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Bitachon & Emunah:
Understanding Belief (Shmuz #7)
Rabbi Bentzion Shafier

God tells Noach, that he will destroy the world. 40 days and 40 nights, everything will cease to exist. Noach builds an ark, God comes again and tells him that it will happen in seven days. Noach, however, waited until it started to rain and he was forced to go in. Noach was lacking in his faith, he didn't fully believe God, says Rashi. This concept is far from us, we believe but we don't. We understand that God controls the world, but in a dark alley, my emunah flies out the window. Rashi asks: why did God ask Noach to build an ark. God could have saved than in so many ways. Why? Because God wanted people to see Noach building the ark and people would know that the world was coming to an end so they would do Teshuva. The ark was 600 feet long. Imagine one person build this thing! Imagine people's reactions when they saw this! Noach was 600 years old when he goes into the ark! For 120 years, he built this ark, he was a righteous person and he had prophecy from God, he's called a tzaddik. How could he not have full belief?

The Kli Yakar asks, why do we have to know how big the ark was? To show us how big of a miracle this was, because there's no way all the animals in the world could have fit in this ship. Noach still built the ship because he trusted in God. How did he catch all these animals? Also, the animals have to be pure (the males only with their own species), but how? God tells Noach not to worry. On that day, the animals marched in one line towards the ark. The people wanted to protest and surround the ark, God made lions and bears protect the ark. There were miracles everywhere! But Noach waited till the water came up to his thighs. Where is the emunah?

God had a problem when he created man. When he created man, he made him with a piece of God and made him so pure, holy and wise, that he had no free will. Man was much higher than the Angels. Now, Angela have free will but realize that anything they do against God is self-inflicted damage, and so they won't do it. God wanted to give

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man free will. So God put the neshama into the body, which allowed free will. The neshama and the body is covered by layers of darkness, and can't see the consequences of it's actions. The body is dumb, it doesn't see the past or future, it just knows the present. There is a part of each of us that only wants to learn Torah, daven, and do chessed to others. And there's another part of me which is dumb, reactionary, heavy and sees nothing intelligent. They are two opposites, two competing natures, we are all walking and living contradictions. (Imagine a situation that is a test, you want to do it, but you don't. That is our lives). Why is it so hard to pray? Part of me knows I am speaking to God. Part of me is saying what are you doing? You're talking to a wall! God doesn't exist! This wasn't by accident. Man was meant to be that way. The person I will be for eternity is molded by the decisions I make. This was Noach, no matter how big of a righteous person you are, as long as you are human, you're affected by this. No matter how big of a prophet, at the same time, there is part of the body that doesn't believe.

This is a big concept, if you want to understand yourself; you have to realize that you are meant to be confused. Your job in life is to straighten yourself out and gain clarity. If God decides how much we're going to make and God has an unlimited amount of money he could give you in an unlimited amount of ways, why do I work 70 hours a week and kill myself over work? How come when I lost that big deal, I was devastated? God runs the world, I have to work, but ultimately it's God that decides how much I will make. We have to make an effort but effort means to work in normal human hours, not to kill ourselves. The same thing goes with tayva. God created you that way. From the confusion, you must create clarity and control. Never once does the Yetzer Hara force you to do something; you have to agree with it. Once you realize how human beings function, you realize that human beings are not so simple, they are very complex. No matter how great and sophisticated a person is, God created anger and anger takes you away from your mind and makes you crazy. The same person could do the biggest Chessed, but be doing the biggest of sins. A human being was made to fight. A person could see God perform the biggest miracles but still not fully believe.

The Bluzhever Rebbe was an inmate in concentration camp. Afterwards, he lived in Boro Park. For a while, he was put in a labor camp. In the labor camp, as long as you

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would work, you were alive. One Erev Yom Kippur some of his followers came to him and told him that he has to find a way for them not to work on Yom Kippur. The problem was that the kappos (Jews given power by Nazis to look after other Jews) were more cruel than the Nazis. There kappos was a man named Shneirweis, an atheist and self hating Jew. The Bluzhever Rebbe goes to ask him if they could not work on Yom Kippur. He says you know I don't have much respect for religion but I respect your courage, let me see what I could do. The next day, he took the rebbe and his followers to an SS house and commanded them to wash the floors without wax, and clean the windows without water. He understood what a melecha was and didn't make them do it.

While they are doing this, they start to pray. It was 12 o'clock noon, five SS men come in to the house with a huge cart filled with food. The kind of food that these people hadn't seen in years! They said "today is a holy day, come let us eat Jews"! No one moved. Again the Nazis repeated what they said. They told Shneirweis to order the men to eat or they would all be killed. Shneirweis stood up tall and with confidence he told the SS men, today is Yom Kippur, we Jews do not eat today. Again, the men scream at him. Again Shneirweis repeats himself. One SS guard takes out a gun, puts it at Shneirweis's temple and shoots him, leaving him in a pool of blood.

You never know what's in the heart of a Jew. Although he was an atheist, this Jew understood what was true and what wasn't. In this one moment of clarity he makes his decision, and gives up his life for it. Unfortunately, it was one choice throughout his whole lifetime. Ultimately, we have many choices to make throughout our lifetimes and the point is that intuitively we know what's good, right and proper. Ideally, a person should make the correct choices throughout his/her lifetime and become the person that God put them on this planet to be.

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