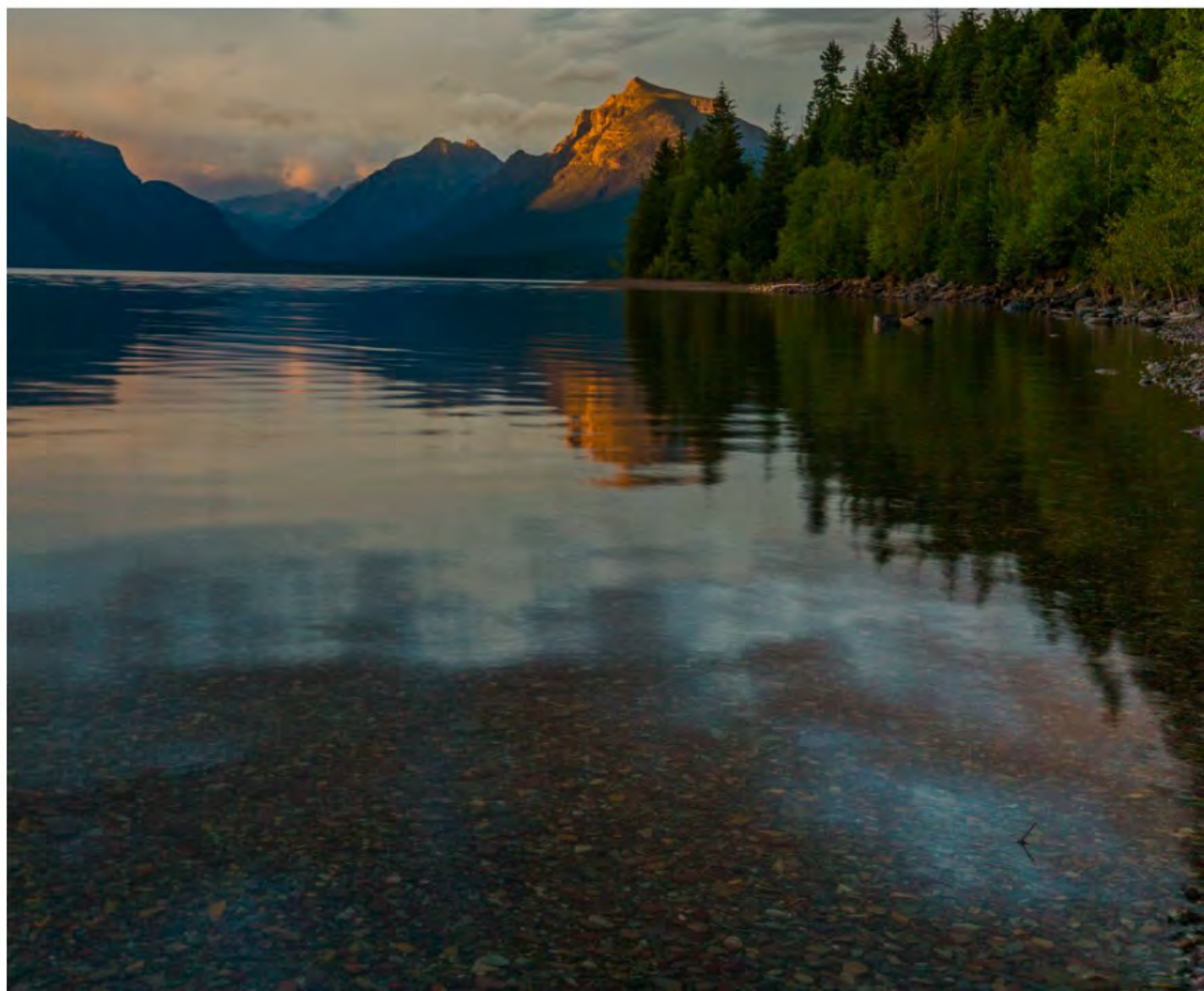




**LIVING WITH EMUNAH**  
**RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG**  
**JULY 2018 - TAMMUZ 5778**





## Ramban

R' Moshe ben Nachman

1194-1270

Born: Gerona, Spain

Died: Acco, Israel

[Ramban now begins a lengthy discussion of the unique importance of the Exodus, explaining why the Torah gives us so many mitzvos to commemorate that event. He ultimately expounds on the underlying purpose of all the mitzvos, and of Creation itself:]

הנה מעת היות עבודה זרה בעולם מימי אנוש החלו הדעות – Now I shall tell you a general principle regarding the explanation of many commandments. – להשתבש באמונה – Now, from the time idolatry came into being in the world, i.e., from the days of Enosh,<sup>74</sup> views regarding the authentic principles of faith began to be corrupted by people. – Some of them denied the fundamental belief in a Creator and said that the world is eternally ancient;<sup>75</sup> *they denied Hashem and said, "He exists not!"*<sup>76</sup> ומהם מכחשים בידיעתו הפרטים אמרו "איכה ידע אל ויש דעה" – Some of them deny [God's] knowledge of the particulars of human events; *they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"*<sup>77</sup> ומהם שוירו בידיעה ומכחשים – And some of them admit to God's knowledge of world events but deny His supervision of them,<sup>78</sup> – and thus in their minds "making man like the fish of the sea"<sup>79</sup> in that God does not oversee them and there is no punishment or reward for them for their deeds;<sup>80</sup> – and they say, "HASHEM does not see us; HASHEM has forsaken the land."<sup>81</sup>

– וכאשר ירצה האלהים בעדה או ביחוד ויעשה עמהם מופת בשנוי מנהגו של עולם וטבעו – However, when God favors a group or an individual and performs a wonder for them involving an alteration of the world's usual course and natural law, – יתברר לכל בטול הדעות האלה בלם – the negation of all these heretical views is made clear to all, – כי המופת הנפלא מורה שיש לעולם אלוה מחדשו, – for the supernatural wonder indicates that the world indeed has a God, Who originated it ex nihilo, knows all, and oversees all that occurs within it, and is all-powerful.<sup>82</sup> – וכאשר יהיה המופת ההוא נגזר תחלה מפי נביא יתברר ממנו עוד אמתת הנבואה – And when that wonder is furthermore publicly declared beforehand through a prophet, the truth of the principle of prophecy is made clear by it as well, – כי ידבר אלהים את האדם ויגלה סודו אל עבדיו הנביאים, – namely, "that God will speak to a person"<sup>83</sup> and "reveal His secret to His servants the prophets,"<sup>84</sup> – ותתקיים עם זה – and with acknowledgment of this principle the entire Torah is sustained.<sup>85</sup>

[Ramban now shows how the ten plagues, "miraculous wonders" all, exposed the falsity of all the aforementioned heretical views:]

– ולכן יאמר הכתוב במופתים "למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ", להורות על ההשגחה – Scripture therefore states regarding the wonders in Egypt, *so that you will know that I am HASHEM in the midst of the land* (above, 8:18), indicating the idea of Divine Providence, – כי לא עזב אותה למקרים בדיעתם, – for [God] did not abandon [the land] to random occurrences, as was [the heretics'] view.<sup>86</sup> – ואמר "למען תדע כי לה' הארץ", להורות על החדוש – And [Scripture] states further in connection with the plagues, *so that you shall know that the earth is HASHEM's* (above, 9:29), indicating the idea of the origination of the world by a Creator, – כי הם שלו שבראם מאין – for they (i.e., the earth and all its inhabitants) are "His" (i.e., HASHEM's) by virtue of the fact that He created them from nothing. – ואמר "בעבור תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ", להורות על היכולת – And it stated also in connection with the plagues, *so that you shall know that there is none like Me in all the world* (above, 9:14), indicating the idea of omnipotence of Hashem, – שהוא שליט בכל, אין מעכב בידו – כי בכל זה היו המצרים מכחשים או מסתפקים – that He rules over all, and nothing can deter Him. – These three declarations and the miraculous plagues that precipitated them were needed because the Egyptians had denied or doubted all this.<sup>87</sup> – ואמנות הבורא ובתורה בלה. – Accordingly, the great signs and wonders in Egypt are "trustworthy witnesses"<sup>88</sup> with regard to belief in the Creator and the entire Torah.<sup>89</sup>

– וכעבור כי ה' לא יעשה אות מופת בכל דור בעיני כל רשע או כופר – Now, because God does not perform a sign or wonder in every generation in sight of every evil person and unbeliever,<sup>90</sup> יצוה אותנו

וְנַעֲתִיק הַדָּבָר אֶל בְּנֵינוּ וּבְנֵינֵינוּ לְבִנְיָהֶם, וּבְנֵיהֶם – He commanded us that we should constantly have a reminder and a sign for what our eyes saw in Egypt, – and transmit the matter to our children, and our children to their children, and their children to their own children, until the last generation. – **And [God] was exceedingly stringent in this matter** of making reminders of the Exodus,<sup>91</sup> – **as we see by the fact that He imposed the severe penalty of excision for eating chametz during Passover and for neglecting the pesach offering,** both of which are commemorations of the Exodus. – **And it required further that we write and attach upon our arms and upon our heads between our eyes everything that was witnessed by us through the signs and wonders in Egypt;** – **and that we write it again** in a “mezuzah” and place it at the entrances of the houses on the doorposts;<sup>92</sup> – **and that we recall this orally every morning and evening,** – **as [the Sages] said:** The daily recital of the blessing *Emes VeYatziv*<sup>93</sup> is required by Biblical law (*Berachos* 21a),<sup>94</sup> which is derived from that which is written in *Deuteronomy* 16:3, so that you will remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life;<sup>95</sup> – **and that we make a succah booth every year for the festival of Succos.**<sup>96</sup>

– **And also there are many other commandments similar to these that serve as a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.**<sup>97</sup> – **And all these commandments serve to be a testimony for us through all the generations regarding the wonders performed in Egypt, that they not be forgotten;** – **and consequently there will be no plausible argument for the unbeliever to deny the fundamental principles of faith in God,** since those principles can be directly deduced from the wonders of Egypt.<sup>98</sup> – **For one who purchases a mezuzah for a mere zuz and attaches it to his doorway and contemplates its import**<sup>99</sup> – **has already acknowledged God's origination of the world, the Creator's knowledge of world affairs and His supervision thereof, and also the truth of prophecy, and he believes in all the cornerstones (i.e., foundations) of the Torah;** – **besides the fact that he has acknowledged that the Creator's kindness toward those who perform His will is very great,** – **for He took us out from that Egyptian bondage to freedom and great honor**<sup>100</sup> in the merit of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who desired to be always in fear of His Name (i.e., to fear and serve Him).

[Ramban now avers that the foundation of faith which the “remembrance” mitzvos impart can, in fact, be derived from all the mitzvos:]

– **Therefore, because a constant awareness of the principles of faith is the best bulwark against heretical thoughts, [the Sages] stated: Be as scrupulous in performing a minor commandment as in performing a major commandment** (*Avos* 2:1), – **for all of them are in fact major**<sup>101</sup> and exceedingly beloved, – **since through them a person is constantly acknowledging his God.**<sup>102</sup> – **For the ultimate objective of all the commandments is that we should believe in our God and acknowledge to Him that He created us.**

[Ramban now goes into the ultimate purpose of Creation itself:]

– **And that is in fact the ultimate objective of the Creation itself;** – **for we have no other explanation for the first creation,** – **and the Most High has no desire for the earthbound creatures except this, that man should know and acknowledge to his God that [God] created him.**<sup>103</sup> – **And the purpose of raising one's voice in the prayers, and the purpose of synagogues and the merit**



of communal prayer, is this: שיהיה לבני אדם מקום יתקבצו ויודו לאל שבראם והמציאם ויפרסמו זה – that people should have a place where they can gather and acknowledge to God that He created them and caused them to be, and where they can publicize this and declare before Him, “We are Your creations!” וזו כוננתם במה שאמרו זכרונם לברכה: “ויקראו אל – אלהים בחזקה” – This is the intent of [the Sages], of blessed memory, in what they said in explanation of the verse in *Jonah* (3:8), *and they shall call out mightily to God:* מבאן אתה למד – From here (the word *mightily*) you learn that prayer requires a loud voice, for boldness can overcome evil<sup>104</sup> (see *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Jonah* 550, *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Taanis* 2:1).<sup>105</sup>

[Ramban concludes his discourse by explaining the enduring lesson of the manifest wonders of the Exodus:]

Through recalling and acknowledging the great, manifest miracles of the Exodus a person ultimately acknowledges the hidden miracles of everyday life,<sup>106</sup> which are the foundation of the entire Torah.<sup>107</sup> שאין – For a person has no share in the Torah of Moses our Teacher unless he believes that all our affairs and experiences are miracles, אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין בנחיד – that there is no element of nature and “the ordinary course of the world” in them at all, whether regarding the community or the individual.<sup>108</sup> – Rather, if one

this (i.e. the proper meaning of “between your eyes” in verse 9) [Scripture] continued and stated in a later verse *and for totafos* (v. 16), לבאר שאין המצוה בין העינים למטה, אבל בגובה הראש, מנחים – to make clear that the commandment is not to place the *tefillin* below, between the eyes, but on the top of the head, placed there like *totafos*-ornaments. ואמר לשון רבים שהם – And furthermore [Scripture] stated “*totafos*” in the plural form because they are several compartments that make up the head *tefillin*,<sup>73</sup> as we have received through the tradition.

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Now I shall tell you a general principle regarding the explanation of many commandments. הנה מעת היות עבודה זרה בעולם מימי אגוש החלו הדעות – Now, from the time idolatry came into being in the world, i.e., from the days of Enosh,<sup>74</sup> views regarding the authentic principles of faith began to be corrupted by people. Some of them denied the fundamental belief in a Creator and said that the world is eternally ancient;<sup>75</sup> they denied Hashem and said, “He exists not!”<sup>76</sup> ומתם מכחשים בידועתו הפרטים אמרו “איכה ידע אל ויש דעה – Some of them deny [God’s] knowledge of the particulars of human events; they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?”<sup>77</sup> ומתם שידו בידועה ומכחשים – And some of them admit to God’s knowledge of world events but deny His supervision of them,<sup>78</sup> and thus in their minds “making man like the fish of the sea”<sup>79</sup> in that God does not oversee them and there is no punishment or reward for them for their deeds;<sup>80</sup> and they say, “HASHEM does not see us; HASHEM has forsaken the land.”<sup>81</sup>

However, when God favors a group or an individual and performs a wonder for them involving an alteration of the world’s usual course and natural law, וכאשר ירצה האלהים בעדה או בנחיד ויעשה עמהם מופת בשנוי מנהגו של עולם וטבעו – the negation of all these heretical views is made clear to all, כי המופת הנפלא מורה שיש לעולם אלוה מחדשו,

## הקדמה לפרקי אמונה

שבת קיט, ב: „כל העונה אמן בכל כחו פותחין לו שערי גן עדן שנאמר פתחו שערים ויבא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים אל תקרי שומר אמונים אלא שאומרים אמן. מאי אמן? א"ר הנינא אל מלך נאמן. מהרש"א שם: „כי הג"ע יש לו הרבה שערים מחיצה לפנים מחיצה ואמר שזה העונה אמן בכל כחו שפותחין לו כל השערים מחדרי גן עדן“.

*Aléi Shor*  
*R' Shlomo Wolbe*  
(1914-2005)



דרך חז"ל היא, לגלות דברים העומדים ברומו של עולם דווקא במעשה קטן. עניית אמן בכל כח הכוונה -- מעשה קטן של אמונה הוא. ומגלים חז"ל בזה, כי מעשה קטן של אמונה פותח לפני האדם כל שערי גן עדן. וגם זאת עלינו לדעת, כי חז"ל אינם מדברים במליצות, וכל דבריהם בדקדוק גדול. בהרבה מקומות מצינו בחז"ל לשון „מובטח לו שהוא בן עוה"ב“, ואילו כאן אינם מזכירים עוה"ב אלא „גן עדן“, וגם דקדקו לומר כי „פותחין לו שערי ג"ע“, ואינם אומרים שהוא „בן גן-עדן“. והנה גן-עדן הוא מקומו של אדם הראשון לפני החטא, אשר כחות הרע טרם הפרידו בין הבריאה לבין הבורא.

בעולם שלאחר החטא שורר הסתר-פנים: אפשר לחשוב כאילו העולם מנותק מבוראו ונושא את עצמו -- „טבע“. כן אפשר לראות בהיסטוריה שרשרת של מקרים, או שרשרת של מאורעות אשר חוקים טבעיים הכריחום להתהוות. בחיינו הפרטיים אנו עלולים ליחס כל הצלחה אל כחנו ועוצם ידינו, וכל כשלון -- לנסיבות מקריות. כך הולכת ומזדקרת מחיצה של ברזל בין האדם לבין אביו שבשמים. האמונה מגלה את הבורא ית' בתוך ההסתר והורסת את מחיצת הברזל בין הבריאה לבין בוראה, העונה „אמן“ בכל כח אמונתו, פותחין לו שערי גן עדן: הוא עצמו נמצא בתוך עולם הזה מוסתר-הפנים, אך הוא רואה נכוחה את העולם בתיקונו. להט האמונה החופש חדרי הבריאה מגלה, כי הבריאה אינה „טבע“, ההיסטוריה אינה מקרה, מעשינו אינם עוצם-יד. האמונה מבחינה בכל תופעות הטבע -- רצונו ית', בכל מאורע היסטורי -- הנהגתו, בכל הנאה -- חסדו, בכל מעשה -- עזרתו. החזק באמונתו חי בעולם רוחני בהיותו עלי אדמות. כל העולם הופך לו למקום של גילוי כבודו ויחודו ית', אור אלוקי בוקע לקראתו מכל פינה בעולם הזה, ואל מלך נאמן מלווה אותו על כל דרך חייו.

אמונה זו היא תכלית היצירה ויסוד כל המצוות, וכן כתב הרמב"ן בסוף פ' בא: „...ולפיכך אמרו הוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה, שכולן חמודות וחביבות מאד שבכל שעה אדם מודה בהן לאלקיו. וכוונת כל המצוות שנאמין

באלקינו ונודה אליו שהוא בראנו, והיא כוונת היצירה שאין לנו טעם אחר ביצירה הראשונה ואין לעליון בתחתונים חפץ מלבד זה שידע האדם ויודה לאלקיו שבראו. וכוונת רוממות הקול בתפלות וכוונת בתי כנסיות וזכות תפלת הרבים זהו שיהי' לבני אדם מקום יתקבצו ויודו לאל שבראם והמציאם ויפרסמו זה ויאמרו לפניו בריותיך אנתנו“.

„והרשע הכופר באל כגון האומרים שהעולם קדמון, כחשו בה' ויאמרו לא הוא, אין במעשיהם זכות אפילו יתנהגו במדות נאות וטובות כל ימיהם“.  
(רמב"ן בהקדמתו לפי' על ס' איוב)

זה פשוט וברור הוא: מי שאין לו אמונה, העיקר חסר בחייו, ומה יועילו לו כל מעשיו הטובים! „ה' עיניך -- הלא לאמונה!“ (ירמיה ה, ג).

## THE POWER OF "AMEN"

"All the gates of Gan Eden are opened for he who answers amen with all his might ... What is amen? R' Chanina says, ['Amen' is an acronym for] **Ail Melech Ne'eman**" (Shabbos 119b).

Chazal often unveil remarkable and lofty concepts that are encapsulated in a small action. One of these is the power of the word *amen*, which is an affirmation of our faith in Hashem. By answering *amen* — a small act of *emunah* — a person succeeds in unlocking *all* the gates of Gan Eden.

Chazal's choice of words was not coincidental. They specifically state, "The gates of Gan Eden are opened," as opposed to the more familiar, "He is guaranteed a portion in the World to Come." Gan Eden was home to Adam HaRishon before he sinned, a place where the forces of evil had not yet separated man from his Creator. After Adam's sin, Hashem became "hidden" behind the veil of nature, and Adam could no longer live in Gan Eden, the place where Hashem's presence was openly manifest. It became possible to perceive the world as a self-contained system, to look at all of history as a chain of random occurrences, and to view all personal successes as a direct outcome of the actions that preceded them. If one's actions did not engender the desired results, his failure could be blamed on bad luck and a twist of fate. But each time a person entertains such thoughts, he unwittingly erects a barrier between himself and Hashem.

*Emunah* is the tool that allows one to break down that barrier and thereby perceive Hashem despite His being hidden by the facade of nature. A person who answers *amen* with all of his might — with complete belief in Hashem — has unlocked the gates of Gan Eden. He himself stands in a world of obscurity, but he is nevertheless connected to a world of clarity. His *emunah* allows him to see past "Mother Nature" to the true "Master of Ceremonies." He recognizes every occurrence in history as a manifestation of Hashem's Omnipotent control, and acknowledges that

***"Emunah allows  
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his successes are not the result of his own blood, sweat, and tears, but rather the product of Hashem's guiding hand. In essence, he has built for himself a spiritual oasis within this very materialistic world.

Ramban (13:16) writes that *emunah* is the purpose of the entire Creation and the foundation of every mitzvah: "Therefore [Chazal] said, 'One should be careful with a simple mitzvah just as he would with a difficult mitzvah,' because all mitzvos are extremely precious, since through them a person acknowledges his Creator. The intention of all the mitzvos is that we should believe in Hashem and acknowledge that He is our Creator, and this is the purpose of the Creation. For we have no other reason in the original Creation, and Hashem has no interest in this world, other than that a person know his God and acknowledge that He is his Creator ..."

A person who is missing *emunah* in his life is missing the essence of life. Every person should know this Ramban by heart, for it is one of the basic foundations of Judaism.

(*Alei Shur*, Vol. I, pp. 98-99)