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EMUNAH - faith and confidence

Emunah is related to the word *Amen*, with which we emphatically state our agreement after a blessing. *Amen* is said to be an acrostic of the words, *Ayl Melekh Ne'eman*, God, faithful sovereign. *Ne'eman*, faithful, also derives from *emunah*. The word *ma'amin* from the song *Ani Ma'amin* (I believe), is the verb form of *emunah* and begins each of the thirteen principles of faith authored by Maimonides, known in Jewish circles as the Rambam, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon. *Maimonides* is Greek for *ben Maimon*, child of a believer.

Emunah is also related to *oman* - an expert craftsperson. *Omanut* means craft or artistry. The training of children is done by an *omayn* or *omenet*, an educator. We find that Mordekhai, of the Purim story, was said to be '*omayn ...et Esther*'; Mordekhai was bringing up (or training) Esther.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the '*Alter Rebbe*,' explains the connection between faith and training. He says that we have to train ourselves to have faith (*The Tanya* Chapter 33). "One has to nurse and give nourishment to one's faith that it grow until it sets right into the heart" (*Likutei Torah*, Devarim, Page 4, Column 2).

This habituation or training in matters of faith is a key element in living a spiritual life. Faith forms the ground of our basic attitude towards life. If we have no trust in life, we have to be constantly expending protective energy being fearful about many things.

Constant fearfulness and uncertainty are also the result of training. This training has taught us to be hypervigilant even when we are flourishing and well. The poor worry about acquiring; the rich worry about losing what they've acquired. The common theme is that everybody is worrying. The unfortunate result of such a training is to find things to worry about, constantly.

There is plenty of room to train ourselves into non-faithful patterns even regarding our spirituality. We can worry about whether we are truly on the path; whether there really is a path; will it get us anywhere? are we being true to authentic Judaism? are we being true to anything? does authentic Judaism address the authentic issues of our lives? is there any coherence and future to the new Judaism?

It stands to reason that a basic step in becoming spiritual would be to start improving our *emunah*. The *Alter Rebbe* suggests that the process is one of artistry, habit and training. How can we start?

Perhaps we can start by asking each other, and ourselves, about the state of our *emunah*.