



AWAKENING YOUR

Soul

Faithfulness and Trust
- Rosh Hashanah

Written and edited by **Dr. Ronit Ziv Kreger**,
Momentum Director of Education and Leadership Development.



ROSH HASHANA

EMUNAH/ FAITHFULNESS AND TRUST

Was there a moment on your Momentum trip when you gazed at Masada or the Sea of Galilee, stood before the Western Wall, met Israelis who are dedicating their lives to others, or contemplated the creation of the modern State of Israel, and experienced a moment of wonder? *Emunah* is the art of opening our eyes to such soul-awakening moments of wonder and transcendence that are often lost behind the blur and busyness of our everyday lives. It is a deliberate practice of finding moments of transcendence, and then acting on them to live a life of faithfulness to the essence of who we are, to our deepest calling, to God.

With such faithfulness everything we do has a different vibration. We experience *emunah* as an anchor, trusting that God is with us (and within us) – through thick and thin. We make courageous decisions, because we trust that righteousness and justice will win out. We take extraordinary actions, and see beyond the news cycle to partner with God in creating a more perfected world.

On Rosh Hashana, we dedicate ourselves to faithfulness, *emunah*. We contemplate the year that has gone by, the improvements we have made in our character and actions, and the challenges that still face us. As the Rosh Hashana tunes and liturgy re-awaken us to our potential, we strive to remain God-conscious and inspired in all our actions in the coming year.

Some questions to ask yourself as you move through this unit:

- *Where have I experienced faithfulness and trust in my life? How is faithfulness different from simply believing?*
- *What are some deliberate practices that I can begin to take on to develop my faithfulness?*
- *How am I making space in my life for God-consciousness?*
- *How can I create a feeling of spirituality and trust in my home?*



THE AWAKENED SOUL



There are certain times in life when you encounter something that awakens your soul, that brings you to a consciousness of beauty and awe that goes beyond the day-to-day. As you read Lori's words on soul-awakening moments, ask yourself: When have I had a soul-awakening moment? What was its effect upon me?

Lori Palatnik¹

God has a way of showing us that we are not just bodies, but souls. We all have those soul-awakening moments in life that lift us out of this world. What are those soul-awakening moments?

Birth - the birth of a baby is a very physical act, but everyone knows that it is truly miraculous. A woman is a mini-creator, bringing forth life.

Death - No one is standing at a funeral thinking, "Hmm. . . I forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer, what will I make for dinner . . . ?" People are standing by a graveside thinking, "What is life all about? Am I living as I should? Is there a God? What happens after I die?"

¹ *Turn Your Husband Into Your Soul Mate.*

A Near-Death Experience - if you or anyone you know ever had a near-death experience, that is a big wake-up call.

“Nature” - When you feel small in front of the Empire State Building, you feel small in front of man, but when you feel small in front of the Rocky Mountains, you feel small in front of God. It doesn’t diminish you, it lifts you. “If God made the galaxies, the oceans and these mountains, and He made me, then I am something special.” Ever look up into a star-filled sky in the country with no city lights? Above you is a living Planetarium. You could touch eternity.

Poetry, Music, Art - You can walk through an art gallery and see painting after painting after painting. They are pretty, they are nice, but then you turn the corner and you see it - the one that takes your breath away (for me it is anything by Renoir or Pissarro); it touches your soul.

Love - When you look into the eyes of someone you love, you are not thinking, “Wow, smart monkey who evolved so beautifully . . .” or “Great DNA.” Your connection to them is a soul connection, way beyond the physical, something much deeper, something eternal.

Yes, you have a soul. It is the essence of who you are. It is eternal. But you also have a body, and often they are at odds. If you can understand what drives each, and get them working together, now you are on the road to greatness.

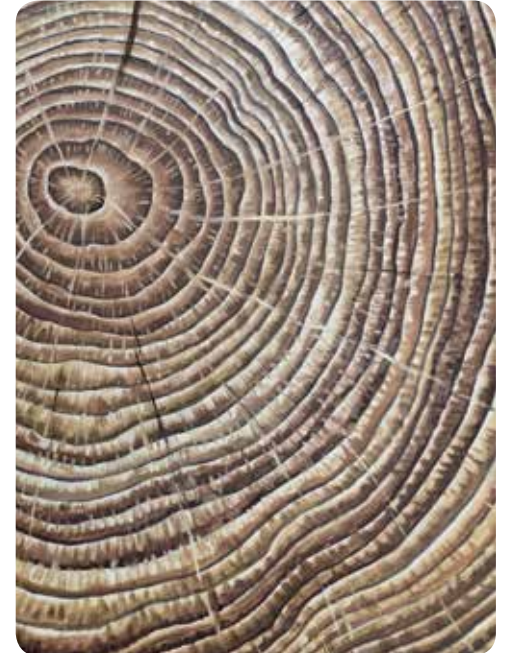
- *What have been some soul-awakening moments in your life?*
- *Did any of those soul-awakening moments lead you to new decisions or actions?*



MOMENTS OF SOUL-AWAKENING

Sometimes it is difficult to describe a soul-awakening moment or **God-consciousness** in words. Look through the following images, and choose a photo that represents a soul-awakening moment you have experienced **or a way that God is active in your life or in your community**. The photo need not literally represent the moment, just remind you of it. Share the image with your sisters and describe your experience. At home, you can copy and cut the images to create a deck of cards for engaging other family members or friends in a similar conversation.





YEAR OF GROWTH





EMUNAH AT 10,000 FEET

When Ruchi Koval went skydiving with her son, she gained some valuable insights into *emunah*.



Skydiving

By Ruchi Koval

When you jump out of a plane at 10,000 feet, you learn a few lessons.

First, the facts: my son and I went skydiving this summer. We drove 45 minutes away, spent about an hour suiting up, signing the safety waiver (five pages long), and listening to the instructional speech.

We then got into a teeny tiny plane that fit exactly 6 people - me, my instructor, my son, his instructor, one other skydiver who was experienced enough that he didn't need an instructor, and finally, the pilot. My son and I would each get strapped to our instructor, who was an experienced skydiver and who had control of the all-important parachute. At the designated time, we would jump out of the plane, tethered to our instructor. Simple instructions. The experienced guy would go first, at 3,000 feet, me and my instructor next, and my son last. Ready? Ready.

We go up in the plane. At 3,000 feet the experienced dude opens the door. Which is right near me. Which reveals a cloud. Just hanging out outside my face. The air is rushing through the cabin, and the guy looks at me, smiles, gives the "peace" sign, and is.... gone. The door slams shut; I look out the window and there he is in free fall.

It was not encouraging. One minute he was there; the next minute he was gone.

But I don't really have time to ponder these ponderings because next thing I know, it's my turn. And the instructor is tethering himself to me and he is telling me in his Peruvian accent to put my feet out of the plane. Do I have a choice? And to sit on the wing. So I do. And he says to jump, so I.... jump.

The first 40 seconds we are in utter free fall. The wind rushing in my face; the sparkling blue sky crystal clear for miles. Breathe! Breathe! I have to consciously inhale and exhale because the force of the air is making it difficult, and then suddenly, impossibly, the parachute opens. Which is when the sense comes back into my brain and I realize how utterly magnificent this moment is! And which is when I start yelling things like OH MY GOSH THIS IS AMAZING OH MY GOSH THIS IS CRAAAAAAZY. Multiple times. It's a perfect, beautiful, glide for the next few minutes - time eludes me - and the instructor directs us gently down, down.

Because in life, you see, there are times that we have to just get our feet out of the proverbial plane. And sit on some scary, uncharted wing. And jump. And there's a time to suspend all the

control, all the mental gymnastics, and remember that we are tethered to an Instructor Who is smarter and wiser and more experienced than us and, this is key, has the controls to the parachute. He is our cloud cover at the top and our safety net at the bottom. If indeed this is what we remember, we can enjoy the ride, the glide, beautifully, to the bottom.

Rosh Hashanah can be a time to wonder:

- *How can I build my trust in God, the Ultimate Instructor, the Source of all Guidance?*
- *Which of my burdens would I like to roll over onto God's "shoulders" this year, and stop worrying about?*
- *How can I be of service? How can I emulate God and be a support to those in my family and community who are in need of my help?*

WHAT IS *EMUNAH* ?

By Dr. Ronit Ziv-Kreger¹

Emunah is not passive belief but an active life of faithfulness dedicated to partnering with God in the world. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, who lived in Germany in the nineteenth century, explains it as follows in his commentary on Genesis:

“*Emunah* is the essence of Judaism; but to define *emunah* as “belief” is to empty the term of its true content. Belief is an act of the mind, sometimes only an opinion. Every believer thinks that his beliefs are true, based on the reasoning and assurances of someone else. . . . *emunah* in [God] is not merely theoretical faith: ‘the subordination of one’s own mind to the mind of another.’ Rather, *emunah* in God means: to rely upon God, in theory and in practice; to take strength in Him.”

How can we understand the distinction that Rabbi Hirsch is making between “belief” and *emunah*? Let’s consider Ruchi’s story above. Believing in the guide might involve intellectual acceptance that he is trained to keep her safe, that belief alone may not have resulted in having a joyful, trusting experience. Ruchi put her trust in the guide, with a steadfast focus to feel the presence of the guide and rely upon him.

- What are your thoughts about the distinction that Rabbi Hirsch is making between “belief” and *emunah*? What examples from your life might help to clarify this distinction?

¹ Adapted from Ronit Ziv-Kreger (c) 2014

² Habakkuk 2:4

“A righteous person lives by his/her *Emunah*.”

צִדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יֵחִי²

Emunah is a spiritual practice, a redirection of our preoccupation with external reality toward an inward awareness.

The *Kabbalah* recommends meditating in front of a candle where one can notice how the outer light that illuminates the room is an outer glow of an inner light. One can see that the outer glow and the inner light are inextricably connected.

Faithfulness, *emunah*, expresses a steadfast commitment to include in our life an awareness of the inner life. By being awake to our inner life we awaken to God in the world around us, to God-consciousness.

The word *emunah* has the same Hebrew root as the words for artist, coach, practice, nursemaid and loyalty.

- What connections do you see among these words? How might these words be related to *emunah*?

The root of *emunah* that connotes steadfastness reveals that creating a spiritual life requires practice, accountability and discipline.

- *What practice or discipline may deepen your spiritual life?*

Journaling as a Discipline of a Spiritual Life.

One of the disciplines of a spiritual life is to keep a journal of personal reflections related to your practice of gratitude, prayer, your observations of beauty and brokenness, and Torah ideas that resonate with or challenge you. Journaling can be part of a process of asking deeper questions. Jewish tradition values questions. The spiritual significance of questions does not depend on the availability of answers but on the questions' capacity to open us to new horizons. The great questions of life often do not lead to answers but only to deeper questions.

Soulful Conversation.

Jewish tradition values the concept of *sichat chaverim*, soulful conversation, where friends explore their lives' deepest questions together. Seek out and cultivate relationships where this is the focus of your connection. Ponder the riddles of your spiritual life together, share entries from your journal with each other, learn spiritual teachings together. If you don't currently have a soul friend or group of friends on this level, pray for it, envision it and call in that relationship to your life.

Talking with God.

Recall your visit to the Kotel during the Momentum trip. Prayer can help us stand in the presence of God with our full selves, with our fears, our guilt and shame, our hopes and dreams, our greed and anger, our success and our failing, our family, friends and foes. This discipline of talking with God, called *hitbodedut*, can be a discipline for which you set boundaries of time and place – a few minutes a day in a chosen place - for solitude with

God, speaking words from your heart aloud, even if only loud enough for your own ears to hear.

Studying Torah.

Reading and learning texts especially in ways that affect prayer and action, can engage the mind with spiritual insights that descend into the heart and help transform our behavior and life.

Family and Community Life.

One of the words in Hebrew for community is *edah*. This word has a second meaning as well. It's also the Hebrew for 'witness.' Part of what makes for community is allowing others to witness our doubts and hopes, failures and success, loneliness and wounds. This witnessing gives a context for our common struggles and quest for meaning. Life in family and in community is inherently challenging and provides real spiritual trials. The "Repentance Toolbox" in the Year of Growth session on *Shalom Bayit* describes a spiritual practice as making regular times and rituals for rejoicing and celebrating together – being witnesses to the fact that we are each inherently beloved.

Ritual Practices.

'Spiritual' is in some ways a compound word, comprised of the words 'spirit' and 'ritual.' Without the 'ritual', one is just 'spir'.³ The goal of Jewish practice is to bring heaven down to earth, to attach the physical world to the heavens. Some practices that do this include making blessings on food, going to the *mikveh* to sanctify physical intimacy, and resting on Shabbat to sanctify time. These rituals are specifically crafted in order to nurture awe and help us experience our lives more deeply.

SPOTLIGHT ON ISRAEL



May 2017 marked the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War, a communal soul-awakening moment for the Jewish people. Against all odds, our nation trusted that God was with us, guiding us to courageous action, with the belief that righteousness and justice would win out. It was a heady time for world Jewry as Elie Wiesel's 1967 column in the "Forward" (or "Forverts" as it was titled at the time) so deftly describes.

"Future generations will probably never believe it. Teachers will have a hard time convincing their students that what sounds legendary actually occurred. The children will, naturally, swallow each word, but later on, as adults, they'll nod their heads and smile, remarking that these were fantasies of history.

They won't believe that this small state, surrounded by hatred, fire and murder, had so quickly managed a miracle. It will be hard to describe how, amid a sea of hatred, a tiny army drove off and humiliated several well-equipped military hordes of who knows how many Arab countries. How does acclaimed scholar and Talmudic genius Shaul Lieberman put it? In another 2,000 years, people will consider these events the way we think of descriptions of the Maccabees and their victories...

You'll recall the radio broadcasts at the beginning of the week that sounded practically Job-like. Every hour, another Arab government declared war against Israel...We bit our lips, cracked our knuckles and could find no comfortable spot for ourselves. Quietly, we asked if the test was too hard this time. Was too much being demanded from the Jewish people and from their land? How could we expect to be redeemed, knowing that the enemy numbered tens of millions, even hundreds of millions of people, against a mere 2 million Jews in Israel?

And then, between Passover and Shavuot, the Hanukkah miracle occurred. It didn't take long before the supposedly mighty enemy was rendered speechless and lost its nerve.... And yet the blood that was shed by our young lions, the sacrifices endured, everything will be inscribed. Each widow's tear, every death rattle of the fallen soldiers – they won't pass unnoticed by our descendants.

For Jews around the world, these last events are a deep source of pride. Every Jew witnessed and survived this trial together. Rarely, as a people, do we feel such a deep connection to each other, of loyalty to the purest principles driven by our shared history.

Do you remember how thousands of Jewish youth besieged the Israeli Consulates, pleading to be sent as volunteers to Israel? Do you recall the mass demonstrations in the streets? And the countless Jews, including the poorest of the poor, donating their

meager savings to the pushkes [charity boxes] of the United Jewish Appeal?

This new Jewish awakening is part of that miracle, a part of the Jewish victory.”

Excerpted by Jennifer Fechter from a column by the former Forverts (Forward) staff writer, Elie Wiesel, first published on Monday, June 12, 1967 and republished on May 1, 2017 on forward.com. Translated from Yiddish by Chana Pollack. To read the full article published in

2017, visit <https://bit.ly/2GWIGHN> 

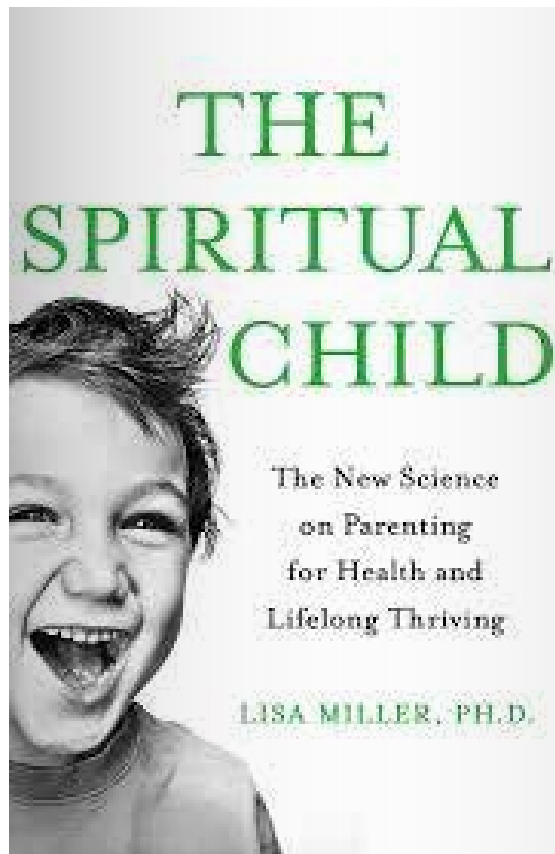
To learn more about the Six-Day War, view this link to view Jerusalem U's Six-Day War Project videos.

<https://tinyurl.com/y7w7dyrg>

You can also view Voices of Jerusalem, a video made by Jerusalem's Mayor Nir Barkat in honor of the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. <https://bit.ly/2IPMF8I>

- *The Kotel was reopened for Jews after the Six-Day War. Since, many Jews have had special experiences at the Kotel. Some have a connection from a distance too. What memories or connections do you or people you know have with the Kotel?*
- *How can you keep the beauty of those moments alive and bring them to your life back home?*

LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER SPOTLIGHT ON THE SPIRITUAL CHILD



Dr. Lisa Miller is Director of Clinical Psychology at Columbia University, Teachers College and a leading scientist in the now blooming field of spirituality, psychology and thriving. Her lab has published scores of research articles on spiritual development of children, adolescents, and families. The following is excerpted from her book: *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Life-long Thriving*.

'That children are so spiritual' is not merely anecdote or opinion. It is an established scientific fact! There are hundreds of rigorous, elegant peer-reviewed scientific articles that show spirituality as the root of wellness in the first two decades of life.

Spirituality is an untapped resource in our understanding of human development, resilience, health and healing. The research shows that children who have a positive, active relationship to spirituality are:

- 40% less likely to use and abuse substances.
- 60% less likely to be depressed as teenagers.
- 80% less likely to have dangerous or unprotected sex.
- More likely to have positive markers for thriving and high levels of academic success.

Awareness of spiritual development creates opportunity to prepare teens for the important inner work required for individuation, identity development, emotional resilience, character, meaningful work, and healthy relationships. Spirituality is the central organizing principle of

inner life in the second decade, boosting teens into an adulthood of meaning and purpose, thriving and awareness.

Spiritual development through the early years prepares the adolescent to grapple more successfully with the predictably difficult and potentially disorienting existential questions that make adolescence so deeply challenging for teens (and their parents).

Parents and children share a parallel developmental arc in which a child's need and yearning for spiritual exploration coincides with a similar "quest" phase in adult life. For parent and child, meaning and connection often lead to spiritual self-discovery. This mutual impetus means that the adult's quest phase and the child's can be mutually awakening and supportive. Our children can be our impetus for spiritual discovery, our muses or guides, and at times the source of illumination.

Research shows that a parent's decision about how to approach their child's spiritual life is a high-stakes proposition with lifelong implications. Studies on spiritual development in adolescents who have spiritually minded parents have shown that parental contribution can make or break the development of adolescent spirituality and can influence the child's lifelong physical health and mental health.

You don't have to understand spiritual development completely in order to support it in your child: you can simply welcome the questions and the conversations.

The important question for a parent to consider is: Might I offer my child something relevant and beneficial, even if it is not something familiar to me? We enroll our children in music lessons even if we do not play an instrument. We eagerly offer our child a better academic education than we may have received ourselves. For some parents, building spirituality in your child may be the same proposition.

Your own inner compass as a parent is the ultimate checkpoint for how to spiritually parent. For your own exploration and consideration, here are [six] right things, to be added to your store of opportunity, knowledge, and creativity, so that you are poised with more material in the moment¹.

1. Share: Transparency and Voice of Spiritual Experience

– Let your child see and hear how you use spiritual experience as the path through which you resolve daily problems, hold relationships, and understand life events and circumstances. "It made me sad when Sharon behaved the way she did, but I sat and reflected and realized I could forgive her in my heart and let it go." "I was so angry about what he said that I took a moment and went for a walk to calm down and reconnect to all that is good in the world."

¹ Consider reading the book to learn more about these ideas.

"Sometimes I pray just to thank God for all the blessings in my life, and sometimes I pray because I could use some help. I personally don't think of God as a fixer, but I do pray for the courage and wisdom to find the answers."

2. **Connect: Meet them Where They Are** – Spirituality is a way of being in the world that informs every moment. So, meeting kids where they are means you hear about mean gossipy girls at school and have a spiritual perspective on it. Meeting them where they are means hearing about the real disappointment of being cut from the team and have a spiritual perspective on it. The things that are so real and feel so big to them are not separate from spirituality.

A teens passion – whether it's running, writing, basketball or friendships – is a wonderful place to meet them, and to explore the spiritual dimension of their *experience*. *Is it wrong to want to win? What if things I write make people mad? I didn't make the cut - it's not fair!*

Meeting your child where he is also means a willingness to tolerate doubt and questioning about spirituality...It's being present with love and interest to hear spiritual questions or hear about experiences that are unfamiliar or unsettling. When you just don't know the answer, appreciate the moment. [Your] child might ask:

"Does God love people even when they're harming others?"

"Why is that man sleeping on the street?"

We need only encourage the conversation... and be willing to listen with the same openness and curiosity that accompanies the question.

"When I was a child I wondered that too. I am so happy you are sharing these thoughts with me."

3. **Teach: Build a Spiritual Practice Together** – Practice brings our attention to spirituality in a consistent way. When parents and children practice together, it brings this consistent spirituality even more strongly into the field of love. Family practice can be praying or meditating or sharing a ritual or ceremony together.
4. **Nurture: Embrace Relationships with Animals and All of Nature** – Bring the living world to your child by delighting in the relationships of nature. Actively engage in the sanctification of nature by openly celebrating it and its contribution to your family and the world we live in. Listening to trees, thinking that the wind has something to show you... Children can learn that all living things are our teachers.
5. **Care and Repair: Tend the Field of Love** – Family needs to be explicitly established and supported as a sacred part of life, a blessing to every person. Express these ideas aloud to your children: *I am so fortunate and blessed to be your mama! Our family is a source of light to me everyday. Our love is the most important thing. How can we bring our love to the world?* In terms of spiritual development, acknowledging and embracing family as sacred gives your child a spiritual place to live in, every day. Researcher Marshall Duke and colleagues at Emory University have shown that children are more likely to thrive when they have a grasp of being an important part of a lineage,

that they term the “intergenerational self.” This sense of belonging to a chain of ancestors is often transmitted through stories. Cultivate your child as a link in the family chain. For example, my youngest child, Lila, stands before her school class each year on Hanukkah. She teaches about this Jewish holiday to the other children, most of whom are of other faiths, and then lights a menorah. She explains that her “great-great grandmother carried the menorah from Russia, then gave it to her great-grandmother in Iowa, who gave it to Grandma Margo, who gave it to my mom, who gave it to me.” Without fail, children and teachers alike are absorbed and moved by the universal power of spirituality passing through the generations.

6. **Strive: The Inspired Life** – The inspired life honors our deep inner compass. It’s not just making do with the customary rules of the school or the workplace; it’s imagining how life could really be instead. In this sense, every moment of daily life is a spiritual opportunity – for both you and your child – to encourage, uplift, or turn anger into a moment of humor and connection. Encourage your children to feel part of “something larger” and to tune into their inner life for reflection and guidance: to meet their everyday actions with their highest self – to decide what kind of soul on earth they want to be. Help them to reach out to someone at school who is having a hard time, to look past unfashionable clothes or bad attitude, and look into another’s eyes and ask, “How are you doing?” While you’re at it, do the same for that crabby colleague at your office. Ask what he is thinking or curious about; ask how he is.





LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER

Practices to Develop Your God Consciousness

By Adrienne Gold Davis

Emunah is sometimes translated as faith, or faithfulness, but I like to think of it as God consciousness or the knowledge that a Higher Power, a Force Greater than Myself, or even a Divine Energy, is running the world.

As opposed to blind faith, *emunah* is a deeper kind of knowledge that is in fact 'knowable' and developed through practice, attentiveness and study. We are taught to 'know' God, rather than 'believe in or have faith in Him.' But many of us struggle with the very concept or even existence of God. Our perceptions have been perverted by the non-Jewish idea of God as an old man in the sky, with a long beard and his finger on the 'smite' button, or as a man with a body and a finger that reaches out to touch the ceilings of the Sistine Chapel through Michelangelo's artistic hands. So how do we develop *emunah*, or God consciousness, if we are not sure what it is we are believing?

In my experience, the first step in developing God consciousness is understanding that *I am not God!* It requires giving up the delusion of control that keeps us tethered to our own bodies, stunts our potential to exceed our grasp, and keeps us small. It begins with diminishing the ego, acknowledging a power 'greater than yourself' and tapping into that power. Then you will feel deep gratitude in knowing that you are not separate from but

actually like a ray of the sun, part of the overwhelming power that runs the universe. When we develop God consciousness we will find that it 'hides in plain sight', peeks behind the coarse curtain of the physical world, and sends us winks and kisses all day long.

So how can you work on your God consciousness, your *emunah*? Start with these basic exercises:

1. Recognize that God consciousness, *emunah*, is built into your very essence. It is part of your very character - a *middah* (a measure that is in all of us at greater or lesser degrees). One can build it!
2. Think of things that you don't fully understand but do anyway. For example, I don't understand aerodynamics but I fly in the plane because I trust that the pilot does! I take medication even though I don't understand pharmacology because I trust the doctor and the pharmacist. This type of trust is in small measure a practice of *emunah*.
3. Look for your 'winks', times in your life when you receive signals that a higher power is looking out for you. I like to call these moments "odd or GOD?" Some call it HP (Higher Power) moments. Friday night at the Shabbat table is an excellent time for you and your family to relate the HP Moments of your week. A family that works on *emunah* together grows together!
4. Study *The Seven Wonders of Jewish History*.¹ You will be awed and amazed at the words of Mark Twain, an agnostic and self-acknowledged skeptic, who penned this in 1899 in Harper's Magazine:

"The Egyptian, Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed

away. The Greek and Roman followed, made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up, and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal, but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

5. Read *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust* by Yaffa Eliach! In these simple but poignant tales of personal experiences through the Holocaust you will find inspiration and perspective about how *emunah* strengthened resolve and underscored miracles. I read this book whenever I feel a need to deepen my connection to God consciousness.
6. Read *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. Frankl was a prominent psychiatrist who developed the system of logotherapy (meaning therapy) while imprisoned in Auschwitz. His basic premise was this: those prisoners who approached life with a sense that every moment was filled with potential for greatness and meaning were able to sustain much more than the other prisoners. This book is a life changing vision into the power of the mind and the attribute of *Emunah* through the eyes of a doctor who treated the 'experience' as a singular sociological experiment. My favorite quotes?
 - When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.
 - Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
7. Listen to two short podcasts about prayer <https://bit.ly/2HtKQ1m>

¹ <https://bit.ly/2HtkxZ7>

TRY IT OUT

Practical Tips and Resources for Families to Cultivate *Emunah*, Faithfulness and Trust, in Your Families

For Yourself or with a Partner

Dedicating ourselves to faithfulness, *emunah*, and soul-awakening moments can be a challenge in our everyday, busy lives. Get inspired to carve out time for such moments by listening to Adrienne Gold Davis' podcasts Prayer I and Prayer II. Adrienne will have you feeling like you're in the room with her as she tells stories from her own life that inspire her to inspire others. Simply click on this link to access her podcasts and get a sneak peek from the suggestions below.

<https://bit.ly/2HtKQ1m>

- Remember what it was like when you were floating in the Dead Sea? How at first, you couldn't quite trust the buoyancy of the water, but then you realized how it was actually holding you up. And then that moment came when you bravely lifted up your feet and allowed yourself to float. The Dead Sea offers an archetypal experience of floating and being supported. One of the first steps to learning how to swim is mastering the art of floating...to just be. In order to float, one has to totally let go and release. There is an essential element of trust involved.

Try this...Write down something that occupies your mind, a worry or an anxiety you struggle with. Now, write down what you've done already to try to effect change. Then, compose a little prayer asking for divine assistance and float yourself to

sleep with the knowledge that you are letting go of the issue for the night.

Focus on one issue only; stick with that for a few days, maybe a week. Then move onto another one. Perhaps the perfect thing to pray about is asking for guidance about when it's time to float, when it's time to swim, and when it's time to just tread water. But know you can always lift your feet. The buoyancy is there.

- Don't worry if you don't know how to pray formally. Just open up your consciousness and give this a try...Use the traditional Jewish formula for Prayer. It goes like this:
 - Praise, a kind of "wow!" thing.
 - Then you request
 - And then
 - Praise again.
 - Like this...
 - Praise: "Ok, God, I know you run the world. You can do anything. You created me, you sustain me. You're that big!
 - Request: So, please could you help me control my temper with my children?! Help me measure my words and not freak out before responding?!"

- Praise: “Because, God, you’re the one who runs the world, not me. I’m only responsible for my efforts, and I know You can help me be successful.”

Remember something.... Trying something new like this can take time to get used to. Rather than assessing how successful it is after just one night, consider choosing to say a bedtime prayer of this nature for a few weeks and see what effect it has on you. Wonderment and *Emunah* can take time to cultivate but the joy, depth and relief on the other side is worth the persistence.

- Check out the podcasts, videos, and articles on MomentumUnlimited.org
- Select a phrase that inspires you, write it on a card and place it where you’ll see it. Repeat the phrase to yourself a few times each morning with enthusiasm. Phrases you could consider:
 - I open my eyes to wonder.
 - I soul-connect.
 - I see wonder as Godliness.
 - I live by my emunah.
 - I develop my God-consciousness.

Aleph Beta Academy is an online library of videos offering in-depth Jewish learning based in text. To learn more about Rosh Hashanah, check out the video “FAITHFULNESS AND TRUST How To Prepare for Rosh Hashanah” (3 minutes): <https://bit.ly/2NwgIHW>

For Families with Children of All Ages

- Invite your child to draw a picture of his/her “field of love,” that includes people, animals, places or anything that offers a loving presence to your child. Let the drawing be a conversation starter. Keep the drawing where you can return to talk about it both at times that are nurturing to your child and at times that are challenging¹.
- When hikers on the long Appalachian Trail grow tired or hungry, they open their eyes to look for “trail angels.” A trail angel offers water, a home-cooked dinner, and a bed for the night. Our daily world is filled with people who show up at just the right time, bringing with them just what we may need.

Share your own experiences of “trail angels” with your child. (For example, that time you ran into someone in the grocery store who reminded you of important information about your

⁵ This idea and several other ideas in this Try it Out section are adapted from Dr. Lisa Miller’s book *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*.

child's new school.) Over dinner, ask your child to reflect on times when someone gave them just the help they needed. Then ask them if they have ever served as a "trail angel" for someone else. Awareness of these experiences shows your child that they abide in and contribute to a loving universe.

- Watch the sunrise with family and friends to begin your day with awe. Even if you're not a morning person, beginning anew with the warmth and beauty of the sun makes us more conscious of the soul-awakening beauty we have access to each day. Near the beach?

Even better, the majesty of the waves beneath the sunrise adds to the experience. On the West coast? Seek this moment of transcendence as the day comes to a close and the sun sets.

- Set aside time for family stargazing activities to reconnect with the vast, beautiful universe. Local stargazing clubs can be found in many communities and often have very knowledgeable night-sky hobbyists on hand to help novices get the most out of their experience.

Explore the family stargazing web site *Lie Back and Look Up* for age appropriate tips on helping children get the most out of their night sky experience. With children's natural inclination

to find wonder in the world, the site reminds us adults that "the most important thing that you can do for your child is to help them become children who look up and wonder."

<https://bit.ly/2JHSYMn>

- Take regular walks in nature to raise your consciousness of the beauty of our natural world, a world we are part of as participants not simply observers.
- Watch the TED talk *Cloudy with a Chance of Joy* by Gavin Pretor-Pinney, founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society. Pretor-Pinney reminds us that we don't have to travel far and wide to experience soul-awakening moments. We can simply look up and notice the awe-inspiring views clouds offer in what we often overlook as the mundane everyday backdrop of our lives.
<https://bit.ly/11jQ0G6>
- People of all ages can benefit from the experience of writing about personal transcendent moments. Giving word to experiences that filled you with wonder and inspiration can be a powerful and life-enriching endeavor. Recall the experience in detail, revitalizing the feelings you had at the time. With younger children, encourage them to share their stories of awe, helping them to write and illustrate them in an age appropriate manner.

For Families with Young Children

- Read the PJ Library Book *The Night World*, written and Illustrated by Mordichai Gerstein. In this story, a young boy explores the night world of his backyard. The boy watches in amazement as the shadows of nighttime give way to the glorious colors of dawn. After reading the book together talk with your family using these questions as a springboard for discussion.
 - A miracle or wonder is when something very special or unusual happens. The boy in the book believes the sunrise is a miracle. What do you think made the morning so special for him?
 - Where would you go to look for miracles and wonders?
 - What do you find miraculous in your world?
 - The Hebrew word for miracle, *ness*, also means “sign.” For which miracles are you most grateful? What might they be a sign of?
 - How might you increase your own awareness of everyday wonders?

This and other activities related to *The Night World* can be found on pjlibrary.com at <https://bit.ly/2Hx1Kik>.

- Go on an Awe Treasure Hunt! Notice things like rainbows, sunrays, and grass growing out of a crack in the middle of a

paved parking lot. Even a digital clock is awesome when it reads 11:11 or 12:12!

For Families with Older Children

- Encourage your teen to draw his/her road of life, including the difficult times: times of disappointment or loss. Draw the difficult period and next to it draw a door that shut as a result. Next to that door, draw a second door. This is the door that can open only because the first one shut. Encourage them to reflect on the outcomes of that precious second door. How did they change as a person? Who or what came into their life? What else became possible?
- Most teens can easily identify people in the popular media whom they admire. Ask your teen who their *spiritual activist hero* is. Encourage them to write or draw about them to deepen their reflection on the person's story and history. Who did they help? Were they well understood? Did other people follow or support them? Now help your teen identify someone in their own life who is a truly spiritual person. How do they handle life's challenges? Whom do they help?
- At the dinner table, take time to make sure each member of the family feels seen and valued. Each person at the table takes a turn being valued as everyone else shares: “I value you because...” Knowing that we are loved and valued ignites the transcendent sacred presence both in ourselves and in our relationships.

 Use this chart to plan and track you progress regarding *emunah*, faithfulness and trust

Acknowledgment (*Vidui*)

What role does the value of *emunah*, faithfulness and trust play in your life? What examples of soul-awakening experiences from your life come to mind? How have they impacted your decisions and actions?

Vision (*Kavanah*)

Imagine your vision of your best self and the role of the value of *emunah*. How does it look? What gets in your way and prevents you from living as your best self? How can you reorient toward your vision?

Goals (*Kabbalah*)

What is one or more small practice or discipline that you can do in your daily life that is realistic, you could easily schedule, and will support you in deepening your spiritual life?

Accountability

Who can help hold you accountable on your goals? How? When?
How can you track your own progress?

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

In this session, we explore the value of Faithfulness/Trust, *Emunah*.

The Guiding Questions in this unit are:

- *Where have I experienced faithfulness and trust in my life?*
- *How is faithfulness different from simply believing?*
- *What are some deliberate practices that I can begin to take on to develop my faithfulness?*
- *How am I making space in my life for God-consciousness?*
- *How can I create a feeling of spirituality and trust in my home?*

Meaning-ful Vocabulary

Faithfulness and trust in God	<i>emunah</i>	אמונה
The process of personally talking with God	<i>hitbodedut</i>	התבודדות
A community or group that bears witness	<i>edah</i>	עדה

Facilitating the Session

1. Seek Participant Input

In advance, invite a few sisters to take a small role in leading the session such as:

- Planning an activity to accompany the study session (see **Extras! Program Ideas.**)
- Hosting the event
- Reflecting on their own soul-awakening moments in preparation for sharing them with the group.
- Asking if one or more of the women would like to share a way she brought home the learning from your last gathering.
- Invite a woman to read in advance and share Ruchi's *Emunah* at 10,000 Feet story, or the Spotlight on Israel article from Elie Wiesel.

******Involving participants helps them take ownership over their learning and prepares them to take the lead in their family and community!

2. Choose Your Session Activities (in advance)

You know what will best engage your participants and what their personal and parenting goals are for growth and development,

so tailor the session to their interests and needs. **Soul Sparks** activities carry a particular power, and we encourage you to include them where possible.

3. Prep Your Space

Before the session begins, prepare the room, for example, by helping the hostess put out a spread of Rosh Hashanah drinks and snacks such as apples, honey, dates and/or other foods you think your participants will enjoy. Arrange the space or seating to support connection. If using the first Soul Sparks activity, be sure to print the images and place them in a central location.

4. Welcome & Warm- Up

Make a ritual of transitioning your participants from their hectic, everyday lives to your safe space of learning and growth. Consider, for example, having women pair-up and listen to each other, for 2 minutes each, as they share what's new for them and what's on their mind today. Invite a few women to share how they brought home the learning from the previous session.

Reminder! Sisterhood Safe Space

Remind everyone that you are in your Sisterhood Safe Space of confidentiality and compassionate listening, free of judgment and unsolicited advice.

5. Intro & Inspiration

Introduce the Hebrew word for faithfulness and trust, *emunah*. Ask the women to reflect privately on their Momentum trip, thinking about times when they may have experienced an “HP” moment of higher-power (or *hashgacha pratit*); a sense of wonder or transcendence, even if just briefly. From this lead into the Moments of Soul Awakening activity with images.

6. Soul Sparks Activities



There are several different activities in the session that will encourage learning and growth; we suggest choosing one or two for your session. Below are some of our favorites:

Moments of Soul Awakening

Spread cards created from the photos across a table (or have consider the photos in the book). Give participants time to look through the images and to choose one that represents or reminds them of a soul-awakening moment of their own. Invite the women to share their photos and the moments they rekindle. Consider how we can encourage our families and ourselves to be open to seeing and experiencing such moments in our day to day lives.

What is Emunah?

In pairs, have your participants read and discuss Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's explanation and commentary on Genesis. Also have them read Ruchi's story about *Emunah* at 10,000 Feet. Ask the pairs to then discuss together Rabbi Hirsch's distinction between belief and *emunah*, in the context of Ruchi's story and through the lens of their own lives and experiences to help clarify his distinction. Invite women to consider the practices for building *emunah*, and whether there is one that might resonate with them.

7. Reflection & Closing

Recall the main ideas explored in the session and create an opportunity for reflection.

Reflection Suggestion: Ask participants to reflect on the following - possibly by writing or drawing before sharing: "What is one takeaway you'll be going home with after our session today?" or "I would like to explore *emunah* with my family by..."

Direct the women's attention to the **"Try It Out: Practical Tips and Resources for Families."** These suggestions will help them bring the learning they have done today home to their families in interesting and fun ways. Encourage them to choose at least one

thing they will do with their families and come back next time and report on how it went. Give a brief overview of the rest of the unit.

Provide an opportunity for participants to arrange a time to connect with another sister to continue exploring, reflecting, and offering each other support and accountability. This **"Learn with Your Sister"** activity serves as an entry points for conversations that may never otherwise happen. (See pages XXXXXX) Let all the women know when you'll be meeting again and what theme will be explored.

Extra! Program Ideas:

To enhance your session and to help each and every participant know the goals that others in the group are working on and aspiring toward, you may want to consider the following:

- Consider hosting a talk by a mindfulness expert on how to notice and attend to our inner selves and connect to the world around us with meaningful presence.
- Bring in a yoga instructor to start off the session with practices that help cultivate deeper awareness of our mind-body-soul connection.
- Invite an inspirational speaker to share a personal story of *emunah* and offer a Q&A session.



- Consider making prayer-tents¹ as physical reminders to help form a new habit of soul-awakening. The “prayer tents” could be for the women themselves or for their children, to serve as bedside reminders. They can remind us to begin and end the day with gratitude, prayerfulness, and connection. Some may want to have the worlds of the bedtime *Shema* or morning *Modeh Ani* prayers in their tents, others may want to have a reminder to reflect on soulful HP² moments.

Materials:

- 1, 6” x 2” piece of heavy weight paper/cardstock.
- 1, ½” x 2” piece of heavy weight paper/cardstock
- 1, 2” x 3” piece of heavy weight paper/cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue
- 1” piece of ribbon or string
- Optional – have a few mini star-stickers or glitter to sprinkle on the nighttime side representing stars.

Note: Feel free to use any color paper you like; visual representations of day and night through different color sides may be useful. You can use watercolor paper and begin your

gathering with wetting it, painting, and setting it to dry. Toward the end cutting the paper to create the tents.

Instructions:

- Fold the 6” x 2” piece of paper in half, then put the smaller ½” x 2” piece on the bottom of the larger one, gluing it all together to create a “tent.” Alternately, fold a larger piece of paper into three equal parts to create a triangle-shaped tent (see photo)
- Write the *Shema* on one side of the 2” x 3” card, and the *Modeh Ani* on the other, or write other thoughts for morning and evening soulful practice.
- Create a loop out of your ribbon or string and attach this loop to the end the card.
- Place card inside cardboard tent and place the tent near your bedside/your child’s bedside.

¹ Jacqueline Serebrani-Kesner is an interdisciplinary and expressive arts educator. More about Creative Arts Enrichment can be found at www.creativeartsenrichment.org. Jacquie can be reached at jserebrani@gmail.com

² HP moments stands for moments of wonder and transcendent connection, moments that seem to be a gift from a Higher Power or to reflect individual providence - *Hashgacha Pratit*



The sales of Year of Growth are used entirely to cover costs of creating, producing, distributing, and supporting the successful use of this educational resource.

Momentum Unlimited
6101 Executive Blvd, Suite 240, Rockville, MD 20852
240-747-7080 | info@MomentumUnlimited.org



MomentumUnlimited.org



Ministry of Diaspora Affairs
Creating a common Jewish future