

Parashat Vayikra

What will Give Me Strength to Deal with all my Hardships?



Dear Rebbetzin,

I really feel at a complete loss, and have a hard time keeping up my emunah (faith). My biological clock has been ticking for more than a decade, and I don't know if I will ever get married and have children. I just feel so devastated and lost. How can I believe that I will get married soon, when I see so many older single women? How can I know that I am not going to remain one of them all my life? I've been praying and praying but it doesn't seem like Hashem is answering me. Can you please help strengthen my emunah?

Rachel Stein (name changed)

Dear Rachel,

I totally feel for you. What you are going through is not easy, and I am aware that it doesn't necessarily help you to know that you are not alone in waiting to find your soulmate. The uncertainty of not knowing what will be and whether you will ever be able to find a husband and have children can be almost unbearable. In truth, we never really know anything in life for sure. Even a woman, who does get married and has children, sometimes, G-d forbid, may lose her spouse and children. The main lesson of life is to accept that Hashem is in control. When we let go and accept G-d's will totally, Hashem doesn't need to bring us hardships in order to teach us this lesson. However, how can we accept Hashem's will and keep our steadfast emunah when we are in a situation that is so unbearable?

Emunah is Trans-rational Acceptance of Hashem's Will

Emunah doesn't mean that we believe that everything is going to turn out the way we want. Emunah is to believe and accept that Hashem is in charge. Everything is in His loving hand and according to His will. Emunah is to trust that everything is ultimately for the best even if things do not always turn out according to our wishes. Within this understanding and acceptance, we can find our place of heartfelt prayer to Hashem that things will end up the way we hope and pray – like Chana who poured out her soul in prayer for children. When we accept Hashem's will, and make His will our will, then Hashem too will make our will His will (*Pirkei Avot* 2:4). Emunah is *bitul* (gratuitous trans-rational acceptance), and as harsh as it may sound, you need to accept that you may or may not get married and have children. Emunah is to believe that even if what you desire the very most never materializes G-d forbid; your life can still be meaningful and have a great purpose. I know many single women who are miserable. I also know others who find ways to be happy with their lot in life, performing many mitzvot and contributing their talents to the world. Still other 'older singles' have found fulfillment in later marriages to men with children whose children call them "Grandma!"

Hardships are Wakeup Calls to Turn to Hashem

"Hashem desires our hearts." He desires to hear our prayers from the depths of our hearts. Hashem always answers our prayer but sometimes the answer is "no" and we have to accept that Hashem knows best what we really need to rectify ourselves. Often the answer is "not yet" or "soon" but we just don't know. Therefore, we need to be patient in our emunah and continue to turn to Hashem

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with our prayers. This week's *parasha* is called וַיִּקְרָא/*Vayikra* – “He called.” Hashem constantly calls us to connect with Him, and hardships are wakeup calls to turn to Hashem with every fiber of our being.

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֵתֵל מוֹעֵד לְאֹמֵר: (וַיִּקְרָא פָּרָק א פִּסּוּק א)
 “Hashem called to Moshe and Hashem spoke with him from the Tent of Meeting saying...”
 (*Vayikra* 1:1).

As I write in my newest *Parasha Meditation Book*, the last word לְאֹמֵר/*emor* – “saying” is extra. If Hashem “spoke,” obviously He would be “saying.” Whenever “saying” appears as an extra word, it teaches us about the ongoing, continuous prophecy which applies to all future generations (*Mechilta, Parashat Beshalach, parasha 1*). Just as Hashem called to Moshe, He continuously calls us throughout the times, nurturing an ongoing relationship with us. Hashem is putting you in this unbearable situation in order to make you unload your burden on Him through the depths of your prayers. Whenever you pray, don't forget to include prayers for other single women who are seeking their soulmate.

Practice Conversations with Hashem

Practicing *Hitbodedut* (speaking with Hashem in your own words) is a powerful way of heeding Hashem's call for an ongoing relationship with Him. I used to find *hitbodedut* intimidating, as the recommended time is for a full hour a day, which there is no way I could fit into my schedule. My interest awoke, when I heard a talk by Rabbi Miki Yosefi, who mentioned that even five minutes a day of *hitbodedut* can do wonders. He also explained how Hashem responds to us by answers we receive in our own heart. We learn this from King David's *Tehillim*: לֵךְ אָמַר לִבִּי בְקִשׁוּ פָנַי – “To You my heart said, ‘seek My face’” (*Tehillim* 27:8). Who is saying, “Seek My face? It is written as if my heart is saying that, but what is the face of our heart that we are asked to seek? When it states, “To You my heart says, seek...” who is talking to whom? According to Rashi, the word “to You” means “My heart speaks for You and as Your emissary telling all of Israel to seek My face.” Thus, Rabbi Nachman explains that when we speak to Hashem, Hashem answers us through the words that come into our own heart. What our heart says is really the words of Hashem (*Likutei Moharan, part 1, Torah 138*). So, I highly recommend daily *Hitbodedut* – pouring out your heart to Hashem, expressing yourself in your own words, in the language you understand best. Tell Him what you are going through – your pain, the various pressures you are under, your personal situation, that of others in your home, and also that of the Jewish people as a whole. Plead with Hashem to help come genuinely close to Him. Argue with the Creator in any way (like Avraham and Chana). Chose the most burning question in your life and ask Hashem for an answer. Ask Hashem to guide you and then remain silent to receive His answer for you.

May Hashem bless you with true emunah and may He send you your soulmate speedily!