

פרשת וישב

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

ולרפואה שלימה ל'
זעלדע ברכה בת חוה לאה רחל

"וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען" (לז, א)
"Yaakov settled in the land of his
father's sojourning, in the land of
Canaan."

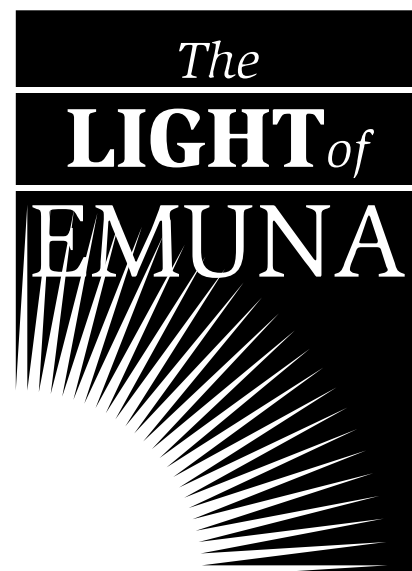
Chazal note that the term for "sojourning" (מגורי) is similar to the term for "converts" (גרים) – Yaakov Avinu was occupied with converting converts. That is why it states immediately afterwards, "These are the children of Yaakov, Yosef."¹ Yosef followed in his father's footsteps and involved himself in teaching converts and drawing distant souls near. Yosef's life mirrored Yaakov's – that is the true explanation of the *pasuk* – "These are the children of Yaakov, Yosef."²

"באשר ד' אתו ואשר הוא עשה ד' מצליח" (לט, כג)
"Inasmuch as Hashem was with him;
and whatever he did Hashem made
successful."

Connecting to Hashem is the greatest pleasure that a Jew can experience. Without this bond, all of the good in the world is insufficient to cause a Jew to feel true joy.

How do we build this bond? We learn from Yosef Hatzaddik. "Hashem was with him" – "the name of Heaven was frequently in his mouth"³ – constantly remembering Hashem – endlessly thinking of Hashem. When we are on the road, we talk to Hashem – we recite some chapters of Tehillim that we know by heart – we speak to

¹ אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף (לו, ב)
² ליקו"ה, השכמת הבוקר ד – ט"ז
³ כי ד' אתו (לט, ג) – רש"י: שם שמים שגור בפיו



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

Hashem with openness. That is the key to our success in life. That is why Yosef was called a "Successful Man"⁴ – he never attributed his success to his own merit. Everything was credited to Hashem's assistance. He viewed himself as insignificant. Even when he was crowned as king, he stated: "I fear G-d."⁵

When we lose something and we turn the house upside down looking for it and then we suddenly find it – "Thank You Hashem. I know that You helped me find it. Thank You for everything that You do for me." And, a moment later – if we have an improper thought or we say something forbidden – "Hashem, I apologize, forgive me, I am so sorry." **It all comes down to two words: thanks and sorry.** In those moments we create a personal bond with HKB"H. **We speak in second-person – directly to HKB"H.**

We face difficulties in the battle against our base urges, we fear trials and tribulations, we feel that there is no hope – we tell Hashem, we elaborate the details, we request His protection. **We have a powerful weapon in our hands** – why do we fail to use it? We must make Hashem our partner in everything that transpires in our lives. We must put all of our options, indecisions, concerns and desires on the table.

⁴ ויהי איש מצליח (לט, ב)
⁵ את האלוקים אני ירא (מב, יח)

Our bond with Hashem is formed through wholeheartedness. When a person has very simple *emuna* that, even in his current state, at whatever stage and whatever level he finds himself, Hashem takes great pleasure in his service - he receives amazing vitality and tremendous enthusiasm from every task that he performs. Rebbe Nachman taught that even one who is highly intelligent must set aside his wisdom and serve Hashem with simplicity.⁶

The more wholesome and simple our connection is - the more exceptional favor it finds in HKB"H's eyes. When a simple Jew sets time for Torah and *tefilla*, toils to purify his character traits and deeds, turns to Hashem with unpretentious words, accepts life's challenges with *emuna* and love - Hashem receives so much gratification from him.

We must always be unsophisticated with Hashem - like the holy forefathers. Hashem told Avraham to walk with him wholeheartedly. With that blessing, Avraham Avinu established the Jewish nation. So too Yaakov - a wholesome man, a dweller of tents.

Wholeheartedness is absolute connection to the goal - and completeness of a person is only attainable via HKB"H. A person cannot be whole when he is infatuated with himself. One who is satisfied alone is egotistical. Our totality depends on clinging to Hashem. G-dliness completes us.⁷

R' Eliyashiv zt"l was once too weak after an operation to leave his house to attend one of his grandchildren's weddings. Yet, when he received an invitation to a child's wedding from R' Uri Lupolianski, the former Mayor of Yerushalayim, within a few days, R' Eliyashiv insisted on attending. When his family protested, he explained that he felt obligated to attend out of gratitude. Perplexed, they inquired as to what the Rav had received from the former Mayor. He explained that the Lupolianskis had

founded the "Yad Sarah" organization that lends medical equipment to those who need it and R' Eliyashiv had received a treadmill from them for his rehabilitation therapy.⁸

The Gemara tells us "As He [Hashem] does ... so you shall do."⁹ That is how we walk in Hashem's way - that is the completeness of *tzaddikim*. Completeness is *emuna* that whatever the Torah tells us is absolute truth - that is how we must live and not by seeking explanations as to why it is indeed true but not exactly relevant in our particular situation.

Wholesomeness means disregarding our own intellect and having *emuna* in Hashem - that whatever He does to us and whatever occurs in our lives - is for our very best. "At times, it seems to each of us as if Hashem does not act towards us with appropriate and fair justice and that He confronts us with tests that we cannot withstand, such as lack of income and the like. In truth, we must have *emuna* that Hashem is just and His judgment is correct and He never challenges anyone with what they cannot handle, even though it seems incomprehensible to us that we are capable of overcoming what we encounter. Despite how things often appear, we must cast aside our intellect and wisdom and have sincere *emuna* that Hashem's ways are trustworthy and know that we are required to endure precisely these matters that Hashem imposes on us.¹⁰

It is difficult to describe the enormity of the challenge that Yosef Hatzaddik faced with Potiphar's wife. We would have assumed that after surmounting such a formidable tribulation he would have been rewarded and not have been thrown into a dungeon for twelve years. Yet, Yosef accepted what had been decreed for him with *emuna* and innocence - the Midrash testifies that he sang and danced throughout those years, constantly thanking Hashem.

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ע"פ ישא ברכה
שבת קלג:
ליקו"ה מזיקין ה', י

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ליקו"ת ה, טו
באור פני מלך חיים

Wholesomeness is completion and that, in turn, is joy. The pinnacle of everything is joy. If a person wants to test himself as to whether he has attained something – he should examine his happiness. And, there is only one thing to be truly happy about – that Hashem is with us, that Hashem resides in our hearts. Potiphar observed this in Yosef - “His master perceived that Hashem was with him.”¹¹ **True joy is when Hashem is with us.** We tend to value quantity over quality. When Hashem is with us, we have quality – what difference does it make what I have accomplished or where I have failed - so long as Hashem is with me? HKB”H is our reality, our home. When a person travels, he has fun, but he does not stay there – he returns home because he returns to his natural place. That is the definition of “Hashem is with us.” When do we feel this most? On Shabbos. Throughout the week we strive – **on Shabbos, we have arrived – we are already there, Hashem is with us.**

A person can never experience Hashem’s Presence when he is entrenched in his own ego. They are polar opposites. A Jew must always remember that he is the King’s son. We are royalty and we must use that capacity for good, not to become arrogant. People are invigorated by their perception of superiority over others. That is not why Hashem has awarded us with royalty – we are meant to use it to elevate others, not to elevate ourselves over them. We must get over ourselves – we must not take ourselves too seriously. Every other Jew is also a soldier, just as necessary, also capable of amazing things.

People need honor. Anyone who says they do not need it - is lying. But, we must restrain it to the minimal amount necessary. When we receive glory we must remove ourselves from the equation – we must recognize that the respect is for the good deed that we performed or the lecture that we delivered – the G-dliness and the truth in those matters. Confusion ensues when we think it is about us. Our task is to take ourselves out of the picture. It is all Hashem’s magnificence. Honor and ego are important to

give us the initial push – then we must nullify it. We may pat ourselves on the back in the beginning – to get started – to get us out of bed. But then, we must quickly quash our egos in favor of Hashem. Torah and *mitzvos* contain inherent nullification – we choose them over our own desires, but that is only a basic level. We remain self-centered – we act for our own honor, not Hashem’s. The ideal is to nullify our existence. **If we succeed at something positive we must turn to Hashem, thank Hashem for helping us, acknowledge that we could not have accomplished without Him – Thank You Hashem, I know it is from You.**

Self-nullification and humility come from the inner, true and deep feeling that everything is an unearned gift, completely undeserved, entirely Hashem’s kindness and compassion. **We cannot accomplish on our own – we need HKB”H – we certainly cannot defeat our evil inclinations without His help.**

We must preface every task with a prayer and request. We must conclude every undertaking with “Thank You, Father, for being with me, helping me, guarding me.” When we live with this authenticity (and when we have a lapse we immediately do *teshuvah*) – we will be eternally joyous.

Every misfortune is to remind us that we are still haughty – we still believe in our own strength. Hashem incessantly signals to us to rid ourselves of our conceit and our self-aggrandizement.

A person who lives with humility is filled with joy, delight, G-dly light. He accomplishes without taking credit and is certain that others are more righteous, intelligent and holy than he. We accord honor to those who honor Hashem – not those who usurp it for themselves.

Regarding Yosef, the *pasuk* says, “but he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah.”¹² These represent the less esteemed Jews, the children of the handmaids. Yosef

¹¹ וירא אדניו כי ד' אתו (לט, ג)

¹² והוא נער את בני בלהה ואת בני זלפה (לז, ב)

lowered himself to them - to bring them close - with humility and modesty. Yosef was seventeen years old - the numerical value of טוב ("good") is seventeen. Yosef was good to others and drew them near - always finding the good in even the seemingly lowest people.

If we were fortunate enough to be born with high intelligence, we deserve no credit for that. Hashem provided the wisdom - we have no cause for arrogance.

We must recognize the truth - that **everything is Hashem's kindness and compassion**. We must thank Hashem for every breath. If we acknowledge this - Hashem gives us all that we request! **Hashem does not owe anyone anything!!!** Hashem's kindness is limitless. Hashem's kindness gives us life, allows us to pray, to learn, to perform *mitzvos* - we can only

say Thank You.

To live with Hashem - we must respect others. Honoring others = honoring Hashem because he created them - how could we denigrate them?

"My brothers do I seek,"¹³ declared Yosef. We must seek our brothers. We must seek their beauty, to recognize that Hashem is with them too, that they are also Hashem's children. We must seek to cause them joy and never pain. We must seek to remember that this person is not merely what he seems. When we see others act improperly, we tend to speak ill of them (or think badly if we try to avoid *loshon hora*), eyeing negatively, disdaining - while we really do not understand their inner essence. We do not see the whole picture - only Hashem does. **We never know the depths of another's soul - how could we possibly judge them?**

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me not take things so personally - not to become insulted so quickly - not to jump to the conclusion that someone was inconsiderate or dishonored me. Many times, I am disappointed in the way that others treat me - but I am forgetting that I do not see or know the whole story. How can I judge them? **It is so easy to be offended, to draw a line through that person and erase them from our lives - but, is that what You, Father, want of us?**

Master of the World! Help me not be so sensitive. There are people who regularly ignore me, do not smile at me and I immediately ask myself what I did to them, why they hate me, what they think of me. Help me, Father, to remember that each person has their own difficulties and it is entirely reasonable to assume that their attitude has nothing to do with me. Grant me the strength to smile first at them instead of my normal routine of closing myself off and returning their treatment in kind. Even if I used to have the desire and the strength to approach them and clarify why they ignore me and if I did something wrong - today, I pass by and avoid them entirely. Help me, Father, that this very thing that they ignore me and do not smile at me, that I hate so much when done to me - that I not do it to others, as I sometimes do.

Master of the World! Help me to finally conquer my anger. I still lose my temper at times - when others do not accept my opinion, do as I wish, speak to me disrespectfully or criticize me. Help me, rather than lose my temper in those moments, to connect to You, to remember that I have You, to recall that I do not run the world, that it is permissible for others to not heed my voice and even to criticize me. **Help me, Father, to experience the sweetness of one who lowers his head and does not respond, argue or get worked up by every comment against him.**

Help me be with You at every single moment.

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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