

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

INSPIRING HEROISM

Reproduced from "Living Kiddush Hashem" by Rabbi Shraga Freedman, with permission of ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications

When a person makes a *kiddush Hashem*, the positive impact can be beyond his imagination. Take Raoul Wallenberg, the legendary Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews from death at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. He risked his life, was arrested toward the end of the war, and was never heard from again. What led him to commit these extraordinary acts of heroism?

Wallenberg had spent several months in Israel, then known as Palestine, a few years before World War II broke out, in order to learn about the British banking system. He shared a room in a boarding house with a Jewish young man who had fled Germany, and the two roommates developed a close friendship.

The Jewish boy invited Wallenberg to participate in many *Shabbos* meals and other Jewish activities. The two friends parted on good terms, and while Wallenberg's roommate never saw him again after those days,

He knew that Wallenberg had developed a deep appreciation for *Yiddishkeit*. He was certain that their warm relationship had inspired the diplomat's tireless rescue efforts (*For Goodness' Sake, Rabbi Boruch Brull*).

That young refugee had no inkling that his friend would go on to save thousands of Jews from annihilation. He could never have imagined that his kindness would bear remarkable fruit. But just as one negative word can have devastating consequences, a positive gesture can lead to enormous good. 



gem

OF THE WEEK

THE BLUEPRINT OF EXILE

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

In *Parshas Shlach*, ten of the twelve *meraglim* and *Am Yisroel* committed a grave sin. They had just witnessed a multitude of miracles—palpable, visible miracles—that could not be confused with happenstance or coincidence.

These were followed by the miracles at *Har Sinai*, which were, again, undeniably supernatural. Yet, they still doubted *Hashem's* ability to intervene in human affairs, and questioned whether His intervention and assistance would be enough to secure a land full of giants for them. Over and over, they tested *Hashem*, trying to see if His promised help was reliable, actual, and adequate.

Despite Him always coming through, they continued to doubt and question. Because of this, even though *Hashem* forgave their transgressions and decided not to erase them and start anew with *Moshe Rabbeinu* and his descendants, His forgiveness could not be absolute. They had seen Divine revelations up until this point, and yet, those many revelations had not been enough to win their hearts and minds to boundless devotion to *Hashem* and trust in Him.

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powerful
PRAYER 

TEKA B'SHOFAR:
CALLING US HOME

The Jewish people's story was foretold by the Torah—*Churban*, exile, persecution, dispersion. But one prophecy has not yet been fulfilled: the promise of *geulah*. *Parshas Nitzavim* predicts a period of redemption, where *klal Yisrael* will do *teshuvah* with full hearts and be returned to the land of their fathers.

Yeshaya Hanavi tells us that on that day, the call of a great *shofar* will be heard, a signal as the dispersed *Yidden* are finally brought home. Therefore, in this *bracha*, we ask *Hashem* to sound that *shofar* and gather us from the four corners of the earth. 

Adapted from Biur Tefillah (Ani Maamin Foundation)

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A SIMPLE SOLUTION THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

In the past few weeks, I've written about the severe *emunah* deficit in our generation, especially among the youth, and quoted numerous *Gedolim* whose assessment of the situation is precisely the same as my own. As previously stated, many articles have been written about how to address this problem. I have not yet seen one that I believe hits the nail on the head, so I will share what I consider the correct solution to a major problem. If the *talmidim* have questions, ANSWER THEM! If they have doubts, SHOW THEM WHY THERE IS NO REASON FOR DOUBT. Yes, it is actually that simple, and it works 99% of the time. I say this not from conjecture, but from experiences throughout my almost six decades of *chinuch*, and especially since the founding of Ani Maamin.

In 2009, we gave our first major lecture in Monsey. I found a voice message on my phone from Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky, shlita, encouraging me to go and speak everywhere. When I called the Rosh Yeshiva back, I asked him to please tell me if he agrees to what we want to do. We want to give the youth a forum to ask their questions freely, without fear or embarrassment, and receive solid answers. The Rosh Yeshiva replied, "Absolutely!" I wish I were able to transport my readers to such a session, so that they could sense the feeling of relief that is palpable in the room after having explained to them in simple terms why the *emunah* they were raised on is compelling and leaves no room for doubt.

I hope to summarize the approach in the coming weeks, but now I merely want you to hear what the youth have said or written as their response. We'll start with one. Ten years ago, I gave a presentation in Yeshiva Shaarei Torah in Monsey. I asked for enough time to speak shortly and then hold a question and answer session. When asked how much time I need, I responded, "two hours." The *menahel* said that if he tells the *bachurim* how long it is going to be, he'll have a mutiny on his hands. Here is the response to the session: The *Menahel* was astounded that the *bachurim* not only sat for the whole two hours, but were actually disappointed when it ended. Parents called the *Menahel* to tell him how happy the boys were when they came home. Just one more for now.

We have an initiative which I hope to write about soon called the Ani Maamin Challenge, by which the *talmidim* or *talmidos* can read my first book about the very basics of our faith. If they pass a test on it, they receive a hundred dollar reward. They are asked to write what they gained from taking the challenge.

Here is one response out of many more than two hundred:

"I have gained many things from this challenge and wanted to thank you deeply for the opportunity to develop my *emunah* and connection to *Hashem*. Not only have I gone to a new level of *emunah*, I have also disproved all my doubts and know exactly how to prove and explain Judaism to others. During *minyan* over the last couple of weeks, I have felt closer to *Hashem*, at times feeling as if I am actually having a one-on-one conversation. In addition, I am often in groups with many types of people with different *Judaica* backgrounds. From this book, I have learned how to relate to nearly all of them and teach them lessons and ideas I have learned."

Need I say more? It's the most simple approach imaginable, the methodology is easy to learn, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We have run training courses for *mechanchim*, and hope to soon offer another one, *b'ezras Hashem*.  To be continued

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Through this, they showed that they were not worthy to be the generation that possessed the Land. They had seen the whole "weight" of *Hashem's kavod*. He was not an abstract notion based on reason, faith, or conjecture; they had actual, observable experience of Him.

They knew Him to be the Supreme, Omnipotent Force in the midst of all concrete earthly forces. They had seen His "signs" both in *Mitzrayim*—the most highly developed culture of the time—and in the *Midbar*—a wasteland totally devoid of the support of human culture.

It was made clear to them that even the most evolved culture could break down and become nothing if it does not follow *Hashem's* will, and they saw a complete wasteland become hospitable solely because of their devotion to following His will.

They had seen all this and still doubted. Because of this, *Hashem* swore that these men would not merit to see the Land, not solely because they did not deserve it, but also because, in order for the Land to attain its destiny of unimaginable fullness of blossom and blessing, the people in charge of the Land must be worthy of elevating it to that level. If the people see *Hashem*, His rule, and His providence as an actual reality that intervenes in earthly affairs and controls them—if they can see *Hashem* as much as they see the Land—only then can the Land fulfill its destiny. And so, we wait for the generation that is able to see Him fully, for the same blindness that cost their forefathers the right to enter *Hashem's* Land will exile the children from the Land if they do as their forefathers did. We are still in the educational process of learning to see *Hashem* and realizing fully that His Torah is still a vision for the future. The decree of "and all who mock Me will not see" set the whole course of our history. 



wonder WORLD

MEMORY TOOL



How do you remember if you forget something?

People often fail to complete a task, not because they lack self-control or motivation, but simply because they have forgotten. In a study from 2016, researchers found that distinct, unrelated visual reminders worked better than verbal or written reminders. In one of their experiments, they divided the participants into three groups. In the first, they used a written sign to remind participants of their assignment. In the second, they used a picture of a cartoon alien to remind them. The final group, the control, did not have any reminder after the initial instructions. They found that 98% of people in the cartoon alien group completed the task correctly, whereas the written reminder group only performed slightly better than the no-reminder group (78% vs. 71%). The One who created our brains fully knows this. In Parashas Shlach, *Hashem* gives the Yidden an ever-present visual reminder to keep the Torah — tzitzis — so that we may see them, and remember all of His mitzvos and be holy. 