

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## MOTIVATION FACTOR

Reproduced from "Living Kiddush Hashem" by Rabbi Shraga Freedman, with permission of ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications.

One of the greatest challenges facing parents and teachers is instilling in children a sense of motivation and passion for Torah observance. But how?

The most powerful motivating force in the world is probably the desire to feel special. What may be surprising, though, is that *kiddush Hashem* can be a key to achieving that. A person feels valuable when he senses that no one else can take his place.

The Meshech Chochmah in Bechukosai points out that everyone has a need to innovate and be unique. When Jewish life is already established, this is stifled. But Jews charged with rebuilding after destruction are imbued with a sense of mission.

Years ago, every yeshiva *bachur* in America was a pioneer. Nowadays, *bachurim* sometimes feel that they are just another number. This sometimes drives them to seek fulfillment in other areas.

Torah educators must walk a delicate line. Even students not destined for long-term learning must be inculcated with *talmud Torah k'neged kulam*, yet they cannot be made to feel unaccomplished because their path in life lies outside the *beis medrash*.

If every child is taught that their mission is to live *kiddush Hashem*, many more avenues of *avodas Hashem* are opened. Some create a *kiddush Hashem* by maintaining their *kedushah*, others with integrity in business, some through wealth, others through poverty. Each and every Jew has his own unique, special, and distinct path to follow.



gem

OF THE WEEK

## UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION

Based on excerpts from the commentary of Rabbi Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.

The *pasukim* (29:1-8) at the end of last week's *parasha*, Moshe *rabbeinu* reminds Yisrael of the facts they witnessed with their own eyes, so that they would gain a correct understanding of the blessings and curses announced to them. He also wanted to add certain explanations to ensure that the nation would not misinterpret the blessings and curses. These explanations are in the *pasukim* at the beginning of Nitzavim (29:9-20)

The first six refer to the fact that the covenant, and the oath in fulfilling the Torah, apply to all of Yisrael and to all future generations. The next six refute the erroneous notion that the pronouncements of blessings and curses concern only national defection, whereas the individual is free to live his life in opposition to the Law, as long as the community as a whole is loyal to Hashem and His Law.

Furthermore the individual does not fulfill his role if he is faithful to his duty in his personal life alone, but does not do his utmost to promote the observance of the Law throughout his community. A person cannot detach himself from the commitment to Hashem and His Torah, neither now nor at any future time.

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powerful  
PRAYER



SHALOSH ACHARONOS:  
THE FINAL REQUEST

The last three *brachos* of *Shemonei Esrei*—*Retzei*, *Modim* and *Sim Shalom*—are one unit, just as are the first three. If we make a mistake in any one of them, if we have already started the next *bracha*, we must return to *Retzei*.

The *Gemara* compares these three last *brachos* to the words of a servant who has received a gift from his master. Prior to taking his master's leave, he first expresses his gratitude.

Adapted from *Biur Tefillah* (Ani Maamin Foundation)

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## THE GREATEST ACT OF DEVOTION

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

We regularly *daven* to Hashem to bestow His kindness on us is the *z'chus* of the *Akeida*. In spite of the fact that Yitzchok stretched out his neck and was willing to become a *korban*, the credit is generally given mostly to Avraham Avinu. In the course of the millennium since then hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters gave their lives *al kiddush Hashem*. We remember them in our *tefilos*, as well, but not with the same credit that we ascribe to Avraham for the *mesiras nefesh* of doing the *Akaida*. From the time that Avraham Avinu came to recognize his Creator, he spent his entire life telling the world to believe in Hashem. He told the people that Hashem is kind to all, and that He wants us to follow in His ways. The concept of hospitality was unknown before Avraham introduced it to the world. He was imprisoned by Nimrod, and only saved from the burning furnace of Ur Kasdim by a miracle. His only dream in life was that a nation should come forth from him that would recognize and serve Hashem.

For years and years, he and Sara *davened* to Hashem, pleading for the child from which that nation would come forth. When Avraham was one hundred years old, Yitzchak Avinu was born, and Avraham was told that the long hoped for nation would come from no one else but Yitzchok. Decades later, Hashem commanded Avraham to take Yitzchok and bring him up for an *olah* (a burnt offering). Without hesitation, he set about following Hashem's instructions. He awoke early in the morning, and chopped wood to take along, just in case the wood at his destination may have worms and be disqualified for a *korban*. He saddled his own donkey, out of love for Hashem. All the while, Avraham had a question burning inside him, for which he had no answer. Yitzchok is not married and has no children.

How will the blessing that Yitzchok would become the progenitor of the chosen nation come true if he is to be brought as a *korban*. Avraham didn't ask, because he felt that his instructions were crystal clear, and he has no right to question Hashem. The Satan was very anxious not to allow the *akaida* to take place. He came in disguise to Avraham, and later to Yitzchok to convince them not to go through with it. On the way, he turned himself into a river to block them and dissuade them from going. They marched right in, and when the water was up to Avraham's mouth, he *davened* to Hashem to remove it, so that he could fulfill His *mitzvah*. (This is offered as one of the reasons behind Tashlich). Only after the *malach* told him to take Yitzchok down did he ask his question, and was told that his instruction was only to bring him up and not to slaughter Yitzchok. The Satan came to Sara and told her the story of the *Akeida* slowly, so that her *neshama* would leave her as a result.

The Satan hoped that if Avraham would hear that his beloved wife Sara died as a result of the *Akeida*, he would regret having done it, and thus lose the *mitzvah* and the *z'chus*. Thus we learn that the single action of self sacrifice and devotion to Hashem ever performed by a human being was Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, his teachings of Hashem's *chesed*, and all the years of his bringing people to the belief in Hashem. What Avraham Avinu did on that long-ago *Rosh Hashanah* is exactly what we must try to the best of our ability to duplicate. *Rosh Hashanah* is the day when we declare that Hashem is our king, and we are prepared to live our lives as His loyal subjects. May we all be *zoche* to pluck off a piece of this magnificent lesson and devote our lives to *ratzon* Hashem, no matter the sacrifice required.

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Moshe tells the people that among the people standing before him, there may be an individual, family, or tribal circle, whose heart is even now turning to go and serve other gods; or this deviant attitude has not yet surfaced, but is today a root, out of which only in the future, perhaps in the descendants, bitter fruit will emerge.

He will be struck by Hashem's special judgement, which does not judge just the nation in its entirety, but, rather with *hasgacha pratit* watches over each individual and judges him in what he does and refrains from doing.

The future descendants and also all the nations of the world will see the catastrophe that will come upon "you and your land", and they will see all these things predicted in this Book. Thus, the catastrophe of the people and the land will be manifest historical testimony to Hashem and His rule.

The Land of Yisrael, the people of Yisrael, and the Torah of Yisrael are the three eternal witnesses which, inextricably linked to one another, each shedding light upon the others, attest to Hashem before the eyes of the nations to this very day.

In Vayeilech Moshe tells the people that on Sukkos, when all of Yisrael comes to Hashem at the Bais Hamikdash, we read this Teaching in the presence of all Yisrael to hear. This is the end of every *shmitah* cycle, not the *moed* of Rosh Hashanah, which begins the eighth year. The *mitzvah* of reading the Torah is not intended as a means of making the Law known to the people. For the obligation to study Torah rests upon every man daily, as part of his ordinary domestic life.

Rather, this is a *mitzvah* that transcends the everyday, recurs at seven-year intervals, and seeks to attain a special purpose. It takes place at a time that invites every Jewish soul to commune with Hashem, on the festival that unites the whole nation through remembrances of the wilderness period, when it was neither agriculture nor commerce, but only Hashem's wondrous grace that kept all of them alive, protecting them with his cloud.



## wonder WORLD

### RETURN HOME



Have a gut feeling about which way to go?

Pigeons can find their way home from more than 1,300 miles away—even when transported in complete isolation. In 1931, the longest recorded carrier pigeon flight covered a staggering 7,200 miles, from Arras, France, to Saigon, Vietnam. Researchers discovered that iron-rich liver cells called macrophages act as the bird's internal magnetic compass. To test this, scientists temporarily disabled these cells in a group of pigeons and released them alongside untreated birds under dense cloud cover, completely cutting off solar and visual cues. While the untreated pigeons oriented themselves instantly, the disabled birds flew aimlessly in every direction. Without their connection to the earth, they were completely lost. But as long as that internal connection remains intact—no matter how far they roam or how scattered they may become—they always have the capacity to find their way back home.