

Emunah

FAITH & COURAGE

Hanukkah Companion 5784

R. Beth Levy & Dr. Jeremy Tabick





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BIOS



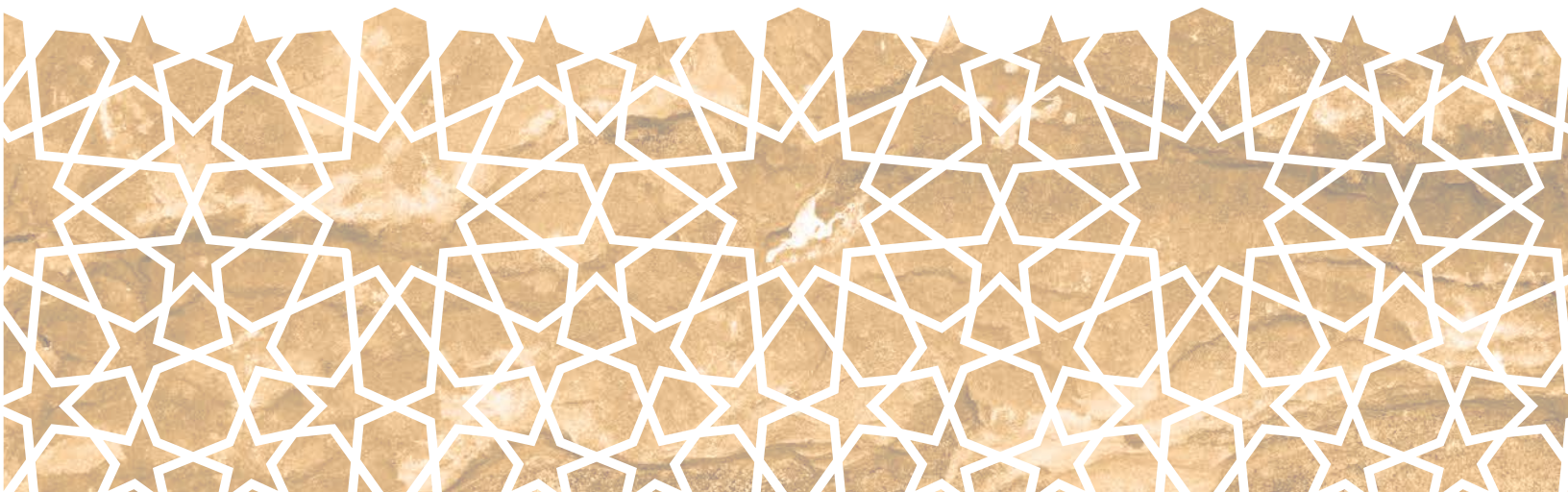
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INTRODUCTION

הבן יקיר לי אפרים כרך א

מיד כשגילו פך שמן טהור הדליקו בו ולא חשבו
מה יהיה בהמשך אלא השליכו את יהבם על
הקב"ה והאמינו שאם הקב"ה זימן להם היום
שמן יש להדליק בו היום ולקיים המצוה היום
ולא לדאוג מה יהיה מחר אכן בזכות האמונה
והבטחון שהיה להם זכו לנס שמאותו שמן יכלו
להדליק במשך כל אותם שמונת ימים.

R. Efrayim Hayyim ha-Levi Klein'

Immediately after the [Hasmoneans] found the jar of pure oil, they lit with it, and they did not think about what would follow. Rather, they threw their lot in with God and had faith that if God had provided them with oil today, they should light with it today and fulfill the mitzvah today, and should not worry about what will be tomorrow. It is because of this faith and trust that they merited the miracle, that from that same oil they were able to light for all eight days.

IN THE STORY of Hanukkah, lighting the *menorah* was an act of faith. The Temple had been desecrated, the oils had been destroyed. The Hasmoneans had only enough oil for one day, but it would take eight days to make new pure oil (see Ra"n's comments on Ri"ף Shabbat 9b). They could have frozen. Rather than giving up, though, they did what they could in that moment and lit the *menorah* with the tiny amount of oil they had.

R. Klein highlights this act of faith and goes even further. According to R. Klein, not worrying about being insufficient is precisely what led to the Hasmoneans meriting the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. The point is that it is almost always impossible to know where strength and salvation will come from. All we can do is follow the model of the Hasmoneans and do our best, having faith that something good will come of the meager effort we can muster.

The ultimate act of faith is often the simple act of putting one foot in front of the other, of continuing on in the face of forces pushing you back. The world, as we all know too well, can be a scary and overwhelming place. Especially in present times, when we feel a need for pure oil, or salvation, but are not sure we're adequate to the task, just getting up each morning and trying our best can take enormous effort. In these moments, simply doing what you're able to can be a statement of faith—faith in yourself, faith in God, faith that there can be hope for better days.

This kind of faith is often not as easy as it sounds. Sometimes despair feels like the appropriate response to the challenges we face. But it's specifically at those times of darkness when we need to hear the encouragement of R. Kelin: "Don't despair! Don't allow the clouds of doubt to prevent you from taking one more step forward! Don't hold back what you can do today just because you don't know what tomorrow will bring!"

In this companion, we present to you texts that help dive into and explore this notion of faith, faithfulness, and trust—sanctifying sometimes simple acts like waking up in the morning or putting one foot in front of the other in order to cross a narrow bridge. Hanukkah happened for exactly that reason. Long ago, the Jewish people lit candles not just because they had a day's worth of oil, but because they had a day's worth of faith. And that was all they needed, a miracle that continues to illuminate our lives to this very day. Our hope is that, by studying these texts through the eight nights of this holiday of faith, we can bottle up some of that pure Hasmonean oil and have just enough faith and courage at our disposal for whenever we might need it.¹

¹ 1916-1988, from his collection of *derashot* on the weekly *parashah* and holidays in 3 volumes, *Ha-Ven Yakir Li Efrayim*.

THE COURAGE TO FACE THE MORNING

Night one



THE SHULHAN ARUKH, still our most central book of Jewish law today, begins with the section called *Orah Hayyim* (“The Way of Life”), describing daily Jewish rituals like prayer, Shabbat and holidays, and the ritual practices of waking up in the morning. As an introduction to the latter, the very first words of R. Yosef Karo’s monumental code reads, perhaps surprisingly, as follows.

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים א:א

יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראן,
שיהא הוא מעורר השחר.

Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 1:1

A person should strengthen themselves like a lion to get up in the morning to serve their Creator, for it is they who awake the dawn.

- What’s the difference between waking up “like a lion” and not? Why is the Shulhan Arukh asking us to wake up that way? Of all images of strength, why do you think a lion fits here?
- Why is it often so challenging to just get out of bed in the morning? How could it help to have the disposition like that described here?
- What message do you think R. Karo is trying to send by opening the Shulhan Arukh with this call? What human instincts is this idea trying to overcome? Why might this be a fitting introduction to a code of Jewish practices and *mitzvot*?
- What could it mean that it is the person who “awakes the dawn” rather than the other way around?

R. Tzvi Katz (17th century, Europe) expands upon R. Karo’s opening:

עטרת צבי אורח חיים א:א

יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראן.
ואף אם ישיאנו יצרו בחורף לאמר איך תעמוד
בבוקר כי הקור גדול, או ישיאנו בקיץ לאמור
איך תעמוד ממסתך ועדיין לא שבעת משנתך,
התגבר עליו לקום שתהא אתה מעורר השחר
ולא יהא הוא מעירך, כמ”ש דוד ע”ה [תהלים
נז, ט] עורה כבודי עורה הנבל וכנור אעירה
שחר, אני מעיר השחר ואין השחר מעיר אותי
[ירושלמי ברכות פ”א ה”א]:

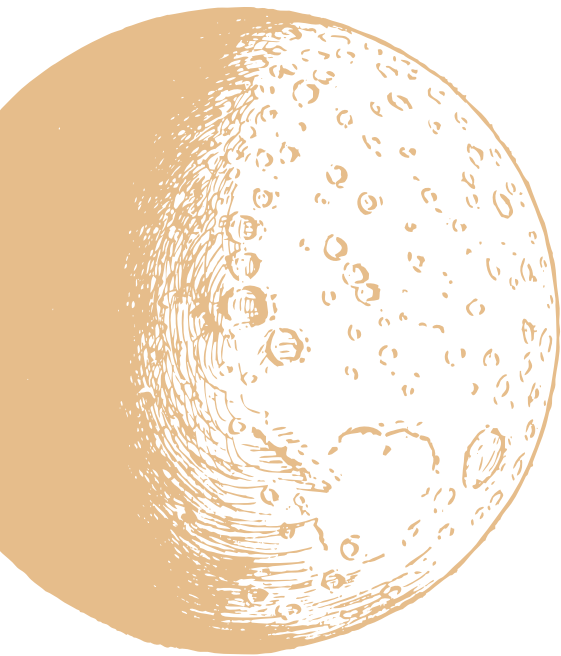
Ateret Tzvi Orah Hayyim 1:1

Even if one’s evil inclination incites them in the winter, saying, “How can you get up in the morning? It’s too cold!” Or it incites them in the summer, saying, “How can you stand up from your bed when you haven’t had enough sleep!”² One should be strengthened against it to stand up so that you awake the dawn and it does not awake you. This is just as David—peace be upon him—said: “Awake, my glory! Awake, the harp and lyre! I will wake the dawn”—I wake the dawn; the dawn does not wake me (see Yerushalmi Berakhot 1:1, 2d).

- What kind of strength does R. Katz suggest the Shulhan Arukh is talking about?
- What does the model of David add to this picture? Why is David the one who “wakes the dawn”?

² The assumption is that, before electric lights, you would get up with the dawn. Because of this, people would sleep a lot more in the winter and a lot less in the summer.

- The way R. Karo talks about us “awaking the dawn,” it sounds more like a statement of fact: people wake the dawn. But the way R. Katz talks about it, it sounds more like a challenge: you need to wake the dawn in order that it doesn’t wake you. Why do you think that might be? What important idea is he trying to teach us?
- There are many things the voice of the evil inclination might whisper to us in order to discourage us from getting out of bed in the morning altogether, let alone waking with energy and vigor. What strength is necessary to combat those whispers?
- What role does faith play in helping us get out of bed? How can faith impact the way we arise from our night’s sleep?
- The Al ha-Nissim prayer recited on Hanukkah describes the Jewish people as being weaker than those who stood over them as oppressors. It seems they had to muster a kind of strength they didn’t really have. How are the Shulhan Arukh and R. Katz suggesting we apply this strength in our daily lives?



BEARING FRUIT

Night two



HONI IS A legendary character from the Mishnah (Ta'anit 3:8) who prays for rain on behalf of the Jewish people. But his prayers appear surprisingly severe and extreme. He makes veritable demands of God—first for rain, then for more, then for less, and finally for the rain to stop. He does this all with a sense of urgency and expecting immediate response from God. He is so direct and confrontational to God that some in his time wondered whether he was actually too blasphemous! And yet, God seemed to always heed his prayers.

After this story is told in the Talmud, it continues with a story about the end of Honi's life.

תלמוד בבלי תענית כג. (כ"י יד הרב הרצוג)

א"ר יוחנן. כל ימיו שלאותו צדיק היה מצטער על המקרא הזה "בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחלמים". אמר. שבעין שני כחילמא מאי איכא דגאני שבעין שני.

יומא חד הוה קא אזיל באורחא חזייה להווא גברא דקא נטע חרובא. אמר ליה. מיכדי חרובא עד שבעין שני לא טעין. אסיקת לך אדעתך דחיית שבעין שני ואכלת מניה?

אמר ליה. אנא עלמא בחרובא אשכחתי. כי היכי דשתלו לי אבהתי אנא נמי אשתיל לבניי.

איתיב קא כאריך ריפתא. אתיא ליה שינא. נים. איהדרא ליה משוניתא ואיכסי מיענא ונים שבעין שני.

כי קם חזא הווא גברא דקא מנקיט חרובא.

אמר ליה. האי חרובא מאן שתליה.

אמר ליה. אבוה דאב.

אמר ודאי שבעין שני כחלמא.

Talmud Bavli Ta'anit 23a (ms Yad ha-Rav Herzog)³

Said R. Yohanan: All the days of that righteous one (Honi), he was troubled by this verse: "When God would return the dwelling of Zion, we were like dreamers" (Psalm 126:1). He said, "70 years is like a dream?⁴ Can someone sleep for 70 years!?"

One day, he was walking on the road. He saw a man planting a carob tree. He said to him, "Since a carob tree doesn't bear fruit for 70 years, could it possibly occur to you that you would live for 70 years and eat from it!?"

He said to him, "I found a world of carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, so too I plant for my descendants."

[Honi] sat and broke bread. Sleep came to him. He slumbered. A grotto formed around him and hid him from sight and he slumbered for 70 years.

When he got up, he saw a man carrying a carob tree.

He said to him, "This carob tree—who planted it?"

He said to him, "My grandfather."

He said, "Certainly 70 years can be like a dream!"

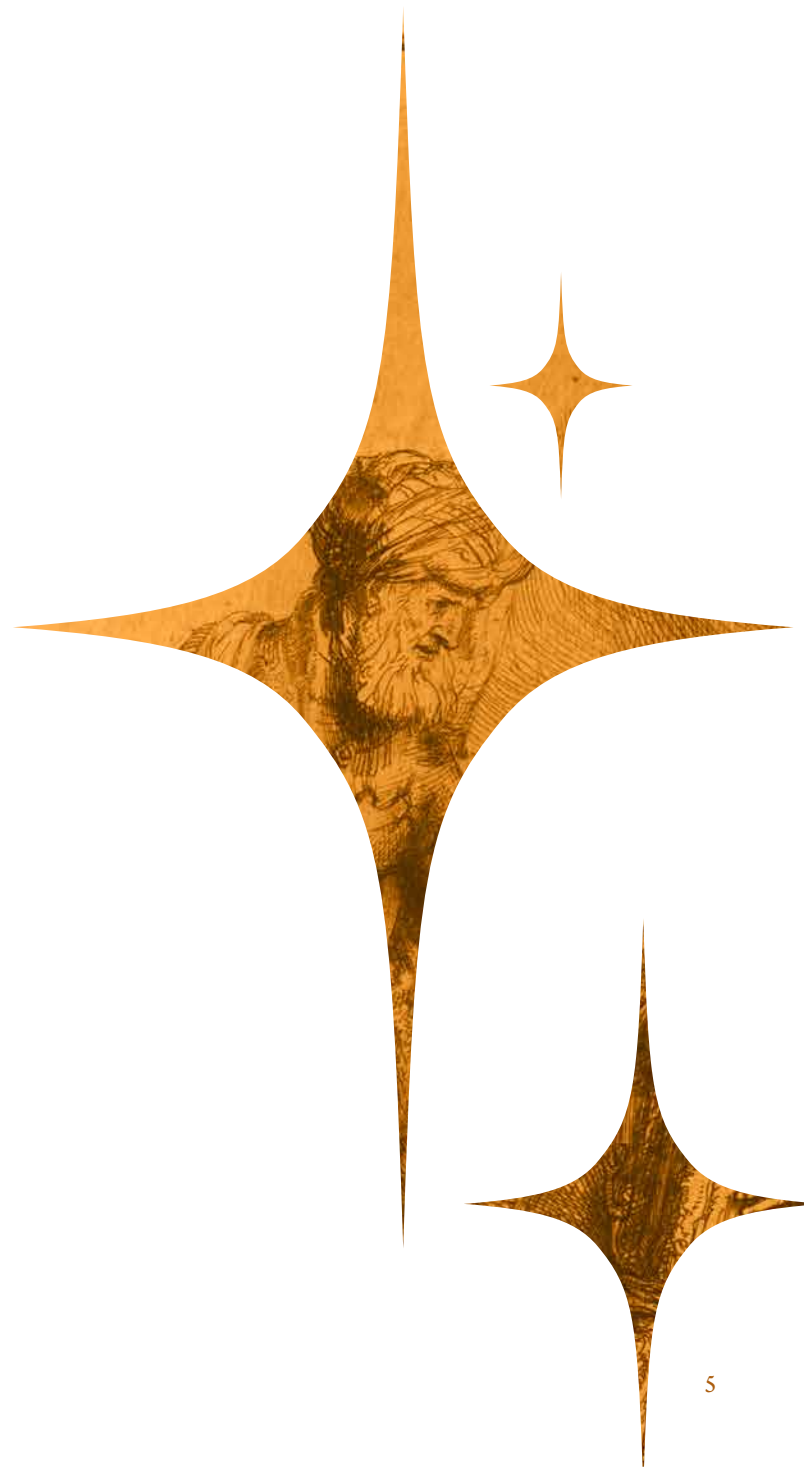
- Why did Honi have such trouble understanding the verse from Psalms? Try looking it up! What do you notice or wonder about? What questions come up for you? In the context of this psalm, what are the dreams being referred to? Who is having these dreams, and when?
- What was Honi struggling with in his encounter with the tree-planter? Should we assume that he couldn't understand something as basic as "paying it forward" and planning for the future? If not, what might have been behind his question, and how does that relate to his question about the verse from Psalms?

3 One of the best and most accurate medieval manuscripts of this section of the Talmud. If you compare this version of the story to the printed edition, you will find some discrepancies.

4 The assumption is that, before electric lights, you would get up with the dawn. Because of this, people would sleep a lot more in the winter and a lot less in the summer.

When Honi prays for rain on behalf of the Jewish people, he demands it right away. There is a kind of immediacy to his expectations for salvation. And God appears to countenance his approach by heeding Honi's prayers. But the tree-planter represents a different approach: one of patience and steadfastness to endure waiting for many years to see fruits.

- What kinds of faith are being represented here? How do they differ from each other?
- How might both of these kinds of faith play a role in our religious lives?
- Which is easier for you, and which could you use more of?
- Which kind of faith best describes how we relate to our most important dreams, and which kind do we need to bring them to fruition? How so?
- Which was the kind employed by the Jewish people in the Hanukkah story?



AVRAM'S FAITH

Night three



AVRAM (AS HE is still known in these early chapters) has already shown extraordinary faith in God by leaving his homeland and going to a completely new place.⁵ But, in this conversation with God, Avram is very open about the pain, loss, and worry he feels about not having children and maybe expresses some doubt as to whether God's promises will be fulfilled, followed by the Torah's attestation to his faith.

בראשית טו:א-ו

¹אָחֵר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְּבָרָהּ אֶל־אַבְרָם
בְּמַחְזֶה לֵאמֹר אֶל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִכִּי מִגֹּן לָךְ
שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד׃ ²וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶדְנִי ה' מִה
תִּתֶּן־לִי וְאֲנִכִּי הוּלָךְ עֲרִירִי וּבֶן־מִשְׁק בֵּיתִי הוּא
דִּמְשֶׁק אֶלְעִזָּר׃ ³וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם הֵן לִי לֹא נִתְּתָה
זֶרַע וְהִנֵּה בְּרִבִּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אֹתִי׃ ⁴וְהִנֵּה דְּבָרָהּ אֵלָיו
לֵאמֹר לֹא יִירָשְׁךָ זֶה כִּי־אִם אִשְׁרֵי יֵצֵא מִמֶּשְׁעֶיךָ
הוּא יִירָשְׁךָ׃ ⁵וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ חֲחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּט־נָא
הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכֹל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זֶרְעֶךָ׃ ⁶וְהָאֱמֹן בָּהּ וַיִּחְשְׁבָהּ
לֹא צְדָקָה׃

Genesis 15:1-6

¹After these events,⁶ the word of God [came] to Avram in a vision, saying: "Do not fear, Avram. I am a shield for you. Your reward is very great."

²Avram said, "Lord God, what will You give me? I walk childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus!" ³Avram said, "Behold, You have not given me a descendent, and behold my household attendant will inherit me!" ⁴But behold the word of God [came] to him, saying: "This one will not inherit you. Only the one who comes out of your innards will inherit you." ⁵God brought him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars—if you can count them." And God said to him, "So will be your descendants." ⁶He was faithful (נ.א.מ.) to God, and it was considered righteousness (tzedakah).

- Can you relate to Avram's journey here from questions to faith?
- Why do you think God told Avram not to fear? What might he have been afraid of?
- Why does God take Avram outside to hear this promise? What's the connection between the stars and the promise?
- Imagine Avram in conversation with God under the vast, dark, star-filled sky. How might he have felt? Why might this particular setting be associated with an explicit moment of faith?
- The last phrase is ambiguous: "וַיִּחְשְׁבָהּ לֹא צְדָקָה" - and it was considered righteousness." Who considered what to be *tzedakah*?
- Rashi suggests that God considered Avram's faith to be a kind of *tzedakah*. The Ha'amek Davar suggests that Avram considered God's promise to be a kind of *tzedakah*. Can you make an argument for each? Can both be true simultaneously?
- In the Torah, this is the first instance of the root נ.א.מ., which (with the prefix ב on the next word) means "to be faithful to / to trust in / have faith in." Which of these definitions do you think best describes Avram here? Why is it so important for the Torah to tell us that this was a moment of faith for Avram?

⁵ Referring to the war in which Avram rescued his nephew, Lot, in Genesis 14.

⁶ Every time Abraham's servant (עבד אברהם) is mentioned in the Torah, he is never named. Throughout the Talmud and in almost all traditional commentaries, it is assumed that this individual named here as Eliezer is that same servant even though he is not explicitly identified as "Abraham's servant" here.

⁷ Genesis 12:1-9.

NIGHT AND DAY

Night four



A PSALM WE SAY multiple times every Shabbat also features the root we encountered in the previous text, “א.מ.נ. - to be faithful to / to have trust in / to have faith in.” What does this root mean here? Look at the verse and then two different—but related—interpretations.

תהלים צב:א-ג

Psalm 92:1-3

¹מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת: ²טוֹב לַהֲדוֹת לַה' וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵיוֹן: ³לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹּקֶר חֲסֶדְךָ וְאַמוּנָתְךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת:

¹A hymn, song for the Shabbat day. ²It is good to thank God and to sing to Your high name, ³to tell in the morning of Your kindness and of Your emunah (root: א.מ.נ.) in the nights.

- How would you translate the word with the root א.מ.נ. here?
- Whose *emunah* is it talking about? What could it mean for God to have *emunah*? Is that referring to a kind of faith we give to God, or is it a kind of faith God has? How would this relate to the rest of the verses here?

A *midrash* connects this psalm with Exodus 14:31: “The people were faithful (root: א.מ.נ.) to God and to Moshe, God’s servant.”

מכילתא מסכתא דויהי פרשה ו

Mekhilta Massekhta de-Vayehi 6

“טוב להודות לה’... (כי שמחתני ה’ בפעלך)” מי גרם לנו לבוא לידי שמחה זו. אל’ בשכר אמנה שהאמינו אבותינו בעולם הזה שכולו לילות. לכך נא’ “להגיד בבקר חסדך”.

“It is good to thank God... (for You have made me joyous, God, through Your work)” (Psalms 92:1,5)—who caused us to come to this happiness? Rather, it is through the faithfulness that our ancestors had in this world which is all night. That’s why it is said, “to tell in the morning of Your kindness” (92:3).

- According to this *midrash*, what “work” of God is causing the joy? Freedom after the Exodus? Or could it relate to its discussion of the morning that stands in contrast to the “night” that is this world?
- What could it mean to say about this world that it is “all night”? In what way is that so? What is this *midrash* teaching us about our world? According to this, what does the morning represent? How so?
- According to the *midrash*, whose faithfulness is the psalm talking about?
- What does it mean to “tell God’s kindness in the morning”? Why is that the right time for telling God’s kindness? And why is the night a time that’s associated with faith?
- Have you ever had a moment of perfect faith in something? Did that faith sustain you? If so, for how long? What was the aftermath like?

רש"י תהלים צב:ג

Rashi on Psalm 92:3

ואמונתך בלילות. ובעוד צרת הגלות להאמין בך שתשמור הבטחתך כל זה נאה וטוב:

“And of Your faithfulness in the nights”—while in the distress of exile, to be faithful to You that You will keep Your promise—all this is wonderful and good.

- What does the night represent according to Rashi? What does faith have to do with this? What does the day represent?
- What can be hard about this sort of faith? What can be helpful and comforting about this sort of faith?
- Because we light Hanukkah candles at night, the holiday is often thought of in terms of finding or creating some kind of illumination in the nighttime. What might the *midrash* or Rashi contribute to that kind of thinking?
- How do these texts relate to the text about waking up in the morning we studied on the first night? How do they relate to lighting Hanukkah candles, which is done specifically in the night?



GOD PROVIDES

Night five



WHEN IT COMES to faith, there's a well-known tension between being completely reliant on God and being more self-reliant. This finds expression in ancient Jewish texts. The first is a *mishnah* in Pe'ah dealing with charitable contributions. The Mishnah thinks about people who need *tzedakah* but do not take it:

משנה פאה ח:ט (כ"י קאופמן)

כל מי שהוא צריך לטול ואינו נוטל, אינו מת מן
הזקנה עד שיפרנס לאחרים משלו.

על זה נאמר: (ירמיה יז:ז) "ברוך הגבר אשר
יבטח בה' והיה ה' מבטחו".

Mishnah Pe'ah 8:9 (ms Kaufmann)

Anyone who needs to take but does not take—they will not die from old age until they can furnish others from their own.

About this, it is said, "Blessed is the man who trusts in God, and to whom God is trusted" (Jeremiah 17:7).

- Why might it be a value to refuse *tzedakah* even when in need? What type of faith or trust in God is this *mishnah* describing?
- How does the verse from Jeremiah illustrate the principle in the *mishnah*?
- What do you think are the values animating this *mishnah*? When might it be most reasonable to apply these values?
- How is this kind of faith visible in the Hanukkah story?

The Talmud Yerushalmi presents a contradictory view:

תלמוד ירושלמי פאה ח:ט, כא טור ב

ר' אחא בשם ר' חנינא כיני מתני' כל מי שהוא
צריך ליטול ואינו נוטל הרי זה שופך דמים
ואסור להתרחם עליו על נפשיה לא חייס על
חורנין לא כ"ש

Talmud Yerushalmi Pe'ah 8:9, 21b

R. Aha in the name of R. Hanina: This is what the mishnah means:⁸ "Anyone who needs to take and does not take—they are a shedder of blood and it is forbidden to have mercy upon them." On themselves they did not have mercy, on others—all the more so.

- What values animate R. Hanina's tradition?
- What do you think R. Hanina means by saying that this person is a "shedder of blood"? Whose blood?
- How do you understand the last line of the *gemara*: is the problem here that one who refuses to accept help has no mercy on themselves, or is the problem that they would have no mercy on others? How does this affect your understanding of the *gemara* overall?
- What is the place of faith according to this *gemara*? Where is this kind of faith visible in the Hanukkah story?

⁸ This phrase (literally: "so too is the tradition") normally indicates an explanation or a correction of an authoritative text, but it is difficult to understand that use here. It is possible that R. Hanina is proposing an alternate version of Mishnah Pe'ah 8:9, or he may be citing another tradition that disagrees with it.

Rabbeinu Shimshon, an important commentator on the Mishnah from the school of the Tosafists, tries to resolve the contradiction between the *mishnah* and *gemara*:

ר"ש מסכת פאה שם

שהוא צריך ליטול ואינו נוטל - בירושלמי...
משמע דפליגי אמתניתין ויש לפרש דההיא
בשאין יכול להספיק במעשה ידיו ומספק ומסגף
את עצמו בחיים רעים ומתניתא במספק על
ידי שדוחק עצמו במלאכה כבדה ובוטח בה'
קודם שיתפרנס מאחרים ועל זה נאמר והיה ה'
מבטחו:

Rabbeinu Shimshon on Mishnah Peah 8:9

"Anyone who needs to take but does not take [they will die from old age until they can furnish others from their own]". The Yerushalmi... sounds like it conflicts with our Mishnah. It can be resolved by saying that [the Yerushalmi] is about someone for whom the work of their hands is not sufficient for them, and they afflict themselves with a life of hardship. Whereas the Mishnah is about someone who pushes themselves in hard work and trusts in God, rather than being furnished from others. And on that the verse says "Blessed is the man who trusts in God, and to whom God is trusted" (Jeremiah 17:17).

- How does Rabbeinu Shimshon resolve the two conflicting texts? Can you think of other ways to resolve them? Do they have to be resolved, or can they be integrated into a religious life and remain in tension?



THE WOMEN'S DRUMS

Night six



THE TORAH TELLS us that the Israelites left Egypt in such haste that their dough had no time to rise and they did not bring provisions for the journey (Exodus 12:39). And yet, Miriam leads the women in song after the miracle of the splitting of the Sea, and they seem to be perfectly—if not overly—prepared!

שמות טו:כ

Exodus 15:20

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנִּבִּיאָה אֶחָדָה אֶת־הַתֶּף בְּיָדָהּ
וַתֵּצֵאָן כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בַּתָּפִים וּבַמַּחֲלֹת:

Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, picked up a hand drum, and all the women went out after with hand drums and with pipes.

- Why would a people emerging from slavery, with not enough time or wherewithal to properly prepare food, inexplicably be furnished with paraphernalia as seemingly unnecessary as musical instruments?!

A *midrash* explains:

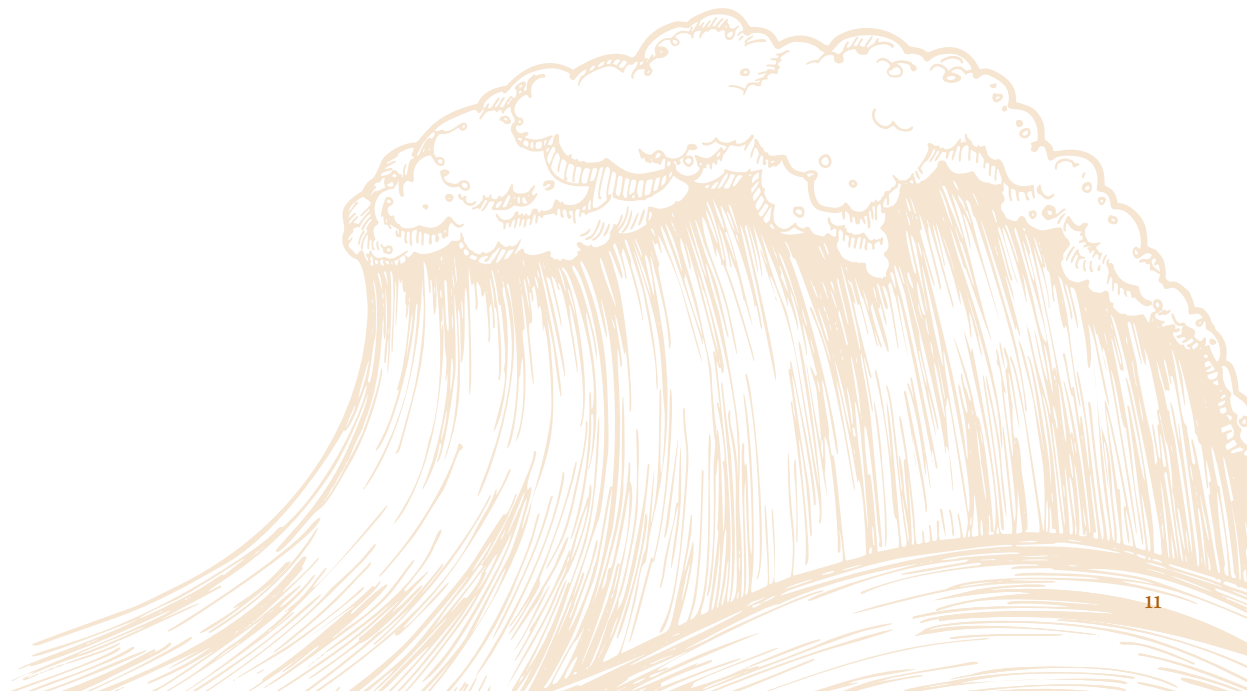
מכילתא דרבי שמעון בר יוחאי טו:כ

Mekhilta de-R. Shimon ben Yohai 15:20

וכי מאין להם תופים על הים אלא לפי
שהצדיקים מובטחין עם יציאתן ממצ' שהמק'
עושה להן ניסין וגבורות לפיכך נטלו תופין
ומחולות בידם.

But from where did they have hand drums at the Sea?! Rather, because the righteous people had faith in their exodus from Egypt that God would do miracles and mighty deeds for them. Therefore, they took their hand drums and pipes in their hands.

- What kind of faith is required to be on the brink of death from a pursuing Egyptian army and to have your instruments ready to play for when you're saved? Or to even bring your instruments in the first place?
- The *midrash* describes this faith as belonging to the righteous. Do you think that means it doesn't really expect most people to be able to express this kind of faith? Or could it mean that this is the standard for all people? What can we learn from the fact that all the Israelite women seem to have achieved this level of faith?
- How can we hope and prepare for the best while things might look or feel rather grim? Do you see a connection between this and the Hanukkah story?



A NARROW BRIDGE

Night seven



REBBE NAHMAN OF Breslov often highlighted faith in his teachings, and beseeched his students to never succumb to doubt and despair. These words below became paraphrased as a popular inspirational song sung in summer camps and shuls around the world, and they represent one of the most important expressions of faith found in Rebbe Nahman's writings.

ליקוטי מוהר"ן תניינא תורה מח

... כי צריך עקשנות גדול מאד מאד, להיות חזק ואמיץ, לאחוז עצמו, לעמוד על עמדו, אף אם מפילין אותו ח"ו בכל פעם. כי לפעמים יש, שמפילין אחד מעבודת ה' כידוע. אעפ"כ, עליו לעשות את שלו, לעשות מה שיוכל בעבודת ה', ואל יניח עצמו ליפול לגמרי ח"ו. כי כל אלו הנפילות, והירידות, והבלבולים, וכיוצא בזה, צריכים בהכרח לעבור בהם, קודם שנכנסין בשערי הקדושה, וגם הצדיקים האמתיים עברו בכל זה...

ודע, שהאדם צריך לעבור על גשר צר מאד מאד, והכלל והעיקר שלא יתפחד כלל:

Likkutei Moharan Part II:48

A person needs tremendous determination to be strong and courageous, to hold on and maintain one's position even if forces cause them to fall time and again, God forbid. For there are times when they cause a person to fall from the service of God, as is known. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon them to do what is theirs, to do whatever they can in the service of God, and not allow themselves to fall entirely, God forbid. This is because one must surely experience all these falls, descents, confusions, and so on, before entering the gates of holiness. And the true tzaddikim (righteous people), too, underwent all this...

And know this! Every person must cross a very, very narrow bridge. The main rule is: do not allow yourself to be frightened at all!⁹

- What kind of courage and faith is Rebbe Nahman talking about?
- Why does he say that we must experience failure in order to “enter the gates of holiness”? Why does he assume that true *tzaddikim* all undergo the same process? What does this tell us about his perspective on righteousness?
- What is the “narrow bridge” that Rebbe Nahman is talking about? What does it take to cross a narrow bridge? What is that supposed to teach us about life in general?
- Why does Rebbe Nahman assume that we have it within our ability to “not allow” ourselves to be frightened? What does this tell us about the kind of faith and courage he is talking about? How can this be applied in our daily lives?



⁹ Translation adapted from Moshe Mykoff.

YOU ARE WITH ME

Night eight



THIS PSALM IS said in many communities at the third Shabbat meal, close to the end of the day. It also features in some versions of the funeral and Yizkor liturgy. At its core, it is a psalm about how God looks after us and how this can give us courage and steadfastness, even in the face of death itself:

תהלים כג

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד ה' רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר׃² בְּנִיחוֹת יְנִיחֵנִי׃³ נַפְשִׁי יִשְׁוֹבֵב יַחְנֵנִי בַּמַּעְגָּלִי צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ׃⁴ אֲתָה כִּי אֵלֶךְ בְּנִיחָא צִלְמוֹת לֹא אֶיִרָא רָע כִּי אֲתָה עִמָּדִי שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֶנְתְּךָ הִפְּחָה יְנַחֲמֵנִי׃⁵ תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שְׂלֹחַן נֶגֶד צָרָרִי דִּשְׁנֶנָּה בִּשְׁמֹן רֹאשִׁי כֹּסִי רִנָּה׃⁶ אֵף טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִדְּפוּנִי כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית ה' לְאֲרָךְ יָמִים׃

Psalm 23

'A hymn for David. God is my Shepherd; I will not lack. ²In grass pastures God makes me crouch, to the still waters God leads me, ³my soul¹⁰ is refreshed. God guides me in right paths for the sake of God's name. ⁴Even when I go in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil—because You are with me. Your staff and Your walking stick, they comfort me. ⁵You arrange before me a table opposite my enemies. You anoint my head with the oil. My cup is overflowing. ⁶Only goodness and love shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of God for a long time.

- What do you notice? What stands out to you, and what do you wonder about?
- Something remarkable happens to the narrative perspective in this psalm. It starts off talking about God in the third person perspective (“God is my Shepherd”). At some point, though, the narrative voice addresses God directly, in the second person perspective. Can you see where it switches? Why do you think it switches at that point? Why would talking about God sometimes drive a person to want to talk to God directly? What is being said that might drive the narrative voice into closer and more direct relationship with God?
- Do you ever find that the most difficult times are the ones where you feel closest to God? Can you imagine that this might be the case for some people? How so? Why is it that faith is sometimes expressed the most in situations when it seems most counterintuitive? What can this teach us?
- How does the personal experience of the person saying this psalm affect their courage and faith? Why is this psalm particularly appropriate for the end of Shabbat? Why might it be well-suited to funerals and Yizkor services?
- Does this psalm comfort you or challenge you? How so?

Before you put away your oil and hanukkiyot for next year...

- What do you think about the various models of faith and courage found in these sources? Which ones do you relate to and which ones seem alienating?
- Think back to the text in the introduction from R. Klein. Now that you have explored the possibilities of faith in other sources, what do you think of the faith displayed by the Hasmoneans? In what ways can you emulate it in your life?
- What's complicated about having faith and courage in your life today? How can these texts, together with the lights of Hanukkah, help you?

10 This word, *nefesh*, is not really the same as the Greek notion of “soul” we’re more familiar with today. It also means “life” and sometimes the word means “throat” (e.g. Isaiah 5:14). It seems that both meanings are at play here: the sheep in the metaphor has its thirst quenched by the Shepherd, and is revived.