which "still dances among us"^[6] - which caused the destruction of the second *Beis HaMikdash*.

Praying For Peace: Heralding The Future, and Surviving In The Now

Thus, now we can understand the request of **שִׁים שְׁלוֹם**.

There are two requests contained in this. It is the final blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, and it represents the finale of our history which we are amidst: the End of Days. It is also a request about the level of the future.

We are praying for peace, for the peace of the future, where "*the wolf shall reside with the lamb.*" This will be accomplished through *Mashiach*, who will come to reveal *shalom* upon the world; he will connect the kingdoms of Yosef and Yehuda together, and he will connect all the sides together who

argue and who have differences with each other; and on the larger scale of things, he will connect the Jewish people together with the nations of the world.

The prayer of **שִׁים שְׁלוֹם** is specifically at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei*, for it is describing the End of Days, in which we are in great need of peace upon the world. We are praying in this blessing for the time in the future where *shalom* shall prevail over *emes*, for that will be the time where falsity is removed from the world. The depth of this is because the power of *achdus* (unity) will ultimately prevail over all the *pirud* (disparity).

All of that concerns the future, however. But in the current time we live in, where we have not yet merited the coming of *Mashiach*, we pray for peace within this world. What kind of peace do we want in our current times? We cannot have total peace in the world, for this is not yet possible. We are asking here for more “good”, and for more “blessing”; we are not asking here for total peace with Creation, for this is currently impossible, being that impurity fills the world. For as long as there is evil in the world, there cannot be total *shalom* on this world.

Anyone who tries to have total *shalom* on this world right now will not succeed, for it will only cause him to bond with the wicked, and the Sages state that this is not a real bond. Trying to bond with evil does not stem from pursuing *shalom*; it stems from the trait of *chanufah* (flattery).

Only when a person feels a burning desire for truth can he reveal real *shalom*; a kind of *shalom* which does not compromise on the *emes*. This is the trait of the trait of *shalom* which the righteous possess, and it is also the depth of how “Torah scholars increase peace on the world.”^[7] Why specifically Torah scholars? It is because only a Torah scholar, who learns the Torah on a regular basis, in the “Torah of truth”, is one who can reveal *shalom* on the world, for genuine *shalom* can only come from this pure and truthful place.

By contrast, when *shalom* is not stemming from a place of *emes* in oneself, it will not be genuine. It will become a disguise for seeking flattery with the wicked.

In Conclusion

Thus, the request of *Sim Shalom* is not only a request to herald the future, where there will be total peace in the world; it is also a request for this current dimension we are in, that we should be a proper balance between truth and peace together.

For the time being, though - until the coming of *Mashiach*, may he come speedily in our days - we must strive to make *emes* at the forefront, so that when the *shalom* of the future does come, we will be able to experience it as a kind of *shalom* that is of ‘good’ and ‘blessing’; **שִׁים שְׁלוֹם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה**.

^[1] See also ***Tefillah #089 - Truth and Peace Together***.

^[2] Sotah 49b

^[3] For an in-depth explanation of this matter, refer to the shiur of **פרקי אבות_0129**

[4] The proper Torah outlook towards life

[5] Sotah 49a

[6] Yoma 9b; see also the *hakdamah* to *sefer Chofetz Chaim*

[7] Berachos 64a

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