

פרשת ויצא

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.

"ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה" (בח, י)

"And Jacob left Beer Sheva and he went to Haran"

This teaches us that exile atones for sin, as it says, "Yaakov left and went to Haran" – since he left his land into exile, Hashem's rage (חרונו) went from Yaakov."¹

"והנה מלאכי אלקים עלים וירדים בו" (בח, יב)

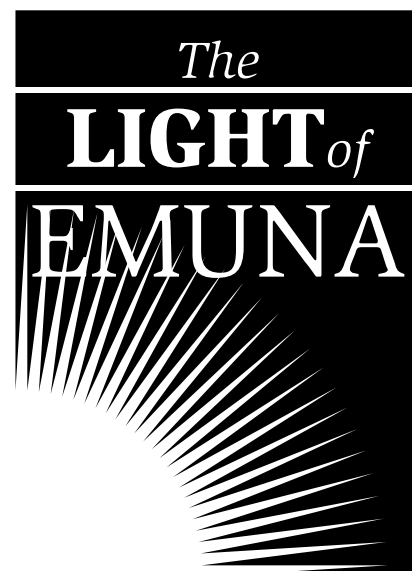
"And behold, angels of Hashem were ascending and descending upon it."

The entire course of serving Hashem is a path of ascents and descents - flashes of elevations and adhesiveness contrasted by moments of failure and downfall. The ladder in Yaakov's dream was set on the ground, as low as possible. Yet, its peak reached the Heavens – we can reach Heaven, to Hashem Himself. One cannot climb a ladder except incrementally, step by step. At times, we fall, all the way to the bottom – but we collect ourselves and begin to climb again. Yaakov Avinu left Beer Sheva, the sanctuary of holiness, and travelled to Haran, the epicenter of evil. Yet, he did not become dejected, he did not despair – this is the trajectory of a Jew who wishes to draw close to Hashem.

When a person is in the darkness, suffering through a downfall – he feels like he is sinking, deteriorating – rather than please Hashem, he is drawn to the triviality of this world, to base urges. Master of the World, what is wrong with me? Where have all those moments in which I felt your presence so strongly disappeared to? At those times I wanted You so much, I fought for

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ילקוט מעין גנים



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

holiness; I felt Your pleasantness and sweetness. Master of the World, save me from this darkness that I've fallen into – return me to You.

Precisely at these junctures, a person draws closer to the truth. Specifically when he is in the fog, when he feels the disappointment, the deficiency – he lifts his head and cries out to Hashem. The prayer of a person who is steeped in the depths of spiritual murkiness, the wail of a person who desires returning and seeing the light – are beloved and desirable to Hashem more than anything else.

Angels of Hashem ascending and descending. The order should have been reversed. First, they should have descended because they originate in Heaven and only afterward ascend again. The allusion is to those who crave Hashem, who wish to cling to Hashem. At the beginning, they experience great light, they are elevated – but, immediately thereafter comes collapse.

"This is ultimately what everyone goes through. At times, with Hashem's mercy, a great light opens for us and it seems as if we will be upright and then, suddenly, we are submerged in darkness as if the sun has set early – this is the ladder standing on the ground with its head reaching Heaven. This is the entirety of our task – going from level to level, like ascending a ladder. Therefore, a person should never become dejected by whatever occurs, nor should

he start to believe that the light is his when he has encouraging experiences of glowing salvation. He must recognize that he is still distant – then, he will avoid downfalls when darkness descends on him. For the truth is that the light is never extinguished and never leaves him. In the end, Hashem will complete what He started in His benevolence towards the Jewish people and each individual, we need only long for salvation constantly – in the manner of ‘every eye awaits You,’ as we say in *davening*, ‘for we hope for Your salvation all day and look forward to salvation.’^{2”3}

At times we ascend and at times we descend. Of primary importance is maintaining our position and realizing that if we can preserve our level during a defeat, we will merit soaring. Yaakov Avinu’s exile to Haran was a terrible demise – but precisely from that disgrace did his greatest ascent emerge – establishing the Jewish people.

When it feels bleak, beg Hashem for salvation. Lift up your head. If it is difficult to talk - mumble. Prayer helps. We must incessantly remind ourselves of this – because we do not sufficiently believe in the power of prayer. “He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set.”⁴ Encountered (ויפגע) is a term of prayer- to teach us that Yaakov established the *tefilla* of *Maariv* – “instituting for generations so that even if a Jew is in a situation of *Maariv*, of darkness, of the blackness of night, in physical and spiritual distress – he can still accomplish through prayer and beseeching of Hashem for deliverance – and redemption can materialize from within the gloom.”⁵

Prayer is stubbornness. Rachel Imeinu refused to give up – “sacred schemes have I maneuvered to equal my sister, and I have also prevailed.”⁶ “I have stubbornly pleaded many tortuous pleas to Hashem to be equal to my sister”⁷ –for I too,

² כי לישועתך קיוונו כל היום ומצפים לישועה (שמונה עשרה)
³ ליקו"ה שילוח הקן ה. י'
⁴ ויפגע במקום וילן שם כי בא השמש (כח, יא)
⁵ שפת אמת
⁶ נפתולי אלוקים נפתלתי עם אחותי גם יכלתי (ל, ח)
⁷ רש"י

yearn, like my sister, to bear children. The *pasuk* concludes, “I have also prevailed.” When we are stubborn in *tefilla* we will usually triumph. Rachel did so and so did Leah. Leah shed an ocean of tears because she was destined to marry Eisav. The *Gemara* teaches that the people used to say that Rivka had two sons and Lavan had two daughters – the older will marry the older and the younger will wed the younger.⁸ “The virtue of *hisbodedus* and abundant *tefilla* is learned from Leah Imeinu –despite that Yaakov loved Rachel, despite that she was destined to marry Eisav – she nevertheless earned, through supplication and tears, to become Yaakov’s first and primary wife, generating the majority of the tribes and even being the progenitor of Moshiach – all due to her eyes being tender – she was weary from so much weeping in *tefilla* so as not to end up with Eisav. Her tears and prayers were so potent that they changed her fate entirely. All of this is to teach us *emuna* - the power of prayer is above destiny, above all calculations and logic that we see. *Tefilla* has the capacity to change and transform things from one extreme to the other – to absolute good.”⁹

Tefilla is a great kindness. At every moment, in every situation, in every place, a Jew can raise his head and beseech of the Holy Blessed King of Kings for whatever he desires, whatever he is missing, whatever hurts him, whatever worries him – he can talk to Hashem about anything and request assistance. When a person stands before Hashem with the authentic comprehension that only He can help him, there is nothing else. If one strengthens himself in warm and sincere prayer and casts all of his dependences on his Creator, even when he cannot perceive any natural solution to his request – he will witness a swift demonstration that he indeed does have on Whom to rely. Rebbe Nosson taught that one must accustom himself to *daven* for anything that is lacking – whether children, income or health – no matter what, his key counsel is to entreat Hashem and have *emuna* that Hashem is benevolent to all - one’s principal effort is to call

⁸ בבא בתרא קכג.
⁹ שיח שרפי קודש ח"ו, שד"מ

out to Hashem – it works for everything in the world and it is always available.¹⁰

If we face difficulties, challenges at home, troubles with neighbors – give in. More than anything else, Hashem recalls the moments in which we relinquish for the sake of others. Foregoing, giving, loving, judging favorably – are most precious to Hashem. With these, we solve problems, end conflicts and return to Hashem.

“Hashem remembered Rachel.”¹¹ Hashem remembered Rachel in the merit of the colossal sacrifice she made in passing the signs to Leah. When a person foregoes, he does not lose. He receives other enormous and amazing rewards. Rachel earned the eternal title of mother of all of us, bearing Yoseph Hatzaddik, who was on the level of the forefathers and whose sons, Ephraim and Menasha were equals of the *shevatim*. When a person foregoes, he opens a passageway for the light of Hashem to penetrate into him - bringing joy and eliminating suffering. When a person foregoes, bending his head a bit, prepared to be the pursued rather than the pursuer, he merits the wondrous pleasure of attachment to Hashem.

Harav Eliezer Berland Shlita: Arrogance brings about troubles. Every arrogant thought pushes away the Divine Presence. When a person sins and is broken about it ... he does *teshuva*. But, when a person is conceited, he does not experience a broken heart and he avoids *teshuva*. An egotistical person cannot tolerate others, he feels as if he is so wise, so gifted – nothing can reach him. When he performs some constructive action, he starts to feel superior to others – setting him on a course of self-destruction. He *davens* well and starts to disdain someone who slept late, without considering why that person has acted so. But, if a person detects haughtiness within himself and does *teshuva* for every narcissistic thought – he corrects everything and elevates all to holiness. Rebbe Nachman instructed that the best way to avoid arrogance is to attach one’s self to

tzaddikim. Observing righteous people highlights where we truly stand in correcting our attributes and we begin to detest our own negative characteristics – we shamed by comparison and start to do *teshuva*. We recognize that chasing urges is not a way of life.

If we live with deficiencies, full of fears and suspicions, on the brink of despair – we must remind ourselves that we have a clear guarantee, received by Yaakov Avinu on the great and awesome night, at the holiest of places - a pledge that was provided to every Jew, at any place, in any situation – “Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go ... for I will not forsake you.”¹² Hashem is with us. Yaakov Avinu endured a lot – driven from his father’s home, divested of all his possessions, indentured to a charlatan for twenty years. Yaakov Avinu was cast into the depths of darkness – and revealed that, precisely there, Hashem is found. The only viable course of action – he turned to Hashem.

From within the murkiness, the haze – one thing is expected of us – to never cease searching for Hashem. To speak to Hashem, to have *emuna* that Hashem is with us in our suffering, to have *emuna* that *tefilla* helps, to have *emuna* in the assurance that Yaakov Avinu procured for us.

This world does not exist for our prosperity, for our success – it exists for one purpose – so that we recall Hashem at every moment. We walk around muttering, “with G-d’s help, thank G-d, if Hashem wills it” and we think that we do it so that we will succeed, will not err, will not lapse – without realizing that every occurrence is to inspire us to say, “thank G-d.” The “thank G-d” does not assist us in enduring the day – the day, with its experiences, is to stir us to say “thank G-d.” The world was created for us to descend into it as Hashem’s ambassadors, to reveal G-dliness in this materialistic world, in the midst of all of the challenges and sufferings. Each person, with his own agonies and tribulations – when he feels like they are impossible to confront and he doesn’t know what to do and he screams out

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קיצור ליקוטי מוהר"ן יד
ויזכור אלוקים את רחל (ל, כב)

¹² והנה אנכי עמך ושמתריך בכל אשר תלך... כח לא אעזבך (כח, טו)

with incomplete cries because the inner bitterness prevents full shrieking – forgets that the cry is the very purpose.¹³

Hashem created the world so that we are aware of Him, recognize Him - to know that we are incapable of accomplishing anything without His help, to know that we are always dependent upon Him. Hashem awaits our seeking Him out, running to Him from the depths of affliction and obscurity – recognizing that only He can aid us - “Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go ... for I will not forsake you.”

Emuna Corner

Our first reaction must always be a thought, word or action of *emuna*. If we got fired, if we were robbed, if someone struck us, if we received a speeding ticket, if our child was expelled, etc. Our first reaction must be, “this is what Hashem wants and it is for the best.” Even if we don’t understand what Hashem wants from us or how it could possibly be good – first, we must say it is Hashem’s will and it is for the best.

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me stop speaking *loshon hora* and *rechilus*, especially in “gray areas” that appear to be permissible, but are not. For example, when we discuss our neighborhood – there are so many dangers. Anything that can be interpreted as shameful is *loshon hora*. Anything said about people that others may view distastefully is *loshon hora*. Even asking where someone was for *davening* or for a *shiur* is forbidden because there are definitely those who will view his absence as a flaw.

Master of the World! How can I treat this so lightly? How is it possible that I have a list of justifications for why it is permissible? i.e. “It’s not possible to exclusively discuss matters of *emuna* and fear of Heaven, I need to relax once in a while, even great *tzaddikim* are accustomed to speak to their wives about mundane matters, for at times this is what provides us with vitality, for at times one is unable to listen to serious matters.”

Master of the World! Help me strongly imbue my head with the idea that it is absolutely forbidden to say anything about anyone that may be interpreted as negative. Give me the strength to stop, to refrain – because very often I remember that it is prohibited, I fight myself a bit, but in the end, it escapes my lips.

Master of the World! *Loshon hora* and *rechilus* are base urges - help me overcome them – for, as is the case with everything, without You, there is no hope. How can I create a warm and close connection with You, Father, while at the same time exhibiting scorn and contempt for Your children? How do I not consider Your pain, Father, when there is hatred among Your children?

Master of the World! Have mercy on me. Do I not have enough cravings? Do I really need another?

Master of the World! Help me sanctify my speech on the holy Shabbos. Help me speak only words of *emuna* and holiness. Help me not be frivolous.

Master of the World! I want to hate *loshon hora* and *rechilus*. **Master of the World!** I want to sanctify my speech – help me.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דוֹב

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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