

This week's translation is dedicated in honor of my wife, Devorah, who continuously teaches our children (and me) the true path of *emuna* in everyday life.

פרשת צו

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

"צו את אהרן ואת בניו לאמר זאת תורת העלה: (ו,ב)

Why is the *korban olah* called an *olah* (from the term for "rising")? It is so called because it is superior and greater than all other *korbanos*, i.e. it "rises" above the other *korbanos*. If a person sins, he brings a *korban chatas* or a *korban asham*. These are obligatory *korbanos*. By contrast, the *korban olah* is not brought to attain forgiveness, it is completely voluntary; therefore, it is precious and praiseworthy in Hashem's eyes.

"אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תקבה. (ו,ה)

The Jewish soul longs to be close to Hashem. In the heart of hearts of every Jew lies a point of enthusiasm for Hashem, a point that is impossible to extinguish. This flame rises on its own every time a person merits seeing the greatness of the kindness that Hashem does for him. A person must constantly improve and enhance his ability to recognize and see divine providence and Hashem's hand in reality and in every single event. He must merit seeing the endless miracles that Hashem performs for him in every moment and every matter. Our entire days are filled with Hashem's kindness, mercy and charity. It begins with the smallest things: you went to the bank and there was no line, you arrived at the supermarket on Friday afternoon a minute before closing, you were bothered by a lot of noise on the train and it suddenly ceased. "Hashem, you are so good to me, you are so merciful."

Even within the difficulties, there is kindness. All of the difficulties, the problems, the suffering, the humiliation, every occurrence is all tremendous kindness from Hashem. Hashem arranges everything on purpose, so that we will work, so that we will strive, so that through our own power we will arrive at the truth. Hashem wants our tears and our cries so that we will each attain our soul correction, so that we will investigate where things are not right and do *teshuva*.

Most importantly, this must be done with simplicity. When a simple person believes genuinely and with simplicity that in whatever situation he finds himself, at whatever level he is on, Hashem has great pleasure and satisfaction from his simple labor, he receives wonderful vitality and tremendous enthusiasm from the work that he does. Rebbe Nachman taught that even one who is highly sophisticated must set aside all of his wisdom and serve Hashem with simplicity.

The primary way to achieve this is through *tefilla*. When a person understands that everything is in Hashem's hands and only Hashem can give him anything and provide what he is missing; when a person understands that only through *tefilla* can he correct his character traits, that only through praying to Hashem can he successfully overcome his evil inclination - then he receives the strength, the joy, the resuscitation that he needs. If everything is dependant on *tefilla* alone, rather than persecute myself and blame myself for my failures and for my failure to change, I increase my *tefilla*. I don't surrender, I plead incessantly because my only power and my only free choice lie in my ability to *daven* to Hashem.

We must strengthen our simple faith in the capacity of *tefilla*. We know that when a righteous person decrees, Hashem fulfills. If a person's simple faith in the power of prayer and the power of a blessing

from a *tzaddik* erodes, how can he reinforce his children's *emuna*? When a child returns home from school crying because his friends refused to play with him, the father is unable to advise him with any warmth that he should *daven* to Hashem and Hashem will listen to him, because his *emuna* has itself been weakened.

There was a well-know *chasid* named R' Zelig Shtitzberg z"l who was told one Shabbos afternoon that his wife gave birth to a baby girl, but the doctors did not believe that the child would survive, G-d forbid. Before he told anyone the news, he anxiously rushed to the Gerrer Rebbe. As he began telling the Rebbe the news, before he had a chance to repeat the bad part, the Rebbe wished him a "*Mazal Tov.*" R' Zelig did not add another word, he didn't tell the Rebbe the bad news, he didn't even return to the hospital to check on his daughter's condition - he received the Rebbe's *bracha* as if he were any other new father. He found his friends and relatives and, with joy, told them of his daughter's birth and celebrated with them. He didn't mention the doctors' concerns. He believed fully and completely in the Rebbe's *Mazal Tov.*

Today, that child is a grandmother.

Everything must be faced with wholeheartedness and simplicity, without too many calculations. The Chofetz Chaim used to keep a diary in which he would record his spiritual accounts so that he could constantly assess his situation. When he would review his accounts, he would speak to himself with simple words, in everyday language. He would refer to himself as "Yisroel Meir," he would mercilessly expose whatever needed to be exposed, he would lecture himself with harsh rebukes, like stabs from a sword, "You know that you are a great sinner, why are you so surprised? *Doteshuva* quickly. How will you defend yourself on the day of judgment? There they know the truth and all of your explanations and excuses won't help you." And during this he would break out in bitter and trembling weeping.

Our connection to Hashem is everything. It's not about what we receive or what Hashem gives to us, the essence of connecting to Hashem is that we merit to connect to Him. The attachment to Hashem is the connection to our own vitality, our own souls, we receive our vigor from our connection to Hashem. Our entire ambition must be to guard this connection. That will fill our lives, that will cause us joy. Happiness from any other source can only exist if it is connected to our attachment to Hashem. Otherwise, it is only momentary elation, temporary pleasure, but it is destined to deteriorate, it cannot satisfy the soul for any length of time. A person experiences many things over the course of his life, sudden difficulties, stresses, problems. Initially a person is frightened, he does not know what will result. We must tell ourselves to remember Hashem. Connect to Hashem, attach yourself to Hashem, then you will find hope, joy, advice, a path. Our mission in life is to remember at all times that Hashem is with us. The moment we forget Hashem we feel ups and downs, tribulations. There can be no such thing as not be occupied with Hashem. There is no separate time for eating, sitting, talking. Even when we discuss base physical matters, it must be with holiness and while thinking of Hashem. We must always look upwards. We must always see all of the beauty. We must always extol, praise, pay tribute to the One Who created such an amazing world of spectacular beauty, one that is truly breathtaking.

”וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמִּנְחָה: (ו, י) ”

See how precious Hashem considers the poor man’s *mincha*. The entire *mincha* is a little flour, a little spice and a little oil. That’s it. And even of that, only a small percentage makes it to the *mizbeach* - only the small amount that is grabbed between the three fingers of the *kohen*, the rest is eaten by the *kohanim*. Yet, this miniscule amount is so precious to Hashem. Why? Because of the poor person’s desire. Even if I cannot accomplish something because I do not have the wherewithal, I can desire to make Hashem happy, I can wish to give Hashem some gratification from me. That desire is the test. If you truly desire, even if you have not yet reached the level that you want to reach, the very desire will bring you closer to the goal.

A certain Jew once told Rebbe Nachman, “I want to be a *kosher* Jew.” Rebbe Nachman answered, “Do you want to want? In other words, would you agree to continue wanting even if you do not receive that which you desire so badly?”

At times, a person is stirred, but what does he do with those feeling? What does he do with the voice of Hashem that calls to him to return in *teshuva*? He usually throws it out the window. Why? Because he doesn’t know what to do with it - to change after 40 or 50 years, after he is already married, after he has adult children, is too difficult. It takes great strength to do *teshuva*, even more so with a wife and children. So what do we do? We throw it out the window, and so that it doesn’t confuse us, we close the window after it, turn on the air-conditioning and think about other things, anything else, so long as these thoughts and desires don’t, G-d forbid, confuse us.

All Hashem wants from us is something small, something simple. When you hear this voice in your heart, when you are awakened and you think how great it would be if you could be somewhat different - hold on to it. All Hashem wants is for us to say to him, “Hashem, *Abba*, I received the fax.” Send him a reply and tell him, “ I want, *Abba*, You know that I want, but I cannot, I don’t have the strength to change on my own, help me. I will take some step forward, whatever I can, maybe I’ll put *ontzitzis*, maybe I’ll say *shema*, I will do what I can, but to be a *kosher* Jew, specifically to have some influence on my family, is too difficult, I don’t have the strength for that, I don’t have the strength to face my friends’ derision, but I beg You Hashem, I got the message, I received the wake-up call and I want.”

The entire secret is that it is possible to, at least, want and from that desire to create *tefilla*. Thank G-d we are not so distant. Each person, at his own level, when he receives a wake-up call to be *atzaddik*, should not discard it because he remembers the past, because he remembers that he once tried to be a *tzaddik* and it did not work out so well, he should never despair. When you learn some *mussar* or *chassidus* in a *sefer*, or you hear a lecture from a Rabbi, do you feel awakened? Even if you realize that you cannot become a *tzaddik* all at once, at least aspire to be a *tzaddik*. Crave it. Stand in the corner and speak to Hashem, “Creator of the World, I just heard a lecture regarding the holiness of this certain *tzaddik* or I just learned a little from a *sefer* on *chassidus*, Master of the World, You know that I also want that, I also yearn for that. I’m not ready to give up, I also want this. Help me *Abba*.” A person must tilt his heart to hear Hashem’s voice. A person must have strong wills and great longings towards Hashem because that is what is most precious to hashem. As the days and years of stronger and stronger desires and yearning accumulate, Hashem will help you become a great *tzaddik*.

The main thing is the desire. That is precious to Hashem - just as the *mincha* of the poor man is precious to Him.

"וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת זְבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים... אִם עַל תּוֹדָה יִקְרִיבֶנּוּ" (ז, יא-יב)

Our redemption, whether the personal redemption of each Jew (that he merit an escape from all of his suffering, both spiritual and physical) or the redemption of the Jewish people (may we merit the building of the third *Beis Hamikdash* and the arrival of *Moshiach*) can only be brought through thanksgiving - acknowledging good, positive outlook and joy in even a little bit of good. The primary cause of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* and all of our suffering is that we did not and do not serve Hashem with joy.

Begin to be happy. You have cause for joy. Ponder: as bad as I am, as far as I am, Hashem still gave me *Shabbos*, Hashem still wants me to keep *kosher*, Hashem still invites me to *shul*, to wear *tzitzis*, He gives me the opportunity to speak to Him. Appreciate this, be happy about this, ask Hashem to place happiness in your heart for all that He entitles you to. This is the key to redemption, to be glad for the good things.

We continuously receive wonderful gifts from Hashem - another moment of life, another moment of health. Rather than continuously thanking Hashem, we are weighed down by what we have not received.

First, see the cup as half full because even these things are not due us, it is all Hashem's kindness and compassion.

It has been told regarding R' Zalman Brizel zt"l that his life reflected this attitude of seeing the glass as half full in every event, in every occurrence, in every failure. When he was a young man, he would greet his friends excitedly in the morning with, "Brother, miracle of miracles, Hashem's kindness is on us, the night went by peacefully and we are still here." If the friend was surprised by his words he would follow with, "Imagine had we needed a doctor during the night. There are times when a person begins his night at home and end sit elsewhere, G-d forbid. Behold, we woke up in the very place we went to sleep. We are greeted by Hashem's shining world, heading to *shachris*. Brother- praised be Hashem. Actually, I had to stay awake all night because the baby was crying in the crib - so, should I complain that, thank G-d, we have a baby?!"

In his old age, when he required a wheelchair, he still had a fresh perspective. He would say, "See how kind Hashem is to us in old age. When a person walks in the street on his own two feet and has to guard his eyes - he has to leave at least one eye open and walk near walls, with downcast eyes and can still be led astray. How lucky am I that I can leave my house and reach *shul* having passed through the streets with both eyes closed, with two trusted hands holding my wheelchair and guiding the way."

Then he would say, "Who is depressed? Only one who believes he is deserving of something. But, one who bears in mind that everything that he has is a result of kindness and gifts from Hashem, will thank Hashem for each and every breath and will find it natural to appreciate Hashem even for every gift that he does not receive for the moment. He will always be happy."

Acknowledge and thank Hashem for every kindness that he does for us and even for what he withholds from us - because it is all a result of kindness and compassion, even if we cannot see how.

This *Shabbos* before *Pesach* is *Shabbos Hagadol*. In essence, every *Shabbos* is *gadol* (great). *Shabbos* is the greatest of all days and all times. *Shabbos* is a unique symbol that Hashem gave us as a sign of the

relationship between Him and the Jewish people. It is an everlasting symbol that we belong to Him and He belongs to us. *Shabbos* is great, on *Shabbos*, great things happen.

Hisbodedus Corner

Most people think that only by crying during *davening* can they be said to have *davened* well. They constantly long to merit crying during *davening*. In truth, even though it is a very good thing for a person to move himself to produce tears that issue from a broken heart, as *chazal* say "the gates of tears are never sealed," the purest form of *tefilla* is *tefilla* that is generated through joy because joy is *emuna* and joy is attachment to Hashem. *Tefilla* with joy is capable of bringing salvation more than *tefilla* with tears. When a person prays with joy, he is easily rescued from trouble.

When *chazal* lauded the virtues of crying, it was precisely when a person is moved to tears by overwhelming elation and longing for Hashem and His mercy and not, G-d forbid, depression. Rebbe Nachman said that the letters for the Hebrew word for crying: **ב.כ.י.ה.** are an acronym for the *pasuk*: "בשמך יגילוך כל היום" - "in Your name we rejoice all day long."

Have an awesome, uplifting and **GREAT** Shabbos,

Dov

NOTICE: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the parsha sheet disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai Shlita and should not necessarily be viewed as an exact translation of the sheet or even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented. The sheet 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 it.

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