

# פרשת פנחס

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

"פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמת  
מעל בני ישראל בקנאו את קנאתי" (כה, יא)

**"Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of  
Aharon Hakohen caused My anger to  
be withdrawn from against the  
Children of Israel by zealously  
defending my zealousness."**

Pinchas zealously defended the zealousness of Hashem and arose and killed a prince of a Tribe of Israel, something that he was not specifically commanded to do, as Chazal describe, "It is the *Halacha* but we do not teach it as such." Nevertheless, he acted on his own, risking his life and thereby succeeded in prevailing and saving the entire Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

"בקנאו את קנאתי" (כה, יא)

**"By zealously defending my  
zealousness."**

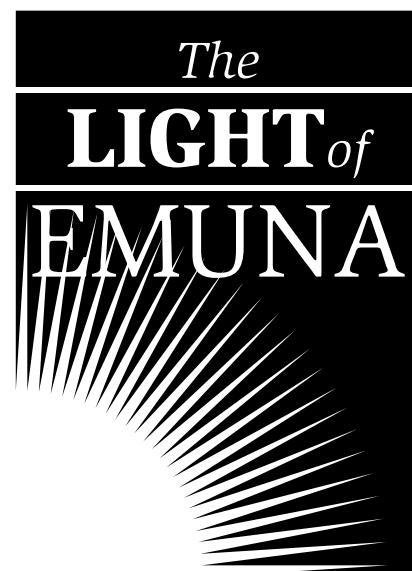
Within the heart of every Jew resides and irradiates a point of self-sacrifice. It may be concealed, but it is protected. No one else can take it away.

There are moments in life that this point is revealed in a big way. A Jew is prepared to die *al Kiddush Hashem* – just to avoid losing his *yiddishkeit*. The binding of Yitzchak is possibly the essence of Judaic self-sacrifice – the proper expression of sacrificing everything precious and dear that a Jew has for the sake of his *emuna*. These are rare but ultimate moments.

Self-sacrifice also permeates into the "minor" moments of life. A person feels as if he has

<sup>1</sup>

ליקו"ה ברכת השחר, ה, צב



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

reached his limits – he cannot go on. He has had enough for today. He is hungry, he is worn out – he just wants to eat and rest. But, suddenly, he hears the melodies of a *Sefer Torah* procession. Can he eat and relax when there is such a joyous occasion outside? He fortified himself a little, a bit of self-sacrifice –and unexpectedly, it is as if he has sprouted wings. We run after the sounds and some stranger grabs our hand and we join the procession following the Torah – and we thank Hashem for the great merit that we love the Torah and have the opportunity to honor it.

A Jew must be prepared to do a bit more than he thought himself capable of. I am tired, I am worn out – but I begin with the last ounce of strength that I can still muster. Then, Heaven helps me finish. Hashem loves our self-sacrifice. He repays us with many multiples. A person makes more effort, one more, even just an effort to nullify his laziness and to offer another smile. That smile is called exertion and is above his current station and precisely there is the great light revealed. "Do something, even small, begin to act, and I will come to you and perform amazing things – but I want to see your inspiration." Self-sacrifice is even getting out of bed to say the bedtime *Shema* while walking around, so as not to doze off. Self-sacrifice includes prolonging *davening* despite the fact that we have a busy day. It includes doing something positive in private despite that fact that we really want everyone to know about it. It

includes not avoiding someone who turns to us and needs to pour out his heart at an inconvenient moment. It includes holding back a comment that is on the tip of our tongue. From the midst of suffering, anger, concealment, obstacles that prevent us from reaching our goals, Hashem not illuminating us and we feel disconnected – if, despite all that, we try to attach ourselves to Hashem, we force ourselves to turn to Him, we remind ourselves that everything is from Hashem and for the best – at these amazing moments – we ascend levels, we attain newer levels of understanding of “there is nothing aside from Hashem” and the more we comprehend this, the better things are for us.

Self-sacrifice is the greatest level in *yiddishkeit*. It sweetens judgment in a wondrous manner – it causes *tefillos* to be accepted – it causes miracles and wonders.

It is well known that before people set out to engage in something major, to finalize a *shidduch*, to buy a home, they precede it with undertaking – they seek a blessing from a *tzaddik*, *daven* at the Kotel for 40 days, travel to *kevarim* of *tzaddikim* – they do something big, something special. If we find ourselves before a big trip or before a judicial verdict in a case that has dragged on for years – we should add something special to our daily routine. The more we add, the more will be added to us and we will see powerful and amazing Divine Assistance.

The primary tool is *tefilla*. Lift up our heads and plead. Everything that happens is to inspire us to pray, to get us to entreat. When does a person merit salvation? When he truly feels as if there is no one on whom to rely except for Hashem. Why are the *tefillos* of widows and orphans answered? For they, more than anyone else, turn only to Hashem – they have no one else to turn to. Like that certain poor man who was told that a certain wealthy man had prepared an envelope for him containing a large sum – he does not move on to another house even if no one answers the door the first few times that he knocks – he persists until they let him in. “Like the poor and the destitute we knock at Your

door, Your doors we knock on compassionate and merciful One.” We knock and knock until the door is opened. Like a Like an infant who is completely helpless – if he merely emits a tiny cry, his mother immediately jumps. That is exactly how Hashem treats us. So long as we rely on our own power and abilities, our intelligence and wisdom – Heaven allows us to try to manage with our own capabilities. Only when we arrive and the appropriate conclusion that we are nothing and are entirely dependent upon Hashem and without His help we cannot attain anything do we receive Divine Assistance and great abundance. We must never throw up our hands – we must continue to *daven* and do so even when we see no change. To continue and proceed - with submissiveness, with *emuna* that Hashem is fully capable even when all of the avenues of turning things around have been exhausted. We must push ahead, like the waves of the ocean have never overtaken the boundaries set for them since the beginning of time – yet, every wave, when it approaches the shore, attempts to elevate itself and overtake the boundary that Hashem set for it and does not succeed. For this stubbornness, Hashem raises them.<sup>2</sup> Continue praying, crying, endeavoring, having *emuna* that hope is not yet lost, have *emuna* that the final word has not yet been uttered, Hashem can still save us. We must never despair. Long for salvation that may come at any moment.

Hashem does not desire success. He wants diligence, persistence, stubbornness – That are not despondent – when they fall, they get back up and start anew. We are not measured by how many pages of *Gemara* we have concluded – we are measured by the number of hours we sat and learned. Our intellect is not the critical factor – the main thing is our diligence and determination. The Vilna Gaon zt”l used to say, “A tenacious person will succeed.”

A student once told the Gaon R’ Binyamin Diskin zt”l, the son of the Saraf of Brisk, that one of the *talmidim* of the *yeshiva* was in crisis. He had

<sup>2</sup> בשוא גליו אתה תשבחם (תהילים פט, י')

heard him crying in the Beis Midrash. In the dead of night, he hid in the Beis Midrash and the *talmid* entered the dark hall and ascended to the Aron Kodesh. He opened the doors of the Aron Kodesh and he started to sob with flowing tears, "Master of the World, when my friends are engaged in learning, I desperately wish to join them, but I do not understand what they are arguing about..." This *talmid* was the Gaon R' Yitzchak Elchonon Spector zt"l – through his persistence and force of will, he became the venerable *posek* of the generation.

True *yiddishkeit* is proceeding with Hashem 24 hours each day. It is having *emuna* that we can battle this world and triumph. We must remember that the essential focus is the battle, not success. We must not look behind us at our failures – we must constantly look ahead.

Even if it seems to person as if he is not changing, that he remains with all of the same urges – every time he is disgusted by this world, he has succeeded. Every time he feels disgust and cries out to Hashem – that is a change in him. These moments in which he is disgusted by this world, that he thinks of everything as silliness, that is his victory – that is his world to come. At times, a person is so broken, he just barely manages to utter some prayer and he feels it to be worthless. But, we never know its value in Heaven. There are times where we feel good about a prayer and are confident in it – but Heaven is not impressed. By contrast, there are times that we feel that they are worthless, there is no hope – but Heaven cherishes it. When a person is broken, and just barely manages to utter something – every word being self-sacrifice, precisely then, when there is no drop of arrogance, he is so close to Hashem.

A person must constantly fortify his connection to Hashem. Otherwise, he will become dejected by every occurrence. We are all experts and strengthening others – but, the moment it is our own challenge, we forget everything. We must perform self-sacrifice over this. We must learn to observe Hashem in every minute and every second. Everything that a person witnesses - he

must realize that it is from Hashem. Everything that happens to us, we know is from Hashem. To do this properly, we require the guidance of a *tzaddik*. We need the example of the righteous who have already removed themselves from urges and have performed much self-sacrifice to show us the way. When we observe a *tzaddik* we are filled with the desire to be like him, to overcome our passions.

A *tzaddik* has amazing love of other Jews, he does not think about himself. He is concerned with his generation, he nullifies himself for the benefit of the Jewish people – like Moshe Rabbeinu who asked Hashem to erase his name from the Torah if He did not forgive the Jewish people. Through the merit of the *tzaddik*, our service of Hashem and our *tefillos* ascend higher.

When Moshe Rabbeinu was informed of the laws of inheritance when it came to the daughters of Tzlofchad, he thought it was time to prepare his own sons to succeed him. Hashem advised him that it would not be his sons, it would be Yehoshua, who has served him so faithfully, who never stirred from his tent. Yehoshua was not the greatest among the Jewish people – but, he was chosen because he sacrificed himself to be close to and learn from his Rebbe.

If a person wishes to attain love of Hashem, he must sacrifice for the *mitzvos* between man and his fellow man. These *mitzvos* create a stronger bond with Hashem than the *mitzvos* between man and G-d. Interpersonal relationships are the primary focus. All of our work on *middos* is interpersonal. Humility, patience, gratitude – are mostly relational. We are so self-absorbed that we have no compassion to feel the suffering of others – or their joy.

Hashem commanded Moshe to rest his hand on Yehoshua and to impart of his wisdom. Moshe did not rest one hand, as commanded, but both hands. Rashi explains that Moshe acted more generously than he was commanded to. Generosity is a lifelong project. Our entire service in this world is to flee negative thoughts towards positive ones. Negative ones: anger,

jealousy, discrimination, anything disparaging about another. We must fight it to turn it off immediately as it emerges and replace it with positive ones: judging favorably, seeking the positive points in others.

**Moreinu Harav:** Love of friends is a matter of self-sacrifice. It does not come easily. Our main *tefillos* must be regarding love of others – towards everyone – completely, with heart and soul, with self-sacrifice. What is love of others? When they denigrate us, hurt us, cause us pain, G-d forbid – and we nevertheless love them because we realize that it is just an evil spirit a spirit of stupidity. We hold no ill will towards them – to the contrary! We feel compassion for them, we seek their good points. People love to

talk about “love your neighbor as you love yourself” – usually the more distant from it one is the more he talks about it. It is a difficult *mitzvah* to fulfill because we tend to be more interested in what is good for ourselves. We must put others first and only Hashem knows whether we truly do.

The foundation of *chassidus* is to disregard ourselves – to ignore our desires. Our will must be a mirror of Hashem’s – to focus on what Hashem wants. And what Hashem wants is affection between us. A generous outlook, judging favorably, foregoing – all of these beautiful attributes between people. Our level of connection to Hashem is measured by our performance of interpersonal *mitzvos*.

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## תפילה

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**Master of the World!** Help me merit struggling more in everything connected to loving others. To sacrifice of myself. For example, when I hear that a friend is suffering and requires much Divine Assistance to emerge positively, and it is ongoing, whether a court case or surgery – to immediately put everything aside and to *daven* for his success and salvation rather than settling for a passing thought with a simple request in the heart, with a weak voice and continue with my own matters.

When I see a defect in a Jew, like someone who is very superficial and materialistic – rather than consider that he may have terrible struggles just to open the Gemara for even ten minutes, I tend to focus on his deficiencies. Am I any better? Always thinking about my next meal – is that any better? Help me, Father, to see only the good, to be impressed rather than the apparent negative.

When I see someone who appears to avoid me, who seems to dislike me – why do I jump to the conclusion that he cannot stand me and I cannot understand why because I have no real connection to him? Why do I not think of the possibility that he did not notice me because he is preoccupied at the moment with something that he is dealing with – and even if he is really distant from me, why not assume that it is just an evil spirit that entered him and I should continue to feel love towards him? Even though it is very difficult.

**Master of the World,** help me sacrifice of myself for interpersonal matters – to comprehend that everyone has their own issues and to stop focusing on myself all the time. Help me, Father, to reach this level of love of others, of such generosity – for they say this is the taste of the next world within this world.

Master of the World, help me – for this is extremely challenging.

**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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