

Fear not Avram, I am a shield for you; your reward is very great. (15:1)

In his *He'Emanti Va'Adabeira*, Horav Moshe Toledano, Shlita, cites the *Peninei Ben Ish Chai*, who quotes the *Aderest Eliyahu* that Hashem is *mavtiach*, assures/guarantees those who observe Hashem's *mitzvos*, with great reward, commensurate with their performance. *Chazal* teach (*Kiddushin* 39b) *s'char b'hai alma leka*, "There is no (payment of) reward in this world." In other words, *mitzvah* performance is rewarded in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. The commentators wonder how this reward is reconciled with the *pasuk* in the Torah, *B'yomo titein s'charo*, "On that day shall you pay his hire" (*Devarim* 24:15). A day-laborer must be paid each day. It is preferable to pay as soon as the day's work is over (so that he does have until the next morning). If so, why does Hashem delay payment of one's *s'char* for *mitzvah* observance until the World to Come?

The answer is based upon a *Halachic* stipulation found in *Choshen Mishpat* 339:7 that, when a person who hires workers through the medium of an agent, such as a foreman, the law of *b'yomo titein s'charo* does not apply. Only when the worker negotiates directly with the owner who is paying the bill is there a requirement that payment be made on that very same day that the work was performed. Therefore, since Moshe *Rabbeinu* was Hashem's medium in giving us the Torah, the demand that payment be made immediately does not apply.

Based upon this we may suggest a novel suggestion, (I assume this is from the *Ben Ish Chai*). *Klal Yisrael* heard the first two commandments of the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, directly from Hashem, without the advantage (or disadvantage) of a medium." Two *mitzvos* for which Hashem will not withhold reward are: *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, during which Hashem "introduces" Himself and enjoins us in the *mitzvah* of *emunah*, faith/belief, in Hashem; and *Lo yiyeh lecha elohim acheirim*, "Do not worship other gods", the prohibition against idol worship. A Jew who maintains his uncompromising faith in Hashem, who unstintingly does not waiver in his belief by believing in other deities, will receive his just reward in this world.

This is derived from the *pasuk* in our *parsha*. *Al tira Avram*, "Fear not Avram." Do not fear that you will have to wait until you reach the next world before you can receive My reward. *Anochi magen lach*, "I am a shield for you" The *Anochi*, I, of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, the first commandment that charges us to be faithful and believe in Hashem, will protect us and be the source for our reward *b'olam hazeh*, this world.

Alternatively, Hashem was giving Avraham *Avinu* the key to Jewish survival in *galus*, our bitter exile, to which so many of our brothers and sisters have succumbed. *Anochi magen lach*. The belief in Hashem, a Jew's *emunah* in the face of the most difficult challenges, will carry him through the ordeal, the pain, the trauma, that has accompanied our people for most of this exile. Faith in Hashem is the only support that we have. It is the only panacea that works. Faith carries us over the hump and walks us through the pain and uncertainty. Indeed, one who has faith may be certain

of one thing: he is not alone in his travail.

In the introduction to *Shema Yisrael* from the **Kaliver Rebbe**, a collection of testimonies of devotion, courage and self-sacrifice, as evidenced during the terrible Holocaust, the saintly author shares with readers his emotions concerning the lofty attribute of *emunah* and how the Jewish People have demonstrated that their faith in the Almighty is invincible. I take the liberty of sharing a few vignettes from this most poignant thesis.

The *Rebbe* begins by stating that, after all of the calumnies to befall our people during the Holocaust, after the terrible bloodshed and brutal deaths of six million Jews under the most heinous forms of murder, we would still stand resolute and strong in our faith, declaring, "We have not forgotten Your Name! Despite everything that we experienced, despite the pain and travail, we stand with *emunah sheleimah*, perfect faith, and shout from the depth of our hearts, "*Shema Yisrael!*"

How... after a long day of backbreaking labor, during which they had been mercilessly beaten and abused, they finally arrived at their decrepit barracks to "enjoy" their longed-for daily slice of moldy bread and a little rest. Yet, they gave up the food and rest, so that they could put on *Tefillin!*

Tefillin?! They only had a shel yad, Tefillin of the hand, but they, nonetheless, ran to carry out the beloved mitzvah, so they could carry out the will of Hashem.

The *Rebbe* is convinced-and states so emphatically-that the only reason that most, if not all, of those who survived that living purgatory did so because of their indomitable faith in Hashem. This empowered them to put aside all mundane, physical considerations. Otherwise, there is no way they could have physically and emotionally survived such horrible torments. While many of these Jews had never before evinced any semblance of such spiritual greatness, the fires that burned within them were so strong that they kept on burning throughout the many challenges that they confronted.

Those, however, who were of little faith quickly wasted away physically and lost their minds emotionally. Faith has always been the foundation stone of our people – without which we cannot survive.

The *Rebbe* relates how, when he was in Auschwitz, he saw the son of a great *Rav* from Grosswardein being taken to his death. Knowing where he was being taken, confronting the brutal truth of his soon to be mortality, he screamed out, "*Yidden*, dear Jews, please remember to say *Kaddish* for me!" What greater example of *Mi k'amcha Yisrael?*; "Who is like Your People – *Yisrael?*" A member of any other nation would have gone mad, lost complete control of himself. Yet, here stood a young Jew about to meet his Maker, and all he could think about was that someone should recite *Kaddish* for him! What is *Kaddish*? It is praise for the Almighty. This is what this young man was thinking about seconds before his death – praise for the Almighty! That is the

meaning of *emunah*. A Jew who has faith lives on an entirely different plane than the rest of the world. He transcends physicality and the mundane, because he is holding on to G-d.

I could go on with pages of testimony and stories of faith and courage, but I will close with a well-known story that took place concerning **Horav Meir, zl, m'Premishlan**. This story imparts a powerful lesson, which every one of us should reiterate on a constant basis. *Rav Meir'l* (as he was referred to endearingly) would immerse himself in a *mikveh* that was on top of a snow covered mountain. Obviously, the trek up the mountain was not easy – especially for an elderly man to whom physical conditioning was not familiar. Yet, despite his advanced age, *Rav Meir'l* climbed the mountain easily and without issue. The man who accompanied him would slip and fall numerous times.

After a number of such trips, the *shamash*, *Rebbe's* attendant, who was a man half the *Rebbe's* age, asked, “*Rebbe*, how is it that Your Honor walks up the mountain so steadily, without straining, and without slipping and stumbling, while I am constantly stumbling?” The holy *Premishlaner* replied, “He who is bound to the One Above will not fall below.”

The legacy of *emunah* that has been left to us from Avraham *Avinu* and transmitted throughout the generations is one of critical significance to our survival. It is a legacy from which we may not deviate. It is our lifeline to eternity – and life on this world, as well!