

THE LIGHT OF *EMUNA*

This week's translation is dedicated in honor of the birth of Yehuda, who was brought to his bris yesterday, by his proud parents, our dear friends, Moti & Shira Gluck. Mazal Tov.

כשם שנכנס לברית כן יכנס לתורה לחופה ולמעשים טובים

פרשת במדבר - שבועות

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

במדבר - שבועות

Why was the Torah given specifically in the desert? Why in such a remote location, in such a low and vile place, in a land of dryness, in a land of drought and death, in a land in which man does not pass and man does not settle? Precisely there Hashem decided to give us our soul, the holy and pure Torah? What is it about the desert that earned it this privilege?

There is a unique charm to the desert - the charm of humility and modesty. It is indeed the least of all environs and that is exactly why it was chosen. There is an allure of honesty to the desert. Humility, modesty, submissiveness, concession are the truth of life. The desert is the most fitting place for people who despise falsehood and seek truth - there is nothing in it but it contains everything. It possesses innocence and honesty. It lacks color, its scenery is natural, without adornment. We strive to be like a desert - quiet, not doubting, hidden, off the radar.

May we merit remembering that all successes are Hashem's and everything that we have are gifts from Hashem. We are happy for everything that we can conceal, that can remain anonymous. We must constantly remember that humility and modesty draw Torah and G-dly light to rest on a person. The *gemara (Eruvin 54:)* tells us that the words of Torah only survive in a person who humbles himself and makes himself like a desert. May we merit being very close to Hashem - honor and success being entirely unimportant to us. Having the attitude of: "Hashem, if I have You, I have everything."

There is nothing in the desert - no water, no foliage. All that is left to a person in such a place is Hashem. That is the greatness of the desert. Precisely there were we bequeathed the holiest and most precious - the holy Torah.

חג השבועות

Shavuos is a day of three loves:

1. the love of Hashem,
2. the love of Torah, and
3. the love of the Jewish people.

Three loves that are really one - "the Jewish people and Hashem and the Torah are all one."
(ישראל וקודשא בריך הוא ואורייתא - חד)

Day of Love of Hashem

The light of Shavuos is the light of "there is nothing besides Hashem." (אין עוד מלבדו) Hashem is king, Hashem was king and Hashem will be king forever. We did not arrive in this world to insure that the refrigerator is full, despite that fact that we need these physical items. That is not why we are here. We came here with a mission, for one purpose, to receive the great and mighty light of "there is nothing besides Hashem."

A Jew cannot live without a connection to Hashem. If a Jew is forced to serve idols, he is prepared to give up his life. That is how Hashem created him, with the strength to die *al kiddush Hashem*.

A person can get angry, fight, want to knock over

walls, look for flaws in other people, but, at the moment that he remembers that there is nothing here, there is no one here, the moment that he recalls Who created him, he calms down. He regains his composure. A person must know that the whole world is obscuring the light of Hashem. Overindulging, even a little more food than is necessary, starts to dampen the flame, the light. We must escape the concealment - the concealment of depression, the concealment that we are deprived, the concealment that we are not successful, that things aren't going well for us, that our lives are so difficult, that fate singles us out. We must escape these mindsets and attach ourselves to the very G-dliness within the concealment, to the light of "there is nothing besides Hashem."

The word "Shavuot" (שבועות) is derived from the word for oath (שבועה). Hashem swears to us and we swear to Him. Hashem swears that he will never exchange us for another nation, that He will always love us, that He created all of the worlds for us, that we are His beloved children, that we are his eldest and most precious son. When we educate children and instill within them this great affection that Hashem has for the Jewish people, the feeling of being Hashem's children and the child learns to feel that he is Hashem's child and Hashem loves him like a father, it becomes much easier for the child to connect to Torah, *tefilla* and *mitzvos*. This holds true for children - **and for us**.

We swear to Hashem that we will never exchange Him for another god; that we cannot do anything without Him; that we are happy that we found Him after so many years and so many searches; that He is everything to us - He is our joy, He is our vitality, He is our hope, He is our comfort, without Him we have no life; that we will try to give him satisfaction from us; that we do everything to honor Him, to remember that everything is from Him; that we will continuously strengthen our connection to Him; that we will build a chamber for Him within our hearts and regularly expand it, enhance it and beautify it.

Day of Love of Torah

Torah is our life and longevity. Everything is contained within it. *Toras Chaim* - it is a guidebook for living a happy life. Joy in Torah is the greatest joy of all. It is a constant euphoria. How and why would one exchange it for momentary amusement?

Parents sacrifice so much to raise their children in the way of the holy Torah. Righteous women sacrifice so much so that their husbands can learn the holy Torah.

Rebbe Nachman taught that when a person is filled with Torah he receives a bright countenance, holiness shines on his face. When a person learns Torah he is detached from negative character traits, improper speech and evil inclinations. When the mind is empty, it fills with silliness. When a person learns Torah in depth, his mind fills with holiness, he receives heavenly assistance in everything and Hashem is with him. When a person ceases learning Torah, all of his evil proclivities attack him.

In our innermost depths we acknowledge that we have not yet received the Torah. It still does not sing within our souls. We are engaged in other things - how we appear and how others value us. We may have received the externalities of Torah, but we must seek its essential inner elements, connect inner and external. What is the inner essential of Torah? It is the delight of connecting to Hashem. It is the knowledge that even in the simplest Jew there is this amazing unlimited facet. We are each a part of Hashem, we have this tremendous soul within us that Hashem cannot give up on. Hashem cannot give up on any Jew. The essential inner Torah is the joy we experience in serving Hashem, experiencing the soul in everything, doing everything for the honor of Hashem, doing everything out of a sense of love for Hashem.

Day of Love of the Jewish People

When souls connect to each other, we immediately feel Hashem. When do souls connect to each other? When there is giving. The purpose of beauty is revealed when a person is a giver, not only a recipient. Look at another person with positive eyes. What are "positive eyes?" Being able to love another person, as he is - to be genuinely happy for him, to judge him favorably, to remember that he too is Hashem's child. We can always find something in the other person that we do not possess. If this is how we relate to him, if we admire him for his unique traits - all of the evil we see in him will instantly dissipate, he will suddenly smile at you and immediately he will be good to you.

Giving is only possible through modesty and humility. How happy is a person who has learned to forgive, to let go, to lower his head, to yield. The life of the modest and humble is so beautiful. So much charm and enchantment is rained upon them. Chazal tell us that there is nothing more beautiful than modesty.

The holy Baal Shem Tov [whose *yahrzeit* is on Shavuous] one told his student, R' Yaakov Yosef HaCohen of Polnoye [Author of *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*], "I love, with great and faithful love, even the lowest of the low of my brethren of my people. At times, quite frequently, the innocence of a simple Jew pulls me towards him like a magic spell much more than I am drawn to a *talmid chochom*, who has pride in his Torah. The entire Torah is to teach us to live with humility and modesty. If one learns so that he be called 'Rabbi,' so that everyone acknowledges his brilliance, his sharp mind, so that people praise him for being able to learn in one hour what others can only accomplish in an entire day - he has forfeited everything.

Our problem is that we occupy most of our time with ourselves and we forget Hashem, G-d forbid. We are always looking around us rather than looking upwards, to Hashem. We are always

glancing at what others have, why does he have it and not me. When a person gives of himself, only then can he remember Hashem. Giving is above all else, that is why the first day of *sefira* is called *chesed sheb'chesed*, kindness of kindness.

How did we receive the Torah? "As one man with one heart" (כאיש אחד בלב אחד). If one soul of the Jewish people is missing, the Torah is incomplete. We can never disqualify a single Jew. How can we avoid our flippant disqualifications of others? By reminding ourselves that every single Jew has a unique task that only he is capable of performing for Hashem's honor. That realization will give us tremendous strength to fulfill our own missions and to stand strong against the evil inclination's seductions. It will also allow us to perceive the unique assignments of others in the world of Hashem. It will also make it easier to vanquish our own obstacles and focus on the other's worthy attributes, that only he can raise up to Hashem.

הַשָּׁמַיִם שְׁמַיִם לְדֹהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לְבְנֵי-אָדָם: (קטו, טז)
"The heavens are the heavens of Hashem, but the earth He gave to the children of man"

The Kotzker Rebbe explained this to mean that the earth is given to man to transform it into heaven - to long and strive, from here on earth, to attach and cling to Hashem.

The Sfas Emes said that the greatest humiliation in the next world will be the revelation that everything in this world is essentially filled with inner holiness - we just didn't notice it, we are too occupied with externalities.

When a person only focuses on Hashem, he does not notice people affecting him, hurting him, dishonoring him. When a person realizes at every moment that everything that happens to him is from Hashem he merits a truly wonderful life. When a person strengthens his *emuna* and merits closeness to Hashem, he feels bound to do the will

of Hashem. He is left with no choice.

Our *parsha* expounds on the flags of the various tribes. Flags symbolize submission and humility - submission to a commander, a king, the King of the world. We are bannermen, We are soldiers of Hashem. Even if we are tired, we strengthen ourselves and rise up. Even if we are hungry, we overcome. We are bannermen, We are subjects of the King. Our days are filled with flags, whatever we do for Hashem's glory is another flag. Whenever we overcome our own desires because we understand that Hashem wants something different, that is a flag. The greatest flag of all flags is the flag of Torah learning.

תפילה

[DE note: Rav Azolai concludes each Parsha Sheet with a *tefilla*. As I don't usually translate his entire sheet, I don't usually include it. I felt that the *tefilla* in last week's Parsha Sheet was so powerful that I am including it here.]

Master of the World! What will become of my eyes? I am embarrassed to even discuss this matter with You but what else can I do as I seem unable to change. I am stuck. There are always many people in my surroundings that I gaze upon with eyes that are less than good. I ignore them

because I cannot tolerate them because I feel like they cannot tolerate me because they ignore me. Rather than warm the air I stay away, I take great pains to avoid them, at least to avoid eye contact. If I see that they have anything good, that they are happy, that they are successful, it irritates me.

Save me Father, help me gaze upon everyone of them with positive eyes. Help me remember a time, before we acme distant, that I used to have nice things to say about them. Give me the strength to break the ice because I have seen many times that if one of these people approaches me and smiles and says a kind word to me, I instantly forget all of my anger and criticism that I had towards him and my heart and eyes are transformed to good.

Master of the World, when will I succeed in remembering that we are all Your children and you specifically not only tolerate each of us but even love us?

When will I cease being flustered every time someone fails to smile at me? When will I begin to realize that it has nothing to do with me? When will I understand that if I smile first, he will smile back? Master of the World, save me, give me good eyes towards everyone. Help me.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov

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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