

פרשת וירא

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

"וירא אליו ד' באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל
כחם היום" (יח, א)

**"Hashem appeared to him in the plains
of Mamre while he was sitting at the
entrance of the tent in the heat of the
day."**

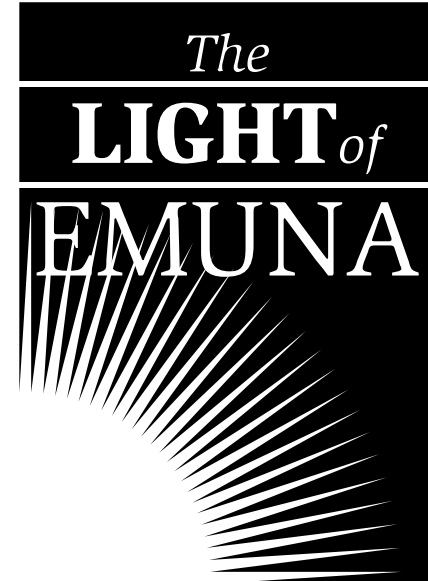
Was it Avraham's habit to sit at the entrance of the tent? The Torah is highlighting how precious the *mitzvah* of hospitality was to Avraham Avinu. Since he had endured two days without guests, he began to consider that potential guests might think that they would be causing him discomfort by visiting so soon after his *bris milah* and for that reason they might have avoided him. Immediately, he sat at the doorway to beckon and invite passersby.¹

מסירות נפש Self-Sacrifice

A Jew cannot survive without self-sacrifice. That is the secret to our survival, the existence of the Jewish people – we are prepared for martyrdom to protect our *yiddishkeit*. How do we begin our days? We retell the story of the *akeida* – the epitome of Jewish selflessness. A Jew set out, with joy and willingness, to surrender his only son, who was born to him in his old age, after already having despaired of ever bearing children, who was sanctified to be his heir in disseminating *emuna* throughout the world even before he was born. He was willing to sacrifice his own continuity, his own path that he was destined to bring down to the world – such a big challenge - an indescribable altruism.

¹

מדרש הגדול



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

He travelled for three days to reach the intended destination – three days of ample time to second-guess. But, our first forefather did not doubt – he was wholly devoted and, therefore, his mission was already accomplished before he even embarked – and father and son returned together - Yitzchak continuing the aforementioned dissemination of Avraham's teachings – originating a complete nation continuing his course – and the merit of the *akeida* supporting it for generations.

We are all children of Yitzchak. In the heart of every Jew lies and illuminates a point of self-sacrifice. **Every single Jew is prepared to die for the sanctification of G-d's name** because in the core of every individual rests the very powerful craving for Hashem.

Self-sacrifice descends to even the small moments in life. A person attempts to pray but foreign thoughts and confusions disturb him – but he battles back, toiling, succeeding to say one sentence with concentration and again is swept into the vortex of thoughts – never giving up. Even if he completes his *tefilla* with a strong sense of sourness, disappointed in himself – who can estimate the satisfaction in Heaven from this prayer? Rebbe Nachman teaches that in these circumstances, the exertion itself with all of one's strength and self-nullification to pray properly is

a version of the sacrificial offerings (*korbanos*).²

A Jew must be ready to do a bit more than he seems capable of. HKB”H loves our giving of ourselves. He repays us with many multiples of what we forfeited. **We begin with our last ounce of strength and Divine Assistance helps us complete the task.** When we go above and beyond our abilities - extra effort, another song, another smile, another act of honoring others, another attempt to overcome sadness, another endeavor to remember that everything is from Hashem and for the very best, another bit of effort – we reveal the infinite light. When a person, in the midst of a difficulty, in the midst of a challenge, in the midst of danger, when he feels as if the evil inclination is defeating him – manages to lift his head and turn to Hashem, “Master of the World, protect me, save me, help me that all of my joy and vitality derive from my connection with You and not from my base urges. Help me, Father, that my soul conquer my body, that my spirit overcome my physicality.”

When a person is caught between difficulties and turns to Hashem – he can experience how Hashem listens to him, is close to him, holds his hand, does not abandon him – “it is so grueling for me but Hashem is with me in the trials, Hashem shields me, Hashem literally performs miracles for me.”

Wherever we sacrifice for HKB”H, we forego. We forego our own will to do His will. I smile at another when I have no smile within me, I refrain from saying something even when I feel the necessity to comment, I conceal despite that I want the world to know.

Forbearance is a formidable weapon. It is the formula for happiness that we search for our whole lives. With this recipe we maintain peace in the home, resolve disputes between neighbors – it opens a door for the light of Hashem to penetrate our insides. When we are self-absorbed, everything is sealed. If we forego, even a little, we receive light. Rachel Imeinu

gave up for her sister and received so much light.

More than anything else, Hashem recalls the moments during which we relinquished for others. *Chesed* is giving up for others – giving up our time, our money – but we never lose out, we receive other compensation - amazing and enormous rewards.

Avraham Avinu was the pillar of kindness. He declared that there was a Creator of the world, one and only, unique - Who orchestrates everything. He proclaimed that all of the idols were mere wood and stone and could not help anyone at all – there is one Creator, Hashem. **Is there a greater kindness that drawing people to their Creator?**

Avraham Avinu brought everyone close – he even prayed for the people of Sodom, who were evil and sinners, to return in *teshuva*. We must always seek the good in others – even if they are terribly evil, they cannot be lacking elements of good entirely.

Avraham Avinu’s hospitality was legendary. It is hard to imagine a one hundred year old man who underwent a *bris milah* two days earlier, on the third day (the most painful day), leaping from his chair enthusiastically to welcome three Arab-looking travelers as his guests.

Tzaddikim exhibit astounding amounts of kindness. One Yom Kippur evening, R’ Yisroel Salanter missed *Kol Nidre* and arrived at the conclusion of *davening* to pray alone. It was later discovered that, on his way to *shul*, he had heard the cry of a baby whose mother had left for *shul*, - so, he sat with, soothed, calmed and fed the baby until its mother returned.

R’ Akiva Eiger was once travelling by wagon when a wheel came off in the middle of a gusting downpour. The driver changed the wheel and returned to the wagon drenched. R’ Akiva Eiger offered him a dry pair of socks. It was not until morning that the driver realized that R’ Akiva Eiger had offered his own socks. Mortified, he asked R’ Akiva why he had given up his own

²

שיחות הר"ן יב

socks – he had only accepted them because he thought they were an extra pair. R' Akiva Eiger interrupted his protest, “my feet were not wet - would it have been proper for me to sit in nice warm clothing while you continued to drive with waterlogged feet? That would have been most inappropriate.” *Tzaddikim* are not just Torah giants – they are also titans of *chesed* – they always know how to discern what is at the depths of another’s soul.

Our primary sacrifice must be made for joy!

Rebbe Nachman taught that when the *yetzer hora* lures a person to transgress, its ultimate intent is not the actual sin – its main objective is the sadness and disappointment that we experience after we stumble. Via depression a person falls into many misdeeds and that is what the evil inclination truly awaits. Therefore, cautions Rebbe Nachman, we must take heed not to fall into despair after an initial failing no matter what occurs. We must simply proceed in Torah, prayer and joy – and do *teshuva* later.

Happiness takes self-sacrifice. We learn this from Avraham Avinu – a most cheerful person. He performed every act with diligence and enthusiasm. Upon seeing guests in the distance – he ran. He acted quickly. Even when he set out to slaughter his son – he woke up early.

Joy exceeds all else. **We have so many causes for joy, reasons to be thankful to Hashem – yet we tend to obsess over what we are lacking,** what still does not go the way we would like. A happy person is successful, he is with Hashem. We always have Hashem, we are with Hashem – we must be glad, we must dance, we must sing. We must wholeheartedly thank Hashem for every kindness that He does for us. **Our daily battle is the struggle to fortify our *emuna* that everything is for the best – that everything that Hashem does is for the absolute best!** We must proceed with gratitude and acknowledgement! We must sing to Hashem! All psychological issues, sadness and depression derive from lack of *emuna*. We must thank for everything – for electricity, for our eyesight, for everything. A certain elderly man

who retained his teeth into old age expressed his appreciation every day to Hashem for leaving him his teeth. Nothing may be taken for granted.

R' Baruch of Mezibozh was very wealthy and suddenly lost everything. He was left so destitute that he could not even afford bread. Yet, he danced and sang his gratitude to Hashem. Puzzled, his wife inquired as to the source of his gaiety. He explained that there is an angel appointed over poverty. When he visits homes and observes complaining, crying, whining, suffering – he decides to remain there and establish a permanent residence. He likes it there because they feed into him. His sustenance originates in sadness, depression, complaints, whining. But, if he notices joy in the home, he receives nothing from it and he hastily departs. And so it was - within a short time, his affluence was restored.

The same is true for everything in life – matchmaking, children – everything. **We must bolster our *emuna* and express appreciation!** Gratitude and recognition bring salvation speedily.³

Patience also requires much sacrifice. Patience is so exalted. So many troubles are a result of rushing. **We must desire, yearn, pine for – but wait until Hashem chooses to provide.**

Rebbe Nachman said that the preparation for a *mitzvah* is often more valuable than even the *mitzvah* itself. This is true because the preparation requires patience, during which time we long for, yearn for and pray for – and, when we finally receive, we value it all the more.

There are periods of waiting in life. We do not get what we want on demand. Many things take time and *tefilla*. We must stubbornly persist with supplication. Often, our prayers connect us so amazingly to Hashem that the sweetness of that bond results in our forgetting entirely about what we were lacking.

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המברך את עמו בשלום

We must remain mindful of the fact that the One withholding from us is Hashem himself, Who loves us in the most incredible way and only He knows what is best for us. At the same time, we must have *emuna* that our salvation will yet arrive.

This week's *parsha* opens with, "Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." Whoever wishes to draw close to Hashem must sit at the entrance of the tent of holiness for a long time – while his urges burn within (in the heat of the day). He feels pushed away instead of drawn close. We must reinforce our will – desire can smash iron. **One who truly desires will overcome all obstacles.** Avraham was alone in the world but did not focus on the impediments – he persisted and prayed.

Moreinu Harav: A *Baal Teshuva* can keep Shabbos, lay *tefillin*, and observe family purity – all very remarkable. But, cleansing the mind, purifying habits, dispelling foreign notions cannot be accomplished overnight. Even someone who was born to holy and righteous parents may not traverse life's journey intact. One who was born into less ideal circumstances must sacrifice so much in the search for truth. He must realize that his bad habits and erroneous ideas still cling to him – he cannot shed them instantaneously. **The more often we have transgressed, the more difficult it is to escape our tendencies.**

In this world, everything takes time. Nothing real can be accomplished instantly. Sometimes, things take a very long time and what we need most is patience.

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me sacrifice for *tefilla*. Grant me an iron will to defeat the alien thoughts and to concentrate on the meaning of the words that I utter. I do not have sufficient desire – when a large portion of my *davening* passes by with thoughts entirely unrelated to my prayers – I am not too disturbed by that reality. Do not allow me to fall into routine, Father; do not allow me to accept this situation. Help me experience the lost opportunity, like a stab to my heart for every *bracha* that I pronounce without attention. Help me fight for every *tefilla* and help me beseech You before I pray that I merit praying with focus. **Intensive prayer transforms that moment of prayer into something eternal.**

Master of the World! Help me sacrifice to conceal everything positive that you allow me to accomplish. May I truly sense that anything I achieve is not a result of any personal merit – it is all unearned gifts from You. The reality is that I am so delighted when others learn of my successes – evidencing that I do not have genuine *emuna* that every success and accomplishment is Your absolute compassion, Father.

Master of the World! Help me to never despair or throw up my hands - even when I have *davened* for something for years and still have not been answered – nothing seems to change for me. Help me have sincere *emuna* that no prayer is wasted and when the appropriate time arrives, all of the prayers will combine and bring about salvation. Help me see the redemption from afar, to imagine that I have already merited and, that itself will bring it closer.

Master of the World! Help me not become broken by the defeats. To the contrary, help me receive strength from them, to attain joy from them, to determinedly decide at those moments that I will not become broken – I will continue, I will never abandon You, Father. Help me understand that downfalls are designed to rouse me from my self-centeredness, to get me to accept new resolutions, to implement additional safeguards to protect myself and to be triumphant in the war. Be with us, Father.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov

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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