

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
MAAMIN
Foundation

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life

LESSONS

RECOGNIZING CHESSED


Rav Avrohom Chaim Levin *zt"l* was the *rosh yeshivah* of Telz Chicago for almost 60 years, a beloved *rebbe* to thousands of students. After his *petirah*, his children were looking through some of his notebooks and found fifteen pages that he had written, detailing *hashgacha pratit* that happened to him.

"I had to travel to New York for a Torah Umesorah meeting. My grandchild had a baby, so it worked out to go on the same day, I didn't have to make two trips to New York. Thank You, Hashem."

"I had to cut down the bushes near the house, and I saw the neighbor had trimmed it for me already, so I didn't have to waste time trimming the bushes."

On the day of the 2012 Siyum Hashas, it was raining. The Agudah had ordered 75,000 ponchos just in case, but just a few minutes before six o'clock, when the *siyum* was supposed to start, the rain stopped. The *siyum* was able to continue as planned.

Rav Avrohom Chaim wrote this story in his notebook as an example of Hashem's *hashgacha*. However, what was notable about this was that he did not even attend that *siyum*! He was in Chicago, but he had noticed and written down the *chessed* and *hashgacha* that Hashem performed for Klal Yisrael.

We have to be *mekadesh shem Shamayim* in everything we do, and constantly live higher and push higher. That was the way Rav Avrohom Chaim lived. 

Courtesy of Agudas Yisroel of America



gem

OF THE WEEK

THE LESSON OF SERVITUDE

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The *halachos* of *eved Ivri* are placed at the beginning of our lists of laws, and there are none better-suited to give us insight into the Divine institutions of social justice, to show us how Jewish law differs from other legal systems.


In the *eved Ivri*, we have the one case where the Torah punishes a crime by imposing the loss of freedom—and we soon see that even this is not really a punishment. In practice, the Torah orders that offender to be placed with a family, just as we might do for a juvenile delinquent today.

Note the precautions taken to protect the servant's status within the family, so as to maintain his self-respect. Despite the degradation he has brought upon himself, he should feel that he is capable of earning and giving love. Note how the Torah holds the master responsible for ensuring that his servant's family remains intact, that they do not suffer because of his crime. In depriving him of his freedom, and thus of the ability to provide for his family, the Torah turns that duty over to those who benefit from his labor instead.

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER 

BIRKAS HAMAZON:
LAND OF OUR DREAMS

The second *bracha*, *Nodeh Lecha*, recalls the memory of our homeland at every meal. It was first spoken by Yehoshua upon entering Eretz Yisrael, and its words vibrate with gratitude for the fulfillment of a deep, nostalgic longing: "We thank You, Hashem, for causing our fathers to inherit a precious, good, and spacious land, and for leading us out of Egypt and redeeming us from bondage." Besides for the land, the *bracha* also mentions Torah and *bris milah*. Our possession of the land is conditional upon the observance of the covenant, and the ultimate purpose of our ownership is the realization of Torah in the Jewish state. 

Adapted from *World of Prayer* by Rabbi Elie Munk

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KNOW WHY YOU BELIEVE

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

The key to real *emunah* is to internalize the truth of the Creator speaking to us at Har Sinai.

In a *sefer* of the saintly *tzaddik* Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, *zt"l* (often known by the nickname Rav Chatzkel), we find a talk he gave in yeshivah, based on a startling conversation he had with a *talmid*.

He had asked the *bachur* if he knew that there is a Creator of the world Who controls everything. “Of course,” the *bachur* said promptly—after all, he was a *maamin*!

But Rav Chatzkel pressed on: did he know the source of his *emunah*? On what understanding was it based? The *bachur* had no response.

As a result, Rav Chatzkel said, he realized that a person can live a long life, seventy or eighty years, without ever knowing the source of his *emunah*. He identifies himself as being among the believers, but he does not even know what *emunah* means or what is behind it. His statements have no real meaning.

In his *drasha*, Rav Chatzkel went on to speak at length about the source of our *emunah*: Yetzias Mitzrayim and Matan Torah.

He closed with a very harsh statement. “I know that this *bachur* is not unique in his lack of understanding of the foundations of *emunah*. It is obvious that this is the state of most *bnei yeshivah* of our time. They do not involve themselves in matters of *emunah*. The foundations of their belief are based on what they learned from their teachers in *cheder*.”

These words were said many decades ago. Has the *emunah* of our young people improved since then? This is the question to which Ani Maamin dedicates itself.

I have heard the following said in the name of this *tzaddik*: When you finish learning *alef-beis*, you never need to go back and learn it again. With *emunah*, however, you must never take your eyes off the basics—the existence of a Creator, Yetzias Mitzrayim and Matan Torah.

Prison, with all the despair and degeneration that breeds behind bars, with all the woe and misery it inflicts on the prisoner’s family, has no place in the Torah. Hashem’s law only allows for detention pending trial. In keeping with the prescribed legal procedure, this detention can be of short duration only, especially considering that circumstantial evidence is inadmissible.

But why does the Torah mortgage the offender’s labor only in this case? Why does *eved Ivri* not apply in any case where a person causes damage and does not have the means to pay for it?

Perhaps the reason is that it is the thief who shows the most direct contempt for the idea of private property. Man’s place in the world is based on the concept of ownership, and it is respect for the property of others that makes us truly human. Only in the case of theft is the obligation to pay back imposed on every aspect of the offender’s personality.

Among all the laws of the *eved Ivri*, there is only one that makes him feel his degraded status: namely, that his master may give him a slavewoman, and that any children remain in the master’s possession. Such a woman is forbidden to a free Jew, and there is no *kiddushin* in their relationship. Marriage with her bears only a physical character, not a spiritual one.

Apparently, this *halacha* is meant to instill in his consciousness the fact of his moral decline, as a result of which he forfeited the moral dignity of a man of Israel and sank halfway to the level of a mere physical existence.

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



wonder WORLD

HEALTH FOOD



Does an apple a day keep the doctor away?

Apples are one of the most popular and versatile fruits in the world, with more than 8,000 varieties of different combinations of flavors, colors, and sizes. There is a very old *minhag* to dip an apple in honey on Rosh Hashanah to express our wish for a sweet new year.

There is some truth to the saying “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Apples are not only tasty, but also good for your health. They are rich in fiber, vitamin C, antioxidants, and phytochemicals that can help lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and inflammation, as well as prevent or reduce the risk of various chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Most of the fiber and antioxidants are contained in the peel.

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