

THE LIGHT OF *EMUNA*

This week's adaptation is dedicated in honor of the graduation of our dear son, Moishe, as Salutatorian of his graduating class at Mesivta Ateres Yaakov. **מזל טוב!!!**

פרשת שלח

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

שְׁלַח-לְךָ אֲנָשִׁים וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן (יג, ב)

"Send out for yourself men who will scout the Land of Canaan"

The previous topic in the Torah was the story of the *loshon hora* that Miriam said about Moshe Rabbeinu and her punishment. Why does our *parsha* come next? Hashem foresaw that the spies were going to return and speak *loshon hora* about the Land of Israel. Hashem did not want to allow the spies any excuses (e.g. claiming that they had not realized that *loshon hora* carries a severe penalty). Therefore, Hashem placed these two stories near each other, so that all would be aware of the punishment for *loshon hora*. Nevertheless, the spies refused to learn. (*Medrash Tanchuma*)

וְהִתְחַזְּקֶתֶם וּלְקַחְתֶּם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ (יג, כ)

"You shall strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land"

Everyone has a small spy deep within himself. The spy feeds upon our disappointments, our past failures. The spy searches for all of our weaknesses to sow doubts and hesitations.

"You are incapable ... you are not qualified ... you are not worthy ... you already tried many times ... it is not for you ... this is the labor of *tzaddikim* ... it's a waste of your time ... be realistic, etc."

The spy sows fear and discouragement in our hearts, causing us to become disheartened, a most difficult disease. If before each step forward we were to ask, "who said I am capable of this" - we would never progress, we would remain stuck.

This is exactly what happened in this week's *parsha*, in the story of the spies. What conclusion must we draw?

לֹא נוֹכַל לָעֲלוֹת ... כִּי-חֹזֵק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ: (יג, לא)

"We are unable to go up ... for they are stronger than us."

The evil inclination is stronger than holiness, G-d forbid. Therefore, we need *chizuk*. "Strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land."

In Rebbe Nachman's view, invigorating or strengthening one's self is not merely a good idea or a recommendation, it is an actual obligation. Our lives involve incessant coping - and Rebbe Nachman's advice is to fortify ourselves constantly.

We must bolster the inner voice that attempts to fight off the other voices. The voice that whispers: "you can ... you can ... you can ..." Rebbe Nachman informs every Jew, in whatever situation he is in: "Hashem is with you and near you. Never give up." That is our greatest source of strength. No matter what happens to us, we have to Whom to run, from Whom to seek advice and counsel. When there are troubles and problems from all directions and we do not know how to begin to tackle them, and we know that we cannot resolve them ourselves - we have to Whom to turn. We have a Father in Heaven who watches us, who saves us, who solves so many problems with so much Heavenly guidance that we are often left speechless.

Hashem is the address for whatever we are missing, there is no other address. He created us so that our lives depend on him at every stage.

Without Hashem's help it is impossible to cross the threshold of our own house and with His help it is possible to split the sea.

The Yismach Moshe toiled in Torah from his youth. He had great difficulty with his livelihood and it affected his learning and service of Hashem. One evening he made an accounting and determined that in order to pay off all of his debts and support himself for the rest of the year, he needed five hundred gold coins.

He *davened* from the depths of his heart to Hashem, Who has all of the silver and gold, "Master of the World, please arrange five hundred gold coins for me." He *davened* intently and in the course of of *davening* exhausted himself until he dozed off. He dreamt of the holy Arizal entering the room and the room lighting up from his holy presence. The Yismach Moshe though that Heaven must have sent the Arizal with the five hundred coins. The Arizal came closer and said, "If I bless you and you have the five hundred coins you will no longer need Hashem's help." With that, he awoke ... with the realization that we need Hashem's help for every step and every breath. The One Who created each day, created sustenance and He will provide us with our food when we need it.

This is precisely where the spies failed. They knew that in the dessert they were surrounded by miracles. The *manna* descended each morning and the quail fell each evening, the Clouds of Glory enveloped them, the Pillar of Fire guided them, they drank water from the Rock, the Ark of the Covenant smoothed mountains and raised valleys before them - wherever they turned there were miracles. They were also aware that this paradise of miracles would cease when they reached the holyland. There, they would be required to go to war in the natural order. When they heard that in

the Promised Land there were fortified cities and giants, their eyes darkened. They felt that they would be unable to ascend because the current residents were mightier than them. Had there not been such fortified cities or such giants, maybe. Can that be? Has there ever been a person that did not require Hashem's assistance at every step? When a person relies on Hashem's help, can anything prevent Hashem from rescuing him, be it something big or small?

Hashem is with us in all of our downfalls and He supports us in rising again. Hashem is with us even in the worst moments, even if we are very distant, He is perpetually ready to receive us again.

A person stands in the midst of *davening* and daydreams and suddenly catches himself, how do his *tefillos* appear? Is there any purpose in invigorating the last *brachos* when the entire *tefilla* was a summer daydream, filled with foreign thoughts? But, Hashem does not consider things this way. Even with the final word, He waits for us to revive ourselves, to return to Him. The Chofetz Chaim said, If he [the *yetzer hora*] snatched the *bracha* of אתה חונן from you, seize back the *bracha* of השיבנו, and if he snags the *bracha* of סלח לנו from you, once again take back the *bracha* of ראה נא בענינו and so on. Of primary importance is to never give up and make peace with the situation, rather we must continue to strike back and grab another proper intention, another good thought, until the last word.

We must also support each other.

When we speak with our children, with our students, with our friends, we most direct most of our words towards this point of reinforcing them, giving *chizuk*. Tell them that they too are relevant at every moment to Torah and the service of Hashem. Every word of Torah, every word of *tefilla*, every small thought, every small motion that we do in avoiding evil and doing good is worth everything. It is everything. It is the purpose. It is everlasting. After giving a lot of such *chizuk*, add

stories about great tzaddikim, to provide aspirations, so that they will want more for themselves. Then you can discuss the severity of sin. But, if you only talk about the greatness of *tzaddikim*, the harshness of punishment and the severity of sin - most people will feel as if they have no hope and they will not even begin to empower themselves.

We must know that every action in the service of Hashem stands alone, it is the goal. If we learn a minute of Torah, the world was created for that minute. We *daven* and bolster ourselves with proper intent for a bit, Hashem created the world for that. Hashem did not create the world for us to eat, drink and enjoy. That is not the purpose. The purpose is to fulfill the will of Hashem, even with little things. One of the great *tzaddikim* said, "it was worthwhile for Hashem to create all of the worlds for one Jew to one time say, 'ברוך הוא וברוך' - 'blessed is He [Hashem] and blessed is His name.'

Holiness triumphs if we only believe in its efficacy - if we remember what Rebbe Nachman shouted to each of us, "Hashem is with you, near you, there is no despair."

The words of Calev ben Yefuneh must always be with us: "עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה, כי יכול נוכל לה" (ג, ל) - "We can surely go up and take possession of it, for we can indeed overcome it."

**וְעַבְדֵי כָּלֵב עֲקֵב הַיְתֵה רוּחַ אַחֲרֵת עִמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא אַחֲרָי
(יד, כד)**

"But as for My servant Calev, since he was possessed by another spirit, and he followed Me"

What was the "other spirit" that Calev merited, through which he earned the honored approbation "servant of Hashem" - a title that until then had not been accorded anyone other than Moishe Rabbeinu?

The "other spirit" is the spirit of humility.

A person's entire goal in this world is to reveal Hashem's glory. Hashem's glory fills the world. Everything that exists here, vegetation, flowers, is all for Hashem's honor. The highest honor is man, the crown of creation.

When a person misappropriates the honor for himself, may Hashem have mercy. This is the essence of our challenge. At every moment, when we receive a compliment, when we get excited - to say *Baruch Hashem* I was successful, *Baruch Hashem* my actions went well - at that moment we must exchange our thoughts for others - remind ourselves who is the glorious King.

The greatest challenge is to remember that we are nothing.

All of the small-mindedness that we fall into so often - "they said this about me, they hurt me" - is because we do not sufficiently grasp the greatness of Hashem, the fact that there is nothing but Him.

The more broad-minded a person is, the more he recognizes that there is only Hashem and if there is only Hashem, there is no "I," "him," "the neighbor," "the other guy," "this," "that" - there is nothing. When a person is broad-minded, nothing confuses him and he is constantly happy. When he realizes that his greatest attribute is his own nullification, he becomes a vessel for G-dliness and he merits the greatest light.

When a person is humble, Hashem is with him. Humility means acknowledging that I cannot do it alone, I need Hashem. Arrogance is, "I did it, I accomplished" - this separates a person from Hashem. It is difficult for a person to feel dependant on Hashem. We want things to arrange themselves. But, Hashem organized the world so that at every stage in life, at every age, we are always dependant upon Him.

A person who knows to give all of the honor to

Hashem, must be respected, not one who commandeers honor for himself. When a person genuinely feels that he is inferior to others - he receives Divine light and abundance - Hashem immediately descends to him. This makes the person happy, constantly happy, happy in his *yiddishkeit*, happy that within his base body, full of desires and negative traits, he managed to instill Divine light.

He does not become broken by the fact that he is still distant because precisely from afar there are many longings and what is apparently so distant is actually quite close.

When we are close to Hashem we are also close to His creations. Love for Hashem's creations must come along with love of Hashem. We love Hashem so much, we are so submitted to Him, we feel so much a part of Him, how can we possibly entertain the notion that we don't want to be next to a certain person or to talk to him or associate with him or to have him as a neighbor because we feel superior ... after all, we are all part of G-dliness.

A humble person, who is not conceited, deals with others gently, pleasantly. Like the young man who does not talk during *davening* and notices other Jews talking. He approaches them with great love and says, "I am but a lowly person, I am not worthy of reprimanding anyone, I myself am guilty of a lot, but I heard that it is written in *sefarim* how serious it is to talk in middle of *davening*, so why talk?" He speaks with love and they acknowledge that he is correct, they accept it because they hear that he is coming from a place of love and acting in their best interest.

Hashem said to Moshe, "take the Leviim from amongst the Jewish people." What does it mean to take them? Persuade them gently, softly. Rashi says Hashem said to take them with words, tell them how fortunate they are to be the servants of Hashem. We find similar phraseology when Hashem told Moshe to "take Aharon and his sons"

and "take Yehoshua."

Everything must be done done pleasantly, softly, with modesty and humility.

When Calev felt the evil inclination enticing him to join the spies, he ran to Chevron to *daven* at the graves of the forefathers so as not to succumb. And it worked.

If one believes in the power of prayer, in the power of *tzaddikim*, if one cries and pleads for his life, if one realizes that alone he is incapable, that without Hashem he is in danger - he merits proximity to Hashem, he earns the title "servant of Hashem," he earns the "other spirit."

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me remember when I suddenly have problems in my life, that I cannot resolve alone or naturally, that appears to have no possible positive resolution - help me not to forget you, Father. To remember that there is no reason to feel dejected, even in the midst of a trouble that weighs heavily on me and clouds my joy.

Because I have You. I have to where to escape. I have to Whom turn and plead - "help me Father." For only You can save me.

When I begin a new day and things just fall into place and the day finishes and I see such salvation, not to forget You, Father. Not to forget that yesterday, in the field, at night, I ran to you and I walked with you, step by step, slowly and I did not stop beseeching - "help me Father." Alone, I could not accomplish anything - only You can rescue from this futile situation.

Help me, Father, to see, in real-time, who helped me, who saved me - not like many times when only after several hours do I realize that I was praying and begging and you aided me, and only then I say "thank You."

Help me constantly recognize both the small and big miracles that you do for me, Your unlimited compassion, and to unceasingly say to You how good You are to me, how compassionate You are to me, how much I love You.

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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