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י"ט מרחשון תשפ"א

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Guided by G-d

A man made a purchase at a grocery store and forgot to take his change. After he left, the cashier saw the money and said to the store owner that this person left \$1.98 on the counter. The boss told him to put it back in the register. At that moment, the boss accidentally knocked over a jar of pickles breaking it. The worker then went to clean it up and informed the boss the jar was priced at \$1.98. This would seem like an obvious message as both cost \$1.98. However, the response of the boss was, "I guess it was a good thing the person left his change so that I wouldn't lose any money from the broken jar."

The Griz would say that if one says he lost money because of a hole in his pocket, he is denying Hashem. Rather since Hashem wanted him to lose the money, he had the hole in his pocket.

Hashem, and no one else, does everything. This is just as we say in the first מאמין לכל — אני מברא ומנהיג לכל — הברואים... Hashem creates and guides all creatures and He alone made, makes and will make everything.¹ Prior to having surgery, a woman told the doctor if you fail don't worry as it is from God. But the same applies if the surgery is successful—it is all from God!² We must realize that no one can help or hurt us without Hashem's authorization.³

In his speeches in the Kovno Ghetto, R' Mordechai Pogramansky⁴ (1903-1949) would say about

¹ A sign once read that Faith is an acronym for Forward All Issues To Hashem.

² "Man blames most accidents on fate but feels a more personal responsibility when he makes a hole-in-one in the gold course."

³ See Chovos Halvevos, Shaar HaBitachon, 5. Also see Shomer Emunim, Maamar Hashgacha Pratis, 13.

⁴ R' Efraim Oshry recounted how R' Lopian discovered young Mordechai Pogramansky: "R' Elya Lopian once told me how he discovered Rav Mottel Pogramansky. After World War One, R'

the vicious Nazis patrolling the ghetto, "I don't see Germans around. I see the *pesukim* of *Tanach* coming to life."

R' Avraham Genichovsky told his students that his watch once fell to the ground and stopped working. He brought it to a watchmaker because he thought something broke inside. He was told all it needed was a new battery. It stopped working when it fell so why should the battery die exactly when the watch fell to the ground, R' Avraham inquired? The watchmaker explained that the battery was weak, but functioning. When it fell, the watch stopped for a moment, but it didn't have strength to begin again. R' Avraham Genichovsky told his students that one's *Emuna* needs to be strong⁵ so that

Lopian was traveling from city to city in Lithuania encouraging Jews to remain faithful to Judaism, to study Torah, and educating their children in the way of Torah. He spent two to three days in a community and taught two to three hours each day. His convincing voice and passionate tone captured the hearts of the masses. At the same time, he sought out alumni and other young boys in each city who would like to resume or begin their Torah studies at his yeshiva in Kelm.

Following an uplifting lesson during a visit to the town of Tavrig, R' Lopian is approached by a young boy who tells him that he is very interested in visiting his yeshiva. This boy, Mordechai Pogramansky, 14, had never studied gemara. Although his grandfather, R' Chaim Yanover, was renowned throughout Lithuania as a genius, Mordechai's parents were modern and he was a student in a [public] high school.

R' Lopian, impressed by Mordechai's obvious intelligence coupled with his genuine interest in Torah study, agreed to take him to Kelm. But the young boy added a condition. He was already such a successful merchant that he even got an import permit from the Germans and sold wholesale paint, so he couldn't afford to stay in Kelm for very long.

R' Lopian agrees and returns to Kelm with Mordechai. He connects Mordechai with many older students and arranges for them to help him so that he is able to take the first level of gemara lessons. Each of these students is preparing a few lines of the Talmud with him. With his brilliant mind, he easily grasped whatever was taught to him, and within a few days, was pushing forward on his own. Despite the pressure to return home with his regular customers, he stayed in Kelm for a few weeks. He then returns home to Tavrig and loses contact with R' Lopian.

*R' Lopian does not give up, and travels to Tavrig to bring him back. This time he manages to convince the young boy to give up his business and he brings him back to the yeshiva to stay there. Young Mordechai Pogramansky uses his superior intelligence in Torah study, and establishes a reputation as the *iluy* [genius] of Tavrig." When Mordechai arrived in the Telz yeshiva, the *bachurim* quickly recognized his brilliance and flocked to him with questions on every topic imaginable.*

R' Oshry, who also survived the Kovno Ghetto, described how R' Pogramansky lived in the Ghetto: "He managed to spend his days and nights in the study. I do not know how he could do it. But he had to have Divine protection because he survived. Day and night, I was told, he studied without text, was always absorbed, and never engaged in a conversation."

⁵ Regarding insurance not being a lack of trust in Hashem see Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 2:111, R' Ovadia Yosef שו"ת יחזקאל דעת 3:85, 118. Also see Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:48.

even when one falls or goes through hard times, his Emuna won't fail.⁶ If the Emuna is weak, every small struggle may cause him⁷ to fail.⁸ There is an expression, "We need a faith that will not shrink when washed in the waters of affliction and adversity."

Trusting in Hashem is like an insurance policy: one can have a policy granting coverage for 1,000, 10,000 or 100,000 dollars. The larger the policy, the more he is covered. Similarly, the insurance we receive from Hashem depends upon the amount of trust we place in Him.⁹

R' Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura interpreted רבות רבות¹⁰ in the following way: That which there is רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום—the many and running thoughts of worry and fear is because you think everything is dependent on man (איש)—ועצת (איש)—the advice to get out of this is היא תקום ה'—that Hashem is always in front of you, so you will remember all that happens is Divine Providence.¹¹

A Logical Test

Why is the Akaida only considered a test of¹² Avraham?¹³ Shouldn't it at least also be a test of Yitzchak since he was the one willing to give up his life?

⁶ There is an expression, "If Hashem put a period, we shouldn't put a question mark." Someone once said, "God deals the deck of cards and we have to play the game."

⁷ R' Bachaye (Hakdama to Beshalach) writes that the ים סוף didn't split all at once rather little by little. As they continued walking, it continued to split. This was just like the מן which didn't come down for a month at a time or the like rather each day. In this way, Hashem accustomed their nature to trust in Him. Through trusting in Hashem it made them fitting to receive the Torah (R' Bachaye, Shemos 13:17). The Shach Al Hatorah (Beshalach, 14:21, s.v. וישוּבוּ הַיָּם) however says that the sea split all at once so that the Jewish people shouldn't be scared they would drown.

⁸ The Kedushas Levi once told his Chassidim, "If I were God, do you know what I would do? Exactly what He is doing now, because I am not smarter than Him!"

⁹ A Gerrer Chassid had a non-Jewish partner in business who came with him to his Rebbe, the Beis Yisrael (1895-1977), because the Chassid wouldn't do anything with money without the advice of the Rebbe. The non-Jew wanted to see a relationship of a Rebbe and Chassid. The Rebbe told him that this man isn't a Chassid rather look at that person as he is a Chassid because he doesn't do anything with his money without asking me despite that he has lost money each time he listened to me. Emuna is when things don't go our way, as it is easy to believe when it goes in the way we desire.

¹⁰ Mishlei 19:21.

¹¹ R' Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb, who lived in Yerushalayim, once remarked that he never missed a bus as sometimes he came early for the next bus, since it was destined for him to take the next bus. He didn't miss the bus that was meant for him.

¹² The (הנה מבואר, s.v. הדרוש הששי, דרשות הר"ן) ר"ן gives a revolutionary explanation concerning the Akaida: If Avraham wouldn't have done the Akaida, he wouldn't have been punished, because Hashem never commanded him to slaughter Yitzchak. And Hashem promised him זרע יקרא לך זרע כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע, through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours (Breishis 21:12). It says ... בנך. קח נא את בנך. please take your son, your only one... (Breishis 22:2), which is not a command rather a request (See Rashi, s.v. קח נא means please. When Hashem commands Mitzvos, He doesn't use the word נא. For example, it doesn't say

Rashi tells us that Nimrod threw Avraham into the האש, fiery pit, since Avraham smashed his father's idols.¹⁴ We would expect such an act showing dedication and loyalty to Hashem would be in the Torah. So, why is it not stated explicitly as we only know this from a Midrash? After all, the Akaida in which Yitzchak was willing to forfeit his life is mentioned explicitly!

For someone like Avraham, to give up his life for Kidush Hashem, says the Divrei Shmuel,¹⁵ is no big deal, as it is just exchanging a physical garment, the body, for a spiritual one. This may sound extreme to us but that is only because we are so far from that. This explains why Avraham jumping into the האש is not mentioned in the Torah.

So what was the test of the Akaida? It was a logical one. That is, if כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע¹⁶ will be considered yours through Yitzchak, then how can Avraham be told now to slaughter him?!¹⁷ Avraham passed this test by not questioning what Hashem said, as he fulfilled ואני בתמי אלך, I will walk in perfect innocence.¹⁸

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please eat Matza, please wear Tefillin, etc.). That is to say, this is what Hashem preferred, if Avraham was willing to forgive Hashem on His promise of זרע יקרא לך זרע and bind Yitzchak. If Avraham responded "This is the only child You gave me and Your promise would be fulfilled through him so how can I do it," it wouldn't be considered a sin and he wouldn't be punished for it. Due to his great love for Hashem, he found in his heart to bind Yitzchak in order to do the will of Hashem.

¹³ We are told that on the day of the עקידה בבקר, וישכם אברהם, Avraham woke up early in the morning (22:3). How he was able to go to sleep thinking he would slaughter his beloved son Yitzchak the next day? Since Avraham was doing the will of Hashem, he prepared himself by getting adequate sleep to perform the Mitzva properly. That requires lots of Emuna. We can contrast this to Paroh's sleep where Rashi (Shemos 12:30) tells us he awoke from his bed on the night of Makkas Bechoros. The point Rashi is making is not that he awoke but that he was able to go to sleep on such a night when he knew that Makkas Bechoros was coming (there wasn't room for doubt with this Makka as the first 9 came just as he was told). Such was the wickedness of Paroh.

¹⁴ Breishis 11:28, Rashi. In Hashem saved Avraham from the אש, fire. In fact, this is one reason why it is called אש אור as אש אור means fire. Is it any surprise that אש are the initials of אברהם, אש?

¹⁵ Nesivos Shalom, Vayera, p. 115.

¹⁶ 21:12. Parenthetically, ביצחק has a Gematria of 210 as it hints that from when he was born, we count the years of the enslavement in Mitzrayim (Breishis 15:13).

¹⁷ The word ביצחק hints that his destiny will continue through Yaakov, not Esav. This is because it is a contraction of יצחק, ב' יצחק, the second child—that is Yaakov, since Esav was born first.

¹⁸ Tehillim 26:11.