

פרשת וירא

This adaptation is dedicated for a
 רפואה שלמה
 for
 העניא בת פריידל

"וירא אליו ד' באלני ממרא" (יח, א)

"And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre"

R' Chama bar Chanina said, "That day was the third day after Avraham's *bris* and Avraham was in pain. So, Hashem visited to inquire as to his welfare. It is comparable to a shopkeeper who had a friend who was a *Kohen* and the shopkeeper had *tumah* in his courtyard – so, the *Kohen* could not enter. The *Kohen* said, 'if you wish me to enter your courtyard, remove the *tumah* from before me.' The shopkeeper removed it and the *Kohen* entered. Similarly, Hashem loved Avraham - but so long as Avraham was uncircumcised, Hashem could not fully reveal Himself to him. Once, Avraham circumcised himself – immediately, "Hashem appeared to him."¹

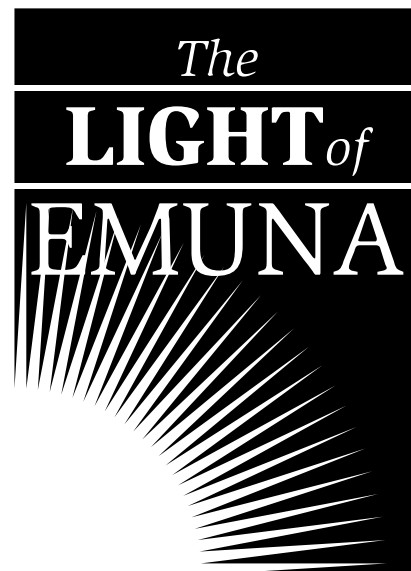
אחד היה אברהם² Avraham Was One (Unique)

The image of the first Jew, Avraham Avinu – exhibited two prominent attributes. The first was infinite generosity – tenacity in doing *chesed*, welcoming guests, helping others. This attribute is embedded in each one of us. Chazal say that doing *chesed* is one of the defining characteristics of our nation. A Jew has a natural inclination to open his hand and give *tzedaka*. *Yiddishkeit* articulates that one's assets are not his own – it is a deposit that Hashem has entrusted to him. One of Hashem's methods of sustaining His creations is to give specified individuals more money, so that they may

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מדרש אבכיר
 יחזקאל לג, כד



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

support those who are less fortunate. *Tzedaka* comes from the word for justice (צדק). When a person gives charity, he is not doing the recipient a favor; he is merely conveying what was entrusted to him to its appropriate destination. He understands that wealth was allotted to him for the purpose of doing *mitzvos* and good deeds – and that is what he is doing. That is justice. When Hashem observes a Jew acting with integrity with the assets consigned to him, He gives him further from His abundance. When a Jew gives charity, he conquers his lust for money – this is so challenging in our generation. At that moment, he earns vast joy, for nothing gladdens the soul more than the feeling that our money is headed to worthy causes, that good deeds are being performed with it.

The second prominent attribute that was illuminated by the persona our first father is passionate *emuna* in Hashem – to the point of total self-sacrifice, to the point of being prepared to forego one's most valued and beloved possessions. We are constantly seeking, we all search – search for that thing that will bring meaning and excitement to our lives – joy, success – satisfaction in life. The first of the seekers was Avraham Avinu – and he was also the first to find. He revealed the most precious gift that any creation can receive from its Creator – a bond. That connection contains all of the good that the world has to offer – everything. He ran after Hashem's *mitzvos* with joy and a willing

soul – not to receive any reward, not to avoid any suffering – just out of love – for His name, with love. He understood the secret that, of all of our endeavors, only this remains – our *mitzvos* and good deeds. Everything else is futility; nothing remains – “for he will not take anything in his death.”³ Grab something positive at every opportunity – that is what will remain with us for eternity.

Avraham Avinu had absolute faith in Hashem. He had *emuna* that Hashem was all-powerful. Only Hashem can do something and its exact opposite simultaneously. Avraham was the master of *emuna*. He headed to slaughter his son, as per Hashem’s command, while at the very same time maintaining full *emuna* that the Jewish people will descend from Yitzchak. What about us? We forget, we become confused, our spirits fall, we become entirely broken, we forget that Hashem is all-powerful, that nothing is difficult for Him.

Harav Eliezer Berland *Shlita*:

Everything depends on a person’s *emuna*. We must know that even if we are filled with sin, Hashem is still with us. Why? Because Hashem created us, he is our Father! A child who consistently gets into trouble – his father continuously explores ways to save him. Hashem seeks ways to save us, ways to help us. A person questions whether Hashem is with him, whether he is worthy of having Hashem with him. Hashem created us; therefore, he worries about us! He accompanies us, every day. He helps us, every day. He will continue to help us every day for the rest of our lives. Never fear – Hashem is with us! Our entire focus must be to escape our anxieties. Everyone has external apprehensions that prevent him from learning, *davening* – he worries about his children, about his livelihood, he worries about thieves – he has all sorts of anxieties. But, if a person is awed by Hashem – he fears nothing else. Rebbe Nachman teaches⁴ that one who wishes to taste of the hidden light must raise the attribute of fear to its

source – to reach the point of only fearing Hashem. How do we reach this? By judging ourselves. If a person assesses himself and thinks, “Hashem stands with me, Hashem sees me, how I act, how I talk, how I think – nullifies all other dreads. If not, he panics all day – afraid of this and that – of what so-and-so will do to me, what the other one will say about me, what criticism will hurt me - incessant angsts, twenty-four hours a day – he cannot learn, he is unable to *daven* properly, he cannot accomplish anything. Fear is a natural emotion stemming from the soul, which experiences the awe of Hashem, the fear of Hashem – realizing that the entire world is filled with His glory. This is why people fear other things – the natural awe of Hashem translates into other obsessions. At times we feared the Russians, the Nazis – today, it’s the Arabs. Every few years, it changes. Eventually, it will be something else. We must overcome our fears – only then can we experience *emuna* in our Creator. All of Creation exclaims, “Hashem ruled, Hashem rules, Hashem will rule forever.” There is nothing aside from Hashem. If a person evaluates himself and thinks about the fact that Hashem monitors him at every moment – he nullifies his apprehensions. He fears only Hashem – just as Avraham Avinu did. “Avraham was one” – alone against the entire world.

It is told that “Rebbe Nachman shuddered constantly, without pause. Such was his fear of Hashem. He perceived Hashem facing him always. Even when he was engaged in conversation with others – his body would shiver, his knees would knock, literal trembling. When he would lean on a table on which others were resting on, they would shake too. This was a regular occurrence – each day, the students would shake along with their Rebbe from his awe of Hashem. One who never witnessed the constant trepidation on his face - never witnessed true fear.”⁵

A person must aspire to reach a state in which there is nothing else facing him - only Hashem.

³ כי לא במותו יקח הכל (תהילים מט, יח)
⁴ ליקוטי מוהר"ן ט"ו

⁵ חיי מוהר"ן

from the windows, peering from the trellises.”⁷

The Jewish people are ceaselessly endangered – but Hashem shields us. “How great is the lamb that survives surrounded by seventy wolves” asked Andrianus Caesar of R’ Yehoshua. ‘How great is the Shepherd who saves them’ answered R’ Yehoshua.”⁸ Hashem is the guardian of the Jewish people, the guardian of the remnants of the Jewish people.

When we have strong *emuna* and an intense desire to influence, assist and perform kindnesses with others – the blessed result is self-sacrifice in drawing others closer to *emuna* in the Creator of the World. This is the greatest kindness that one can accomplish. Avraham Avinu wore a gem around his neck that would immediately cure anyone who gazed upon it. What was this gem? Chazal say that it referred to his mouth, which produced gems. He regularly sought to inspire, draw close, quench thirsts for the word of Hashem – and thus they were cured. By healing their souls, he inevitably healed their bodies.

We must learn from Avraham Avinu. Even if we do not possess the faculties to give lectures, we are not absolved from passing on what we have learned, what we have received from Hashem. For years we pray for assistance and we see no progress. Then, suddenly, after intensifying our prayers we overcome a challenge in the area for which we prayed. Yet, we don’t pause to thank Hashem, to thank Him for this gift. We must thank Him and implore His help us in continuing to *daven* every day – for we have learned that if we cease *davening*, our abilities to overcome can dissipate as quickly as they appeared. So it is with all areas of serving Hashem. If we learn something, or something happens to us – we must use it to fortify someone else. We never know what this may do for him, how it may influence him. Our intention is not to boast, for we know that without Hashem we are unable to budge even a millimeter. Only from that mindset

⁷ משגיח מן החלונות, מציץ מן החרכים (שיר השירים ב, ט)
⁸ אסתר רבה י

“When the Jewish people approached the Yam Suf, the accusation was leveled in Heaven that both these [the Jewish people] and these [the Egyptians] were idol worshippers. Accordingly, the question was posed, “why did the Jewish people deserve Hashem’s altering of the sea for them?” How could the Jews have still been idol worshippers if they had circumcised themselves and offered up the first Paschal sacrifice already? In order for someone to not be considered an idol worshipper, he must have such a level of *emuna*, such a bond with Hashem and be so detached from external fears – only then is he considered to not worship idols. So long as a person attributes any power, any validity or any reality to any other force in Creation apart from Hashem – he is considered to venerate idols. So, the idol worship of the Jewish people was – that they feared the Egyptians. They still believed that the Egyptians had some might – that there was some authority other than Hashem – that there was a natural order – some energy independent of Hashem. Avraham Avinu changed this. He saw only G-dliness. He observed how G-dliness was embedded in all of creation.⁶

We must relentlessly strengthen our *emuna* and *bitachon*. Shlomo Hamelech wondered whether there was any tiny creature that was not directly provided sustenance. Heaven revealed to him a fragment of stone with a worm embedded in it. Adjacent to the worm was moist grass for the worm to feed on. Similarly, the holy Baal Shem Tov was once walking with his followers in the forest when suddenly a strong wind blew for a short time and stopped abruptly. The Baal Shem Tov remarked that nearby there was a worm that had nothing to eat and was weakening. Therefore, Divine Providence brought this wind to detach leaves from the trees and set them at the mouth of the worm. How much more true must this be for us, the children of kings, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov – Hashem certainly protects us – “supervising

⁶ באור פני מלך חיים

(of not bragging) can we and must we bolster others – primarily those within our own households. Avraham Avinu had many merits – yet, Hashem cherished one above the rest – educating the children in Torah. “For I have known him because he commands his sons and his household after him, that they should keep the way of Hashem.”⁹ “Known” is a term of affection. Hashem held Avraham dear to Him, specifically for the *mitzvah* of teaching the children, so that even after his death, his children would follow Hashem’s path.¹⁰

We must reinforce our homes with *emuna*. *Emuna* that whatever happens is Hashem’s will – that everything is from Hashem and for the best, even if we cannot see the good at the moment. We must increase the usage of expressions of *emuna* in the home, to devise tricks to encourage *emuna* at home. This is especially important when it comes to having *emuna* in *tefilla*. If anything is bothering you – *daven*. Lift up your head. Even if you cannot foresee any rational solution to your problem – everything is possible for Hashem - and can change instantaneously.

תפילה

Master of the World! Grant me patience.

When I say something to someone and he does not hear me and asks me the same thing over and over again – help me to simply respond rather than get angry – to get closer to him so that he may hear me better. Similarly, when someone says something to me in a manner that is difficult to hear – rather than get angry that he is talking from so far away, help me simply walk over to hear him better.

Master of the World! Grant me patience.

When I am prepared to leave and I am forced to wait for someone who says “one minute” but his minute turns into many minutes and I start to go stir crazy and can’t stand waiting around for no reason and I cannot understand why others cannot be ready on time, like I am – help me remember, Father, that there are so many things that I can do with these extra minutes so that they are not wasted. By doing so, the wait is transformed into something else entirely.

Master of the World! Grant me patience.

When something unexpectedly goes wrong, like I cannot find my keys (as if they were swallowed into the ground), or I am locked in a room with my grandson and the key that worked moments ago is turning in the door uselessly and it is Rosh Hashanah and I’m about to miss Shofar blowing. Save me from the confusion, from losing my temper, give me some serenity and some *emuna* that if I just turn to You for a moment, everything can work out the way it is supposed to.

Master of the World! Grant me patience.

For those who annoy me, especially those who repeat themselves five times and I have said all that I have to say, with nothing to add. Grant me patience for people who are “not my speed” – they don’t think like me, they don’t look like me, or they just annoy me. Help me not get annoyed by anyone. Help me have patience for everyone. For You, Father, have patience for everyone – for so many types, species and kinds of people.

Master of the World! Help me emulate You.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

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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 adaptation 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 - 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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To receive this adaptation by weekly email, email me at LightofEmuna@doveliass.com

⁹ כי ידעתי את אשר יצוה את בני ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ד' (יה, יט)
¹⁰ רש"י שם