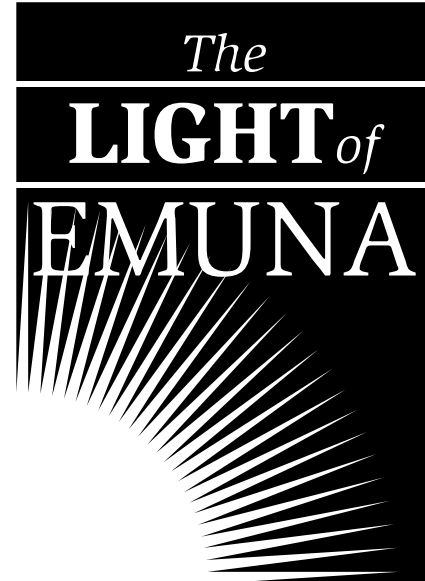


# פרשת שמות

This adaptation is dedicated  
in honor of my wife Devorah.



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

"ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה" (א,א)  
"And these are the names of the sons of  
Israel who came to Egypt"

What is meant by "and these" – would it not have been sufficient to simply say "these?" The addition of the letter vav (ו) teaches us their wholeness. Just as Yoseph and his brothers were completely righteous and did not change their names, so were all of them – their children and grandchildren, likewise righteous. Despite descending to Egypt and entering the iron furnace of exile – they did not alter their names and they all remained righteous – like Yaakov and his sons.<sup>1</sup>

"והן לא יאמינו לי" (א,ד)  
"They will not believe me"

Why is our holy Torah so centered on our exodus from Egypt? Why are so many *mitzvos* described as "a memoriam of our exodus from Egypt?"<sup>2</sup> For in reality, we have not yet departed from Egypt. The exile of Egypt is not merely a physical one; it is subjugation of the soul. Our souls remain exiled to this day – an exile of forgetfulness and scatterbrained-ness. We forget our pedigree, we forget that we are descendants of the holy forefathers – there is no greater lineage than ours. We overlook the fact that we are beloved children of Hashem – that we are Hashem's firstborn. We fail to recognize that the very One who has forced us into the depths also promises to elevate us. We forget that the very same One who afflicts us has already previously created the cure. We forget that things just don't

happen; we forget that for every suffering there is purpose, that every pain accomplishes corrections – no sigh is for naught. When we are in the midst of travail, in the midst of a bitter concern over our livelihood, in the midst of worrying over an unending litigation, in the midst of humiliations, in the midst of distress – we forget the truth. We forget that we are not alone. Penetrating the veil of concealment and revealing the secret that is within this exile, within these struggles – is a most difficult task. That is why Moshe protested that "they will not believe me." From amid the exile, behind the shroud, still enslaved – how will they possibly believe that Hashem revealed Himself to me? Precisely in the midst of this most difficult exile – the greatest redemption is born. Therefore, we constantly recall the exodus.

Life is not a garden of roses. There is much anguish in life. Each person endures considerably. We must remind ourselves perpetually that Hashem desires only the very best for us – even if there are currently difficulties. "The Lord chastens the one He loves."<sup>3</sup> If a person feels as if an injustice is happening to him, that the ordeals are to his detriment – he merely amplifies the strict judgments against him, G-d forbid. Every person has his own path, with many corrections, with many difficulties – but, one thing must be clear –

<sup>1</sup> צרור המור  
<sup>2</sup> זכר ליציאת מצרים

<sup>3</sup> את אשר יאהב ד' יוכיח (משלי ג, יב)

even amid our own private devastation – even then, Hashem supervises us. Hashem never abandons us. When we are mindful of this - it provides us with much strength, much hope. We understand that this is Hashem's method of elevating us to draw us closer to Him. When we perceive suffering in this manner, the pain eases. The day will come when we will realize that at the depths of strict justice lied the deepest mercy and compassion.

Rebbe Nachman taught that the purpose is all good, even the tribulations, the suffering, the negativity that occur – if we focus on the purpose, they are definitely not negative at all, rather they are great favors because all of the misfortunes are certainly for our ultimate good, because Hashem's intentions are always only for the good.<sup>4</sup>

Only via suffering can a person connect to his Creator. Light is not revealed when everything is wonderful. Light is revealed through difficulties. There is no stronger bond with Hashem than during times of distress, when there are hardships. Suddenly, we are connected. Unexpectedly, we lift our heads, plead, we suddenly speak from a most intimate place inside, from the deepest point within. Suffering purifies us, cleanses us, and brings us closer to Hashem. We relentlessly seek light – but we acknowledge that when we are ensconced in darkness it is even more enriching. For, only when we are blanketed in obscurity are we truly capable of crying out to Hashem. This sort of scream pierces all screens and reaches the Throne of Glory. Just as it was for the Jewish people did in this week's *parsha*, “and the Children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to Hashem.”<sup>5</sup>

“Even after the difficulties that occur to you - I stand by your side, I am found with you, I am even discovered in these places. I take pity on you, I watch you, I do not allow you to fall, and I

<sup>4</sup>

ליקו"מ סה

<sup>5</sup> ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו ותעל שוועתם אל ד' (ב, כג)

assist you even in the most trying situations. But, to be worthy of redemption, you must prepare utensils. When you were in Egypt, you did not have speech, speech was in exile. Speech is *tefilla* and you were unable to pray. But, you did have one weapon – your voice. There is voice and there is speech. Voice alone is a cry, without words – it is always possible to cry out to Hashem. Please Hashem, save me, raising our heads, emitting some sound – a person is capable of this in any condition. You were occupied with work, you were unable to *daven* with a *minyan*, you were unable to find a *siddur*, you did not know the appropriate text – but you were able to shout. Hashem awaits your cry – without it, there can be no redemption.

But now, things appear to get worse. The Egyptians will not even provide the straw. This is your test. *Emuna* is the tools of redemption. Without *emuna* there is no one with whom to speak. *Emuna* is our faith in Hashem. If you trust Hashem, He deals with you. Whatever transpires in life – even the unpleasantness and failures – are called “acts of change.” These must coalesce into a simple unity of G-dliness. One's entire labor is to recognize that all of these activities stem from one place – Hashem. At times these acts take the form of negativity, difficult judgments, adversity, problems, miseries, big or small. At those moments a person thinks, ‘woe is me, what is happening to me, how will this work out, what will be?’ Then he is told, ‘hold on a minute, we told you that you must merge all of the acts of change into a simple unity – so, do so, remember Hashem, bond with Him, connect to Him and then you will find hope, joy, counsel and a proper path.’<sup>6</sup>

Wherever we do not understand, we need *emuna*. When we do not understand why certain things happen, why nothing is going well, why everything seems upside-down – we must realize that this is all preferred, preplanned, preordained since Creation, this is the intent, this is the course, nothing is unexpected, nothing happens that is unforeseen. The more we

<sup>6</sup>

באור פני מלך חיים

comprehend that there is nothing aside from Hashem, the better of we will be.

The lower we are when we reveal Hashem, run to Him and seek Him – the greater is our reward.

When a Jew experiences no light and still puts on *tefillin*, still *davens*, it is most special.

When a person hears Hashem's "no" and still remains attached to Hashem – it is greater that when he does so after hearing a "yes" (i.e. when Hashem gives him what he asks for).

Our setbacks arise because we seek alternate solutions. Rather than clinging to Hashem, we pursue substitute ideas. One person chases gastronomical pleasures, another avoids life by sleeping in, a third's temper spins out of control, while a fourth seeks illicit pleasures. They forget Hashem. If, instead, we push everything else aside and turn to Hashem - it creates a lot of satisfaction above.

Life is not a sanitarium. Life can be summed up in three words: struggle, struggle, and struggle. Hashem never gives up on a single Jew. He strikes us again and again, he places mask upon mask – all to inspire us. They are all there to awaken us to Hashem

A person must embrace his obstacles for, without, them he would accomplish nothing in life. If a person contemplates his life, he recognizes that precisely in the most difficult periods the greatest salvations sprouted.

**Rav Eliezer Berland Shlita:** A person must accept all experiences with love. His wife criticizes him, his parents humiliate him, his friend rebukes him, a bus driver yells at him - everyone opposes him, screams at him, and embarrasses him. This cleanses a person. "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be cleansed of all of your impurities and from all of your abominations will I purify you."<sup>7</sup> Clean

<sup>7</sup> זרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאותיכם ומכל גולויכם אטהר אתכם (יחזקאל לו, כה)

water is the rebukes and the humiliations – they cleanse a person.

A person suffers downfalls – he can repair the entire world with *teshuvah*. He can tell people that he too endured what they are going through, he's been there, in the same place in which they find themselves – and he did *teshuvah* - they can too. All of a person's defeats transpire so that he can lead the way – so he can show others the way. His failures were mere messengers, like divers who descend to the depths of the ocean in order to rescue others.

When we acknowledge that (a) Hashem sent us the suffering, (b) Hashem will remove it, and (c) it is in our best interest – we attain a wondrous level. But, we can go a bit higher – we can thank, praise and extol Hashem while in middle of suffering. Rebbe Nosson taught that if everyone would heed the teachings of the *tzaddikim* and constantly have *emuna* in Hashem that everything is for the very best and would continuously thank and praise Hashem, as it says "With Hashem's justice I will praise a word; with Hashem's kindness I will praise a word,"<sup>8</sup> all suffering and exile would undoubtedly cease and the final redemption would arrive.

There is no suffering without sin. If a person never sinned, there would be no reason in the world for him to suffer. When we understand that our grief is a result of our iniquities and are designed to inspire us to correct our shortcomings – the anguish is removed. If we take responsibility for our lives and stop blaming others, stop complaining, stop becoming depressed, stop getting angry at Hashem – our revised attitude itself will sweeten judgments against us. If we persist and beseech Hashem to show us which sins are the cause of our afflictions, we will be shown what needs rectification. It is not easy, but living this way raises a person and fills him with joy. We always have free choice. Moishe Rabbeinu did not think the people would believe him – but they did. Even after all of the abuse they

<sup>8</sup> באלקים אהלל דבר בד' אהלל דבר (תהלים נו, יא)

endured for so long – they chose to believe. We have that power as a nation – and each of us has that power individually.

Hashem strengthens so many souls in tasting the sweetness of withstanding a difficult time only to see the clear hand of Hashem at work – His guardianship, His desire to provide good, to help, to lessen our pain, to encourage, to gladden and to support.

When, in the middle of tribulations, in the midst of darkness, we take a *Tehillim* or begin to speak to Hashem from our tortured hearts – Hashem receives us as true friends, He listens to our prayers. “Hashem is close to all those who call Him”<sup>9</sup> This does not happen overnight – but,

eventually we find Hashem. Ultimately we realize that there are no punishments, Heaven never pushes anyone away – suffering is meant to draw us close, not drive us away. Hashem loves us dearly – His love for us is beyond human ken. A Jewish soul is more important to Hashem than the entire Torah.<sup>10</sup>

Just as a father cannot be severed from his son, regardless of what his son has done (including the worst things), and will follow him anywhere, *daven* for him anywhere. He cannot become disconnected – he has no choice in the matter, a father’s love for his son is beyond free-will. Such is Hashem’s love for us. He never gives up on any one of his children - He wants all of us, even the most distant.

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### תפילה

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**Master of the World!** Fortify me with *Emuna* when the exact opposite of what I had wanted and prayed for occurs:

Even though I recited the entire *Sefer Tehillim* Friday night,

Even though I did *hisbodedus* for so long,

Even though I took advantage of the days on which we say *Hallel* to scream with my last ounce of strength, “Please Hashem save me, Please Hashem make me succeed,”

Even though I cried and concentrated so hard during *hoshanos* on *Succos* and *Hoshana Raba*,

Even though I traveled to *kivrei tzaddikim* and *davened* so much,

Even though I tried so many other things that I cannot recall at the moment

And yet exactly the opposite of what I had requested materialized – exactly what I beseeched not to happen, came to pass – help me have *emuna* that this is just another test of my *emuna*. Help me realize that it is not bad luck or that I made mistakes – rather it is precise Divine Providence.

Everything is from You, Father, everything is for the best – even if I am, for the moment, in the darkness of Egypt and do not perceive any good in my current situation.

Help me comprehend that I understand nothing and what I identify as terrible for me can be exactly where my salvation lies.

**Master of the World!** Fortify me with *Emuna*.

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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