

פרשת

מקץ
Parashat Miketz

*Bereshit / Genesis 41:1-44:17, Zechariah 2:14-4:7
Luke 4:16-31*

Unrepentant until being Confronted with Sin?

In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Miketz, we read the following, *Bereshit / Genesis 42:5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. 42:6 Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. 42:7 When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, 'Where have you come from?' And they said, 'From the land of Canaan, to buy food.' 42:8 But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. 42:9 Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, 'You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.' 42:10 Then they said to him, 'No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. 42:11 'We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.' 42:12 Yet he said to them, 'No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!' (NASB)* A lot can be drawn out of these seven verses, we read how the Lord established Joseph above all people as a ruler. His brothers come to buy food, he recognized them, they did not recognize him. Their inability to recognize him may be spiritual in the sense how

their hearts were seared with hatred for their brother, leading to murder, selling him into slavery, and then believing he was dead. Though they did not physically murder him, selling him into slavery was considered a death sentence. Joseph tests his brothers to see if they have changed or if they have continued to walk in the way of the wicked. Something to note in the story of Joseph and his brothers was his brothers were not repentant until they were confronted with some insurmountable thing where they had to trust in the Lord God of Israel and confess their sins. Looking at the rabbis, the commentaries such as *Chizkuni on Bereshit / Genesis 42:12 Part 1*, *Rashbam on Bereshit / Genesis 42:12 Part 1*, *Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 42:12 Part 1*, *Sforno on Bereshit / Genesis 42:12 Part 1 and 2*, and *Siftei Chkhamim on Bereshit / Genesis 42:12 Part 1*, all these commentaries speak of Joseph's brothers saying that they did not enter into Egypt through the same gate. They took different gates, different paths to the same location to buy food. Each commentary states that Joseph knew this which is why he questioned His brothers in the way that he did saying they are spies. Why do you think the rabbis focus upon this entering through differing gates? What are the Rabbis are trying to draw out from the text? There may be something about not traveling together, traveling separately which suggests they were not all of the same mind. This draws in the idea or concept of *"all religions are simply different paths up the same mountain."* The problem with this form of reasoning is related to the journey one is taking in seeking the Lord and the fact that separate but equal does not work. All who are seeking the same goal but taking differing paths is not enough. The path we take changes us and forms who we are. How we perceive the Lord God in heaven will in part be determined by the spiritual journey one is taking, how we have dealt with obstacles on our path, and the manner in which we strive in our walk before the Lord. By choosing a different path than what is laid out in Scripture, one's understanding of God, who He is will be different. The biblical context always draws in the marriage relationship with God. If we consider the marriage relationship, people of the same faith tend to be happier as opposed to those of differing faiths. Religion affects things that affect our marriages, for example, how we spend our time, how we spend our money and how we raise our children, etc. These are issues that are significant because they relate to the way in which we live for

the Lord (faithfulness), how we understand who God is, how we treat others (i.e. what we want to instill in our children as considered good biblical values of morality and love), and to having a basis (a standard) for living. When we read that Joseph's brothers each took a separate path to the same location to buy food, this draws in a particular context that leads to Joseph's reasons for questioning his brothers in the way that he did. Their repentance and confession of their sins is related to their being confronted with an insurmountable obstacle. The lesson that we may learn from this week's Torah portion is not to wait until we are confronted with an insurmountable problem before turning from sin and turning to the Lord. Our hope and our salvation is found in the Lord God of Israel and His Messiah Yeshua. If we are not seeking Him daily, we will not grow in our lives and relationship with the Lord. This will lead to the Lord moving in a way to draw us back to our first love, to Him and His ways. That journey may not be so enjoyable as opposed to taking action now and rejoicing in the blessings He is providing.

Most people who believe in the Lord God of Israel and in Yeshua His Messiah want to grow spiritually. Coupled with spiritual growth is also to mature in faith. The apostle Paul describes this as *“to be like Christ.”* Many however do not seem to understand what this means or how this is accomplished in living a daily repentant life style. In *Tehillim / Psalms 108*, the Psalmist opens saying, א שִׁיר מְזֻמֹּר לְדָוִד: ב נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹהִים אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה אֶף-כְּבוֹדֵי: *A song. A psalm of David. 108:1 My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul. (NASB)* What does David mean that he will sing praises to the Lord even with his soul? What is it about the soul that makes this so significant? Note how this draws out an important point in relation to how some people understand repentance. Is repentance lived in a So'odic context (Zohar style mysticism) in the sense that repentance is a desire that is not associated with the physical realm? The soul (nefesh) does not have a mouth in the sense that we can audibly hear our own spiritual voice. The nefesh is connected to our physical body, and as a result of the longing for our soul to praise the Lord, the praise of our souls become words which are expressed audibly for all to hear. David's words *“even my soul”* (אֶף-כְּבוֹדֵי) is written in a peculiar way which translates literally as *“even my glory”* as he uses the root word

כבוד in reference to his soul. The significance of his words אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי is in the reference to “*my glory*.” Note how the glory of a man is in his heart. Man glorifies himself over and above others in his heart. This is a very easy thing to do and is something the Lord wants us to avoid. David states “*by his glory*,” which is translated as “*his soul*,” to say even his glory gives praises unto the Lord. This is important because it is only the one who humbles his soul (humbling his own glory) who is able to give praises unto the Lord by that which would rather set itself up to receive glory. Humbleness and repentance are key! In this week’s Torah portion, Joseph was testing whether his brothers had changed, whether they had humbled their souls? Joseph did not take a So’odic approach to the testing of his brothers. He treated them in a particular way to see whether they had truly repented of their wicked ways, and to see how they would react, whether they would try to save themselves, or lay down their lives for one another? In today’s world, there are a lot of self-help shortcuts that people try in an attempt to improve themselves. Some even look for an emotional experience, such as are some in the Pentecostal movement who seek a healing or a tongues experience over and above drawing near unto the Lord, and seeking first His Kingdom. It is thought by achieving these things, all problems may be solved and one may finally have become a “*mature Christian*.” In reality, this only emphasizes one’s immaturity in faith. In the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:22* we read “*Ben Bag Bag says: Turn it and turn it, since everything is in it. And in it should you look, and grow old and be worn; and from it do not move, since there is no characteristic greater than it.*” What is the “*it*” that the Mishnah is likely referring to? Is this not a reference to the Scriptures, that which is a lifelong endeavor whereby laboring in the Scriptures changes us and our perceptions of the world. This process of studying the Scriptures also involves more than just reading the words of a text, it also involves reflection coupled with a practical interaction with the text in our lives. The on-going encounter with the biblical text gives each of us an opportunity to renew ourselves, to grow as individuals, and to strengthen our communal connections with one another which directly impacts our relationship with the Lord God of Israel. This is what it means to grow spiritually and learn to be mature in our faith. Let’s discuss this further in this week’s study!

In this week's Torah portion, we are looking at *Bereshit / Genesis 42:1-16*.

Bereshit / Genesis 42:1-16

42:1 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, 'Why are you staring at one another?' 42:2 He said, 'Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.' 42:3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. 42:4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, 'I am afraid that harm may befall him.' 42:5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. 42:6 Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. 42:7 When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, 'Where have you come from?' And they said, 'From the land of Canaan, to buy food.' 42:8 But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. 42:9 Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, 'You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.' 42:10 Then they said to him, 'No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. 42:11 'We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.' 42:12 Yet he said to them, 'No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!' 42:13 But they said, 'Your servants are twelve brothers in all, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.' 42:14 Joseph said to them, 'It is as I said to you, you are spies; 42:15 by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh,

you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! 42:16 'Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.' (NASB)

א וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֵשׁ-שָׂבָר בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה שָׁמַעְתִּי כִּי יֵשׁ-שָׂבָר בְּמִצְרַיִם רְדוּ-שָׁמָּה וְשִׁבְרוּ-לָנוּ מִשָּׂם וְנִחַיָּה וְלֹא נָמוּת: ג וַיִּרְדּוּ אַחֵי-יוֹסֵף עֲשָׂרָה לְשָׂבָר בָּר מִמִּצְרַיִם: ד וְאֶת-בְּנֵימִינְיֹן אָחִי יוֹסֵף לֹא-שָׁלַח יַעֲקֹב אֶת-אָחִיו כִּי אָמַר פֶּן-יִקְרָאנוּ אֶסּוֹן: ה וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׂבָר בְּתוֹךְ הַבָּאִים כִּי-הָיָה הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: ו וַיּוֹסֶף הוּא הַשְּׁלִיט עַל-הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשַׁבֵּיר לְכָל-עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֵאוּ אָחִי יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לוֹ אַפַּיִם אָרְצָה: ז וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אָחִיו וַיִּכְרַם וַיִּתְנַפֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּדְבַּר אֲתָם קִשּׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאִין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְשִׁבְר־אֶכָּל: ח וַיִּכַּר יוֹסֵף אֶת-אָחִיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרָהוּ: ט וַיִּזְכֹּר יוֹסֵף אֶת הַחֵד לְמוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָלַם לָהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם לָרְאוֹת אֶת-עֵרְוַת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם: י וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו לֹא אֲדַגֵּי וְעַבְדִּיךָ בָּאוּ לְשִׁבְר־אֶכָּל: יא כָּלָנוּ בְנֵי אִישׁ-אֶחָד גִּחְנוּ כְּנֵיִם אֲנִיחָ-נוּ לֹא-הָיוּ עַבְדֵיךָ מְרַגְלִים: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם לֹא כִי-עֵרְוַת הָאָרֶץ בָּאתֶם לָרְאוֹת: יג וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר עַבְדֵיךָ אַחֵים | אֲנַחְנוּ בְנֵי אִישׁ-אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהִנֵּה הַקֶּטֶן אֶת-אֲבִינוּ הַיּוֹם וְהָאֶחָד אֵינָנוּ: יד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲלֵכֶם לֵאמֹר מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם: טו בְּזֹאת תִּבְחָנוּ חַי פְּרַעֲה אִם-תִּחַצְּאוּ מִזֶּה כִּי אִם-בָּבוֹא אַחֵיכֶם הַקֶּטֶן הִנֵּה: טז שְׁלַחוּ מִכֶּם אֶחָד וַיִּקַּח אֶת-אֲחֵיכֶם וְאֲתֶם הֶאֱסָרוּ וַיִּבְחָנוּ דְבָרֵיכֶם הֲאִמַּת אֲתֶכֶם וְאִם-לֹא חַי פְּרַעֲה כִּי מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם:

In the MT, we read the manner in which Joseph tested his brothers according to *Bereshit / Genesis 42:13-15*, יג וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר עַבְדֵיךָ אַחֵים | אֲנַחְנוּ בְנֵי אִישׁ-אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְהִנֵּה הַקֶּטֶן אֶת-אֲבִינוּ הַיּוֹם וְהָאֶחָד אֵינָנוּ: יד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲלֵכֶם לֵאמֹר מְרַגְלִים אַתֶּם:

טו בְּזֹאת תִּבְחָנוּ יְיָ פִּרְעֹה אִם־תֵּצְאוּ מִזֶּה כִּי אִם־בָּבוֹא אֲחִיכֶם הַקָּטָן הַזֶּה:
 42:13 *But they said, 'Your servants are twelve brothers in all, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.'* 42:14 *Joseph said to them, 'It is as I said to you, you are spies; 42:15 by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! (NASB)* Based upon the narrative, his brothers considered Joseph to be dead. Joseph tested them by having them prove his youngest brother was alive. Joseph called them to action, to have one of them go and retrieve their brother for him. This is one of the major presuppositions of the Torah, and of Judaism, more emphasis is placed upon actions than on intentions, on the acts we perform rather than on the emotions we feel. In a similar way, the Lord is calling us to a life of action. This is also a foundational component of Teshuvah (repentance) to seek forgiveness from the Lord God our Father in heaven and to turn (actions) from our sins. This is why the Tanach writes according to *Joshua 1:8 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy ways prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (KJV, לֹא־יָמוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה, (ח) לְמַעַן תִּשְׁמְרֵם לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכָל־הַכְּתוּב בּוֹ כִּי־אָז תִּצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ וְאָז תִּשְׁקִיל:*) Spiritual maturity takes discipline, and is the point of what is written according to *Midrash Tehillim 119, Part 1.*

Midrash Tehillim 119 Part 1

1. Blessed are the upright in the way, who walk in the Torah of the Lord. King Solomon, may he rest in peace, said, The just man walks in his integrity, his children are blessed after him (Mishley / Proverbs 20:7). Now, if the children of a just man are blessed because of him, all the more so is the just man himself blessed. The Holy One blessed be He, asked of Abraham only that he be upright, as is said, Walk before Me, and be you upright (Bereshit / Genesis 17:1). So, too, Moshe said to Israel, You will be upright with the Lord your God (Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:13). The verse does not say, Before

the Lord your God, but with the Lord your God. That is, If you are upright, you will be with the Lord your God. Wherefore? Because God Himself is upright, as is said, The Rock, His work is perfect, Just, and Upright is He (Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:4). The children of Israel are also upright, and the Torah is upright, as is said, The Torah of the Lord is upright (Tehillim / Psalms 19:8). Hence, it is said, Blessed are they that are upright in the way. The people of the generation of the wilderness were upright and saintly. According to Rabbi Eliezer, they are the saints referred to in the verse, Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice (Tehillim / Psalms 50:5). To receive the Torah, the children of Israel had to walk twelve miles forward for each of the Ten Commandments and twelve miles back. Hence, it is said, Blessed are they that are upright in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord. And so, purified, the children of Israel received the Torah. God said to them, You will eat no fat, of ox, or sheep, or goat (Vayikra / Leviticus 7:23), and though He did not tell them why not, they took obedience to the command upon themselves. God said to them, And when you will come into the land, and will have planted all manner of trees for food, then you will count the trees thereof as forbidden; there years will it be as forbidden unto you (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:23), and though He did not tell them why it was forbidden, they took obedience to the command upon themselves. And even after they took obedience to these commands upon themselves, they did not ask, what is to be the reward for our doing them? Hence, it is said, Blessed are they that are upright in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.

The Rabbis in the Midrash on *Tehillim / Psalms 119* state that those who walk upright are those who walk in the Torah (instruction) of the Lord. (see *Romans 3:31, Romans 7:12*) Solomon said those who walk

in integrity, their children will be blessed. The rabbis point out the significance of *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:13* which speaks of walking “*with*” the Lord your God, as opposed to walking “*before*” the Lord your God. The significance of “*walking with*” is that the Lord is upright, righteous, and holy. In parallel fashion, we too are to do the same. The Lord provided us with a plumb line for our lives, the Torah, which explains to us how to be righteous, holy, and upright, walking in the footsteps of our Father in heaven, and of Yeshua the Messiah, we are walking “*with*” them as a people who represent and bear the testimonies of God. Those who have done this are those who have entered into a covenant with God in blood through the sacrifice. Today this is accomplished through His Messiah Yeshua. Note how the rabbis speak of the receiving of the Torah, that the people walked ten miles forward for each of the ten commandments, and twelve miles back. The point is that living our lives for the Lord is not an easy task but is paralleled to one who takes steps forward, and then takes steps backward to evaluate where he has traveled, whether what he has done is pleasing to the Lord or not, and learning from his experiences. Did Joseph’s brothers learn from their experience and treatment of Joseph? They had to witness their sorrow of their father Jacob and perpetuate a lie for 30 years. Walking upright before the Lord is to do so according to His will and word, and not according to our own word, which may be the reason the people took twelve steps backward after having taken ten forward in their obedience to God’s Word. Midrash Tehillim 119 Part 1 concludes saying, “*And even after they took obedience to these commands upon themselves, they did not ask, what is to be the reward for our doing them? Hence, it is said, Blessed are they that are upright in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.*” The significance of this is that we live our lives because of our love for the Lord God in heaven and not to receive a reward. True love takes this kind of approach to what we do in our relationship with others. Above all things, the Lord God of Israel wants us to demonstrate our faith (*Hebrews 11:6*). Faith is trusting in the character of God before we see how He is going to work things out. He has given us His Word, and His promises still stand. As we apply His ways to our lives He brings His promises to fulfillment by our trust in His faithfulness. Just as our trust in other people grows with daily interaction, our trust in the Lord grows the same way.

ה כִּי-גָדוֹל יְמֵעַל-שָׁמַיִם 108:4 *For Your lovingkindness is great above the heavens, And Your truth reaches to the skies. (NASB)* We give thanks unto the Lord and offer praises because of His loving kindness. What does the psalmist mean that the truth of God reaches to the heavens? What is the truth the psalmist is speaking of? The modern theological approach to the “*truth*” of God is to direct us to believe in the Tanach (OT) man earned his salvation, and in the NT all we have to do is believe in the Messiah (the So’odic approach, i.e. hyper-grace movement). What was this truth the psalmist speaks of? The term *emunah*, rendered in English as “*faith*” or “*belief*,” occurs for the first time in the Bible in connection with Abraham in the Torah. After obeying God’s command to leave his family and home, Abraham is led to the land of Canaan which the Lord God promises to give to his descendants. The narrative tells us that a famine forces him to sojourn in Egypt, where Sarah’s beauty causes Pharaoh to take her as his wife, when Abraham claims she is his sister. Pharaoh blesses Abraham and sends him and his wife away. Back in the land promised by God, Abraham and his nephew Lot find that they cannot live together in peace, and each goes his own way. Lot is captured by enemies and then freed by Abraham. After these things, the Torah tells us, *Bereshit / Genesis 15:1-6 saying, 15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.’ 15:2 Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ 15:3 And Abram said, ‘Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.’ 15:4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’ 15:5 And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (NASB)* Through the life of Abraham, the Lord promised him that he would have a child, and that the land would be given to his descendants. The Lord uses the stars as a way to describe to Abraham so numerous will be your descendants that you will not be able to count them. What was Abraham’s response

to the Lord's promise? The Torah says ' *15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (NASB)* What was the nature of Abraham's belief which the Lord God counted as righteousness? Was it simply a list of propositions? Was it simply a matter of Abraham accepting the Lord's statements as true, a sort of intellectual understanding (a So'odic faith) and belief to the truth of a series of propositions such as the following?

- *God exists.*
- *God communicates with individuals and makes promises to them.*
- *God has the power to keep the promises He has made.*
- *God may be relied upon to keep His promises.*

No, the context makes it very clear! Abraham's act of righteousness was found in the demonstration of his emunah (faith) and trust in God. If you think about this for a moment, there can be no doubt had Abraham been asked, he would most assuredly have affirmed the truth of these four propositions listed just above. The Torah, however, gives us no reason for thinking that Abraham ever asked himself the sort of questions that would bring into question these four propositions. The emunah spoken of in Scripture is more than the belief that certain statements about God are true; it is the belief in the Lord God of Israel that is coupled to trust and reliance upon Him, all of which call forth a behavior that is consistent with our faith, trust, and reliance upon the Lord. The point is to understand the meaning of emunah; where emunah is not something new in the NT as the modern theologies of Dispensationalism would teach, man "*earned*" his salvation in the OT, and now he lives by faith in the NT. I heard this nonsense for 10 years while attending a church in Ohio. The fact is, Emunah can be seen from the text of the Torah. What we need to understand about "*the truth*" that is taught in God's Word, this truth that reaches to the heavens, is

not about an intellectual exercise. This truth is about who the Lord God our Father in heaven is, and the meaning of emunah, to trust and rely upon Him, that is coupled with the belief and practice of His word in our lives. Was this what had happened to Joseph’s brothers, they learned from their past actions and their faith had increased over the years due to the expectation the Lord would one day pay them back for Joseph’s life?

The Lord God is described as a God of emunah in Parashat Ha’azinu when Moshe writes *“The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of faithfulness [emunah] and without iniquity; just and right is He”* (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 32: 4*, הַצּוֹר־תָּמִים פִּעְלוֹ כִּי, (כָּל-דַּרְכָּיו מִשְׁפָּט אֵל אֱמוּנָה וְאֵין עוֹל צַדִּיק וְיֵשֶׁר הוּא: The Lord God is not being described here as agreeing to the truth of certain statements. The verse itself teaches us of God’s character which makes it possible to appeal to a *“God of faithfulness,”* where He is faithful, He is upright and just, and He is righteous and holy. Notice the difference here, the Hebrew text speaks of a *“belief that He is able”* as opposed to a *“belief in His ability.”* Studying the context almost always reaffirms the point being made here about the interpretation of emunah according to the Torah. In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:23* Moses berates the children of Israel saying, וּבִשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִקֶּדֶשׁ בְּרִנֶּעַ לֵאמֹר עָלֶיךָ וְרָשׁוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָכֶם וַתִּמְרוּ אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלֹא הִאֲמַנְתֶּם לוֹ וְלֹא שָׁמַעַתֶּם: *9:23 And when the LORD sent you on from Kadesh-barnea, saying, “Go up and take possession of the land that I am giving you,” you flouted the command of the LORD your God; you did not put your trust in Him and did not obey Him. (NASB)* Note how the Hebrew text is written, it says *“you believed him not”* using the word ve’lo he’emanatem (וְלֹא הִאֲמַנְתֶּם) saying that they did not listen to His voice, where emunah is faith that leads to what we do, how we live, and how we demonstrate our trust in the Lord God of Israel. The point is that the Torah teaches a believe in God as opposed to having a belief about God. The Scriptures automatically assume the existence of God. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that He exists, or that there is a command to believe that He exists. The Torah teaches clearly that the Lord God is one in the Shema (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*), and that He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. There is no question in the Scrip-

tures about doubting the existence of God, as we see being posed in our modern times. The Torah does not teach or demand that emunah is a belief system, or that only certain statements are true. The fact of the matter is the Torah teaches us to trust in the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which finds its expression in our behavior (living out our faith). Judaism emerged from a the people's struggle with idolatry and the biblical command that demands loyalty to the one true God, creator of the universe. This loyalty is found in obedience to God's will as it is expressed according to His Word. Note that throughout the history of Israel, little attempt was made to inquire closely into the doctrines that one believed about God. Additionally, no attempt was even made to establish exactly what doctrines one ought to affirm. Furthermore, Judaism developed as a religion that was intimately connected with a distinct community of faithful people. The truth the psalmist speaks of in his psalm is of the Lord seeking a people to live by faith, to trust in Him, and to live righteous, holy, and just lives towards one another. This process of spiritual growth and maturity in faith involves more than just reading the words of a text, or going to church. These things require a deep reflection of who we are as the children of God which is coupled with a practical interaction with the Scriptures in our lives. The on-going encounter with the biblical text gives each of us an opportunity to take ten steps forward, and twelve backwards as we learn to grow as individuals in God's Word, and to strengthen our connections with one another which directly impacts our relationship with the Lord God of Israel. This is very likely what had happened in the lives of Joseph's brothers who fearfully expected the Lord God to bring judgment down on their heads because of Joseph's life. This is what it means to learn to be mature in our faith and to seek His Kingdom! To draw near to the Lord in faith, by studying His word, in prayer, humbling our lives, and the practical application of God's word in our lives.