

THE LIGHT OF *EMUNA*

This week's translation is dedicated in honor of the engagement of our dear cousin Mindy to Shlomo Shurin. **מזל טוב!!!**

פרשת נשא

Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's
"Ohr Ha'Emuna"

**נְשֵׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן גַּם־הֵם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם
לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם: (ד, כב)**

"Raise up the heads of the sons of Gershon, them too, per their fathers' houses, per their families."

The "sons of Gershon" is a reference to merchants who are occupied with their wares - they are somewhat divorced (גרושים) from the service of Hashem. The goal is to not get completely caught up in the silliness of this world. At times that people are involved in commerce, they should raise their heads heavenwards and remember that they are children of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. That is what is meant by "raise up the heads of the sons of Gershon, them too, per their fathers' houses" - even when they are separated from the service of Hashem, they should raise their heads as per their fathers' houses and remember who they are and thereby be inspired and long for a return to holiness.

נְשֵׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן (ד, כב)

"Raise up the heads of the sons of Gershon"

A Jew has many reasons to raise his head upwards. He is the King's son, he is royalty, he has a purpose in Hashem's world. Hashem instructs us, "you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for me" (ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש). Hashem wants us to transform our physical bodies into holiness. That is how we become Hashem's partners in the ongoing existence of the world. If we do not sanctify ourselves, the world cannot continue, G-d forbid. We have a mission, we are not meant to merely wander around this world without any purpose or knowledge of what

Hashem expects of us.

The entire *yiddishkeit* is to dispel darkness. We are contained within physical bodies that we must transform into holiness. If it seems bitter, we must learn to convert bitterness into sweetness.

To merit the pleasantness from on high, we must overcome all of the curtailments - there are no shortcuts.

A person returns to Hashem through *teshuva* and is suddenly faced with difficulties and diminshment, things stop going well. These difficulties are the very way by which to receive the requisite understanding that Hashem is G-d, that nature is Hashem, that G-dliness is embedded in nature, that everything that happens to us is from Hashem and is for the best. Rebbe Nachman said that he came into this world for one purpose - to make one proclamation: "Hashem id G-d." All of the Torah, all of the books, all of the *tzaddikim* throughout all of the generations all came to this world to battle against forgetting. The world forgets that Hashem is G-d. We forget that everything that happens is all by amazing divine providence - that it is specifically what we need to overcome in order to reach our correction. It is all one great compassion from Hashem. This is the insight that encompasses all insight. It is wisdom of an entirely different kind. It is clearer and deeper than any other wisdom.

When a person gets caught in closed and dark thoughts, when the soul gets caught in situations in which it calls out for salvation - the person must lift up his head and take an alternate view of the circumstances. This alternate perspective is

provided to us by the *tzaddikim*.

From *tzadikim* we can learn an alternative outlook towards life. They illuminate everything with the light of clear and pure *emuna* - the *emuna* that Hashem is G-d, that strict justice is kindness, that there is nothing besides Hashem.

Suddenly, a person can recognize that his misfortune is not so awful. Rather, it is Hashem's compassion. Instantly, he can say thank you for what he only realized at this moment can be the correction required in his life and if he remains steadfast and continues to thank, he will feel it in his heart, in his soul. It will not remain superficial but will be internalized.

This mindset will bring us to lifting up our heads. It will provide us with the perspective towards all of existence through the clear illumination of *emuna*. With this attitude we will merit to slowly achieve the pleasantness from above. We will recognize that we are not missing anything, nothing irritates us. We will feel complete and calm. A quiet joy that lifts up our point of view and raises our heads above whatever is happening to us here and now. Additionally, it does not detach us from those around us. To the contrary, it connects us.

If a person wants to attain something from the higher realms, he must bring it down to the world of action. He must implement it in the way he speaks, the way he learns, how he talks to his children, how he talks to his wife, how he conducts business, how much he takes and how much *tzedaka* he gives - he must learn to implement this higher light into his daily life.

When a person understands that everything that happens to him, big or small, is all from Hashem he attains a tremendous amount of patience and does not lose his temper or become demanding because he understands that nothing is independent of Hashem and everything is from Him. He enjoys a pleasant and sweet life, absent fear of any living thing. He lives with a strong

sense of security, of serenity and tranquility. We must constantly strengthen ourselves with simple *emuna* that everything is conducted through amazing and wonderful divine providence - all of our matters, our successes and our salvations depend only on Hashem and on no human being.

If a person thinks that he accomplished through his own abilities, difficult tribulations are visited upon him and he struggles greatly with them and they embitter his life since he believes that they are dependant on him. When things do not go his way, he becomes completely broken. When a person strengthens his *emuna* and recognizes that without Hashem he is nothing and everything that happens is from Hashem, he can tolerate anything, both in the spiritual and physical realms, whether they affect him through his own hands or by the hands of others. So long as one is upset by occurrences in his life it is a sign that he is still distant from holy *emuna*, from the light that there is nothing besides Hashem.

When a person is not happy, it is a sign that his *emuna* is weak. One who has solid *emuna* is always happy because even in the most difficult situations, he has to whom to turn, to where to run.

For many years, Dovid Hamelech felt as if he was disqualified from being part of the Jewish people. So convinced was everyone that when Hashem told Shmuel Hanavi to anoint one of Yishai's sons, Yishai presented Dovid's seven older brothers, to which Shmuel responded, "Hashem did not choose any of these." Thus far Shmuel had not met the anointed one and inquired, "are there no more sons."

How could Yishai have not offered Dovid amongst the rest of his sons? There was an eighth son, why not include him? Yishai and his sons did not even consider that Dovid could have been the one.

Why was Dovid assigned the task of shepherding the flock? The Shach on Parshas Vayeishev says

that Dovid's brothers assigned him to the task of shepherding because they hoped that he would be killed by a lion. Instead, Dovid killed lions and bears.

Furthermore, Dovid was not allowed to eat with his family, he was made to sit at a table in the corner of the house. Dovid himself testifies (*Tehillim* 69, 9), "I was strange to my brothers and alien to the sons of my mother." This lasted for twenty-eight years. Dovid was considered to be disqualified as a Jew, distant and degraded by his brothers - yet he never complained or bore a grudge against them. Had he been pedantic to any degree, had he taken offense at all he would not have earned the monarchy. During those years he reached the highest and mightiest pinnacle in Torah by spending his days and nights in simplicity.

From where did Dovid draw such strength? How did he overcome such challenges? Dovid Hamelech found Hashem even in the most distant and darkest places. Dovid Hamelech would wake at midnight to thank Hashem. Specifically then, at midnight, when the darkness and the concealment is most powerful, Dovid stood before Hashem with song and praise, in wondrous attachment to Hashem. Even in the darkest moments Hashem is found and that gave Dovid the amazing strength to serve Hashem with such self sacrifice. Each and every one of us came down to this world to reveal Hashem in the world. Therefore, we must overcome challenges, concealments, downfalls so that there too Hashem's presence is revealed.

A Jew has many reasons to raise his head upwards, to his Father in Heaven. He is not alone, never alone. The Jewish people are the beloved children of Hashem, we are Hashem's eldest son, His most precious son. We are his forever. An everlasting bond that no one can harm.

Hashem is with us all of the time. Hashem never forgets the self-sacrifice we made when we left Egypt. Hashem's name means: "I will be as I will be" - I will be with you in this tribulation as I was

with you in all of the others. It is true that there will be suffering, but Hashem promises to always be with us. Anyone who touches us touches the apple of Hashem's eye. Hashem and the Jewish people are one.

A Jew always has whom to turn to, to whom to raise their heads and say, "Father, please help me because I cannot go on." When we turn to Hashem in that way, we immediately feel Hashem's presence.

A Jew witnesses so many miracles if he just opens his eyes and observes a bit, if he just understands that nothing is owed to him, if several times a day he can lift his head and passionately express, "Father, you are so good to me."

A Jew has many reasons to raise his head upwards. Hashem, I want you. I want to feel Your presence. Hashem, I can no longer continue with masks and concealment. I want to feel my *tefillos*, experience them. I want to get excited by another Jew, to have a good eye, a good heart, to have happiness in my heart. I want to experience closeness to Hashem, to see Your miracles, to cling to You at every moment, that my soul reach Your place.

Why does this not happen? Why don't we feel Hashem? Because we do not act for the sake of Heaven. We try to hold back good for ourselves, we chase our own honor. We live twenty-four hours a day measuring ourselves against others. If we seek closeness to Hashem, we must act for Hashem's honor. We must continuously introspect and investigate why we do what we do.

"Hashem, help me do things not for my own glory, but for Yours." Every good action earns a reward but when it is done altruistically, for Hashem's sake, the reward is multiplied. Good is not measured not by its amount but by its intent. The *gemara* (*Menachos* 110) tells us that it does not matter whether one does a lot or a little, so long as his intent is for the sake of Heaven - all for the

sake Heaven, for Hashem, with love.

A Jew has many reasons to raise his head upwards. We must thank Hashem - Hashem You are so good to me - You are so good to me that I am an observant Jew, so good to me that I have learned to speak to You like I am doing right now. Hashem, I am not missing anything, I want for nothing, except for You.

יְשֹׁא ד' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם: (ו, כו)

“May Hashem raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace.

If we have peace, we have everything. Hashem has no greater blessing for His people than peace.

Where does peace begin? Inside of us. If a person has inner peace, if he is at peace with all of his actions, if he is at peace with his path, he radiates peace to those around him and peace results. When is a person at peace with his actions? When he constantly seeks to do the will of Hashem, for Hashem's honor, when he learns to live with Hashem, when he realizes that alone he cannot accomplish anything.

Peace is being complete and one can only be complete with Hashem. When a person has inner peace, he has peace at home. Peace in the home is the source of all abundance, spiritually and physically. All blessings depend on peace in the home. Hashem even allows His name to be erased for peace in the home.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov

To raise one's head upwards towards Hashem includes lifting up, elevating and strengthening another person. If a person is connected to Hashem, he loves Hashem's creations as well. He lives peacefully with everyone and finds the good in others and takes joy in their talents.

It is impossible to maintain a good eye if we do not look upon ourselves with a good eye - to see our own charm, to remember that we are a part of G-dliness. If we cannot see our own strength, that Hashem loves us, that we contain G-dly light, then we can never see the good in others. If we do not feel worthy, we will only see the evil in others, to soothe ourselves. If we feel valuable and lift ourselves up and see the good within us we can learn to see the good in others. (*Beor Pnei Melech Chaim*)

A good eye is also needed between parents and children. We must encourage our children, admire their successes, show them the good within them. We must honor our children and consider their feelings. Children need much love and encouragement. A child cannot handle too much criticism, no one can. We must set guidelines, but we must show more love. We push with the left hand but draw close with the right hand. Love must exceed discipline.

Peace above all else - between husband and wife, between parent and child, between neighbors, between friends. That is what Hashem wants from us, that there be peace among us.

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai Shlita and is not a complete or exact translation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material and is not even aware of its existence. Any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*.

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