

Pesach & Renewing our Belief in Miracles

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The Challenge of Believing in Miracles when Life gets Tough

Pesach is about renewing our belief in miracles. Even if we surely believe in G*d and in His Torah, it can be difficult to integrate this belief into our personal lives, especially when things get tough. Sometimes we fall into thinking that Hashem has forgotten us, allowing the negative side of darkness to have free rein. I recently went through a personal difficulty. I would say the hardest thing that ever happened to me. None of you should know of such agony! I was about to fall so low into despair, thinking that everything was lost. Of course, I still believed that everything was from Hashem, and for the best, yet I caught myself thinking that it was for the best to punish me for all my multitude of sins and shortcomings. I surely deserved that everything would end up in the worst possible way. I thought I still had great *emunah* (faith) thinking that *emunah* is not just the naïve belief that everything will turn out well in the end, as many things don't really turn out so well in the end. We all know that true *emunah* is to believe that even when things don't turn out well, like the Holocaust, it's still for our best. So I was spiraling down into the negative thinking of the worst possible scenario that could happen to me, which of course in my great "*emunah*" I accepted would be for the best.

Fear of the Evil Eye

I felt that due to my selfish bragging, I had opened myself to the evil eye – (*ayin hara*), remembering the Talmud that quotes Rav proclaiming that "Ninety-nine percent of those buried in the cemetery died as a result of the evil eye, and only one percent died naturally."¹ With hindsight, I now understand why *ayin hara* only affects those who believe in it, because if we look at ourselves through Hashem's eye of kindness we do not leave room for the evil eye to have any power over us. The problem arises when we allow other people's evil eye to affect us, and we begin to look at ourselves in their negative judgmental light. However, as long as they are unable to affect our positive hopeful attitude towards ourselves, then we do not allow *ayin hara* to have any effect on us.

G*d's Unity Transcends the World of Light and Darkness

Negative thoughts of despair are really like idol worship because they empower the *sitra acha* (the side of impurity) by telling ourselves that the one and only G*d, has hidden His face and allowed evil to take over. This is almost like giving power to a dual Deity, the G*d of goodness and G*d forbid the god of negative darkness and evil eye, etc. The Torah teaches us to believe

¹ Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 107b.

in One and only G*d, Whose unity overrides the world of dichotomy including good and evil, light and darkness, etc. The existence of darkness is only for the sake of illuminating the light which grows brighter through contrast and counterpoint. This is why Israel had to go down to the very darkest most perverse place in the world – Egypt, before we could be redeemed to receive the greatest light of the Torah.²

The Effects of Positive Thinking

So is it not naïve to always believe that everything will turn out good in the end? Why should I believe in something which may be unrealistic? Positive thinking can affect the final outcome of every situation, according to the saying: “think good and it will become good.”³ The righteous women in Egypt acted according to this principle when they packed their tambourines. “*Miriam the prophetess sister of Aaron took the drum in her hand.*”⁴ The righteous women of that generation trusted that Hashem would perform a miracle for them, and they therefore brought drums with them from Egypt.⁵ King David writes in his *Tehillim*, “Hashem is your keeper; Hashem is your shadow upon your right hand.”⁶ Just as the shadow follows the movements of the person, likewise, according to how a person acts below, so is he acted upon from Above. In the same vein when we have mercy towards others, Hashem will have mercy upon us. Therefore, if we are sure that Hashem will provide for all our needs, all our requests will be fulfilled from Above. However, if we are always worried, then the object of our worries will come to pass, G*d forbid. “Happy is the person who won’t forget You, but places his trust in Hashem, then Hashem will be his shadow.” King David trusted so greatly in Hashem, that he would recite songs of praise to Hashem before the redemption from the many troubles he experienced. Likewise, Israel recited song at the Sea before the actual redemption, as they trusted that Hashem would surely part the Sea for them. When we trust that Hashem will fulfill all our needs, then G*d will fulfill all our needs, for He is our shadow.⁷

Believing in the Best Possible Outcome

True *emunah* is to believe that things will turn out according to the revealed best possible way, even if it will take a miracle to make that happen, for “is anything too hard for Hashem?”⁸ Our positive thinking will affect the final outcome both because a positive attitude energetically attracts positive outcomes, and also because our actions are affected by our attitude. If we have a positive outlook, we will act in ways that bring about the positive end result. Our prayer is so much more powerful when we believe that Hashem will answer it for good. However, if in the end things don’t turn out the way we had hoped, then is the time to have *emunah* that this too was from Hashem for our own good. Yet, to begin with we must

² Maharal, *Gevurat Hashem*, Chapter 4.

³ Original Yiddish: *Trakht gut vet zein gut*. By simply trusting in G*d, our prayer may be answered.

This saying is attributed to the *Tzemach Tzedek*, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, September 9, 1789 – March 17, 1866 the third Rebbe of the Chabad movement.

⁴ *Shemot* 15:20.

⁵ Rashi, *Shemot* 15:20.

⁶ *Tehillim* 121:5.

⁷ *Kedushat HaLevi*, *Parashat B'Shalach*, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdizchov, 1898.

⁸ *Bereishit* 18:14.

always believe in the very best possible outcome. Even when things look impossible, “Hashem’s salvation is like a blink of an eye.”⁹

Exodus from Darkness

The Pesach story teaches us to believe in miracles to bring about a happy end. Although we had sunk into the very lowest level of being absorbed within the darkness of Egypt in the 49th gate of impurity, Hashem still took us out with a strong arm¹⁰ full of wondrous miracles, to the 49th gate of purity. The Exodus is called: **יסוד היסודות ושור הכל** – “The foundation of the foundations and the root of all.”¹¹ Through the revealed miracles of the Exodus we learn to recognize the hidden miracles of everyday life, which are the foundation of the entire Torah. In order to have a portion in the Torah we need to believe in everything described in it which is all miracles beyond nature.¹²

Celebrating the Belief in the Impossible

I want to take this opportunity to thank Hashem for His goodness and blessings. As we chew on our matzah – bread of *emunah* – and celebrate the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt, I celebrate my personal miracle and belief that the impossible can truly happen in all of our lives. I pray for miracles to happen in all of your lives as well. May those of you who are single keep up your faith that the right man is around the corner! May all the barren women receive renewed faith that they too will bear fruit! May we all be strengthened in the belief that the final *Geulah* (redemption) is at our doorsteps, and may our strengthened *emunah* draw down the *Shechina* to become our shadow for the ultimate good!

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⁹ Tefilah following *Tikun HaKlali*.

¹⁰ *Shemot* 13:9.

¹¹ Maharal, *Gevurot Hashem*, Chapter 3.

¹² Ramban, *Shemot* 13:16.

