

פרשת וישלח

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

ולרפואה שלימה ל'

זעלדע ברכה בת חוה לאה רחל

"וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו אל עשו אחיו" (לב, ד)
"Then Yaakov sent angels ahead of him
to Esau his brother."

Yaakov instructed the angels as follows: "Thus shall you say, to my lord, to Esau, 'so said your servant...'"¹ Esau is identified as the master and Yaakov as the servant. Yet, Esau had sold his birthright to Yaakov and now Yaakov was considered the firstborn – so, why is Esau addressed as the master? Yaakov was demonstrating to Esau that the sale of the birthright was meaningless to him – he was not acting like the elder brother. He hoped to diffuse the hatred in Esau's heart. It is customary for a younger brother to honor the firstborn, as he would his father – as the Torah itself hints to in commanding us to honor our older brother (as learned from the word את אביך in את).²

"והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה" (לב, ט)
"Then the remaining camp shall
survive"

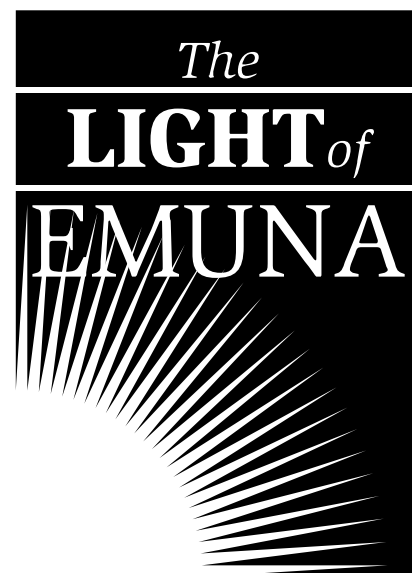
When Yaakov Avinu heard that his brother, Esau, was approaching with 400 warriors – "Yaakov became very frightened and it distressed him."³ He divided his camp into two so that if Esau would attack one of the groups - at a minimum, the other would survive. If he could not save everyone, at least he would save some.

That is how we must serve Hashem – to grasp onto whatever we can. We must do some good

¹ כה תאמרן לאדני לעשו כה אמר עבדך (לב, ה)

² רמב"ן

³ וירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו (שם, ח)



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

every day. So long as we are doing something positive – we must never cease merely because we aspire to better.

A Jew is forbidden to despair. Every Jew is essentially virtuous, with no connection to evil. We must be truly and wholeheartedly convinced that we will yet attain all that we desire and crave. A Jew is connected only to the decent and the holy - even if the path to it is paved with obstacles. Our true role is that of beloved children of Hashem. Just as the Father is holy – so are the children sacred.

R' Yehuda Assad led a delegation of Hungarian Rabbis to Kaiser Franz Josef to entreat him to abolish the harsh decrees against the Jewish people that were instigated by members of the enlightenment. Throughout the journey, he tendered many prayers from the depths of his heart to the King-of-All-Kings, HKB"Ha. He was so persistent that the carriage's upholstery was drenched in his tears. At the palace, the walls were covered in mirrors. R' Yehuda, who was always cautious to not look in a mirror, caught his shining reflection in one of the surfaces and was sure that it was an angel who was accompanying them to the Kaiser. He thought: if they were being escorted by such an eminent companion – they had no cause for concern. He was unaware that he was observing his own image. The delegation was received with great pomp and esteem and, upon meeting the Kaiser,

the Rabbonim made the blessing, "Who apportions of His glory to flesh and blood" and then explained the meaning of the blessing to the monarch. He was so moved by their elucidation that he reacted with a resounding Amen. Moved by their veneration, the Kaiser fulfilled their requests and R' Yehuda blessed the Kaiser with long life – a blessing that came to fruition. We must appreciate what a holy Jew really is.⁴

We may not yet be in that place, but we too can be. The main objective is to keep moving ahead. To grab hold of whatever we can. **If we fall – we reinforce ourselves and begin to climb again.** That is the path of a Jew who wishes to approach Hashem. At times, in his infinite mercy, Hashem reveals great light to us - but then, suddenly, we are plunged into darkness. Our main duty is to stand firm and know, that if we do indeed stand strong through a downfall – we will merit a subsequent ascent. Yaakov Avinu earned the distinction of establishing the House of Israel precisely after his years of endurance in Haran. **We must never become dejected – we must continue to yearn, continue to long for redemption - and it will appear.**

When we feel enveloped in darkness - we must lift our heads and beg Hashem to rescue us. Yaakov Avinu constantly preserved his bond with Hashem, endlessly pleading, "Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear."⁵ If we truly understand that only Hashem can help us, if we have real *emuna* that even when we can perceive no natural solutions to our quandaries – Hashem is all-capable. If we have genuine *emuna* that Hashem does not forsake us, that he is with us even in the midst of the anguish – **if we have *emuna* → we will succeed.** We must always run to Hashem.

We must be satisfied with our lot in life. We must remember that we are Hashem's children. **There is no such thing as being devoid of good.** Even serving Hashem by rote is good,

even while not ideal. Things need not be perfect to be good. Torah is not only the domain of those who are successful in learning and can *daven* with devotion and attachment. Every simple Jew, who lives with Torah, is connected to *yiddishkeit* and to the service of Hashem. We must feel joy for our portion – we must be satisfied. **How fortunate are we and how grand is our share – we are with Hashem.**

At his encounter with Esau, Yaakov wished to present his brother with a gift. Esau responded, "I have plenty, my brother, let what you have remain yours."⁶ Yaakov's retort demonstrates two opposing worldviews, "For G-d has been gracious to me and as I have everything."⁷ Esau states that he has plenty – but there is room for improvement, he has not yet attained contentment. By contrast, Yaakov says that he has everything. He is not lacking anything. He is happy with his allocation. That is how every Jew must feel. **If we have Hashem – we have everything.**

When we fall – we can always do *teshuva*. We can cry out to Hashem to help us overcome. **HKB"H is always ready to accept us.** G-d forbid, we must never allow ourselves to experience despair or inertia. We may not belittle what we are indeed capable of accomplishing because of the things that are beyond us. We may never abandon our mission.

As a child, the Kloizenberger Rebbe, R' Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam zt"l, accepted upon himself to say "Tikkun Chatzos" every night. He would sneak out to *shul*, open the *Aron Kodesh* and pour out his heart in *tefilla* and supplication. The sound of the child's cries pierced the quiet of the night and stirred the occupant of the neighboring house. The neighbor was not religious and was amazed by the mysterious cry emanating from the *shul* in the dead of night. He imagined that they were the wails of ghosts or the like.

One night, he mustered the courage to hide in the

⁴ מרוה לצמא
⁵ הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו כי ירא אנכי (שם, יב)

⁶ יש לי רב אחי יהי לך אשר לך (לג, ט)
⁷ כי חנני אלקים וכי יש לי כל (שם, יא)

women's section of the *shul* to peek down on the main sanctuary. He was shocked to observe a young child standing next to the open *Aron Kodesh*, arms outstretched, begging for his life with terrifying shrieks. He heard how the child wholeheartedly implored for forgiveness and pardon for his "sins" and requested Divine Assistance that he may achieve comprehension of the words of Torah. When the neighbor returned home, he could not rest - the child's cries reverberated in his ears and shook his soul. His conscience was tormented and he was filled with regret for all of his transgressions. Ultimately, he abandoned his undesirable ways and returned in complete *teshuva*. His entire upheaval was inspired by the wailing of that child, who grew up to become one of the greatest and most admired Admorim.⁸

We too have moments of transcendence in which we are overwhelmed by our love for Hashem, love of the sacred, happy with our yiddishkeit, overjoyed for being part of a saintly community of seekers of Hashem.

Our souls pine greatly for that which is above us – we are not satisfied with our current reality – we long for something greater that will raise us up and, when we reach it, everything will be different. What is this greater existence? It is holiness, clinging, *tzaddikim*, HKB"Y, the holy Torah, prayer and all of the remarkable areas that we so wish to attain. All that we have not yet accomplished are found slightly beyond us – our entire task is to try to seize some part of them, to experience them, to yearn for them, to receive strength from them. The soul is not gratified by results - it delights in the journey of ascending to what is above it. The goal is not the achievement - but rather the desire – for only that can we hold onto from beginning until end.⁹

Desire is the motivating influence in life. It envelops us, propelling our limbs. The Midrash tells us that Avraham sent Eliezer, the elder of his home, to seek guests. Eliezer set out but

could not find any. Avraham declared, "Slaves have no *emuna*" – in other words, "you did not try hard enough." How is that fair? Eliezer had searched everywhere, roaming the streets - no one was out because Hashem had made the sun burn so strongly. Why did Avraham rebuke him – he'd done all he could? From his failure it was evident that he had not actually done as much as he could have done. In fact, when Avraham went out - he did find guests. Success is dependent on the force of the desire and Eliezer's was not fervent enough.

Rebbe Nosson taught that Hashem's foremost pride in the toil of Jews is in their desire and craving for Him. "I want, Father. You know that I want – I have no strength to change, I try but fail – but I want, I want, I want. Help me, Father." A person's life reflects his desire. **Nothing can stand in the way of true desire – when a person is consistent and persistent in his aspirations, Hashem helps him become a *tzaddik*.** If we truly want something – we will *daven* for it with great zeal until we obtain it.

Yaakov Avinu prepared gifts for the fateful encounter with his brother, but he left space between the droves.¹⁰ We must not look at our difficulties as one. We must separate them, leave space. We need to deal with one challenge at a time and set the rest aside. We must seek the consolation, Hashem's mercy, within the suffering. "There are times when it seems as if the entire world is falling upon us, as if, G-d forbid, all troubles are merging and descending upon us at once and this twists our hearts away from Hashem ... Therefore, we must find generosity and comfort in the pain. In reality, all suffering contains bounty. 'In my distress, You have relieved me.'¹¹ The Hebrew words for 'relieved' (*הרחבת*) and 'space' (*רוח*) are related."¹²

How do we approach the events in our lives? If we recognize that everything happens to cure us, correct us, purify us, cleanse us, refine us and

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לפיד האש
באור פני מלך חיים

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ורוח תשימו בין עדר ובין עדר (לב, יז)
בצר הרחבת לי (תהילים ד, ב)
ליקו"ה בלאי בהמה ד, ח

draw us near to Hashem – if we understand that that is the entire purpose of all tribulations – everything becomes more palatable. But, if we approach occurrences as if they are happenstance – they can break us and demoralize us. We compare ourselves to others and wonder why their lives appear easier. Hashem orchestrates every life in the best possible manner - to bring us close. **We must turn to Hashem, speak to Him and ask of Him. We must have complete *emuna* that precisely from our difficulties does salvation sprout.**¹³

We must incessantly reinforce joy – Hashem is with us and we can overcome anything. We are alive, healthy, breathing – how happy that ought to make us. We must stop worrying about the past and the future. We must enjoy each moment. Hashem has given us such a beautiful world – sun, moon, stars, heaven, oceans, rivers,

flowers, trees, birds – and especially – ourselves.

Stop comparing our life to the lives of others. We receive exactly what we need for our necessary corrections and purpose. Hashem does so much for us. We have a *yarmulke*, *tzitzis* and *tefillin* – amazing. How lucky we are every time we do a *mitzvah* – **how good Hashem is to us for allowing us to do His will.**

We must *daven* for everything, about everything. No one has it entirely easy – everyone needs to pray. We must *daven* for everything – big or small. Many people refrain from praying because they do not want to “bother” Hashem with small things, it seems impolite. But, the truth, **the more we “bother” Hashem – the more miracles and salvations He provides.** There is nothing too great or too petty – Hashem wants us to come to Him with everything.

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me run to You instinctively, without confusion, like the *tzaddikim*, who, when everyone else is busy making all sorts of efforts and attempts, they run to You, understanding that only You can save them – even in small matters and, definitely, in large ones.

Master of the World! Help me truly feel as if I “have everything.” For, if I have You, I really need nothing else. I am still so attached to so many trivialities that I actually suffer when they are absent. For example, when I forget my cellphone at home, I am a mess. Instead of relishing that today I can talk only to You, I obsess over who might be trying to reach me.

Master of the World! Help me take delight in the little things – like the elderly man who is so thrilled that he still has teeth (and retains them until he dies in the merit of his gratitude). Help me be impressed by the beauty of Your creation. Due to the rushed pace of life, I rarely notice it. **Help me thank You for E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G. Help me not wait until things go wrong for me or for others to suddenly realize how much kindness You do for us without our noticing.**

Master of the World! Grant me many of those holy moments in which I feel such powerful love towards You, such joy that we have You, such gratitude towards You – for at some of those times, I can stand with my head raised, and not budge for a full hour.

Master of the World! Bring me close to You.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דו״ע

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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