

פרשת תולדות

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my wife, Devorah,
who continuously teaches our children (and me)
the true path of *emuna* in everyday life.

"ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם" (כה, יט)

**"And these are the generations of
Yitzchak, the son of Avraham"**

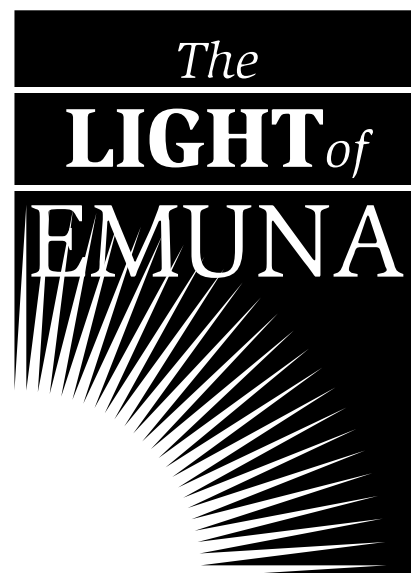
Yaakov vs. Eisav, Yitzchak vs. Yishmael, Avraham vs. his generation, Noach vs. his generation, Adam vs. the serpent – the battle between spirituality and materialism – inner truth vs. superficiality; holiness vs. *tumah*. In nature, we encounter the husks before the fruit. The shell is assigned to protect the fruit. Eisav was born before Yaakov. He emerged first. His purpose was to serve Yaakov. The word "Eisav" derives from the word for action (עשייה) – physical action. The purpose of materialism is to serve spirituality. The purpose of externals is to serve the core. But, when roles are reversed, when the facade misappropriates eminence for itself, it is a king without a crown – deceit is fortified in the world – confusion and embarrassment intensify – and truth becomes hidden.¹

"ויהי עשו איש ידע ציד איש שדה ויעקב איש תם
ישב אהלים" (כה, כז)

**"And Eisav was a man who knew hunting,
a man of the field, whereas Yaakov was an
innocent man, dwelling in tents."**

Two brothers who emerged from the same womb, raised and educated in the same home, matured into two entirely different people – as opposite as east and west.

Soul vs. body, spirit vs. matter, holiness vs. *tumah*, inner truth vs. superficiality, good vs. evil, - essentially, Yaakov vs. Eisav. Inside of us, two



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

divergent forces wrestle each other. The *pasuk*, "And the children struggled within her"² hints clearly to the constant wrestling between the Yaakov and the Eisav inside each one of us.

We stand in the middle – between externals and innerness, between holiness and secular. The *yetzer hora* strives for the shallow and materialism. The soul yearns for innermost truth, spirituality. This is our lifelong struggle – straining to elevate the soul over the body. We are here, in this world – constantly longing to lift ourselves a bit higher, to get a little closer to Hashem. How? We do so by acting for Heaven's sake, for Hashem's honor. By fighting the forbidden with countless *tefillos* and pleading – for we have no hope without Hashem's help. The *yetzer hora* is so strong, so sophisticated – we need so much Divine Assistance, at every moment – anew. By incessantly working on correcting our characteristics - we received Torah only for the goal of attaining positive attributes. That is the aim of Torah and *mitzvos* – to bring a person to the complete correction of his *middos* - to deserve being called a *mensch* – to earn this honorable title, primarily, by learning to have a "good eye."

Our mission in life is to acquire a benevolent outlook – not to be jealous of others, to delight in their successes – even if we are experiencing a

¹

שבעה משיבי טעם

²

ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה (כה, כב)

deficiency in that very matter. If we are happy for him, Hashem will give us the same. This is a very challenging ordeal. If we are honest with ourselves, we must recognize that we still have begrudging eyes. We are troubled by what others have. It infuriates us.

We must weep to Hashem, "Hashem, what am I doing with this envying eye of mine, I cannot stand to be jealous anymore, save me. Help me remember that it is forbidden for me become dejected, even if others have been more prosperous. Help me remember that I can reach You only via my own path and at the rate that You have set for me. Help me remember that others have their own assignments and I have mine." What is there for me to be jealous of? Rather than being envious, we must seek the good in each person. There is no such thing as being unable to find any good in someone. When we see the virtue in others, in our wives, in our children, in our friends, in those around us – by looking at them with a positive attitude we encourage them, we embolden the best in them. Instead of focusing on deficiencies, we must consider the entirety of a person. By doing so, we will certainly discern his positive aspects. If we are genuinely pleasant to others, if we smile at others – they will smile back. "As in water, face mirrors face, so is the heart of a man to man."³ Just as our own image reflects back at us when we gaze at water, so does the heart of one person towards another's. When we regard a friend with love and encourage him, praise him - evil abandons him and he suddenly smiles back.

Never forget: one who is disqualified is disqualified by his imperfections. If we say, "I cannot tolerate this person, I cannot abide him" it is a sign that we contain this same negative quality. If we say something adverse about someone, it is an indication that we suffer from the same deleterious feature. Our route to holiness must pass through the recognition of the virtue of every Jew. That is our labor in life – to reveal and identify the subtle elements of decency in everyone. In order to be effective in

this, Rebbe Nachman says that we must begin with ourselves. We must experience glorious joy in everything that we can grasp. One person merits thinking about Hashem for an hour, another person for ten minutes and another for only one minute – but, by joyously experiencing that one minute, he earns so many more minutes. The good aspect that I find within myself brings me so many other positive traits. When I am happy in my service of Hashem, in my mission – I am gladdened as well by another's service, success, his unique duty that differs from mine. To reach perfect correction of Creation, Hashem needs all of us. Our holy forefathers too, each had their own distinctive calling. Only together, were they able to achieve completion.

Avraham Avinu, the pillar of love, brought people closer to Hashem through kindness, by giving, inspiring all of the greatness in their hearts. He revealed all of the good within them, he dug wells, digging into their souls – removing the dirt from within (i.e. depression and melancholy) thereby exposing deep waters inside. The water was within because every G-dly soul is boundless. Avraham was entirely benevolent and his greatest kindness was showing others that Hashem existed in the world.

Then, there was Yitzchak Avinu, who had a trying time when the Philistines stopped up the wells with dirt. All of the converts that Avraham converted returned to their evil ways. Not a single one remained. With love alone – there are no tools, no boundaries, no principles, no laws – a person becomes bewildered from the abundance of love – he has no direction. That is not to say that everything Avraham did was for naught. With the love that he revealed, he caused Hashem's Divine Presence to descend – preparing the tools for Yitzchak, the pillar of awe. Now, love and awe together could achieve the complete correction.

Yitzchak excavated new wells, wells of awe – these do not give up so readily. Everything must be precise. But, there already was love in the world – thus, Yitzchak's reverence built on the foundation of Avraham's love. That is why our

³ כמים הפנים לפנים כן לב האדם לאדם (משלי כז, יט)

parsha opens with the phrase, “Avraham bore Yitzchak” – love yielded awe. This is not to say that Yitzchak did not contain love – we know how hard he tried to lure his son Eisav back. He was called Yitzchak after laughter (צחוק) – which is comprised of joy and love. Fear/awe combined with copious amounts of love.

When Yaakov Avinu appeared in the world, everything was already whole – he was not required to add anything more. For, what does Hashem want – love and awe. “What does Hashem, your G-d, demand of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to walk in all of His ways and to love Him, and to worship Hashem, your G-d.”⁴

Yaakov did not add, he merely examined, at every moment, what the moment demanded – love or awe. That is the middle pillar – not the halfway point between love and fear – it is knowing precisely when to utilize awe and when to utilize love. The pillar of truth. Truth changes in an instant - sometimes fear and sometimes love. Blending everything and knowing how to proceed, what Hashem’s will requires, without hesitation, without considering one’s self.⁵

Love of friends is mandatory. Not only must we consider what others need, we must seek to influence them, do for them. Hashem conducts His world with kindness and His creations with compassion and He commands us to follow His lead. Just as He is compassionate and merciful, so must we be. There is no greater obligation. We must speak kindly to others, words that cheer hearts. Parents must constantly increase their love and warm words towards their children. When other children hurt them or embarrass them and they return home to receive unconditional love and support – it heals them. We do not have the option of not loving each other – we must invest all of our efforts into doing so.

Loving our fellow Jews is the gauge of our

⁴ מה ד' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ד' אלקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאהבה אתו ולעבד את ד' אלקיך (דברים י', יב)
⁵ באור פני מלך חיים

connection to Hashem. A person can only know his level of connection to Hashem via the *mitzvos* between people. For example, yielding (letting go, forgiving, etc.) is an amazing weapon that creates an aura of pleasantness and satisfaction wherever it is deployed. Yielding one’s demands protects peace in the home, resolves disputes between neighbors – and immediately attaches him to Hashem.

Honor – we must be so meticulous with the honor of others. One’s honor lights up his countenance and when we impinge upon it, we darken his visage. The color drains from his face when we hurt him, when we degrade him, when we ignore him. The same is true for mockery at the expense of others – we must avoid it like fire. Rashi tells us that the *pasuk* made a point of telling us that Avraham was Yitzchak’s father because the gossipmongers of the generation were spreading rumors that Sara was impregnated by Avimelech. To quash those tales, Hashem made Yitzchak’s appearance identical to Avraham’s so that all would testify that Avraham bore Yitzchak.⁶ It is difficult to understand this – did Avraham, who was called *ivri* because he battled and was triumphant over all of the idol worshippers of his day, who stood on one side opposed to the rest of the world – really require such a unique validation from Hashem because of some rogue scandalmongers’ chitchat? Why was it necessary - certainly Avraham did not care about what they were saying? The Torah is teaching us the strength of the diabolical power of mockery – even a warrior like Avraham would be powerless against it without Divine Assistance countering the havoc and poison that it disseminates. Mockery is not just feeling superior to someone else – it is deriding every obligation in life. It is impossible to describe the dreadfulness of this tactic.

The greatest kindness is showing another person that Hashem exists. We cannot bring redemption without each other. We are responsible for one another. A person cannot be connected to Hashem without being connected

⁶ רש"י (כה, יט)

to the Jewish people. Hashem wants us to help each other find our way back to Him. He loves us all, He is our Father and He wants us to pass on the good things that we've learned and acquired.

By nature, we love ourselves and it is very difficult to love and lavish upon others. Instinctively, we are drawn to those *mitzvos* that are between us and Hashem more than those *mitzvos* that are between us and our fellow man. We must alter ourselves. Just as we are so meticulous with hearing *shofar*, so must we be fastidious with providing for others. When a Jew

stands before us asking for help, we should imagine that it is Hashem sending us a golden invitation to ascend towards Him. We are following His path, for His kindness and love towards us in infinite. Nothing is more precious to Hashem than our doing *chesed* and taking care of each other.

Hashem never gives up on anyone, even those mired in the swamps of detachment and darkness. Out of His enormous world-wide compassion, he sends us, His loyal messengers, to bring other Jews close to Him.

תפילה

Master of the World!

Protect me from all of the passions that I still long for, from all of my negative attributes that I have not yet corrected.

Have mercy on me, Father, that I not face challenges that You know I cannot overcome.

I beg You, Father, to remove my negative desires and replace them with new ones. Give me one strong will – to be as You wish me to be.

Help me, Father, that all my appetites be transformed into one fervent craving for You. Create a new heart for me, a pure heart that does not hunger for improper things.

Of all of my negative attributes, I plead of You, Father, save me from jealousy – begrudging eyes – may I warrant being happy for the successes of other Jews. For, if I am not happy for them, if I am jealous, I will be unable to sense You. I will be distant from You.

Help me merit feeling joy for another, even if I am missing the very success he enjoys – even if it seems as if I will never attain it. Help me understand that what someone else receives, You, Father, gave to him, and I have no inkling as to the workings in Heaven, how You conduct the world.

Help me, Father, to remember that everyone has their own unique path to You. Help me perceive that everyone has their own positive elements, different than mine – and each one is wondrous in his own way. Help me always see the good in others, that I may be impressed by every little action towards holiness – even if he is quite distant and has much work to do. Help me not forget how far I am and how much work I have yet to do.

Master of the World! I can no longer tolerate being envious, I can no longer bear my resentful eyes.

Save me, Father.

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 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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