

Are we to Believe Blindly?

In today's Parashah, we read of the countless times the Israelites failed the test of emunah, trust in action. The first, of course, was their doubt of HaShem's and Moshe's abilities to save them from the Egyptian army, which was bearing down on them, as they reached the Sea of Suf. Did you hear the words, in Exodus 14: *Was it because there weren't enough graves in Egypt that you brought us out to die in the desert?* (Exodus 14:11) Time and time again, as we have and will read later, the children of El Shaddai lacked the faith required of them. As we shall read, even Moshe succumbed to the frustration of the moment and lacked sufficient faith. And this brings to my mind the question of how much faith ought we to have? Should we have blind faith in Adonai Elohim? And then comes the inevitable question, How Blind is Blind Faith?

Abba Father, human nature has a very difficult time accepting the notion of faith, without testing to determine if it is real. And, sometimes we are told, we must have blind faith; very few of us, even many believers, have that depth of trust. I pray Your message today on blind faith will resonate through our hearts and will teach us something valuable about You and Your word. In Your precious Name I pray.

I was shared the following story, through the internet, by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky:

Reuvain and Shimon were two men, who lived on opposite ends of town. They both inherited a fortune of gold. Each of them decided to bury their fortunes in their backyards. They wanted to make sure that they would have something to sustain them in their old age. On their respective properties, they each picked a landmark, paced twenty steps due north and dug a large hole.

Reuvain, the more nervous of the two, was careful to make sure that no one was watching. Every other second he glanced furtively over his shoulder to make sure that no one saw him bury the treasure. No one did.

Shimon, by nature, was trusting and carefree and he was not so careful. He was not worried that anyone would steal his fortune. But he was wrong. He was spotted by a nosy neighbor, who was also a thief.

In the middle of the night, the thief dug up the fortune. Out of mercy, he left few coins at the bottom of the pit, and removed the coins. He refilled the hole and packed the ground perfectly as if nothing was disturbed. Then he took off with the fortune.

Reuvain's fortune, however, remained intact. But he was, by nature, a worrier. And so, the next day he decided to dig up the hole to make sure that the gold was still there. Accidentally, he counted only fifteen paces from his landmark and dug. There was nothing there. Reuvain was frantic. Someone must have seen him dig the pit, he figured. For the rest of his life, he worried. On his property, he had a pit filled with gold coins, but all Reuvain did was worry!

Shimon on the other hand had nothing but the remnants of a few coins. Everything else was stolen. But he never checked the fortune, and was merrily content, assured that when the time would come he could dig up the pit and retrieve his fortune. Reuvain, the millionaire, died heartbroken and frantic. Shimon, the man with but a few coins left for his old-age lived his life content as if he was the wealthiest man in the world.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Rabbi Sha'ul writes, . . . *we live by trust, not by what we see.* (2 Corinthians 5:7) For many believers and non-believers, this passage provides the necessary proof to conclude our belief in HaShem is based on blind

faith, defined as, *belief without true understanding, perception, or discrimination.*

(On-line Dictionary) But does this passage really direct us to follow God's word blindly, without question, discussion or research? This is a very hot topic, even within our Fellowship. Many millions of believers adhere to the idea that God's word in Scripture must always be taken literally, even though much of it has been written in metaphoric language and often means something different, than when taken only literally. Let's look at an example. In John 6, one of the many readings from the Brit HaDashah selected for this week's Shabbat, Adonai Yeshua tells the multitude following Him, *Don't work for the food which passes away but for the food that stays on into eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.* (John 6:27) Does this passage mean Adonai Yeshua will provide our daily, physical food needs? Hardly, what He is saying to us is our efforts must be aimed at understanding His Word of grace and salvation, since being obedient to Him will secure us in eternal life.

We often speak about Pikuach Nefesh, literally to save a soul. Where does this come from? The rabbis have developed this understanding from Torah, specifically Leviticus 19: *Do not go around spreading slander among your people, but also don't stand idly by when your neighbour's life is at stake.* (Leviticus 19:16) The deeper meaning of this passage has not been derived from understanding the literal meaning of the passage but from its metaphoric meaning – we have an obligation to protect our neighbours from harm, even if in doing so we violate Torah. This life instruction from Adonai Elohim is so important, Adonai Yeshua uses it to show the Pharisees of His day the Shabbat is made for man, not man for the Shabbat. But we are getting off-track.

Rav Sha'ul also wrote, *For you have been delivered by grace through trusting, and even this is not your accomplishment but God's gift.* (Ephesians 2:8) Here we are informed of trust being an integral part of receiving grace from Adonai Elohim, as a gift flowing from His love of our obedience. Does trusting HaShem stem from blind faith? Did Avram trust God blindly or did he base his trust on observable evidence? I shared with you previously how Avram went from an idol worshiper to questioning the truth of idols to exploring who controlled the movements of the moon and the sun. It was through this questioning and doubting process that our patriarch stumbled upon God, who found him. And this leads us to a discerning truth, true faith is not blind but is well grounded in reason and logic, which leads to knowledge.

Let's look at two examples. In example one, you are approached by a stranger in a mall parking lot, who asks you to lend him the keys to your car, as his car will not start and he has an urgent errand to run. He insists he will return your car to you within the hour. To give him the keys to your car, based solely on his word, would take a blind leap of faith, since he is a stranger to you. I am amazed how people who would never give their car keys or anything else of value to perfect strangers would, however, entrust their souls with teachers, preachers and pastors about whom they know absolutely nothing. This happens regularly through the internet and especially with tele-evangelists.

In our second example, one of your dear friends comes to you, claiming his car will not start and he has an urgent errand to run. Would you be willing to lend him the keys of your car? Chances are, if he is a good friend, you will have no difficulty helping him out. Why? Because your trust in your friend is well-

founded; it is based on observable evidence of trustworthiness. The same is the case with our trusting Adonai Elohim.

Let me make something very clear, everyone has some level of faith, even the atheist. If we believe blindly, without that belief being grounded in reason or logic, that takes us into superstition. The fear of walking under a ladder or having a black cat cross our path is not based on observable evidence but is a blind faith without substance. The atheist's claim of life ending in nothingness is not based on evidence but on blind faith.

Belief in Adonai Elohim is rational; it is based on evidence, observable evidence, which is readily available for everyone to assess and evaluate. Evaluate the evidence of creation. The fact our day, week, month, seasons and our year are cyclical, predictable and tied to observable data is no coincidence. Did you know, for example, each phase of the moon lasts a week? The Full Moon comes two weeks, into the middle of the cycle, while the new moon, is at the end of the month and the beginning of the next month. And how may evolution explain the cycles in human life and our individual finger prints?

As Dr. D. James Kennedy, a renowned theologian states, "the claim that belief in Messiah produces an irrational, uneducated, unintelligent, or unintellectual view of life is completely false. And the statement that unbelief produces a rational and intelligent and enlightened view of the universe is equally false."

As human beings, our knowledge is always imperfect; we often rely on our assumptions and presuppositions to inform us, in making decisions. As intelligent beings, using reason and logic, as well as emotion, we must be wary of being trapped by our preconceptions, which may block the development of new knowledge, challenging pre-existing understandings.

As Adonai Yeshua shared with us, in Matthew 7:24-27, building our faith in Adonai Elohim on sand is developing our foundations of faith without careful examination or scrutiny. Using our preconceptions and assumptions may only be self-destructive, denying ourselves access to evidence based data which will allow for a rational decision about what to believe. Our young people often use assumption and preconception only, when making irrational decisions, such as texting while driving, drinking and driving, attempting to satisfy the restrictions of peer pressure and a host of other issues facing them today. I can only imagine the pain and agony a young person today must face, when being bullied on social media and in their schools. Some, as we have read and seen on national news, take to route of suicide in order to make the pain stop. These are not decisions made rationally but decisions based on assumptions of helplessness and hopelessness. These in themselves are examples of blind faith leading to disaster and destruction.

Rav Sha'ul shares with us faith in Adonai Yeshua is based on knowledge not assumption, as we read in Romans 10: *So trust comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through a word proclaimed about the Messiah.* (Romans 10:17) It is important to note the predominate mode of learning in the 1st Century was listening, as scrolls were too expensive and labour intensive for mass production and books, as we know them today, didn't exist.

Rav Sha'ul's argument is augmented in Romans 4, when Avraham's example is used, *Avraham is our father in God's sight because he trusted God as the one who gives life to the dead and calls nonexistent things into existence He did not by lack of trust decide against God's promises. On the contrary, by trust he was given*

power as he gave glory to God, for he was fully convinced that what God had promised he could also accomplish. (Romans 4:17, 20-21)

It is absolutely critical we examine carefully what Scripture calls truth and not accept it on blind faith. Again, this is not conjecture on my part, it is a biblical imperative. Proverbs 23 exhorts us to *Apply your mind to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge. (Proverbs 23:12)* and *Buy the truth, don't sell it, also wisdom, discipline and discernment. (Proverbs 23:23)* These verses guide us towards an understanding we are to examine His Word for truth and apply to this process discipline, wisdom and discernment. This is as much an intellectual process as it is spiritual and emotional. Luke, in his writing of Acts, shares with us the example of the Bereans of Asia Minor, who, upon hearing Rav Sha'ul's teaching, *eagerly welcomed the message, checking the Tanakh every day to see if the things Sha'ul was saying were true. (Acts 17:11)* The Greek word used for checking is ἀνακρίνω, anakrino and means to examine, judge. (Strong's Concordance) By doing so, they realized the truth of Rav Sha'ul's teachings and many came to trust Adonai Elohim.

Once again we rely on Rav Sha'ul to guide us towards understanding the role of truth in our lives, when he writes, in 2 Thessalonians 2, *He will enable him to deceive, in all kinds of wicked ways, those who are headed for destruction because they would not receive the love of the truth that could have saved them. This is why God is causing them to go astray, so that they will believe the Lie. The result will be that all who have not believed the truth, but have taken their pleasure in wickedness, will be condemned. (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)* Notice Rav Sha'ul

equates denial of the truth to be wickedness; this is an indication of how strongly he perceives the role, purpose and worth of HaShem's Word in our lives.

And, Sha'ul continues in this vein, as he teaches his spiritual son, Timothy, written in 2 Timothy 2, *Do all you can to present yourself to God as someone worthy of his approval, as a worker with no need to be ashamed, because he deals straightforwardly with the Word of the Truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15) Dealing straightforwardly with the Word of the Truth is another way of saying he develops knowledge from God's Word. Developing knowledge is a conscious and deliberate intellectual act, based on reason, discernment and wisdom. Rav Sha'ul also explores for Timothy the other side of the coin, in verses 16-17;23-25, *But keep away from godless babbling, for those who engage in it will only become more ungodly, and their teaching will eat away at people like gangrene . . . But stay away from stupid and ignorant controversies -- you know that they lead to fights, and a slave of the Lord shouldn't fight. On the contrary, he should be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and not resentful when mistreated. Also he should be gentle as he corrects his opponents.* In this passage, Rav Sha'ul is advising Timothy and, by extension, us to avoid petty confrontation leading to arguments. As believers, we ought to know we will never win an argument against a non-believer, why? Firstly, we must argue in love and follow the rules of fairness, whereas a non-believer is not held to such a high standard. We've all met non-believers and, unfortunately professed believers who do not adhere to God's directions, as sincere believers strive to do. Let's first examine why we shouldn't argue with insincere believers, for, as Psalm 5 declares, *For in their mouths there*

is nothing sincere, within them are calamities, their throats are open tombs, they flatter with their tongues. (Psalm 5:9) Specifically:

1. **They don't accept the authority of Scripture.** To these people, Scripture is either story-telling or analogy, designed to provide some life lessons but are really not life instructions and, particularly, instructions on how to become kadosh, holy and set-apart, and how we receive God's grace of salvation. Remember what Rav Sha'ul said to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 3, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living.* (2 Timothy 3:16)
2. **They lack the desire to witness to the lost.** These people believe faith is private and personal; sharing our faith with others is seen as an infringement of their privacy and, therefore, an imposition. Psalm 107 clearly directs us, *Let those redeemed by ADONAI say it, those he redeemed from the power of the foe.* (Psalm 107:2). And, as we all know, Adonai Yeshua commissioned His Disciples, which includes us, to *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.* (Matthew 28:19,20)
3. **Their only desire is to promote and enhance themselves in their own community's eyes,** by convincing others their way is right and everyone else is wrong. We could never win when we are drawn into an argument which has this understanding as a foundation. Proverbs 16 shares with us how following blindly a wrong idea or a false premise may lead to

destruction, *There can be a way which seems right to a person, but at its end are the ways of death.* (Proverbs 16:25)

4. **They follow a false messiah.** Believe me, beloved, there are so many self-proclaimed believers who follow a plastic messiah, an idol, claiming he is the real deal. But listen to how Rav Sha'ul advises Timothy regarding these, *For the time is coming when people will not have patience for sound teaching, but will cater to their passions and gather around themselves teachers who say whatever their ears itch to hear. Yes, they will stop listening to the truth, but will turn aside to follow myths.* (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Now, let's explore why we should never argue with non-believers.

1. **Unless God is drawing a non-believer to His Truth, he will never really listen to you.** I can't remember how many times I have stood before a Jewish non-believer, attempting to share the Gospel and being received by a blank stare, as if I was speaking in Klingon. We read in John 6: *No one can come to Me unless Abba — the One who sent Me — draws him.* (John 6:44) Could that be any clearer? Only Adonai Elohim can remove the scales from a non-believer's heart, opening her or him to HaShem's redemptive grace.
2. **Often, these people are the tares within Adonai's wheatfield.** They will look and sometimes respond like believers but are imposters. As Adonai Yeshua shared with us, in Matthew 13, *Let them both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest-time I will tell the reapers to collect the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burned, but to gather the wheat into my barn.* (Matthew 13:30) To me this parable says stay away from them; the

risk of being trapped by their rhetoric is too great. They will exhaust us and, in the end, still reject His life instructions.

3. **We are called to follow the example of Adonai Yeshua**, who . . . *will not fight or shout, no one will hear his voice in the streets.* (Matthew 12:19) If Adonai Yeshua did not argue then neither should we. And, finally,
4. **If a non-believer has no questions, then we are wasting our time.** Those who listen but do not question are not being led by Ruach HaKadosh, the Holy Spirit. They will not respond appropriately, unless drawn by the Holy Spirit.

Bringing this message home, beloved, I urge each one of us to be ever vigilant of those who we can only understand faith and belief blindly, that is belief which is never explored or examined intellectually, through logic and reason. That is not what Adonai Yeshua taught us, through His parables. He used this complex form of teaching precisely because He wants us to struggle with their meanings, as Adonai Elohim shared with Isaiah, in Isaiah 6, *Make the heart of this people [sluggish with] fat, stop up their ears, and shut their eyes. Otherwise, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, then understanding with their hearts, they might repent and be healed.* (Isaiah 6:10) We too, dear ones, are to struggle with the meaning of Scripture, so as to dig as deeply as we are able and pull from His Word the kernel of truth hidden within. All of this will not be done by ourselves but only through the efforts of the Holy Spirit; call upon Him, whenever you engage His Word. Do not be afraid to dig deeply into His Word in order to develop deeper understandings. I assure you, through struggling with the hidden meanings of His Word to us, our love of Him will grow much deeper and we will become so much more intimate with the Lover of our souls.

ABBA, Father, how we long to learn from both your written word and from revelation upon revelation which comes from going deeper into the meanings within the layers of your Word. I thank you, for all of us, for providing us with the means to learn from You, through the Holy Spirit directly and from those whom He chooses to teach us. In Your precious Name I pray.