

פרשת וארא

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my wife Devorah.

"וארא אל אברהם אל יצחק ואל יעקב בא-ל-שד-י"
"I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and
to Yaakov as Kel Shakkai" (ג, י)

The Torah illustrates the greatness of our forefathers – Hashem revealed Himself to them with the name Shakkai, indicating restriction and frugality – for this was their nature.¹

"ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה"
"But they did not heed Moishe because of
shortness of breath and hard work" (ט, ט)

The severest penalty for a Jew is not being able to recognize Hashem, having no awareness of the presence of the Creator. A Jew, whose soul is hewn from under the Throne of Glory, yet is not able to acknowledge Hashem, draw close to his Creator – is in the darkness of Egypt. He is in exile. This concealment is the exile. Exile of the soul is when we forget Hashem, when we do not feel Hashem, when we do not cling to Him; connect to Him, long for Him - until we can no yearn no more.

There are times when we do feel. Times when an inner warmth blazes within us – times when we actually feel our dependency on Hashem's kindness – times when we feel how the hand of providence grasps ours and guides us down the alleys of life. That is redemption.

Exile and redemption are assorted interludes in life – appearing at different periods.

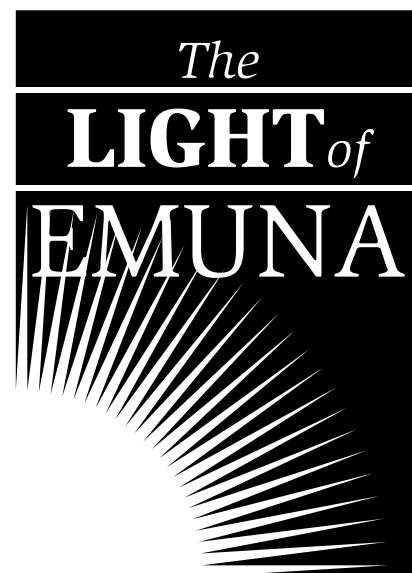
Within the soul of a person, within the ventricles of the heart occur the mighty struggles between

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באר משה

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לקו"ת פ"ו
נועם אלימלך

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

Yitzchak and Yishmael, Yaakov and Eisav, Moshe/Aharon and Pharaoh. Battle after battle – countless skirmishes to escape the impurity of Egypt, flee the inclination of urges and negative characteristics to reveal and earn the treasures buried in our hearts – amazing riches that are still concealed.

Most of the time, we are in exile. We cannot seem to leave Egypt. We do not fulfill the words and wondrous counsel of the righteous, which are complete cures for the soul. "But they did not heed Moishe, because of shortness of breath and hard work." Rebbe Nachman explained that people have such limited *emuna* because they do not believe that they can do *teshuva* with relatively little effort – they think it is too difficult.²

Moishe Rabbeinu arrived and spoke of redemption with joy, with song and melody, while clinging to Hashem – but the Jewish people had already given up, they were short of breath and out of patience to listen or believe that it was still possible to escape their current circumstances – they could not believe that it was possible to connect to Hashem with happiness and tenderness.³ That was true then and remains true today. We must proceed with joy. We must be happy, we must dance and sing

and thereby avoid all of our troubles and adversity – transforming exile into redemption. Chassidus is not merely an injection of inspiration. *Chizuk* (fortifying one's self through learning) is the essential path, fundamental and deep – it is the path that shows us that we too are connected to *yiddishkeit*, that the service of Hashem is relevant to us too. We must associate with *tzaddikim* because they direct us on the proper course and provide incredible advice – guidance that revives the soul in the darkness and obscurity of this world.

Hisbodedus is one example. It is a concept that includes everything. Through *hisbodedus* one can converse with Hashem about everything that he is lacking, everything that happens to him, thereby cleansing and purifying his heart. How much ecstasy does a Jew experience when he unexpectedly reminds himself that he can talk to Hashem about anything – even some misfortune that just precipitously arose, even some matter that worries him greatly - about everything. Seek counsel, express gratitude, plead for salvation – Hashem is our address for all. We are never alone. We are never powerless – Hashem is all controlling, all-powerful, He merely awaits our *tefillos*, via which we can attain anything, rectify our character traits, overcome our urges – are *tefillos* have amazing capacity. When we realize that alone we are unable to conquer the evil inclination, as it says, “One's evil inclination overwhelms a person daily, were it not for Hashem's assistance, he could not prevail.”⁴ When we understand this, we will *daven* incessantly. The same is true for all holy matters – we are unable to accomplish any good deed without Divine Assistance, without praying and beseeching Hashem for aid. When a person has *emuna* that everything depends on his *tefillos*, he talks to Hashem constantly and requests Divine Assistance in every matter. This knowledge bolsters us. It is such a tremendous gift that it alone is cause for nonstop gratitude – that it is possible to turn to Hashem and plead for everything – even those things that I feel no

desire for and I have no drop of strength or zest for – “Master of the World, have mercy on me. Give me the will and longing to do Your will. Master of the World, I want to feel Your presence.” Without this, *teshuva* is indeed difficult work. With it, *teshuva* is phenomenal.

If a person realizes the power of personal prayer, even his *shemona esrei* is entirely different.

Rav Eliezer Berland Shlita: When we reach *shemona esrei* – there lies salvation, there lies a till containing a million dollars. What are we chasing? We must start praying letter by letter, word by word, we are in the King's hall! At a minimum, occasionally, we must pray *shemona esrei* for twenty minutes - one minute per blessing. When we reach the blessing of “heal us” (רפאנו) – there is our cure! “Bless on our behalf” (ברך עלינו) contains our livelihood! “Bring us back” (השיבנו) is the address for *teshuva*! If we *daven* slowly we will see much salvation. There are eighteen blessings corresponding to eighteen vertebrae – and the Tikkunei Zohar explains that abundance descends from higher worlds via *shemona esrei*. If we wish to receive the bounties of health, income, intellect - they must originate through eighteen worlds represented by the blessings. If we skipped *shemona esrei* or said it too fast, the pipelines remain clogged, the plenty cannot descend. It is time for *Mincha* – where are we running? What's the rush? We should *daven* like a *mensch*. Whatever it is can wait until we finish – we are not the *shliach tzibbur*. He has to finish first but we can *daven* for an hour. Rebbe Nachman revealed that *tefilla* contains all of the salvations – there is nothing to fear, nothing to worry about – an enemy can be transformed into a friend. If we are worried about our business, our children – we *daven shemona esrei* – we will find deliverance.

People do not pray properly because we do not believe in the power of prayer, because we lack *emuna*. A person does not pray slowly because he thinks he does not need prayer, he feels as if everything okay without *tefilla*, he is already a millionaire. If a person had complete *emuna* and

⁴ יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ... ואלמלא הקב"ה שעוזר לו אינו יכול לו (סוכה נב:)

recognized that Hashem stands above him and listens to every word and heeds the sound of our *tefilla* – he would *daven* properly.

If a person or his wife suddenly falls ill, he runs to the emergency room, he ignores what they tell him and immediately starts to *daven*. He asks for health slowly and deliberately, not only for himself but for Jews everywhere. He would be so particular when saying, “For You are G-d, King, the faithful and compassionate healer” – only Hashem is a trusted healer, not the doctors. Even the best, most careful doctors are also focused on their careers. Only Hashem is a compassionate and faithful healer – He does not need our money, He does seek honor, and He is not aiming for a promotion. Receive all of the cures in the world, beg Hashem to heal us. All miracles and wonders are prepared for every Jew; we need only open our mouths.

The road to redemption is in simplicity. The *tzaddikim* have taught us simple ideas. The way back is with *Tehillim* – without complicated strategies – saying *Tehillim* and singing *zmiros* on Shabbos - simplicity above all else.

Yiddishkeit is simple and amazing. They once asked the Chofetz Chaim’s mother how she merited a son who enlightened the eyes of the entire world. She responded that she could not think of anything special. She only knew that her mother had taught her that she is commanded to raise good Jews and to do so she must *daven* whenever she could. So, whenever she finished her chores or put a pot on the fire to cook and had a few minutes, she would take a siddur and, with tears, ask Hashem to help her raise him to be a *talmid chochom* and *yarei shomayim*.

A Jew must take delight in his guileless service of Hashem - even if he feels nothing and everything is dark for him. This is what gives Hashem gratification. We feel nothing and we still continue – this is the only way to prepare receptacles to receive the light.

No one’s life is perfect. Everyone has his challenges. In this world we work and struggle

awaiting the next world, the world of reward. Hashem knows exactly what we need to best connect to Him. We are saved by the suffering itself. If everything always went well, we would become haughty – we would never reach the goal. Therefore, when we wish to draw close to Hashem, Heaven pushes us away, so that we remain humble. Whether or not we feel, we must continue to please Hashem –not be angry at Hashem because he did not give us what we asked for - never despair. Always remember that we have someone to run to. Hashem is with us in every downfall and helps us get back up. He is always ready to accept us again. *Yiddishkeit* does not demand what we cannot do. Every minute of prayer, every small motion towards good is everlasting – that is Hashem’s delight – that is why He created the world.

There is no person without good. Even routine service is good. It does not have to be perfect to be good. We are all filled with good points. We may not denigrate what we have done because of what we have not done. Desire is the mightiest power – if our essence and aspirations are directed towards holiness, we will attain it. If we do not give up our desire – we will definitely surmount all obstacles.

Hashem loves our desires more than our successes. He does not need success, he needs those who don’t succeed, who stumble, who are humiliated and down and yet not broken - they start anew. We must remember that everything that happens to us is designed to cure, correct, cleanse, purify, purge and benefit us – to bring us to the ultimate purpose.

Yiddishkeit is in its simplicity. *Kiruv* for instance need not be performed by delivering sermons – often a kind word, showing someone that he is not alone – with love, without condescension – smile at him, tell him how great it is to live like a Jew. This is the greatest kindness. To be a “chiloni” means to be connected only with the mundane (*הויל*), with no bond to holiness. Does such a Jew exist?

R’ Yisroel Salanter asked someone what he did

for a living. The man replied that he was a fabric merchant. R' Yisroel asked him again and again the man responded. On the third query, the man was puzzled. R' Yisroel explained that he kept answering how Hashem gave him his livelihood; he was asking what he was "earning" for himself for the next world. The man immediately decided to sell his business and, with the proceeds, established the Nevohrdik *yeshivas*.

Our job is to be a link in the chain, to pay it forward, to give to others. We continue the chain of the generations by influencing others, in the smallest ways – with a smile, a kind word, a listening ear. We receive from each other and give to each other. Even someone who is not a parent impacts others.

The Alter of Slabodka said that the face is public property. We do not have the right to not smile, not laugh, not gladden another. We have no right to say, "leave me alone, don't talk to me. By merely smiling we connect people. Even if we do not do so wholeheartedly – it provides honor, it reveals fear of Heaven. We can inspire others and we must do so.⁵

Hashem is always with us – the light of His kindness is always shining – we need only seek and request it – by speaking to Him. Speech is the primary form of connection. If we manage to establish a personal relationship with Hashem, we have everything. That is what they were lacking in Egypt. *Yiddishkeit* invites us to live a life on its side of beauty. How can we reject this offer and not extend it to other Jews?

תפילה

Master of the World! What will be of my prayers? When will my *shemona esrei* be personalized, like *hisbodedus*? When will I manage to *daven* at length, with sweetness, with concentration, from the depth of my heart?! When will I have complete *emuna* that all of the abundance, in all matters, all comes via *shemona esrei*?!

When will I be able to stand like those *tzaddikim* whom, when I watch them *daven*, it takes my breath away – who hardly move while *davening*, glued to the floor and pray to You without cunning, without a watch?!

When will I be able to focus on what I am saying and stop daydreaming and planning – at times realizing that I do not even know where I am up to in *shemona esrei*? When will I have my own tune, unique to my *shemona esrei*, even when it is a *tefilla* without sound, just in the heart?

Master of the World, thank you, nonetheless, for what I do have in my *tefilla*.

Thank you that, despite everything, I feel that this is a time of clinging to You, that, despite everything, I ascend somewhat in those moments even when I cannot concentrate on every word.

Thank you for my love of *tefilla*, that I enjoy going to *daven*. Thank you for the miracle, that after so many years, so many days, three times each day – it is always like the first time.

Thank you for our merit in being able to speak with You in second person, personally, so closely.

Master of the World! I want to improve my *tefilla*, You deserve much more from me – Help me.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

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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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Reb Doyv's Corner⁶

Letter from the Yetzer Hora⁷

To my star pupil,

I am writing this letter to let you know what I think of you. Up here in heaven things are not like they are down on Earth. Over there, people only know what they can see. If they see a person is "successful", they think that he is the greatest guy. When they see somebody struggling, they think he might be one of the weaker elements.

Let me tell you something. Hashem gives every person certain abilities that nobody knows about down where you live. Some people are capable of tremendous things, while others were put there for much smaller purposes. Only Hashem in His infinite wisdom is able to give every person exactly what he needs, to reach his potential.

I am very misunderstood. Most people hate me, and I don't really blame them. Most people think that my job is to make sure that they fail in all aspects of Mitzvos, and that I rejoice every time they sin. This is the furthest thing from the truth. Did you ever watch a boxing coach train his student? It is really a funny sight. The coach will put on gloves, and fight against his student. At first, he won't hit him so hard, or throw his best punches. But, as the student gets better and better, the coach will start to fight him harder and harder. He does this so that the student will improve his skills, and become the best boxer he can be. This is where it gets strange. Every time the coach knocks down the student, the student gets yelled at!! But finally, when the coach threw everything he has at his student, and not only does he withstand the beating, but he knocks the coach down, there is nobody in the world happier than the coach himself!

This is exactly how I feel. If you fail right away, and don't even try to fight back, I see that there is not much talent to work with, and so I take it easy on you. But if you get back up swinging, I realize that I may have a real winner here, and so I start to intensify the beating. With every level that you go up, I increase

the intensity of the fight. If you finally deal me a blow that knocks me out, I will get up and embrace you and rejoice with your success.

Sometimes my job is very disappointing I see a person with a lot of potential and I start right in on him. He fights back for a while, but when the fight gets too tough, he quits and just remains on whatever level he was on. (And he usually ends up going down!) I feel like yelling at him, "Get up you fool! Do you have any idea how much more you could be accomplishing?!" But I am not allowed to do so. I just leave him alone, and go try to find another promising candidate.

If I have chosen you to be the target of my more fierce battles, it was not for no reason! You have tremendous ability! You were born into a very special family, you have Rabbeim who really care about you, and parents who would help you grow in Torah and Mitzvos. You are a very respectful and kind person.

I am writing to you now, because I have a very serious request to ask of you. Please don't stop fighting! Don't give up! I have been beating too many people lately, and I am losing patience. Believe in yourself, because I would not be involved with you as much as I am if I didn't think you could beat me. Know what your strengths are! A great Rabbi once said: "Woe is to he who doesn't know his weaknesses. But, 'Oy Vavoy' to him who doesn't know his strengths - for he will not have anything with which to fight."

Always remember one thing: you have a secret weapon at your disposal. I shouldn't really be telling you - but I will anyway. Hashem himself is watching our "training" sessions very closely. I'm pleased to inform you that He's rooting for you! If things should ever get tough, almost too tough to bear, just call out to Him with a prayer, and He will immediately come to your aid. I wish you the best of luck, and I hope that after 120 years when your time is up in that world of falsehood, you will come up here to the world of truth, where I will be waiting for you with open arms, to congratulate you on your victory, and personally escort you to your place next to the Kisey HaKavod.

Sincerely, and with great admiration I remain,

Your Yetzer Hara

⁶ Not from Rav Azolai – something else I liked.

⁷ Posted on EmunaDaily.com by Jeremy Schiowitz – he found it on <http://www.divreichizuk.com>