

בס"ד

דברי תורה ד'צבי אליהו
DIVREI TORAH

ואתחנן
שבת נחמו

Vaeschanan
Shabbos Nachamu

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Live Rabbi Adam Singer

Life is the course of action we pursue in every one of the 525,600 minutes of our years, 7 days of our lives, and 24 hours in our days. Of all these moments, weeks, and days, how many would we actually call living? How much of our lives is spent in overcoming or being distracted away from parts of life we'd like to avoid, forget, or wash away? How much is spent earning, working or investing for parts that may or may not come in the future. In any given day, week, or hour, how much do we live?

The following verse from this week's parsha describes what it means to truly live: "*And you, the ones who cling to Hashem, your G-d, all of you are living today*" (*Devarim 4:4*). What does it mean that the people mentioned in this verse were "living"? What does this verse teach us about what it means to live? What does it mean to "cling to Hashem"? And how is clinging to Hashem connected to life and living?

Rav Shlomo Volbe, zt"l (20th - 21st cent., Israel) explains that clinging to Hashem means living with a true knowledge that G-d is real, that He will always do what is best for us, and that He will do everything that He says. This knowledge is what we call *emunah* in Hebrew. Somehow, when we know the reality of G-d, the Omniscience of the Almighty, we are empowered with the sense that we can accomplish anything. The knowledge that G-d exists, is real, enables us to succeed in all of the afflictions, challenges, or privileges life metes out to us. *Emmunah* allows us to stop planning and/or escaping and start

living. Clinging to the sense of clarity that G-d is real is the key to truly living life. It is the passkey to enable us to live and to avoid or at least minimize the need to escape, avoid, deny, or wash away the bitterness which sometimes comes along with living.

Emmunah, the knowledge G-d exists, should not be confused with faith. Faith is based on an inability to gain clarity. It is an intellectual throwing-up-of-the-hands when logic seems to run out. In English we combine the word "faith" with words like "blind" or "mere" as in acting out of "blind faith" or proceeding with "mere faith". These concepts are antithetical to *emunah*, the knowledge and clarity that G-d exists. *Emmunah* does not come from abandoning logic. It comes from clinging tenaciously to it.

Emmunah, the act of trusting G-d, comes from a careful and truthful reflection on the Torah we've been given, and daring to ask why this document and our people is so unique from every other people who lives or has lived throughout history up until our present time. It comes from reflecting truthfully on the following verse, also from this week's parsha, "*Has a **people** ever heard the voice of G-d speaking from the midst of fire, as you have, and lived?*" (*Devarim 4:33*). Look through history, and examine world religions. In all of the millenia of recorded history there has never been even one other nation who has claimed to have experienced a revelation of G-d en masse as our Torah testifies we experienced at Mount Sinai. Dare yourself to sincerely ask why. (For a more complete discussion of the total lack of other religions

who claim a mass revelation, see Permission to Believe by Rabbi Lawrence Kellerman)

There is a more tangible way to connect to the knowledge of G-d which allows us to truly live. The Ohr HaChayim (18th cent., Israel) explains that clinging to Hashem means living a life of mitzvahs. Every one of the 613 mitzvahs described in the Torah is a unique and perfect path to a connection to the Almighty. Every mitzvah is an act which binds us to the Almighty. It is an act where we use our will to connect ourselves to G-d, and an act which G-d describes as a way that He connects Himself to us.

Each of us faces times of adversity. Most of us have times in every day we need to heal, rest, or recover from. Mitzvahs are a way to energize our lives. Deepening our knowledge that G-d is real is a way to live more fully. Through whole-heartedly performing the mitzvahs of the Torah and clarifying for ourselves the reality of the Almighty we become more and more alive with every minute, every hour, and every day.

May we all merit eternal life and eternal living both in this world and the next through mitzvahs and true emmunah. GOOD SHABBOS!!!

“The Voice of Hashem Is In Power...”

Reuven Formey

In Parshat Va'etchanan, Moshe Rabbeinu repeats the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people, adjuring and reminding

them about the special gift of being given the Torah as well as the great responsibility that comes with it. He says that, “*These words Hashem spoke to your entire congregation...a great voice which did not cease.*” Rashi explains on that verse, that unlike a human who cannot speak all of his words in one breath, G-d spoke all of His words without stopping. Although this is a very valid explanation, we know the words of Torah are precise, and if we take the verse in its simplest sense, it seems to say that G-d never stopped speaking at all! This means that G-d is still speaking words of Torah to us even today. How do we understand such a concept?

The Midrash gives three ways to understand the verse, “*a great voice which did not cease.*” The first is that the voice was not limited to one language. It split up into seven voices and then into the languages of all the 70 nations. That's simply amazing. The second interpretation is exactly what we've mentioned above, that G-d's voice never stops. As a result, all of the Prophets and Sages of all generations were able to tap into this never-ending, spiritual flow of G-d's voice conveying the Torah and reveal all of the books of Tanach, Halacha, esoteric Torah, etc. which are contained in it. Nothing is new in Torah, its just brought out into revelation at the proper time. The third way to understand the verse is that the voice did not have an echo. What relevance is there in that? Plus, is there some great lesson about this great voice that we are meant to learn from the Midrash giving these three explanations? How are they all relevant to us?

The first word of the Ten Commandments – “Anochi” or “I” – is rooted in the Egyptian language and is an acronym for “*I have written Myself in, and given of Myself totally in the Ten Commandments.*” G-d began the Ten Commandments using a word from the lowest of all languages in order to teach us that through His Torah, His Presence can, and is meant to penetrate even the lowest places of existence. Therefore, the first explanation above emphasizes two points. G-d made His “voice” split into all of the 70 languages in order to infuse into every language (not just Lashon Hakodesh) some spark of holiness that could be elevated through studying Torah in that language. This way, even the “voice” of Torah being learned in French, Spanish, or Swahili, languages that at least stem from the original 70, will bring the holiness of Torah to every part of the world where it is spoken. Additionally, it reinforces the fact that the Seven Noachide Laws and all their sub-laws that the nations are required to follow (and Jews should help teach them when possible) were given as a part of Torah as well.

To explain the second Midrashic interpretation, we need some background. In the classic work of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe explains that all of creation is constantly being brought into existence by G-d’s “speech”, the Ten Utterances (“Let there be light, let there be a firmament”, etc.). Man can only create something with materials that already existed. The clay he uses to form a bowl, or the metal he uses to form silverware already existed. However, G-d created the universe in a way of “something from nothing.” There was no “room” in the Presence of G-d for worlds to exist, much less any pre-existing materials

to form them with. Creation was unique in the deepest sense of the term. Therefore, even after He created everything, He could not fully withdraw and leave it to exist on its own (G-d forbid). At every moment He must give it life through His continuous speech and vitality, for creation has nothing to stand on alone. Only G-d has such an independent existence. This being said, we can understand the parallel in regards to the voice at Sinai. So that we don’t make the terrible mistake of thinking that the power contained within this great voice only carried into the Ten Commandments or the Five Books of the Torah, the Midrash gives us the second interpretation that G-d’s voice never ceases. Not only did the words communicated explicitly at the giving of the Torah have the quality of never stopping, but all of the holy prophecies and writings *revealed* by the tzadikim of all the generations that followed are apart of this original voice. Therefore, their authenticity and relevance remains valid at all times. The ways in which we are to apply the words in every generation have always existed in concealment, ready for the Sages of each time period to explain their application to the populace. So you see, we can never say that Hashem’s words are out-of-date. We may not be able to carry out all of His laws because of our present condition in exile, or we may need to figure out what the words mean for us today, but the relevance and potency of Torah is never diminished. It is we who have fallen down multiple levels and sometimes fail to internalize the Torah’s eternity. Thank G-d He designated righteous teachers in every generation, from Moshe on down, to guide us in this effort.

Lastly, what does it mean that the voice did

not have an echo? An echo is generated anytime that a sound does not penetrate an object, but instead bounces off of it. When the Torah was given, G-d revealed His Infinite Essence. He and His Torah are One and by bringing Torah to the world, His Essence could penetrate and be revealed within all things. His revelation could be felt and internalized by all matter. Psalms 29 states, *"The voice of the Lord causes the desert to quake; the Lord causes the desert of Kadesh to quake. The voice of the Lord will frighten the hinds and strip the forests."* The Sages state that an ox did not bellow and a bird did not chirp. These are just a couple allusions to the fact that G-d's voice at Mattan Torah was absorbed in all aspects of creation, affecting them internally. Therefore, by telling us there was no echo, the Midrash stresses that G-d is a part of every element of our existence. He may be more hidden in certain areas than others, but that is why He gave us the Torah, to roll away even the heaviest concealment and reveal His kingship over everything. At Mattan Torah, this reality was fully acknowledged.

So what is *our* task? Our mission is to draw from the highest level of our souls and deepest reserves of our faith, and acknowledge what was openly revealed when the *"great voice which did not cease"* issued forth. The fact that we don't see the immense G-dly revelations and miracles of past times makes our sincere efforts at continually serving Hashem that much more incredible. But we do see miraculous things. We can succeed by recognizing the miracle of waking up each morning, being provided nourishment each day of our lives since birth, having children, or any of the

things that don't necessarily *have* to be. Who says these things are a given? Who says that all of the amazing stories we have about Divine Providence had to happen for us? These are all our personal miracles, the results of G-d's voice sustaining our lives. So many of us turn a deaf ear to it. Yet He continuously speaks. Stop for a moment once in a while. Ponder all that's transpired in 5769 years. Think about all the blessings in your life, and then think of the state of the world today. Close your eyes. Can't you hear what the voice is saying, vibrating inside of you? *"Anochi Hashem Elokecha! I am Hashem...YOUR G-d!"* Maybe when you open your eyes and wipe away the tears, you'll actually see that reality.

Can Brown Do This For You? Post Tisha B'av Thoughts

Rabbi Yosef Samberg

There was once a king who had one son. Naturally, this son, the prince of the country, was treated royally. Wherever he went, people accorded him with the greatest of honor. When he attended school, his classmates were always nice and friendly to him. While they did the typical boy stuff among themselves (fighting and teasing) they never did anything to their royal classmate. They were simply afraid that if they did, the king would find out and they would suffer ramifications. One day, the king had to leave the country for business reasons, not to return for a long and indefinite time. Everything seemed to be going alright for the prince until his classmates found out that the king was out of town. Immediately, they started picking on and bullying their aristocratic classmate.

For one week, not a day went by without the prince arriving home with a bruised limb, bruised ego, and tears streaming down his face. Alone in his room, the prince took out a pen and paper and began to compose a letter to his father. In it, he articulated all of the physical and emotional pain he had endured in the king's absence. Tears soaked the paper as he requested that his father return home soon, so that his presence would naturally protect him from his mean classmates. Slowly, he folded the letter, put it in an envelope and addressed it. He walked over to the nearest mailbox, opened the lid, and deposited the letter with the hope that it would reach its destination and fulfill its purpose of convincing his father to return to him soon.

We are Hashem's special and unique children. We are the princes of the world! When the Bais Hamikdash was standing and we were obeying the commandments of the Torah, G-d's presence was clearly felt and the nations of the world treated us with the respect and reverence due to us. However, when we started to stray from the path of Torah and mitzvos, G-d, so to speak, had to leave town for an indefinite amount of time. With the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the presence of G-d was removed not just from Jerusalem, but from the entire world. What ensued from thereon was that the nations of the world were not afraid to persecute us, the princes of G-d. This, unfortunately, continues to be the situation today. How true is the statement in the Pesach Haggadah that, in every generation there is always another person or government that tries to solve the "Jewish problem." But what are we to do? Are we to just sit back and bemoan our national fate? NO! We must write and send

letters to G-d requesting that He return home so our pain and suffering cease. What should we say in the letter?

Rabbi Chaim Freidlander, based on a Gemara in Maseches Berochas, explains that the letter is made up of seven words: "Yehay Shemay Rabbah Mevorach L'olom U'lemay Ulmayah" (translation: "May His Name be Great and Blessed forever and eternity). These words are written in the future tense, not present tense. Therefore, these words are to be understood as a request, not a statement. What are we asking for? We are stating that we are tired of the long and painful exile that is caused by the absence of G-d's presence, and we call for a return of G-d's holiness to the world where it will be acknowledged by all the nations of the world. With these simple but very powerful words we "send a letter" exclaiming our pain over G-d's "absence" and our request that He return soon to His rightful place in the world. With His return, our national pain and suffering will stop once and for all. Isn't that what we all want?

One "Yehay Shemay Rabbah" said by one person with total concentration has the capacity to change and affect cosmic worlds far and wide. Imagine a whole congregation saying these seven words together with proper concentration and the impact it could have. Imagine a community, imagine a city, imagine the Jewish people worldwide and what would happen if we banded together to request that G-d return soon.

On Tisha B'av, we focused on the pain we suffer from being "exiled from the table of G-d." The time after Tisha B'av is the time to "send letters" requesting and demanding

that G-d return His presence and that we find our original seat at His table. Let us strengthen our resolve to focus and listen to the holy words of Kaddish so we can answer together as a nation “Yehay Shemay Rabbah” and inundate the heavens with our sincere and convincing

calls for the revelation of G-d’s Presence and subsequent end of our long and dreadful exile. May it happen speedily in our days!

Have a great and meaningful Shabbos