

שיש מצות תמידיות

6
the
CONSTANT
MITZVOS

Introduction

וְהַחַיִּיב שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵי לַעֲשׂוֹתָן אֵינוֹ בְּכָל עֵת רַק בְּזִמְנֵים יְדוּעִים מִן
הַשָּׁנָה אוֹ מִן הַיּוֹם. חוּץ מִשְׁשֶׁה מִצְוֹת מִהֵן שְׁחַיִּיבֵן תְּמִידִי, לֹא
יִפְסַק מֵעַל הָאָדָם אֲפִילוֹ רָגַע בְּכָל יָמָיו, וְאֵלֵּי הֵן:
א. לְהֶאֱמִין בַּשֵּׁם.
ב. שְׁלֹא לְהֶאֱמִין זֹולָתוֹ.
ג. לְיִיחָדוֹ.
ד. לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתוֹ.
ה. לְיִרְאָה אוֹתוֹ.
ו. שְׁלֹא לְתוֹר אַחַר מַחֲשַׁבַת הַלֵּב וּרְאִיית הָעֵינָיִם.

The obligation to fulfill these mitzvos (i.e., the 613 mitzvos of the Torah) is not constant; rather, they are obligatory during specific times of the year or day. *Six mitzvos, however, are obligatory constantly; they should not be absent from one's consciousness for even one second of his life. They are:*

- (1) To have faith in Hashem.
- (2) Not to believe in other gods.
- (3) To understand that He is One.
- (4) To love Him.
- (5) To fear Him.
- (6) Not to stray after the thoughts of our heart and the sight of our eyes.

(Introduction to Sefer HaChinuch)

Introduction

In an introduction to *Sefer HaChinuch*,¹ the author singles out six mitzvos (commandments) that one is obligated to fulfill on a constant basis. These mitzvos, he writes, should not be absent from a person's consciousness for even one second of his life.

These commandments do not involve action; they are meant to be performed through thought alone. Even so, it is difficult to understand the very premise of the obligation to fulfill *Sheish Mitzvos Temidiyos*, Six Constant Mitzvos, for how is it possible to think about six different things at the same time? And even if someone could theoretically master the art of juggling six different thoughts in his mind simultaneously, how would he then go on to fulfill all the other mitzvos of the Torah — let alone lead an otherwise productive life?

It would seem, therefore, that there must be a different idea behind the Six Constant Mitzvos.

✎ Making Decisions Without Active Thought

How many times a day do we think about the force of gravity? It is quite possible that days, years, or decades go by in which we do not think about gravity at all. At the same time, how-

1. *Sefer HaChinuch* is a fundamental text that elucidates the 613 mitzvos of the Torah. Written in the 13th century, it is most often attributed to Rabbi Aharon Ha-Levi of Barcelona (*Ra'ah*), a student of Ramban and Rabbeinu Yonah, and a contemporary of Rashba. This work, *The Six Constant Mitzvos*, is based primarily on *Sefer HaChinuch* (also referred to as *Chinuch*) and Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvos*.

ever, our awareness of the existence of a gravitational pull in the atmosphere is evident in nearly every movement we make. We sip coffee from a mug, and then place the mug down on the table. An astronaut traveling in space could not have done that. He would need some apparatus to hold the mug (and the coffee!) in place. Even the simplest movements we make require an awareness of gravity. We would not be able to walk, lie down, or shake hands without it. Now that we *are* thinking about gravity, we realize that we would not be able to accomplish very much without its existence.

Although we are constantly aware of the force of gravity, we do not need to think about it on a conscious level. Our actions reflect our awareness of this invisible force as a constant presence in the atmosphere, even though we give little or no thought to it.

The idea behind the Six Constant Mitzvos is that each of the six represents an awareness that we must have. These six “awarenesses” should become so ingrained in our psyche that they are reflected in all of our actions.

Juggling six awarenesses may sound as difficult to master as thinking about six different concepts. We will learn, however, that the Six Constant Mitzvos have a cumulative effect, and by mastering the thought processes behind them, we can learn to behave in a way that reflects all six awarenesses simultaneously. Every decision and every movement we make — from the most deliberate to the most mechanical — can be governed by the underlying concepts of the Six Constant Mitzvos, without our stopping to actively think about them.

Practice Makes Perfect

One might argue that six sets of thought processes are very different from gravity. Gravity is intuitive. There are parts of the world in which people are raised without the most rudimentary knowledge of science, and yet they are able to place

their feet on the ground or pick fruits from a tree without having them float away. Perhaps, then, reflexive integration of a concept is possible only with physical, intuitive phenomena, such as gravity, but not with the complex thought processes that are the Six Constant Mitzvos.

Let us take another example from everyday life to show that we can keep extremely complex processes simmering in the background of our mind while performing other tasks in the foreground.

When a person first learns to drive, he is often overwhelmed by the multiple tasks that must be performed simultaneously. He wonders how he will manage to shift between the gas and brake pedals, glance in all the mirrors every few seconds, check the speedometer, keep an eye on traffic lights, and steer the car in the correct direction, all the while paying attention to road signs and traffic conditions. A few months later, the same person will be able to juggle all of those tasks with ease. He will even manage to eat, tune the radio, and carry on conversations with passengers at the same time. Unlike the intuitive awareness of gravity, the act of driving does require conscious training, but once a person masters the skill, he can focus on other complex thoughts and tasks and still drive safely.

When studying the Six Constant Mitzvos, we must focus not only on understanding how to perform them technically, but also on training ourselves to absorb their underlying concepts to the extent that they become ingrained in our psyche and thus intuitive.

This does not mean that we can study these six mitzvos just once and be set for life. As we will see, there is breathtaking beauty and depth to these mitzvos, and the more time we spend studying them and absorbing their underlying concepts, the deeper our awareness and understanding of these concepts will become. And the deeper our awareness becomes, the more consistent we will be in reflecting that awareness in our actions.

WHEN THE EGYPTIANS DEvised A PLAN to subjugate the Jews, the Torah states: וַיִּקְּמוּ מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ ... אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף, *A new king*

arose ... who did not know Yosef (Shemos 1:8). The verse implies that had this Pharaoh known Yosef, he would not have enslaved Yosef's nation. Yosef had single-handedly built the Egyptian economy and demanded nothing in return. His brothers came to Egypt with the sole intention of devoting themselves to the service of Hashem. They were not harboring any secret intentions of ruling the country — they didn't even accept government positions that were offered to them. They would have been willing to volunteer their services had the country needed them, but they preferred to remain in Goshen and focus on loftier pursuits.

There was neither a moral justification nor a political need to enslave them. Yet this new Pharaoh decided to do just that.

Rashi adds a surprising comment to the words, "A new king arose." There wasn't really a new king, he writes. The same Pharaoh who had named Yosef his viceroy now wanted to enslave the Jews. The king wasn't new; only his decrees were new. The old decrees made Yosef second-in-command in Egypt and showed appreciation for the presence of Yosef's family. The new decrees said the Jews are subversives, and we had better enslave them before they drive us out of the land.

What does it mean that the king did not know Yosef? Did he suffer from severe amnesia? Rashi explains that he *pretended* not to know Yosef. But Hashem did not use poetic license in choosing the words in the Torah. It seems that there was something about Pharaoh's behavior that indicated a genuine lack of knowledge of Yosef.

In describing Pharaoh's behavior this way, the Torah is imparting an important message: If you can ignore something, you don't really know it, you don't really understand it, and you haven't really internalized it. If Pharaoh was able to ignore all that Yosef had done for his country, it means that he never really knew him. Had he really known Yosef in the years that he had been the viceroy, Pharaoh could never have done what he did.

This failing exists in each of us to some extent or another. We

study and witness things — and even talk and write about them — without *really* knowing them.

A cab driver who was driving Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, mashgiach of Mir in Europe and later in Ponevezh, related that he once witnessed an open miracle. When secular Israelis finish their army service, they typically unwind by touring some exotic location. After his discharge, this cab driver had gone with a few of his buddies to tour a mountainous region in Africa. One night, they awoke in their tent to hear one of their friends screaming in terror. The boy was enveloped by a huge boa constrictor, which was squeezing him to death.

They had no idea how to free their friend, and they were afraid to do anything to the snake, for fear that they would antagonize it and make it squeeze even harder. Facing what seemed to be inevitable, a member of the group told his friend, “I know that when Jews are about to die, they recite Shema. You should recite it now.”

As soon as the ex-soldier screamed, “Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad,” the snake unwound itself and slithered away into the darkness of night.

“The miracle changed my friend’s life,” the cab driver concluded. “He went directly back to Israel, and is now a thoroughly religious Jew.”

“And what about you?” Rav Yechezkel asked.

“Me?” the driver responded in a quizzical tone. “The Rav doesn’t understand — the snake wasn’t wrapped around me, it was wrapped around my friend.”

This story demonstrates that a person can see something without understanding it, and know something without *really* knowing it. We would hope that most of us would learn a lesson from a friend’s brush with death without having to undergo the experience ourselves. But to some extent, we each have a gap between

what we study and see, and what we succeed in internalizing.

In studying the Six Constant Mitzvos, it is important to develop an initial awareness as a basis for the fulfillment of the mitzvos. We must keep reviewing them, however, to gain deeper perspectives that will enable us to close the gap between logical knowledge of the mitzvos and having that knowledge reflected in our actions on a constant basis.

☞ Why the Need for Constant Mitzvos?

One might wonder why there is a need for constant mitzvos. Is it not possible to lead a wholesome Jewish life and punctiliously observe the commandments without having these six awarenesses reflected in our actions?

To answer that question, let's examine the circumstances that led to two of the most monumental transformations that occurred within the world of Torah Judaism in the modern era — transformations that, although initially met with skepticism and even opposition by great Torah leaders, eventually became accepted by mainstream Torah Jewry.

In the years 1648-49 (5408-5409), centuries of severe persecution of the Jews came to a climax with the horrific Chmielnicki massacres. Hundreds of European Jewish communities were pillaged, and over 100,000 Jews were killed. These savage attacks left the Jews of Eastern Europe in a state of despair and despondency. Few avenues of escape were open to them at that point: the United States of America was far from declaring independence or even establishing its first Jewish community, and Eretz Yisrael lay desolate.

Then, a young man of extraordinary charisma and great genius by the name of Shabbesai Tzvi began to claim that he was the Mashiach. Many Jews in Europe were swept up in his messianic movement, hoping that the redemption he heralded would allow them to escape the persecution and suffering they had endured

in *galus* (exile). Shabbesai Tzvi possessed extensive Torah knowledge and was well-versed in Kabbalah (the mystical portions of the Torah). He claimed that his knowledge of Kabbalah gave him the power to invalidate certain aspects of Torah law.

In 1666, after most of European Jewry had accepted him as the Mashiah and were anxiously awaiting his announcement of their redemption, their hopes were ruthlessly dashed. Shabbesai Tzvi was arrested by the Sultan of Turkey, who offered him an ultimatum: he could convert to Islam, or be executed. He chose to convert.

This fiasco caused European Jewry to sink into even greater despair. Although many people returned to the Torah study and mitzvah observance that had sustained the Jewish people through all the trials and tribulations of exile until then, others lost their faith because of this letdown, and abandoned Judaism. World Jewry was also gripped by suspicion. Anyone who began to express interest in Kabbalah was regarded as a possible renegade who would draw the masses astray, as Shabbesai Tzvi had.

In the mid-1700's, the movement known as *Chassidus* took root. Many secular historians erroneously view *Chassidus* as a movement designed to connect the ignorant masses to Judaism by removing the focus of Jewish observance from Torah study, where it had always been, and instead placing an emphasis on serving Hashem in other ways. This erroneous belief is held to this day by people who fail to take note of the fact that the early leaders of *Chassidus* and the overwhelming majority of their followers were, in fact, great Torah scholars. Although it is true that *Chassidus* appealed to the unlearned, that was a secondary benefit of the movement.

The true motivation driving *Chassidus* was to re-inject vigor into people's observance of Torah and mitzvos. Even among those who clung to the Torah despite oppression and the Shabbesai Tzvi calamity, there were people who had little feeling for Torah study or mitzvah observance. They observed the commandments punctiliously, but with no emotion. *Chassidus* attempted — and, as history bears out, succeeded — in creating a Jew who *lives* for Torah

and mitzvos. It placed emphasis on *enjoying* Judaism, which, as we will see, is part of *Ahavas Hashem* (love of Hashem, the fourth of the constant mitzvos).

Nevertheless, *Chassidus* fell under the suspicion of many Torah leaders, most notably the Gaon of Vilna, because some of its practices — its study of Kabbalah, for instance — resembled Shabbesai Tzvi's. While *Chassidus* became popular in Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, and Rumania, it did not spread as strongly to Lithuania and several other parts of Europe, where the *misnagdim* (those opposed to *Chassidus*) fought it successfully.

Less than a century later, Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant (who would become known as Rav Yisrael Salanter), sensed a staleness developing in Lithuanian Jewry's observance of Torah and mitzvos. He felt that something must be done to invigorate his community, and he founded what is referred to as the "Mussar Movement." The central focus of the movement was the study of certain sections of Torah and teachings of the Sages so intensely that one became emotionally connected to them. Unlike *Chassidus*, *mussar* did not appeal to the unlearned. Nevertheless, it fell under the suspicion of many Torah scholars, who felt that "emotional involvement" with the Torah sounded similar to the ideas that *Chassidus* promulgated.

In certain branches of Novarodok, there were *mussar* sessions that lasted several hours, during which people would sit and repeat a teaching from *Chazal* over and over to themselves until they *felt* it in their bones. No wonder that the movement was opposed by those who felt that the same end could be achieved by studying the halachic portions of Torah in those hours.

Looking back at these two movements through the clear perspective of history, we are able to see that they were nothing less than lifesavers for Torah Jewry. History showed that, far better than other segments of Klal Yisrael, Chassidim were able to withstand the temptations of the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) and the

many “isms” that became popular in the late 19th century and early 20th century. When we look back at the development of Judaism in America, we find that Chassidim were able to strengthen many areas of observance that had floundered until their arrival. Their emotional bond to Judaism formed the bedrock of their unwavering commitment to Torah and allowed them to succeed in building Jewish life where others had failed.

In the non-Chassidic Jewish world, most of the Torah institutions that exist today were founded or led by those associated with the Mussar Movement. For example, the yeshivos of Kelm, Mir, Slabodka, and Novarodok, which were led by great *mussar* masters, produced many of the *gedolei Yisrael* who rebuilt Torah in America and Eretz Yisrael following the destruction of European Jewry. R' Aharon Kotler, R' Reuvein Grozovsky, R' Yaakov Kamenetsky, R' Yitzchak Hutner, R' Yisrael Yaakov Ruderman, R' Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (the Steipler Gaon), R' Chaim Shmulevitz, R' Yechezkel Levenstein, R' Elazar Menachem Man Shach and others all emerged from such yeshivos.

Clearly, the emotional involvement with Torah that was the underlying principle of these two movements was the key to the survival of Torah-true Judaism despite all the existential and spiritual threats to our nation in modern times.

In our study of the Six Constant Mitzvos, we will find that the primary principle behind these mitzvos is harmonious with the principles behind *Chassidus* and *mussar*. These six mitzvos require us to develop an emotional bond with Hashem and His Torah, and not suffice with the mechanical motions of mitzvah observance. And history has proven that it is *not* enough to try to live wholesome Jewish lives without this emotional bond. Judaism — contrary to popular belief — is not a religion predicated solely on laws and actions. An emotional bond to Hashem and His Torah is vital for our continued existence as a nation, and for our own spiritual fulfillment and growth.

TODAY, our connection to Judaism and Torah is being chal-

lenged by issues similar to those that plagued the Jewish world prior to the creation of *Chassidus* and the Mussar Movement. Jews throughout the world, and particularly those in Eretz Yisrael, are being reminded once again that *הֵן עַם לְבָדָד יֹשְׁבֵי*, *They are a nation that will dwell in solitude* (*Bamidbar* 23:9). Israel is castigated time and again by an overwhelming majority of the nations of the world, and anti-Semitic attacks are on the rise in a world that is apparently rethinking the pledge of “Never Again” that it so loudly proclaimed when the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed. After a brief half-century respite, many Jews once again feel unsafe.

Although the era of pre- and post-World War II “isms” may be over, our generation is faced with moral and spiritual challenges that no generation before could have envisioned in their worst nightmares. Instead of causing people to abandon Judaism in favor of some intellectual movement or another, as the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) did in previous generations, today the *yetzer hara* has adopted a different tactic. He allows us to retain our outwardly pious appearance, while distracting us from Hashem and His Torah in the most insidious ways. Instead of appealing to our intellect, he appeals to our emotions, attempting to fill our time with diversions that will leave us with no time to focus on our true purpose in this world.

The *yetzer hara* succeeds when he turns our service of Hashem into rote, and lulls us into going through the motions of Judaism mechanically, with little feeling for what we are doing. This “going through the motions” is very unsatisfying, and leaves us feeling empty. Observance of Torah and mitzvos in a way that lacks feeling and depth becomes frustrating to us, instead of providing us with joy, as it is meant to do. When that happens, we start looking for shortcuts in our service of Hashem.

Now, more than ever, we must find a way to infuse our service of Hashem with emotion and feeling — to *live* for Torah and mitzvos, not just “do” them.

☞ Aim High; Achieve Greatness

Some may feel that the levels of spiritual perfection discussed in this work are beyond us, that it is better to present these mitzvos in a “down-to-earth” practical form. We contend that they should be presented in their pristine, undiluted form, for two reasons:

First, a famous teaching of Chida states, “*Ein davar ha’omeid bifnei haratzon* — nothing stands in the way of desire.” This statement (which is often mistakenly quoted as a teaching of Chazal) is most often understood to mean that if a person has a strong enough desire to do something, nothing will prevent him from succeeding. This is obviously not true, because many people fail to achieve their desires despite the most strenuous efforts.

Imrei Emes interprets the saying differently: indeed we are not always capable of executing our desires, but nothing can obstruct us from *desiring* something, from *trying* to attain lofty goals. “Yes, it was very difficult — even too difficult — but why didn’t you *want* to succeed?”

By discovering the true depth and beauty of perfection, we will at least *aspire* to attain it.

Moreover, if we limit ourselves by setting our sights on mediocrity, we can never achieve more than that. But if we aim for greatness, we can hope to achieve higher levels than anyone would have anticipated.

True, some of the levels of perfect faith, love of Hashem, and fear of Hashem that we will discuss *are* difficult to attain. But when we realize that by applying the principles of the Six Constant Mitzvos in our lives, we can make each moment we spend in this world meaningful, enjoyable, and fulfilling, we will take the time to study and apply each mitzvah, ascending the ladder toward spiritual perfection rung-by-rung.

Let’s begin.

מצוה תמיד
CONSTANT
MITZVAH

1

אֱמוּנָה בַּה'

Faith in Hashem

"נח מצא חן בעיני ה'"

לזכר נשמת

ר' נח צבי בן ר' דוב ז"ל

Mr. Harry Markowitz ז"ל

Dedicated by his wife and children

מצות האמנה במציאות השם יתברך

The mitzvah to believe in the existence of Hashem

להאמין שיש לעולם אלוך אחד שהמציא כל הנמצא, ומכחו וּחִפְצוֹ הָיָה כָּל מַה שֶׁהוּא, וְשֶׁהָיָה, וְשֶׁיְהִיָּה לְעַדִּי עַד, וְכִי הוּא הוֹצִיאֲנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְנָתַן לָנוּ הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּתַחֲלִילַת נְתִינַת הַתּוֹרָה [שְׁמוֹת כ, ב], "אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם" וגו', וּפִירוּשׁוֹ בְּאֵלוֹ אָמַר, תִּדְעוּ וְתִאֱמִינוּ שִׁישׁ לְעוֹלָם אֱלֹהִים, כִּי מִלַּת "אֲנֹכִי" תּוֹרָה עַל הַמְּצִיאוֹת. וְאֲשֶׁר אָמַר "אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ" וגו', לֹאמַר שֶׁלֹּא יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם לְקַחַת עֵינֵי צֵאתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדוֹת מִצְרַיִם וּמִכּוֹת הַמִּצְרַיִם דְּרַךְ מִקְרָה, אֲלֵא דְעוּ שֶׁאֲנֹכִי הוּא שֶׁהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּחַפְזָךְ וּבְהַשְׁגָּחָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִבְטִיחַ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב.

We must believe that there is one God in the world, Who created all that exists, and in Whose power and will everything came to be; that He has always been and will forever be, that He removed us from Egypt, and that He gave us the Torah. We derive this mitzvah from the verse, "I am Hashem, your God, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt" (*Shemos 20:2*), which means, "Know and believe that there is a God in the world" (for the word *Anochi*, I, assumes the existence of the One speaking). By saying, "Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt," Hashem tells us, "Do not allow your heart to convince you that your removal from Egypt and the plagues that led to the defeat of the Egyptians were mere coincidences. Rather, know that I took you out [of Egypt] with Divine intervention, as I pledged to your forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov."

(*Chinuch, Mitzvah 25*)

Constant
Mitzvah

1

מצוה
תמידית

אֱמוּנָה בַּה' — FAITH
IN HASHEM

I: The Need To Internalize

A man from England once visited the Chazon Ish. As the man was preparing to leave, he asked what message he could relay to the Jews back home.

*“The Torah states: נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו, Noach was a righteous man, perfect **in his generation**” (Bereishis 6:9), said the Chazon Ish. Chazal deduced that a person is judged based on the level of his generation.*

The Chazon Ish continued, “Tell the Jews of England that the challenge of our generation is to strengthen ourselves in Emunah (faith) in Hashem.”

The first of the Six Constant Mitzvos is: אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, *I am Hashem, your God, Who has taken you out of the Land of Egypt (Shemos 20:2)*. This mitzvah is often referred to as *Emunah* (Faith).

Since these words come from the first verse of the Ten Commandments, we assume that this verse is the first of those com-

mandments, and according to most *Rishonim*, our assumption is correct.

Surprisingly, however, some *Rishonim* (Bahag and Rav Saadiah Gaon) maintain that this is not a commandment at all. Their case is so compelling, in fact, that the burden of proof is on those who disagree.

When a teacher walks into a classroom on the first day of the school year and says, “Good morning, I am your teacher, Mr. Smith,” he has not instructed anyone to do anything. He simply introduced himself. In the same way, the words “I am Hashem, your God” do not seem to be a commandment, contend Bahag and Rav Saadiah Gaon, but a preamble: “I am Hashem, your God; therefore, you must obey Me when I command you to do A, B, and C.”

The majority of *Rishonim*, however — Rambam and *Chinuch* among them — maintain that this verse contains the mitzvah of *Emunah*, faith that Hashem exists. According to them, the parallel drawn from a schoolteacher’s introduction is inaccurate, because his students need not exercise “faith” in order to believe that he is there. They see him. His greeting to his class, therefore, is no more than an introduction.

Since we cannot see Hashem, however, when He states, “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*,” He is not merely introducing Himself — He is commanding us to believe that He exists.

But this explanation is insufficient. If *Anochi* were intended as a commandment, Hashem should have stated explicitly, “I am God. Believe that I exist.” Why couch the commandment as an “introductory” statement — “I am Hashem, your God”? Moreover, it would seem that commanding people to believe that God exists is either futile or redundant. Those who doubt His existence do not study the commandments to begin with, and even if they do, they are unlikely to believe simply because they read the verse, “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*.” And if the verse is addressed to those who already believe, why must they be commanded to believe?

📖 Knowledge vs. Belief

In codifying the mitzvah of *Emunah* in the very first lines of *Yad HaChazakah*, Rambam writes that *the* fundamental of Judaism is, “*leida* (to know) that there is a First Existence that created all that exists” (*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1). It is interesting that Rambam does not say that we are commanded to “believe”; he says the commandment is to “know.” What is the difference between belief and knowledge?

To differentiate between the two, we must remember that the Revelation at Sinai did not occur in a vacuum. It is not as if 600,000 men, along with their wives, children, and the souls of all of their descendants, were wandering through a desert, when suddenly the heavens split and Hashem said, “I am Hashem, your God.” The Revelation was the culmination of a process that began when Hashem heeded the cries of the Jewish nation enslaved in Egypt and struck the Egyptians with the plagues. The process continued when the Jews left Egypt, and when Hashem split the *Yam Suf* (Sea of Reeds) and saved them from the Egyptian pursuers.

Before that process, there may have been some doubt about who controlled the world. The Egyptians were idolaters who served the Nile, sheep, and Pharaoh, among other gods. They were also experts in *kishuf* (black magic), which occasionally enabled them to make nature conform to their wishes. The Jews who emerged from the *Yam Suf* understood clearly that none of those forces had any power. They had seen all the Egyptian gods defeated: the water of the Nile had been turned into blood, sheep died in the plagues of *dever* (pestilence) and *barad* (hail), and Pharaoh humbly came to beg Moshe for mercy when he thought he would die during *Makkas Bechoros* (Plague of the Firstborn). Pharaoh’s necromancers had also admitted defeat when they could not duplicate some of the plagues with their black magic. Logic dictated that there must be

some unseen Force controlling the world, and when Moshe identified that Force to be Hashem, we *believed* him.

At Sinai, there was a new element: we *saw* a manifestation of Hashem's Presence. We experienced the absolute reality of His existence. Once the Divine Presence descended and declared, "I am Hashem, your God, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt," we *knew* that He existed. Belief had become knowledge. According to Rambam, the mitzvah is to recreate the certainty we had at Sinai — to *know* that Hashem exists, not just believe it. Similarly, *Chinuch* states that the mitzvah of *Emunah* is to take the basic level of faith that already exists in our mind, build on it and internalize it, so that we feel Hashem's influence with clarity and certainty.

These *Rishonim* present us with what seems to be an insurmountable challenge. The Jewish people who stood at Sinai were able to be certain of Hashem's existence because they saw a manifestation of His Presence. We, unfortunately, are not privy to such a phenomenal display. We do not get to "see sound" and "hear sights" as they did. Is it really possible for us to attain the level of certainty that Rambam and *Chinuch* require?

☞ Are We All Philosophers?

Rambam writes that the way to come to positive proof of Hashem's existence is to realize that there is no other explanation for First Existence. All other systems of explaining Creation fall short when they get back to the first step. They claim to have an explanation for step two, or two million, but they can never explain step one.

It would seem that Rambam maintains that in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *Emunah*, each Jew must be an analytical philosopher. But few human beings can grasp such deep philosophical proofs. Does that mean that most people are unable to fulfill the mitzvah of *Emunah*?

Chinuch teaches that there are simpler methods of fulfilling this mitzvah. He writes that there are three ways to internalize *Emunah*:

(1) Talk About Emunah

When we talk about *Emunah*, both to others and to ourselves, it penetrates deep into our hearts and becomes part of our consciousness.

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, mashgiach of Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov, once traveled to Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, the mashgiach of Ponevezh, to discuss a difficulty he was having with one of his students. When they were done, Rav Wolbe turned to leave, but Rav Chatzkel called him back.

"Tell me, do you know that there is a Creator?"

Rav Wolbe was shocked. He assumed that there must be some hidden depth to Rav Chatzkel's question, but he could not understand what it was.

"Yes," he answered after a few moments.

Apparently unsatisfied, Rav Chatzkel repeated, "Do you REALLY know that the world has a Creator?"

Once again, Rav Wolbe paused, and again said, "Yes, I know that there is a Creator."

"Good," replied Rav Chatzkel. "Then go back and tell your talmidim that there is a Creator."

"It took a long time for me to understand what Rav Chatzkel wanted," recalled Rav Wolbe. "Two weeks after this incident, I finally realized what he meant. There are people who go through their daily lives, studying Torah, performing mitzvoos — living as all good Jews should — without feeling in the depth of their hearts that there is a Creator. Rav Chatzkel was telling me that I should be sure to imbue my students with the knowledge and feeling of Hashem's existence."

(2) Sacrifice for Emunah

Chinuch teaches that when we *act* with *Emunah*, not only do we show that Hashem's existence is real to us, we also *strengthen* our

Emunah. Each time we make a decision to act in a certain manner because we feel that Hashem is watching us, we strengthen our faith in Him.

Sacrifice comes on two levels, and the greater the sacrifice, the more our *Emunah* will grow from it. The ultimate level of sacrifice is when a person is ready to give his life for his *Emunah*. The very last breath of a person who allows himself to be killed rather than deny his faith in Hashem will be accompanied by a level of perfect clarity of Hashem's existence.

Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach would often tell the following poignant story that occurred during the Holocaust:

A group of Jews was taken to die in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. As they were waiting on line, someone announced, "Yidden, today is Simchas Torah! We have to rejoice!"

"Rejoice?" those surrounding him wondered. "How can we rejoice? We don't have a Sefer Torah to dance with. The Nazis have taken every vestige of Godliness from us. How can we rejoice?"

No sooner did they ask the question, than they found the answer. "We may not have anything to rejoice with, but we have the Creator. They can never take Hashem away from us. Let us rejoice and dance with Hashem."

Rav Shach would describe how they danced away the last few moments of their lives, rejoicing with the absolute certainty that Hashem was with them. "All feelings of happiness we can experience in this world pale in comparison to what those Jews felt," Rav Shach would conclude. "No experience on earth can compare to the joy felt by Jews, dancing with Hashem, on the way to the gas chambers."

Sacrifice does not necessarily mean dying, however. The second level of sacrifice can be experienced daily. When a person has a chance to earn money illicitly and refrains from doing so

because he realizes that Hashem is watching him, he is displaying his *Emunah*. A person sitting with a can of tuna at a business meeting held in an elegant, nonkosher restaurant is displaying *Emunah*. Each instance in which we sacrifice for our belief, our faith increases in proportion to the difficulty involved.¹

(3) Use Wisdom To Build Emunah

Chinuch writes that while every Jew can build his *Emunah* through talking about it and sacrificing for it, some are fortunate enough to be able to use wisdom to solidify their faith. Those who utilize wisdom to build *Emunah* fulfill the mitzvah in the most meaningful manner, concludes *Chinuch*.

Chinuch does not limit the mitzvah of *Emunah* to those who can appreciate the nuances of philosophy, as Rambam does, but he agrees that the most meaningful fulfillment of the mitzvah is through the use of philosophical proof.

There must be another side to this issue. Is there no value in *Emunah peshutah*, simple faith in the existence of God without examining the philosophical proofs?

☞ You Must Use Intelligence

S*efer HaKuzari*, written by Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, mentions the value of accepting Hashem's existence without logical proof.

Nevertheless, it is *Kuzari* that points out that while all other religions began with a purported revelation to a single prophet, Juda-

1. In studying Rambam's opinion, we chose the most common definition of *leida* (to know), which led us to the conclusion that Rambam considers *Emunah* a primarily philosophical mitzvah. *Chinuch's* mention of the concept of acting with *Emunah* brings to mind an additional usage of *leida*, which appears in the verse: וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ, *Adam had known his wife Chavah*" (*Bereishis* 4:1). This usage suggests an intimate form of knowledge that would require one to *act* in accordance with that knowledge. We can say, therefore, that Rambam agrees that philosophical knowledge of God's existence is insufficient. The knowledge of Hashem's existence must be clear enough to cause one to act in a manner that reflects that knowledge, as we shall explain on pages 65-66.

ism claims that God revealed Himself to the *entire* nation. A single person can emerge from a cave and say that God revealed Himself to him. If he is powerful and charismatic enough, he can base a religion on that claim. But it is impossible for 600,000 men to agree on a fabrication. If the story of the Revelation at Sinai were untrue, there would certainly have been many denying the story, and it could never have gained credibility.

At an outreach seminar, the famed speaker Rabbi Amnon Yitzchak was challenged by an irreligious police detective. The man claimed that since no one alive could verify the stories in the Torah, he could not believe that they were true.

“Do you remember whether we celebrated Pesach last year?” Rav Amnon Yitzchak asked.

“Yes, we did,” replied the detective.

“How about five years ago?” asked Rav Yitzchak.

“Of course,” responded the detective.

“And ten years ago?”

“YES!” snapped the detective, slowly losing his patience.

“Now I am going to ask you a difficult question,” continued Rav Yitzchak. “I know that you were not alive 50 years ago, but do you think that the Jews who were alive then celebrated Pesach?”

“Why not?” replied the detective.

“How about 100 years ago?”

“Certainly” shouted the detective. “They celebrated Pesach 100 years ago, and 1,000 years ago, too.”

“So when did the Jews start celebrating Pesach?” asked Rav Yitzchak.

“When they left Egypt!” replied the detective.

“What?” exclaimed Rav Yitzchak. “I thought you don’t believe that they left Egypt!”

It is difficult to think back and envision events that occurred so long ago, but it is illogical to doubt their existence. How could

such clever fabrications become accepted by an entire nation and be transmitted from parent to child throughout the generations? This line of reasoning, which *Chinuch* expresses in the words, “*Ein adam morish sheker l’vanav* — a man does not transmit lies to his children,” is one of the powerful proofs of the truth of Torah.

But if *Kuzari* considers the simple acceptance of God to be a true level of *Emunah*, why does it bother recording such logical proof? A similar question can be posed on *Sefer Halkarim*, by Rabbi Yosef Albo, who writes that there is a value to the simple acceptance of God. He writes, however, that you cannot believe a person who tells you that a diagonal line drawn from one corner of a square to the other is shorter than the side of the square. You cannot believe something that your heart tells you is false. You either consider Hashem’s existence logical, or you don’t really believe it.

It appears that the *Rishonim* agree that we cannot have proper *Emunah* without thinking about it altogether. The primary difference between Rambam and *Kuzari* is that Rambam examines the subject of *Emunah* as an “outsider,” going all the way back to Creation and reasoning that God is the only way of explaining it, while *Kuzari* begins its examination as an “insider,” accepting the Torah as a given and then seeking proof that it is true.

All agree, however, that *Emunah*, even *Emunah peshutah*, requires thought. One may not feel a need to delve into Rambam’s philosophical proof. One may accept the Torah as a given and build *Emunah* through *Kuzari*’s proof — but that, too, requires intelligent thought. Those whose faith stems from a need to solve their insecurities or from a need to have Someone to pray to in stressful times have not fulfilled the mitzvah of *Emunah*.

☞ Yes, But ...

We have ascertained that it is necessary to come to calculated knowledge of Hashem’s existence. But why is *Emunah* a constant mitzvah? Why is it so important to internalize it, and work

to clarify and solidify it every second of our lives?

In order to face the challenges that we confront at every turn, we must make God's Presence a constant in our lives.

Imagine an ostensibly religious person who is less-than-honest in business. If you ask him if he believes in God, he will certainly tell you that he does. "But if you believe in God," you may ask, "why would you cheat or lie to earn money? Don't you realize that God commands us not to lie and cheat?"

An individual with some measure of self-respect probably won't respond, but in his mind he might think, *I know that God exists, but ...*

That modifier, the dangling "but" that people utilize to justify actions that run contrary to God's will, can be eliminated only through the internalization of *Emunah*.

No one stands in the middle of a busy street and says, "I know that a car can injure or kill me, but I'm not in the mood of going onto the sidewalk."

If God's existence is a fact of life, if one uses all the tools mentioned above to internalize *Emunah* — and a few more that we will discuss below — one *knows* that God is there. And when God is there, there are no "buts."

II: Living for a Purpose

Although the basic element of *Emunah* is to know that God exists, the *Rishonim* teach us that *Emunah* is far more complex.

Chinuch adds more aspects to the mitzvah, all derived from the verse: אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, *I am Hashem, your God, Who has taken you out of the Land of Egypt.*

According to *Chinuch*, a *maamin* (believer) is someone who believes that:

- (1) There is *one* God.²
- (2) The one God is responsible for all that exists, has existed, and will exist, both in deciding what to create, and being the only One with the power to carry out His decisions.
- (3) The God responsible for Creation also took us out of Egypt.

Chinuch adds that we should not allow our heart to convince us that all the miracles surrounding the Exodus were mere coincidences. Rather, we must believe that Hashem performed those miracles in fulfillment of His pledge to our ancestors that He would take us out of Egypt.

- (4) The God Who created the world and took us out of Egypt gave us the Torah.

Sefer Mitzvos HaKatzar [*Smak*] (*Mitzvah* 1), by one of the Tosafists, adds one more factor.

2. *Chinuch* writes that all of these factors are alluded to in the verse of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*. The words *I am Hashem* mean that Hashem is the One and Only God. *Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt* teaches that we must believe that Hashem liberated us. The fact that these were the first words we heard at Sinai indicates that we must believe that He gave us everything that followed, i.e., the entire Torah.

The Talmud (*Shabbos* 31a) states that one of the questions a person will be asked on the Day of Judgment is, “*Tzipisa li’shuah* — did you await the salvation (i.e., the coming of Mashiach)?”

Smak reasons that we would not be asked whether we awaited salvation if we were never commanded explicitly to do so. Where do we find a commandment to await Mashiach? He answers that the source of this mitzvah is the verse of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*. Hashem pledged that He would take us out of Egypt, and He also pledged to redeem us from our current exile. Just as the mitzvah of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* requires us to believe that Hashem redeemed us from the Egyptian exile, so must we have faith that He will eventually lead us out of our current exile through the Final Redemption.

Thus, the *Rishonim* provide us with a list of five factors of which we must be cognizant in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *Emunah*. Are we really expected to keep track of all five of these factors every single second of our lives? We would never get to the rest of the constant mitzvos, let alone all the other things we must do in order to live!

As we explained earlier,³ the underlying concept of the constant mitzvos is not to reflect on all of their aspects every second of the day.⁴ Many pieces of information are stored in our subconscious mind, and although we never really think about them actively, we reflect them through our actions. When a person walks into a room and turns on a light, does he first think, “It is dark. If I want to avoid bumping into things, I had better turn on the light”? Just as one keeps track of whether it is night or day without focusing on it, *Emunah* must be so ingrained in our heart and mind that it is reflected in our actions.

3. See Introduction, pages 41-43.

4. *Be’ur Halachah* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 1, s.v. *Hu*) does write that one will receive immeasurable reward for each second spent contemplating these mitzvos. Clearly, however, there must be some way to fulfill these obligatory mitzvos without sitting and contemplating them, or we could not lead productive lives.

That might be easy if *Emunah* required only that our actions reflect our recognition of God's existence. But how can we reflect our belief in all of the factors listed in the *Rishonim*? There must be one concept that unites all the aspects of *Emunah*, and it is through reflecting our belief in that concept that we can fulfill the mitzvah of *Emunah* every second of the day.

🕊️ Purpose: In the World

If there is one word that accurately represents God's existence, His Oneness, His being the sole Creator, the Exodus from Egypt, the transmission of the Torah, and the Final Redemption — that word is *purpose*.

Let us start from the end. Why does Mashiach *have* to come? We may need him to redeem us from our travails — both on a personal and national level — but does that mean that he *must* come?

Maharal writes that Mashiach must come because this world is not an end in itself. Hashem created the world and everything in it to enable us to indulge in the greatest pleasure of all: to bask in the Glory of His *Shechinah* (Divine Presence).⁵ We can enjoy that pleasure only when all of creation has attained perfection, which can happen only when Mashiach comes.⁶ 'We are sure that Mashiach will come, therefore, because we know that Hashem will orchestrate events in a manner that will lead to the fulfillment of His will, which can occur only through Mashiach's arrival. We await him daily — in accordance with one of *Rambam's* Thirteen Fundamentals of Faith — thereby displaying our cognizance of the true purpose of the world and our desire to experience its perfection.

If we review the factors that *Chinuch* considers part of the mitz-

5. See *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chapter 1.

6. As we will show in the fourth mitzvah, *Ahavas Hashem*, our sojourn through this world is also most enjoyable when we develop a close relationship with Hashem. The *ultimate* pleasure, however, will be attainable only when the world reaches perfection.

vah of *Emunah*, we find that they all fit into the *purpose* for which Hashem created the world:

(1) Belief in one God.

It is clear that *Chinuch* cannot be suggesting that the belief that there is only one God is part of the mitzvah of *Emunah*, because that belief is the subject of a separate constant mitzvah called *Yichud Hashem* (belief in the Oneness of Hashem). Rather, *Chinuch* is teaching that *Emunah* includes the belief that Hashem had one *purpose* in creating this world: to enable us to bask in His Glory.

(2) Belief that the one God created all that existed, exists, and will exist, both in terms of deciding what to create and having the power to create them.

It is axiomatic that there must be some purpose necessitating all of Creation.

(3) The God responsible for Creation took us out of Egypt.

The Exodus from Egypt — and the belief that it was Hashem Who performed all those wondrous miracles — reinforces the faith that Hashem did not abandon the world after Creation; He controls even the minutest details through *hashgachah pratis* (Divine Providence).

Just as we must believe that Hashem heeded our cries and led us out of Egypt through a series of events — thereby bringing the world closer to perfection — so too do we believe that He orchestrates world events until this very day, steadily bringing the world closer to perfection.

(4) God gave us the Torah.

Since Hashem created the world so that we can take pleasure in His Presence, it follows that He must have given us a guide with which to perfect the world and hasten the day when that would become possible. That guide is the Torah.⁷

7. We must realize, however, that Hashem can — and will — bring the world to spiritual perfection with or without our involvement. He allows us to take part in

When we internalize these beliefs and start to view the world through the proper perspective, historical events that are otherwise inexplicable begin to make sense. We learn to view history in terms of the world being moved closer to perfection, not as a series of unrelated events.

Shortly after the Holocaust, a survivor came to visit the Chazon Ish. The man had been a believer prior to the war, but the atrocities he had witnessed shook his faith. He asked the question that many others asked at the time: How could Hashem allow such destruction to take place?

“If you were to see a world-class tailor take a bolt of expensive cloth and cut it into pieces, would you ask why he ruined the cloth?” asked the Chazon Ish. “You would understand that he will create a stunning garment from those pieces.

“During the Holocaust, Hashem shredded the world — and European Jewry in particular — into pieces. You can be sure that the resulting ‘garment’ will be wondrous.”

🕊️ Purpose: In our Lives

An *Emunah*-filled outlook on life is not only essential for understanding history; it also enables us to understand events that occur in our own lives. Once you realize that the purpose of the world — and your purpose as a player in it — is to attain perfection, you begin to notice Hashem’s Hand in your life. You begin to view troublesome events as challenges that will help you grow. You no longer take the good for granted; you realize that Hashem is giving you tools with which to advance. You cease to view events in your life as random occurrences. Every event — major or minor — begins to fit into the general purpose of the

perfecting the world for *our own* benefit, so that we can enjoy the reward we will receive for our efforts (see pages 133-135).

world. *Emunah* becomes part of your life, filling every second of the day, and then begins to be reflected in your actions.

One book of *Tanach* is devoted entirely to teaching us to view the world through this perspective: *Megillas Esther*. The Talmud (*Megillah* 7a) entertains the possibility that *Megillas Esther* is not actually part of *Tanach*. The Book of *Esther* does not contain overt prophecies — we do not read of any communication between Hashem and Mordechai or Esther — and it does not record a single event that we would classify as a miracle.

It is clear, however, that *Megillas Esther* is not merely an account of events that occurred in Media and Persia over two millennia ago. The penultimate verse of *Esther* reads: וְכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה תְקִפּוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ וּפְרָשֵׁת גְּדֻלַּת מְרֹדְכַי אֲשֶׁר גִּדְּלוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ הַלּוֹא הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי וּפְרָס מְדֵי וּפְרָס, *All [Achashveirosh's] mighty and powerful acts, and the account of the greatness of Mordechai, whom the king promoted, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia* (10:2). Why must we resort to secular sources for the rest of the story? Why doesn't the Book of *Esther* relate what became of Achashveirosh, and what Mordechai accomplished?

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky considers this verse to be one of the most pertinent verses in the *Megillah*, for it delineates what this book is about. The objective of *Megillas Esther* is not to teach us history. There are enough history books in the archives of Media and Persia. The *Megillah* was written to teach us to notice Divine Providence. It strings together a series of seemingly unrelated events that occurred over a period of nine years. Only when we read the sequence of events as they are recorded in the *Megillah* do we realize that Hashem prepared the cure before the malady: Vashti rebelled against Achashveirosh and was deposed, paving the way for Esther to become queen, and for Mordechai to save the king's life, thus placing them into position to save the Jewish people — even before Haman's decree began to ruminate in his head. Had these events not been listed together in the *Megillah*, we probably would not notice the relationship between them.

The *Megillah* is not about history, but about destiny. It is part of

Tanach because it teaches us to examine our lives and try to see how each event fits into Hashem's plan for our personal advancement. Think about the grand events in your own life: the person you married, and the person you *didn't* marry; the job you accepted, and the one that you really wanted but did not get; the teachers who influenced you. You may start to notice a pattern. Sometimes the grand events are not enough. You will have to focus on the minutiae of life: people you met — seemingly by chance — who affected you in some way; a train you missed that caused you to see an advertisement on the next train that helped you grow; a ride you took with a friend, during which you overheard a conversation that bore an important message for your own life.

Such introspection can boost your *Emunah*, as you begin to make sense of your life and the path that has been paved for you. It might be painful sometimes. There might be questions. There may be events that you simply cannot understand. Don't forget — you are in the middle of the story. If we were to stop reading the *Megillah* somewhere in the middle, we wouldn't be able to make sense of it. We should extrapolate the message of the *Megillah* and view it as a guide for our own lives, and have faith that once we move on to the next world, all our questions will be answered.

On Sunday October 9, 1994, Nachshon Wachsman, an Israeli soldier returning to his home in Jerusalem from a training course in the North, was kidnaped by Hamas terrorists. Two days later, Hamas gave Israel an ultimatum: if they would not release Hamas leaders and terrorists serving jail sentences, Nachshon would be executed at 8 p.m. on Friday night.

The State of Israel was mobilized in one of the greatest displays of unity since the time the State was founded.

To quote Esther Wachsman, Nachshon's mother:

I asked women throughout the world to light an extra Sabbath candle for my son. From about 30,000 letters that poured into our home, I learned of thousands of women

who had never lit Sabbath candles, who did so for the sake of our son — who had become a symbol of everyone’s son, brother, friend.

On Thursday night, 24 hours before the ultimatum, a prayer vigil was held at the Western Wall and, at the same hour, prayer vigils were held throughout the world in synagogues, schools, community centers, public squares . . . throughout the world. People of good faith everywhere hoped and pleaded and prayed for Nachshon.

At the Western Wall 100,000 people gathered with almost no notice — Chassidim in black coats and long side curls swayed and prayed and cried, side by side with young men in torn jeans, ponytails, and earrings. There was total unity and solidarity of purpose — religious and secular, left wing and right wing, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, old and young, rich and poor — an occurrence unprecedented in our sadly fragmented society.

Unfortunately, the salvation that everyone expected did not come. Israeli intelligence learned where Nachshon was being held. An elite rescue team raided the house, but Nachshon was killed along with Nir Poraz, the captain of the rescue unit.

Many people were left with questions, but Mr. and Mrs. Wachsman were not. Mr. Wachsman asked Nachshon’s rosh yeshivah, Rabbi Mordechai Alon, to include in his eulogy that a father would like to say “yes” to his children all the time, but there are times when he must say “no.” World Jewry had begged Hashem to return Nachshon, but for reasons unknown to us, Hashem, our Merciful Father in Heaven, said no.

Will viewing the world with *Emunah* explain every detail of our lives? No. But it is likely to help us notice the pattern. We will begin to see ourselves being drawn closer to perfection — just as the world took a step closer to perfection during Nachshon Wachsman’s captivity — and even if we cannot make sense of the

outcome, we can accept the fact that Hashem is bringing us closer and closer to Him.

🕊️ **Something To Rely Upon**

Life can be frightening without *Emunah*. The world is moving at a dizzying pace, and technological advancements bring us live reports of world events that we would not have been aware of had we lived 100 years ago. *Emunah* allows us to understand some of these events, but more importantly, it gives us the sense of security that Someone is orchestrating each and every one of them.

A man once came to the Chofetz Chaim to bemoan his lot in life. "I earn my livelihood as a peddler, traveling from village to village. Sometimes I am away from home for a few days, sometimes for a few weeks. I travel through the bitter cold of winter and under the blazing summer sun. Until recently, I was able to comfort myself in my travels, because I knew that in a matter of days or weeks I would be able to go home, where my beloved wife would be waiting for me with some good food, a comfortable bed, and the radiant warmth of a Jewish home.

"Recently, however, my wife died. Now, not only do I have to suffer from my conditions on the road, but I don't even have the comfort of knowing that I will eventually be able to restore my strength; I have no home to return to."

*The Chofetz Chaim extracted an important message from this man's tale of woe. Our journey through this world is at times filled with pain and difficulty. Without *Emunah*, one can become despondent during such times. Fortunate are those who realize that this world is fleeting, that every measure of pain has a purpose, and that they will soon be able to return "home" and enjoy the warmth of the Divine Presence in the World to Come.*

III: Practical Emunah

We now understand why it is important to internalize *Emunah*, and we know that the mitzvah of *Emunah* includes the belief that the world was created for a purpose. Now comes the hard part: reflecting that belief through our actions on a practical level.

Let us look at three examples, following the chronological order of a day in the life of a Jew, to see how practical *Emunah* should affect our lives.

☞ **Setting Hashem Before You**

In his first gloss to *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim*, commenting on *Shulchan Aruch's* teaching of how a Jew should arise each morning, Rema writes:

שְׁוִיתִי ה' לְפָנָי תָּמִיד, *I have set Hashem before me always (Tehillim 16:8)*, is an essential principle in following the Torah and in the virtues of the righteous. If a person lives with the constant realization that Hashem is watching him, he will consider his conduct more carefully than if he feels that he is not under observation.

While Rema's teaching applies to every decision we make in life, let us focus on just one practical point. Are we supposed to stand out as much as possible, or should we try to avoid publicity? Are we supposed to make our observance obvious to others, or should we try to conceal our virtues?

There are valid arguments for each side. On the one hand, we can teach others by making our observance noticeable. On the other

hand, there is a concept of modesty, of shunning recognition. How should we behave?

The precept of “setting Hashem before ourselves always” requires us to judge on a case-by-case basis.

There are times when we need to show publicly that we are willing to stand up for our rights to observe Torah and mitzvos, and even to risk our lives for our observance. And there are instances in which we can teach others by example. To maintain our privacy in such instances is not modesty, but selfishness.

For the most part, however, our mission in this world is to fade into the background. The righteous Jews who lived in the *shtetls* of Europe or the Old City of Jerusalem in the early 20th century would have been happiest if no one would have known that they were born, and no one would have taken note when they died. They just wanted to study Torah and serve Hashem — to become great without anyone ever discovering their greatness. Being discovered might cause them to become vain, as human recognition will almost always do. They went out of their way to hide their deeds, to be as inconspicuous as possible.

A man once asked Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky’s “hoiz bachur” (young man who assisted the Rav in his later years) what he had observed during his years of serving such a great man.

“Nothing,” the man replied. “Absolutely nothing.”

Rav Yaakov would determinedly consider all of his actions in advance to avoid letting anyone see any of the halachic stringencies he kept.

Emunah allows you to become great — quietly. You feel comfortable with the fact that God knows that you are great, and you shun recognition, unless that recognition will be helpful to others.

☞ Talk to Hashem

After rising with God on our mind, we proceed to *daven*. All forms of *tefillah* (prayer) imply *Emunah*, because a person praying before God obviously believes that He exists. But there is one form of *tefillah* that indicates a deeper level of faith.

The Torah states: וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאֲרָצְכֶם עַל הַצָּר הַצָּרֵר אֹתְכֶם וְהִרְעַתְתֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְנִזְכַּרְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְנוֹשַׁעְתֶּם מֵאִיְבֹיְכֶם. *When you go to wage war in your Land against an enemy who oppresses you, you shall sound short blasts of the trumpets, and you shall be remembered before Hashem, your God, and you shall be saved from your foes (Bamidbar 10:9).*

This verse is astounding. Does Hashem forget us if we do not blow trumpets? Must we sound trumpet blasts to remind Him that we are in trouble?

Ramban writes (glosses to Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvos, Mitzvah 5*) that this verse teaches that there is a mitzvah to pray in times of need. Although the Torah is referring to a time of drastic need, such as war, Ramban defines "time of need" to refer to *any* feeling of need. No matter how trivial a need may seem, it provides an opportunity — and a mitzvah — to pray.

When we think of *yissurim* (affliction), we tend to think in terms of painful illnesses or extreme poverty. But the Talmud (*Arachin 16b*) states that a person who reaches into his pocket to pull out three coins and pulls out two has suffered *yissurim*, because he must reach into his pocket a second time to retrieve the third coin. How is that *yissurim*?

The Talmud is teaching that Hashem wants our lives to be perfect. If we are inconvenienced, even slightly, we should feel that there is a reason why it happened. If a person understands how perfect Hashem wants his life to be, he can feel a "time of need" every 10 minutes, and there will be a mitzvah to pray to Hashem each time. You're hot? You're cold? You don't have enough food? Don't complain to your friends or feel miserable — *daven* to Hashem. Speak to the One Who has the power to change things.

Your *tefillah* need not be formal. You do not have to hold a *sid-dur* or recite words from *Tehillim*. Go into a room, shut the door, or stay where you are and whisper under your breath so others won't hear. And *talk* to Hashem. Tell Him, "Hashem, please let that check clear in time to cover my expenses." "Hashem, please make my boss happy with my work."

This form of prayer is the litmus test of *Emunah* for two reasons: first, it shows that you realize that there is Someone to turn to, an Omniscient and Omnipresent God Who can solve all of your problems. Moreover, if you can stand in an empty room and talk to Hashem without feeling as if you are talking to yourself, it is clear that you are certain He is there. You *know* that Hashem exists; your *Emunah* has penetrated deep into your heart.

The Chazon Ish instructed a bachur to work on Emunah through tefillah: "Each time you need something, ask Hashem to help you obtain it," he said. "If you need to buy shoes, for instance, ask Hashem to send you money and help you decide where to buy a good pair of shoes. After you buy the shoes, thank Hashem for them. You will find yourself turning to Hashem all day, and your Emunah in Him will become more profound."

Bitachon

If you managed to wake with God on your mind, and you find yourself talking to Hashem on a regular basis, you are ready for the most difficult challenge of all: *Bitachon*.

Chazon Ish writes that *Emunah* and *Bitachon* are similar but not synonymous. Whereas *Emunah* refers to a *theoretical* knowledge of Hashem's involvement in our lives, *Bitachon* describes an ability to reflect that knowledge in our actions. A person can talk about *Emunah* all day and night, but if his actions indicate that he truly believes in himself, his boss, or his money, he is not much of a believer after all.

Once we have internalized *Emunah*, we are sure that everything we own was granted to us by Hashem, and that He has the power to support us without having us lift a finger. Nevertheless, we are not allowed to rely on miracles. We are not allowed to sit and wait for our sustenance to be sent directly from Heaven. There is a certain amount of *hishtadlus* (effort) that we must make, while bearing in mind that *hishtadlus* is nothing more than a requirement we must satisfy, and that our needs are truly being filled by Hashem.⁸

The Chazon Ish helped found a new Talmud Torah in Bnei Brak, and sent someone to America to collect funds for the school. The collector failed miserably; he barely raised enough to cover his airfare. The man was too embarrassed to report back to the Chazon Ish. He simply could not tell the gadol hador, who was waiting anxiously for the funds, that no money was forthcoming.

One day, a messenger came to summon him to the Chazon Ish. Left with no choice, he dragged his feet to the Chazon Ish's house, trying desperately to think of a way to excuse his failure.

To his surprise, the Chazon Ish greeted him with a hearty "thank you." He showed the collector a check for \$50,000, which had been sent by a generous donor from Australia.

"Australia?" the collector wondered aloud. "I didn't go to Australia. That check has nothing to do with me."

"Yes it does," the Chazon Ish insisted. "We are required to make an effort to fund the yeshivah, but in truth, the money comes from Hashem. You fulfilled the requirement by traveling to America, and Hashem sent us this money as a result of your efforts."

8. *Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu* 15 (s.v. *Paam achas*) states that one *must* work in order to receive Hashem's blessing, as can be derived from the verse, "In order that Hashem, your God, bless you *in all your handiwork*" (*Devarim* 14:29) — i.e., you must provide some handiwork for God's blessing to be applied to.

🕊️ How Much Hishtadlus?

Since *hishtadlus* is a mere requirement, but not the determining factor, one of the most difficult challenges a Jew faces is how much effort to place into sustaining his family, and how much to rely on Hashem.

May a person buy a lottery ticket as *hishtadlus* and go to the *beis midrash* (study hall) and study Torah all day? Should a worker or businessman put in extra hours so that he will have money on hand for a “rainy day,” or should he spend those hours learning and rely on Hashem to make sure that he does not need extra money?

There are no definitive answers to these questions. Each person must determine the amount of *hishtadlus* he needs, based on an accurate assessment of his level of *Emunah*.

The Talmud (Taanis 25a) relates that Rav Chanina’s daughter mistook a container of vinegar for a container of oil and poured it into the lamp for the Shabbos lights. He told her that vinegar could burn, for “He who commanded oil to burn can command vinegar to burn as well.”

Indeed, the vinegar burned. But why was Rav Chanina allowed to rely on a miracle? Why wasn’t he required to engage in more natural hishtadlus? And once he was relying on miracles, why didn’t he just say, “Let there be light!”?

Rav Chanina knew that as long as a person is here on earth, no matter how much Emunah he has, he must still follow the basic rules of nature. On earth, only flammable substances will burn; a command is not enough. But while we assume that oil is naturally combustible and vinegar is not, Rav Chanina realized that what we consider “nature” is actually a series of miracles that Hashem chooses to perform on a consistent basis. Oil burns because Hashem miraculously causes it to burn; we consider it to be natural only because it happens consistently. Although He performs that miracle regularly, it is a miracle nonetheless. Rav

Chanina knew, therefore, that Hashem could just as easily cause vinegar to burn.

Are you allowed to mimic Rav Chanina? It depends. If you are as certain as he was that oil is no more inherently combustible than vinegar, perhaps. It won't work, however, if you have an iota of doubt in your heart as you strike the match and try to light the vinegar. You must *know* that Hashem can cause it to burn.

Attempting to light vinegar is a black-and-white case. Most of us realize that we are not on Rav Chanina's level, and that we need to engage in a more natural form of *hishtadlus* in order to have light in our homes.

The question for ordinary folk is not whether to engage in natural *hishtadlus*, but where to draw the line. How do you determine how much *hishtadlus* to make, and when to rely on *Emunah*? By taking an honest look at your emotions. If you have no doubt that your *hishtadlus* is enough, then you can rely on *Emunah* for the rest. But if you are worried, then more *hishtadlus* is necessary.

Rabbi Shmuel Salant was the chief rabbi of Jerusalem in the 19th century. The people who settled in Eretz Yisrael at the time accepted a life of poverty, but did so happily, in order to study Torah and serve Hashem in the Holy Land.

One of the primary benefactors of Yeshivah Eitz Chaim — we'll call him Mr. Gibber — was visiting Eretz Yisrael. Mr. Gibber was not particularly devoted to the Torah himself, but he had a warm place in his heart for Torah institutions, and the administrator of the yeshivah felt that a meeting with the chief rav of Jerusalem might cause him to be even more generous in the future.

The meeting was arranged, and as Mr. Gibber was conversing with Rav Shmuel Salant, a scrawny Yerushalmi dressed in tattered clothing and a dusty hat entered the room. Rav Shmuel Salant turned to him and asked warmly, "What would you like?"

"While waiting at the dentist this morning," the man replied, "I thought of a novel approach to answer one of Rabbi Akiva Eiger's questions."

"Excuse me," Rav Shmuel Salant said to Mr. Gibber, "I have to talk to this man."

They went off into a corner, and spent 25 minutes discussing the matter. After the man left, Rav Salant returned to Mr. Gibber, who had been waiting impatiently at the table.

"I wonder," said Mr. Gibber, his annoyance apparent in his voice, "if we would see such a royal welcome extended to a mere beggar back where I come from."

"Are you aware," replied Rav Salant, "that the person whom you have just described as a beggar is an outstanding and extremely humble Torah scholar? I could not continue our meeting while keeping such a great man waiting."

The administrator, sensing that Mr. Gibber was still perturbed by the long wait and not satisfied with Rav Salant's explanation, tactfully brought the meeting to an end. They walked away from Rav Salant's house in awkward silence. The administrator began to worry that the years he had spent developing a relationship with Mr. Gibber would go for naught, and that he had lost one of his most generous donors as a result of the meeting.

Thankfully, this story had a happy ending. That evening, the administrator asked Mr. Gibber to accompany him to the house of the Yerushalmi who had interrupted his meeting with Rav Salant. They stood outside the house peering through the window and watched as the man studied Torah with his children, with much joy and enthusiasm despite the poverty that was evident in their home. Mr. Gibber was so impressed with the sight that he pledged to keep supporting the yeshivah, and even insisted on apologizing to the scholar for the insult.

Happy ending aside, why did Rav Shmuel Salant endanger the financial viability of the yeshivah by offending his visitor? True,

Mr. Gibber didn't speak about the *Yerushalmi talmid chacham* with the proper respect, but did that warrant jeopardizing the stability of the yeshivah?

Apparently, to someone of Rav Shmuel Salant's stature, human benefactors do not support Torah institutions — Hashem supports them. The benefactors are merely messengers from Hashem. If they are not respectful to the cause that they are upholding, Hashem has other messengers who can step in.

If so, why did the administrator placate Mr. Gibber? Anyone willing to live in Jerusalem in those days had to have a strong measure of *bitachon*. Shouldn't his *bitachon* have precluded him from pandering to a man who didn't honor the Torah?

In truth, Rav Shmuel Salant and the administrator of Eitz Chaim were both correct. The amount of *hishtadlus* a person must make is highly individualized. On Rav Shmuel Salant's level, pandering to a benefactor who did not respect Torah scholars was unnecessary *hishtadlus*. But the administrator was worried. How would he replace the funds that Mr. Gibber was donating to the yeshivah? On his lower level of *bitachon*, he was required to make an effort to placate Mr. Gibber so that he would continue to support the yeshivah.

Bitachon is complex. It is the ultimate test of one's level of *Emunah*. A person can easily delude himself into thinking that he is doing something because he has *bitachon*, when in truth he is acting irresponsibly, because he does not have that level of trust. Don't start by working on *bitachon*. First work on placing Hashem before you constantly. Internalize *Emunah* by evaluating your actions based on whether they will bring you — and the world — closer to its purpose. Then work on *tefillah*. Talk to Hashem. Feel His Presence at your side at all times. Finally, you will be ready to manifest your absolute clarity in Hashem's existence by demonstrating *bitachon* in your actions. It might require painful sacrifice, and it might require you to act in a manner that others would consider irrational. Ultimately, however, such sacrifice will enable you to keep advancing in your level of *Emunah*.

✍ **Never Finished**

We have completed the study of the mitzvah of *Emunah*, but we are not finished.

Each year we finish the Torah on Simchas Torah, and immediately start again from *Bereishis*. We study the *parashiyos* week after week, year after year, and we don't get bored. Why? Because as we go through life, we grow and develop. The insights we had into the *parashiyos* last year were at our level of understanding last year. Now we are deeper, more analytical, broader, and more spiritual. If we apply ourselves, we can understand better than we did last year. The messages that we took from the weekly Torah portion last year will be augmented by additional messages.

The same is true for *Emunah* and the five mitzvot that follow it.

As you grow, you should review the mitzvah of *Emunah*, and find more and more meaning in it.

And *Emunah* is a life's work. Rav Yechezkel Levenstein would tell people that he was afraid to stop thinking about *Emunah* for a second, lest he lose it — and that was coming from a person whom the *Chazon Ish* described as one who “feels *Emunah* in a physical sense.” We must keep working, keep gaining more clarity, or we can lose all that we have achieved.

But that is not the only reason we are not finished. As we study the other constant mitzvot, we will find that they are all outgrowths of *Emunah*, and that we can fulfill them properly only when our lives are saturated with *Emunah*.

MITZVAH REVIEW

Constant
Mitzvah

1

מצוה
תמידית

אֱמוּנָה בַּה' — FAITH IN HASHEM

In this mitzvah, we learned to differentiate between *belief* and *knowledge* of Hashem's existence, and to appreciate how that difference will manifest itself in our daily lives: when we *know* that Hashem exists, we will never act in a way that contradicts that knowledge.

In addition, we have learned that part of *Emunah* is to realize that Hashem created this world for a purpose — to enable us to enjoy the reward of basking in the Glory of His Divine Presence in a world that has attained perfection. We know that we can take an active role in perfecting the world, and that our reward will be commensurate with the efforts that we expend toward that end.

Practical Applications of Emunah

(1) Talk About Emunah

By talking about *Emunah*, we reinforce our knowledge of Hashem's existence.

(2) Sacrifice for Emunah

When we force ourselves to act in a certain manner because we realize that Hashem is watching us, our knowledge of His Omnipresence becomes stronger.

(3) Use Wisdom To Build Emunah

We can find proof of God's existence in nature, in the Torah, in history, and in logic. The more we study these proofs, the more we will build our *Emunah*.

(4) Shivisi Hashem Lenegdi Samid

When we are cognizant of Hashem's constant presence in our lives, we make decisions based on how they will affect our relationship with Him. Among other benefits, this will teach us to shun attention and not seek human recognition for our spiritual accomplishments.

(5) Talk to Hashem

Aside from the scheduled prayers, we should *talk* to Hashem on a regular basis, requesting His assistance in every pursuit — from the most spiritual to the most mundane.

(6) Bitachon

We can display and build *Emunah* by determining how much *hishtadlus* (effort) we must really undertake in our individual circumstances and levels of *Emunah*, and relying on Hashem for the rest.