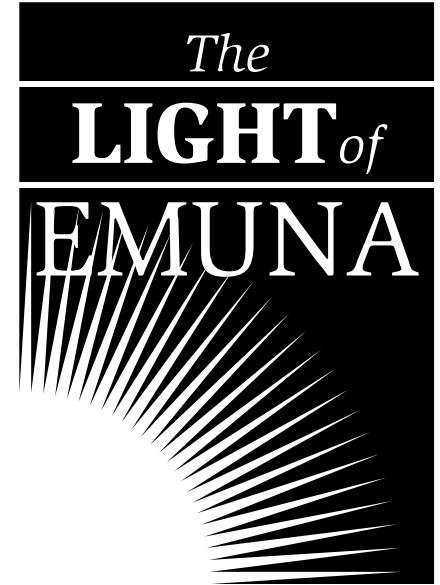


פרשת אמור

This week's adaptation is dedicated in honor of:
my dear wife, Devorah.



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

"ויאמר ד' אל משה אמר אל הכהנים בני אהרן
ואמרת אליהם ... (כא, א)

**"Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the
Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell
them."**

Why does the *pasuk* use the term **אמור** rather than the more common term of **דבר** to express "say?" **דבר** refers to more general statements, while **אמור** is used for specific instructions – this particular idea shall be relayed to them.¹ And, what are the most important details to convey in life? Words of *emuna*!

"ויאמר ... אמר ... ואמרת ... (כא, א)
"Said ... Say ... Tell ..."

When a person habituates himself in talking to Hashem in his own words - he relays to Hashem whatever is in his heart, whatever weighs upon him and increasingly pleads and prays to Him – there is no limit to the spiritual pleasure that he experiences. Every individual faces a variety of difficulties and sufferings in life, all sorts of troubles on a regular basis – but, when a person is accustomed to speaking with Hashem and communicates whatever is in his heart, he does not despair, no matter what situations arise. He does not become broken; he receives renewed vitality and enjoys the taste of life. In *shemona esrei*, after the first three blessings, when we begin our requests, we begin by asking for wisdom. That is our most important entreaty. The first thing that we ask for is knowledge because if a person has knowledge, he has everything. What knowledge? Knowledge that

there is a Hashem in the world – that He dwells among us, in all situations, at every moment. Knowing that whatever happens to us is from Hashem and for our own good – even if we do not always understand how. Knowledge that all of our deficiencies are for the purpose of bringing us to, ultimately, open our mouths and cry out to Hashem. Hashem waits for the moment that we finally realize that what we are missing is Him and call out to Him. Being unable to talk to Hashem is the greatest suffering that we must pray to alleviate. "Master of the World, if there is such a thing as talking to You about everything, to seek counsel with You like a son would with his father or a good friend – please allow me to do the same, for it is so difficult for me, it does not come easily."

To be able to speak with Hashem means to have *emuna* in Him. If we believe in Him, why do we not talk to Him? The more we speak to Hashem, the stronger our *emuna*. This week's *parsha* instructs us in the waving of the *Omer*.² The Kohen waves the *Omer* in all four directions and up and down – to illustrate that Hashem is everywhere, that the entire world is filled with His presence. The Hebrew word for waving is **תנופה**, which can be broken into the words **תנו** and **פה** ("give mouth") – begin by speaking with the world's Creator, fortify *emuna*. Rebbe Nachman said that in the eyes of the world, *emuna* is of

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שפתי חכמים

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והניף את העומר לפני ד' (כג, יא)

minor significance, but to him [Rebbe Nachman], it was a matter of great import. Primarily, *emuna* is without cunning and investigation whatsoever – with complete simplicity.³

Moreinu Harav: “a G-d-fearing woman – she should be praised.”⁴ Women are naturally more G-d-fearing than men. Women were not involved with the sin of the Golden Calf or the sin of the Spies because from the moment that they accepted the Ten Commandments, the moment that they accepted the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*, nothing could move them from their commitment or shake them – no argument, no persuasion could affect their *emuna*. When the men came home and tried to convince their wives to donate their jewelry for the purposes of the Golden Calf – the women protested. The men retorted that Aharon Hakohen himself commanded them to contribute – asking, do you not trust Aharon Hakohen, do you not believe in *tzaddikim*?

The women responded: We do not know what Aharon did or did not say but we do know that Aharon does not have the power to change the Ten Commandments. They stood firm to the point that the Zohar describes the men forcing the jewelry from their wives. They would not relinquish it voluntarily. The women remained wholesome, kosher, and modest - with pure *emuna* – and nothing could move them, nothing in the world!

The Zohar teaches that there are foyers in Heaven set aside for righteous women. One is labeled, “Basyah bas Pharaoh.” In it, thousands of women introduce novel Torah ideas. Basyah gave up being a princess to become a simple Jew. So many Jewish women throughout history have given up so much to raise good Jewish children. They attain the level of Basyah who ascended to Gan Eden in physical form.

Women share a quality with the *Mizbeach*. They sacrifice themselves for Hashem. They risk their

own lives to bring children into the world, to feed them, clothe them, and dote on them. They do it with self-sacrifice, sacrificing themselves for Hashem.

What is a Jewish home? A Jewish home is a *Mishkan*. *מיטה שולחן כסא נורה = משכן* (bed, table, chair, light). When a woman maintains her home – she is building a *Mishkan*. A woman is not obligated in certain *mitzvos* because of her other obligations, but she is not free of the obligation to cling to Hashem. She builds her relationship with Hashem through caring for her children and her home. It is told of the holy wife of R' Yitzchak of Drohobitzer, the mother of R' Michel of Zlotchov, who, while sweeping her home would say “holy, holy, holy.” Her husband inquired as to why she was doing so and she replied, “I hear the angels singing and they are reciting *kedusha* at this very moment.”

When R' Moshe Leib Sassover went blind he explained that it was because of his wife. He related that she regularly said “for the honor of Shabbos” when doing anything –she would knead dough and say, “for the honor of Shabbos,” she would cook and say, “For the honor of Shabbos,” etc. Every time she said it, another angel was created until the entire house was ablaze with fire. From the abundance of light, he lost his sight.

When a woman conducts her home for the sake of Hashem, with *emuna*, with joy, with awe and reverence – these simple acts elevate her to the point of prophecy.

Lag B'Omer

When the destitute knock at the door of a wealthy man, the wealthy man considers whether or not each indigent man's cause is more or less worthy. Based on his assessment, his donation is proffered accordingly. But, on the day that the affluent man is celebrating his son's wedding, he does not investigate. Every outstretched hand is filled without question because the benefactor is so cheerful and he wishes all those to enjoy along with him.

³ שיחות הרן לג
⁴ אשה יראת ד' היא תתהלל (משלי ל, ל)

Everyone receives.

Lag B'Omer is the same. Throughout the year, when a person asks and prays, he is evaluated as to whether or not he is worthy of having his requests fulfilled. But on Lag B'Omer – no questions are asked – all are worthy, all receive and draw with joy from the wellspring of salvation.⁵

Why do so many people make the trek to visit the gravesite of R' Shimon Bar Yochai? Even those who know not why they go, still go. Why?

R' Shimon represents secrets of Torah – they are not necessarily understood, but they are felt. Without understanding – people light torches, sing songs, and cut the hair of their three year olds. They do not know why – but they feel it in their souls.

Moshe Rabbeinu gave us the revealed Torah - R' Shimon gave us the hidden Torah, the inner Torah. It is the source of the pleasure of being connected to Hashem – of loving Hashem and Hashem loving us. Inner is what is not seen. It is concealed, covered, not external. It is the depths within each Jew, the point of attachment to Hashem, of desires and longing. Every Jew has this amazing unlimited point of G-dliness that Hashem never gives up on. We must reveal it - remove the covering over the heart to feel the full extent of our love for Hashem and His for us.

All of the sweetness of Torah and *yiddishkeit* come from there. That is what is desired of us – to go deeper, to seek genuineness over superficiality. We must incessantly seek Hashem's messages in our lives' occurrences. If we do not, we quickly descend into boredom, habit, sadness, bitterness, complaining – we begin to take shortcuts, rush through *davening*, and we quash any drop of vitality. Without inner Torah, we are empty. We require air, life, good feelings, happiness, and the soul of every matter.

Love of Friends

R' Shimon taught that we depend on the love between us. R' Shimon was a student of R' Akiva who taught love for each other and lost 24,000 students for their failure in this very matter. Their failing was that each one had his own method and, on some level, felt his own way to be superior to those of others. In that way, they failed to honor each other. R' Shimon came to correct that. He revealed light. The Zohar regularly talks about the *chevra*. The greatest preparation for Lag B'Omer is in loving each other and forgiving others for their past offenses against us. Loving each other connects us to Hashem. We recognize that we all share one Father and we are all part of the same G-dliness.

We must not think ourselves superior to others and show disdain for others. Joining together is the surest way of bringing about redemption. We must love all unconditionally. We must embrace those who are so different.

Thankfulness

Lag B'Omer is the day of **הוד שבהוד**. **הוד** means glory but also thankfulness (**הודאה**). We thank Hashem and thank Him for allowing us to thank Him. It is infinite – constant gratitude. Thank You Hashem that we have You, that we have upon whom to depend, to whom to turn, that we have hope, *emuna*, *bitachon* that you will rescue us.

Thank You for bringing righteous people into our lives – to teach us and warm us towards Your embrace. The Zohar is replete with gratitude by the students of R' Shimon for bringing him into their lives. A *yid* is so called based on the trait of gratitude – that is our essence. The glory of gratitude.

Never Despair

We must never despair. 24,000 students of R' Akiva died within a thirty-three day period – there was not even time to bury them. It is hard

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בשם צדיקים

to imagine the devastation. Yet, R' Akiva did not despair. He sought new students and found five, R' Shimon among them – and through them Torah survived. Most people would have been broken – not realizing that even the devastation has purpose.

All destruction is designed to reveal good. Sometimes we must remove many layers of husks to reveal the gems. Nothing is for naught. No groan or tear is wasted. Everything that transpires causes new things to sprout – more amazing, more praiseworthy, and more wondrous. The secrets of Torah are revealed from within the wreckage. R' Shimon emerged from ruin. From within desolation a person receives a sign. Suddenly from within one's materialism, his desperation, his depression – he feels, he hears a voice call out that directs him

not to give up – despite the fact that everything that he has heard, learned, engaged in, accepted shows that all is lost – there is still hope – for Hashem is found everywhere.⁶

R' Shimon reassured that Rabbis of Yavneh that Torah would not be forgotten from Israel. When one experiences such pleasure in Torah, such pleasure in *yiddishkeit*, such pleasure in connecting to Hashem – it is impossible to forget. The Rabbis were not afraid that the words of the Torah would be forgotten, they feared for the loss of its soul. R' Shimon revealed the internal portion of Torah, the soul of the words. When we learn Torah with soul, with vitality – it cannot be forgotten. If we constantly converse with Hashem and incessantly thank Him – it cannot be forgotten. When there is great love between friends – it cannot be forgotten.

תפילה

Master of the World! Give me the strength to refrain and not respond to those who unexpectedly scream at me, humiliate me, and even disparage me. Not just to desist from retorting – to remain relaxed in their presence. Help me consider that they are correct and I am not. Even when they treat me so in front of others, which makes it so much more difficult, help me, Father, that it not break me – even when the others are those who know me and respect me and will now think less of me.

Master of the World! Even if I managed to remain calm in the first few minutes, help me not develop anger and a desire for revenge as time progresses – for one who is vindictive and vengeful is so distant from You. Help remind me that this degradation that I suffer is also from You, Father. Therefore, why should I be upset at the other person, he is merely a messenger. I should not just not get angry – I must think positively about the one who embarrassed me – even pray for him for good in life, that he come close to You – for I have seen in the past that this is the best route to transform enemies into friends.

Master of the World! Help me not lose spirit and become broken when someone catches me red-handed, when he notices me behaving in a way that I should not, in a way that is improper. Help me acknowledge that it is the truth, that my attempts to conceal it stems from arrogance and a desire to present myself as loftier than I truly stand. Instead, help me lift my head towards You and beg You to help me change. Even if no one sees me, You, Father, always see me – eating improperly, *davening* inadequately, treating others inappropriately. Help me, Father, to recall that, at any and every moment, I can begin afresh and that I cannot accomplish anything without You – without prayers and supplications. Help me, Father.

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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