

# A PORTRAIT OF EMUNAH!

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Then Yosef said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me," and they drew closer. And he said, "I am your brother Yosef whom you sold into Egypt. But now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you. For already two years of famine [have passed] in the midst of the land, and [for] another five years, there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And G-d sent me before you to make for you a remnant in the land, and to preserve [it] for you for a great deliverance. (Breishis 45:4-7)

This brief monologue must certainly be one of the most remarkable records of personal greatness in the history of human interaction. Yosef addresses his brothers just moments after dramatically revealing his true identity. At the end of a long and lonely personal exile, 22 years isolated from family, in the face his "oppressors", he invites them to draw close to quiet their fears. How does someone come to such a level of acceptance and forgiveness to actually embrace those who had damaged him the most?!

The Talmud in Makos, of all places, synthesizes and identifies a single phrase by the Prophet Habakuk, as the essence of Torah, "Tzadik B'Emunaso Yichya- A Tzadik lives by his Emunah-Faith!" Yosef, who uniquely bears the title Yosef HaTzadik, certainly is the exemplar of this potent notion. What does it mean, though? Does it mean that a Tzadik blindly adheres to beliefs?

The word Emunah means to "raise" or "to shape", like a craftsman is called an "uman". It loses a lot in the translation to mere "belief" or "faith". It expresses a dutiful loyalty, a conscious shaping of the heart to remain true to a determined set of true principles and ideals. The Tzadik is not thrown off his game by short term or long term setbacks and disappointments. He is disciplined, inwardly and outwardly, to remain true and devoted even when the forces of life so brutally and so seductively try to dissuade him otherwise. If he remains so, then he is a Tzadik.

He anticipates the good long in advance of its arrival. That longing for the dawn allows him to endure any darkness and even see good where others may justify surrender. That's Emunah in motion!

It's hard to tell this story because it's real, too real. One of my good friends was shocked and terribly distraught when he heard of his older brother Avrumi's horrific car accident in Israel a number of years ago. Avrumi was driving someone to the airport in his minivan when a driver in the oncoming direction decided to pass a truck. He glanced off of a police car, spun out of control and struck

Avrumi's van. Boruch HASHEM Avrumi survived but tragically he broke almost every bone in his face and lost both of his legs. He was in the hospital under sedation for a long time. The painful new reality that dawned on him upon awakening was probably the hardest thing to face.

Months after the accident Avrumi, was allowed to leave the hospital temporarily. To ease the pressure of preparation, arrangements were made for him and his family to go to a hotel for Pesach. He realized that the location of the hotel was in the same city where the driver, a secular Israeli, who had precipitated the accident, happened to live. Once there, he phoned the fellow whose driving indiscretion had caused the whole calamity. He told him that he would like to meet him and that he shouldn't be nervous about it because he had no malice against him. Remarkably he showed up.

There standing before him was a man with a yarmulke and sporting a beard. Avrumi had expected to see a typical secular Israeli. The young fellow told him that because of all the problems the accident has caused he started to think a great deal and that eventually caused him to become a Baal Teshuva! Avrumi asked him to come close. He hugged him and he told him with a full heart, with both now crying, "It was worth it that I lost my legs so that you should become a Torah Jew." Is that not **a portrait of Emunah!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).