

# פרשת שלח

This adaptation is dedicated  
in honor of my wife, Devorah.

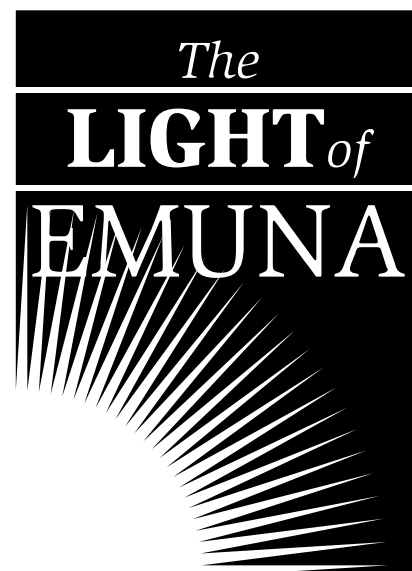
"שלח לך אנשים ויתרו את ארץ כנען" (יג, ב)  
"Send for yourself men who will scout  
the Land of Canaan."

Hashem did not command Moshe to send spies. Had it been a command, the Torah would have said, "send" not "send for yourself." What is meant by the additional phrase "for yourself"? It means: "as per your understanding – it is entirely your decision." Hashem left the decision to Moshe's judgment – not preventing it, but not encouraging it either. Hashem did not want His name associated with the mission – especially, considering how it would conclude. That is the way of Hashem – He compassionately and benevolently engages people to bring them closer via many conduits, yet leaves sufficient room for doubt to allow for challenges and free will.<sup>1</sup>

"ד' אתנו אל תיראם" (יד, ט)  
"Hashem is with us; do not fear them."

Life is a war – a very difficult one. So long as a man lives, he is engaged in a fearsome battle that rages continuously. Every person, in his own unique way, faces formidable struggle with his evil inclination. Anyone who seeks Hashem and a connection to Him is at war – a war against urges and negative character traits, a war against our egos and the inability to see beyond ourselves.

The evil inclination misleads us – for in reality, he is nothing, mere cobwebs. Our problem is that he appears to be a huge mountain. How can



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

we overcome such a large obstacle? Only with *emuna* and *bitachon* in Hashem. Only by lifting our heads and incessantly praying to Hashem for help – for alone, we are incapable – there is no hope without Him. "You, Father, are all-powerful, nothing is too difficult for You – so, please, Father, save us." A person's negative thoughts and wicked desires never leave him, giving him no respite – to the point that we start to believe that this is our lot in life and we are destined to die with these depraved attributes and sinful desires.

The solution is to never despair – to remember that there is always hope. Essentially, this was the dispute between the ten spies and Yehoshua and Calev. The spies described the threats and the challenges that faced the nation in the natural order, while Yehoshua and Calev proceeded with *emuna* and *bitachon*. The spies said that we would be unable to defeat the current occupants because they were mightier than us while Calev declared, "We can surely go up and take possession of it, for we can indeed overcome it."<sup>2</sup> The spies infused fear and despair within the people to the point that they cried out in desperation, while Yehoshua and Calev attempted to remind them that they had Hashem on their side. When a person realizes that the evil inclination constantly rises up against him with renewed vitality and years have

<sup>1</sup>

ליקו"ה שבועות ב, טז

<sup>2</sup>

עלה נעלו וירשנו אותה, כי יכול נוכל לה (יג, ל)

passed while he remains stuck in the same place – he feels like giving up, he is ready to throw up his hands in defeat.

He fails to recognize that every bit of desire builds worlds, every prayer performs corrections, every pang for lack of progress or breakthrough makes a significant difference. We must never become dejected – in one moment, everything can be transformed for good – all of the positive desires, all of the prayers, all of the pleading and begging – all combine and transform terrible darkness into great light. We can be like Yoseph Hatzaddik, who was instantly and miraculously transported from the dungeon to the palace of the king.

This world is full of danger – the greatest danger beginning with our eyes. There is a reason that this week's *parsha* concludes with, "and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes"<sup>3</sup> – this world is capable of causing us to completely forget our goal – it hijacks our vision and prevents us from focusing on our purpose, on the greatness of our Creator, on the boundless kindness that Hashem bestows upon us. It intrigues us with the emptiness of this world and causes us to lose sight of what is really important, of what can truly bring us joy and fill our souls.

**Moreinu Harav:** When a child descends into this world, it arrives holy and pure; it does not want to be defiled here by any impurity. A baby has no interest in what is happening in the streets – it knows that the whole world is filled with sewage. We must maintain that innocent and pristine outlook and not be seduced by impurity. When a person encounters a sewer in his travels, he does consider walking through it, even if it is a shorter route to his destination. We run away from sewage. We are unwilling to tolerate it, even momentarily. We must see the world as containing much filth – we must flee negative influences and harmful matters. We must endeavor to maintain the innocence of children – not allowing sin or urges to cling to us,

that nothing apart from Torah and *tefilla* interest us. An intelligent person avoids things that are disgusting and harmful to him.

R' Elya Lopian zt"l once told a young student that when he walked in the street at the advanced age of eighty years and even blind in one eye, he was still terrified of seeing something that might negatively affect his soul. How much more careful, he warned, must a young man with two healthy eyes be.

As an antidote to this most difficult challenge – Hashem gave us the *mitzvah of tzitzis*. When we look at our *tzitzis* we are reminded of all of the *mitzvos*. The Alshich Hakadosh compared *tzitzis* to one who ties a string to his finger to remind himself of some chore that he must remember to complete. Therefore, it has five knots, corresponding to the five books of the Torah, which, together, contain all of the *mitzvos* and their details. It has four corners – to serve as a constant reminder to us, no matter which direction we turn towards.

Bar Mitzvah boys used to visit the previous Belzer Rebbe zt"l on the day that they first donned *tefillin*. The Rebbe would ask them to accept upon themselves not to talk while wearing their *tefillin*. One young man who was about to be married and who had been successful in this challenge until that point asked if he should accept the same rule with regards to his *tallis*. The Rebbe was pleased and encouraged the young man to do so. He told the man that if he succeeded, when the time came for him leave this world and appear before the Heavenly tribunal - he would have an ironclad defense strategy. He would be able to insist that since he never spoke words that were not Torah or *davening* while wearing his *tallis* and Jewish men are buried in their *taleysm* – the Court would not be permitted to talk to him about things other than Torah and *davening*. Accordingly, they would be unable to discuss any sins that he may have committed – only his *mitzvos* and learning would be permissible topics.

<sup>3</sup> ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם (טי, לט)

*Tzitzis* are like armor that protects us from the arrows of the evil inclination and prosecuting angels.

One of the greatest dangers that our eyes present is the test of jealousy. A person observes his friend's success and rather than be delighted for him, he begrudges him his achievements. Why did the spies really try to thwart the Jewish people's entry to Eretz Yisroel? Why did they try to scare the entire nation with tales of giants and enormous produce?

**Moreinu Harav:** The real motivation of the spies was jealousy. When a person is filled with envy, he creates all sorts of philosophical arguments to justify it and obtain what he covets. Jealousy and hatred remove a person from the world. The Zohar tells us that upon arrival into Eretz Yisroel there was to be a change in the leadership of the tribes. The spies were the current leaders and they were unwilling to relinquish their positions. If they would remain in the desert, they would retain their stations. So, they began devising schemes and stratagems to remain in power. There was self-interest, latent as it was – they knew that entering Eretz Yisroel meant no longer being the Rabbis, the leaders, the tribal chieftains. This sliver of selfishness inflicted tremendous damage on the Jewish people for generations – ultimately causing the destruction of both Batei Mikdash and all of the exiles. During their forty day mission, they plotted to subvert the wondrous objective of entering Eretz Yisroel, the immediate building of the Beis Hamikdash, the bringing of Moshiach and the ultimate redemption.

All that destruction stemmed from jealousy, from begrudging eyes – possibly our most difficult challenge – one that we must face continually, throughout our lives, and fight to gain mastery of.

But, it is attainable. We can acquire a benevolent attitude – feeling genuine joy for the success of others. It is all possible: to triumph over anger,

to overcome gluttony, to convert sorrow to joy, to enter Eretz Yisroel. Everything is achievable if we walk hand-in-hand with Hashem – if we never cease asking and *davening*, if we pay no heed to the little spy inside of us and we root out our aspects of weakness that sow doubt and hesitation, fear and discouragement in our hearts – causing us to become disheartened. We must always remember that we are never alone. We always have to whom to turn. We have a Father in Heaven who protects us. We must never despair.

Calev ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun were not enticed by the conspiracy of the spies and took no part in their slander of Eretz Yisroel. Calev ran to Chevron to *daven* at the tombs of the patriarchs – he cried and pleaded that he not be ensnared in the plot and his prayers were effective. “But as for My servant Caleb, since he was possessed by another spirit.”<sup>4</sup> What was this “other spirit”? The spirit of *emuna*. He had *emuna* in the power of *tzaddikim* and in the power of *tefilla*.

When a person prays for **everything**, every tiny need and aspiration, he is on the proper path and will definitely succeed. If he does not, it is a sign that he must increase his *tefillos*. To *daven* again, to pray with more *emuna*, to use more inspiring words, to specify in greater detail – not to *daven* concisely. We must remember that all suffering has meaning, every pain achieves correction, no groan is ever discarded. *Emuna* is our true test. *Emuna* means trusting Hashem. We have nowhere to turn aside from Hashem. With Him rests our success, our salvation, our hope. When a person proceeds with strong *emuna* and *bitachon* he draws forth deliverance. *Emuna* is the basic tenet of *yiddishkeit*. We are in this world for one purpose – to learn and strengthen *emuna*. Complete *emuna* means knowing that only Hashem can help us.

A certain dean of a girls' school in Eretz Yisroel had difficulties dealing with a certain “problem” child. After much effort, the decision was made

<sup>4</sup>

ועבדי כלב, עקב היתה רוח אחרת עמו (יד, כד)

to send the child to a psychologist for treatment and not allow her to return to school until there were considerable changes in her behavior. Miraculously, the girl returned a mere two months later completely transformed. It did not seem to be the same student. The principal called the child's mother and asked for the telephone number of the psychologist because the change was most impressive and there were other girls who could also benefit from such effective therapy. After an awkward silence, the mother explained that the real cure came not from the flesh-and-blood psychologist but from the greatest psychologist of all, the very One Who had created her daughter's soul and understood her true essence, down to the minutest detail. The cure was in her *tefilla*,

"Master of the World, You gave me this daughter, You gave me this impediment, You gave her this evil inclination that troubles her so. More than any psychologist in the world, I turn to You – no one can help her more than You. Help me." The mother continued that at that moment, she felt as if only Hashem could help and, at that moment, she started to notice a change in her daughter.

We must be stubborn and persist – but we must also be patient. One who wishes to truly serve Hashem must be patient and persist until Hashem takes compassion on him and opens the gates of *teshuva*. It can sometimes take many years, but we must always persist.

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## תפילה

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**Master of the World!** Help me remember that when I refrain from looking at what I should not see, when I abstain from eating what I should not eat, when I desist from saying what should not be said – it is the greatest pleasure, greater than any enjoyment that I could receive from anything that I could see, eat or say. This is true even when it feels like the exact opposite in the very moment. For, when we hold back, fight back, beg You and we are victorious - we feel so strong, so connected to You – we recognize that this is the true flavor of life, not submitting to our base urges.

**Master of the World!** Help me ask You for all of these things again each day. That is the only way to penetrate the mind and the heart. That is the only way to ingrain it in us so that we remember what is forbidden at those critical moments. Help me, Father, to accept that there are certain things that must be beseeched for throughout our lives, until our final day. When we ease off a bit, we immediately forget. Help me merit, Father, to learn and discuss these matters because that helps me not to neglect You. For example, we know that when we regularly learn the *sefer* "Chofetz Chaim" on guarding the tongue, it is much easier to refrain from repeating everything that we enjoy retelling - because it is forbidden.

**Master of the World!** Do not allow me to despair. Even if I had succeeded in the past and thought I had made it but then proceeded to fall – and now I face the same challenge again. Help me always start afresh, to have *emuna* that there is no doubt that I will triumph. When You, Father, see a person truly and fiercely desire You – You clear the way for him.

**Master of the World!** I want You more than anything else in the world. Bring me close to You. Closer and closer.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דוד

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.

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