



SUKKOS AND EMUNAH

As we enjoy sitting in the Sukkah under the “shade of *emunah*” (*Zohar*, *Vayikra* 3:103b), I would like to reveal a dimension of *emunah* that may differ somewhat from our standard understanding. In Samurai tradition there is a concept called *bushido*, The Way of the Warrior. This creed requires absolute, unconditional loyalty to one’s leader. There is no place in this system for a man to confront the problem of personal responsibility, of individual values different from, if not actually contrary to those of his society. The incredible story of Lt. Hiroo Onoda is a graphic illustration of this tradition. Lieutenant Onoda was an Imperial Japanese Army intelligence officer who was sent to the Philippines in 1944 to conduct operations against Allied forces. When the war ended in 1945, he did not surrender, since he assumed

that leaflets dropped ordering Japanese troops to surrender were Allied propaganda. Despite repeated attempts to contact Onoda and convince him that the war was over, he continued his military activities. Since he never received an official command from an authorized military commander, he continued the task that had been given to him years earlier. It was not until Onoda’s former commander, Major Yoshimi Taniguchi, was brought to the Philippines and ordered Onoda to surrender that he was willing to give up the fight. This occurred on the 9th of March 1974 (!!), 29 years after he first arrived in the Philippines. This is one of the most extraordinary examples of the Samurai ideal of loyalty I have ever heard. My revered teacher, Rav Moshe Shapiro zt”l, always translated the word *emunah* as “loyalty,” *ne’eman* as “trustworthy”

or “secure.” He based this translation on numerous verses throughout the Tanakh, where it is clear that the word does not mean only “belief,” but also loyalty, security and trustworthiness. For example:

לֹא־כֵן עֲבָדִי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל־בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא:
Not so with my servant Moses, for he is trustworthy ne’eman one in all my house.
Bamidbar 12:7

וַיְדִי מֹשֶׁה כְּבָדִים וַיִּקְחוּ־אָבֹן וַיִּשְׁימוּ תַחְתָּיו
וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלֶיהָ וְאַהֲרֹן וְחֹר וְתַמְכוּ בְּיָדָיו מִזֶּה אֶחָד
וּמִזֶּה אֶחָד וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֶמּוּנָה עַד־בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady emunah until the going down of the sun.
Shmot 17:12

והקימתי לי כהן נאמן באשר בלבבי ובנפשי
יעשה ובניתי לו בית נאמן והתהלך לפני
משיחי כל-הימים:

*And I will raise me up a loyal ne'eman
priest, who shall do according to that
which is in my heart and in my mind;
and I will build him a secure ne'eman
house; and he shall walk before my
anointed forever.*

Shmuel 1:2:35

ותקעתיו יתד במקום נאמן והיה לכסא כבוד
לביית אביו:

*And I will fasten him as a tent peg in a
secure ne'eman place; and he shall be for
a glorious throne to his father's house.*

Isaiah 22:23

The Torah, however, does not laud loyalty as a virtue independent of all other considerations. The Torah requires truth as a condition of that loyalty. Onoda's loyalty was impressive, but it was not loyalty to the truth. In the siddur we find that the words truth and *emunah* are juxtaposed several times.

אמת ואמונה חק ולא יעבר

*Truth and emunah, a statute that will
not pass away...*

Shacharit

אמת ואמונה כל זאת, וקיים עלינו, כי הוא ה'
אלקינו ואין זולתו, ואנחנו ישראל עמו.

*All of this is truth and emunah, and
established upon us...*

Maariv

מנוחת אהבה ונדבה, מנוחת אמת ואמונה
*A rest of love and generosity, a rest of
truth and emunah....*

Mincha for Shabbat

The holy *Zohar* even describes truth and *emunah* as a married couple:

*"...he is truth, emet, and she is loyalty,
emunah..."*

Zohar, Re'aya Meheimnah 3:230a

Rabbeinu Bachya emphasizes this idea in his article on *emunah* when he says that "included in *emunah* is that a

person should love the truth, choose it and speak it..." (*Cad HaKemach, Emunah*). What we have seen until this point is that *emunah* requires *emet*; loyalty must be tied to the truth and is only meaningful and moral if allied with truth.

We will now see that the reverse is also true; *emet*, truth, needs *emunah*, loyalty, in order to survive and in order to have an impact on our lives and on the world.

Emunah is listed by the Rambam as the first of all the 613 commandments (*Sefer Hamitzvot* 1) and is the first halachah in his *Mishneh Torah* (*Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1), where he also states that "knowing this [that there is a G-d] is a positive commandment" (*ibid* 1:6). Some of the commentaries consider it problematic to list belief as an individual commandment, since it is the logical prerequisite of all the commandments — without a commander one cannot possibly have a commandment (Ramban, *Critique of Book of Mitzvot*, *Mitzvah* 1, Abarbanel, *Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 4). Various answers have been suggested to this critique, but I believe that the approach of Rav Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (Tzemach Tzedek) is the most relevant to our discussion.

אמנם הרמ"ם וסיעתו ר' יונה וסיעתו שמנו זה במנין המצוות עעמם כי הציוי הוא על העמקת הדעת וההתבוננות בדבר זה הידוע שע"ז יתכן ציוי כי גם שהדבר ידוע אעפ"כ אם לא יתבונן תמיד בזה ויסיח דעתו לדברים אחרים לא יועיל כלום ואפ"י שיחשוב זאת במחשבה והרהור לבד אינו כלום אלא צריך להעמיק דעתו דוקא ואז יפתחו המדות וכו' וע"ז נאמר וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך.

However, Rambam and his school of thought... do include emunah as a mitzvah; their reasoning is that the mitzvah involves deepening one's understanding and contemplation of that which one already instinctively

knows. And to do this one can indeed be commanded. For even a truth that one already knows, if one does not think about it and contemplate it; if one's mind is completely distracted from this truth; then the knowledge of this truth is useless. And even if one does think about it, that is not sufficient, one must invest the intellect in deep thought about this truth, and then it will have an impact on one's character and personality. And regarding this it states, (Devarim 4:39), "Know therefore this day, and consider it in your heart, that the Lord is G-d in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is no other."...

Derech Mitzvotcha, The Mitzvah of Emunah in Hashem

The Tzemach Tzedek maintains that knowing truth intellectually is not sufficient, it must be something we think about and meditate upon; it must be what directs our behavior and character. In other words, to the same degree that loyalty must be married to truth, truth must be married to loyalty. Without being devoted and loyal to the truths that we know, those truths remain theoretical, ephemeral and without impact.

Another dimension of *emunah* is its ability to reveal truth in this world through the power and courage of those loyal to the truth. When Rambam defines the commandment of *kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of the Name of G-d, he writes that the mitzvah requires us to publicize the truth of our *emunah*, not to be fearful of any tyrant or of any threat whatsoever in following this truth and not even to give the impression that we have denied Hashem, even when internally we are still loyal (*Sefer HaMitzvot*, *Mitzvah* 9). So, the prestige, honor and absolute nature of the truth is manifested by its followers' loyalty, courage and stubborn

attachment to the truth through all circumstances. Throughout history the Jewish people have been the bearers of the torch of the Torah's truth by not giving in to those who wish to see Judaism disappear. Our survival and the survival of Judaism have shown the eternity and power of truth by the persistence and power of our *emunah*, our loyalty.

Finally, *emunah* connects us to the redemption and to Olam Haba, eternity. As the Midrash states:

אז ישיר, ויאמינו בה'. לפיכך זכו לירש את הארץ. אתה מוצא בשכר אמנה שהאמין אברהם אבינו בה', ירש העולם הזה והעולם הבא, שנאמר (בראשית טו, ו): "והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה". וכן (שמות ד, לא): "ויאמן העם". וכתוב (תהלים לא, כד): "אמונים נוצר ה' ומשלם על יתר עושה גאוה". וכן במשה (שמות יז, יב): "ויהי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש". ואומר (תהלים קיח, כ): "זה השער לה' צדיקים יבואו בו". אלו בעלי אמנה, שנאמר (ישעיהו כו, ב): "פתחו שערים ויבא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים".

Then sang Moshe (Shmot 15:1). They had emunah in Hashem (ibid. 14:31) and therefore merited acquiring the land. You find that because of his emunah in Hashem, our patriarch Avraham inherited both this world and the world-to-come, as is written: And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness (Bereshit 15:16). Similarly, because the people believed (Shmot 4:31), it is written: The Lord preserves the faithful... (Tehillim 31:24)... Scripture states: This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter it (Tehillim 118:20). Who are the righteous ones that will enter? The

faithful ones, as it is said: Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps emunim faithfulness may enter in (Isa. 26:2)..."

Midrash Tanchuma, Beshalach 15

I believe that this is a slightly different understanding of *emunah* — as faith and confidence but also hope. The Midrash informs us that having confidence that Hashem will indeed redeem us is what will cause the redemption. It is interesting to note that the word for hope, *tikvah*, is also the word for string, as in *tikvat hashani* (Yehoshua 2:21), or line, *kav*, (e.g. Isaiah 28:10) because our hope for the redemption is indeed the line that connects us to the redemption. Similarly, when we lose something and give up hope (*ye'ush*) then we sever the connection to the lost object. If the owner continues to hope for its return, he is, so to speak, still connected to his possession by the line, *kav*, of hope, *tikvah*. The Jewish people have never given up hope of redemption or of return to the Land of Israel and therefore, wherever we are, and whatever situation we are in, the thread of hope still connects us to our future.

Rav Yeshaya Halevi Horowitz describes the desert journeys of the Jewish people as the "pillar of *emunah*" (*Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Masechet Taanit, Drush Matot-Masei* 18). He bases this idea on Hashem's praise of the Jewish peoples' loyalty for following Him into the desert:

וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֵלַי לֵאמֹר. הֲלֹךְ וְקִרְאתָ בְּאָזְנִי
יְרוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר ה' זְכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּ

רִיךְ אֶהְבֵּת כָּל־לִלְתִּיךְ לְכַתֹּב אַחֲרַי בְּמִדְבַר בְּאָרְץ
לֹא זְרוּעָה. קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵה' רִאשִׁית תְּבוּאָתָהּ
כָּל אֲכָלְיוֹ יִאָּשְׁמוּ רָעָה תְּבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם נְאֻם ה':
And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus said the Lord; I remember you, the devotion of your youth, your love like a bride, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not cultivated. Israel is holy to Hashem, and the first fruits of his produce; all who devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, said Hashem.

Yirmiyahu 2:1-3

Emunah is particularly necessary during the long night of exile. As the Talmud states:

אמר רבה בר חנינא סבא משמיה דרב כל שלא אמר אמת ויציב שחרית ואמת ואמונה ערבית לא יצא ידי חובתו שנאמר (תהלים צב, ג) להגיד בבקר חסדך ואמונתך בלילות.
Rabba bar Chinena Sava said in the name of Rav: One who did not recite: True and Firm, emet veyatziv, at the beginning of the blessing of redemption that follows Shema in the morning prayer, and: True and Trustworthy, emet ve'emunah, in the evening prayer, he did not fulfill his obligation, as it is stated: "To declare Your kindness in the morning and Your faith (Emunatcha) in the nights" (Tehillim 92:3)."

Berachot 12a

In the morning, one must mention Hashem's loving-kindness, while in the evening one is required to emphasize the aspect of faith. As Rashi explains:

וברכת אמת ויציב כולה על חסד שעשה עם אבותינו היא שהוציאם ממצרים ובקע להם



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הים והעבירים וברכת אמת ואמונה מדבר בה אף על העתידות שאנו מצפים שיקיים לנו הבטחתו ואמונתו לגאלנו מיד מלכים ומיד עריצים ולשום נפשנו בחיים ולהדריכנו על במות אויבינו כל אלה הנסים התדירים תמיד: *The blessing of emet veyatziv is completely about the kindness that He did to our ancestors, whom He took out of Egypt and for whom He split the Red sea... Emet veemunah speaks about the future, that we look toward Hashem fulfilling His promises and His faithfulness to redeem us from the kingdoms and the oppressors and to give us life, to cause us to tread over the forts of our enemies, all the miracles that are with us always.*

Rashi, Berachot 12a

Emunah is a bond of love between Hashem and the Jewish people:

וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְצֶדֶק
וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים: וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי
בְּאֵמוּנָה וְיָדַעַת אֶת־ה':

And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in grace, and

in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, be'emunah; and you shall know Hashem.

Hoshea 2:21-22

However, the bond of *emunah* is not a unilateral relationship, one that only involved our loyalty to Hashem. *Emunah* also involves Hashem's loyalty to us. The Sifrei comments on the verse in Ha'azinu (Devarim 32:4) that describes Hashem as "God of faith" "*Kel Emunah*" and says that Hashem has faith in His world, which is why He created it — *Shehe'emin b'olamo uvera'o* — He believed in His world and created it (*Sifrei*, Ha'azinu Piskah 2). It is clear that the word *he'emin* does not mean "believe" in the sense of apprehending its existence, rather it means that Hashem created the world because He had (and still has) confidence that it would succeed. Hashem loyally sustains the world and ensures the continued existence of the Jewish people, because He knows that we are a good investment. We

express this idea every single morning when we end the *Modeh Ani* prayer with the phrase, *rabbah emunatecha* — abundant is Your faith. It is a very optimistic and encouraging way to start the day by affirming the fact that Hashem, our Creator has confidence and trust in us.

Our ancestors followed Hashem loyally into the desert and dwelt under His clouds of glory. They marched through the desert of our long exile and were loyal to Hashem and His Torah, and they had hope even in the darkest of times. We too, when we dwell in our *sukkot* manifest this same loyalty, confidence and hope and hence our *sukkot* may correctly be called "shelters of *emunah*." May the merit of our study of *emunah* during the night of exile bring us to the moment when we will tell of Hashem's kindness in the morning of the redemption (Rashi, *Berachot* 12a) and to see Him "spread over us His *sukkah* of peace."

Introducing Divine Providence (continued from page 10)

against supernatural forces such as witchcraft, so too they must take natural forces (*teva*) into account. If this interpretation is correct, then, perhaps R. Chanina's statement that no man bruises his finger here on earth unless it was so decreed against him in heaven may reflect his own personal reality; it does not definitively point to an all-encompassing providence.

2. While this passage indicates that small annoying occurrences are sometimes the result of divine providence it may not imply that all such occurrences are providential.

3. This explains the language used in *birkat ha-gomel*, הגומל לחייבים טובות שגמלני שגמלני (Who bestows good things upon the guilty, Who has bestowed every goodness upon me). Why do we call ourselves guilty? In fact, the *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 376) rules explicitly that one may not say that he has

not been punished as he deserves (לא יאמר) אדם: לא נפרעתי כפי מעשי, או כיוצא בדברים אלו, (שאל יפתח פיו לשון exactly this when we proclaim our guilt and unworthiness in *birkat ha-gomel*? The answer, however, is that in this case of a near-death experience, God has warned the person that he is deserving of punishment, and, accordingly he must take note of this, as Rashi writes: - לא הרגן בידוע שנודמנו לו להרוג אותו - והראה לו הקב"ה שחטא אלא שנעשה לו נס.

4 Some thinkers may distinguish between death, where God does not allow free will to cause the demise of someone undeserving, and other forms of pain, where free will can cause undeserved pain.

5 Along similar lines, *Tosafot Yeshanim* question Tosafot's assumption that a person can terminate their own life in light of the

Mishna in *Avot* (4:22) that states a person lives against their own will (על כרחך אתה חי).

6 It is not clear that *Chovot ha-Levavot* would even allow for that. In *Sha'ar 4, Bitachon* ch. 3, he writes:

שאין ביד אחד מהברואים להועיל את נפשו ולא להזיקה ולא לזולתו, כי אם ברשות הבורא יתברך

This line indicates that a person cannot even harm themselves without God's approval. However, one could respond simply that if a person goes out without a coat, God may allow them to get sick. Thus, their getting sick was with God's permission, but it is not *bi-dei Shamayim* in the sense that it was not part of God's initial plan. Rather, their decision to act negligently resulted in God's allowing them to get sick. However, should they have acted responsibly, then they would not get sick unless it was part of God's original plan.