

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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Foundation

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life


LESSONS

SMALL STEPS

One important guideline for working to create a *kiddush Hashem* is to view even the smallest amount of progress as a tremendous mitzvah. If you manage only to reduce another person's hatred for the Torah, that alone is a huge accomplishment.

The Chofetz Chaim used to expend a significant amount of his time and energy arranging kosher food for the Jewish soldiers who had been stationed on several of the czar's army bases. Someone once remarked to the Chofetz Chaim that his efforts were a waste of time. True, the soldiers were eating the kosher food he had arranged for them, but after that they would go ahead and consume *tereifeh* food as well.

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "If these Jewish soldiers eat just a little less *tereifeh* food because they are somewhat full from the kosher food, that makes it worthwhile as well."

Causing a slight reduction in an *aveirah* is a *mitzvah* in its own right. This is a very important concept that should be taught to every religious Jew. 

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OF THE WEEK

THE ESSENCE OF SEFIRAH

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The mitzvah of counting the *omer* only began after the people entered their land—that is to say, when they had been given not only freedom (leaving Egypt), but national independence (entering Eretz Yisrael). When they lived on their own land and reaped its harvest, only then did they bring an *omer*. This teaches us that what the land produces is not ours; rather, it has been grown for the sake of the Torah, and is used to fulfill the Torah's purpose.

We celebrate our freedom on Pesach, remembering the independence we gained before Hashem. Although freedom is the end goal of other nations, we consider ourselves only beginning, and we start counting toward another goal. The mitzvah of counting is expressed in Devarim: "when the sickle begins to be put to grain, you shall begin to count seven weeks." Where others stop counting, you will begin.


This is because personal freedom means nothing without Torah. Without Torah, freedom becomes anarchy.

A person who attains freedom must make an effort to prove himself a *continued on reverse side*

powerful
PRAYER 

YOTZER OHR:
ONLY HUMAN

The two visions of *malachim* are both featured in the *haftaros*. The *nevuah* of Yeshaya is the *haftarah* of Yisro, and the *nevuah* of Yechezkel is the *haftarah* of the first day of Shavuot. Both are referred to as "Maaseh Merkavah."

We, of course, are not *malachim*. We cannot duplicate their response to the wonders of Hashem. But when we think of the *malachim*, we should be reminded that we, too, should be excited and inspired when we consider the lights and all of nature, as much as a human being can be. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom



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**Coming
Soon!**

NO CONTEST

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

A few weeks ago, we discussed a very common question for a thinking person: “How do we know that we are right and everyone else is wrong?”

Every *ben* and *bas Yisrael* needs to know that as far as truth is concerned, the Torah has no competition. Our *mesorah*, when viewed accurately, is absolutely compelling.


Investigating other religions’ claims even briefly will quickly reveal their inaccuracies. Both Christians and Muslims officially believe in the Tanach, and their religions are based on our Scriptures, and they agree to the entire narrative of Matan Torah! From this alone we can see the glaring falsity.

Imagine that an emperor announced in the national media that his country has declared war on another. The next day, the press secretary states that the emperor told him in private that he has changed his mind and there will be no war. That would be absurd! The emperor must go back to the national media to publicize his intentions.

Yet this is what Christianity and Islam claim: the Almighty Creator gathered His chosen nation, a few million strong, and spoke to them at Har Sinai. He gave them the Torah and told them that this covenant would be forever.

Later on, though, He “changed His mind.” But rather than gather His people together again to let them know, He relayed that information in private to one person (or perhaps a select few), and now the deal has changed. No longer are Torah and mitzvos needed to earn a share in the World to Come. No longer does atonement depend on *teshuvah*. All that is required is to accept the Christian deity as one’s personal savior and presto—you are in. Alternatively, you can submit to the demands of Islam. Should you refuse to accept one belief or another, you will burn in Hell forever.

While the Christian Bible and the Quran both contain endless threats of punishment to those who don’t believe, our Torah, *lehavdil*, contains not one word attempting to convince the reader of its truth. Instead, its narrative makes it clear that millions of people personally witnessed its events and thus needed no proof. Subsequent generations also held steadfast to what they had heard from their fathers.

For that reason, although we find in the *navi* words of chastisement for almost every sin under the sun, the prophets never once rebuke their nation for the sin of not believing. 


man. He must break the chains of his body’s impulses, break his stubbornness, which would make him a slave to physicality.

This idea contrasts so sharply with the goals of other nations. In this worldview, only morality has real value—not because it yields prosperity, but the opposite: prosperity has meaning only because it helps attain morality.

It is easy to receive freedom as a gift from Hashem. But if we wish to set ourselves free inside, if we seek to attain the freedom required for our calling as bearers of the Torah, we must aspire to inner growth.

Physical wealth cannot last without spirituality to control it. Prosperity has no value without Torah and mitzvos, especially for us. We cannot possess G-d’s land without His Torah, for the land is only ours because of it.

To have land without Torah would be the surest way to our downfall. If Klal Yisrael became like the other nations, viewing the land as its own and prosperity as its supreme goal, we would be lost, erased from the Divine record of the history of nations. We would be denying our mission if we did not begin to count where others only stop. And so, we are commanded to count from Pesach, the day of our national independence, and our counting leads us to true freedom.

We must learn to use our freedom and our land only in the service of the Torah. Only then will our freedom and our land have real value. Freedom and prosperity are not the end of our national aspirations, but only the beginning. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



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THE OLIVE TWIST



How does a fruit become a light?

In Parshas Emor, we learn that pure olive oil was used to light the menorah in the Mishkan.

Olive oil is one of the best natural fuels. It’s made mostly of fat molecules that store lots of energy. When the oil touches a flame, heat breaks those molecules apart. The carbon and hydrogen inside them mix with oxygen from the air, and energy is released as light and heat.

Unlike many other oils, olive oil burns slowly and cleanly: a steady, beautiful flame with no bad smell or smoke. That is why olive oil is still used in lamps and cooking today. This simple oil has been fueling light for thousands of years. 

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