

# פרשת ויגש

This adaptation is dedicated  
in honor of my daughter Ariella's Birthday.  
Happy Birthday!!!

"ויגש אליו יהודה" (מד, יח)

## "Then Yehuda approached him"

Yehuda's name derives from the term for gratitude (הודאה). Therefore, we are called Jews (יהודים) because we thank Hashem for everything, big or small – we acknowledge that everything is from Him. That is how we draw near and that is the best advice for every time of difficulty and isolation – to nullify ourselves to Hashem's will, thereby clarifying for ourselves that even amid the concealment – Hashem is found.<sup>1</sup>

"הוציאו כל איש מעלי" (מד, א)

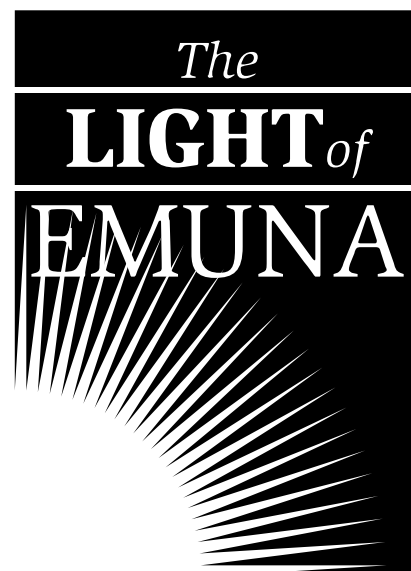
## "Remove everyone from before me!"

When Yoseph decided to reveal his identity to his brothers he ordered everyone removed from his presence. He wanted to remain alone with his brothers. Only then, did he exclaim, "I am Yoseph." Why was it necessary to dismiss them? Rashi Hakadosh informs us that Yoseph Hatzaddik was concerned that his brothers would be embarrassed by the presence of others.

The beauty of *yiddishkeit* is in not causing to harm others, not embarrassing others – most importantly, protecting the honor of others. The *Gemara* tells us that "it is better to cast oneself into a lit furnace rather than cause the color to drain from someone else's face."<sup>2</sup>

Yoseph Hatzaddik forgave. He felt no acrimony towards his brothers. Despite everything they had done to him - stripping off his tunic, shutting

<sup>1</sup> שפת אמת  
<sup>2</sup> מוטב שיפיל אדם עצמו לכבשן האש ואל ילבין פני חברו (בבא מציעא נט.)



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

their hearts to his pleas and throwing him into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions - despite all of this – he forgave. "I am Yoseph your

Happy Birthday to: Adam Sokol, Jay Yurman, Chany Blass, Shira Gluck, Suri Sokol, Tuvia Marciano, Ariella Orlofsky, Dovid Gluck

Happy Anniversary to: Michael & Mirie, Aliza & Ronnie, Howard & Jill, Judah & Adina, Ari & Allison

brother – whom you sold into Egypt." Despite their having sold him to Egypt as a slave, he remained their brother – he held no grievances, no anger, no hatred. How much pleasure does Hashem enjoy when we treat those who have mistreated us graciously?

"Then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck."<sup>3</sup> Rashi Hakadosh explains that Yoseph cried over the two *Batei Mikdashos* that would ultimately be destroyed in Binyamin's portion of Eretz Yisroel. Binyamin cried over Mishkan Shiloh that would ultimately be destroyed in Yoseph's portion. Why did each one cry over the other's misfortune and not their own? The separation between Yoseph and Binyamin was forced upon them as a byproduct of unwarranted hatred. The antidote was baseless love. They loved each other so fiercely that the other one's pain was more unbearable than their own.

The Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh said that it is

<sup>3</sup> יפל על צוארי בנימין אחיו ויברך ובנימין בכה על צואריו (מה, יד)

worthwhile for a person to live eighty years to just once do a favor for another Jew, even a materialistic favor. The favor need not be unique – it may even be small, trivial and insignificant – it is still inscribed in the book of remembrances.

Unconditional love brings us close to Hashem. It is so pleasing to Him. Considering how to benefit others, how to defend their honor, how to truly participate in their celebrations. We must remind ourselves that they too are Hashem's children and Hashem takes gratification in their unique service. We must learn to regard each and every child of Hashem with a positive outlook, to discover their beauty – that area in which only they can perform for Hashem's glory and no one else can take their place. Being ever cognizant of the fact that Hashem is found with every single person is a highly elevated level and we must work hard to attain it.

**Rav Eliezer Berland Shlita:** Dovid Hamelech had a benevolent outlook.<sup>4</sup> He observed only the light in every Jew, the positive aspects in every Jew, the holy spark in every Jew. A person tends to see his own light and not that of others, whether his friends or his family. Sometimes a person sees light in his wife but she does not discern any in him, or vice versa. We must find it in each other because it is forbidden to see the deficiencies and failings of others. The essential element of the “evil eye” is the inability to tolerate the fact that a friend may be superior to us in some way. Why does it bother us that he learns or davens better than we do? If we could accept another's talents we would be able to rectify the entire world. A generous outlook means admiring others, loving others, being happy for their advantages, being elated for their successes.

Hashem desires our unity more than anything else. When a person respects another, notices his attributes and admires them, feels some gentleness towards another – he merits receiving some of that person's amazing gifts.

“I prefer to walk in the street and not encounter anyone, I can barely bear myself, I can hardly tolerate what happens to me and I have no strength to pay attention to others or to encourage them, nor for them to have pity on me. I want to be isolated and not see anyone.” These are normal feelings but they are not real. These are moods that we must overcome. There may be rare times when they are appropriate, but they are generally prohibited because every one of our souls is a fragment of one communal soul, the soul of the Jewish people.

We are individual parts of a treasured nation that has a holy mission. We must feel for all of the other parts, for we are included in them – it must hurt us when someone does something negative. Even in our weaknesses, we must cling to amazingly righteous people – by honoring them, by praising them, by learning from them, by longing to emulate them, by feeling submissive to them. By doing so, we are included among them and are part of the collective and thus able to receive all of their remarkable qualities.

When we join those who do not share our background and who might not be as “religious” are we are – but we join together to serve Hashem wholeheartedly - and we refrain from acting in a condescending or disdainful manner towards them, we are united. Without this harmony, Hashem cannot bear to look at us, despite all of our wonderful *fumkeit*.

We must interact with others affably – greet them warmly, bring them close, pray for them, gladden them – to whatever extent we are capable of – and to the extent that we are unable, we must, at least, yearn to.<sup>5</sup>

When a person reminds himself that he is part of a complete nation, one common soul – it affords him strength, it gives him joy and it provides him with a little extra humility. Even the simplest person has some facet that we are missing. We may be extremely successful but we still require

<sup>4</sup> יפה עיניים וטוב רואי (שמואל א' טז, יב)

<sup>5</sup> באור פני מלך חיים

his component - which we do not possess.

Unity, love and peace – that is what Hashem wants from us. The story of Yoseph and his brothers is a lesson for the generations. It teaches us how to not bear a grudge, how to forgive, how to judge favorably and even how to love someone who has wronged us, pursued us and bullied us for many years. The stories of the fathers are lessons for the children.

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"ונפשו קשורה בנפשו" (מד, ל)

**"Since his soul is bound up with his soul"**

Yaakov Avinu could not survive without Binyamin. He loved him from the depths of his soul. Their souls were bound together. And, that is how we are with Hashem.

"For should he leave his father he will die."<sup>6</sup> Without You, Father, we have no life. You are our joy, You are our tranquility, You are our vigor, You are our consolation. We ask for nothing except one thing, one request, one petition – to be with You, to cling to You. We will not give up on You. We constantly seek You, raise our heads to You – we will not become confused by what happens around us. If we are close to You, if we feel You – we need nothing more. The rest will come on its own, G-d willing.

With every problem, every concern, every deficiency and every difficulty – we always have to Whom to turn. Only You can help us. Our salvation is only with You. First, we turn to You – only after that do we make any endeavors.

There is so much suffering in the world – only someone connected to Hashem can withstand them. Without this connection – it is misery. We cry for those who do not have this bond, we cry for ourselves for those moments in which we lose that relationship – our hope.

Story: There was a Baalas Teshuva in Leone, France who learned about the *mitzvah* of

*mezuzah*. The *mitzvah* made an impact on her and she decided to put one up on her door. Friends cautioned her of the dangers of exhibiting signs of Judaism where they lived and, so, she reluctantly took it down. One day, she found a note on her door from an upstairs neighbor telling her that they had accepted a package for her. When she went to retrieve it, the elderly occupant asked why she had removed her *mezuzah*. When she explained, the man related, "I am a Holocaust survivor. I have remained alone after losing my wife and children in the war. To escape from Torah and *mitzvos* I moved to this area. About a month ago, the elevator broke and I was forced to use the stairs. On my way up, I caught a glimpse of your *mezuzah* and I was flooded with memories of the distant past. I stood next to your *mezuzah* for half an hour, touching it and sobbing – I felt as if your *mezuzah* was connecting me to my past. Since then, I started taking the stairs every day to kiss your *mezuzah* and to fill the void inside of me." She immediately returned the *mezuzah* to the doorway and the elderly man began his return to Hashem.

Within every Jew, no matter what stage he is at, there hides a tremendous aspect of holiness – a Jew is a part of G-dliness – a Jewish heart is a heart that burns for Hashem.

**Rav Eliezer Berland Shlita:** Every Jew contains boundless treasures – he need only remove the grit that conceals them. The soul of Jew is passionate for Hashem. Every Jewish soul longs to do *teshuva* and contains the fire of the *Mizbeach* – a continual fire than is never extinguished. Each one is capable of setting the entire world ablaze. No matter how evil a person is, he has an even greater soul. The Midrash tells the story of Yossi Meshisa. He was a heretic who had joined the Romans. He watched as any Jew who kept Shabbos or *Bris Mila* was crucified and he chose to join the Romans and help them burn the *Beis Hamikdash*. Before they destroyed the *Beis Hamikdash*, they wanted someone to bring out its treasures. They were all afraid to enter so they offered Yossi to keep the first item that he brought out. He

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<sup>6</sup> ועזב את אביו ומת (מד, כב)

emerged with the golden *Menorah*. The Romans decided that he did not deserve something so precious and they sent him back in to take something else. At that point, something ignited within him and he refused to go back in or let them have the *Menorah*. They threatened him with horrible things but he refused to give up the *Menorah* – willing instead to die with it. They proceeded to torture him and cut him into pieces. As he was suffering, he felt peaceful and immediately accepted *teshuva* on himself – he acknowledged Hashem and accepted the pain with love. At that moment of extreme pain, he only felt Hashem's presence and recognized that the Jewish people were everlasting and there was nothing aside from Hashem.

Few merit achieving closeness to Hashem as it is meant to because as soon as we begin drawing near, many obstacles arise to trip us up. Often,

people fall and remain down. Our *parsha* teaches us that even in our downfalls, Hashem is with us. "I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up."<sup>7</sup> Even if we, G-d forbid, reach the lowest point, the bleakest darkness - we must fortify ourselves because, precisely there, Hashem will have mercy on us, save us and bring us close to Him – for Hashem never abandons His nation.

If we fall – we begin anew. We must recall that whatever happens is to heal us, to correct us, to provide us with merits, to cleanse us, to purify us – all of the challenges, difficulties and suffering are to bring us closer to Hashem. That is their only purpose. Our primary task is to realize that Hashem is always with us, with everyone. Even those who have sunken so low can correct everything with one inspiration of *teshuva*.

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## תפילה

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**Master of the World!** Help me to avoid people a little less – help me be a little friendlier when:

I am in the elevator and someone is running for it and I desperately want it to close before they reach it;

I come home and my neighbors are outside and I am tempted to rush in before they can see me;

I am walking down the street and recognize someone and I lower my eyes, as if I am so "frum," so I won't have to talk;

Someone knocks on the door or calls my phone and I'm tired, so I motion to my wife as if to say "I am not here;"

I embark on a long bus ride and notice acquaintances and silently hope that someone I don't know sits next to me so I can be alone with my thoughts.

**Master of the World!** Why is it that I only like it when some people spot me and approach me with kind words?

**Master of the World!** Give me the strength to express a bright countenance, to say nice words, to get out of my shell for a bit – help me cheer others up and not run away from them.

**Master of the World!** Help me be a little more sociable and friendly – for, just as I need a smile, so do others.

**Master of the World!** Who knows what damage I do to others when they see me so closed up in myself?

**Master of the World! – Help me!**

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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אנכי ארד עמך מצרימה ואנוכי אעלה גם עליה (מו, ד)