

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Vayetze	17 Nov 2018	9 Kislev 5779	Gen. 28:10-32:2	Hos. 12:12-14:9	John 1:41-51

“These six things does YHWH hate: yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent *dahm* (blood), A *lev* (heart) that plans wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brothers.” (Prov. 6:16-19) It is true we should not lie. But in some circumstances, we have no choice but to lie. We see in many places in the bible where lies were told or bend the truth, and yet in some situations there weren’t any punitive damages to them as there are who were punished for telling lies.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines lying as “dishonest, mendacious, untruthful.” It also can mean cheating, deceiving, etc. In some case, lying also can bring positive influence. As always, there are two sides to everything. One is positive (good) and the other is negative (bad). There is another side of which a person tells the truth but doesn’t tell the whole truth. We call it as ‘bending the truth.’ It is a very fine line between telling the truth and lying. So, let us examine all three aspects.

So, let us examine when we are permitted to lie. Abraham lied not once but twice. He asked Sarah that she was his sister when they entered Egypt and to Avimelech. Sarah went along with it on both occasions. Yet, they was not punished for it. Yitzchak lied that Rivkah was his sister to Avimelech. And he was not punished for it. Yosef’s brothers lied to their father that Yosef must have been killed by a wild animal. They also lied after the funeral of Ya’akov that their father told them to tell Yosef not to harm them. The Shulcan Aruch (Jewish Code of Law) along with the Talmud teaches us when to lie!

What was their purpose of lying? For Abraham, Yitzchak, Yosef’s brothers, and many others, their survival depended on lies. Avraham, Yitzchak knew that their lives were at risk when entering a foreign country. It was customary at the time that the kings took whomever they pleased, and they would kill anyone who gets in their way. Thus, the lies of Avraham and Yitzchak were pivotal to survive.

Aharon, the High Priest also lied to bring peace and harmony within the family and the tribes. Let’s say that there were two people who were best friend but their relationship fell apart because of argument. Aharon would go to person A and would say, “You know, he really did not mean to say that. He regrets what he said to you and wants to be your friend again.” Then he would go to person B and he would say the same thing. So when A and B meet again, they would be cordial and be friends again. For this reason alone, when Aharon died, all Yisraelites mourned for him.

While Ya’akov is commonly known as a “deceiver”, he did not lie, especially to his father, Yitzchak. All he did was “bend the truth.” So, let’s examine Genesis 27:19-27 closely. Now, as we know the Torah does not use punctuation or periods in Hebrew. However, English does, and placing a comma or a period makes a huge difference in a sentence. It could simply be a wrong translation. As we use English translation, we are to refer to the Torah in Hebrew to get full spectrum of hidden messages. Below is a comparison of some of the verses.

English Translation	Hebrew	Comment
I am Esav your firstborn (Gen. 27:19)	אֲנֹכִי עֶשָׂו בְּכֹרֶךָ (A-no-chi e-sav be-cho-re-cha)	<i>Anochi</i> means “it is I”. “I am” in Hebrew is <i>ani</i> . “It is I. Esav your firstborn” Thus, Ya’akov identifies himself.

		Then reminds his father that Esav is his firstborn.
He said, Are you indeed my son, Esau? And he said, I am (Gen. 27:24-25)	וַיֹּאמֶר, אֵתָה זֶה בְּנִי עֵשָׂו; וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲנִי. (Vai-yo-mer, at-tah zeh be-ni e-sav; vai-yo-mer, a-ni.)	Yitzchak was not asking the voice. The sages comment that Yaakov and Esav sounded so alike that Yitzchak could not tell them apart. Rather, his statement that the voice is Yaakov's voice refers to Yaakov's manner of speaking, inasmuch as Yaakov spoke gently and invoked the Name of Heaven (Rashi).

The Talmud teaches their students when to lie: 1. He hides his education. 2. He does not favor his hosts so they don't compete each other. 3. When it is not other person's interest. Shulcan Aruch adds: life in danger, and peace between two people.

When Hashem was about to create mankind, He gathered all the angels and asked for suggestions. The angel of Truth said that he man will lie, steal, and cheat. The angel of Humbleness said man will do good and perform kindness against one another. The angel of Charity said the man will be charitable. The angel of Peace said the man are full of disagreement amongst each other. Hashem said that since it is two against two, He will create a mankind.

So, Hashem bent the Truth into the world and covered it with Lie. Thus, this world is called the World of Deception as the world above is called the World of Truth. An example would be a bride. Let us say for the argument sake that the bride is very unattractive. The groom asks to his friends, "Isn't she beautiful?" If his friends say that the bride is ugly, then the friendship will end with a fight. But the friends say, "She is beautiful to your eyes. That is all that matters." Thus, the friends bend the truth by not telling them the truth.

If the people live in a world where there is only the truth, then this world cannot survive. For this reason alone, Hashem provides a way for us to not to tell the whole truth, and sometimes provides a way out with a deception. An example of this can be found in the First Samuel when Hashem commands him to anoint David as a king while King Saul is still reigning monarch. As this will be seen as a treason and Samuel protests against such idea, Hashem provides anointing of David by providing a disguise for Samuel to use. Hillel says that we have to be flexible to live in this world.

It is a common practice to do confession before someone dies. This confession known as *viduy* in Hebrew is recited each night before we go to bed as we will not know if we will be awake next morning. It is a confession to the Creator of the world. So, instead of saying, "You are going to die. Therefore, you should do *viduy* before the Creator." Instead, you should say, "You should make confession, so you could have a long life." This is not wrong as we are talking about a soul living on in the World Above. But we are to say similar words to soothe the ears to a person about to die. So teaches the Schulan Aruch, the Jewish Code of Laws.

That being said, the Scriptures will not allow blatant lies as the person will have repercussion. Even an indirect lies, deceit has consequences. We know that Yosef lost five years of his life for not revealing himself to his brothers when they said, "your servant" in regards to Ya'akov. We are to learn when to tell the truth, when to use deception, and when to bend the truth so we don't hurt others.