

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## LIFE ITSELF

Reb Raphael Davidowitz had been stuffed into a cattle car and shipped off to a concentration camp. No personal belongings were allowed, yet somehow, Reb Raphael managed to smuggle in a Gemara.

But one day, the Nazi guards caught him. They tore out the pages of the Gemara and commanded Reb Raphael to step on them. He had no choice but to do as he was told, crying the whole time.

Weeks went by. Reb Raphael was greatly depressed. Eventually he was assigned to make cement pipes. One day, a group of non-Jewish day laborers joined the prisoners' group. These men were paid for their work, and were well-fed with sandwiches.

But Reb Raphael noticed something more precious than food. One of the laborers' sandwich was wrapped in a page of Gemara. The next day, the same man brought the next *daf*. And the next day, the next. Every day, after Reb Raphael finished working, there was a short break before returning to the barracks. During this time, he hid in the oversized cement pipes, learning the precious Torah from those discarded sandwich wrappers.

When we cry for the Torah, we are *zocheh* to learn it.  
*V'nismach b'divrei Sorasecha ub'mitzvosecha l'olam va'ed—ki heim chayeinu.*

*Adapted from Touched by a Story by Rabbi Spero, with the permission of the copyright holders, Artscroll/Mesorah Publications, Ltd. (Artscroll)*



gem

OF THE WEEK

## THE BASIS OF JUDAISM

*By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow*

Hashem's first words at Matan Torah, "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*," use an unusual first-person pronoun. The word *Anochi* reveals the speaker as someone intimately close to the listener. Amid an upheaval of nature, the foundations of the earth quaking, Hashem proclaiming Himself as the sole, absolute *Anochi* of the universe through Whom all other beings exist, He turns to each individual Jew and says: "I am *your Anochi*." This is not a declaration, but a *mitzvah*. It does not mean "I, Hashem, am your G-d," but "I, Hashem, *shall be* your G-d." This is the basis of our entire relationship with G-d, the duty Chazal call *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim*.

What philosophers call "belief in G-d" is different from this foundational verse. The fundamental truth of Jewish life is not belief in G-d's existence or that Hashem is One. It is that He is *my* G-d. He made me what I am, gave me my duty, guides me throughout life. I am not a coincidental product of a universe that He caused many years ago. Rather, every breath and moment of existence is His gift. My duty is to devote every moment to His service. The essential thing is not to know that Hashem exists, but to acknowledge

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER

TACHANUN:  
CHOOSING TO IMPROVE



Tachanun is recited only at Shacharis and Mincha, never at night. In the Beis Hamikdash, the crowd would fall on their knees only after the *korban Tamid* of the morning and afternoon (Mishnah Tamid 7:3). Likewise, the confession of sins also never takes place at night (Megillah 20b). At night, the darkness and silence impresses upon man a greater awareness of his dependence on Hashem. He can reflect on the sins of the past during the day, when he has more freedom to truly choose to improve. Tachanun is also not said on Tisha b'Av, when we are depressed, or on days of joy.

*Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk*

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## THE CROWN OF TEFILLAH

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

The *siddur* was authored by the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah, the Sanhedrin at the beginning of the second Beis Hamikdash era. Earlier, *tefillos* were spontaneous. With the advent of the *siddur*, we were given a text to follow.

What did this Sanhedrin do to deserve the special title of Knesses Hagedolah—the Great Assembly? The answer is found in Mesechta Yoma (69b). “Why were they called the Men of the Great Assembly? Because they restored the crown [of *tefillah*] to its original state. [In the Torah,] Moshe said ‘the great, mighty and awesome G-d.’ Yirmiyahu ... did not say ‘awesome.’ He said, ‘when strangers dance in His palace, where is His awe?’ Along came Daniel, and did not say ‘mighty.’ He said, ‘when strangers enslave His children, where is His might?’ When [the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah] came along, they said, ‘To the contrary. It is His might that He controls His will and is slow to anger against the wicked. And it is His awe, for if not for awe of Hakados Baruch Hu, how could one nation be able to exist among the nations?’”

Just a few days before the tragedy of Tisha B'Av, Babylonian soldiers were partying in the Beis Hamikdash, in celebration of the anticipated destruction. So when Yirmiyahu davened, he referred to Hashem only with two of the adjectives in the Torah: *gadol* and *gibor*. He refrained from saying *nora*. With gentiles dancing in His palace, where was His awe? Daniel was one of the leaders of Jewry in the Babylonian exile. When he davened, he omitted the title *gibor*—if gentiles were enslaving Hashem’s children, where was His might?

The Anshei Knesses Hagedolah restored all three titles, which can be found at the beginning of Shemone Esrei. That is the “crown” of *tefillah* that was returned to its original state. According to the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah, Yirmiyahu and Daniel’s statements were not correct. Hashem’s awe is evident even during the Churban. If not for the fear of Him, how could we continue to exist among 70 nations who seek to devour us? And His might is evident because He is slow to take retribution against the wicked.

This latter statement seems puzzling. The author of Eitz Yosef explains that when a child gets a thorn deeply embedded in his hand, there is no alternative but to cut it out. The father takes a knife and ignores his precious child’s screaming. Hakadosh Baruch Hu determined that there was no way to prevent the total annihilation of His beloved people but to give them *yisurim* that would cleanse them of their sins. This is an demonstration of His *gevurah*.

Yirmiyahu and Daniel understood intellectually that Hashem is awesome and mighty, but during moments of terrible suffering, they could not comprehend it emotionally. Therefore, they omitted these words from their *tefillah*.

that He is my G-d, that my fate is in His hands, and that He alone brings my efforts success.

And what is the basis for these truths?

The Torah refers to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, a fundamental event we saw with our own eyes. More than any other nation, we owe Hashem everything. All *Mitzrayim* took from us was returned by Hashem Himself: our individuality, the right to own property, the possessions themselves. Therefore, He alone rules over our lives and property, and we belong only to Him.

On this condition, we were freed and granted independence. Only subservience to Hashem frees us from servitude to man. We left *avdus Pharaoh*, and entered *avdus Hashem*. In Hallel, our national anthem, we sing “*Ani avdecha ben amasecha, pitachta l'moseira*”—I am Your servant from birth, for You opened my chains.

Therefore, Hashem says, *v'heyisem li segulah mikol ha'amim, ki li kol ha'aretz, va'atem tihyu li mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh*. A *segulah* is something that has no relationship to anyone but its owner. In our relationship with Hashem, it says that we are completely and exclusively His, in every part of our nature and aspirations. Our existence depends on Him alone. He, and no other force, shapes our way of life.

Why? *Ki li kol ha'aretz*. Our relationship should not be exceptional, it should exist for everyone on earth. All mankind is Mine; all nations are Mine. I educate them to become Mine.

And so you must become My *mamleches kohanim* and *goy kadosh*. Each of you is to be a *kohen*, by allowing Me to regulate your actions, by accepting *ol malchus shamayim* and living up to it. You must be a people that does not seek its own glory, but the establishment of Hashem’s kingdom on earth.

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



## wonder WORLD

### KING OF THE ICE



#### How do emperor penguins survive Antarctic winters?

Standing over four feet tall and weighing up to 100 pounds, emperor penguins are by far the largest of the 18 types of penguins. Their title of “emperor” is not only because of their size, but also because of their ability to survive the harshest winters. Antarctic temperatures can fall below -75 degrees, with wind speeds over 120 miles per hour. Emperor penguins have two layers of feathers, a fat reserve to insulate their bodies, and smaller beaks and flippers to minimize heat loss. During the coldest snowstorms, they form giant huddles of 5,000 or more penguins, taking turns around the edge of the circle where it is the coldest.

*Adapted from the Niflaos HaBoreh Explorer series by Rabbi Yaakov Lubin*

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