

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
MAAMIN
Foundation

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life

LESSONS

EVERYMAN'S HOUR

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There once was a Roman shepherd named Duklat Chazira who was treated with great contempt by the Jews. He gradually became a powerful political figure. When he ascended the throne, he did not forget the indignities he had endured, and resolved to use his newfound power to exact revenge. When he informed the *chachamim*, they managed to persuade him to relent (*Talmud Yerushalmi Terumos* 8:4).

This incident is cited by many *mefarshim* as an illustration of *Pirkei Avos*: "Ein lecha adam she'ein lo *shaah*." Anyone, no matter how powerless, may one day rise to influence. This is yet another reason to exercise care in dealing with others. There is no telling when an insult may come back to haunt us. Often, if there is friction between a town's Jews and non-Jews, one or two troublemakers take it to the next level and post slander online. Once, someone posted a video from a *frum* convention, took a few words out of context, and publicized it for the world to see. The result was heartache for the organization, which found itself in legal trouble. Huge amounts of time and effort were expended to repair the damage. Today, technology makes it possible for anyone to start a "kingdom" of followers. A few bad experiences can be the basis for a blog. Any individual can wreak havoc, using the Internet to spread poisonous messages to an incalculable number of readers. Thus, we must be vigilant in our interactions with the outside world. If we offend others, or give them grounds to resent us, our actions may lead to inestimable harm. 



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OF THE WEEK

ANSWER THE CALL

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

In *Parshas Korach*, the community united against Moshe *Rabbeinu* in objection to Aharon and his family being appointed *kohanim* and given the job of performing the *avodah* in the *mishkan*. To quell their complaints and to show them Whom they were complaining about, *Hashem* proposed a test. Let each household bring a staff inscribed with the name of the head of the household and the tribe to which they belong, and place them in the *mishkan* overnight. The next morning, they will know without a doubt whom *Hashem* has chosen. The staff that blossoms is the one chosen by *Hashem* to be the leader of the *kohanim*. In this simple staff that looks no different from its neighbors, He found the seed for the future flowering and fruit-bearing of the Testimony amidst the people. At the same time, *Aharon ha-kohen* is marked as the rightful leader because it was his staff, out of all the staves from the households of *Levi'im*, that was chosen to bloom.

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powerful
PRAYER



EXILE AND RETURN

The Torah tells us that *geulah* will come when we do *teshuvah*. Most Jews today have lost their connection to Torah and to *Hashem*. Even those who are *shomrei mitzvos* have much to improve. We might despair, but it will happen. Until about forty years ago, many Jews were drifting away from *Yiddishkeit*, but almost none were coming back. Soon, the tide gradually turned. *Yeshivos* were opened for people with limited background, and a trickle became the flood that is the *teshuvah* movement. Today, there are tens of thousands of *baalei teshuvah*, representing the fulfillment of the Torah's promise. 

Adapted from Biur Tefillah (Ani Maamin Foundation)

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By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

I promised last week to share with my readers the simple system of teaching emunah in a compelling manner. Let me set down a few ground rules before we begin. Never present anything that an objective person would not find totally convincing. There is such an abundance of undeniable evidence to every facet of emunah, that presenting something that is merely conjecture weakens the entire presentation.

A second very important principle is that it must be presented in an ascending order, from the ground up. More years ago than I want to put in writing, I was a tenth grade high school student learning algebra. It starts with the first theorem, that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Once that is proved, it becomes an axiom and the basis upon which to prove the next theorem. So, too, with teaching emunah. Everything must start with demonstrating that there is a Creator. When that has been demonstrated to the talmidim with no doubt remaining, then it is possible to move on to the next subject, which is the Divine origin of our Holy Torah. After that will come the substantiation of the Oral Torah.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman, zatzal, wrote that one does not need to be a philosopher in order to believe in Hashem. Rather, the truth is just the opposite. Only a shoteh would not realize that a universe as complex and wondrously planned as we can clearly see must have a Designer, a Creator. The Novi Yeshaya said, "Don't you know, if you haven't heard? Hashem is the G-d of the world, who created the expanses of the earth. He never becomes tired or weary. There is no way to fathom His intelligence." In saying, "Don't you know, if you haven't heard?" the novi means to say that if you were raised in an environment where no one ever told you about Hashem, don't you know it on your own? Just look around at the world and you will automatically understand that there is a G-d Who created and designed it all.

Yeshaya also said the following: "Lift up your eyes and see Who Created these? He brings them out by number and to each he calls a name." At the present time, astronomers are talking of trillions and trillions of stars. No Big Bang or other imaginary theory can account for them To be continued.....

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This test was made to calm the complaining of the people, for they saw it was Hashem, and not Moshe Rabbeinu, who appointed Aharon to his role, and that it was not due to any favoritism on Moshe Rabbeinu's part.

Aharon's staff blossomed and sprouted forth in the way of the almond tree: a way that is unique from most fruit trees. All fruit trees produce leaves, blossoms, and fruit, but the almond does it differently: with zeal, devotion, and vigor, preceding all of its brother trees. While they are still "making up their minds," the almond tree has already completed its work. As soon as the weather warms enough, it begins immediately with the blossoms, whose whole purpose is to produce fruit. Only after the flowers have blossomed, and only for the sake of the fruit, the almond tree then produces leaves, which replenish the stores that the tree has expended to create the blossoms and to further nourish the almonds themselves.

This is a wonderful *mashal* for the tribe of Levi, and shows in a way of perfection, the reason they were chosen for the *avodah*.

Only the *Levi'im* responded when Moshe Rabbeinu called, "*Mi la-Hashem eilai!*" But this distinction comes with a promise to all of *Klal Yisroel*. The same way all the other fruit trees eventually follow the almond and produce fruit, so will the rest of *Klal Yisroel* also eventually follow the example of the *Levi'im* and also "produce fruit." They will see the spiritual development and way of life of the *Levi'im* and, by following their example, will also attain a high spiritual level.



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Unlike most fruit trees, which produce leaf buds before flowering, the almond tree prioritizes its blossoms. Almond trees flower first, developing leaves only after the blossoms drop and fruit development begins. This process relies on nutrients stored in the trunk and roots from the previous season, as the tree switches to active photosynthesis much later. This growth sequence provides a distinct biological advantage: the blossoms become the primary attractor for pollinators when few other nectar sources are available. Additionally, the bare branches grant pollinators easy access and maximize sunlight exposure to enhance fruit set. Finally, delaying leaf emergence protects young foliage from damp, cold nights, reducing the risk of fungal infections and creating a highly effective strategy for success.