

פרשת ואתחנן

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

"וּוְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֶל ד' בַּעַת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר" (ג, כג)

**"I implored Hashem at that time,
saying."**

The *pasuk* states, "A poor man speaks with supplications, but a rich man replies with impudence."¹ R' Tanchuma taught, "A poor man speaks with supplications' refers to Moshe, who approached his Creator with entreaties – "a rich man replies with impudence' refers to Hashem who answered with intensity, 'Do not continue to speak to Me."

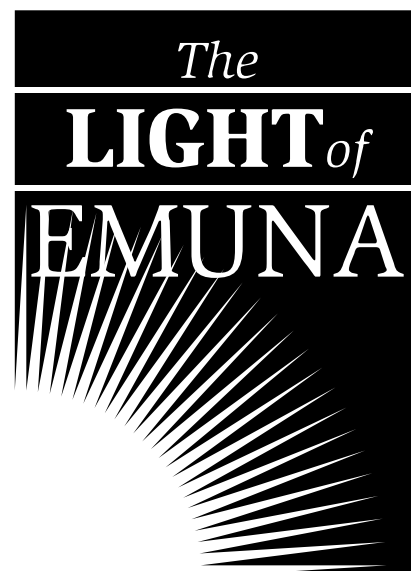
"וַיֵּדַעַת הַיּוֹם וְהַשַּׁבָּת אֵל לִבְכֶךָ" (ד, לט)

**"You shall know this day and take to
your heart."**

We must connect the brain to the heart – to instill much fervor into our lives. Heart is connection, heart is love, heart is joy, heart is something elevated.

Rebbe Nachman taught that one who has heart is not limited by space. Wherever he is, he is connected. Heart is the pleasure of being connected to Hashem, from loving Hashem and knowing that Hashem loves us - even when we do not succeed, even when we do not merit, even when we are in pain. When a person feels distant, separated from Hashem, like a stabbing in his chest from the detachment – that itself draws us near. These yearnings are the greatest bond. A person commits a sin, G-d forbid, falls for some base urge, or some negative attribute – he asks forgiveness and proceeds – but that is merely superficial, he acts just to avoid

¹ תחנונים ידבר רש ועשיר יענה עזות (משלי יח, כג)



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

punishment. We must perform *teshuva* with our hearts, tearfully – pleading with Hashem to help us change. When a person raises his hands towards Heaven and cries – "what will become of me, have mercy on me, save me" – that *teshuva* is accepted immediately.

A person must constantly look for inspiration, long for Hashem – that is his essential success. "But you who cling to Hashem, your G-d – you are alive today."² We must embrace the light that there is nothing aside from Hashem. We must eat and drink, but recognize that that is not living – there is much greater pleasure – a spiritual bliss.

Hashem desires our hearts, our innerness, our passion for *mitzvos*, our joy in *mitzvos*. We have become accustomed to darkness, we no longer seek light. Hashem wants us to join our emotions to the words we say. When we praise Him, we must do so with feeling. When we request of Him, we must do so wholeheartedly. Hashem is with us, he listens to all of our prayers, every word we utter.

Our hearts are detached. We are self-absorbed. To feel the pain of another, we must pause for a moment, contemplate, and imagine what he is going through, what a family whose lives were

² ואתם הדבקים בד' אחיכם חיים כלכם היום (דברים ד, ד)

turned upside down is experiencing. If we stop, ponder, try to envision – it is impossible for our hearts to remain apathetic.

Hashem wants sensitivity, honesty. He is not impressed by one who sways (*shukles*) vigorously during *davening* but interrupts every few minutes to check his cellphone. “With their mouth and with their lips they honor Me, but their heart they draw far away from Me.”³ Why should we wait until we receive suffering, G-d forbid, to open our hearts and, only then, find the time to speak to Hashem?

We must consistently expand our vision to recognize that there is nothing aside from Hashem. “You have been shown in order to know that Hashem, He is the G-d! There is none besides Him!”⁴ If we can be mindful, twenty-four hours a day, that there is none besides Him – our tribulations would cease. We must acknowledge this in our minds – but if it does not also penetrate our hearts, it is of less value. If it is only theoretical it is still good – but the difference between purely theoretical and emotional is a great divide.

Moreinu Harav: Whatever occurs in our 120 years are all challenges – challenges with Nazis, with terrorists, with murderers, with horrible decrees. We must reveal the *emuna* that is hidden within – that we not become dejected by any official, any enemy – we must strengthen our *emuna* that there is only Hashem.

During the Holocaust, a certain Jew was dragged to a wall, made to stand against it and a Nazi officer leveled his rifle and told the Jew that he was about to kill him. The Jew responded that the Nazi was unable to kill him, only Hashem could kill him. This angered the officer who responded, “I am about to kill you, **I** am about to shoot you, not G-d.” The Jew replied, “It is not you, it is Hashem!” Angered further, the Nazi explained that that he was making the decision

to shoot and it was all in **his** hands. Again, the Jew retorted, “I do not fear you, it is all from Hashem! Only He decides if I will die.” Stunned, the Nazi ran away, refusing to act as an agent of Hashem. This Jew survived the incident and the war – all because he understood that nothing happened without Hashem.

Rebbe Nachman taught that the first thing in serving Hashem is to have no fear. There is nothing to fear – there is a G-d in the world! The source of this strength is in our hearts – not to fear any person or anything. We must be warriors with resilient hearts and thereby be victorious in all of our battles. “Who is mighty? One who overpowers his inclinations.”⁵ The first task is to overcome our negative thoughts and destructive outlook.

We must instill much passion into our lives – much love, much encouragement and support. A child must hear often how wonderful he is. We must praise them frequently – but truthfully. Children are very perceptive to phoniness. When we yell at our children, it is usually to relieve our anger rather than for the good of the child. That is true not only vis-à-vis our children – but also towards ourselves, our spouses, our friends, our neighbors or just about anyone. By speaking positively, by appreciating the good in others – we show them that there is cause for joy, that is how we open their hearts.

We must accustom ourselves to greet everyone cheerfully and with a smile and we will soon observe how the whole world is happy to see us and smiles back at us. To be happy and gladden others is so crucial – via which we merit the World to Come. The *Gemara* tells us that R’ Beroka once met Eliyahu Hanavi in the marketplace and asked him who present had earned the World to Come. Eliyahu pointed out two individuals who took it upon themselves to cheer up unhappy people.⁶

We must strengthen joy in our hearts.

³ בפיו ובשפתיו כבדוני, ולבו רחוק ממני (ישעיהו כט, יג)

⁴ אתה הראת לדעת כי ד' הוא האלוקים אין עוד מלבדו (דברים ד, לה)

⁵ איזהו גבור? הכובש את יצרו (פירקי אבות ד, א)

⁶ תענית כב.

Sometimes, a person faces a crisis and becomes despondent and distressed. A suggestion for that is to fortify ourselves with joy to whatever extent we can muster, to look for the good in even this situation – for even in this state, Hashem has not forsaken us, Hashem has not performed any injustice, G-d forbid, for Hashem is just and righteous. Whoever follows this course and strengthens himself no matter what occurs, remains happy without become bitter over his predicament, who closes the door and dances out of elation in Hashem's honor – will triumph over all afflictions and will ultimately merit salvation.

If a person connects to his Father in Heaven and realizes how sweet and amazing He is – yes, he made mistakes, he failed with his children, botched things with his wife, prayed dismally – nevertheless, he chooses to focus on how much he loves Hashem, how much he loves holiness, how much he loves those amazing moments. He must recognize that this is all within him – he must cherish it, even if these moments of clarity are infrequent, because, if he loves them, they will prevent him from loving other things. Love is the primary means of connection and we can hold onto those moments of love when we feel as if we are drowning in the confusion of daily life. That brings us joy.⁷

When we proceed with excitement, when we are sensitive to others – Hashem performs miracles for us. R' Chiya and R' Yosi were standing on a high hill with plenty of food and they witnessed something surprising. They noticed two men walking through the desert. Another man approached and asked them, "Could you please give me something to eat? I have been lost in the desert for two days and I haven't eaten a thing." He was on the brink of starvation and suffering from heat stroke. One of the two gave him his food. Startled, his companion asked him, "What will you do when you have to eat? What I have is mine to eat! The Torah instructs us to guard our own lives before those of others. If you give away your food, do not expect me to share mine

with you." The generous man responded, "Am I dependent upon you for protection and sustenance?" He gave the poor man most of his food and drink and nursed the man back to health. The two Rabbis watched and said, "Perhaps some judgment was decreed upon the generous man and Hashem wanted to give him the opportunity, so that he merit being saved from a disaster." A short while later the generous man became exhausted from the oppressive heat and his lack of nourishment. His companion said to him, "I told you not to give away your food" and left him in the desert. R' Chiya said, "Perhaps we should give him some of our food to eat." R' Yosi said, "Do you want to take his merit away from him? Let's watch, for certainly Hashem prepared this mitzvah for him to save him." The generous man fell asleep under a tree. As he was sleeping, a viper appeared. R' Chiya said, "Woe to that man who is about to die." R' Yosi responded, "Lucky is he, for Hashem will surely perform a miracle for him." Suddenly, another snake fell from the tree, ready to kill the man but the viper struck and killed the snake. The viper then left without bothering or harming the man. R' Yosi said, "Didn't I tell you that Hashem wanted to perform a miracle for this generous man and that you should not take away the merit from him?" In the meantime the man awoke and began to continue on his way. The Rabbis approached him and gave him food and they told him the miracle that Hashem had performed for him.⁸

Reaching the heart can be accomplished with small matters. With one good thought, with one benefit of the doubt, with one suppression of temper, with one kind word to a friend, with one acknowledgement to a spouse, with one foregoing of an insult – we can attain an elevation of the soul.

How do we descend from the mind to the heart? Through speech. There is nothing that connects and distinguishes a person with his Creator more than dialogue. Words can create a new reality. We must incessantly thank Hashem – not

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באור פני מלך חיים

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הזוהר הקדוש פרשת בהר

superficially, but meaningfully, recognizing that nothing is owed to us – thanking and pleading.

Moshe Rabbeinu, who faithfully sacrificed of himself his entire life, *davened* so fervently to be allowed into Eretz Yisroel, but the gates of Heaven were closed before him. Yet, all he wanted was to continue to pray. He desperately wanted to *daven* further and maintain his connection to Hashem.

We defend ourselves and our transgressions by citing the fact that there are so many areas that we have to work on and we could not possibly succeed – Hashem’s response is, “Why didn’t you ask Me for help?” That we failed in various areas is understandable – but why didn’t we beg Hashem to help us overcome? “Father, help me, I am lacking love of Torah, a yearning for Torah,

comprehension of Torah – help me want to learn.”

So too, with everything. “Father in Heaven, have compassion on my son, give him the desire to *daven*, give him love of Torah, illuminate the light of Torah before him, keep him away from negative influences.” Ten minutes of prayer a day amounts to 60 hours per year. Whatever we can manage – one minute, thirty seconds – we must pour out our hearts.

All of the other nations have wisdom – but theirs is without heart. When we attain some knowledge, we must draw it to our hearts and assess whether it has influenced our actions so that our deeds are greater than our wisdom, as they are meant to be. We cannot be satisfied with the intellect alone.

תפילה

Master of the World – Give Me Heart! When I hear of something good that happened to someone else, some success, some joyous occasion, help me, Father, to be happy for him with all of my heart and not allow a trace of jealousy to penetrate my heart. If I hear of some suffering of another, let it bother me, that I truly imagine what he is going through, that I manage to pray for him for a few minutes – not like now, when I hear something painful in someone else’s life, it often relaxes me to know that I don’t have his problems. And, if G-d forbid, I hear of some tragedy – help me be shaken, that I be unable to so quickly return to my daily routine, with my plans, as if nothing happened.

Master of the World – Give Me Heart! When I finally join someone else’s *Simcha* – help me feel, allow me to cry, to *daven* with all of my heart for the couple standing under the *chuppa* or for the baby that is being initiated into the Jewish nation.

Master of the World – Give Me Heart! That I too should shed tears when I recite *Tehillim*, that my *Tehillim* too be moist with tears to the point of fading the words.

And You, Father, should hear my weeping in the silence of my *Shemona Esrei*, or between the *Shofar* sounds on Rosh Hashanah.

Master of the World – Give Me Heart! That I may merit praising You with all of my heart, to request my needs with emotion, to do *teshuva* with passion, to cry over my urges and negative attributes, that they pain me – that they pierce my heart.

Master of the World – Give Me Heart!

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

ד"ר

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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