

NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה.
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Make Your Prayer a Plead

וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֶל ה' (דברים ג, כג)

I pleaded to Hashem. (*Devarim 3:23*)

The first word of the *parshah* is ואתחנן, "I pleaded." This teaches that we should pray in a pleading way, in a way of תחנונים. It says in *Pirkei Avos*:

When you pray, don't make your prayer fixed, but rather asking for mercy and pleading to Hashem.¹

And this is in fact the *Halachah*.

A person should pray in a pleading way like a poor person asking [for *tzedakah*] at the door, and without rushing, and it should not appear as if the prayer is a burden upon him that he wishes to get rid of.²

The *Mishnah Berurah* explains:

Even if he recites the prayer in a pleading way, if he doesn't think like someone who needs something and is coming to ask for it from the King, but rather prays due to his obligation, which he wishes to discharge, this is not right. One needs to be very careful about this.³

There is a wonderful *Midrash* on this.⁴ When Moshe ascended to heaven, Hashem showed him treasure-houses. Moshe asked, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, who are they for?" and Hashem answered, "For those who toil in Torah." He showed him other treasure-houses, and he asked, "Who are they for?" and He answered, "For those who do kind deeds." This repeated itself several times over. Afterward,

1 *Avos* 2:13.

2 *Orach Chayim* 98:3.

3 *Ibid* s.v. 9.

4 [See *Shemos Rabbah* 45:6 and *Devarim Rabbah* 2:1.]

Hashem showed him a very great treasure-house which was endless. Moshe asked, "Who is it for?" *Hashem* answered him, "It is מתנת חינוך, an undeserved gift."

The *Midrash* continues: When Moshe made his request in the merit of the Torah, it was not granted. He then said, "I am asking to receive only from the great treasure-house." So it is written, "And I begged for חן, grace." *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* said, "So goes the common saying: 'Better to bring a snake into your house than to bring in a man who has eyes.'" [I.e., *Hashem* complained, so to speak, that *Moshe Rabbeinu* had discovered His secret.]

Moshe found out a great secret when he ascended to heaven. A person can merit, by means of his *mitzvos* and good deeds, great and wondrous treasures from *Hashem*.

But there is something even greater. It is for the person who understands that he has nothing on his own. That he is truly poor and impoverished before *Hashem*. This person doesn't lean on his good deeds and his merits, but on *Hashem's* great kindness. He will receive treasures of *chein* and *chesed* greater than all the other treasures. This is *Tefilah* at its best.

There is a simple reason for this. If a person approaches *Hashem* on the basis of his good deeds, well, most of what we do is empty and vain. רוב מעשינו תוהו ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין והכל הבל. But if we approach *Hashem* asking for the sake of His Name and His kindness, this is a winning claim that cannot be refused. *Hashem's chesed* and goodness are infinite and unlimited. There never

was and never will be something that can stop them or limit them.

Fortunate is the person who approaches *Tefilah* in such a way three times a day. Not to pray just because of the obligation to do so, in order to perform the order of prayer that *Chazal* enacted, out of habit, but rather to plead before *Hashem* for what he lacks. Like a pauper standing at the door and pleading for a freewill gift. Such a pauper does not make his request on the basis of any good deeds he may have done. He does not rely on his *mitzvos* and merits. He is asking for *chesed*, and that's it.

So it should be when we pray. If we *daven* this way, our prayers will always be lovingly and willingly accepted, and will open for us the Heavenly treasure houses of *chesed* and *berachah*.

What is one is praying by the wayside? A Jew goes to the beach during *bein hazemanim*. He swims and relaxes. At 5:30 PM he starts packing up to go home. He looks at his watch. Sunset is at six. He did not *daven Minchah* yet. And the bus is leaving soon...

What to do? Beforehand, he should already start to think about *Minchah*, even if he is in the water. He could think to himself: "There is a very special *tefilah* in front of me! Maybe no one ever *davened* where I will stand. Maybe I am opening a new gate in heaven. Who knows how many sparks of *kedushah* will be elevated?"

Now, a unique experience is before him. He will *daven* an excellent *tefilah*, the likes of which he hasn't prayed in a long time. ●

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נדידים ~ עטרת זקנים בני בנים והפארת בנים אבותם

Keep Davening

וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֶל ה' (דברים ג, כג)

I pleaded to Hashem. (Devarim 3:23)

Moshe Rabbeinu stood and prayed to be let into *Eretz Yisrael*, and *Chazal* say¹ he in fact prayed 515 *tefilos*, which is the *gematriya* of וְאֶתְחַנֵּן, “I pleaded.”

What does this teach us? That when a person needs a certain thing, such as healing for a sick person, or help with financial troubles, and he sees that he is not being answered by Heaven, he should *daven* more and more prayers and keep on asking for the thing he needs, to the point that he doesn't give *Hashem* rest, so to speak, and He must grant his wish.

This is what *Moshe Rabbeinu* did. He offered all sorts of different pleas and arguments, over and over again, that he should be allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

It says also about Yitzchak that he was וִיעָתָר, he implored *Hashem*, and Rashi explains that he offered many prayers and kept on begging. Channah, too, prayed and prayed until her request was granted,² and *Chazal* learn from her story³ that anyone who prays again and again will be answered.

And it is written:

כִּי תִרְבוּ תַפְלָה אֵינֹנִי שֹׁמֵעַ — Even if you pray again and again, I will not hear.⁴

From this one exception, *Chazal* learn the rule⁵ that anyone who prays again and again will be answered by Heaven. This is what all holy people have done when they wanted to receive something. They prayed again and again until *Hashem* did their will.

It may be compared to a beloved son. If he keeps on asking and begging his father without stop, there is nothing he can't get. His father will even give him the coat off his back.

This is how *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* treats us. If we just keep on asking and begging and *davening* without stop, even if we don't really deserve that our prayers should be answered, *Hashem* will grant our wishes nonetheless, as long as it is not harmful to us.

However, together with praying over and over, we need to keep firmly in mind:

Whoever speaks too much brings sin.⁶

It is not a good idea to be too stubborn about getting a certain thing, such as wealth and the like, or even extraordinary wisdom, because we are very far from knowing what is truly good for us. I am sure that many of us could think of things we asked for, and later on, we realized how fortunate we were that we never received them.

So what should one do? Always ask in a general way. Word the request to ask for that which is in accordance with *Hashem's* Will. For instance, if a person needs *parnassah*, he should ask *Hashem* to send him the *parnassah* that *Hashem* knows is good for him.

Also, we should ask *Hashem* not to allow sins and *kitrugim* to hold Him back from bestowing goodness. And the best thing is to include one's prayer with the prayers of the Jewish people as a whole, and to recite many *Tehillim* or other prayers written by *Chazal*. Then the prayers will ascend to Heaven and find favor in *Hashem's* eyes and bring down blessing in every matter that we pray for.

Chazal say that if *Moshe* had continued to pray even just one more prayer, he would have been answered, and allowed into *Eretz Yisrael*. This teaches us that a person should not give up. He should pray another prayer and another supplication and another set of *Tehillim*, and this will cause *Hashem* to answer his prayers and grant his requests. ●

1 *Devarim Rabbah* 11:10.

2 I *Shmuel* 1:12.

3 *Yerushalmi, Berachos* 4:1.

4 *Yeshayahu* 1:15.

5 *Yerushalmi, Taanis* 4:1.

6 *Avos* 1:17.

וַיֵּדַעַת הַיּוֹם וַהֲשִׁבֶתָּ. (דברים ד, לט)

You shall know it this day and bring it into your heart. (*Devarim* 4:39)

Tangible Emunah

We all believe that G-d exists. And we really do believe it. Because if a person does not have faith in G-d, there is no doubt that sooner or later he will stop behaving as religious Jews do. He might not cast off his *yarmulke* right away. It might even take a year or two of going downhill. But in the end, someone who doesn't believe in G-d will hit bottom.

If a Jew keeps *Shabbos* and learns Torah, it is only because deep down, subconsciously, he knows that there is *Hashem*. The only question is how much he brings this subconscious faith into his conscious heart and awareness.

For example, let's take a *frum* Jew who lives in Israel and travels abroad often. His friends ask him to buy for them electronic items that are expensive in Israel. Now he is on his flight back home. He has two suitcases with various purchases that he will have to go through customs with. He didn't keep track of the total worth of the items, which he picked up here and there, and he doesn't know how much he is allowed to bring in, and he is concerned that he might be well over the limit. Now what to do?

He spends the eight or ten hours of the flight working on *Emunah* and *Bitachon*. He reminds himself that everything that happens to a person is decreed by Heaven. No one can do anything to him that is not meant to be. If *Hashem* wants him to get through customs without a hitch, he will. After all, he made all his purchases *l'sheim Shamayim*. It's not even for himself. It's all *chesed* for others. And

so on. He tries to calm himself by strengthening his faith.

He gets to the airport, picks up his two suitcases, and his arms start to quiver. As he goes nervously through customs, he feels like he would faint if the customs man would just look in his face.

Where is the *Emunah* that he worked on so hard for so many hours? Everything was fine until he needed to put it into practice.

This illustrates the point I wish to bring out. It is extremely important not to make do with just knowing that *Hashem* exists, and runs the world, and takes care of us. We need to make our awareness of *Hashem* a reality. So to speak, *Hashem* should be for us like a live personality, tangible and real, like any other real, tangible reality that we are familiar with in our daily lives. This awareness is what we need to acquire.

A Jew's ABC

If a person wants to acquire love of *Hashem*, to acquire fear of Him and attachment to Him, this means relying on Him in daily life. In terms of the above illustration, it means going through customs without getting the quivers. To simply believe that the world has a Boss who runs everything. This requires working on oneself. It requires bringing one's innate *Emunah* into the heart – והשבות אל לבבך.

Even if a person knows something to be true, he still needs to "bring it into the heart." How? By working on it, by saying over and over again, "*Baruch atah Hashem...*" The word "*baruch*" means "*breichah*," pool. A veritable "pool"

of blessing. The whole world is like a pool. Everything is a "brachah" from Hashem: me, my eyes, this *beis midrash*, the air I breathe. It is all His, and He gives and gives.

Every day we repeat these words many times: "Baruch atah Hashem." We say it again and again until "Baruch atah Hashem" starts to become a living reality for us. This brings Hashem into our world, into our senses, into our perception of reality. It brings us to fear Hashem, to love Him and also to rely on Him.

This was actually the *avodah* of the *Chassidus* movement and the *Mussar* movement. They worked on themselves and worked on themselves, until Hashem's reality became tangible to them. For instance, the *Alter of Kelm* would close himself up in his room for six hours and repeat to himself over and over again verses speaking of *Emunah*.

When I was a *yeshivah bachur*, I would do it, too. Not for six hours, not for all day, but once on *Erev Shavu'os* I went to a *shul* and sat there alone for about forty-five minutes, during which I repeated to myself over and over the verse of וַיִּרְדֵּה ה' עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיִּסְּפֵי. I said it hundreds of times until the meaning of the *pasuk* started to come alive for me. Hashem came down on *Har Sinai*!

The *Alter of Kelm* did this for years, every day for six hours!

The source for this practice is a story told about the *Vilna Gaon*. All night long he repeated to himself the teaching of *Chazal*:

אוי להם לבריות מעלבונה של תורה –
Woe to people who insult the Torah.¹

His neighbor, who was a working man, heard the *Vilna Gaon* saying this, and was so greatly influenced that the next morning he left his job to sit and learn Torah.

What is True Kavanah in Tefilah?

This idea applies particularly to *Tefilah*. We talk

¹ *Avos* 6:2.

a lot about the importance of *kavanah* when we pray. What is *kavanah*?

It happens to all of us from time to time that we need to ask another for a favor. Let's take, for instance, someone who is sent to fundraise for his *yeshivah*. He visits wealthy people and asks them for money to support his institution. When he is sitting and talking to a potential donor, and presenting to him the project that he wants to enlist support for, what is he focusing on? Not just on what he needs. He focuses also on the person in front of him, the donor. He is sitting and talking with someone who has the ability to help, and he needs to find the right way to motivate him to do so.

Now let's say a person has a sick family member, *chas v'shalom*. He is *davening* to Hashem and screaming ונרפא ה' רפאנו – "Heal us, Hashem, and we will be healed!" Or let's say he is a tough financial situation. He has no income. His checks are bouncing. He pleads with Hashem: ברוך עלינו – "Hashem our G-d, bless for us this year!"

In such situations he is likely to be focused completely on the sick family member or on his dire financial situation, and he isn't talking to Hashem at all. All his *kavanah* boils down to, "I need..." A little *kavanah* would be like this: "I kind of need..." and a lot of *kavanah* would be like this: "I badly need..." we need to realize that this is not called increasing *kavanah* in *Tefilah*. This is increasing one's concentration on what one needs.

Accordingly, a person could *daven* the *Amidah* and say every word with this kind of intention. אתה חונן לאדם דעת ומלמד לאנוש בינה – "Hashem, I am so ignorant. I don't know anything. Help me learn Torah!" – השיבנו אבינו לתורתך – "I also need to do *teshuvah*." – סלח לנו – "I desperately need to be forgiven for my sins!" And he goes on through the whole *Amidah* while he is thinking, "I need, I, I, I..."

Such a person hardly talked to Hashem.

The correct understanding of *kavanah* is knowing that you are talking to a real, live G-d. There is a *Ribono shel Olam* and He is right in front of you. He has all the money and all the health. He can do absolutely anything. Just talk to Him, cry and beg to Him, and He will give you.

When *davening* we need to focus mainly on being with *Hashem*. A little *kavanah* goes like this: “*Hashem*, You are the Healer of Your people Yisrael. You have billions of people in the world. Can’t you please give me, too, a little health and healing?”

A lot of *kavanah* goes like this: “*Hashem*, You are so great and You have such tremendous power of health and healing. And You love me so much. You are my G-d. Please, give me *refuah!*”

This is *kavanah*. It is all about focusing on *Hashem* in that He is a living, tangible G-d Who is as real as can be. The more a person develops this awareness, the more he is having *kavanah* in his *davening*.

Yeridas Hadoros

This awareness is, in my opinion, what we lack in our generation, more than anything else. Most of us have heard about the concept of *yeridas hadoros*. The earlier generations of the Jewish people were higher and saintlier than our lowly generation. And the further you go back, the greater they were.

On the other hand, it was once common for there to be *amaratzim*, uneducated people who know virtually nothing. Nowadays, everyone knows how to read and write, and have studied at least a little. On the average, religious Jews are much better educated in Torah learning than they were a few generations ago. Nevertheless, we believe that they were on a much higher *madreigah* than we are on.

But what made them so great, if some didn’t even know how to read and write?

Their greatness was their *Eemunah*. To a Jew of previous generations, *Hashem* was as real as his

next-door neighbor was. We try not to aggravate the neighbors. We meet them every day and it’s embarrassing to look in their face if we know that the laundry, which we put out to dry, dripped down onto their porch and made a mess. *Hashem* was as real to them as that. They felt that He is alive and close to them, they felt Him as if He was an actual personality, so to speak. So they naturally felt a need to show consideration for His Will and not anger Him.

This is what the simplest, most ordinary Jews were once like. As the generations descended, we gradually lost the sense of *Hashem* as a tangible personality.

This is what we need to work on as regards *Eemunah*. We need to acquire the sense of *Hashem* as a tangible Being.

However, we have a hard time with this, because we do not perceive *Hashem* like we perceive flesh-and-blood people. This was expressed by R. Yochanan ben Zakkai who said to his *talmidim*:

May it be His Will that you should fear Heaven like you fear people.

His disciples said to him, “Only that much?”

He answered, “If only [you would fear *Hashem* that much!] As you know, when a person commits a sin, he says to himself, ‘I hope no one will see me.’”²

Hashem is indeed Almighty, infinitely great, unendingly kind. Nevertheless, all these qualities belong to G-d Who is here with us and is a partner with us in our lives. He is like a real, live personality. Nothing is more real and tangible than *Hashem*. He is more real than our neighbor is.

Someone who succeeds in sensing *Hashem’s* presence like he senses his friend’s presence has reached a very high spiritual level. He has brought his *Eemunah* into his heart. ●

2 Berachos 28b.

A Passage That Is Stated and Repeated

We will now speak about *bein hazemanim*, those periods of the year during which most *yeshivos* do not hold regular learning sessions. We will begin by noting a fascinating fact about the Torah portions often read right before the *bein hazemanim* of *Pesach*.

There is something very striking about the *parshiyos* of *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*. Everything in *Vayakhel* (the description of the vessels and utensils of the *Mishkan*) seems to be a repetition of what was already stated in *Parashas Terumah*. And everything in *Pekudei* (the description of the priestly garments) seems to be a repetition of what was already stated in *Parashas Tetzaveh*. This is puzzling: why does the Torah go back and repeat things that were already written in fine detail in the previous *parshiyos*?

In order to answer this question, let us consider the following *pasuk*, discussed earlier, that we recite every morning in the *Vayevarech David* passage of *pesukei d'zimrah*: **לֵךְ ה' הַגְדֵּלָה וְהַגְבוּרָה וְהַתְפָּאֲרָת וְהַנְצַח**: *Early Torah sources say that this verse comprises the seven middos by which Hashem conducts Himself. (We mentioned the first six of these middos in the preceding chapter.)*

The seventh *middah*, which is *malchus* (sovereignty), is represented by the word *hamamlachah*. Anyone who reads this *pasuk* carefully will notice that before this final *middah* is stated, the words “*lecha Hashem — to You, Hashem*” are repeated. These very same words already appeared at the beginning of the verse. What need was there to state them again at the end?

There is a deep answer to this question.

Potential Middos and Actual Middos

Every *middah* that exists is built from two stages.

Let's take as an example the *middah* of *chesed* (which is “*gedulah*” mentioned in the above *pasuk*). It is built from two stages. The first stage is the potential, which is the *middah* of *chesed* in its essence. This is man's understanding and recognition of the virtue of *chesed*, and his genuine desire to bestow *chesed* upon others.

Ask any poor but upright Jew: “If you would have money, what would you do with it?” He will not answer, “I would buy myself a Cadillac!” The first answer is always, “I would do *chesed* with it.” (Of course, this exists also among wealthy Jews. Each person according to his level.) This is due to the trait of *chesed* that is part of man's nature. However, this is just the first stage of the *middah* of *chesed*.

The second stage of this *middah* is the actualization: the ability to practically perform acts of *chesed*. The will to bestow *chesed* already exists, and the only thing lacking is the bringing of one's will from potentiality to realization — a good Jew presented with an opportunity to bestow goodness upon others will go the next step and do so in actuality.

It comes out that a person could intellectually grasp the meaning and depth of all the virtuous traits: *chesed*, *gevurah*, *chochmah*, etc., yet still not have the capability to bring them from potentiality to realization.

What does it take to bring things to actualization? That is what the *middah* of *malchus* is all about. A *melech*, a king, is not someone who possesses the proper “qualifications” to be king. Rather, it is someone who has the authority to do things in actuality.

Also when it comes to the ways of Heavenly conduct, the *middah* of *chesed* divides into two parts. There is the trait of goodness called “*For He desires to bestow kindness*,”² which is *Hashem's* will to bestow

1 I Divrei HaYamim 29:11.

2 Michah 7:18.

unlimited *chesed* upon His creatures. This is one part of the Divine conduct of *chesed*. The second and complementary part is the actual granting of *chesed* to the world's inhabitants. *Hashem* does this in His aspect of *Melech*. Kingship in its practical expression is actual rulership. The practical effect that Heaven's ways have on the world, the actualization of the Divine conduct, is only from the *middah* of *malchus*.

This is why the *pasuk* repeats, “*Lecha Hashem hamamlachah.*” It is because there are two separate subjects in this *pasuk*. First, the *pasuk* tells us that *Hashem* has the *middos* of *gedulah*, *gevurah*, etc. Then the *pasuk* moves on to the second subject, which is *malchus*. This *middah* serves to bring all the preceding *middos*, all the preceding ways of Divine conduct, to their actual fulfillment.³

And what about the repetitions in the *parshiyos* of the Torah, as we mentioned above? The *parshiyos* of *Terumah* and *Tetzaveh* comprise the commands to construct the *Mishkan* and its components. It is written in them: וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ – “They shall make Me a Mikdash,”⁴ וַעֲשִׂיתָ מְנֻרַת זָהָב טָהוֹר – “You shall make a Menorah of pure gold,”⁵ etc. These are instructions to make, build and construct.

However, these deeds come to fruition and completion only in the *parshiyos* of *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*, which comprise the deeds in actuality. This is the stage of “*And he made the Mishkan...*” The potential that was inherent in the commands, in the instructions, comes to actual implementation through the practical fulfillment of the *mitzvah*.

We will add a brief word on this subject, regarding an expression often found in early Torah sources: לִשְׁם יִיחֹד קוֹדֶשׁ אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּא וְשִׁכְנֵנוּתָהּ — For the sake of unifying *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* with His *Shechinah*.” The phrase “*Kudsha b’rich Hu*” refers to *Hashem’s* ways of running the world, i.e., the *middos* of Divine conduct. Whereas the phrase “*Shechintei*” refers to *Hashem’s* dwelling in our midst, so to speak.

³ See elucidation of this point in the author’s *sefer*, *Shabbos Malkesa*, vol. 1, beginning of Chapter 1.

⁴ *Shemos* 25:8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, verse 31.

In other words, it is how the above expresses itself practically for us.

The whole purpose of *Hashem’s* Kingship, His *middah* of *malchus*, is the way in which He wishes to actualize His Kingship. However, when the receptacles that are supposed to receive the reign of His *Malchus* are not in a fitting state, this produces the lamentable state known as “the *Shechinah* is in *galus*.”

We thus learn that even though *malchus* surely exists in man as a *middah*, an inner trait, its main significance and purpose is its practical expression — just as *Hashem’s* *middah* of *malchus* is bringing the Heavenly flow of influence into the receptacles in this world.

When we seek to evaluate and examine man’s *middos* and achievements, this is how they are to be evaluated. The crux of the matter is their practical expression.

The Avodah of Bein HaZemanim

During the *yeshivah zeman*, people were busy with “*They shall make...*” In other words, they occupied ourselves with the potential side of things. When the period of *bein hazemanim* arrives, the *avodah* is that of “*And he made*” — bringing the potential to realization. These two parts of *avodas Hashem* are given different names: there is להגיד בסוף היום – “To tell in the morning of Your *chesed*,”⁶ and there is ואמונתך בלילות – “and of Your *emunah* in the nights.”⁷ We will explain.

On the eve of *bein hazemanim*, the *middah* of *hasmadah* is present in everyone. Everyone intends to do some learning during *bein hazemanim*. People don’t plan on spending the whole next month bereft of Torah.

During the learning *zeman*, it was “To tell in the morning of Your *chesed*.”

However, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* arranged His world in such a way that there are also times of “Your *emunah* in the nights.” The completion of a person’s

⁶ *Tehillim* 92:3.

⁷ *Ibid.*

avodah during the *zeman* lies in the nature of his *bein hazemanim*.

Let us understand the significance of “*nights*.” The light that shines at night comes through the moon. As we know, the moon does not have its own source of light. All the light we perceive in the moon is a reflection from the light of the sun.

When evening falls, the light of the sun dissipates, and the moon has the special quality that it continues to receive light from the sun even while the world is wrapped in the darkness of night.

The moon has nothing of its own about which it can boast. It may be likened to a mirror in front of which is placed a picture of R. Akiva Eiger. Let’s say the mirror would then begin to boast, “Great *tzaddikim* may be seen in me!” The mirror then grows so proud that it decides to glorify and adorn itself. It hires a painter to color it a beautiful blue, as befits its high stature. But the moment it acquires its own color, it is no longer a mirror, and nothing can be seen in it!

Emunah and Faithfulness

If we want to understand the meaning of “Your *emunah* in the nights,” first we must understand the concept called *emunah*. It is commonly thought that having *emunah* means simply to believe. However, belief alone is not enough to be called *emunah*. Let’s say we believe that someone formed a certain object. This does not yet mean that we have “*emunah*” in that person.

The deeper meaning of *emunah* is “faithfulness.” Applied to *Hashem*, this means that even when a person is enveloped in darkness and gloom, he knows that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* exists, and places his trust in Him.

The Prophet Yeshayahu defines a lack of *emunah* as follows: “If you do not have *emunah* in this, it is because you lack faithfulness.”⁸ In other words, a person’s degree of *emunah* depends on his degree of faithfulness to *Hashem*.

In *Shabbos* morning prayers we say, “Let Moshe

8 Yeshayahu 7:9; see Rashi.

rejoice in the gift of his portion, for You called him a ‘faithful’ servant.” This prayer reveals what *Moshe Rabbeinu* did in order to attain the holy Torah and bring it down into this world. It was all in merit of one thing: his faithfulness to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Hashem testifies about *Moshe Rabbeinu* that “in all in My house, he is faithful.”⁹ So to speak, *Hashem* gave him the “keys” to His entire house, because he is faithful. These “keys” are the Torah. The *pasuk* is saying that at every moment, *Hashem* can put His trust in Moshe. Even when Moshe is alone, *Hashem* can rely on him not to do something in His house that is against His will.

And what is “faithfulness”? If someone is truly faithful, this entails negating his self and his own interests. It is a person who negates his being before *Hashem*, who says about himself *מה ואנחנו* – “What are we?”¹⁰ Such a person is fitting that the Torah should be placed in his hands. About the Torah it says:

The Jewish people are beloved, for they were given a precious instrument; but it is by a special love that they were informed that they were given a precious instrument, with which the world was created. As it says:¹¹ *כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם תּוֹרַתִי אֶל תַּעֲזֹבוּ* – “For I have given you a good teaching; do not abandon My Torah.”¹²

We received from *Hashem* the “keys” to His house. These keys are the Torah. And the importance that a person attaches to Torah study is tested specifically at those times when there are no fixed learning sessions, no regular *sedarim*. This is the time when his faithfulness to *Hashem* is tested. Will he learn even if there is no fixed *yeshivah* schedule?

Nevertheless, a person’s Torah learning is not the best test of faithfulness because it is open and visible to others:

Anyone who occupies himself with

9 Bemidbar 12:7.

10 Shemos 16:7.

11 Mishlei 4:2.

12 Avos 3:14.

Torah study inside, his Torah learning announces him outside.¹³

A better test of faithfulness is when it comes to *avodas hatefilah*. Here we feel it more tangibly. When a person is standing and *davening* the *Shemoneh Esrei* in a whisper, this is the time when only he is there, alone with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. At a time when there are no external factors pushing a person to *daven* properly, his regularity in *tefilah* and his conduct in *tefilah* are the most tangible tests of his faithfulness to *Hashem*.

Yaakov Avinu's Unlimited Estate

We are told that *Yaakov Avinu* "sought to dwell in tranquility,"¹⁴ and for this he is criticized. Why did Yaakov seek tranquility?

He reasoned as follows: Avraham dwelt in tranquility. True, Avraham spent ten years in prison, and then underwent additional tests and trials, the height of which was the *nisayon* of the *Akeidah*. But after this *nisayon*, until the end of his life, Avraham merited dwelling in tranquility without *nisyonos* or troubles. (*Chazal* say that Avraham was spared even the pain of seeing his grandson Eisav take to evil ways, and for this reason, Avraham passed away five years before his time.)

What about Yitzchak? He was a prophet. He dwelt in tranquility in his home, and was promised that nothing bad would happen to him.

Thus Yaakov held that he, too, deserved to dwell in tranquility.

And why shouldn't he? What is wrong with a little tranquility for Yaakov, too, after all he went through in his life?

The answer is that Yaakov's *middah*, his defining trait, is Torah learning:

וַיֵּקֶב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים – Yaakov was a man of innocence, dwelling in the tents [of Torah].¹⁵

And thanks to this *middah* he merited a *nachalah bli metzarim*, an estate without limits,¹⁶ greater than the estates of his forefathers.

The land that *Avraham Avinu* received had a certain size and limit. *Avraham Avinu's* defining *middah*, *chesed*, is also something that can be bound to a limit. A person can reach the point where he feels satisfaction with the deeds of *chesed* that he has done. And this seems to hold true regarding the *middah* of *tefilah*, which is the *middah* of *Yitzchak Avinu*, as well: there exists the possibility of sufficiently "acquiring" the faculty of *tefilah*. When a person takes a *siddur* in his hands, and the *siddur* "speaks to him," so to speak, he has attained the *middah* of *tefilah*.

But there is no such thing regarding Torah learning. Torah is acquired through forty-eight qualities, through *mesirus nefesh*. Toiling in Torah learning has no end, no limit and no fixed amount. There is no "rest" and no state of "tranquility." This is the unlimited estate of *Yaakov Avinu*, which is given over to all those who toil in Torah.

If a person aspires to Torah, he must practice *mesirus nefesh*. Life in this world is not for rest and pleasure. The verse states: "Man was born for toil."¹⁷ *Chazal* explain: For the toil of Torah.¹⁸

It takes a little *mesirus nefesh* to learn when there is no fixed schedule and no external obligation. But that is what Torah is all about. ●

¹⁵ Bereishis 25:27.

¹⁶ See Midrash Tanchuma, Shemos 1.

¹⁷ Iyov 5:7.

¹⁸ Sanhedrin 99b.

¹³ Moed Katan 16b.

¹⁴ Bereishis Rabbah 84:3.