

THE LIGHT OF *EMUNA*

This week's translation is dedicated in memory of our dear grandfather, Jack Horn a"h.

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נפטר כ"ו אייר תשנ"ו תנצב"ה - May 15, 1996

פרשת בהר-בחוקותי

Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's

"Ohr Ha'Emunah"

וַיֹּדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר: (כה, א)

"And Hashem said to Mohe on Mount Sinai, saying:"

Har Sinai is the mountain of Hashem. The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (24, 3-4) says "Who will ascend upon Hashem's mountain and who will stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken My name in vain and has not sworn deceitfully." The *pasuk* warns about three faculties - action, speech and thought. "Clean hands" refers to action. "Pure heart" refers to thought. "Who has not taken My name in vain and has not sworn deceitfully" refers to speech. With these three capacities a person perfects himself. (*Radak*)

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"And Hashem said to Moshe on *Har Sinai*, saying:"

The purpose of beauty is revealed when a person is a giver, not a taker. Giving is the greatest joy that man can experience - when a person can give to himself, to his family, to his friends, to his neighbors, to everyone. "Hashem, give me the strength to smile at another person, give me the strength to rejoice with another person, give me the strength to reveal the good point in another and to admire him."

There is another avenue of giving - giving to

Hashem. "Hashem, give me strength to thank You for all of the good that you provide me with, give me strength to do Your will, give me the strength to believe that whatever happens to me is all from you and for the best."

Moshe Rabbeinu merited ascending the mountain, *Har Sinai*, Hashem's mountain, the mountain upon which the Torah was given. Only Moshe so merited - but Hashem wants all of us merit the same - for us all to climb and approach the summit, ascend levels of holiness, draw near to Hashem, focus on our purpose. We all know that Hashem has unlimited amounts of love for us and He desires to raise us higher, towards Him, to be like Him. What is man (אדם)? One who is fashioned in the likeness of Hashem (אֲדָמָה לְעֵלְיוֹן). To deserve the title of "man" a person must be G-dlike. Just as Hashem provides and gives without limit, so must we. We must give to everyone, to bring joy to everyone, to impart of the good that Hashem has given us to others, from the wealth that we have attained - most importantly, to gladden Hashem.

How can we gladden Hashem? By marveling at all of the amazing things that He created for us.

What an amazing creation Hashem created for us - what amazing seas, what rivers, what trees, what flowers, what colors. We always forget - we live in the city, we don't see all of the species of fish in the ocean, the variety of flowers, the breeds of birds, the species of animals - it is impossible to

describe how much exists. Without even discussing what exists in the upper realms such as angels or what clouds are or what rain consists of, we cannot measure the amazing creation that Hashem provided for us. All of it is for us to recognize the grandeur and to serve Hashem with the splendor and raise it up higher. For if it remains below, what comes of it? The result is that creation does not reach its perfection. Who should look and who should recognize? Most people just cry - with difficulty they manage to get through the day. They awake in the morning and by afternoon they have fallen because they overate or spoke too much or suddenly became depressed and did not succeed in one area or failed in another. So, creation does not fulfill its mission - it does not reach the point where we appreciate all of the magnificence and sing to Hashem. Dovid Hamelech merited becoming Dovid Hamelech and Moshiach because, in the midst of all of his difficulties, in the deserts, with the sun beating down on him, under the most exacting conditions, he managed to raise everything up and say (*Tehillim* 119, 71) "It is good for me that I was afflicted, in order that I learn your laws," thereby composing for us, for all generations, the wondrous book of *Tehillim*. (*Beor Pnei Melech Chaim*)

How else can we delight Hashem? What else can we give Hashem? We can **strengthen our emuna**. *Emuna* that Hashem knows what is best for us and that He wants to do the very best for us. There was a certain pious man who would conclude his *tefillos* with: "Master of the World, now that I have laid out my requests before You and prayed for my needs (I only did so because I am obligated to pray in such a manner), since You know what is really best for me, I turn to You and ask that if Your will differs in any way from what I requested, pay no heed to my words and do Your will." (*Chovos Halevovos*)

There are those whose self-nullification vis-a-vis

Hashem's will is so great and strong that their hearts never entertain another will. When such a person sees that Hashem's will at this moment is different that what he might want, he gives himself over, with joy, to Hashem's path.

When Yaakov Avinu went to Yitzchok Avinu dressed in Eisav's clothing to receive the *brachas*, Yitzchok asked him to come close so that he could touch his hands. Upon feeling "Eisav's hands" Yitzchok declared, "the voice is the voice of Yaakov but the hands are the hands of Eisav." Yitzchok recognized an uncertainty as to the true identity of the person before him, yet continue to give the *brachas*. Why? Why didn't he call one of his servants to clarify the situation? Yitzchok nullified himself utterly and completely to Hashem's will - whoever Hashem placed before him, that was the one he was obligated to bless.

This level is very elevated and is only possible for the most righteous of the generation. It is not a level that we can attain. But we are expected to, after we have *davened*, requested, cried, tried and still find that Hashem continues to hide His presence from us, not be upset that we were not saved. To the contrary, we should proceed calmly, peacefully and happily knowing that Hashem does everything for our own good. There are tens and hundreds of proofs that Hashem loves us and provides us with great favors and salvation. We must have no doubt that even in making us wait there lies enormous benefit to us. Hashem never forgets anyone. No one, G-d forbid, escapes Hashem's thoughts. Everything is measured and weighed in the Creator's trusted hands and everything is done out of His goodness. Even the fact that one already waited half a year to find an apartment for rent and he have to vacate his current apartment in two weeks and he has nowhere to go. Even the fact that one has waited so many years to find her spouse. Even the fact that one has so much pain in his body, in his soul and he doesn't stop begging and asking and yet

salvation is delayed.

So long as a person does not thank Hashem for his misfortune, but only asks Hashem to remove it, it is a sign that the person has not made room for it in his heart, he does not accept it, does not feel connected to it and consequently is not with the One who gave it to him. When we approach *tefilla* from another place, with *emuna* and *bitachon* in Hashem, with a feeling of being in the hands of the One who desires good for us, everything looks different. Rebbe Nachman taught that Hashem created the world because of his compassion - in order to reveal his compassion. (*Likutei Moharan 64*)

Our *Emuna* and *bitachon* in Hashem is the very gift that we can give to Hashem. That is what brings joy to Hashem, that is what draws us closer than anything else to the pinnacle of the mountain.

“Pure *emuna* is able to provide the soul with all of its needs, all that it wants, its essential sustenance. A Jew with *emuna* is able to exist in absolute poverty, by any material standards, and yet be the happiest man on the planet - he draws nourishment from elsewhere - from his *emuna*. (*Aleh L'trufah*)

Our *parsha* paves the way for us to strengthen our *emuna*. How? By describing the year of *shemitta*. It is *Shabbos Shabboson*. The *pasuk* (25, 4) says, “your field you shall not sow and your vineyard you shall not prune.” So how will we live? Hashem provides for us and blesses us with many multiples of crops in the years before and after *shemitta*. We need only have *emuna* and *bitachon*. All of the *mitzvos* are meant to instill within us the light of *emuna*. The *mitzvah* of *shemitta*, even more so. *Shabbos* too is mentioned in this week's *parsha* (26, 2). *Shabbos* reveals the recognition that nothing is done by our hands - the entire world illuminates and declares Hashem's handiwork, without any involvement by or touch of man.

Who merits ascending the mountain? He who constantly strengthens himself with *emuna*. He who constantly strengthens his knowledge that there is no reality without Hashem, no coincidence, no nature - every move and motion reveals the Master of the World. Hashem ruled, Hashem rules and Hashem will rule forever. Rulership belongs only to Hashem.

When a person internalizes this knowledge, he can accept everything that happens to him with pleasantness, graciously, he is able to tolerate what happens to him because he knows that absent Hashem no one could lift a hand or a foot, without Hashem's permission no one could affect him either positively or negatively.

When we get angry, when we get offended, when we worry, when we focus on people, we are not focused on Hashem. All concealment and despair stem from lack of *emuna*. If we had strong simple *emuna* that there is nothing but Hashem, we would never become dejected, we would never despair.

What else can bring us closer to Hashem? What else can bring us close to the pinnacle of the mountain?

מסירות נפש - giving of one's self. This is the greatest stratum in *yiddishkeit*. A Jew would rather die in sanctification of Hashem's name than give up his *yiddishkeit*. A Jew is prepared to give up his life for learning and keeping the holy Torah.

It is told of some students of the famous Novohrdik yeshiva who were once imprisoned in substandard conditions in a Russian prison, starving and thirsty, that they were only upset by the fact that they could not learn because they did not have *gemaras*. This is what disturbed them and that was the only focus of their *davening* to Hashem about their troubles. While they were

davening they hatched a brilliant plan: the Russians allowed their friends on the outside to bring them one package of cheese every day. They asked their friends to warp each day's cheese in a page of *gemara*, so that after 23 days they had the entire *Maseches Makkos*. The Russians never noticed and they had the benefit of a new *blatt* every day. This incident caused a question to be posed to the Chofetz Chaim zt"l: "Isn't it disrespectful to wrap the pages of the *gemara* around cheese?" The Chofetz Chaim responded instantly, "not only is it not disrespectful, it is the honor of the holy Torah. Furthermore, I am certain that the *mesiras nefesh* of these boys will protect them and they will all merit ascending to Eretz Yisroel." The Chofetz Chaim's words were fully realized and every single one of those delightful students miraculously reached Eretz Yisroel and built beautiful homes.

All of the labor of a person in this world is to not remain in one place. A person cannot say: this is my reality, this is my nature, this is who I am and there is nothing to do about it, this is how I will remain. We must continually draw closer to Hashem. How? By learning to give of ourselves.

We are currently in middle of *Sefiras Haomer*. All of life is essentially *Sefiras Haomer* - from the *omer*

of barley to the *omer* of wheat - from animal food to human food.

Life's labor, the labor of purification and sanctification, never ends. We climb the mountain little by little, nearing the top. When we stop and look below we realize the distance we have covered. When we gaze upwards, towards the peak, we realize how great the distance still left to traverse. We never give up, G-d forbid. Life requires us to incessantly travel, purifying and sanctifying until our last moment.

אִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם:
(כו, ג)

"If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them"

Rashi says that the meaning of "if you follow My statutes" is that you must toil in the study of Torah. Human perception values people based on their intellect. Conversely, Hashem cherishes a person's toil and exertion in Torah. Wisdom/intellect is a gift from the Creator in that He opens your heart to understand and grasp. However, when a person toils and exerts himself, he is giving of himself - his pain, his challenges, his suffering are more precious and beloved to Hashem than much wisdom.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful 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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