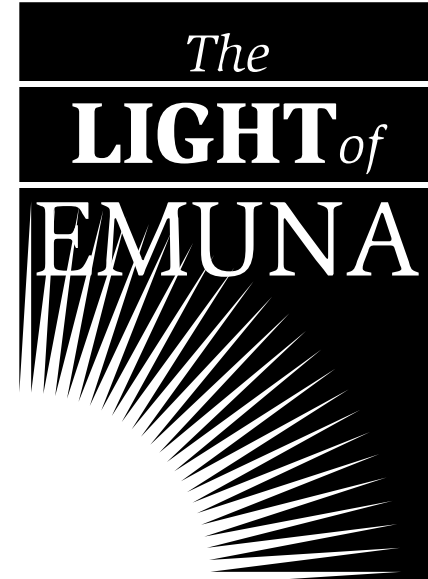


פרשת בהר-בחוקותי

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



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

"וידבר ד' אל משה בהר סיני לאמר" (כה, א)

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai saying."

The following *pasuk* begins the topic of *Shemita*. What is the connection to Mount Sinai? Weren't all of the *mitzvos* conveyed at Mount Sinai? The Arizal explains that the Seventh Year hints at the Kingdom of Heaven – "the land shall rest a Sabbath to Hashem"¹ – that was commanded at Mount Sinai, for Mount Sinai bears testimony to the revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven – all of mankind witnessed the mouth of Hashem speaking – "I am Hashem, Your G-d, and aside from Me, there is no God."²

"מי יעלה בהר ד'"

"Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem?"

A person's entire job in life is to climb the mountain – draw near the peak. We cannot stay in one place and say, "this is the way it is, this is my nature." We must incessantly draw adjacent to Hashem – constantly improve, to become better. Like *Sefiras Haomer* – from an *omer* of barley to an *omer* of wheat – from animal fodder to human food. The project of life never ceases – a duty of purification and sanctification.

We begin with *Emuna*. We must relentlessly reinforce the concept that there is no reality apart from Hashem – nothing happens on its own – we must not become confused into thinking that anything else exists. When a person merits honestly internalizing this knowledge, he earns the ability to accept

everything that happens to him affably – he is able to endure whatever occurs because he knows that without Hashem no one can lift a hand or a foot - without Hashem's permission, no one can do anything good or bad to him. When we get angry, when we worry, when we are offended – we see human beings before us, we do not notice Hashem. Whatever happens to us in life is all circumstances that Hashem envelopes us in to bring us closer to Him, so that we remember Him, so that we raise our heads to Him. When life goes well – we tend to forget.

We face many adventures every day and we stumble often along the way. We must recognize that these are all challenges from above and by withstanding them we benefit. We must remember that a person is never challenged in a way that he cannot persevere through. Wherever we find ourselves – Hashem is with us and helps us. If we stand strong, even just a little, Hashem bolsters us - he awaits our efforts, even if they are minimal. Hashem asks us "to open an opening the size of the eye of a needle and He will open for us an opening the size of a great hall."³ The entire purpose of life's challenges is to strengthen and forge us. True, while in the midst of difficulty we are uninterested in corrections and strength and only want the situation to change for the better.

¹ ושבתה הארץ שבת לד' (כה, ב)
² עבודת ישראל

³ פתחו לי פתח כפתחו של מחט, ואני אפתח לכם פתח כפתחו של אולם

But, Hashem's ways are concealed and if He tests us, it is for our best – because Hashem is a good father Who is concerned for His children. Every father wants his children to learn to overcome the crises that they encounter in life. This is the only way to rise spiritually and get closer to Hashem. That is the only way to climb to the pinnacle. Conquering our ordeals is the essence of the task of every Jew – that is the key to our success. Through difficulties, a person builds himself. He exposes his hidden abilities from their potential to actualization – amazing abilities that do not emerge when things proceed normally and splendidly – only by facing struggles. Without overcoming adversities – a person can fall dramatically – he can reach elevated heights and plunge severely. Impediments ensure that we do not collapse – like vaccines that guarantee against illness. When we face troubles and are not broken by them – it is good, we are happy, we are revealed as better than we were before, stronger.

To scale this mountain, we must boost our *emuna*. When the rule of “everything is from Hashem” is transformed into the key of life – our lives are entirely different. We constantly forget, become confused, feel victimized, always thinking of ourselves, our honor (e.g. they said to me, did to me) – this is all forgetfulness. The more we successfully focus on the fact that there is nothing aside from Hashem – the more we abolish our difficulties. A person plans all sorts of schemes and Hashem reverses them. It seems like bad luck – some mishap interferes with our plans but we strengthen our *emuna* that everything is in accordance with Hashem's plans – nothing occurs that was not meant to happen – we understand that trouble will pass, that its only purpose is to connect us to Hashem. When we realize that they will all pass, that they are for the best – we will observe how they transform into good. If not, we become disgruntled, we blame the whole world, we will blame ourselves and our lives are grueling and bitter, G-d forbid.

The Hebrew word for “challenge” (בַּסִּיּוּף) comes from the word for “miracle” (נִסִּים). They uplift a person. Acknowledging that they are ordained

from Heaven, intentionally, invites one to ascend – failure for the sake of growth. Every ordeal is a correction and the only way to cling to Hashem.

We are attached to this world. Our physical body is intense and rather than allow the soul to rule over it, it rules over the soul. Our mission is to slowly upend that nature. We must coronate the soul, which is a portion of G-dliness, which desires adherence to Hashem.

Our *parsha* states: “For the children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants.”⁴ A servant of Hashem is one who empowers the soul over the body. The soul is really the king and the body is the servant. Just as a servant must serve his master and do his will, so must the body serve the soul and annul its will before the will of the soul. When the soul rules – there is true freedom. There is no freer man than one who engages in Torah. To reveal the infinite zeniths of life, we must close our eyes to the limited. If we really want to know what is there – we must close our eyes to what is here. This world seeks to trap us in so many ways, to cause us to chase after it without pause, to engage in it and take interest in it. A person believes that by satisfying his urges he will attain peace and tranquility. But, the soul is not satiated. “A parable: an urbanite marries a princess. Even if he gives her everything he can afford, it is insignificant to her. She is a princess. Such is the soul of Jew – even if we provide it with all of the delicacies of this world – it is inconsequential because it is from above.”⁵ Rebbe Nachman recounted how the *yetzer hora* constantly asks us to choose what is secreted in his hand. We spend our lives pursuing it only to discover his hands to be empty. Buried deeply inside every Jew is life itself – positive attributes, holy thoughts, true vitality. We must assist the soul in freeing itself from servitude to the body. The soul seeks Hashem – its greatest pleasure is derived from serving Hashem. When Shabbos arrives, serenity for the soul arrives. A Jew drops everything and abandons himself into the arms of *emuna*.

4

כי לי בני ישראל עבדים, עבדי הם (כה, נה)

5

מסילת ישרים

Shabbos illuminates the recognition that nothing is a product of our own efforts. The entire world enlightens and illustrates the works of the Creator of the World. This facet of Shabbos is also found in the *mitzvah* of *Shemita*.

“But, in the Seventh Year, the land shall have a complete rest, a Sabbath to Hashem.”⁶ We do not sow, we do not harvest, we make no effort. We strengthen our *emuna* that our livelihood is from Heaven - our income is predetermined from the beginning, that no one can touch what is set aside for another. Hashem is capable of providing for us in a myriad of ways. If the Jewish people had had sufficient *bitachon* and had not asked “What will we eat in the Seventh Year” - the crop would have grown on its own throughout the seventh and eighth years. Because they asked what they would eat, they received three years’ worth of crops at one time, in the sixth year. That was less desirable for it had to be stored and they had to eat old grain. The *mitzvah* of *Shemita* (שמיטה) alludes to the fact that we must let go (שמוט) of all of our worries, all of our pressures and give ourselves over to lives of *emuna* and *bitachon* in Hashem.

It is impossible to reach the apex of the mountain if we forsake our friends en route. Interpersonal relationships and our relationship with Hashem are one and the same. Who is it that commands us to love, honor and help each other? Hashem. “If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him.”⁷ We must not wait until he falters, for then it will be difficult to stand him upright again. Now, when he reaches out for help, support him.

We must perceive Hashem within our friends. We must reveal the Creator in every “good morning,” “G-d bless you,” encouraging smile, pat on the back, kind word, expression of love, honor and concern for others.

We must learn to escape our self-centeredness. We must experience another’s pain. When

someone else is hurting, it is not the time to lecture on *emuna*. He is suffering and we must commiserate, comfort him, feel his misery. When something negative happens to us, G-d forbid, then, we should fortify our *emuna*. When someone else is in pain - it must hurt us too.

Where do we truly want to reach? What is at this apex that the Jewish soul yearns and longs for? There is inner truth. There is heart. There is the pleasure of attaching one’s self to Hashem - we love Hashem and know that He loves us. Nowadays, people increasingly seek *Chassidus*, secrets of Torah, the soul of matters. When externals govern, everything is more burdensome, we have no strength, we skip and take shortcuts - we have no connection to Hashem, we are so distant.

A person can fulfill all 613 *mitzvos* and eat only kosher - and yet be very lacking. His thoughts may still be negative, his eyes may still be damaging, his jealousy may still be adverse, his hatred may still be festering, he may regularly covet what is not his, he may be guided by his urges - even his lust for food. He eats delicious food that others do not have to goad them - so what good is the kosher certification?

He is a scoundrel within the confines of *Halacha*.⁸ He is uninterested in connecting to Hashem, he just wants a *hechsher*. He insists on the finest house, the nicest furniture and the fanciest car. He does not give *tzedaka*, it does not bother him that the indigent are lacking - and, even at home, he competes with his young children for the choicest piece of cake. Even though he was raised in a *frum* home and does not wish to violate *Halacha* - he is a rogue within the margins of *Halacha* - full of cravings and distant from Hashem. He perceives himself as righteous and others as evil - constantly justifying himself and denigrating others. He is steeped in materialism - he does not do *teshuva*. He does not confess, he does not improve - he remains stagnant.⁹

⁶ ובשנה השביעית שבת שבתון יהיה לארץ, שבת לד' (כה, ד)
⁷ וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו (כה, לה)

⁸ נבל ברשות התורה
⁹ באור פני מלך חיים

We must inject heart into our lives. If we have not succeeded, if we have not yet merited – it should pain us. When a person feels distant, separated from Hashem, it should stab at his heart. That itself draws him near. These longings are the greatest force of connection. When a person lifts his hands Heavenward and cries, “Hashem what will become of me, I fell again” – this motion, these words are so beloved to Hashem. We must connect the brain to the heart. We place *tefillin* opposite the heart and opposite the brain so that these two vital organs combine in one task. To connect them we must utilize words. Speech can create an entirely new reality – a reality of association with Hashem.

The moment we open our mouths to talk to Hashem, a spark is ignited in our souls and we receive renewed vigor. To connect heart and mind we must contemplate the countless gifts that we receive from Hashem each day and at every hour. We must thank Him. Not just with our lips – with our hearts. When we sanctify ourselves - our eating, drinking, sleeping and our money all become ancillary. We reveal all of the hidden greatness – joy, *emuna*, forbearance, self-sacrifice.

Rebbe Nachman taught that one who has a heart is not affected by his location – for, wherever he finds himself – he is connected. The heart is attachment, love, joy, something higher.

תפילה

Master of the World! Free me of my innumerable servitudes. I have already discovered, Father, that alone – I am incapable, I have no chance. Only when I raise my head and plead without pause – for days, months, and sometimes, years – only then can I behold miracles, the longed for changes.

Free me, Father, from my servitude to sweets, cakes, chocolate. Am I but a child? How long, Master of the World, will I be so dependent upon these things? When will I finally merit that the enjoyment I have from talking to You, when I yearn and pine for You will be sweeter than any other gratification? When will I internalize the concept that if I have You, I have everything?!

Free me, Father, from this sensitivity, when people talk to me impatiently, often with actual anger and yelling – I feel so wounded, offended, immediately withdrawing within myself for hours until I emerge again. When will I manage to find joy in these humiliations and remember that my true honor lies in what I do for Your honor, what I do in my service to Hashem? When will I finally merit not losing everything that I could receive by remaining silent and even being happy for the humiliation?

Free me, Father, from this servitude to jealousy, to my begrudging eye. When I see someone else who is on fire for You, enthusiastic in his learning, prolonged in his *davening*, doing everything diligently, with vitality, with devoutness, I am not happy for him. I immediately think about myself. I instantly seek some deficiency in him to calm myself. What will become of me, Father? When will I finally manage to be truly happy for another’s success?

Free me, Father, from the servitude of my comfort-zone – that everything must be the way I am accustomed to or as I like it – that everything must be on time, that nothing be missing, that everything go according to plan. Help me, Father, to be more flexible, more open-minded, to accept that sometimes my plans need to change, to make room for Your plans, Father, to accept that although life requires order – sometimes, we must deviate from the order.

Master of the World! Free me from all servitude and leave me just one – my servitude to You! That servitude is true freedom.

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*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

©Dov Elias 5773.

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