

# TRUTH IS TANGIBLE

written by Chaim Kramer  
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**Rebbe Nachman once said: The world fools a person. Accept this advice from me: Do not let yourselves be fooled!**

The Talmud tells us that falsehood does not last! (*Shabbat* 104a). It has no permanence and offers no true reward. However, this presents a problem. We know that a lust for money is a form of foreign worship, i.e. idolatry, and idolatry itself is the epitome of falsehood (cf. *Sanhedrin* 92a). How, then, can greed and a craving for wealth ever result in gains for one who has them? How can a desire for money every pay off? The answer can be found in the following Talmudic exchange.

The Sixty Wise Men of Athens challenged Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya: "Tell us something false!" Rabbi Yehoshua answered:

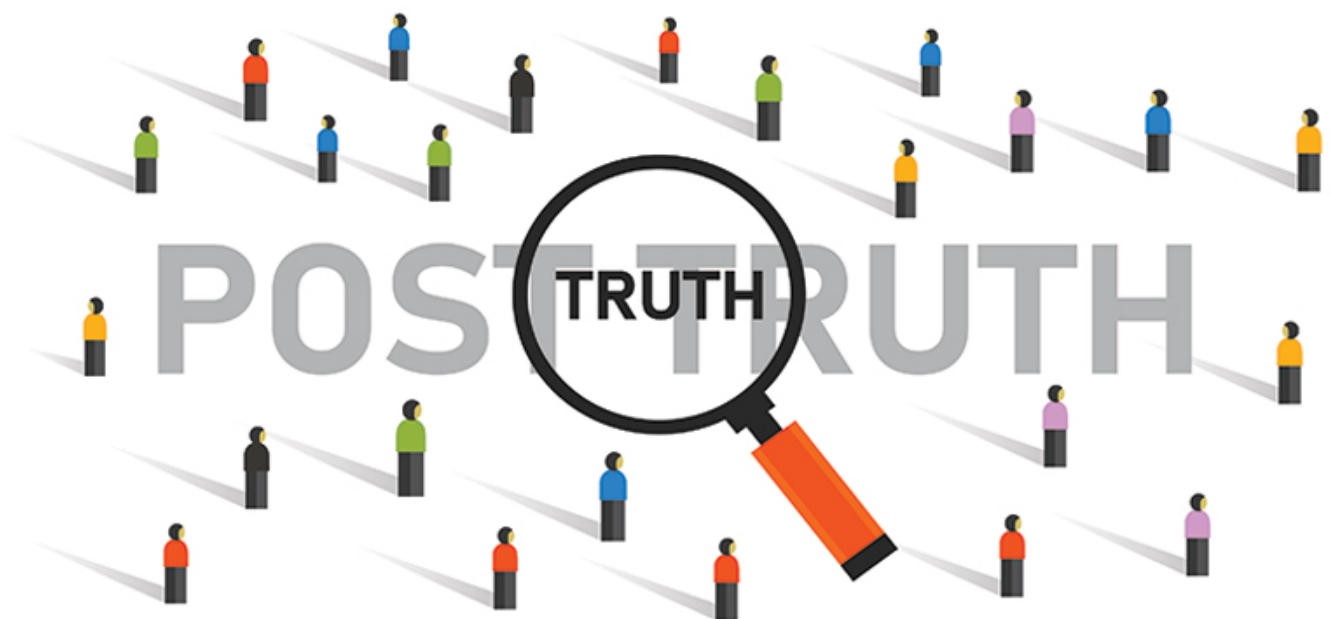
“We had a mule which gave birth. Hanging from the neck of the newborn mule was a note on which was written: My father owes 100,000 coins.” They said: “How does a mule give birth?” He answered: “You asked for something false, didn’t you?!” (*Bekhorot* 8b).

Rebbe Nachman explains: A mule alludes to idolatry. Birth suggests being fruitful and profitable. When the Sixty Wise Men wondered how a mule could give birth, they were really asking how it was possible for idolatry to yield profits. How could falsehood, the lust for money, give birth? Rabbi Yehoshua answered them that this was the falsehood they had asked for. Such people only think they are profiting. The truth is that they are not. Falsehood yields no benefits, no true reward... People work hard their entire lives and think that they are actually earning and profiting. In the end, most see that they have nothing from their constant labor. And, even if something does remain of their wealth, it simply means that they have mortgaged *their entire lives* just for money; money which they will in any case not take with them. They run from place to place, job to job, city to city, seeking profit, seeking money. It is as if they were born with an outstanding debt, with a note hanging from their necks that they owe money and have been told to pay it (*Likutey Moharan* I, 23:5).

***People work hard their entire lives and think that they are actually earning and profiting. In the end, most see that they have nothing from their constant labor.***

Reb Noson added: It seems that everyone feels the need to leave something for his children. This itself is a debt. Ask anyone who’s ever lived why they work so hard and he’ll tell you, “I do it for my children.” “You’d think,” said Reb Noson, “that since everyone is working for his children, you’d see such wonderful children. I’m still waiting to see that flawless child! [The one that everyone sells their lives for!]” (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*).

Rebbe Nachman once said: The world fools a person. Accept this advice from me: Do not let yourselves be fooled! ([Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom](#) #51). Rebbe Nachman wanted us to understand that the search for the truth does not begin with the search for worldly needs and possessions. Granted, we have to live: the need for food, shelter and clothing is real. The Torah speaks of the necessity to work in order to survive. But the search for truth is a search for eternity, a “possession” which man can acquire and hold onto forever – the tangible. A person shouldn't have to sacrifice his entire life to “idolatry,” to falsehood, just for the ration of bread he needs. Were we to put our energy and resources into searching for the truth, we would have a far more content life even in this world.



*Do not let yourselves be fooled!*

Reb Noson once remarked: [The desires of] this world *are not* tangible, and one cannot [ever] attain them. Torah and prayer *are* tangible and one *can* attain them (*Aveneha Barzel* p. 86). Some people work their entire lives to reach an objective, perhaps money or some other desire. Sometimes, they even reach their goal. “But,” as Rebbe Nachman said, “man and

wealth cannot endure together. Either the money is taken from the man, or the man is taken from his money. They cannot remain together forever” ([Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom](#) #51).

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Rebbe Nachman emphasized over and over again that truth represents something everlasting, something tangible, something which man can grasp and keep for himself. You have to look out for your family; it is your responsibility. You have to take care of yourself; if not you, then who? But remember your primary responsibility: to strive for the everlasting, the truth – the Ultimate Truth. Look for “births,” for futures, for profits – but permanent profits, not the momentary profits that fool and mislead you into running after the transient.

(taken from the book [Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings](#), chapter 4 -Truth; pp. 56-58)