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Those Who Don't Believe

We daven in *Shemoneh Esrei*, וכל המינים כרגע תאבדו – that those who deny Hashem should be destroyed. Someone who denies Hashem (a “*min*”) is liable to the death penalty, and in the times of the Gemara, he would be put to death. On a deeper note, though, someone who denies Hashem is already considered to be dead, because he lives a deathlike kind of existence.

Our whole life-sustaining energy, our *chiyus*, comes from having *emunah*; as it is written, “*And the righteous man shall live by his faith.*” We need *emunah* in order to live. Someone who doesn't believe in Hashem not only forfeits his *emunah* – he has basically forfeited his life. Since he has cut himself off from having *emunah*, he has cut himself off from his Source of life. So his death penalty is not a punishment – it is rather a direct result of not having *emunah*.

A person who doesn't believe in Hashem, at his worst level, is called a *min* or a *kofer*, a complete denier of Hashem. Most of us, however, who keep Torah and mitzvos, do not ever sink to such a level as to outright deny Hashem. But, deep down, even those who keep Torah and mitzvos struggle with their *emunah*.

Chazal say that Noach was someone who “believed, yet didn't believe.” He believed in Hashem, but he was somewhat weak in his *emunah*. This can be applied as well to most of us who keep Torah and mitzvos.

We believe in Hashem, of course; in our minds, we all believe in Him. But often, the knowledge about Hashem in our minds has not yet been internalized in our heart. “*And you shall know today, and you shall return the matter to your heart.*” The *emunah* that we know in our mind must become internalized in our heart.

The Ramban says that there are two levels of belief – *Emunah* (faith) and *Bitachon* (reliance). *Emunah* is what we know of Hashem in our minds, and *Bitachon* is when we internalize it in our heart and we actualize our *Emunah*.

If a person does not seek to constantly work on his *emunah* each day of his life, if he does not try to instill *emunah* in his heart, then his *emunah* will be weak. He will be someone who “believes, yet doesn't believe.” This is in spite of the fact that he grew up on the knees of Torah and mitzvos. He might know in his mind about Hashem, but he does not necessarily feel that way in his heart....

The Contradiction Inside Us

If a person really thinks about it deeply, he can discover that there is actually a tremendous contradiction going on between his brain and heart.

For example, a person might know, intellectually, that Hashem is the Provider of the world, yet he still worries about how he will have what to eat tomorrow. Chazal say that such a person is of those who are weak in their *emunah*.

A person knows, intellectually, that everything is from Hashem, yet he still can have an angry outburst. Chazal say that an angry person is like someone who commits idol worship; what is the connection? It is because someone who gets angry has temporarily lost his belief in Hashem, which is the same idea as idol worship, in which a person loses belief in Hashem. No one will become angry directly with Hashem, *chas v'shalom*; usually, when a person gets angry, he doesn't get angry with Hashem. But he doesn't attribute how everything comes from Hashem. In that sense, it is as if he is committing idol worship.

If a person doesn't seek to work on his *emunah* day by day, by default he will naturally encounter contradictions between his mind's knowledge with what he feels in his heart. He won't feel in his heart the *emunah* that he knows of in his mind. A person must make a self-introspection and become aware of this contradiction going on inside himself. He must realize that although he knows in his mind that Hashem runs the world, his heart doesn't feel that way yet. He does not yet feel his *emunah*; it hasn't yet been internalized.

Of course, we are all *maaminim* (believers), but often it's only in our brains, and we don't feel *emunah* in our hearts. The Steipler zt"l said that there are many levels to *emunah*; there are rooms within rooms to *emunah*.

The first commandment was, "*I am Hashem your G-d.*" This commandment was the root of everything; Rav Saadya Gaon says that it contained the entire Torah. It is because *emunah* in Hashem is where we get our vitality in life from. If a person lives from his *emunah*, he lives the level that we were at Har Sinai. He is connected to the level of being at Har Sinai. The Torah that he learns is the kind of Torah that we received at Har Sinai, a Torah connected with *emunah*. But if a person doesn't have *emunah*, even if he always learns Torah, his Torah learning isn't connected with the level of being at Har Sinai.

If a person never reflects, then it's very possible that all of his "*emunah*" is only intellectual. He might even think that *emunah* is just one of the 613 mitzvos, and he doesn't realize how central *emunah* is to our life. He views "*emunah*" as just another fact of life, and he is unaware that *emunah* is the very root of our life-sustaining energy.

We need to work every single day on our *emunah*! *Emunah* cannot just be another random piece of information to us. It is not a side thing. It's the root of everything!

We know that the greatest mitzvah is learning Torah. But does that mean that *Emunah* is not as important? Torah is greater than all the mitzvos, but *Emunah* is the root of the Torah!! Without *Emunah* we do not really have Torah. The Torah that we learn must be connected to Har Sinai, in which we had revealed *emunah*. Chazal say that if someone says that Torah is not from heaven, he is a denier of Hashem, in spite of the fact that he learns Torah. Because learning Torah isn't enough. It must be preceded with *emunah*.

Working On This Practically

It must be very clear to you that *emunah* is the very root of all life-sustaining energy. We must each take notice of the contradictions between our brain and heart and see that our heart still doesn't feel

the *emunah* that we know of in our brains. And we must seek to instill *emunah* in our heart.

First, clarify to yourself that *emunah* in Hashem is the reality of our life, that it is the root which sustains us.

After that, notice the contradictions going on between your brain and heart. Think into all the situations of your life in which you don't yet feel *emunah* in your heart.

For example, if you get angry, it should bother you that you haven't yet internalized *emunah* in your heart. It should bother you that although you know in your mind that you need to have *emunah*, your heart still doesn't feel *emunah*, and that is why you were able to get angry. But do this in a constructive way: now that you feel bad about it, this can spur you on to improve yourself to work on bringing *emunah* into your heart.

You need to work on how your *emunah* can be felt in your **heart**. The *emunah* which you should seek is not a brainy, "**intellectual**" thing, and it is not "**inspirational**". It is not an "**emotional**" thing either. Rather, it is what you **internalize in your heart**. When you internalize your mind's *emunah* into your heart, your **actions** will then reflect what you have internalized.

Where We Get Our Energy From

There is another point now which we will discuss, and it a point that is even more hidden than what was discussed until now.

Ever since Hashem breathed a spirit of life into man, it has been the nature of man to seek vitality (*chiyus*). Every person has a will to feel alive. All people want to be alive and to feel alive, and in that aspect, we all share a common denominator. But the difference between one person and another is in **how** alive a person is, as well as **from where** he is getting his vitality in life from. Any person who seeks truth should become aware of this concept.

We each have to reflect on where we are getting our *chiyus* from. Understandably, we also have to reflect on how much we are keeping the mitzvos and to make a necessary *cheshbon hanefesh* (self-accounting), but such reflection is still only addressing the outer aspects of our life, our *chitzoniyus* (external layer). The inner kind of reflection we need to make is on our *penimiyus* (inner layer): "From where am I getting my *chiyus* from?"

A person who hears about this might respond, "What kind of question is this? Of course I have *chiyus*. I learn Torah, I daven, and I do all the mitzvos. That is where we get our *chiyus* from." But if a person really thinks about it, he can discover from what he **truly** derives his *chiyus* from in life...

Everyone is getting their *chiyus* from something. Some people are getting their *chiyus* from their cup of coffee in the morning! Others get their *chiyus* from a compliment they received from someone that day, or from hearing a "Good Morning". Others get their *chiyus* from a good meal they enjoyed that day; or from a fiction novel they are reading; or from a nice picture they looked at that day which was pleasing to the eye.

People get their *chiyus* from these things! But this is not true *chiyus*! Most people do not have a real *chiyus* in their life. They get their *chiyus* from various kinds of superficial pleasures. There are others who do seek *chiyus*, but they seek it with pursuing physical gratification or with running after honor. This is also a superficial kind of *chiyus*.

If a person is a bit more spiritual, he gets *chiyus* from his *davening*. This is wonderful, but it's not enough. If a person is even more spiritual, he gets *chiyus* from learning, and if he is even more

spiritual, he gets *chiyus* from learning for many hours on end. Maybe he gets his *chiyus* from a penetrating insight that came into his head when he learned in his morning *seder*. All of these things are wonderful, but they are not yet true *chiyus*!

We must derive *chiyus* from keeping the mitzvos, because it is Hashem's will that we do the mitzvos. And we must derive *chiyus* as well from learning Torah, because it is Hashem's Torah. But even if we get *chiyus* from mitzvos and Torah learning, there is a more inner source of *chiyus* which we need. We need to mainly get *chiyus* from our very *emunah* in Hashem.

**We need to
mainly get
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"And the righteous man shall live by his faith."

We can get *chiyus* from the very fact that there exists a Master of the world. It is very possible that a person lived his whole life and he had *emunah*, but he didn't get *chiyus* from his *emunah*! Even if he believed in his mind about Hashem's existence, and even if he enabled that knowledge to penetrate into his heart, it is still possible that he doesn't derive ***chiyus*** from his *emunah*.

A person should therefore ask himself: "What makes me feel more alive? If I feel good from eating a certain kind of food I enjoy, or from a nice compliment I receive, or from a song I enjoy listening to, why don't I feel *chiyus* just from hearing the mention of Hashem?" It is written, *"To Your Name and to Your remembrance, my soul desires."* Knowing that Hashem exists is not just a piece of knowledge; it is the source of all our energy!

This is what it all boils down to: if someone derives *chiyus* from knowing about Hashem.

Many people seek spirituality, and there are others who take their spirituality further and they seek to derive *chiyus* from Torah and mitzvos. This is a true kind of search, but, it's very possible that a person is very "spiritual", yet he is missing the main source of *chiyus* to have in life. A person needs to get *chiyus* from his *emunah* - from just knowing that there is a Master of the world.

A person might even be getting his *chiyus* from learning Torah, but he doesn't necessarily get *chiyus* from knowing that there is a Master of the World. This is the meaning of the prophecy, *"[Even] those who hold onto Torah do not know Me."*

The real way that our life is supposed to look like is, that when a person gets up in the morning, he gets *chiyus* from saying *Modeh Ani*; not just to "know" that there is a Master of the world, but as a knowledge that he can feel and sense. It is a knowledge that gives us pleasure. It is not just an abstract kind of knowledge that a person knows about from learning *sefer Daas Tevunos* of the Ramchal; it is a kind of knowledge that can be very pleasurable to us, and it must become the source of where we get our *chiyus* from.