



REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

Chesed and Clarity

Pesach is a very apropos time for one to strengthen his emunah. The Seder night is the “Rosh Hashanah” for emunah, we even call the matzah “the bread of emunah.” Indeed, the Slominer Rebbe in *Netivot Shalom* understands that the dictum, “*ve’chol hamarbeh lesaper be’yitziat mitzrayim harei zeh meshubach* — and all who elaborate on the story of the exodus from Egypt, they are praiseworthy,” refers to speaking about aspects of emunah. The goal of the night is for everyone to clearly understand that “One is Hashem in the heavens and the earth.”

The theme of emunah continues throughout the week of the *chag* and culminates on the seventh day of Pesach. The Torah tells us that when the sea split, “*Vaya’aminu*

ba’Hashem u’veMoshe avdo — and they [Am Yisrael] believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant.” (*Shemot 14:31*) Indeed, Chazal teach that at the sea, a maidservant reached similar levels of spiritual revelation as Yechezkel Hanavi. Rav Biderman quotes Rav Yissachar Dov of Belz zt”l, who explains that when the people witnessed the great manifestation of Hashem’s presence, they exclaimed, “*Hashem yimloch l’olam va’ed* — Hashem will reign forever and ever,” in the future tense. They were expressing their wish for this level of clarity and connection to remain within them forever. Thus, the day itself remains a time when we can access and tap into this wellspring of emunah on our own personal level.

Rav Pincus zt”l describes a special aspect of relationship and closeness to Hashem that we find on the seventh day of Pesach. He explains that water represents Hashem’s chesed, His lovingkindness. When Hashem created the world, it was filled entirely with water, representing Hashem’s outpouring of love. On the second day of creation Hashem separated the upper and lower waters. We access the upper waters in heaven through the raindrops that fall to the earth. We are told that when it rains, there is a powerful revelation of Divine favor and therefore is time for anyone to daven for any and all needs. It is a “window” into the treasure house of the abundant chesed in the heavens. In contrast, we only “meet” the waters found beneath the earth twice a year. Once

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is at the *Simchat Beit Hasho'eva*, the water drawing ceremony on the holiday of Succot when the lower waters were drawn forth and poured on the altar in the Beit Hamikdash. We were able to access these special waters after completing the whole teshuvah process of the *Yamim Nora'im*. The second time is on the seventh day of Pesach. *Am Yisrael* was able to walk through the waters of the *Yam Suf* onto the dry land, surrounded by the chesed of Hashem. The seventh day of Pesach is a time when we recall our troubles and Hashem's response of enormous love.

Let us take advantage of of this favorable time, the seventh day of Pesach, to truly believe and feel this abounding flow of Divine love and connection, to believe that Hashem's love surrounds us and buoys us in every situation and every circumstance. ■

 **Doron M. Spierer**
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Elevating Everything

The book of *Vayikra* focuses on maintaining *kedushah*, holiness in Jewish life. “*Ki ani Hashem hama’aleh etchem mei’eretz Mitzrayim le’heyot lachem le’Elokim*

ve’heyitem kedoshim ki Kadosh Ani — For I am Hashem Who has brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your G-d. Thus, you shall be holy, because I am holy.” (*Vayikra 11:45*) This verse beautifully encapsulates the essence of our service to Hashem. Rashi understands that the reason Hashem took us out of Egypt was to give us the opportunity to do the mitzvot. What is the deeper message behind Rashi’s message?

In his introduction to his sefer *Ba’alei Hanefesh*, the *Ravad zt”l* explains that we encounter opportunities to do mitzvot in every area of life. There are laws relating to the food we eat, the clothes we wear, in our interpersonal relationships, in our interactions with family members, and in business. At times, we tend to look at religion as something ancillary; mitzvot become things to get done so we can move on and focus on “our lives.” The *Ravad* stresses that Torah and mitzvot form the basis of our lives, and thus, must be our essential focus. We are given the mandate to remember the Exodus from Egypt each day so we can remember **why** Hashem took us out — so that we can serve Him in good faith.

The Saba from Kelm *zt”l* would continuously exhort his students to live with introspection, not to

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simply go through the motions. We are not meant to remain “simple people” rather, we must continuously seek growth throughout our lives to become deeper, greater and more developed people.

Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l* warns that we are held accountable for the way we use our G-d given resources in all areas of our lives. Understanding that we are created to serve Hashem, comes with the responsibility to use our money, our time, and our many talents in a purposeful, meaningful way. At every juncture, we must examine what the Will of Hashem is so we can best fulfill His Will in the highest sense that we can.

The *Ba’al Shem Tov Hakadosh zt”l* sees our verse as strongly supporting this idea. One can put a comma after “*le’heyot lachem* —to be for you” and separate it from the word following, “*le’Elokim*,” G-d. It is hinting to us that in the “for you” areas of life, the areas of personal pleasures and interests, we must be genuinely dedicated to direct it all “to G-d.”

As we approach the time period of *Sefirat Ha’omer*, let us apply ourselves to live with a greater degree of awareness toward our actions and feel the pride of being servants of Hashem at every moment of the day. ■

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