



# RABBI SHALOM ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, NOFEI HASHEMESH  
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ROSH BAIS MEDRASH ENGLISH SPEAKING PROGRAM JCT MACHON LEV

## Emunah – Two Types of Belief

וַיַּאמְרוּ בָּהּ וּבָמֹשֶׁה עָבֹד

“...they believed in God and in His servant Moshe.” (Shemot 14:31)

### BELIEVING IN ONESELF

As Bnei Yisrael stood at the shores of the Yam Suf and witnessed the sea split before their eyes, the Torah attests that **now** they believed in Hashem and in Moshe. Rav Tzadok HaKohen explains that embedded within this verse is an additional message: not only must one believe in God — **one must believe in oneself**.

This theme resonates with Tu B’Shvat, which we will celebrate this coming week. In the cold stillness of winter, when the trees seem lifeless and bare, we begin to see the first signs of blossoming. The budding tree testifies to hidden potential — life stirring where none seemed present. So too, even in our darker or more challenging moments, we must believe in the latent greatness within us, waiting to bloom.

### TWO TYPES OF EMUNAH

The *Darkei Mussar*, citing Rav Simcha Zissel, distinguishes between two types of emunah:

**Mazal tov to  
Yosef & Adina Besso-Cowan  
and family on the birth of a son,  
brother of Tzofia Ruchama**

### Emunah through inquiry and study

(חקרת) — belief reached through intellectual reasoning.

**Emunah through experience** (חוות) — belief that emerges from direct encounter, felt reality, and lived connection.

Language itself hints at this idea. While the word for “father” varies dramatically across cultures (dad, abba, tata), the word for “mother” is strikingly similar worldwide — *ma, ema, mama*. This root is shared with the word *emunah*. A child instinctively trusts a mother who has carried, nurtured, and sustained them; the trust is born of closeness. So too, the deepest form of *emunah* is not merely belief — it is relationship.

To illustrate: imagine someone who has never tasted bread. He may accept a scientific study claiming that bread is filling. But a new study may later persuade him otherwise. Intellectual conclusions can be overturned. But someone who **tastes** bread — who has felt its satiation — cannot be shaken. His knowledge is experiential.

So it is with our faith. If *emunah* is based only on philosophy or abstract ideas, it can be unsettled by new arguments. But when *emunah* flows from **encounter**, from lived connection with Hashem — through tefillah, Torah, mitzvot, gratitude, and the ups and downs of life — it becomes unshakeable. That is the level Am Yisrael reached at the Yam Suf,

where they didn't merely hear — they *saw*. "וַיַּרְא יְשֻׁעָה" — their eyes confirmed what their minds already held.

### KNOWING, NOT MERELY BELIEVING

A Chassidic story illustrates this beautifully. A Rebbe once asked his students if they believed in God.

"Of course," they replied.

"I," said the Rebbe, "do not believe in God."

Shocked, his students asked what he meant.

"Do you believe this object before us is a table?" he asked.

"No," they answered, "we *know* it's a table."

"Exactly," said the Rebbe. "I don't *believe* in God — I *know*. I sense Him with the clarity of something right before my eyes."

Our task is to strive toward *emunah sheb'chush* — a felt faith, a relationship so real that it becomes part of our daily awareness.

### OUR EMUNAH – TYPE TWO

Emunah is not meant to live only in our minds; it is meant to live in our hearts, in our experiences, and in our daily lives. It is built every time we recognize Hashem's presence in the ordinary moments — a sunrise, a breath, a small kindness, a challenge that strengthens us, a prayer whispered from the depths of our heart.

As Tu B'shvat remind us — just as the barren tree blossoms again in mid-winter, so too can our Emunah blossom at any moment. No matter how cold, dark, or uncertain life may feel, there is always potential waiting beneath the surface — in our relationship with Hashem and in ourselves. May we cultivate not only belief, but connection. Not only ideas, but experience. Not only faith in Hashem, but the courage to believe in the greatness He planted within each of us. ■



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