

פרשת קרח

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

"ויקח קרח בן יצהר בן קהת בן לוי" (טז, א)

"Korach the son of Yitzhar, the son of Kehas, the son of Levi."

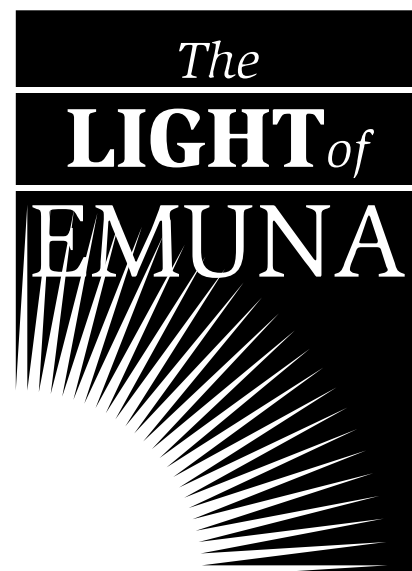
Korach and his assembly sinned with their mouths (by speaking loshon hora against Moshe Rabbeinu and fostering discord) and were therefore punished accordingly – "and the Earth opened its mouth."^{1 2}

גדול הוא השלום Peace is Great

The greatest matter of all is peace. When the Kohanim bless the nation, they conclude with, "and grant you peace."³

When we *bentch* – we conclude with "Hashem gives strength to His people, Hashem will bless His people with peace."⁴ When the final redemption arrives, the first news will be of peace, "How beautiful are the feet of the herald on the mountains, announcing peace."⁵ Chazal established many edicts based on "the ways of peace."⁶ Between husband and wife, between friends – what is most important is the absence of conflict – that there is unity. Even during war, even when there appears to be no possibility – we must attempt to make peace. The Torah tells us, "When you approach a city to wage war against it, you shall propose peace to it."⁷ Yisro

¹ ותפתח הארץ את פיה (טז, לב)
² האדמו"ר מבעלז
³ וישם לך שלום (ו, כו)
⁴ ד' עוז לעמו יתן, ד' יברך את עמו בשלום
⁵ מה נאוו על ההרים רגלי מבשר משמיע שלום (ישעיה נב, ז)
⁶ משום דרכי שלום
⁷ כי תקרב אל עיר להילחם עליה, וקראת אליה לשלום (דברים כ, י)



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

came to visit Moshe and Moshe was eager to recount all of the miracles that Hashem had performed for the Jewish people, but they began with, "each man inquired as to the other's welfare (שלום)."⁸ First there must be peace - only then, do we praise Hashem.

The greatest matter of all is peace. Even when the Jewish people are engaged in idolatry, G-d forbid, if there is harmony among them – Hashem instructs Satan not to touch them.⁹ What is it about peace that makes it so important? When a person lives peacefully with others – his life is amazing, he constantly experiences Hashem's presence, he is always connected.

Master of the World; help me flee from controversy, not to speak about anyone, not to hate anyone - no *loshon hora*, no begrudging eye. Help me, Father, to believe that every Jew is good; help me not to believe anything negative that I hear about any Jew. I am not in this world to judge others or analyze them – I am here to come closer to You, to recognize You, Father – and, what I desire above all else is to continually feel You. We have learned that this is only possible when there is peace with everyone.

⁸ וישאלו איש לרעהו לשלום (שמות יח, ז)
⁹ במ"ר יא, טז

שְׁלוֹם עִם עַצְמִי Peace with One's Self

In order to live in harmony with others, we must first be at peace with ourselves. There is no wholeheartedness without Hashem. Without Hashem, we are perpetually deficient.

How Hashem created us, what Hashem gives us and what Hashem withholds from us - that is our perfection. Under these precise conditions, with these particular tools, we can fulfill our mission in this world in the best possible way.

A complete person is one who has *emuna* and is not envious of anyone else. He knows that what others have is precisely what Hashem has decided to give them and has nothing to do with him. When a person begins his day with holy *emuna*, he remembers that whatever happened, happens and will happen is a product of Divine Providence – his entire day is illuminated differently. If a person remembers this, if he starts his day in this manner, he will certainly be happy – nothing will get him down. When a person endeavors to strengthen others in this arena, he himself is fortified – for, when we help others, it helps us. When a Jew recognizes that Hashem is the address for every problem that he has, that salvation only stems from Hashem – it instills calm and serenity within him. He is never alone. Whatever is missing – he has guidance and a path, he has to Whom to turn, he has from Whom to request help.

At the funeral of the Nadvorno Rebbe zt"l they retold that when he was a young boy, about to enter yeshiva in Yerushalayim, he desperately wanted an exceptional *chavrusa*, one who would be very diligent, would not speak unnecessary words and would be someone who feared G-d. But, he did not know how to arrange for this. No one knew him - why would anyone want to learn with him? How would he even know who would be the optimal choice? So, he spent the entire night standing at the *Aron Kodesh*, reciting *Tehillim* tearfully, begging and pleading with Hashem to arrange the best possible *chavrusa* for

him. The next morning, one of the finest boys in the yeshiva approached him and asked him if he would learn with him. They learned together for five years. The Rebbe would regularly retell this story to teach the tremendous power of prayer. If we have positive desires, and we sincerely *daven* to Hashem from the depths of our hearts – Hashem helps.

Tefilla is so powerful. In this week's *parsha*, Moshe Rabbeinu, asks Hashem not to accept the prayers of Korach and his followers.¹⁰

Amazing – why was Moshe concerned about their *tefillos*? They were rebels, their intent was not for Heaven's sake but for their own honor - why would Moshe even think that their prayers would be accepted?

This is very telling about the power of prayer – if Korach and his 250 tribal leaders would have stood in prayer and cried out from the depths of their hearts to the Master of the World, it is possible that Hashem would have answered them. Therefore, it was necessary for Moshe to preempt them and ask Hashem not to pay them any heed.

Peace begins in our innermost recesses. When a person merits inner peace, when he is secure in what he does, when he is confident in his path - he radiates it to those in his environment and, consequently, there is harmony amongst all those around him.

When does a person attain inner peace? When he learns to live with Hashem. When he learns to be satisfied with whatever he is doing at any given moment. One of the reasons we are so unhappy is because we are always thinking about something else that we must do as soon as we complete our current task. That imposes pressure and worry on us and we miss out on the pleasure of doing everything with Hashem – fully experiencing the present moment.

¹⁰ ויחר למשה מאוד ויאמר אל ד' אל תפן אל מנחתם (טז, טו)

שלום בבית Peace in the Home

Only when a person is comfortable with himself, can he attain peace in the home. Peace in the home is the most important thing in life. We may not surrender it for any price. All wealth, both material and spiritual, depends on peace in the home – all blessing depends on peace, all good abundance stems from there. Rebbe Nachman taught that a person's primary income arrives via his spouse – through the light of her soul, his livelihood is realized. The Torah is so concerned about the happiness of a married woman that there is a specific mitzvah for a new groom to remain at home for the first year and gladden his new bride.¹¹ The contentment of our wives serves as a compass to us. If she is happy - we are headed in the right direction. If she is not, G-d forbid, we must correct course. Harav Ben Zion Abba Shaul zt"l would bring home a gift for his wife, even if it was something small, every night for the first year of his marriage. He thereby fulfilled the aforementioned *mitzvah*. Together, man and woman are complete. Even if they are not always together, because each one has unique tasks in their partnership, they are still together. They think about each other - how they can cheer the other one. What would make him/her happy? That is an attachment of souls. We must constantly strengthen this connection - to be impressed by each other, to see the positive attributes in the other.

Moreinu Harav: Even after the wedding, we must spend our entire lives searching for our *bashert* because when we marry we still do not know all of their wonderful qualities. We must search and reveal their amazing traits – “a woman of valor, who can find.”¹² One who is worthy will discover that his wife is a woman of valor, not just once – but, again each day. Anyone who recognizes that his wife truly has qualities that no other woman in the world possesses – must declare, honestly and wholeheartedly: “Many women have excelled,

but you surpass them all.”¹³

When there is no tranquility in the home, the family's income is immediately impaired. Conversely, when the wife wants something and the husband complies – abundance descends to him instantly.

Our primary challenge, explains the Arizal, is to live serenely with one's wife. Our relationships with friends are much less challenging because we are not with them constantly – but, we live with our spouses twenty-four hours a day – that is a huge trial.

We must regularly express gratitude to each other. There is no shortage of things to thank for. Our problem is that we take so many things for granted. We must acknowledge those things that have been done for us consistently for so many years. The more we do so – the more Hashem's presence is found in our home. We must also teach our children to be grateful.

A Torah home is one of personal example – one we must set for our children. To properly teach our children, we must begin by training ourselves, by working on our characteristics, by eliminating our egos.

Children are endowed with naturally perceptive eyes - they absorb all influences that they are exposed to. Words of Torah and *mussar* do not make an impression like that of the living example set by their parents and teachers, whether positively or, G-d forbid, negatively.

Short-tempered parents cannot teach patience. Cranky parents cannot teach restraint. Arrogant parents cannot teach good manners. Deceitful parents cannot teach wholesomeness and scrupulousness. We must elevate ourselves and elevate our children with us. Children must observe parents regularly serving Hashem - endlessly yearning. They must also witness parents who act levelheadedly. When we discipline – we must pay attention to the way in

¹¹ ושימח את אשתו אשר לקח (דברים כד, ה)
¹² אשת חיל מי ימצא

¹³ רבות בנות עשו חיל ואת עלית על כולנה

which we forbid or permit things and notice the joy that we provide when we give them the freedom to do as they wish. We must show our children that the decision as to whether to forbid or permit something is not erratic, borne of an inclination to rule or out of some ill-conceived stubbornness – but rather emanates from levelheadedness and solemn consideration – and that we do not forbid or permit unless necessary.

Spouses must restrain themselves from commenting. Every comment destroys, poisons, and never helps at all. It is difficult to constantly hear criticism - we need to hear compliments. Only a very pure soul can accept critique without feeling insulted.

R' Avraham Kupschitz Shlita, Rav of Neve Tzvi, related that when he was young, his father, R' Hersh zt"l, used to daven with his great-grandfather, R' Yoseph Chaim Zonnenfeld, on Friday nights. R' Avraham's mother was R' Yoseph Chaim's granddaughter and had lost her parents at a young age. On the way home from shul, R' Yoseph Chaim would stop off to wish his orphaned granddaughter a "good Shabbos." It delighted her that revered Rav of Yerushalayim went out of his way to wish her a good Shabbos. One Friday night, when they came home from shul, she was in middle of davening Maariv. Her grandfather could not wait and so he left without his regular greeting. After she finished, she walked to her grandfather's house to receive her greeting. Her grandfather received her warmly, gave her a Shabbos *bracha* – and then gave her some *mussar*: "My dear daughter, please know that when your husband returns home after *davening*, his wife must have completed her *tefillos*. A husband anticipates his wife's greeting with the table set for Shabbos and should not come home to his wife standing in the corner. If you feel that you do not have sufficient time to finish *davening* before he arrives – you should delay *davening* until later in the evening, so long as you can receive her husband pleasantly and with a warm "good Shabbos" greeting.

שלום לרחוק ולקרוב

Peace for the Distant and the Near

We must sacrifice of ourselves for the sake of peace. Often, it is easier to remain angry, with hurt feelings, remaining alienated from those who insulted us. But, one who wishes to feel Hashem and have Hashem dwell within his heart – must work hard for peace.

One suggestion for avoiding anger at someone who disrespected us is instilling powerful love in our hearts towards that very person and to judge them favorably – thereby, removing any hatred. When a person has a generous heart, his outlook towards all those around him is so positive, his entire life transforms for the good. There are people who are able to do this and see nothing negative in other Jews. They do not merely judge favorably – they do not see sin. If you insist that someone did indeed sin, they argue that sinner meant well, is not guilty at all, simply misinterpreted the *Halacha*.

People love being around these good-natured people. They make us feel secure - we can open up to them and pour out our hearts to them, conveying all of our most private issues because we are confident in the knowledge that they will judge us well, that our honor will not diminish in their eyes – they will not exploit the negative details that we have disclosed.

There are people who are able to brighten their countenance towards all. They greet everyone heartily, with such a smile that they actually make a *Kiddush Hashem* and draw people who are distant to Torah and mitzvos. If, of all one's neighbors, only this religious one greets him warmly, he presents Torah as warm. If the only co-workers who bless and offer kind words are the Orthodox ones – it seems as if their lives are good and they love other people, they are respectful – it makes others want to be like them.

A certain *Baal Teshuva* reported that he grew up in a *frum* community. None of the religious Jews talked to him and most would cross the street to

avoid him - with one notable exception. On Purim, the Erloi Rebbe Shlita would bring a large *Shalach Manos* and sit and eat with them. He would talk to them as if they were the biggest *tzaddikim* in town. The man testified that the shining face of the Rebbe stayed with him and eventually brought him to Torah and *mitzvos*.

Korach represents contentiousness. To this very day, wherever there is fighting, there are sparks of Korach and his assembly. We need peace. We need love between us. Before he died, Rebbe Nachman urged his students to support each other and thereby be good and decent Jews - not just decent but even great and righteous. Disputes are everywhere today. We must flee

them. "The entire world is filled with arguments, both amongst non-Jews and Jews, and in every city, every home, between neighbors, between spouses, amongst siblings - no one seems to pay attention to the fact that every day is gone once it passes and brings us one day closer to death - and yet we waste them with pettiness. When Moshiach arrives, speedily in our days, then, all discord will be abolished and there will be great harmony in the world. Korach's bitter end must serve as a harsh reminder warning to us. We must avoid all conflict and friction and seize only the ways of peace and goodwill. Hashem has no vessel to contain blessing greater than peace. Someone hurt us, denigrated us, embarrassed us, humiliated us - we will only benefit from it.

תפילה

Master of the World! I want to be as close to You as possible - to constantly remember You, to continuously speak to You, to endlessly connect to You. That is the only way to be comfortable with myself - the only way to remain calm and happy. If I do not have this connection and embrace - every "negative" occurrence worries me and stresses me. When I see someone else who things go well for and he hums and is happy - I am jealous and feel dejected. All of the dangers of the world become much more hazardous when I am not bonded to You.

Master of the World! I want to be as close to You as possible. For, then there is much peace in the home. For, then there is no limit to the strength that You give us, Father, to be joyous, encouraged, fortified, emboldened, impressed, foregoing, attentive and so many other good things. It then becomes much easier to close our mouths and never criticize - for who am I that I should criticize - have I perfected myself already? Then there is joy in the house - everything that anyone needs, whatever they request - we hasten ourselves to say, "yes, definitely, no question" and our hearts are so upbeat to all, there are no words to describe it.

Master of the World! I want to be as close to You as possible. For this is the only way to maintain peace with everyone. If not, if I am not connected or embraced, I easily sin, lose my temper and wish ill unto others. But, when I am with You, Father, I exert myself to give the benefit of the doubt, to assume that insults were unintentional, that the offender did not realize what he was doing, and that he is already sorry for what he did - all sorts of vindication, all sorts of favorable presumptions.

Master of the World! Help me be at peace with everyone. There are those who avoid me, do not say hello to me, as if they do not see me and I do not know why. There are also those who I avoid, that I elude, as I do not see them - and I do not always know why.

Tatty - help me. I want to be different. I want peace and love with everyone. The only One Who can help me, is You, Father. Only if I manage to be close to You. Only if I feel You at every moment. Help me, Father.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Do

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 Mordy Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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