

# VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach  
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English

ערב שב"ק פרשת  
Devarim-Chazon  
שנת תשפ"ה

בס"ד

## When One Has Emunah, He Will Even be Able to Love Someone Who Wronged Him!

### » Emunah Even in Difficult Times

The *pasuk* states (Devarim 1:31-32): "And in the desert, where you have seen how Hashem... But regarding this matter, you do not believe Hashem, your G-d."

What is meant by the seemingly extraneous words "regarding this matter"?

The Bnei Yissoschor *zt"l* (Ig'ra D'Kallah D.H. U'badavar) writes that the main *avodah* of a person is to have *emunah* at all times. One who only believes in Hashem when things are going well for him is not considered a believer at all. Rather, one must have faith in Hashem even when things are not going so well. The verse is saying that one who only believes in Hashem "in this matter", meaning when everything is bright, clear and good to his eyes, is not a man of true *emunah*. Only one who has trust in Hashem even when things seem to be going bad for him and he cannot see the good before his eyes is really considered a true believer.

Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim (92:3): "To relate in the morning Your kindness, and your *emunah* at night." This is explained to mean that the earlier generations are compared to the morning – a time when it is light and it is easy to see Hashem's kindness. The later generations are compared to night – when it is dark and difficult to see the truth. At such a time, all we can do is strengthen our *emunah* and have faith in His kindness despite all our troubles and challenges. In our generations of gloom and darkness, we must have no less *emunah* than they had in the earlier generations, and the *emunah* itself will be the light that will guide us through the darkness of these later generations.

Avrohom Avinu merited all that he received specifically from amidst the darkness, as the prophet says (Nechemiah 9:8), "And You found your heart faithful before You." Avrohom received less Heavenly revelation than Moshe Rabenu, as the verse says (Shemos 9:8): "And My name was not known to them." He also did not merit seeing the revelation of the receiving of the Torah or the splitting of the sea. The greatest faith is at

times when one does not see. This is seen from the words: "To relate in the morning Your kindness and Your faithfulness at night." As the Medrash explains (Yalkut Shimoni): "This refers to this world, which is compared to night." Perfect faith comes in times of darkness, when one cannot clearly see Hashem's presence.

This was the test Avrohom went through when he was told that he would have a son. The Siporni in Parshas Vayeirah explains the reason that Sara Imeinu laughed when she was told that she was going to have a child, even though she knew she was speaking to Heavenly angels, by saying that she thought the words of the angel were simply the blessings of a prophet, not a prophecy or mission from Hashem. She thought that no prophet had the power to make her young again, for returning to youth after reaching old age is like resurrecting the dead, and such an unnatural blessing was impossible and could not find favor in the eyes of Hashem.

We thus see that Hashem tested Avrohom's faith greatly. He tested him to see if he would accept His words simply, with no reckonings or calculations.

This is Rashi's intent (Bereishis 15:6) when he says that Hashem valued the actual faith that Avrohom showed. Avrohom's faith was on such a high level that, for him, it was as if the thing had already occurred. At the time of the test, a time when he had yet to see the matter come to fruition and it was all still a dream that ran contrary to nature, he still did not make any calculations according to the laws of nature. The laws of nature did not limit Avrohom's level of faith, and for this reason his belief was considered a great act of righteousness.

This time of year is auspicious to strengthen one's *emunah* and increase one's recognition that Hashem rules this world with kindness, and everything that occurs is a manifestation of that kindness. Chazal say (Shabbos 119B): "Yerushalaim was destroyed only because there were no more men of *emunah*..."

If Yerushalaim and the Bais Hamikdash were destroyed because of a lack of *emunah*, it is obvious that increasing our *emunah* will

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הרה"צ אלחנן  
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bring closer the *geulah*. This is as Chazal say (Tanchuma Beshalach 10): "Those exiled will be redeemed in reward for their *emunah*..."

### >> *The Connection Between Sinas Chinam and Emunah*

**The** Gemara (Yoma 9B) states: "Why was the first Mikdash destroyed? Because of the three cardinal sins of idol worship, immoral relationships, and murder... They were wicked people but they had *bitachon* in Hashem. But during the Second Bais Hamikdosh, the people were immersed in Torah, mitzvos and *gemilus chasadim*. Why was it destroyed? Because of *sinas chinam* (pointless hatred). (The Gemara adds that since the sins of the time of the First Bais Hamikdosh were out in the open, the date when the exile would end was revealed, but since the sins of the time of the Second Bais Hamikdosh were hidden, the date of the exile's end is hidden.)

**The** Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:3) adds another layer of explanation regarding why the second Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed. It states: "They were immersed in Torah and careful with mitzvos...but they loved money and hated each other with *sinas chinam*. And *sinas chinam* is as bad as idolatry, murder and immorality."

**The** Vilna Gaon *zt"l* (Biur HaGra on Agadas Chazal) writes that the root of their *sinas chinam* was a lack of *emunah*. He explains: Why would anyone hate his friend for no reason? Usually, one hates someone else if that person hurt him in some way. If so, that hatred is not "pointless". So what exactly is *sinas chinam*?

**He** answers that, in fact, all hatred is pointless because if one would have *emunah* in Hashem, he would know that his friend cannot do anything on his own. If someone hurts him, he is merely Hashem's messenger to bring about His desire. Thus, if one hates his friend for doing something bad to him, it is a sign that he doesn't really believe that Hashem is in control of everything that occurs in this world.

**For** this reason, *sinas chinam* led to a much worse destruction. During the first Bais Hamikdosh, the corruption was external. They committed terrible *aveiros*, but they still believed and trusted in Hashem. Therefore, the end-date of the exile was revealed to them. During the second Bais Hamikdosh, the corruption was internally in their hearts. Externally, they looked like *tzadikim*. Internally, however, they hated others because they lacked *emunah*. Therefore, their transgression was

considered much more severe and the end-date of their exile was not revealed.

**This** is also seen from the Gemara (Brachos 33A) that says: "If a person has intelligence, it is considered as if the Bais Hamikdosh was rebuilt in his days." It is explained in the name of the Yismach Moshe *zt"l* and other *tzadikim* that since the Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed because of pointless hatred, it will be rebuilt through increasing love amongst Jews. One who has intelligence understands the cause of the destruction and, therefore, he will not get angry at anyone who appears to harm him. He will know that this was decreed in Heaven and, therefore, there is no reason to hate anyone else. Thus, he will be bringing the redemption closer and it is as if the Bais Hamikdosh was rebuilt in his days.

### >> *Desire for Revenge is Caused by a Lack of Emunah*

**The** *pasuk* states: (Vayikroh 19:18): "You shall not take revenge from nor bear a grudge against the members of your people. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Hashem." Rashi cites the words of Chazal: "He says to him, 'Lend me your sickle,' and he replies, 'No!' The next day, he says to him, 'Lend me your ax.' If he says to him, 'I will not lend it to you, just as you did not lend to me!' this constitutes revenge. And what constitutes 'bearing a grudge?' He says to him, 'Lend me your ax,' and he replies, 'No!' Then the next day, he says to him, 'Lend me your sickle.' If he says to him, 'Here it is for you. I am not like you, who did not lend me!' this constitutes 'bearing a grudge,' for he keeps the hatred in his heart, even though he does not take revenge."

**The** Mesilas Yesharim (Perek 11) writes that the desire for revenge and bearing a grudge are natural feelings in a person's heart. Therefore, the Torah warns us not to seek revenge. He writes that vengeance is the natural desire to refrain from doing good to someone who refused to do good for him or who committed wrong to him.

Bearing a grudge is to remind the wrongdoer of the wrong he committed to him while one is doing good to him.

**He** states that the *yeitzer* stokes the heart, seeking constantly to leave at least some remembrance of the wrong done to him. The Torah therefore stated a general principle which includes everything: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18) - "as yourself", with no difference whatsoever, "as yourself" without any strategies and ploys, literally "as yourself".

*"...You must love him like yourself. By loving him you will automatically remove the hatred between you and replace it with love. If you would ask how it's possible to love him after he hurt you, the verse concludes: "I am Hashem" – I am the One behind everything that occurred..."*

**The** Mesilas Yesharim had previously stated: “Hatred and vengeance are likewise exceedingly difficult for the mocked heart of human beings to escape from. For a human being strongly feels insults and he experiences great pain therein. Revenge is then sweeter to him than honey for it alone is his peace. Therefore, for one to have the strength to relinquish what his nature impels him to and to overlook the wrongdoing, not hating the one who ignited hatred in his heart, not exacting vengeance when he has the opportunity to do so nor bearing a grudge against him, but rather to forget the whole incident and remove it from his heart as if it had never happened - he is mighty and courageous.

“**Such** forbearance is easy only to the ministering angels who do not have among them these traits, but not to human beings ‘who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust’ (Iyov 4:19). But it is a decree of the King.”

**On** the verse “The voice of Hashem is with power”, The Mechilta (Parshas Yisro) says: “It is within the power of every individual.” We know that Hashem never demands anything of us that is beyond our abilities. If the Mesilas Yesharim says that this matter is easy for Heavenly angels and is demanded of every person, we can discern what a great treasure trove of strength exists in the heart of every single Jew to be able to overcome his nature and love his friend literally like himself.

**Rav** Elya Lopian zt”l (in Lev Eliyahu) writes: “One should not err and say that this is only an extra measure of piety. Rather, it is a positive and negative commandment – the positive command to love one’s friend like oneself and the negative command not to take revenge or bear a grudge.

“**As** the Mesilas Yesharim states, the command is to love one’s friend literally like himself and the negative command is not to take revenge as if no wrong had been done to you at all. You must consider the one who wronged you like your best friend and love him as you do yourself. Hashem demands this of every Jew, with no exceptions. It is amazing to contemplate this and see how great the powers that Hashem gave every Jew truly are.”

» *How Can One be Expected Not to Desire Revenge!*

**How** can one reach the level of being above the natural inclination to desire vengeance against one who wronged him? “Vengeance is sweeter than honey” and, as the Mesilas Yesharim writes, it is only natural for one to want to get even with someone who harmed him. How can one overcome this natural tendency?

**The** Chinuch (Mitzvah 241) states: “A person should know that everything that befalls him, both good and bad, all comes from Hashem. Nothing can happen without the will of Hashem. Therefore, when someone

hurts him or pains him, one should know that his own actions were the cause of his problems. And he should not think about taking revenge against his antagonist because he did not harm him. Rather, his own sins harmed him, as Dovid Hamelech said after being cursed by Shimi ben Geira (2 Shmuel 16): ‘Let him be, let him curse, for Hashem has told him to’.”

**Rav** Yechezkel Levenstein zt”l explains the words of Chazal that: “Torah scholars bring peace into the world.” He explains that Torah scholars are always on the level of understanding that everything that occurs comes from Hashem. Even when someone wrongs them, they know that this person is not the one that is harming them. They know it is all from Above and their antagonist is only the tool that is being used by Heaven. He is merely like the mailman delivering a letter to him which contains bad news.

**Of** course, one would be foolish to be upset at the mailman for delivering the bad news since he is merely the messenger. So too, even when Torah scholars’ friends hurt them, they don’t become upset at their friend and they don’t get into a fight because they know the friend is merely a messenger. In this way, Torah scholars increase peace in the world and reduce strife between man and his fellow man.

**Therefore**, our avodah must be to strengthen our faith that everything comes from Heaven. If one does this, he will not be upset at his friend for hurting him in any way, and he will be able to repay his badness with kindness.

**This** is also seen from the verse (Tehilim 41:6-11) where Dovid says: “My enemies speak evil of me; “When will he die and his name be lost?... But You, Hashem, be gracious to me and raise me up, so that I may repay them.” Rav Saadya Gaon explains (quoted by the Radak) that Dovid wished to repay them good for bad. He thus states on the next verse: “With this (by repaying good for bad) I shall know that You desired me.” He writes that this is the command of Hashem not to take revenge or bear a grudge.

**We** can now understand why the Torah places the command to love one’s friend like himself right after the prohibition to take revenge or bear a grudge. The Torah is telling us that one may not take revenge or bear a grudge.

**If** one would claim: But he wronged me! The Torah’s response is that you must love him like yourself. By loving him you will automatically remove the hatred between you and replace it with love.

**If** you would ask how it’s possible to love him after he hurt you, the verse concludes: “I am Hashem” – I am the One behind everything that occurred and your friend was merely a messenger. Therefore, you have no reason to hate him.