

פרשת וישלח

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my daughter, Chaviva's, birthday;
and to my wife, Devorah - Happy Anniversary
thank you for nineteen wonderful years.

"וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו אל עשו אחיו" (לב, ד)
"And Jacob sent angels ahead of him to his
brother Eisav"

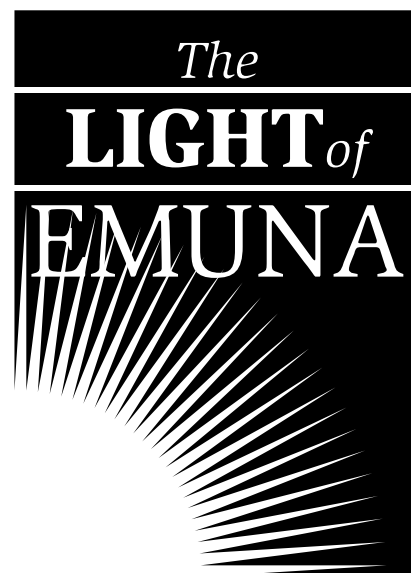
Why was Yaakov so afraid? R' Shmuel bar Nachman answered, notice how fearful *tzaddikim* are of sin – after all of the assurances that Hashem gave Yaakov Avinu, he was still afraid of Eisav and sent angels. Why was he scared? He pondered the fact that for twenty-two years he had not seen his father and had not served him – “maybe that sin of not honoring my father is instigating against me and allowing Eisav (who did serve our father for the duration) to attack me. Therefore, Yaakov sent angels.¹

"כי ראיתי אלקים פנים אל פנים" (לב, לא)
"I saw an angel face to face"

There is no more amazing and complete pleasure in a person's life than the limitless and everlasting delight of a person who is bound and connected to the King of the world through love and awe. It is a remarkable matter, a terrific thing – to adhere one's self to Hashem. This is what the soul wants. A person needs nothing other than Hashem – if he has Hashem, he has everything. What of the judgments and troubles in life? What of all the corrections that a person endures? Rejoice over tribulations! Celebrate that Hashem occupies Himself with us. We are in the best possible hands. Whatever happens to us, whatever we are missing – these are our essential perfections, this is how Hashem has created us and this is what Hashem deems to be the best and fastest way to our corrections. There are no accidents. Everything we receive –

¹

לקח טוב



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

all difficulties, all deficiencies – are not mistakes, they are not bad luck – everything is orchestrated by Hashem in our best interest and we must accept them and be pleased about them.

Yaakov Avinu braved everything - what did he not withstand from the moment that he was forced to flee his father's home? He was forced to spend so many years with the most notorious crooks and cheats. Then, the hostile encounter that opens our *parsha* – on one side of the barricade stood Yaakov Avinu with the four holy mothers, the eleven *shivtei kah* and myriads of sheep and cattle and, on the other side, four hundred warriors draw near with Eisav at their helm, furious and seeking revenge. What did Yaakov and Co. do? They ran to Hashem, they raised their heads. “Master of the World, ‘deliver me now please from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav, for I am afraid of him, lest he come and strike me.’”² Despite all of the troubles and obstacles – we have fine reason to be joyful. We have Hashem. We are never alone. Hashem loves us, Hashem manages our lives, Hashem extends a hand, Hashem leads us. We must dig inside our souls, find the jewel known as happiness – acknowledge that it is impossible to appreciate Hashem without trials and tribulations. Hashem desires that we find our joy, our attachment to Him in those depths. We

² הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשיו כי ירא אנוכי פן יבוא והכני (לב, יב)

constantly ask Hashem to give to us, but, if we had everything, there would be no room in our hearts for Hashem.

When a person understands that only Hashem can help him, he raises his head and speaks to Hashem about his woes, not just once a day, ten times daily – this being most valuable above all. This connection is essentially everything. It is not whether we receive our wishes or not, our very connection with G-d is the greatest accomplishment. The bond with Hashem is one's attachment to his own very vitality, with his own soul. Our entire focus must be on guarding that bond - it fills the soul, creates happiness. Any other source of joy only exists if it is linked to our relationship with Hashem. If not, it is only temporary, destined to eventually disintegrate, it can never satiate the soul for any extended time. When something occurs, some sudden difficulty, some hardship, some adversity – our initial reaction is to panic. Instead, we must remember Hashem, connect to Him, cling to Him and thereby, find hope, joy, counsel and a way out. Our entire concern in life must be to recall Hashem at every moment.

Talk to Hashem as much as we can. When a person does *teshuva*, he must do *hisbodedus* every day – thereby forming a relationship of closeness and love – unattainable without talking to Hashem. It is our oxygen, our sedative, our vivacity and our exhilaration. Every time we speak with Hashem, it is our first time - even if we discuss the same matter over and over. In *yiddishkeit*, there is no such thing as repetitiveness – it is always new.

Say “thank you” – a lot of “thank you”-s. There are so many reasons to express gratitude to Hashem. There are small miracles and big ones – constant kindness. One, who recognizes them, never ceases expressing appreciation. “Thank You Father, You are so generous towards me.” Yaakov Avinu, amid all of his suffering, noted, “For with my staff I crossed this Jordan River, and now I have become two camps.”³ So many

³ כי במקלי עברתי את הירדן הזה ועתה הייתי לשני מחנות (לב, יא)

kindnesses that he was concerned that his merits may have been depleted and Eisav may best him - maybe “I have been diminished by all the kindnesses.”⁴

There is external kindness, which we can observe. There is also inner kindness – Hashem's tremendous love, with which Hashem loves us and it is evident in everything that happens to us. All of the difficulties, problems and humiliations – each and every incident is complete and incredible inner *chesed*. Suffering is kindness because Hashem arranges things intentionally so that we may arrive, with our own capacities, in an astounding and magnificent way, to the entire truth. Things cannot always proceed in a desirable, orderly and wonderful manner. Hashem wants tears, cries – so that we correct ourselves, so we seek out our flaws.

We should not be alarmed by the darkness. The obscurity itself is a great light. The *pasuk* places evening before day⁵ - Creation begins with nightfall – the marvelous song of Creation begins at night - even if its revelations only arrive with morning. Dovid Hamelech came to the world to introduce all types of flaws, to absorb all sorts of humiliation, to falter in all kinds of failings, to descend to the lowest places. All of this, to show us and the entire world that it is possible to ascend from the lowest depths. From the dimmest gloom - we can attain the ultimate light.⁶

Say “thank you” – a lot of “thank you”-s. First of all, it is Hashem's due – He gives us so much, He does so much for us. Aside from that, it is so gratifying to praise Hashem. We always profit from this because Hashem, like a good father, wants to give more to those who thank Him and truly feel excited by what He gives them.

In the midst of all of his suffering, Yaakov Avinu never lost his joy. He maintained this obligatory and appropriate outlook and it gave him much

⁴ קטונתי מכל החסדים (שם)
⁵ ויהי ערב ויהי בוקר (א,ה)
⁶ באור פני מלך חיים

strength. He sent flocks of cattle to his brother, Eisav, but he commanded his servants to maintain a space between each flock. He did this in order to satisfy the greedy eye of the evil Eisav. Rashi explains that Yaakov's motivation was to make his gift appear larger and more respectable. This is a clue for serving Hashem. A person is suddenly struck with many misfortunes, G-d forbid. He feels as if the entire world abruptly collapsed on him and he doesn't know where to begin. He must calm himself, catch his breath – create gaps between the calamities – one thing at a time. If he reflects well, he will see that here too Hashem is calculating, softening them so that the pain is not too great. "This world is naturally filled with suffering and sorrow. But, Hashem provides for us, even in times of difficulty, and performs amazing and everlasting favors. We must thank Him. We must seek the expansiveness even in the very afflictions themselves and express gratitude incessantly. Every agony has its own benefits. This is the secret of Yaakov's leaving space – we must leave gaps between the miseries and notice Hashem's magnanimity."⁷

When Eisav and his men approached Yaakov's camp, Yaakov divided the people and the cattle into two camps - so that if he could not save everyone, he would at least save some. Such is how we must serve Hashem. If we cannot do what we usually do, we do what we can, grab something – do not quit. Things do not have to be perfect to be called good. At times, the little bit we perform under difficult circumstances, when we have no strength or vitality left – gives Hashem the most contentment.

Similarly, at times a person finds himself facing a dilemma, unsure of which choice to make – he feels as if the wrong option will cost him everything – he is perplexed, confused, filled with doubt. Yaakov Avinu provided the answer – whatever we do will be good. There are many ways to compete with our enemies - gifts, prayer or battle. Hashem is found in every route, whichever path we take we will find Hashem, in

every option. Hashem is with us if we decide to go; He is with us if you decide to stay. It is good.

A person's connection to Hashem must be with love and awe. One without the other is not sustainable. The term "and he was very afraid"⁸ is only used once in the Torah. What was Yaakov so worried about – hadn't Hashem guaranteed to protect him? Yaakov's fear was of his own sins, even the most minute - he was not worried about Eisav himself.

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev was once walking and noticed a spiritual light emanating from a house, so he knocked on the door. The woman who answered the door immediately assumed that the Rebbe had come to rebuke her. She broke down and cried that she used to be a sinner but she has done complete *teshuva*. When she finally stopped crying, the Rebbe asked what her terrible sin had been. She recounted how when she had been 17 years old, her parents had died suddenly and aside from her pain over her loss, she had to worry about supporting the family. Her parents had been employed making butter and cheese on the farm of the local *poritz*. She approached the *poritz* to ask to be allowed to continue their posts. He agreed on the condition that she allow him to touch her hair. She agreed and as he touched it, she ran out of his house back to her home and cried all night. She followed up by shaving her head of the hair that caused her to "sin." She then exiled herself and worked as a maid in exchange for food and lodging until several years later when some acquaintances married her off to an orphan. Her husband died shortly after the wedding and she remained alone in the world. "Rebbe, continued the woman, I have suffered so much for my sin and I have done *teshuva* – I hope that Hashem forgives me." Reb Levi Yitzchak asked her what she had done with the hair that she shaved off that night. "I burned it all except for one lock that I save so that whenever I question why I deserve all of my grief, I can remind myself and tell Hashem, 'You are righteous'."

7

ליקו"ה, כלאי בהמה ד, ח

8

וירא מאוד (לב, ח)

It is impossible to serve Hashem without joy and it is impossible to be truly happy without serving Hashem, without learning to live with Hashem.

The angel that fought with Yaakov tried to cast him into depression – but Yaakov fought back, he fortified himself, and he would not let the angel leave without blessing him. The blessing that Yaakov insisted on was joy – “Your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but Yisroel”⁹ – Yisroel = the song of G-d (שִׁיר אֱ-ל) – constant singing, constant joy. We must fight for happiness.

Harav Eliezer Berland Shlita: There are people who enjoy being sad and depressed. If you try to cheer them up – it annoys them. We must work hard to be joyful, for human nature draws us towards despair. Sadness and depression temporarily anesthetize pain, but magnify them in the long term. We must be vigilant to never

allow sadness to dominate us. The evil inclination battles our joy with all of his might. If a person remains blissful, if he sings and dances to Hashem – all abundance will reach him. Joy transforms descents into ascents, cures all ills. We must remind ourselves of all the good that we have – we are healthy, our spouses are healthy, our children are healthy. If we have not merited a spouse or children yet – be happy and the merit of the happiness will bring us what we require. On Shabbos, we must enjoy our families and not feel miserable or dejected. It is difficult to be happy – it takes self-sacrifice. Even our sins should not sadden us – they cannot touch our pure, holy, righteous souls. We only sin because we are sad. If we err, we do *teshuvah* and be happy – sing, hum, say *Tehillim* – never despair. Remember all of the good we do – we fasted on Yom Kippur, we keep Shabbos, we don't *tefillin*, we wear *tzitzis* – be happy, always.

תפילה

Master of the World! At difficult times, when I am suffering, when I am angry, when I am in pain or confused, when everything suddenly goes wrong, when everything unexpectedly falls apart – help me, Father, to draw strength from the words that I often repeat, “Everything is from Hashem; this is Hashem’s will; everything is for the best; the greatest darkness can lead to the greatest light” and so many other accurate and beautiful maxims that are all so true. Help me Father to draw strength, encouragement, hope and even joy from them. Help me remember that You Father, can save me from all suffering, nothing is too difficult for You, and that things can be transformed for the good in the blink of an eye. When I am in the midst of distress, pain, destruction – I forget, I am broken - it is even hard for me to hear these adages. It is so difficult to watch others suffer when there is nothing that I can do and the words that I utter have no effect, on him or on me. Teach me, Father, how to help others who are broken and in pain and cannot abide words of *emuna* or *bitachon*. They cannot understand how things can happen to them, why Hashem no longer loves them, how Hashem forgot all of their merits. Help me, Father, to be strengthened and to strengthen others with words of *emuna* and *bitachon* – the truest words.

Help me, Father, to understand that when we bow our heads and accept that we do not understand anything and recognize that we do not run the world, that not everything has to go our way – then, everything gets easier. Help me, Father, in these difficult times, to be closer to You, to report to You, to beseech of You, to cry to You, to speak to You from a deeper place.

Understanding that You are our Father is our greatest comfort, hope and salvation. May it ultimately penetrate our minds and our hearts that the real reality is that everything is from You and everything is for our greatest good.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דו

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*.

©Dov Elias 5772.

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

⁹

לא יעקב ייאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל (לב, כט)