

פרשת תולדות

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

"ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם אברהם הוליד את
יצחק" (כה, יט)

**"And these are the offspring of
Yitzchak son of Avraham - Avraham
begot Yitzchak."**

Avraham is the epitome of kindness, while Yitzchak is the epitome of strength and awe. Yitzchak's aspect of strict judgment derived and was a direct continuation of Avraham's aspect of kindness. In reality, true judgment encompasses great mercy for it is in one's best interest - "for Hashem chastens the one that He loves."^{1 2}

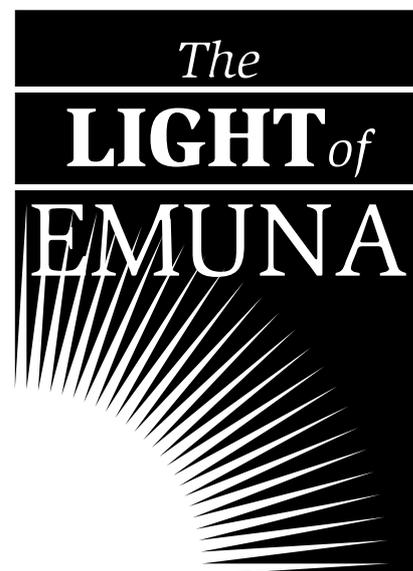
יעקב ועשיו: פנימיות מול חיצוניות

Yaakov & Esau: Essence vs. Superficiality

HKB"H created the world with a persistent and ongoing war between two sides: good and evil, truth and falsehood, innocence and cunning, essence and superficiality.

Hashem creates counterbalances - "G-d has made one corresponding to the other."³ Offsetting holiness, Hashem created the "other side." Opposite devotion to a life of Torah and *mitzvos* stands succumbing to the seductions of this world. That is the struggle of life - the eternal struggle between Yaakov and Esau that exists within each one of us - the struggle between real and frivolity. What is internal? It is taking moments of life and transforming them into the everlasting.

¹ כי את אשר יאהב ד' יוכיח (משלי ג, יב)
² ליקוטי מוהר"ן, עד
³ זה לעמת זה עשה האלוקים (קוהלת ז, יד)



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

A Jew lifts his head and thanks Hashem for illuminating His countenance towards him - allowing him to undertake something and succeeding - he is awestruck - "Hashem, You are so amazing." He speaks with Hashem with such simplicity. As Rebbe Nachman advised, "If you tell Hashem whatever happens to you - that moment becomes eternal."

When a person is focused - when he thinks before he speaks, when he prays or blesses with concentration - with every individual blessing, he is able to attain such magnificent closeness to Hashem - and **he converts the moment into something timeless.** By contrast, if he pronounces blessings robotically, without thinking about what he is saying (especially those words that he repeats daily, like *Shema*, *Bentching*, etc.) he transforms the everlasting into the fleeting, G-d forbid. We must strengthen ourselves to feel the words, to say them from a text even when we know them by heart - why squander the light embedded in each word and every letter? When a Jew prays with concentration, he attains a deeper understanding of Hashem - he is not merely asking for healing when he reaches **רפאנו** - he reinforces his *emuna* that Hashem is the greatest healer, that He is able to heal every disease and that all cures belong to Him. He does not merely request a year of blessing and sustenance when he says **ברך עלינו** - he has *emuna* that livelihood comes only from Hashem and Hashem is so

compassionate and so wishes to provide for us – if only we ask.

Moreinu Harav: Rebbe Nachman teaches that when a person does not concentrate on prayer - it is an indication of a lack of *emuna*. Every rushed word, without devotion, is heresy. When a person wholeheartedly knows that the world is filled with Hashem's Presence and he feels Hashem standing by him and watching him during *davening* – that is called *emuna* and, consequently, he prays with tranquility and says each letter slowly. When a person focuses on a single word of *Shemona Esrei* and says it deliberately, calmly – **he is literally called a *tzaddik* - he receives all of the rewards in the world.** It is great when we focus on some of the words, but that is not yet called *emuna* – *emuna* means concentrating on every expression of prayer – talking to Hashem at least as well as we converse with our friends. People disdain heretics – but, we must really hate the heretics within our hearts – the heresy of *davening* thoughtlessly. We must be *mekarev* ourselves to *teshuva*. A certain *tzaddik* once set out to declare to all the nonbelievers that there is a Master of the World and suddenly turned back – he explained that there were sufficient nonbelievers inside of him for him to work on first.

We are not here for ourselves. Our purpose is not to accumulate merits or to earn Gan Eden. **We are here to reveal Hashem's glory in the world.** When all of a Jew's requests and desires are to do Hashem's will – he exchanges the transitory for the permanent.

“Master of the World, help me so that everything I desire be for You – help me merit being a partner in the revelation of Your honor in the world.”

What remains in the end is only what we have performed for Hashem's majesty. That is our World to Come, our eternity, what remains for the Resurrection of the Dead. The Creator of the World does not require honor from angels. He loves the devotion He receives from simple people. He wishes for us to forget ourselves

momentarily and recognize that everything that He created in His world was created for His honor, not ours.

A person feels deprived – he was denied here and robbed there – because, essentially, he feels that the world was created for him. **Everyone is certain that they are the very reason for creation.** We have all sorts of cravings and longings and we even interpret HKB”H's will according to our own. When we perform *mitzvos* with awareness that we are performing Hashem's will – they are infused with elevated and exemplary flavor. When we provide honor to HKB”H – we receive honor in return.

When R' Eliyahu Dessler zt”l arrived in Eretz Yisroel from London, he took a bus and it let him off with all of his suitcases at some distance from the Ponevitch Yeshiva. So, he began to walk slowly with all of his belongings. It was a rainy day and the ground was muddy. A former student drove by and noticed his Rebbe dragging such a heavy load through difficult conditions. He immediately stopped the car and offered his Rebbe a ride. R' Dessler said that he first had to ask the student a question. The student replied that they should get in the car first to avoid the heavy rain and then R' Dessler could ask him anything. R' Dessler refused. R' Dessler inquired as to whom the car belonged. The young man explained that although the car did indeed belong to his employer, he had received permission from the fleet manager to use the car for personal errands as well. R' Dessler refused to accept a ride, explaining that the fleet manager was only authorized to grant permission for company related matters, but had no authority to allow personal use. Accordingly, the student was not permitted to offer R' Dessler a lift. R' Dessler continued to slog through the terrible weather and the dirt with difficulty. **Of primary importance – doing Hashem's will and revealing Hashem's honor in the world.**

When a Jew is willing to sacrifice all that is important and precious in life – to do Hashem's will – he links to the everlasting.

R' Yidel Lazerson lived with his wife and three

children in abject poverty. He refused to accept any help. "I will only take from Hashem" was his usual rejoinder to any offer of assistance. One day, to everyone's surprise, the Lazerson family moved into a new house, the children wore new clothing and there was an abundance of food in the home. All of the neighbors wondered who the anonymous benefactor who finally convinced R' Yidel to accept aid was. The mystery was solved several months later when a former Rabbi of R' Yidel's visited and spent Shabbos with him. The Rabbi asked where the newfound wealth came from. "Hadn't you persistently refused all support and refrained from taking from anyone – why did you change your way?" "I have not changed," responded R' Yidel. He proceeded to explain that there had been a very wealthy miser who had lived in town with his wife. Their greatest joy in life had been their wealth. They had not had any children and, a year prior, the wife had died. The man became so lonely and miserable that he thought regularly about committing suicide. Upon learning of this, R' Yidel approached the man and asked for financial assistance to alleviate his own misery. Initially, R' Yidel used the meager amounts provided by the miser to buy bread for his family and reported back to the man how overjoyed and appreciative his children had been. Slowly, the man increased his gifts and, with each new gift, the light in his eyes returned and grew. R' Yidel was so brokenhearted over the hard work of so many years dissipating in the blink of an eye – but what choice did he have – he had to perform the *mitzvah* of saving a life as it presented itself. With trembling, he asked his Rebbe what he could do to correct the situation – he declared himself prepared to do whatever was necessary, even going into a lengthy exile, to correct the damage he had done. The Rabbi was silent for a while and began to cry. **"This is not called taking, R' Yidel, this is a greater giving than any other because it was done modestly and by sacrificing your very soul."**

Every action that we perform and every thought that we have – requires much introspection. If they contain any extravagance, any superficiality – we must shudder. "Hashem, help me that

everything I do be for Your credit – all because I love You."

We are created below to remember Hashem above. The lower we find ourselves – the greater it is when we remember Hashem above. **The greater the challenge – the greater the accomplishment.** Our problem is that we forget. We forget the key to life – that everything is from Hashem. We become confused frequently, constantly feeling victimized, always thinking of ourselves – about our honor, about what people say to us, do to us, - all of that is forgetfulness. We forget that every occurrence is merely Hashem's maneuvering to return us to Him, to remember Him, to raise our heads to Him – because when everything proceeds smoothly, we forget. **We must incessantly refine and improve our ability to see Divine Providence in every occurrence.**

When a person realizes that the moment requires him to set aside all of his own efforts and lift his head Heavenwards – for only Hashem can help him – he makes those moments last forever.

When amidst failure – with our children, with our prayers, with our spouses – we acknowledge that we love Hashem, we love holiness, we so love those moments when we experience Hashem's Presence within us, as sparse as they may be – we turn temporal into divine.

If we fully understand that there is nothing besides Hashem, we cannot become sad – we must smile, we must be joyous, we must recall Hashem continually. We must know that everything else is emptiness, imaginary. All of our challenges with our spouses, with our children, with our homes, with our neighbors, with our income, with our health – are all concealments. How do we counteract them? We take a slightly different approach to them. We talk to Hashem – we acknowledge to Him that everything is from Him, that He brought them on us and that they are all mere tests. "Hashem, I love You. I am not here to indulge." We must speak from the heart – simply, without cunning.

We must impart this attitude to our children, even to our spouses and our neighbors – so that they too say “everything is from Hashem.” We have free will to detach ourselves, even slightly, from silliness, nonsense, pedantry, irritations, materialism, urges. **Hashem judges us entirely based on how we disconnect from our current status to an ever so slightly higher status** – even a hair’s breadth. Hashem collects all of those hairs and creates great things from them.⁴

We are mostly true to ourselves by way of our interpersonal relationships. Actions do not tell the whole story – there are also thoughts and feelings – love, joy, *emuna*, hope. People observe our actions but Hashem observes our hearts. We never know another’s thoughts – how can we

ever judge them?

We must believe that there is great light within every Jew, regardless of how they appear. We must remember that every Jew is a child of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov and contains G-dliness.

Yaakov was a “wholesome man, abiding in tents” - everything in private, with humility. Esau was a “trapper” – deceitful, a smooth talker, cunning. Yaakov sought only Torah and holiness. Esau sought the pleasures of this world – an easy life, good income, every indulgence – materialistic, superficial and shallow.

Every one of us contains some Yaakov and some Esau - we must help the Yaakov win.

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me transform all of the vanity and inanity that I utter into holiness! To the point that I not voice a single inappropriate word – **no gossip, no slander, no irritation, no anger, no arrogance, no selfishness, no criticism**. Help me, Father, for this is so difficult – but those who are successful lead such amazing lives.

Master of the World! Help me to not speak about others! Help me be terrified of talking about others! I do not wish to forfeit everything! Save me from this, Father! Help me refrain even speaking about family members, even if it is only to my wife and even if it is accurate and it seems to be for a proper purpose – as it so often seems. Only You, Father, know the truth.

Master of the World! Help that whenever I see something positive in another person – to say something nice to him. Words have tremendous power and a kind word spoken to another can resound in his head for a long time. I know myself, Father, how much it gladdens me and how long I remember it - who said something nice to me and what they said. Help me always remember that every positive word that I say or is said to me is really from You. **Thank You, Father, that I merited being able to say something pleasant to someone else**. Thank You, Father, for sending someone to say something encouraging at the appropriate time – exactly when I needed to hear it.

Master of the World! Help me to be happy when I hear of something good that happened to another person – something was corrected for him or he enjoyed some success. How can I expect You to provide for me unless I have a benevolent eye towards other?! Help me request of You that others succeed, that they receive what they want – help me repeat it over and over until I feel it in my heart.

Master of the World! I have a mouth so that I may express my gratitude constantly for every kindness that You bestow upon me. Help me remember that and to do so throughout my life.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דov

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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