

# פרשת ויגש

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

ולרפואה שלימה ל' זעלדע ברכה בת חוה לאה רחל

"ויגש אליו יהודה" (מד, יח)

## "The Yehuda approached him"

R' Yehuda explained the *pasuk* to mean that Yehuda approached Yosef – prepared to do battle. R' Necehmya expounds it to mean that he approached in order to appease him. The Rabbis teach that he drew near to pray. R Elazar elucidates the *pasuk* in accordance with all three: **if the situation calls for war – I am ready; if for appeasement – I am ready; if for prayer – I am ready.**<sup>1</sup>

"וירא אליו ויפל על צואריו" (מו, כט)

## "He appeared before him and he fell on his neck"

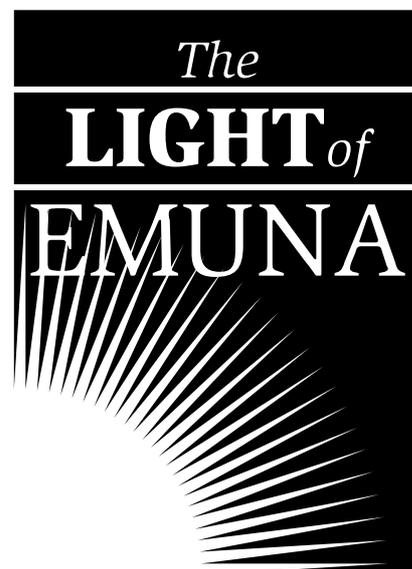
Twenty-two years of painful separation finally reach their conclusion. The son falls on his father's neck. And the father - he recites *Krias Shema*. It is astounding – Yaakov Avinu had suffered immeasurably - the pain of a father having his son torn from him – to the point that he refused to be consoled throughout the duration – and when he is finally reunited, is it possible that he did not kiss him, hug him, cry on his neck? Couldn't he say *Shema* later? Chazal explain: when Yaakov Avinu realized that **his love for Yosef was overwhelming him and filling his heart, he was afraid that his love for his son might overpower his love for Hashem.** So, he fortified himself, like a lion, to perform the *mitzvah* of "You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart" – the very second *pasuk* of *Shema*.

<sup>1</sup>

מדרש רבא

<sup>2</sup>

אחת שאלתי מאת ד' אותה אבקש (תהילים כז)



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

We love You Father. We want You more than anything else in the world. We need only recall You and we already feel our hearts uplifted. We are so ecstatic that we have been so fortunate to draw close to You, to recognize You, to experience You – even if not consistently, even if only occasionally. The fact that we have You has such a calming effect on us so that when something that seems to be negative occurs – **we have to Whom to turn.** And, when we desire something positive or that someone succeed – again, **we have to Whom to turn. We are never alone.**

Within the heart of every Jew there pulsates a pure, G-dly soul bursting with love of Hashem. The *pasuk*: "One thing I asked of Hashem, that shall I seek"<sup>2</sup> can be read, by changing the emphasis, as, "One thing I ask of Hashem – Him I shall seek." **We want nothing except for one thing, one request, one wish – to be with YOU - to find our joy and vitality with You** - within holiness and not in the passions and silliness of this world. We do not give up on You – we ceaselessly lift our heads towards You and we wait for You, Father, to look upon us – like a person who stares at another for an extended period of time – will the second person not return his gaze?

We want You, Father – we do not want

concealment – we wish to see You face-to-face. We wish to experience our prayers, to feel for others – we want to have benevolent eyes, generous hearts – that there be joy in our hearts – we long for You so that we may experience the closeness of Hashem that is good, that we may literally be near You - that there be no disguises, that we may witness Your miracles, that our souls may attain their proper level.

**A Jew is a slice of G-dliness.** How much do we suffer when we cannot manage to *daven* with attachment, when we cannot succeed in pouring out our hearts before Hashem? When we do accomplish some level of proper *tefilla* and we actually shed a tear and cry to Hashem – we feel as if we are alone with Hashem – a seclusion that bears fruits, generates joy, holiness and yearning. Hashem is always with each and every one of us, traveling with us anywhere we go. **He is in our hearts and is with us in every corner, at every minute of every hour.** Our bond with Hashem is such that it pervades our entire inner soul. True, we have spouses, children, parents, commitments, livelihood related responsibilities, and they are all pressing and urgent – but, first and foremost must always be our obligation to give our souls their due.

If we forget, even for a moment, that we are here for the purpose of coming close to Hashem and we become confused because of our base urges and negative attributes – we must conduct introspection, regret our actions, do *teshuvah*, beg Hashem for forgiveness – and tell Him that we wish to be with Him - incessantly.

Our primary method of connection is through speech. **“Hashem I love You, I think about You, forgive me, I want to do Your will, help me, save me – that I have peace at home, that my children learn well, that I be deserving of You.”** Relentless communication – because we are perpetually conversing anyway. Even our thoughts are made up of words. So, if we accustom ourselves with words of association to HKB”H - we will automatically connect to amazing places. For example – gratitude and acknowledgement. **“We must contemplate the**

**myriad kindnesses and favors that HKB”H graces us with and sweetens our lives with.** Even a minor change in the mechanisms of the body makes a person fall apart, dragging his entire family along, even distant relatives, whose lives suddenly revolve around him. HKB”H, in his vast mercy, makes sure that everything works properly for us – and not only us, but for our children and families – and not just for one day, but for days, weeks, months and years. Should we not be stirred to thank Him wholeheartedly for everything that we do have before we complain and cry over what we seem to be lacking?”<sup>3</sup>

**We are here on a holy mission.** “You shall be to Me a kingdom of ministers and a holy nation.”<sup>4</sup> We received *mitzvos* so that we can connect to Hashem. It is all about connection. When there is no immediate *mitzvah* available – we attach through thought. **If we need a break or need to relax a bit – that too can be motivated by the ultimate goal.** Vacations, talking with friends, eating something enjoyable are all positive, **if** they are done with connection. It is not easy; it is quite difficult for a materialistic human being to truly desire to be joined to G-dliness constantly.

It feels impossible to hold on until we merit being able to pour out our hearts before Hashem, until we manage to do anything for Heaven’s sake, until we are able to do something true, without ulterior motives – but we never give up. “One thing I ask of Hashem – Him I shall seek – to dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life.” That is what we seek – to be close to Hashem. **We can be with Hashem anywhere – not only in *shul*.** Even in the lowest places, the dirtiest locales – even there, there are specific *Halachos* and regulations and even there we can find ourselves attached to Hashem.

What happens when there are challenges? What happens to our relationship then?

When a person faces a tribulation and cries out

<sup>3</sup>

כי אתה עמדי ד'

<sup>4</sup>

ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש (שמות יט, ו)

to Hashem – because it is difficult for him and he cannot understand what and why this is happening to him, when he feels like he has reached the limits of his endurance - and he nevertheless says to himself, “I know nothing, whatever Hashem chooses to do with me will only cause me to do more self-analysis to determine if I have acted as Hashem wants me to.” When we face hardships and overcome them and perform Hashem’s will and we forego and submit and acknowledge that we cannot comprehend and we accept whatever Hashem does – we are suddenly awash in feelings of love and longing for Hashem. **We sacrifice our own ambitions and let go of our negative aspirations. We acknowledge that whatever Hashem wishes us to have, He will give us and what He does not want us to obtain – we are better off without.** “I have no personal ability, I proceed via Hashem’s compassion, in simplicity – I only plead.<sup>5</sup>

Clinging to Hashem is an amazing and powerful tool. It is what the soul desperately craves. A person needs nothing when he clutches to Hashem. **He is never in exile, because no matter where he is - he is connected to Hashem.** He is elated because Hashem is with him.

**We need a bond with Hashem.** It is the sustenance of our souls. A personal relationship – a warm rapport. When things do not go well – it is only because we do not experience Hashem’s Presence. If a person thinks that he has certain problems – his only real problem is that Hashem is not found in his heart. The Rebbe Reb Zushya lived in abject poverty but could not understand the meaning of the word “bad” because he was always attached to Hashem.

**Our bond with Hashem is one of love.** The term “love” appears many times in *Shema*. And that is precisely what Yaakov Avinu elected to engage in at that incredible moment of reunion with Yosef. **He chose to elevate his love for Hashem above any other love.**

Avraham Avinu founded the Jewish nation. He acquired a love for something above him, something exalted and wondrous. This love burned within him and he was willing to be thrown in a fiery furnace for it. **Love is the greatest strength in the world. It is a power that nothing can withstand. When it is absent, it is a calamity.** Therefore, we must cry for those who have not yet merited attaining a link to Hashem. We must cry for ourselves when we lose the connection and the hope.

What can help us in trying times – periods of despair, when we are ready to give up on life, nothing seems to go well, nothing succeeds – in all areas: material, spiritual, familial? When everything seems grim – we must have *emuna* in one thing: **Hashem loves us.** As much as we may muster love for Hashem – **He loves us exponentially. His love is an infinite love that we cannot even grasp.** Anyone who hurts the Jewish people is as if they harmed the apple of His eye. **There is absolutely nothing that can disconnect the Jewish people and Hashem.** “You are My Chosen People. I created you so that My *Shechina* would reside in the lower world. You have a holy mission in the world. You and I are One. I established a covenant with you.” The covenant is expressed to every Jew in the world: **you and Hashem are One.** Things are only good when we are together with Hashem. Apart, it can never be good. Only with Him - can we be at home. It is not that we need Hashem in our lives – **Hashem is our life, He is life itself.** If a person feels down - it is because he is a bit detached from HKB”H. If his *emuna* was secure, he would feel better. The minute we forget Hashem, we experience ups and downs, challenges – such is life. In the midst of the challenges, the hardships and the concealments is precisely when **we must strengthen our *emuna* that Hashem loves us.** Not by rote – but, we must try to feel Him, to attempt to see how Hashem is with us in the suffering that we are currently enduring, at the heart of the terrifying darkness. **Hashem is with us, He sees us, Hashem shares in our anguish.**

Time marches on! There is nothing we can do

<sup>5</sup>

באור פני מלך חיים

about it. Even the greatest *tzaddikim* are subject to time. How do they remain steadfast and attain amazing heights? They are constantly cognizant of the fact that **Hashem always loves us**. And, **everything that He does is for our ultimate benefit!** Hashem wants only advantages for us – even when there are downfalls, failings, adversities – **we must never lose faith in Hashem’s love for us!** We must fortify ourselves. When Hashem smiles at us – it is marvelous. But, often, Hashem withholds His smiling face and things do not ensue as we would like – and we become broken and distant. The secret of the *tzaddikim* is that, even then, they refuse to be cast away – they intensify their efforts and come even closer. They understand: “HKB”H loves me; if He makes me feel distant it must be that I have committed some sin or that I require some humiliation or some suffering as atonement. I realize that I must correct

something or Hashem desires that I enhance and amplify my *tefillos*.”<sup>6</sup>

There are times when a person finds himself at the gates of holiness, about to enter – and the “other side” abruptly overpowers him – and he despairs and loses everything. We must bolster ourselves. **We must remember that Hashem is with us precisely in these most difficult moments.** In this week’s *parsha*, Hashem promises us, “I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up.”<sup>7</sup> This is explained in many *sefarim* as referring to all of the ascents and descents in the life of every Jew. **Hashem is always with us.** When we will return our souls after 120 years, we will see everything clearly. We will see how everything was for our benefit – **we will realize how Hashem was always with us, always protecting us. Hashem loves us.**

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## תפילה

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**Master of the World!** Help me remember those special moments in which I lift my head and am able to tell You, “Father, I love You” – again and again. For, those moments are the epitome of delight – they are the best for me – I am happiest in those instances. Help me, Father - that those moments occur more frequently, as often as possible, so that I never forget the truth (that everything else is false).

**Master of the World!** Help me remember that what brings me closest to You and what engenders the strongest feelings for You is when I do for others – smile at them, illuminate my countenance, speak encouragingly, do favors. Help me remember that we must make small efforts to gladden others. It is such a shame to waste such opportunities – squandering the chance to receive blessings from those who we do even tiny kindnesses for (not to mention big favors). Help me remember, Father, that when I sacrifice of myself for others, I receive such joy – what I want in those moments is only one thing: YOU!

**Master of the World!** Help me feel that You are with me, that You love me, even in the difficult hours, when there are sudden corrections, challenges, disruptions, misfortunes, suffering. If I can manage to feel Your Presence in those moments – realizing that You are suffering right alongside me - they will be much easier to handle – I will not become angry or despondent. In my current mindset, when something happens to me, I forget everything and I break down – I only see darkness. Help me remember that whatever happens is Your doing, Father – it is definitely for my benefit, even if it is so difficult right now.

**Master of the World!** May I merit loving You more than anything else in the world – to love Torah, love holiness, love *tefilla* – that I not think about anything else – that I not desire anything else – that all that resides in my head and my heart is YOU!

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דוד

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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המברך את עמו בשלום  
אנכי ארד עמך מצרימה ואנכי אעלך גם עלה (מו,ד)