



*Yeshivat Ma'alot*  
*Parashat Va'etchanan*  
*Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"u*

ישיבת מעלות  
 פרשת ואתחנן  
 רב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

*Mitzvat Emunah*

In this week's parasha, Parashat Va'etchanan, Moshe repeats the Aseret Hadibrot to Bnei Yisrael. The first commandment, Anochi Hashem Elokecha is the root of a very fundamental argument with regard to the mitzvah of emunah- belief in Hashem. The Rambam, in the beginning of Sefer Hamitzvot<sup>1</sup>, writes that it is a mitzvah to believe in Hashem. He quotes the first of the Aseret Hadibrot, Anochi Hashem Elokecha, as the source for this mitzvah. However, not all of the commentators agree with the Rambam's approach. The Ramban<sup>2</sup>, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, quotes the Ba'al Halachot Gdolot, who writes that to have emunah is not a mitzvah independent of itself. He explains that the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot which we are commanded to fulfill are actions which we as Jewish people are commanded to perform, or are action which we are commanded to refrain from. However, emunah is not a mitzvah that we are commanded to fulfill, rather it is the *reason* that we fulfill mitzvot. Emunah is the backbone of the Taryag mitzvot.

This disagreement between the Rambam and the Ramban is in essence a disagreement on what are mitzvot. The Rambam, based on what he writes in Moreh Nevuchim<sup>3</sup> (The Guide to the Perplexed) explains that mitzvot are the actions and the conceptions that help man attain perfection. Therefore, it is quite obvious why the Rambam includes emunah as one of the 613 mitzvot; it is one of the fundamental concepts that bring man closer to perfection. On the other hand, the Ramban views the mitzvot as decrees that a king decrees upon his people. If this is the case, accepting the king's authority is a necessary precursor to accepting the king's decrees. So too, emunah is a fundamental forerunner to the mitzvot.

Upon looking more closely at what the Ramban writes, there appears to be a contradiction in his opinion. On the one hand, he understands that emunah is not a mitzvah; rather it is a fundamental necessity in order to fulfill the mitzvot. Yet we find that the Ramban writes<sup>4</sup> that "Anochi Hashem Elokecha" is counted as one of the 613 mitzvot. He explains that the word "Anochi" implies that one takes upon himself the yolk of Hashem's kingship, which in essence means emunah. This emunah entails the belief that Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt, and that Hashem is all powerful.

<sup>1</sup> Sefer Hamitzvot, Mitzvot Aseh 1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Hasagot Haramban

<sup>3</sup> Part 3, Chapter 27

<sup>4</sup> Sefer Hamitzvot, Mitzvot Lo Ta'aseh 5, Hasagot Haramban

The contradiction in the Ramban's commentary can be explained as follows. Emunah in Hashem is the backbone for all of the mitzvot, as explained. Yet what the Ramban counted emunah as a mitzvah is having emunah that Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. The belief in Hashem was present even before Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, yet at Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael was commanded to have emunah that Hashem redeemed them from the Egyptian exile. The Sefer Mitzvot Hagadol also explains the mitzvah of emunah in the same way that the Ramban does- that the mitzvah is to believe that Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt.

The Sefer Mitzvot Hakatan expounds on the same principles that the Ramban states. Just as it is a mitzvah to have emunah that Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt, so too it is a mitzvah to believe that Hashem will gather the exiles and bring salvation to Bnei Yisrael. And all this is learned from the pasuk "Anochi Hashem Elokecha". According to the Sefer Mitzvot Hakatan, emunah encompasses the longing for salvation. This comes to show that emunah is not only belief in the presence of Hashem, but it also the belief that the world has a purpose and destination, and that the final redemption, the Geulah, is an intrinsic part of this process.

The ideas of the Sefer Mitzvot Hakatan come to teach us how Am Yisrael is to cope in times of distress, especially in days like today. Emunah in Hashem requires us to see the hardships and difficult times that we go through as part of a process which began with the creation of the world and which will end with the final redemption. This knowledge, this emunah, can give us strength and hope during these hard times which Am Yisrael is going through, and can serve as a light for us in these dark times. By strengthening our emunah and our longing for salvation, we can give meaning even to the difficulties which we are facing today.