

THE LIGHT OF *EMUNA*

This week's adaptation is dedicated in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of Moshe Simon, son of our dear friends, DuvZ and Bashi Simon. מזל טוב!!!

פרשת בהעלותך

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

בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ אֶת־הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל־מִוּל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוּרָה יֵאָרוּ
שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת: (ח, ב)

"When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light towards the face of the *menora*."

The kindling of the *menora* is forever. Even after the *Mishkan* and both *Batei Mikdash* have been destroyed, the western lamp is not extinguished, it is hidden together with its light and remains kindled.

בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ אֶת־הַנֵּרוֹת (ח, ב)

"When you light the lamps."

The soul of a Jew always desires to ascend to Hashem. It is like a coiled spring that pines to return to its original position. True and everlasting delight and pleasure comes from bonding with Hashem - no material or physical pleasure can come close and they are incomparable to the gratification experienced by the soul that is connected to its Creator. We spend our lives pursuing the illusory enjoyments of this world that never manage to satiate the soul. No matter how much of this world we accumulate the soul cannot be content because the soul is from a higher plane, a part of G-dliness.

Our bodies are darkness, physical and foul. The vastness of the darkness should make it impossible to survive. The soul descends into this world for the very purpose of illuminating the darkness of the body. What is this world worth without Hashem? To eat more, to drink more, another

pain here another pain there, hurting us, insulting us - we are left with nothing. What is the purpose? The purpose is to be enveloped by Hashem, to attach ourselves to Him.

What is attachment? Attachment is desire. "Hashem, I want You, Hashem I cannot proceed without You."

A Jew has an amazing attribute - stubbornness. In this week's *parsha* the *pasuk* regarding the *menora* states (8,4) "this was the form of the *menora*: hammered work (מקשה) of gold." The word מקשה is of the same root as the word for stubbornness - עקשנות. A person must be stubborn in the service of Hashem - stubborn in times of difficulty, when things aren't going well. Hashem loves this stubbornness above all else.

One of the elders of Bnei Brak, a simple person, told Rav Shach zt"l that he had learned together (*b'chavrusa*) with one of the leading Rabbonim of the previous generations when they were young. He explained that the Rav had had great difficulty in comprehending his learning, he could not get through a single line of *gemara* on his own. However, the love of Torah burned within him in an unusual manner. Every day he would ask one of the other students to help him and explain one line to him. After a while, the other students started to avoid him because the task of explaining one line, which they often felt was readily comprehensible, would take hours. It reached the point where he became a burden on them and they would summarily dismiss his overtures. "Eventually," continued the storyteller, "I too

started to avoid him because I felt that he was causing me to waste my time completely.

“One day I noticed him sitting alone in the corner of the *Beis Hamedrash* learning with tremendous passion. I was surprised because he could not understand anything on his own. So, I decided to sit down behind him and see what he was engaged in. What did I see? He had a *siddur* in front of him open to *אהבת עולם* and he was focused on the phrase: *רחם עלינו ותן בלבנו בינה להבין ולהשכיל, לשמוע, ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות ולקיים את כל דברי תלמוד תורתך באהבה והאר עינינו בתורתך ודבק לבנו במצוותיך* ‘have compassion on us and instill into our hearts to comprehend, and to be intellectually creative, to listen, to learn, and to teach, to preserve, to practice, and to fulfill all the words of instruction in Your Torah with love. And enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, and cause our hearts to hold fast to Your commandments.’

“He repeated it over and over with tears streaming from his eyes. And look,” concluded the elderly man, “what has become of him - he became one of the leading Rabbinical figures of the generation - and what has become of me?”

Our success is the power to begin anew each time - never giving up hope, never throwing up our hands in despair, never allowing our passion to cool. The key is to continue wanting, to pray, not to become confused by our downfalls, never to say, “I’m done, I have no hope left.” Hashem loves us for the smallest moment of will. What remains of a person from all of his work in this world are the subtle moments of desire.

There is no such thing in life as no opportunity. All of the people that were unable to participate in the first *Pesach* in the desert did not give up. In this week’s *parsha* (9,7), they screamed, “why are we excluded” - and, unexpectedly, a new concept was created - *Pesach Sheni*. Who would have thought that something like this could happen? Yet, when we sincerely desire something and beg for it, scream for it, anything can happen.

On *Shavuot* we read *Megillas Rus*. Rus felt the elevated pleasantness of Naomi and decided not to give up on the Jewish people. She was the daughter of the king of Moav and the Torah says that a Amonite or Moavite may not join the nation of Hashem. Yet she was not discouraged. When Hashem saw the extent of Rus’s desire and longing - that she gave of herself and endured extreme poverty in contrast to the wealth she was accustomed to as a princess - a new *halacha* was conceived - only male Moavites were banned, not female Moavites. All Moavite women were now welcome, due only to Rus’s awesome desire, her self sacrifice. Desire so strong merits drawing forth the soul of Moshiach.

“The best situation for a person is when things are difficult for him. When things go well and easily, a person does not remember Hashem. The *pasuk* tells us “you ate and were satiated and you became arrogant.” Hashem is reluctant to give us too much to eat, to much affluence and to take care of everything for us, because then we would never *daven* to him.

There are righteous individuals who receive everything, yet they do not forget Hashem because they do not tolerate materialism, they find it to be disgusting, they receive no gratification from it. They have everything but feel as if they have nothing, because their souls yearn for greater things.

This is not the norm. Normally, when a person becomes too comfortable, he rebels. When a person feels some deficiency, he cries, he says, ‘*oy vey*, please give me what I am missing.’ He fails to realize that Hashem receives his cry with, “*Oy*, this is precisely the moment that I’ve been waiting for, for this moment that you feel lacking and call out to me.” (*Beor Pnei Melech Chaim*)

עַל־פִּי ד' יִסְעוּ ... וְעַל־פִּי ד' יִחַנוּ (ט, יח)

“At Hashem’s bidding they travelled ... at Hashem’s bidding they encamped.”

Life is a journey. Every person and every soul has its own path. We are always on the road. We want to arrive already but the closer we get the more we realize how distant we truly are from holiness, how apart we are from Hashem. Yet this does not weaken us, we do not despair. We continue to long for, crave and yearn for and that is our true merit, that we constantly want to come closer. There are moments of kindness, moments of outpouring of emotion, tears for the fact that we cannot continue but refuse to stop, moments of private time with Hashem.

Our journey is planned from the start, based on Heavenly decree, orchestrated by Divine Providence. When we realize that our voyage is guided down to the smallest detail, that there is no coincidence, it gives us strength. Everything that occurs is part of one long course, with one goal - to testify about Hashem, to reveal Him within the concealment of the world.

Superficially, the world appears to follow the laws of nature, the world follows its natural course. For us, our assignment is to reveal Hashem in creation, to recognize that it is Hashem Who gives life, conducts and guides all of creation down to the minutest details. “And you shall know that I am Hashem” - that we should see Hashem’s hand in everything, His guiding hand. We must act according to Hashem’s will, for Hashem’s honor, for the sake of Heaven.

The Chidushei Harim asks, “Must all of our actions resemble those of a horse or an animal? Can we not satisfy all of our physical needs with a higher purpose, pursuant to Hashem’s will - to eat so that we remain healthy to serve Hashem, the same going for sleep, conducting business and all other necessities? Why do people fear death? Where do people go when they die? They return to our Heavenly Father and He will definitely have mercy

on us? So why fear? We are afraid because when we arrive there and we realize how, with a bit of thought and contemplation, we could have raised up all of our base actions to a higher plane, we will be unable to bear our shame.”

When we reveal Hashem within the challenges, within suffering, within our downfalls, when we feel that someone hears our prayers - we are transformed into witnesses for Hashem.

No one did this more than Dovid Hamelech. He found Hashem in the most distant and darkest places. Dovid says, “at midnight I will arise to thank Hashem.” When darkness was most severe, when concealment was so harsh, Dovid stood before Hashem with song and praise, in amazing attachment. Dovid felt that he was in the trusted and loving hands of Hashem even when he was in the most painful and distant situations in his life.

Hashem hides Himself from us but we can always find Him. Why does Hashem conceal Himself? Since His love for us is so great, He must sometimes strike us despite His compassion and because He cannot bear to watch us suffer, He hides Himself from us.

Our task is to reach the places that are not well lit and reveal Hashem even there. When a Jew lacks the zest to open the *gemara* and some time goes by and he cries out, “where have I reached? what will become of me?” - and then he becomes inspired and turns to Hashem with tears - he reveals that Hashem is with him in this lowly place as well. He speaks with Hashem there, he feels Hashem there, he can testify that Hashem is found even there. Only he can so testify because only he was there. Just as people are different, so are moments and every moment has its own function, its own testament. From Hashem’s perspective there are no losses, only gains. Both in accomplishments and in failures there lie amazing and wonderful corrections that only Hashem fully recognizes.

What did Chazal mean by “even the perfectly righteous cannot stand in the place of *baalei teshuva*?” At the times when *Baalei teshuva* were encountering downfalls, living in darkness and numbness, they illuminated and revealed Hashem’s providence in those places in that He raised them up, brought them to Him. The purely righteous cannot accomplish that.

For a Jew there are no downfalls, only revivals. Even his failures transform to advancement. Precisely when he is down he strengthens himself with efforts that he didn’t know he was capable of. Even if he feels disappointed in himself, his desire is so precious in Heaven because Hashem asks for our hearts more than anything else.

Life is a musical journey. Each of us has our own unique script that Hashem wrote specifically for us. Each of us has our own unique score composed based on our individual essence, soul, temperament, attributes, abilities, challenges, successes and failures. Each of us is part of an orchestra, emitting sounds with our service of Hashem, by withstanding challenges and succumbing to them - a unique and rare note that is unable to be replicated by anyone else. Hashem waits for each of us personally. If a person despairs, if a person perceives himself dimly, with darkened eyes, he deprives his Creator of his personal notes, that only he can create, to which only he can testify. Together we perform a perfect symphony with which Hashem perfects that world.

Life is a journey. When a Jew travels through it with self sacrifice, Hashem moves mountains for him.

תפילה

Master of the World be with us!

When something difficult occurs, when someone does something to us that is not fair, we are left broken, bruised and bleeding. We do not even have the strength to lift our heads. We do not have the strength to cry out. Not even a cry of the heart. All we have is a whisper of the heart.

Be with us, help us, give us the strength to overcome this challenge and emerge from it stronger. At this moment Father, we cannot hear anything or make heard any of the appropriate words of truth - that everything comes from You, that everything is for the best, that Your salvation is in the blink of an eye.

We are also still unable to thank You for what happened. Right now we feel the pain, the burning insult and we ask You for one thing: be with us, give us Your hand and together we will survive the coming hours.

But what shall we do with our anger? How do we overcome it? When we lose our temper, how can we be close to You?

Help us Father to show compassion rather than anger. Help us find in You the comfort, the perfection, the hope.

For You are our Father Who is unlimited and we have seen and heard over the years how in the darkest moments you begin to weave the plan of success and You surprise us each time.

How great is Hashem.

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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