

# Emunah in the Classroom - Parshas Hashavu'ah: Bereishis - Yisro

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman

**Grade Level:** Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle School, High School, Special Ed, Kiruv, Adult

**Categories:** Core

**Lesson Context:** Input/Strategy

**Description:**

Yesodos in emunah, as well as other fundamental hashkafos, divided according to Parsha for teachers to inject into their Parshas Hashavuah lessons.

**Specifications:**

This booklet is similar to Rabbi Sapirman's Chumash materials but is designed for the overview style generally associated with Parsha class rather than the passuk-by-passuk format of Chumash class. This booklet will give teachers material to impart to their students each week. For Chumash materials see Emunah in the Classroom – **Chumash**: (followed by the specific Parsha you need).



# *Emunah in the Classroom*

אמונה על ידי לימוד פרשת השבוע  
בראשית-יתרו

by Rabbi Ilan Segal  
In collaboration with Rabbi Dovid Sapirman

**A hands-on guide for reinforcing basic Hashkafa concepts through *Chumash***

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## Introduction

This booklet has been written for educators, - *Rebbeim* and *Moros*, who regularly present their students with a thought on parshas hashavua, whether orally or in writing. In order for our children and students to develop into genuine *ovdei Hashem*, the seeds of ikarei Yahadus need to be implanted in them as soon as they begin to learn *Torah*, and continually ever after. The awareness of *Hashem Yisborach*, His infinite kindness, and His constant supervision and control over our daily affairs must be ingrained in their consciousness on a regular basis. Likewise, the reality of *ma'amad Har Sinai*, the veracity of the *mesorah*, and so many other fundamental *yesodos* and *hashkofos*, must be emphasized and reiterated time and time again, throughout the years of their elementary and high school education. Then, when they approach maturity, they will be saturated with *hashkofas Hatorah*, and the confidence that what they have been taught is the absolute truth.

The weekly d'var Torah on parshas Hashavua affords a marvelous opportunity to repeatedly implant the basics of the Thirteen Ikarei Emunah, and other fundamental hashkofos, via an insightful thought on the Parsha of the week.

This current project is a sequel to Ani Maamin's Emunah in the Classroom project, in which brief thoughts were presented for the Rebbe/Mora teaching Chumash to inject into the explanation of each individual pasuk. This current, more expanded effort, will make this available even to mechanchim / mechanchos of all grades, including those who are not currently teaching that particular parsha.

As the saintly Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zatzal, used to say, when it comes to emunah, one never, ever takes his eyes off the basics. Therefore, constant reinforcement is necessary, and we hope that this work will provide an easy to use tool to affect that end.

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## פרשת בראשית

### *Shabbos reminds us of the Great Creator*

**ב:א** וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם: **ב** וַיְכַל אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

- Everything in the world was made during the six days of Creation. All the animals and plants that exist today have been here ever since then. Since that time, nothing new has ever come to be.
- The world runs today by what we call "the laws of nature". Whose laws are these? They are *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* own rules. These rules were set in motion on the very first *Shabbos*. Before that, He created everything supernaturally, without using any of the laws of nature.
- This is what we celebrate when we keep *Shabbos*: that this world is Hashem's creation, which He personally formed. Since He stopped on that first *Shabbos*, nothing new has been created.
- This is what we mean when we say in מאמין that Hashem is "בורא וּמְנַהֵיג" - Creator and Conductor. He was the Creator during the six days, and now He conducts the world with the rules of nature that He Himself made.

**ב:ג** וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שְׁבֹת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

- *Shabbos* is felt even in Heaven. The *resha'im* get a rest from their punishments on *Shabbos*.
- *Shabbos* has been in existence from the very beginning of time. It is fixed permanently, every seventh day. Nothing can change it.
- Although the dates of the *Yomim Tovim* are prescribed in the Torah, they are dependent on when the *Beis Din* will establish *Rosh Chodesh*. These special times are sanctified by *Bnei Yisroel* in *Beis Din*. For this reason, the *brachah* we say on *Yomim Tovim* is מקדש ישראל והזמנים. However, *Shabbos* comes

weekly, even without *Bnei Yisroel's* involvement. So the *brachah* for *Shabbos* is מקדש ישראל והשבת, and not מקדש השבת.

### The Power of Tefillah

**ב:**ה וְכָל־שִׂיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרַם יִהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרַם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ד' אֱלֹקִים  
עַל הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לְעַבֵּד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה:

- Although the plants were created on the third day, they only came to the surface of the ground and did not yet sprout. For that they needed rain, and since man was not created until the sixth day, there was no one that would appreciate the rain. When Adam came along, he realized that rain was needed and prayed for rain.
- *Tefillah* means talking and connecting to Hashem. It is so important, that the trees had to wait for Adam's *tefillah* before they could sprout.
- *Davening* for something is a way of showing that we recognize that Hashem is the One Who gives it to us.

### Hashem's Torah Needs No Improvement

**ג:**ב וּמִפְּרֵי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ הַגֵּן אָמַר אֱלֹקִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְעוּ בוֹ כִּן תָּמֹתוּן:

- The command to not eat from the *eitz hada'as* was given before Chava was created. She heard it from Adam, not from Hashem. When Adam told it to her, he added that she should not even touch the tree. He wanted to make sure she would not eat from it.
- What Adam did was incorrect. He should have told her that it was his idea that she should not touch, and not Hashem's command. That is how the *nachash* was able to trick her. He convinced her she would not die when she eats from it, just as she didn't die by touching the tree.
- The idea of adding on extra practices to protect from an *aveirah* is actually something we are supposed to do. Whenever a person has something of value, he takes steps to protect it. Nothing is more precious to us than *mitzvos*, and we take steps to see that we will follow them.

Adam's mistake was only in letting Chava think that this mitzvah came from Hashem.

- The *Torah* commanded the *Chachamim* to make protective laws, and commanded the Jewish people to obey them.

### Serving Hashem Sincerely

ד:ג ויהי מקץ ימים ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מנחה לד':

- Adam brought a *korban* on the day he was created, in order to show his gratitude to Hashem. Now Kayin and Hevel followed his example, and also brought *korbanos*.

- Long before there was a mitzvah to bring *korbanos*, wise people understood that a *korban* is an excellent way to come closer to Hashem. The word *korban* actually comes from the word *karov*, "to come close".

- Later on, Noach and the *Avos Hakedoshim* also brought *korbanos*.

- Kayin understood that Hashem had no personal need for the *korban*. Of course He would not eat it. So Kayin reasoned that it made no difference if the *korban* is a nice one or not. However, this was a big mistake. If the person bringing the *korban* looks down on it, due to its inferior quality, that is disrespectful to Hashem.

- This is why Hashem rejected Kayin's *korban*.

ד:ד והבל הביא גם הוא מבכורות צאנו ומחלבהן וישע ד' אל הבל ואל מנחתו:

- Hevel understood the matter better than his brother, so his *korban* was accepted. He knew that when we do a mitzvah we must do it in the nicest, most respectful way that we can. Then we will have a greater feeling of respect for the mitzvah.

- This is the idea of *Hiddur Mitzvah*—beautifying a mitzvah. This is why we buy a beautiful *tallis*, a *lulav* that is *hadar*, and make the Shabbos meals as delicious as possible.

## Hashem's Judgement is Perfect

ד:י ויאמר מה עשית קול דמי אחיד צעקים אלי מן האדמה: יב פי תעבד את האדמה לא תסר ותת פחה לך נע ונד תהיה בארץ: יג ויאמר קין אל ד' גדול עוני מנשוא:

- Every person is like a whole world, because he can have children and grandchildren, just as the first man did. *Hashem* used the plural form of “blood”— דמי, to hint that *Kayin* was responsible for killing not just one individual, but all the generations that would have descended from him.
- Although *Kayin* killed *Hevel* deliberately, he was considered somewhat *shogeig*—unintentional. Since he had never been exposed to death, he did not realize that *Hevel* could actually die when he hit him. Therefore his punishment was not death, but rather *galus*, which is the punishment of a person who kills unintentionally.
- *Kayin* realized that he had committed a terrible sin, and he regretted it. His *teshuvah* was accepted, and his punishment was lightened.

## The Origins of Avodah Zarah

ד:כו וילשת גם הוא ילד בן ויקרא את שמו אנוש אז הוחל לקרא בשם ד':

- How could *Enosh* and the people of his generation make such a terrible mistake and worship idols? At first, they thought it would be an honor to *Hashem* if they would also serve the sun, moon, and stars. After all, they reasoned, these heavenly bodies were like ministers of *Hashem*! Hadn't he placed them on high, and given them the important task of maintaining the world? In the course of time, they completely forgot about *Hashem* and worshipped the heavenly bodies.
- If one mistakenly believes that he can only connect to *Hashem* through an intermediary, he is still guilty of worshipping *avodah zarah*. *Enosh* and his generation made the mistake of using a go-between to serve *Hashem*. After a while, the *pasuk* tells us, "אז החל לקרוא בשם"— they began calling the idols by the name of *Hashem*.
- That is the meaning of אז הוחל, that a terribly negative thing was done, לקרוא בשם השם, to call the idols by the name of *Hashem*, and think that they are also gods.

- In the days of Enosh, there was a mini-*mabul*, and one third of the world was flooded. This was their punishment for turning to *avodah zarah*

### The Image of Hashem

ה:א זה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם בְּדַמּוֹת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ:

- We must never forget what makes a human being so special. He has been created in the image of Hashem. Of course, this doesn't mean physically, because Hashem has no body. That is one of the thirteen *Ikareri Emunah*. It means that a person has something of Hashem's likeness in his *neshamah*.
- This is one of the reasons that the *Torah* treats the *mitzvos bein adam lechaveiro* so strictly. After all, how can you possibly rob, cheat or hurt the feelings of someone that is created in the image of Hashem?

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## פרשת נח

### Sensitivity to Others' Pain

ז:יז ויהי המבול ארבעים יום על־הארץ וירבו המים וישאו את־התבה ותָּרַם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:

- Hashem could have saved Noach and his family in a way that would have been simpler and more comfortable for them. Noach had a tremendous responsibility to make sure that each animal was fed its proper diet at the right time. If even one animal would not survive, that species would become extinct. Noach and his family worked tirelessly under great pressure to feed all the animals. They suffered during the entire time in the *teivah* from lack of sleep, because some animals needed to be fed in the daytime and others at night. *Chazal* tell us that Noach was working so hard that he was moaning and spitting blood. Some say that the lion once bit Noach when he came late to feed him. Additionally, there was a bad smell in the *teivah*. Hashem wanted Noach to be pained and troubled while the world was being destroyed. *Noach* had to feel the pain of the terrible tragedy and experience sorrow and discomfort. Every person should be aware of other people's suffering and feel their pain. This is called חִבּוּר עִם חֵבֵר—sharing the burden with your friend.

### Mitzvos for All Mankind

ט:ד אֶדְ-בֶּשֶׂר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ:

- *Adam Harishon* was commanded to keep the following six *mitzvos*:
  - Not to worship idols
  - Not to kill
  - Not to have forbidden relationships
  - Not to steal
  - Setting up a system of judges and courts
  - Not to curse Hashem [referred to as "Blessing Hashem"]

- After Noach was given permission to eat meat, another *mitzvah* was added to these six. It is forbidden to eat meat from a living animal. *Noach* was not commanded to slaughter the animal according to *halachah*; that *mitzvah* was given later to the *Bnei Yisrael* at *Har Sinai*. Still, *Hashem* commanded him not to eat from a living animal. Perhaps the reason for this *mitzvah* is to avoid the great cruelty of eating from a live animal.
- Every human being must keep these seven *mitzvos*. They are called "שבע מצוות בני נח," since everyone is descended from Noach. Keeping these *mitzvos* is what makes a person a “*mentsch*” and separates man from the animal kingdom. If someone does not keep these *mitzvos*, he is living just like an animal.
- A non-Jew who keeps these *mitzvos* properly is considered one of the חסידים אומות העולם – "a righteous person among the nations", and he will have a share in *Olam Habah*. Certainly, his share will be smaller than that of a Jew, who keeps 613 *mitzvos*, yet he will have a portion.
- It is interesting to note that in all other religions, *l'havdil*, non-believers are condemned. Only Judaism allows the idea that deserving members of other religions will also have a share in *Olam Habah*.

### The Value of Human Life

ט:ו שפך דם האדם באדם דמו ישפך כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם: ז ואדם פרו ורבו שרצו בארץ ורבו בה:

- Murder is one of the most severe *aveiros*, because every person is created *b'tzelem Elokim*—in the image of Hashem. Man is not simply a higher form of animal – he actually has a spark of *Hashem* within him. If someone believes that man is just another animal with higher intelligence, then murder does not seem such a terrible crime. It is almost as if he is stepping on a bug, or killing an animal. The reason one is not permitted to murder is precisely because man is created *b'tzelem Elokim*. That is the connection between the beginning and the end of the *pasuk*.
- *Chazal* tell us that this is the reason man was created as an individual. This teaches us that whoever kills even one person, it is as if he destroyed

an entire world, and one who sustains one person is considered as if he saved an entire world.

- *Bais Din* was commanded to ensure that a murderer be killed. Since his victim is no longer alive, the murderer has forfeited his right to live. In addition, if he was allowed to live, he might murder again.
- It is a great *mitzvah* to bring children into the world. This *mitzvah* helps to fulfill the will of Hashem. He did not create the world to be empty. Rather, He wants it to be fully populated.
- After a person is *niftar*, one of the questions his *neshama* will be asked is “Did you involve yourself with the mitzvah of having children?”

### Rainbow of Peace

ט:יג אֶת־קִשְׁתִּי נָתַתִּי בְּעָנָן וְהִיְתָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ: טו וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר  
בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל־בֶּשֶׂר וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה עוֹד הַמַּיִם לְמַבּוּל לְשַׁחַת כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר: טז  
וְהִיְתָה הַקִּשְׁתׁ בְּעָנָן וּרְאִיתֶיהָ לְזִכָּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל־בֶּשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר  
עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

- The rainbow has a similar shape to the bow used in battle. Indeed, they are both called “*keshes*”. A soldier shoots arrows toward the enemy. When he wishes to make peace, he turns his bow around so that the arrow faces him. This is how Hashem places the rainbow in the sky. If it was to have an arrow, the arrow would face heavenward. It is as if Hashem is showing a sign that he no longer wishes to wage war with the world by bringing another *mabul*.
- Seeing a rainbow in the sky is an indication that Hashem would want to bring another *mabul* to the world. Yet Hashem’s promise to Noach prevents Him from destroying the world. In the time of King Chizkiyahu, and later during the generation of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, no rainbow was ever seen. This was a credit to the *tzaddikim* who led these generations. Because of the greatness of these generations, Hashem never had any reason to punish the world. This is one of the reasons for the *minhag* that children play with bows and arrows on *Lag B’Omer*, the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

## Don't be Down, Start Up Again

ט:כא וישת מוהינו וישכר ויתגל בתוך אלה:

- Noach wanted to drink wine because he was depressed after the *mabul*. After all, the whole world had been destroyed. It was truly devastating. Drinking wine would cheer him up. But Hashem was upset with him, because Noach knew that it was up to him to rebuild the world, and he should have gotten busy rebuilding, instead of giving in to his depression.
- The *gedolim* who survived the Holocaust were in a similar situation. Despite the tragic losses of their own families/*kehillos/yeshivos*, they did not allow themselves to become depressed and give in to despair. Rather, they threw themselves into building anew and spreading Torah wherever possible.

## It All Came True

ט:כה ויאמר ארור כנען עבד עבדים יהיה לאחיו: כו ויאמר ברוך יהוה אלהי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו: כז יפת אלהים ליפת וישכן באהלי-שם ויהי כנען עבד למו:

- Noach's words were indeed prophetic! The sons of Kena'an became slaves to the sons of Shem, even when the sons of Shem went to *galus*. The descendants of Yefes expanded the borders of Europe and Russia. And the *Shechinah* of Hashem was found only in the tents of Shem.
- The Torah promises that Hashem's *Shechinah* will only dwell in the tents of *Shem*. This promise was fulfilled in the time of the second *Bais Hamikdash*. Since the second *Bais Hamikdash* was built under the rule of Persia (descendants of Yefes), Hashem's *Shechinah* was not present there. Only in the first *Bais Hamikdash*, built by Shlomo Hamelech, was Hashem's *Shechinah* present.

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## פרשת לך-לך

### Finding Hashem in the World

יב:א וַיֹּאמֶר ד' אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֲרָצְךָ וּמְמוֹלְדֹתֶיךָ וּמִבְּיַת אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ:

- Avraham's parents did not believe in Hashem. They worshipped *avodah zarah* and prayed only to the idols. They took Avraham with them to the *avodah zarah* temple. How could Avraham come to know about Hashem without anyone teaching him? He looked around at the world and saw that it was running in perfect order. He realized that the universe cannot run itself. Who made it all? Who controls it? Who makes it go around? He could not stop thinking about this question day and night, for many years. Eventually he came to understand that everything was obviously designed by one master designer, the Creator of the universe. It is He Who made everything, and is in control of the whole world. It is only to Him that we should pray, and only Him we should serve.
- Since Avraham had been looking for Hashem for so long, Hashem finally rewarded him by actually talking to him. The *Midrash* says this can be compared to a person walking in a very deserted part of a desert. It seems as if there is no human being around anywhere. Suddenly, he comes upon a big house with all the lights on in the entire house. He looks around for the owner, because, after all, a house cannot light itself up. There must be someone here. The owner of the house had been looking down at him through a window on the second story. "Hello there! I see you are looking for the owner of the house. I am the owner of the house." This is exactly what happened to Avraham. All his life he had been looking for the owner of the world. Finally, Hashem spoke to him and said, "Hello there! I see you are looking for the owner of the world. I am the owner of the world."

## Leaving Negative Influences Behind

**יב:ד** וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כְּאִשְׁרֵי דְבַר אֱלֹהֵי ה' וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בֶּן חַמֶּשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן:

- In his birthplace, Aram Naharayim, Avraham was familiar with the people and all their ways. Avraham did the will of Hashem all his life, and never imitated their evil ways. Nevertheless, it was his home. His father and his family lived there. *Am Yisrael* must be totally separate from the nations. Their ideas and attitudes, their way of life and everything they do is so very different from the way a *ben Yisrael* must be. In order for the Jewish people to come forth from Avraham, he had to make a totally new start, completely removed from the people of his past. That is why the instruction to leave is in the reverse order of how it would seem it should be. When a person moves away from his place, he first leaves his father's house, then his birthplace and then, finally, his land. Here, Avraham was told to disconnect first from his land (the easiest), then from the people of his town, and last from his father's house.

## All Hashem Does is For Our Good

**יב:י** וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ וְיָרַד אַבְרָם מִצְרַיִמָּה לְגֹר שָׁם פִּי־כֶבֶד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ:

- Just after Avraham arrived in Eretz Kena'an, there was a hunger only in that land, the first hunger in all of history. He had no choice but to go down to Egypt to find food. Hashem had told him to go to Kena'an, and just when he arrived there Hashem caused him to leave. This was a test for him, to see if he would complain. He certainly might simply have thought that Hashem is not fair, making him come here just in order to leave. But Avraham Avinu knew that everything Hashem does is fair, whether he understands it or not. If that's the way it is, then that is the way Hashem wants it to be.

**יג:ב** וְאַבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בְּמִקְנֵהוּ בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב:

- Hashem promised to make Avraham rich when he told him **וואברכך**. By the time he returned from Mitzrayim, the promise had already come true. Avraham had great flocks and much silver and gold.

## Too Selfish to Share

יג:יג וְאִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם וְחַטָּאִים לְד' מְאֹד:

- The people of S'dom were evil both to Hashem and to people. They worshipped *avodah zarah* and did many other sins to Hashem. They also were very cruel to people. Nevertheless, when the *Navi* Yechezkel (17:49) told the story of S'dom's destruction, he stressed the sin of not sharing their wealth with the poor. They should surely have known that it is wrong to behave this way. Although they were very wealthy, and could easily afford to share, they refused to do so. They attacked the poor man who asked for *tzedakah*, as well as the person who was giving the *tzedakah*. They surrounded Lot's home to protest that he had taken in guests. For this reason they deserved to be punished with destruction.

## Always Stand Up for the Truth

יד:יג וַיָּבֵא הַפְּלִיט וַיִּגַּד לְאַבְרָם הָעֵבְרִי וְהוּא שָׁכַן בְּאֵלֶיךָ מִמְּרָא הָאֲמִרִי אָחִי אֲשָׁפֵל וְאָחִי עֵנָר וְהֵם בְּעֵלֵי בְרִית־אַבְרָם:

- Avraham *Avinu* is called *Avram Ha'ivri*. *Chazal* say that the word עברי comes from the word עבר, which means "the other side". The Torah calls him this because, "the entire world was on one side (עבר אחד) and Avraham was (מעבר השני) on the other side". He knew that his *emunah* was correct, and he was prepared to stand up to defend the truth even if he had to go against the whole world. We, who are his children, must also never give in to pressure, but always stand up for what we know to be the truth.
- Og was certain that Avraham would not hesitate to dash into battle to save his nephew. After all, he was *Avram Ha'ivri*, who would stop at nothing to defend the truth.

## The First Kiddush Hashem

טו:ז וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אַנְי ד' אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאָתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים לְתַת לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:

- Hashem said to Avraham, “I am Hashem who took you out of Ur Kasdim.” Ur is translated as a valley, but *Chazal* tell us that it also means “the fire of the Kasdim.” This refers to the time that the evil king Nimrod tried to get Avraham to accept his idols, but Avraham wouldn’t budge. Finally, *Nimrod* threw *Avraham* into a burning furnace. *Avraham* was ready to give his life for his *emunah*. Nothing could make him admit to the belief in idols. Although Avraham was not expecting to be saved, Hashem made a miracle for him, and he was not harmed by the fire at all.
- This was the first example of *Kiddush Hashem* in history. We who live in countries that allow freedom of religion have never experienced such a thing. The truth is, though, that throughout the ages countless thousands of our people followed the example of Avraham *Avinu*. They allowed themselves to be hung or burned at the stake rather than give up their faith. This is the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*.

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## פרשת וירא

### Walking in the Ways of Hashem–Chesed

יח:א וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ד' בְּאַלְנֵי מִמְרָא וְהוּא יָשָׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵקֶל כְּחֵם הַיּוֹם: ב וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה נְשֻׁפָּה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיִּרְץ לִקְרֹאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵקֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה:

- Hashem appeared to Avraham to visit him on the third day after his *bris*, which is the most painful time. Hashem came to be *mevaker choleh*—visit the sick. There is a *mitzvah* in the *Torah* to "go in Hashem's ways". We are supposed see what Hashem does, and imitate His ways. Just as we see that Hashem came to visit Avraham when he was a *choleh*, we must do likewise. Visiting a sick person is one of the many ways in which we perform *g'milus chasadim*.
- Hashem made that day very hot, so that travelers would not be bothering Avraham for hospitality. Nevertheless, Avraham waited patiently in the hope that maybe someone would be on the road that he could invite in. He learned to do this from Hashem Himself, Who created us in order to bestow His infinite kindness on us. Just as Hashem wants to bestow goodness on his creations, so, too, must we look to share and do good to others.
- Avraham understood that Hashem wants us to do *chesed* both with people's physical beings, and also with their *neshamos*. By his example, he taught the whole world about *hachnosas orchim*. He would invite guests into his home, and serve them a sumptuous meal. After they would eat and drink, he would tell them to thank the One to whom the food really belongs: Hashem. Avraham's program of *chesed* was for the body, but even more for the *neshamah*. Therefore Avraham traveled all around to teach people about Hashem.
- Avraham didn't know who the three travelers were. He actually thought they were plain Arabs. Still, he wanted to reach out to them, host them, and teach them about the Creator.

## Measure for Measure

יח:ד יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם והשענו תחת העץ: ה ואקחה פת לחם וסעדו לבכם  
אחר תעברו כי על פן עברתם על עבדכם ויאמרו פן תעשה כאשר דברת:

- Avraham sent someone to fetch water, but personally ran to get the bread. Hundreds of years later, Hashem repaid him for this mitzvah in exactly the same way. When Avraham's descendants, Bnai Yisrael in the desert, needed water, they were given water by Moshe *Rabeinu* hitting the rock, but the *mann* came down directly from Hashem with no human intervention at all.
- From here we see that no *mitzvah* ever gets lost. Even hundreds of years later, the reward will always be forthcoming, besides the eternal reward in *Olam Habah*.

## Hashem's Love for Avraham

יח:יז וד' אמר המכסה אני מאברהם אשר אני עשה: יט כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו  
ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרוד' לעשות צדקה ומשפט למען הביא ד' על-אברהם את אשר  
דבר עליו:

- Hashem loved Avraham so much that He said he could not keep what He was about to do a secret from Avraham.
- The Jewish people became Hashem's chosen nation because of His love for the *Avos*. The Torah states numerous times that Hashem loved Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Here is one example from *Parshas Eikev*:

רק באבתיך חשק ד' לאהבה אותם ויבחר בזרעם אחריהם בכם מכל-העמים כיום הזה:

“Only, Hashem desired your fathers to love them, and chose you, their descendants after them, from all the nations as it is this day (*Devarim* 10:15).”

- Avraham *Avinu* was great in so many ways. He passed all ten tests, even allowing himself to be thrown into a furnace to die for *Kiddush Hashem*. Yet, Hashem said that He loved Avraham because he will make absolutely sure to teach his children the *Derech Hashem*. Here we are,

almost four thousand years later, still learning Torah, keeping *mitzvos* and passing on our heritage to our children.

### Trust in Hashem – His Words Are Truth

**כב:ב** וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךָ אֶת-יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר-אַהֲבָתָּ אֶת-יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ-לְךָ אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמִּדְבָּר וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים:

- A *navi* knows when Hashem speaks to him, with no doubts about it. As great a sacrifice as it was for Avraham to carry out the *akeidah*, he knew one hundred percent that he had been commanded to do it by *Hashem*.
- The *akeida* was not only a test to see if Avraham would give up his son. It was all the more difficult for him, because he had been told that the Jewish people would come forth from Yitzchak. " כי ביצחק יקרא לך " "זרע". If Yitzchak were to die now, his hopes would be dashed.
- In addition to his disappointment, Avraham could not understand the seeming contradiction. First Hashem told him that the Jewish nation will come from Yitzchak. Yitzchak is not yet married, so he has no children. Then Hashem tells him to bring Yitzchak for a *korban*. Then how can the Jewish people come forth from him? Avraham understood very well that Hashem never contradicts Himself. If it looks to us like a contradiction, it simply means that we don't understand. There is surely an answer, because Hashem is perfect.
- The *akeidah* was a difficult *nisayon* for yet another reason. All of Avraham's life he had been teaching the world about *chesed*. When he had been in Mitzrayim, he taught them how terrible it is to perform human sacrifices. If Avraham had actually carried out the *akeidah*, all of his teachings would have been contradicted, and all his lifetime's work would have been in vain.

## Trust the Chachomim

**כב:ח** וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹקִים יְרָאֵה-לוֹ הַשָּׁה לְעֵלְהָ בְנֵי וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו

Yitzchak did not hear the command of the *akeidah* from Hashem, but he knew that his father was telling him the truth that he had been told to do this. He asked no questions, because he trusted Avraham. His descendants inherited this wonderful trait of *emunas chachomim* from him.

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## פרשת חיי שרה

### Hashem is All Good

**כג:א** וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה וָעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה:

- Sara *Imeinu* passed away while Avraham and Yitzchak were passing the test of the *akeidah*. The *Satan*, who is also the *Malach Hamaves*, came and frightened Sara so badly with the news of the *akeidah* that she died. Why did he do this? Unable to stop Avraham from carrying out the *akeidah* and passing his tenth test, the *Satan* tried to cause Avraham to regret his actions, because if Avraham regretted it, he would lose all the reward for doing it. The only way a person can ever lose the *zechus* of a mitzvah that he did is if he regrets having done the mitzvah. Then that mitzvah gets cancelled. The *Satan* hoped Avraham would come home and say, “Had I known that the *akeidah* would cause my wife to die, I would not have gone through with it!”
- Rashi says that the extra words, שְׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה, teach us that all her years were equally good. Yet we know that Sara *Imeinu*'s life was far from smooth: she did not have children until she was ninety years old, she was kidnapped twice (once by Pharoah and once by Avimelech), and experienced other hardships in between. How can we say that her life was “all equally good”? *Tzadikim* live always in the knowledge that their lives are good – they know that what happens to them is *ratzon* Hashem, and that if they do what they are supposed to do, they will receive vast reward in *Olam Habah*.

### Sharing Emunah

**כד:ג** וְאֶשְׁבִּיעַךָ בְּה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תַחַת אֲשֶׁה לְבָנֵי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּקִרְבּוֹ:

- When Avraham spoke about the time he left his homeland, he referred to Hashem, as “G-d of the Heavens”. Now, he referred to Him as “G-d of the Heavens and the Earth.” After years of Avraham’s work to spread awareness of Hashem throughout the world, He was known by all the people of the Earth. In this *zechus*, Avraham was confident that Eliezer would succeed in finding a proper wife for Yitzchok. Every Jew must try to be like Avraham, and always strengthen the *emunah* in Hashem in the hearts of all those he knows.

### Human effort

**כד:ז** ד' אלקי השמים אשר לקחני מבית אבי ומארץ מולדתי ואשר דבר-לי ואשר נשבע-לי  
לאמר לזרעה אתן את-הארץ הזאת הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך ולקחת אשה לבני משם:

- Avraham trusted in Hashem to help him find a wife for Yitzchak. Still, he did not wait for Hashem to just send Yitzchak's bride to their house. He did all the necessary *hishtadlus* – he did his part, by sending Eliezer on a long journey, loaded with gifts for Rivkah's family. This is what we must do as well: we always try our best, and at the same time, we trust in Hashem that He will do what is really best. Even while we are working on something, we should remember that if Hashem desires, our plans will succeed, and if He does not, they will not.

### The Power of Tefillah

**כד:יב** ויאמר ד' אלהי אדני אברהם הקרה-נא לפני היום ועשה-חסד עם אדני אברהם:

- Before beginning anything, we must always *daven* to Hashem for success.
- Eliezer did not ask Hashem to answer him in the *zechus* of Avraham's good deeds. He asked for a gift of *chessed* from Hashem. This is the way of *tzadikim*: to ask only for *chessed* and not to rely on their own good deeds.

### The Cost of Belief

**כד:לא** ויאמר בוא ברוך ד' למה תעמד בחוץ ואנכי פניתי הבית ומקום לגמלים:

- Lavan knew that Eliezer would not sleep in a house containing *avodah zarah*, so he removed his idols from the house. For an opportunity to make money, he was willing to push his gods, his idols, outside. A Jew, loyal to serving Hashem is exactly the opposite. He will forego wealth, and give up all his money and possessions, in order to preserve his faith.

### Conducive to Concentration

**כד:סב** ויצחק בא מבוא באר לחי ראי והוא יושב בארץ הנגב:

- Yitzchak always *davened* in the spot where the *malach* had revealed himself to Hagar. He made that his set place for *davening*, because he could *daven* better there than anywhere else. We, too, should always try to *daven* in the place where we can have the most *kavanah*.

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## פרשת תולדות

### Powerful Prayers

**כה:כא** וַיַּעֲמֵר יִצְחָק לְד' לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עָקְרָהּ הוּא וַיַּעֲתֵר לוֹ ד' וַתֵּהֵר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ:

- **כה:כא** is a word that means very strong, heartfelt prayer. When one needs something from Hashem, he must *daven* sincerely, and not simply mumble the words of the *tefillah*.
- All of our *Imahos*, except for Leah, were barren because Hashem desires the *tefillos* of *tzadikim*. Throughout years of waiting for children, they *davened* to Hashem with all their hearts. Hashem wants our *tefillos*, not for His benefit, but rather for ours. Connecting to Hashem through *tefillah* makes us even greater.
- When a person *davens* to Hashem, Hashem considers his deeds and also the deeds of his fathers. Although Yitzchak and Rivkah were both righteous, Yitzchak had the additional *zechus* of being the son of a *tzadik*, so his *tefillos* were answered first.

### Choose to be Good

**כה:כה** וַיֵּצֵא הָרֵאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי כִּלּוֹ כְּאֲדָרֶת שֵׁעָר וַיִּקְרָאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו:

- Eisav's ruddy complexion was an indication that he was predisposed to spill blood. Nevertheless, Eisav could have taken this natural tendency and used it in a positive way. If one is predisposed to bloodshed, he can become a *mohel*, doctor, or *shochet*. We find that David Hamelech was also "red", but he used his inborn trait to fight against the enemies of *Bnai Yisrael*, according to the directives of the *Sanhedrin (milchemes mitzvah)*.
- Eisav was born completely formed, with hair like an adult. This was not a good sign. A person should always be striving for completion and perfection. He should not feel that he is already "finished", because then he will not put any effort into self-improvement.

## A Hint of the Future

כּוֹיֵד וַיְהִי־לוֹ מִקְנֵה־צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בְקָר וַעֲבָדָה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנְאוּ אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים: טז וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֶל־יִצְחָק לֵךְ מֵעַמְנוּ כִּי־עֲצַמְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מְאֹד:

- What happened here to Yitzchak happened to his children as well. Time after time, when Jews were successful, the non-Jews became jealous and claimed that the Jews were taking their livelihood. This is despite the fact that in every place where Jews have settled, they have brought tremendous blessing to their host country!
- The expulsion of Yitzchak from Garar is likewise a sign of what will happen to Bnei Yisrael in the future. During our current long *galus*, we have been chased from country to country many times.

## Yaakov's Voice or Eisav's hands

כּז: כּבּ וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב אֶל־יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַיְמַשְׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַקֵּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהִזְדִּים יְדֵי עֵשָׂו:

- Eisav's strength is in his hands – his sword and his bow, used in battle. Yaakov's power is through his voice which he uses for Torah and *tefillah*. When Bnai Yisrael use their voices in *shuls* and *batei medrash*, there is no need to worry about Eisav's hands, because Hashem will protect the Bnei Yisrael. If Yaakov's voice is not heard in Torah and *tefillah*, then the hands of Eisav have power to harm him.

## Just the Right Moment

כּז: ל וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה יִצְחָק לְבָרֵךְ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיְהִי אִף יָצָא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַעֲשׂו אָחִיו בָּא מִצִּידוֹ:

- At this point, Yitzchok still did not realize that Eisav was a *rasha*, and he was planning to give Eisav the *brachos*, since he was the *b'chor*. Hashem's *hashgachah* prevented Eisav from entering until after Yaakov was given the *brachah*. Had he entered earlier, Yitzchak would have realized that *Yaakov* was tricking him, and he would have blessed Eisav instead.

## It Depends on What We Do

**כז:מ** וְעַל־סִרְבָּךָ תִּחַנֶּה וְאֶת־אָחִיךָ תַעֲבֹד וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר תִּרְיֵד וּפְרָקֶתָ עָלָיו מֵעַל צִנּוֹרְךָ:

- As long as Bnai Yisrael keep the Torah, Eisav will be subservient to to them, and will be unable to harm them in any way. However, “when they slacken (from doing *mitzvos*)” he will have an accusation against them. “If Bnai Yisrael are not doing the will of Hashem, why must we be subservient to them?” Then, he will “remove the yoke from his neck” and overpower Bnai Yisrael.

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## פרשת ויצא

### The Power of *Kol Yaakov*–Torah and Tefillah

**כח:א** וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיְלֵן שָׁם כִּי בָּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשֶׂם מְרֹאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא.

• *Chazal* tell us that the word “*vayifga*” is referring to the *tefillah* that Yaakov established – *Ma’ariv*. The darkness of night demands that we place our trust in Hashem and daven to Him. Indeed, Yaakov's entire life was similar to night, as he suffered from many troubles throughout his life: Eisav, Lavan, Dina, the death of Rachel, Yosef, etc. It is certainly fitting that he was the one to establish the nighttime *tefillah* of *Ma’ariv*. From Yaakov we learn to trust in Hashem even during the most difficult times.

• Yaakov's main attribute was the *midah* of *emes* – truthfulness. Included in this *middah* is the study of Torah, which is called *emes*, and is the source of all truth. Therefore, his main service was through Torah. *Chazal* tell us that during the entire fourteen-year period, Yaakov did not go to sleep in a bed. His diligence was so great, that when he felt drowsy, he would rest his head on his *shtender* for a short while, and afterwards resume his learning.

### A Hint for the Future

**כט:ב** וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה בְּאֵר בְּשֵׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה שָׁם שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶדְרֵי צֹאן רֹבְצִים עָלֶיהָ כִּי מִן הַבְּאֵר הַהוּא יִשְׁקוּ הָעֶדְרִים וְהָאֶבֶן גְּדֹלָה עַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר.

• Yaakov *Avinu* knew that the woman he was seeking would be the mother of *Klal Yisrael*. The sight he saw here was a hint of what his children would merit in the future. The well is symbolic of the *Bais Hamikdash* from which *ruach hakodesh* would be drawn, just as water is drawn from a well. The three flocks of sheep represent the three festivals on which Bnai Yisrael would go up to the *Bais Hamikdash*, and join together there (רמב"ן).

### Hashem Remembers *Chasdei Avos*...

**כט:כה** וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַהֲנִיָּהּ הָיָא לְאָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל לָבָן מַה זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בָרַחֵל עַבְדָּתִי עִמָּךְ וְלָמָּה רַמִּיתָנִי.

- Yaakov first became aware of the deception the next morning. In the evening, he did not realize that Lavan had tricked him, since Rachel and Leah were similar in appearance, and Rachel had given over the *simanim* to Leah. When Rachel realized what Lavan was planning, she thought about the terrible humiliation her sister would suffer by being sent out of the *chupah* when Yaakov would realize she was not Rachel. She considered this embarrassment like murder, and decided to share the secret *simanim* with Leah. At that time, she did not know that she would also wed Yaakov, yet she performed this unbelievable act of pure *chessed* to save her sister from shame.

### ... And Brings the *Go'el* to their Children

- For this selfless action, the *navi* Yirmiyahu said that Hashem accepted only the cries of Rachel when the Bnei Yisrael were being taken out to *galus* Bavel. As they passed her *kever*, Rochel came out and wept bitterly and cried out to Hashem. Hashem promised her that He would be with them and eventually return them to Eretz Yisrael, in the merit of her supreme sacrifice for her sister's honor.

### Hashem's Mitzvos are Always for our Good

**לא:ה** וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶן רָאָה אֲנֹכִי אֶת פְּנֵי אַבְיָכֶן כִּי אֵינְנֶן אֵלַי כְּתָמַל שְׁלֹשָׁם וְאֵלַי אָבִי הָיָא עִמָּדִי.

- Yaakov could have simply told his wives that Hashem commanded him to return. However, he understood that it is better to fulfill the word of Hashem when one realizes its advantage. Therefore, he first reported what was happening with Lavan, so they would recognize that it was in their best interest to leave. Only then did he tell his wives that Hashem had commanded him to return (לב אליהו).

## Do What's Right no Matter What

לא:ז ואביבן התל בי וקהלף את משכרתו עשרת מנים ולא נתנו אלקים, להרע עמדי.

- Yaakov would surely have been justified in hating Lavan for all the injustices he had committed against him. Still, he worked for him with supreme faithfulness. We, too, must always put in our full effort when we are hired to work for someone.
- Rambam writes that a worker "must work with all his strength. Behold, Yaakov the *tzadik* said, 'For with all my strength I worked for your father.' Therefore he received reward even in this world, as it says, 'The man became very, very wealthy' (שכירות יג:ז).

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## פרשת וישלח

### Eisav's Grudge is Forever

**לב:ז** וַיָּשְׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֶל יַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר בָּאנוּ אֵל אַחִיךָ אֶל עֵשָׂו וְגַם הִלֵּךְ לִקְרֹאתָךְ וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ.

- The messengers told Yaakov: You treat Eisav like a brother, but he is still just plain Eisav, and the hatred he has always shown to you has not gotten less since you ran away from him (רש"י).
- Wicked people can never bring themselves to forgive a person who they feel has wronged them. Their arrogance is too great for that. Eisav never forgot that Yaakov took the *brachos* that he thought should have been his. The *navi* Amos tells us that Eisav never will give up his grudge. “He holds on to his anger forever—וְעִבְרָתוֹ שְׁמֶרְהָ נֶצַח- (עמוס א:יא). Rome, and the other nations that were ruled by the descendants of Eisav, have treated us very cruelly over the last two thousand years for this reason.

### Facing Off

**לב:לא** וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם, פְּנִיאֵל: כִּי-רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים, וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי.

- Here **אלוהים** means the *malach* (תרגום אונקלוס). Of course, it is not possible to see Hashem face to face, as He has no physical form.

### Torah is Forever

**לב:לג** עַל כֵּן לֹא יֵאָכְלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת גִּיד הַנֶּשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר עַל כַּף הַיָּרֵךְ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי נִגְעַ בְּכַף יָרֵךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּגִיד הַנֶּשֶׁה.

- The *pasuk* declares that Bnai Yisrael do not eat *gid hanasheh* until today. At any time in the future, whenever this *pasuk* will be read, this statement will still be true (רש"ר הירש). This is the nature of Torah. The Torah will never change, and there will always be Jews who will keep the *mitzvos*.

- The *mitzvah* of not eating *gid hanasheh* is a reminder to remain strong in our *emunah* through the *galus* and never give up, even when we suffer at the hands of the descendants of Eisav. Just like Yaakov was injured, Bnai Yisrael suffer loss and destruction. Just like Yaakov overcame the *malach*, Hashem will bring the *geulah* and we will emerge victorious. Just as Yaakov was healed when the sun came out, so Hashem will repair all the damage and save us with the rising of the sun of Mashiach.

(ספר החינוך)

### It's All Good

לג: יח ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שקם אשר בארץ כנען בבאו מפדן ארם ויחן את פני העיר.

- When Yaakov arrives in Shechem, Hashem has fixed everything. His limp is healed, the animals he gave to Eisav are replenished and his Torah learning is undamaged (רש"י).
- Earlier, as Yaakov faced the challenges of Lavan's deceit, fighting the *malach* and encountering Eisav, we may wonder why Hashem seemed to abandon Yaakov. Now we see that Hashem fulfills the promise He made to Yaakov in Bais E-1– to bring him back home "complete." When we go through difficulties, we have *emunah* that Hashem has the power to fix everything.

### Remove Foreign Objects

לה: ב ויאמר יעקב אל ביתו ואל כל אשר עמו הסרו את אלהי הנכר אשר בתככם והטהרו והחליפו שמלתיכם.

- The idol worshippers of Shechem had disqualified their objects of worship so that technically they were no longer considered *avoda zara*. Even so, in preparation for their serving Hashem on the *mizbei'ach* in Bais E-1, Yaakov tells his family to get rid of all these items (רמב"ן).
- There are things that may not be *assur* according to the letter of the law, but they clearly remove us from an atmosphere of holiness and purity.

We enhance our relationship with Hashem when we surround ourselves with *kedushah* and *taharah*.

- Yaakov instructed his family to bathe and change their clothes in preparation for their *avodas* Hashem in Bais E-l. From here we learn that when we go to shul to daven our bodies and clothes should be clean (אבן עזרא).
- When coming to daven, we show our respect for Hashem by preparing ourselves and dressing as if we were having an audience with a king.

### Hashem All the Way

לה:ג ונקומה ונעלה בית-אל ואעשה שם מזבח לאל הענה אתי ביום צרתי ויהי עמדי בדרך אשר הלכתי.

- From the time he left home until his return, Yaakov faced many difficulties. He encountered Elifaz, Lavan, Eisav and Shechem, all of whom tried to harm him. As his journey comes to its end, he reflects on Hashem's kindness, appreciating how Hashem answered his *tefillos* and remained with him throughout all his travails. A *ma'amin* is able to appreciate Hashem's involvement in all circumstances and believe that Hashem is with him even in difficult times.

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## פרשת וישב

### Wait For It

לז:ח וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אָחָיו הַמְלִיךְ תְּמַלִּיךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם מְשׁוֹל תִּמְשַׁל בָּנוּ וַיּוֹסְפוּ עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתוֹ עַל חֲלֻמֹתָיו וְעַל דְּבָרָיו. – יֵא וַיִּקְנְאוּ בּוֹ אָחָיו וְאָבְיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדְּבָר.

- Yosef's brothers assumed that his dream was a reflection of his thoughts. (מלבי"ם)
- *Chazal* teach us that dreams are generated by a person's thoughts. But there are also dreams that are prophetic and true (ברכות נב:). The brothers were convinced that Yosef's dream was of the first kind, and resented him for it. They did not realize, like Yaakov did, that they were dreams of *nevuah*.
- Yaakov expected and anticipated the fulfillment of the dreams. (רש"י) Yaakov understood that these dreams were actually *nevuah* and that they would be fulfilled. Like Yaakov, we too, believe that all the words of our *nevi'im* are *emes*. We wait in anticipation for the fulfillment of all that they told us.

### No Coincidence

לז:טו וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ וְהָיָה תַעֲזָה בְּשָׂדֵה וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה תְּבַקֵּשׁ.

- The "man" who found Yosef was the Malach Gavriel. (רש"י) Alternatively, *Hashem* arranged a guide without Yosef's knowledge in order to bring him to the hands of his brothers. This is what *Chazal* meant when they said this was a *malach* (רמב"ן)
- A man, who just happened to have overheard the brothers saying that they would travel to *Dosan*, finds Yosef, lost in the fields, and directs him to his brothers. What appears to be a stroke of luck is actually carefully arranged by Hashem so that His plan will be realized. We should try and see Hashem's hand directing the occurrences in our lives. Nothing is luck or coincidence. It is Hashem who puts people, things and events in the right place and at the right time.

## Deadly Sins and Harmless Snakes

לז:כד ויקחהו וישלכו אתו הברה והבור רק אין בו מים.

- The pit was empty of water but it was full of snakes and scorpions. Hashem performed a great miracle, preventing the dangerous creatures from harming Yosef Hatzadik. (רמב"ן)
- Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa was once told about a poisonous creature that was biting and killing people. Rabbi Chanina went and stood with his foot on its burrow. The creature bit him on his foot and then died. Rabbi Chanina turned to his *talmidim* and said: "It is not the creature that kills; it is *cheit* that causes death.

## Hashem is in Control

לת:כו ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני כי על כן לא נתתיה לשלה בני ולא יסף עוד לדעתה.

- *Chazal* tell us that the word ממני "from Me" was said by a *Bas Kol* from *Shamayim* (רש"י).
- The convoluted and devious events that initiate the lineage of David Hamelech and Mashiach may appear strange, but Hashem assures us that He is the one directing the process.

## Hashem Is With Me - I have Nothing to Fear

לטי:י ויהי כדברה אל יוסף יום יום ולא שמע אליה לשכב אצלה להיות עמה.

- Mrs. Potiphar tried everything to convince Yosef to do an *aveirah*. She threatened to put him in prison. Yosef said "Hashem frees those who are imprisoned" She threatened to push him down. He said: "Hashem straightens the bent." She said she would put out his eyes. He said: "Hashem opens the eyes of the blind" (יומא ל"ה). Yosef's *emunah* was so complete that he knew that no person has power to do anything to him unless it is Hashem's will.

## Learning Experience

ל:ט:כ ויקח אדני יוסף אתו ויתנהו אל בית הסהר מקום אשר אסירי המלך אסורים ויהי שם בבית הסהר.

• *Hashgacha Pratis* puts Yosef in the prison where the other prisoners are servants of the royal household. This gives him the opportunity to learn from them all about the workings of the palace, government and proper royal conduct. So when Pharaoh meets him, he is fully qualified to easily move into the role of second in command to the king of Egypt (ע"פ משך) (חכמה). When Hashem gives us opportunities to learn things and gain knowledge, take advantage because you never know when it might be useful.

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## פרשת מקץ

### Trust Hashem

**מא:ט** וַיְדַבֵּר שָׂר הַמְשָׁקִים אֶת פְּרֻעָה לְאמֹר אֶת חֲטָאֵי אֲנִי מִזְכִּיר הַיּוֹם.

- Yosef had been of great service to the *Sar Hamashkim*, interpreting his dream in a good way. He asked the *Sar Hamashkim* to repay the favor and use his influence to get him out of prison. Yet it took two years before the *Sar Hamashkim* remembered Yosef. At first glance, Yosef's request to the *Sar Hamashkim* seems to have been a good idea that, after two years, finally paid off. But Chazal tell us quite the opposite. A person, as great as Yosef, should have had more *bitachon*. If Yosef had trusted in Hashem absolutely and not turned to the *Sar Hamashkim*, he would have been out of prison two years earlier (בראשית רבה פט:ג).

### Say it Straight

**מא:טז** וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת פְּרֻעָה לְאמֹר בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹקִים יַעֲנֶה אֶת שְׁלוֹם פְּרֻעָה.

- Given the opportunity to be of service to the king of Egypt and receive favors in return, Yosef may have been tempted to take credit for his dream-solving services. But Yosef makes it very clear to Pharaoh that the ability to interpret dreams is not his. He is only a messenger, passing on Nevertheless, Pharaoh recognizes Yosef's greatness and Hashem's words. promotes him to be second-in-command. A *ma'amin* does and says what is right, knowing that Hashem will determine the best possible outcome.

### Consistent Belief

**מא:לט** וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֻעָה אֶל יוֹסֵף אַחֲרַי הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹקִים אוֹתָךְ אֶת כָּל-זֹאת אֵין נִבּוֹן וְחָכָם כְּמוֹךָ.

- Pharaoh recognizes the truth and believes that it is *Elokim* Who has sent the dreams to him, and the interpretations through Yosef. Yet the Pharaoh in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu says, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to Him?" An Egyptian king believes in Hashem when it is convenient –

for instance, when Hashem is saving him from famine. But when Hashem demands that he free Bnai Yisrael and he stands to lose his slaves, then he “doesn't know” Who Hashem is. The Pharaohs are fickle; but Bnai Yisrael are true *ma'aminim*, who never abandon their *emunah*, no matter what happens (דרכי מוסר מועדים).

### **Tough, But Worth It**

**מא:נב** וְאֵת שֵׁם הַשְּׁנִי קָרָא אֶפְרַיִם כִּי הִפְרִנִי אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶרֶץ עֲנִי.

- Yosef gave his second son the name Ephraim, to celebrate that Hashem made him successful in the land of his suffering. Yosef recognizes that his path to greatness, wealth and honor went through the land of suffering. Now, seeing where he has arrived, he can thank Hashem for the entire experience, including the suffering. Without it, he would never have achieved his present success.
- While going through tough times and difficult experiences, we remain strong in our *emunah* that all Hashem does is for the best. Once things get better, we may look back and discover that the difficulties were preparation for a much better future.

### **Don't Worry About Tomorrow**

**מב:א** וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֵשׁ שֹׁבֵר בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ.

- Why should everyone look at you and think it strange that you don't seek food before you finish what you have? (רש"י). As long as Yaakov and his family still had food they did not worry about what would happen after their supply ran out. Chazal teach us: Someone who has bread in his basket and worries about what he will eat tomorrow is lacking in *emunah*. כל מי שיש לו פת בסלו ואומר מה אוכל למחר - אינו אלא מקטני אמנה (סוטה מח:). Yaakov and his sons were strong in their *emunah*; as long as they still had food, they were not concerned for the future. Hashem, who provided food for today, can do so tomorrow too. Yaakov sent his sons to Mitzrayim at that time only so that their neighbors should not be jealous.

## Selective Memory

**מב:ט** וַיִּזְכֹּר יוֹסֵף אֶת הַחֲלֵמוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָלַם לָהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מִרְגָּלִים אַתֶּם לָרְאוֹת אֶת-עֲרוֹנוֹת הָאָרֶץ בְּאַתְּמֶם.

- Yosef's brothers are now at his mercy. We might think that he would remember that they tried to kill him, threw him in a pit, finally sold him as a slave, and now take advantage of this opportunity to get back at them. But no! The Torah tells us that all he remembered were the dreams he had dreamt about them. Everything that he would put them through would be only to fulfill the *nevuah* of his dreams, by bringing Yaakov and family to Mitzrayim. There was absolutely no intention of revenge (העמק דבר). A *ma'amin* knows that all that happens to him is from Hashem and is for the best. Revenge is never the right response.

## What Did I Do to Deserve This?

**מב:כח** וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אָחָיו הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּכַסְפִּי וְגַם הִנֵּה בְּאַמְתַּחְתִּי וַיֵּצֵא לָבָם וַיִּקְרְדוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחָיו לֵאמֹר, מַה זֹּאת עָשָׂה אֱלֹקִים לָנוּ.

- "What is *Elokim* doing to us?" The brothers knew that Hashem pays back *middah k'neged middah* – the punishment fits the *aveirah*. When Shimon was imprisoned they saw the clear parallel and understood that it was punishment from Hashem for selling Yosef to Mitzrayim. But now they were perplexed. If they were being punished, the reward of extra money in their sacks made no sense (רשב"ם, חזקוני).
- When something bad happens, people are quick to ask "What did I do to deserve this?" When good fortune comes their way, though, they accept it without question. Bnai Yaakov look for the *Yad Hashem* in everything, good or bad.

## The Justice in Injustice

**מד:טז** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מַה נֹּאמֶר לְאֲדֹנָי מַה נְדַבֵּר וּמַה נִּצְטַדֵּק הָאֱלֹקִים מִצָּא אֶת עֵוֹן עַבְדֶּיךָ הַנֶּנֶנִּי עַבְדִּים לְאֲדֹנָי גַּם אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ בְּיָדִי.

- “What can we say to you? We can't admit that we sinned, because we did not steal the cup. But we can't deny that we sinned, because Hashem (בראשית רבה צ"ב).is punishing us”
- Yehudah understands that while the brothers are not guilty of theft, they are liable to Hashem for a number of other deeds. He sees their false arrest ordered by Yosef as a legitimate punishment from Hashem for other *aveiros*. A *ma'amin* knows that while the person inflicting the punishment may be corrupt, Hashem is just. He rewards every *ma'aseh tov* and punishes every *aveirah*. There is no such thing as a punishment that is not deserved.

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## פרשת ויגש

### Brotherhood of Responsibility

מד:לב כי עבדך ערב את הנער מעם אבי לאמר אם לא אביאנו אליך וקטאתי לאבי כל הימים.

- If you should ask why I am fighting more than any of my brothers, it is because I made a strong commitment to be responsible in this world and the next. (רש"י). Yehudah accepted responsibility for his brother's welfare,(ערב את הנער), even to the extent that he was willing to forfeit his Olam Habah. We can be inspired by Yehudah's sense of *arvus*. כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה. We should see every Jew as our brother and feel a deep sense of responsibility to Hashem, our Father, to do everything to ensure that each one is keeping *mitzvos*.

### Positive Perspective

מה:ח ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אתי הנה כי האלקים וישמיני לאב לפרעה ולאדון לכל ביתו ומזל בכל ארץ מצרים.

- Now that we see Hashem's purpose in putting me in this situation, we can understand that all the events which brought us to this point were all Hashem's will (ספורנו). We believe that Hashem supervises and has control of everything that happens. Sometimes Hashem's guiding hand becomes clear when we look back and realize that seemingly negative events were part of a process leading to a positive conclusion.

### Tell of His Greatness

מה:יג והגדתם לאבי את כל כבודי במצרים ואת כל אשר ראיתם ומהרתם והורדתם את אבי הנה.

- Tell my father of my great position in Mitzrayim and describe all you saw of my greatness and wealth so that he should not worry about coming, as I have the power and ability to give him all he needs. (רשב"ם).
- Speaking of Yosef's greatness would put Yaakov's mind at ease. So too, when we recount the praise of Hashem in davening or when saying Tehillim and describe His Greatness, Power and Might, we realize that we do not need to worry about anything. Hashem, our King has the power and ability to provide all of our needs.

## Light in the Darkness

**מו:ב** וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִרְאֵת הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב וַיִּעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְנָנִי. ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֵל תִּירָא מִרְדֵּה מִצְרַיִם כִּי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשִׁימָהּ שָׁם.

- Hashem calls to Yaakov, not using his name Yisrael, which indicates his victories over man and angels. In Mitzrayim they will have to struggle for survival as slaves. It will be many years until they will again see triumph that is indicated by the name Yisrael. (רמב"ן). Bnai Yisrael have good times and bad times. Hashem assures Yaakov that He will go down with him and also go up with him. Hashem is always with us through the ups and the downs.
- Yaakov is frightened by the difficult times his children will face in *Galus Mitzrayim*. Hashem tells him that he should not fear because it is there that they will become the great nation that Hashem promised to Avraham (חזקוני). In difficult times, we reassure ourselves, that Hashem has put us in a particular situation for a good reason.
- In Eretz Kena'an there was a risk of Bnai Yisrael intermarrying and disappearing. The Mitzrim, however, would not even eat together with Ivrim. Their antipathy will require that Bnai Yisrael live separately-and so it will prevent intermarriage and assimilation. (ספורנו). Sometimes, when the nations dislike us, it is for our own good.

## One is Hashem

**מו:כט** וַיֹּאסֶר יוֹסֵף מְרַפְּבֹתוֹ וַיַּעַל לְקִרְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גִּשְׁנָה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפֹּל עַל צַוְאַרְיוֹ וַיִּבְכֶּה עַל צַוְאַרְיוֹ עוֹד.

- Yaakov did not embrace or kiss Yosef since he was saying *krias shema*. (רש"י). At their reunion after 22 years of thinking that Yosef was dead, Yaakov chooses to direct the intensity of his emotions to *ahavas Hashem* by saying *Shema*. In *Shema* we declare our love for Hashem and our *emunah* that Hashem is One. Everything that happens, whether good or bad, has one source - Hashem *Echad*.

## Just Visiting

**מז:ד** וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵל פְּרַעֲהָ לְגוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן כִּי אִין מְרַעָה לְצֹאֵן אֲשֶׁר לְעַבְדֶּיךָ כִּי כִבֵּד הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְעַתָּה יָשָׁבוּ נָא עַבְדֶּיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ גִּשְׁוֹן.

- The word לְגוֹר indicates that Yaakov and his family came to Mitzrayim for a temporary stay, not to settle there. (הגדה של פסח). Bnai Yisrael make

it clear from the moment that they arrive that Mitzrayim will never be their home. So too in our current *galus* we know that we are here only for a while until Hashem brings the *geulah* and we all return to Eretz Yisrael.

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## פרשת ויחי

### The End of the Block

מז: כח ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה ויהי ימי יעקב שני חייו שבע שנים וארבעים ומאת שנה.

- *Parshiyos* in the Torah are separated by a blank space. *Vayechi* is unique in that its separating space is blocked. There are two ideas hinted at by this “blocked *parshah*.”
- When Yaakov died the difficulties of *galus* Mitzrayim began, causing *Bnai Yisrael's* eyes and hearts to be blocked.
- Yaakov wished to reveal the end of the final *galus*, but this was blocked from him. (רש"י).
- In our *galus* too, our hearts and eyes are blocked. It is sometimes difficult for our hearts to be filled with *emunah*. Our eyes don't always see Hashem's involvement in our lives. But even though the time of the coming of Mashiach is hidden, we know that he will come soon, and then our hearts and eyes will be opened.

### The Land of the Living

מז: כט ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות ויקרא לבנו ליוסף ויאמר לו אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך שים נא ידך תחת ירכי ועשית עמדי חסד ואמת אל נא תקברני במצרים. ל ושכבתי עם אבתי ונשאתני ממצרים וקברתני בקברתם ויאמר אנכי אעשה כדברך.

- Yaakov did not want to be buried in Mitzrayim because *techias hameisim* will occur only in Eretz Yisrael. The bones of *tzaddikim* who were buried in other places will have to first roll under the ground to Eretz Yisrael, and Yaakov wanted to avoid this distress. (רש"י).
- Yaakov's concern for *techias hameisim* reminds us that this is one of the thirteen *ikarim* of *emunah*. Death is not forever. The *neshamah* lives in Olam Haba while the *guf* rests in the *kever* until the time of *techias hameisim*, when Hashem will restore the *neshamah* to the *guf* and they will live again.
- We give great respect to the body after the *neshamah* leaves. We take care not to damage it in any way, and bury it whole in the ground. This indicates our firm *emunah* that there will be *techias hameisim* and the body will be used again.

## Left is Right

מה:יז וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף כִּי יָשִׁית אָבִיו יָד מִיְּמֵינוּ עַל רֹאשׁ אֲפֻרַיִם וַיִּרַע בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּתְמַךְ יָד אָבִיו לְהִסִּיר אֹתָהּ מֵעַל רֹאשׁ אֲפֻרַיִם עַל רֹאשׁ מְנוּשָׁה.

- Even if they tell you that right is left and left is right, do not stray from the words of *Chachamim* (רש"י דברים יז:יא) .
- It appears to Yosef that Yaakov made a mistake and confused his right and left. Yaakov assures Yosef that he knows exactly what he is doing and the switch is intentional. Sometimes we may think that a statement of the *Chachamim* does not make sense. Nevertheless, we have *emunas Chachamim* and believe that their words are accurate even when it appears to us that they are saying that right is left and left is right. We realize that their understanding is much deeper than ours, and that they perceive things that are beyond the grasp of an ordinary person.

## Chizuk for All Generations

מה:כא וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל יוֹסֵף הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מֵת וְהָיָה אֲלֵקִים עִמָּכֶם וְהָשִׁיב אֶתְכֶם, אֶל אֶרֶץ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם.

- Yaakov leaves Yosef with a powerful message of support. Even though Yaakov is leaving his children, they should never feel alone or abandoned in the long years of *galus*. Hashem will always be with them; eventually the *galus* will end, and Hashem will bring them back to Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov's words give us courage to remain strong in our *emunah* until Mashiach comes.

## Mashiach Mistake

מט:יח לִישׁוּעָתָה קוֹיִתִּי ד'.

- Yaakov Avinu foresaw Shimshon and thought that he would be Melech HaMashiach. But then, when he visualized Shimshon's death he said, "Hashem, I await your salvation!" (בראשית רבה. צח:יז) We should not be deceived into thinking that any individual, no matter how strong or successful, can deliver the *geulah*. Like Yaakov Avinu, we await and anticipate the *yeshuah* of Hashem.

### The Words of the Nevi'im are True

מט:כח כל אלה שבטי ישראל שנים עשר וזאת אשר דבר להם אביהם ויברך אות איש אשר כברכתו ברך אתם.

- He blessed them with the *brachos* that would occur to each of them in the future. (רש"י).
- Through *nevuah* Hashem revealed to Yaakov the future significant events in the history of each *shevet*. Most of these have already occurred just as Yaakov predicted. This strengthens our *emunah* that the *brachah* of Yehuda, which forecasts the coming of Mashiach, will also be fulfilled, just like all the other *nevuos*.

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## פרשת שמות

### Emunah in Action

**א:טז** ויאמר בגלדכן את העבריות וראיתן על האבנים אם בן הוא והמתן אתו ואם בת הוא ותיה.

- Pharaoh was concerned about the boys because his astrologers said that a son would be born, who would save Bnai Yisrael. (רש"י)
- Pharaoh's belief in the words of his astrologers was so strong that he ordered his people to kill all the newborn boys, even though it meant he would have fewer slaves. Our belief in the coming of *Mashiach*, who will take us out of this *galus*, should be even stronger than Pharaoh's!

### Try Your Best and Hashem Can Help

**ב:ה** ותרד בת פרעה לרחץ על היאר ונערתיה הלכת על יד היאר ותרא את התבה בתוך הסוף ותשלח את אמתה ותקחה.

- Chazal say that אמתה could mean "her arm." Even though it was not possible to reach Moshe, Bas Pharaoh stretched out her arm, doing her best to save Moshe. Hashem miraculously extended her arm and she was able to grab hold of the *teivah* and bring him to safety. (רש"י).
- We should always try our best to do what Hashem wants, and daven that Hashem will help us succeed.

### Seeing the Good in Everyone

**ב:יב** ויפן פה וכה וירא כי אין איש ויד את המצרי ויטמנהו בחול.

- Moshe only killed the *Mitzri* once he was able to determine, through his *Ruach Hakodesh*, that no good would ever come from him. (רש"י).
- Everything that Hashem put in the world has a purpose. We should never be quick to condemn something or someone as useless.

## Take Note of Hashem's Chesed

**ב:יח** ותבאנה אל רעואל אביהן ויאמר מדוע מהרתן בא היום.

- Reu'el notes that his daughters arrived sooner than on other days. We can learn from here that even a small convenience, like getting home more quickly than usual, is a special gift from Hashem. We should take notice and appreciate it.

## The Power of Prayer

**ב:כד** וישמע אלקים את נאקתם ויזכר אלקים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב.  
**כה** וירא אלקים את בני ישראל וידע אלקים.

- Hashem promised Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov that whenever their children will call out to Him, He will always hear them and be there for them. As soon as Bnai Yisrael cried out to Hashem, He remembered His promise to the Avos. That promise is true for us too (ספורנו)!
- Hashem knew that their sincere *tefillos* were said with all their hearts and full attention. He responded by focusing His "full attention" on Bnai Yisrael and relieving their suffering (ספורנו).

## My Father's Friend

**ג:ו** ויאמר אנכי אלקי אביך אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלהי יעקב ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט אל האלקים.

- On his first day in a new school Yossi was feeling very sad and alone. He didn't know a single kid or teacher. Then the principal came over to him and said: "You must be Yossi. You should know that your father is my best friend." Yossi started smiling. He knew everything would be fine. Hashem introduces Himself to *Moshe* as אביו. We never need to feel alone. Hashem already has a connection with us through our parents and their parents all the way back to the Avos.

## I Am Not Afraid - Hashem is With Me

ד:ד ויאמר ד' אל משה שלח ידך ואחוז בזנבו וישלח ידו ויחזק בו ויהי למשה בכפו.

- Usually, a person would be afraid to grab a snake by its tail. This snake was so fearsome that Moshe ran away from it. Yet once Hashem told Moshe to grab hold of the snake's tail he did so without fear. If Hashem tells us to do something, we can do it confidently and there is nothing to fear. (אור החיים הקדוש).

## The Dream Team

ד:טז ודבר הוא לה אל העם והיה הוא יהיה לה לכה ואמה תקיה לו לאלהים.

- Moshe's weakness is Aharon's strength. Only by working together will they complete Hashem's mission. Similarly, each individual has a particular task to perform. Hashem equipped each person with a unique set of abilities and circumstances to achieve his purpose. There is no need to be jealous of another person, because what they have is not what you need. When we each recognize and appreciate this, we are able to work as a team to perfect Hashem's world.

## Hard is Not Bad

ה:כב וישב משה אל ד' ויאמר אדני למה הרעתה לעם הזה למה זה שלחתיני.

- Moshe, a caring, responsible leader, complains about the added suffering of his people. Why did Hashem find fault with this? The problem was his use of the words: למה הרעתה? Everything that Hashem does is for the good לטב עביד רחמנא לטב עביד. To label Hashem's action as bad is not acceptable. A person can ask questions or express frustration at their not understanding what Hashem is doing. But he must always maintain his *emunah* that all Hashem does is ultimately for the good. (דרכי מוסר, וארא)

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## פרשת וארא

### Good Judgement

ו:ב וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ד'

- Hashem spoke with Moshe in judgment (as denoted by the name *Elokim*) for his inappropriately asking Hashem: "Why have you worsened the situation of this nation?" (רש"י). We believe that Hashem judges every person and gives them their appropriate reward or punishment. Even Moshe Rabeinu, the greatest of the *nevi'im*, is accountable for everything he does and says.

### Fathers of Belief

ו:ד וְגַם הַקְּמַתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם לְהַחֲלִיף אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶת אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר גָּרוּ בָּהּ .

- "I made many promises to Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov. Even though they did not see the fulfillment of those promises, they never ceased believing and trusting that every word of Hashem was true. Now the time has come for me to do as I promised in *bris bein habesarim* and punish the Mitzrim (רש"י). We believe that every word of Hashem is true. Like the *Avos*, we trust that everything will happen exactly as Hashem promised. Even if we don't see it right now, when the right time comes, every *nevuah* will be realized exactly as foretold by the *nevi'im*

### Emunah is Here - I don't Hear

ו:ט וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כִּן אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה מִקּוֹצַר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה .

- Bnai Yisrael believed that everything Moshe said was true, but were unable to hear him because they were overwhelmed by their suffering and fear. (רמב"ן).
- Sometimes, circumstances make it difficult to act based on *emunah*. That is not necessarily an indication that *emunah* is lacking. Rather, the difficult situation prevents one accessing their *emunah* that is within.

## Emunah in 10 Lessons

ז:ה וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי ד' בְּנֹטְתִי אֶת יְדֵי עַל מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם.

- Until now Pharaoh had declared "I don't know Hashem." Now, through the *makkos*, he will learn to know that Hashem is Master and Ruler of the world (רשב"ם).
- The main purpose of the *makkos* was not punishment. Rather they were a course of education through which Pharaoh, Bnai Yisrael and the world would recognize that Hashem is the Creator and Master of the universe (ספורנו).
- By studying the *makkos* we can strengthen our *emunah* that Hashem created and controls everything.

### Explain Away

ז:יג וַיִּחְזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ד'.

- After it reverted to a stick, Aharon's stick swallowed all the rest (רש"י). Even though it now had become clear that Aharon represents a power that is greater than that of the magicians, Pharaoh remains unimpressed and refuses to listen to Moshe and Aharon.
- A *ma'amin* can clearly see Hashem's actions in the world. One who refuses to recognize Hashem will use every excuse, no matter how illogical, to explain away any sign of Hashem's existence.

### A Body of Belief

ז:טו לֵךְ אֶל פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר הַגֵּה יְצֵא הַמִּיזְמָה וְנִצְבֶּתָּ לִקְרֹאתוֹ עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּאֵר וְהַמָּטָה אֲשֶׁר נִהְפְּדָה לְנַחֲשׁ תִּקַּח בְּיָדָהּ.

- To reinforce his claim that he was a god, Pharaoh relieved himself at the river in the early morning, hiding the fact that he had physical functions like ordinary people (רש"י).
- While Pharaoh saw healthy functioning of the body as a contradiction to godliness, we say a special *brachah* after using the bathroom. We recognize the incredible wisdom with which Hashem created our bodies. Every tiny detail of the perfect system that is called a human being testifies to the greatness of its Creator.

### Emunah is Life

ז: כח וְשָׂרֵץ הַיָּאֵר צָפְרָדַיִם וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ בְּבֵיתָהּ וּבְחֹדֶר מִשְׁכָּבָהּ וְעַל מִטָּתָהּ וּבְבֵית עֲבָדֶיהָ וּבְעַמָּהּ וּבְתַנּוּרֶיהָ וּבְמִשְׁאָרוֹתֶיהָ.

- The *tzaddikim*, Chanania, Mishael and Azaria learned *mesirus nefesh* from the frogs. If frogs, that do not have a *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*, were willing to enter the burning hot ovens to do what Hashem wanted, then certainly they, who are commanded to give up their lives for Hashem should do so (פסחים נ"ג:).
- A Jew lives with *emunah* in Hashem. The *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem* tells us that we would rather die than abandon our *emunah*. Life is not worth living without *emunah* in Hashem.

### Alongside but Far Apart

ח: יט וְשָׂמַתִּי פְּדַת בֵּין עַמִּי וּבֵין עַמָּהּ לְמַחֵר יִהְיֶה הָאֵת הַזֶּה.

- Even in Eretz Mitzrayim where the animals rampaged, devouring Mitzrim, if a Jew happened to be there, they would not harm him (רמב"ן).
- Two people in the same situation can emerge with absolutely opposite results. One emerges unscathed and the other is damaged. Hashem's involvement in every aspect of our lives constitutes *Hasgachah Pratis*. He ensures that each person receives exactly what they deserve or need. (דעת תורה - רב ירוחם ליוואוויץ).

### Hashem at all Times

ט: לד וַיֵּרָא פְּרַעֲזָה כִּי חָדַל הַמָּטֶר וְהַבְּרָד וְהַקֶּלֶת וַיִּסָּף לְחַטָּא וַיִּכְבֵּד לְבוּ הוּא וְעַבְדָּיו.

- This is how *reshaim* behave. As long as they are in trouble they submit to Hashem. Once the difficulty passes they slide right back to their evil ways. (תנחומא יז). Pharaoh, terrified by the display of Hashem's power, admitted that he was a *rasha* and Hashem was right. The minute the *makkah* stopped he hardened his heart and denied Hashem.
- The Torah teaches us וְאֵהָבֵת אֵת ד' אֱלֹקֶיךָ... בכל מאודך. In every situation that Hashem gives you, acknowledge Him and thank Him. We encounter all kinds of situations in life; some easy, some difficult, some happy some sad. *B'chol me'odecha* teaches us that whatever Hashem sends our way, we thank Him, appreciating that everything is from Him, and ultimately for our good. Regardless of changing circumstances, we recognize Hashem's involvement in our lives at all times, under all conditions.

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## פרשת בא

### With our Children

יִיָא לֹא כֵן לָכוּ בְּנֵי הַגְּבֵרִים וְעַבְדוּ אֶת ד' כִּי אֲתֵה אִתָּם מִבְּקֻשִׁים וַיִּגְרַשׁ אֹתָם מֵאֶת פְּנֵי פְרַעֲוֹה.

- Pharaoh reasoned that if Bnai Yisrael were really just going to make a celebration and offer *korbanos* to Hashem it was not necessary to bring the children along. He was wrong! When we celebrate Pesach the main feature of our *seder* is the Haggadah through which we fulfill the mitzvah of והגדת לבנך. Involving our children and teaching them is an integral part of our *avodas* Hashem. That is the key to passing down *emunah* to the next generation.

### Light in the Dark

יִכַב וַיֵּט מִלְּשָׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ אַפְלָה בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים. כִּג לֹא רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו וְלֹא קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתְּחַתּוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים וְלָכֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר בְּמוֹשְׁבֹתָם.

- The darkness was so thick that even by the light of a candle or torch nothing could be seen (ספורנו). When we turn on a light, darkness disappears. Although this seems obvious, it is really nothing other than Hashem's Will. When He decides that darkness will reign, then the brightest light is ineffective. Each time we turn on a light in a dark room, we appreciate that it is Hashem who is יוצר אור ובורא חושך – "Makes light and creates dark"

- For the last three days of *makkas choshech* the *Mitzrim* were frozen in darkness, unable to move. Someone who was standing could not sit and someone who was sitting could not stand up (רש"י). This stage of *makkas choshech* reminds us that our mobility is a gift from Hashem and should not be taken for granted. Each morning we say a *brachah* מתיר אסורים appreciating the fact that Hashem has given us the ability to move our limbs. Then we say זוקף קפופים appreciating that we can stand up straight.

## Down to the Last Detail

**יא:ב** דָּבַר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ וְאִשָּׁה מֵאֵת רֵעוּתָהּ כָּלִי כֶסֶף וְכֹלִי זָהָב.

• **יא** is an expression of request (רש"י). Bnai Yisrael were ready to leave Mitzrayim empty handed. Impatient for freedom and relief from their suffering, they were happy to dispense with collecting the wealth of Mitzrayim. Yet Hashem made sure to fulfill His promise to Avraham that Bnai Yisrael will leave with great wealth. He asks Moshe to please speak to Bnai Yisrael telling them to ask the Mitzrim for their silver and gold (ברכות ט). Even if we are willing to relinquish our claim on any promise Hashem made to us, Hashem is faithful and will fulfill every detail of every *nevuah*.

## Dogs have Something to Say

**יא:ז** וְלֹכֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִחָרֵץ כָּלֵב לְשָׁנוֹ לְמֵאִישׁ וְעַד בְּהֵמָה לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּן אֲשֶׁר יַפְלֶה ד' בֵּין מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל.

• At the time of *makkas bechoros*, Bnai Yisrael will be so completely protected from harm that a dog will not even bark at them (רשב"ם). Hashem's *hashgachah* can extend to the tiniest details of our lives. A dog barks at one passerby, but when another person walks by he remains silent. A *ma'amin*, who believes that Hashem controls everything, will think that, if a dog barked at me, there must be a reason that Hashem wanted this to happen. He will try to learn something from the episode.

## Commemorative Calendar

**יב:ב** הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה.

• The mitzvah of הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית חֳדָשִׁים - "This month is for you the first of the months," determines that Nisan is the first month of our yearly cycle. Even though the year actually begins with Rosh Hashanah in Tishrei, Nisan is our chief month as it is the month in which *Yetzias Mitzrayim* took place. Furthermore, in the Torah the months do not have names, they are only identified by number counting from Nisan. By counting our months from Nisan, whenever we mention a date we remember the great *nissim* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (רמב"ן).

- Our calendar gives us constant opportunities to strengthen our *emunah* by remembering the great miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

### Don't Miss a Mitzvah

**יב:יז** ושמרתם את המצות פי בעצם היום הזה הוצאתי את צבאותיכם מארץ מצרים ושמרתם את היום הזה לדורתכם חקת עולם.

- Rabbi Yoshiah said: Do not read the word as *matzos* rather read it as *mitzvos*. Just like one should not delay when baking *matzah*, allowing it to become *chametz*, so too do not delay performance of a *mitzvah*. When a *mitzvah* comes to hand, do it immediately (רש"י). Each *mitzvah* is a precious opportunity to serve Hashem. Delaying a *Mitzvah* may result in losing the opportunity altogether. Also by seizing *mitzvos* and doing them with *zerizus*, we demonstrate our love of Hashem and enthusiasm to do His *mitzvos*.

### Nothing is too Small

**יב:כב** ולקחתם אגדת אזוב וטבלתם בדם אש רבסר והגעעתם אל המשקוף ואל שתי המזוזות מן הדם אשר בסר ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר.

- This *eizov* seems small and insignificant, yet it has great power before Hashem. In *Mitzrayim* he commanded us to do a *mitzvah* with the *eizov* as it says "Take a bunch of *eizov* and dip it in the blood..." This teaches us that Hashem makes miracles even with the smallest things. *Eizov* is the lowliest of trees yet Hashem used it to bring Yisrael out of *Mitzrayim* (שמות רבה יז:ב).
- Everything that Hashem created is there to bring glory to Him. We should treat everything with respect, for even the most seemingly insignificant item can be used for great *mitzvos*. So too every person is precious in Hashem's eyes and capable of doing *Retzon Hashem*.

### Believe in the Future

**יב:כז** ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לד' אשר פסח עלבתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל ויקד העם וישתחוו.

- The nation bowed in appreciation of the news of their impending *geulah*, that they would be going to Eretz Yisrael, and for the news that

that they would have children (רש"י). Even though these were all still in the future, Bnai Yisrael believed that the *nevuah* of Moshe was true, and bowed in appreciation to Hashem.

- We, too, know that all the words of all our *nevi'im*, who told us that the *geulah* will come, and the wonderful things that will occur then are all true. In the *berachos* we say when reading a haftarah we affirm our belief that all the words of the *nevi'im* are true and will be fulfilled.

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## פרשת בשלה

### The Long Way Around

יג:יז ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם ולא נחם אלקים דרוך ארץ פלשתים כי קרוב הוא כי אמר אלקים פן ינחם העם בראתם מלקמה ושבו מצרימה.

- Hashem did not take Bnai Yisrael on the shortest, most direct route, through Eretz Plishtim. The *pasuk* explains that this was for their own good, as they were not yet ready to face the wars that lay ahead. Sometimes, when things don't go as easily or as directly as we would like, we trust that Hashem is looking out for our best interests. While a delay or complication seems like a bother, Hashem does everything, ultimately, for our best interests.

### Picking the Wrong Detail

יד:ג ואמר פרעה לבני ישראל נבכים הם בארץ סגר עליהם המדבר.

- After seeing the awesome might of Hashem through all the *nissim* and *makkos*, what could prompt Pharaoh to chase after Bnai Yisrael to try and recapture them? He seized on a small detail, that didn't make sense to him, to justify his actions. Bnai Yisrael appear to have lost their way. He explained this to mean that Hashem is not with them after all, and set out, with his armies, to bring them back. There are people who react like Pharaoh. They look at Hashem's magnificent world, filled with evidence of His greatness and kindness, and seize on some small detail, that doesn't make sense to them, to deny Hashem's existence. They don't have the humility to think that it is not a lack in Hashem—He is perfect. Rather, their problem is their lack of understanding Hashem's ways.

### Closing in Brings Closeness

יד:י ופרעה הקריב וישאו בני ישראל את עיניהם והנה מצרים נסע אחריהם ויראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה'.

- The word הקריב could be understood to mean "brought closer." Pharaoh's pursuit caused Bnai Yisrael to do *teshuvah* and become even closer to Hashem (שמות רבה כא:ה).
- When we face trouble or feel threatened, we turn to Hashem. Difficulties are opportunities to deepen our connection with Him.
- Bnai Yisrael were trapped. The Mitzrim were approaching from the rear and Yam Suf was in front of them blocking their way forward. From

the sides, the vicious beasts of the desert were eyeing them hungrily. With nowhere to turn, they cried out to Hashem for help. Hashem said: "This is what I have been waiting for-to hear your voice (שמות רבה כא:ה)!"

- Hashem wants us to connect with Him through *tefillah*. Sometimes, to strengthen our power of prayer, Hashem gives a person a challenge where they feel there is nowhere else to turn. That pushes them to work harder on their *tefillos*. Even when the answer to our *tefillos* is not the one that we hoped for, we have still strengthened our connection with Hashem.

### Things are About to Change

יד:יג ויאמר משה אל העם אל תיראו התמצבו וראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום כי אשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תסיפו לראתם עוד עד עולם.

- Moshe acknowledges their fear and their desire to flee. He enthuses them with a powerful message of *emunah* saying, "Take a good look at the scary, powerful Mitzrim right now, because all this is about to change. As you see them now you will never see them again." Any time we feel overwhelmed, we remember that in an instant, Hashem can change everything for the better.

### Small Problem, Big Solution

יד:כג וירדפו מצרים ויבאו אחריהם כל סוס פרעה רכבו ופרשיו אל תוך הים.

- The word סוס, in singular form, indicates that all Pharaoh's many horses were like only one horse in Hashem's eyes (רש"י).
- Sometimes a problem can seem enormous and we don't see a way out. Remember, that while it may seem daunting to us, to Hashem it is nothing at all. If we try and solve the problem on our own, we may find it insurmountable. Rather, have *emunah* and ask Hashem to take care of it. Nothing is too big for Hashem!

### Seeing is Believing

יד:ל ויושע ה' ביום ההוא את ישראל מיד מצרים וירא ישראל את מצרים מת על שפת הים.

- Bnai Yisrael were concerned that perhaps, just like they had made it safely through *Yam Suf*, the Mitzrim had also survived. Hashem had the sea wash up the bodies of the Mitzrim so that Bnai Yisrael would see that they had really drowned (פסחים קיה).

- Bnai Yisrael had a slight lapse of faith. Hashem provided the booster they needed to strengthen their *emunah* that He had saved them completely.
- Hashem surrounds us with demonstrations of His presence and His *hashgachah*. We just need to open our eyes to see them.

### The Past is Past

טז:ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי יִתֵּן מוֹתֵנוּ בְּיַד ה' בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁבְתֵּנוּ עַל סִיר הַבְּשָׂר  
בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ לֶחֶם לְשֹׁבַע כִּי הוֹצֵאתֶם אֹתָנוּ אֶל הַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לְהָמִית אֶת כָּל הַקָּהָל הַזֶּה בְּרָעַב.

- Bnai Yisrael complain about their situation in the *midbar*, remembering the abundance of meat they had in Mitzrayim. It seems that they forgot about the suffering and slavery that went together with the pots of meat. When circumstances change, people like to reflect on the "old days," which seem to have been much better. Sometimes things were really better then, and sometimes we just imagine that it was so. Either way, the best approach is to deal with the present and to look to the future with *bitachon* in Hashem, knowing that He has put you in the situation that is best for you right now.

### Trying Something New

טז:ד וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵל מֹשֶׁה הֲנִי מְמַטֵּיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַלְקָטוּ דְבַר יוֹם כִּי־וּמו  
לְמַעַן אֲנִסְנוּ הַיְלִד בְּתוֹרַתִי אִם לֹא.

- The *mann* was a test of Bnai Yisrael's *emunah*. Their sole sustenance was going to be a totally unknown food. Furthermore, they would receive a daily ration only, never feeling secure that there will be enough for the following day. Would Bnai Yisrael be strong in their *emunah* and happily follow Hashem, trusting that He would provide their needs daily (רמב"ן).
- In new situations, one may be anxious about the changes and worry about how he will adapt. Trust that Hashem has put you exactly where you need to be. He will provide you with everything you need, to overcome any difficulties and to be successful.

## Hashem is Right Here

יִזְזוּ וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מִסָּה וּמְרִיבָה עַל רֵיב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל נִסְתָּם אֶת ה' לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם אֵין.

- A man was walking along, carrying his son on his shoulders. The boy saw something and asked: “Abba, please get me that,” and his father gave it to him. Again, and yet a third time he asked for things, and whatever he wanted, his father gave him. Then they met a man and the son asked him: “Have you seen my father?” His father, who was carrying him the whole time, exclaimed: “You don’t know where I am?” He dropped him and just then a big dog ran up, barking at the son. Terrified, the son jumped back into his father’s arms (רש"י).
- Hashem had provided Bnai Yisrael with everything. He guided them day and night with the *amud anan* and *amud eish*, split the *Yam Suf*, fed them *mann* and *slav*. Yet after all of that, they questioned, “is Hashem with us or not?” Hashem responded to Bnai Yisrael’s ingratitude, saying: “I’m always with you providing your every need. Yet, you wonder: ‘Is Hashem with us?’ Let the dog come and bite you and you will cry to me and know where I am!”
- The *brachos* that we say every morning help keep us aware of Hashem’s constant caring for us. We thank him for giving us life, for sight, clothing, shoes, movement and so many other gifts, that we should never take for granted. By appreciating Hashem’s supplying our every need, we are always aware of His presence in our lives and never need ask: Is Hashem with us?

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## פרשת יתרו

### The Awesome Power of Hashem

יח:יא עתה ידעתי כי גדול ה' מפל האלהים כי בדבר אשר זדו עליהם.

- Yisro had investigated every religion and way of worship until he reached the conclusion that Hashem was the true G-d (רש"י).
- After a spiritual journey that took him through many false beliefs, Yisro discovered the truth. Baruch Hashem, we have the Torah to show us the way, so we do not need to take any detours to discover the right path.
- The Mitzrim drowning in *Yam Suf*, clinched Yisro's recognition that Hashem is the true G-d. He saw *middah keneged middah*, how Hashem matched the punishment to the crime. The Mitzrim, who had drowned Jewish children, were drowned (רש"י).
- If, as the *ovdei avodah zarah* believed, there were separate gods who controlled the various forces of nature, then *middah keneged middah* would not be possible. Each god could only use his power. But Hashem, the Creator and Master of all forces, is able to do anything. Only He can make the punishment match the crime (ספורנו).

### Seeking Hashem's Help

יח:טו ויאמר משה להתנו כי יבא אלי העם לדרש אלקים. טז כי יקנה להם דבר בא אלי ושפטתי בין איש ובין רעהו והודעתי את חקי האלקים ואת תורתיו.

- People would come to Moshe to seek help from Hashem. In the times when there were *nevi'im*, when a person needed help from Hashem for something specific, he would go ask the *navi*. If someone was sick the *navi*, who had a special connection with Hashem, would daven for his *refuah shleimah*. The *navi* could even tell him if his *tefillah* had been answered (רמב"ן).
- Today, though we don't have *nevi'im*, we do have great *talmidei chachamim* and *tzaddikim*. We ask them for *brachos* and to daven for a person who needs a *yeshuah*.
- Some people in the long lines waiting to see Moshe Rabbeinu were coming to ask questions of halachah. Others were coming to have a dispute adjudicated. Yet others wanted to understand a piece of Torah.
- For all these needs we have *poskim*, *rabbanim* and *dayanim* to whom we turn with every query.

## Public Prophecy

יט:ט וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָּא אֵלֶיךָ בְּעָב הָעָנָן בְּעִבּוֹר יִשְׁמַע הָעָם בְּדִבְרֵי עֲמָךְ וְגַם בְּךָ יֶאֱמִינוּ לְעוֹלָם וַיִּגַּד מֹשֶׁה אֶת דִּבְרֵי הָעָם אֶל ה'.

- Until now, Hashem had spoken to Moshe, and Bnai Yisrael had believed that Moshe was a *navi* who communicated with Hashem. Now, at *Matan Torah*, that *emunah* was going to be deepened even further. Hashem will enable all of Bnai Yisrael to hear Him speak with Moshe as he gives the Torah. This will leave no room for doubt. Every Jew who stood at Har Sinai will know that Hashem gave us the Torah, because he was there and heard Hashem speak. His children and descendants for all generations will have a faithful report. Passed down from father to son, they know that, long ago, their ancestor heard, with his own ears, Hashem giving us Torah (רמב"ן).
- Other religions trace their source to an individual who claims to have had a revelation. Because there are no witnesses to the “event,” their tradition is based on believing one person’s claim. The one true Torah does not hide in mysterious beginnings. Hashem speaks to Moshe with all of Bnai Yisrael witnessing and participating. To suggest that it never happened would be preposterous!
- Moshe had a unique level of *nevuah* that was never given to another *navi*. Hashem would communicate with him directly, mouth-to-mouth, and not in a veiled or concealed way. This one time, Bnai Yisrael will be able to participate in Moshe’s *nevuah* so that no-one will ever be able to deny the truth of Moshe’s *nevuah* and *Matan Torah* (ספורנו).

## No Pictures Please

כג:ג לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ כִּסֹּל וְכָל תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ.

- Do not say: You are an invisible, hidden G-d, so I will make some idols to remind me of You and bow to them in Your honor (חזקוני) .
- Even when Hashem spoke to us at Har Sinai, we heard His voice but did not see any image. A cardinal point of *emunah* is that Hashem has no physical form. Any attempt to represent Hashem is a distortion and forbidden. Generally, a picture is an easy way to understand what something is. Hashem is infinite and cannot possibly be contained in any physical illustration. We get to know Hashem by learning His Torah,

seeing His creation and His *hashgachah pratis*. These give us an understanding that is far beyond any picture.

### Shabbos—The Day of Emunah

כ:ז זכור את יום השבת לקדשו. ח ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך. ט ויום השביעי שבת לה' אלוקיך לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ובתך עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך.

- We do not name the days of the week like others do. Rather we number them, counting toward Shabbos. When we refer to Sunday as *yom rishon*, we mean that today is the first day counting towards Shabbos. Each day we remember that Shabbos comes at the end of the week and fulfill a *mitzvah* of remembering Shabbos (רמב"ן).
- By using the Jewish names for the days, we remind ourselves daily that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on Shabbos.
- When Shabbos comes, you should view all your work as complete and not think about it (רש"י).
- Shabbos strengthens our trust in Hashem. While all week long we work hard trying to accomplish what we can, when Shabbos comes we sit back with a secure feeling that it is Hashem who is in control, and all our success is from Him. There may be unfinished business, but it makes no difference. On Shabbos, as far as we are concerned, there is nothing left for us to worry about.
- It is remarkable that, throughout the world, a week has seven days. Units of time are mostly determined by astronomy. A year is 365 ¼ days because that is the time it takes for the earth to complete its revolution around the sun. A day is 24 hours because that is how long it takes for the earth to revolve. But there is no apparent astronomical phenomenon which accounts for a seven day week. The only possible explanation is that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. The universal seven day week is testimony, strengthening our belief, that Hashem created the world in seven days
- Shabbos is our weekly reminder that Hashem created the world. Since He created the world, we are responsible to live in it according to His Torah.

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## Index

Each thought has been indexed to one of the thirteen *Ikarim* of *Emunah*.  
Some are clear illustrations of the principle and some are springboards for  
a discussion of the concept.

1	<p>אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא בּוֹרֵא וּמְנַהֵיג לְכָל הַבְּרוּאִים. וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ עֹשֶׂה וְעוֹשֶׂה וְיַעֲשֶׂה לְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים: (מְצִיאוֹת ה')</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things. (Existence of Hashem)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ב:א יב:א יב:יג ב:ב יד:יג כב:ב כד:ג כד:ז כז:ל מא:טז</p> <p><b>שמות</b> ב:יב ד:ד, ד:טו ה:כב ז:ה י:כב יב:ב יב:כב יד:יג יד:כג כ:ז</p>
2	<p>אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא יְחִיד וְאֵין יְחִידוֹת כְּמוֹהוּ בְּשׁוּם פְּנִים. וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ אֵלֵינוּ. הָיָה הוּא וְיִהְיֶה: (אֲחֻדוֹת)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be. (Unity)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ד:כו יב:ד ט:ז *** מא:לט מד:לד מו:כט כד:א</p> <p><b>שמות</b> ז:יג ז:כח יד:יג יח:יא</p>
3	<p>אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ אֵינוֹ גּוֹף. וְלֹא יִשְׁיגוּהוּ מְשִׁיגֵי הַגּוֹף. וְאֵין לוֹ שׁוּם דְּמִיּוֹן כְּלָל: (אֵינוֹ גּוֹף)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, has no body, and that He is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever. (Non-physical)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ה:א לב:לא</p> <p><b>שמות</b> ז:טו כ:ג</p>
4	<p>אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא רִאשׁוֹן וְהוּא אַחֲרוֹן: (רִאשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרוֹן)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the first and the last. (First and Last)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ט:כא מה:יג ג:ו כד:לא</p>
5	<p>אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ לוֹ לְבַדּוֹ רְאוּי לְהִתְפַּלֵּל. וְאֵין רְאוּי לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לְזוּלָתוֹ: (רְאוּי לְעַבּוֹד רַק לוֹ)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, Blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him. (Only worship Him)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ב:ה ד:ג ב:כד כד:יב כד:סב כה:כא כז:כב כח:א לה:ב</p> <p><b>שמות</b> י:יא יב:יז יד:י</p>

6	<p>אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שְׁפָל דְּבָרֵי נְבִיאִים אָמֵת: (נבואה)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true. (Prophecy)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ט:כה כב:כו:יד כט:יב מב:ט מט:כח <b>שמות</b> א:טז ו:ד יא:ב יב:כב יח:טו</p>
7	<p>אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שְׁנֵבוּאַת מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם הִיְתָה אֲמִתִּית. וְשֶׁהוּא הִיָּה אָב לְנְבִיאִים. לְקוֹדְמִים לְפָנָיו וְלְבָאִים אַחֲרָיו: (נבואת משה)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both those who preceded him and those who followed him. (Prophecy of Moshe)</p>	<p><b>שמות</b> ו:ט יב:כז יט:ט</p>
8	<p>אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שְׁפָל הַתּוֹרָה הַמְצוּיָה עִתָּה בְּיַדֵּינוּ הִיא הַנְּתוּנָה לְמֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם: (תורה משמים)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses our teacher, peace be upon him. (G-d given Torah)</p>	<p><b>שמות</b> יט:ט</p>
9	<p>אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שְׁזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה לֹא תִהְיֶה מְחֻלָּפֶת וְלֹא תִהְיֶה אֲחֵרֶת מֵאַתְּ הַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ: (לא תהא מוחלפת)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be exchanged, and that there will never be any other Torah from the Creator, Blessed be His Name. (Immutability of Torah)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ג:ב יח:יז כב:ח לא:ז לב:לג מח:יז <b>שמות</b> ו:ד י"א</p>
10	<p>י - אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ יוֹדֵעַ כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה בְּנֵי אָדָם וְכָל מַחְשְׁבוֹתָם. שְׁנֵאָמַר הַיֵּצֵר יַחַד לִבָּם הַמְבִין אֵל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם: (השגחה)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, knows all the deeds of human beings and all their thoughts, as it is written, "Who fashioned the hearts of them all, Who comprehends all their actions" (Tehillim 33:15). (Hashgachah)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ז:יז יב:א יג:ג יח:א לה:ג מא:ט מא:נב מב:א מב:ט, מה:ח מו:ב <b>שמות</b> ב:ה ב:יח ג:ו ח:יט ט:לד יא:ז יג:יז יד:טז טז:ג טז:ד יז:ז</p>
11	<p>אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ גּוֹמֵל טוֹב לְשׂוֹמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו וּמַעֲנִישׁ לְעוֹבְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו: (שכר ועונש)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those that transgress them. (Reward and punishment)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> ד:י ט:ד טו:ט טיג יב:י יח:ד כה:כה כז:מ לא:ב מב:כח מד:טז <b>שמות</b> ו:ב</p>
12	<p>יב - אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. בְּבִיאַת הַמְּשִׁיחַ. וְאֵף עַל פִּי שְׂיִתְמַהֲמָה. עִם כָּל זֶה אֲחַפֵּה לוֹ בְּכָל יוֹם שְׂיָבוֹא: (משיח)</p>	<p><b>בראשית</b> כט:כה לב:ז מו:ב מז:ד מז:כח, מח:כא מט:יח</p>

	<p>I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may tarry, nonetheless, I wait every day for his coming. (Mashiach)</p>	<p>מט:כה</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>יג - אָנִי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה. שְׁתִּהְיֶה תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים בְּעֵת שְׁיִעָלֶה רְצוֹן מֵאֵת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ שְׁמוֹ וְיִתְעַלֶּה זְכוֹרוֹ לְעַד וְלִנְצַח נְצָחִים: (תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים)</p> <p>I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, Blessed be His name, and His (Revival of the dead).mention shall be exalted for ever and ever</p>	<p><b>בראשית מז:כט</b></p>

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