

פרשת ויחי

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

ולרפואה שלימה ל' זעלדע ברכה בת חוה לאה רחל
ושלמה בן רייזע גיטל

"ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה" (מז, כה)
"Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt
seventeen years"

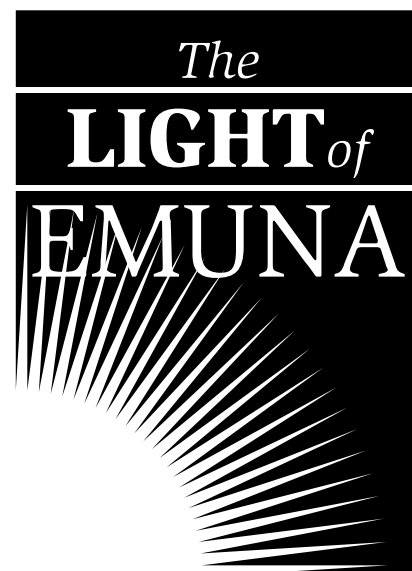
Did Yaakov only live seventeen years? Rather, Hashem's compassion was aroused for him and granted him seventeen good years in his final days. Therefore, it is said: "Whosoever experiences one good year in his final years – it is a good sign for him; whosoever experiences a bad year in his final years – it is a negative sign for him. Yaakov Avinu experienced seventeen such good years before he died – Hashem raised them up for him as if all of his days had been wonderful.¹

"ישמך אלקים כאפרים וכמנשה" (מח, כ)
"May Hashem make you like Ephraim
and like Menasha"

Yaakov tells Yosef that, forever, when one wishes to bless sons, he will say, "May Hashem make you like Ephraim and like Menasha." Why did Ephraim and Menasha deserve such distinction? **In the merit of humility and submissiveness.** The elder, Menasha, received his blessing from Yaakov's left hand, despite it being the less significant hand. Yet, he was not jealous of his younger brother who received the blessing with Yaakov's right hand. And Ephraim, the younger brother, who received such honor, did not become arrogant - he did not attribute the gift that he received to his own merit. Humility and mildness are inner feelings, true and deep – **recognizing that everything is a free gift, entirely unearned and undeserved – it is all from Hashem's kindness and compassion.**

¹

דדר אליהו רבה



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

Our life's mission is to acquire a generous outlook – **to not be envious of others, to be pleased about their successes** – even if we are experiencing deficiencies in the very matter in which they succeed. If we are happy for others – Hashem will give us as well. It is a difficult test – let's not deceive ourselves. We still have begrudging eyes - it is taxing for us to watch others succeed where we have failed. We must pour our hearts out to Hashem – "what shall I do with my resentful eyes – I cannot bear being covetous any longer – save me, I have no more strength for this overwhelming envy – help me remember that I reach You via my own path and at the pace that You have set for me, having nothing to do with the path and pace of others."

What belongs to others is from Hashem and what we have is from Hashem. If we want something that we do not have – we must ask Hashem for it – it makes no difference what someone else has. Whether or not he has it has no bearing on whether or not we have it. Each of our individual routes to reach the pinnacle of the mountain does not, at any point, intersect with the routes of others – they are all straight lines that never cross. Our own paths were chosen for us in Heaven. It makes no difference what someone else's trail looks like. The fact that another person has already arrived has nothing to do with us. There is absolutely no reason to allow it to disturb us – we must attain our own portion in Heaven, our own palace. They are

entirely independent courses and one has no impact on another. **What is ours is ours and what is his is his – Hashem has sufficient for all. Hashem loves us and loves others. When Hashem wants him to have – it is not at our expense.**

We must do our part regardless of others. We have our own obligations to Heaven. We are only compelled to do our part. There is no point in looking at others, even when they appear to be so much more successful. They undergo their corrections through their own unique trajectory – dealing with their own issues, which have their own challenges - even if they appear to be *tzaddikim* for many generations already. Every single person has their own inner work to do - each his own path.²

We must strengthen our desire. Rather than envy others, we must fortify our desires, even if the thing that we want seems impossible, even if we feel incapable or unqualified. **We want and pray ceaselessly for the thing that we crave – and in that merit, we will attain.**

We must also begin to look favorably at ourselves. **For, if I do not view myself kindly, I will constantly seek deficiencies in others so as to appease myself.** Do we love ourselves at all or does it only seem like we do? If we really love ourselves, how is it possible to become sad, unhappy, self-destructive, unaccepting of ourselves, believing that certain things so not happen to others, only to us? “What will become of me, how is it that everything goes smoothly for my neighbor – he has a beautiful new house and I constantly have to move.” **We forget that there is One Above who orchestrates everything down here and every time that we complain, get angry and feel deprived, it is as if we say to HKB”H: “You do not administer the world properly.”**

“A man’s folly perverts his way, but his heart is angry with Hashem.”³ When a person has a

faulty outlook, it causes him to become angry with Hashem. People constantly complain – this hurts, I am lacking this or I should have that. Who said that they should have what they want? **Maybe we were created specifically not to have certain things. Maybe Hashem does not want us to have certain things – maybe they would be detrimental to us, G-d forbid.**

Hashem wants us to replace our perspective. Our view of life must be different. He wants us to say to Him: “Hashem, I know that everything is You. I know that everything is as You want it, not as I might prefer. I know that I must continuously recognize the beautiful package that I have received from You and to be gladdened by it, without regard to what my neighbor possesses. I know that I have sufficient cause to proceed through life with joy and gladness of the heart, to be happy about even those things that do not go well for me, even for all that I am lacking – because whatever I have received and whatever I have not received are precisely what I need to complete my correction. I also know that my greatest joy is when I am connected to You, Father, a personal, warm connection that fills my soul.”

Having generous eyes means loving others – as they are. It means feel joy for others, judging them favorably, remembering that they are G-d’s creations. It is eyes that **see the good in every person – because there is good in everyone.** That is our life’s work. We must pass this forward to our children, grandchildren – to maintain a benevolent outlook. How? If a person is humble, considers himself to be less important, recognizes that he is but flesh and blood – he can always love another person – he can always uncover some positive trait in another that he does not possess.

A begrudging eye cannot tolerate the success or fortune of others. He immediately disqualifies them. But, he forgets that one who disqualifies - does so with his own flaws. If we notice someone else’s faults – we can be sure that we possess the same ones. However, if we look at others with a smile, with love, encouragingly,

² באור פני מלך חיים
³ אולת אדם תסלף דרכו ועל ד' יזעף לבו (משלי יט, ג)

praising them – even when they may be acting badly – the evil immediately departs and they suddenly smile back. That is our primary duty. First, we must learn to judge ourselves favorably and then we can do the same for others. If we cannot sustain ourselves, who will be left to give others the benefit of the doubt? If we feel worthless – we will only be able to see the negatives in others so that we may assuage our own feelings of inadequacy. But, **if we recognize our own value, if we find the aspects of wonder within us – we will learn to recognize the amazing qualities in others.** Even if we feel overcome by all of our negative attributes and people say terrible things about us and we observe others who are better and more successful than us – we must not consider ourselves to be worthless. If we denigrate ourselves, we are maligning the image of Hashem – the G-dly soul that Hashem infused in us – and we have no right to do so. **We are fortunate to be vessels, even if for only a tiny drop of G-dly light that is reflected in us.** Is that insignificant? It is a great and glorious thing.

If we regularly look at others, we will be always be resentful. If we have some, we are lacking in other areas. There is always someone to be jealous of. We are always missing something. **But, if we look to Hashem - nothing is missing** and we will be able to shower all of the abundance that we receive upon others. If we constantly look to Hashem, we will look kindly at others – for everyone is a child of Hashem.

The power of generosity is that it seeks the good points that are hidden inside the depths of another's soul. Even if the good is not visible and one might assume that the person has no saving grace – Hashem still sees him as good. Similarly, true *tzaddikim* perceive him as good and we must learn to see him the same way. **We must learn to love everyone, to recognize the good.** This is the way of *tzaddikim* – they defend the Jewish people. They find the good and highlight the good. We have difficulty doing so because the *yetzer hora* is too strong for us. Despite our efforts, we are still filled with urges and drawn to triviality. *Tzaddikim* have such strong love of

Jews that they ignore their own needs. They protect their generation. They nullify themselves for the benefit of the Jewish people – as Moshe did when he told Hashem to erase his name from the Torah if He refused to forgive the people. In the merit of the *tzaddikim*, our *mitzvos* and *tefillos* ascend.

The *tzaddik* attains a complete bond with Hashem and merits that truth shine upon him. He never gets angry at anyone. He understands that there is no cause for anger. He has patience. He is always delighted by the happiness of others. He is willing to forego everything that he has, both in this world and in the next world, so that a single Jew's life is a little better.

That is the generous outlook that is the pinnacle of attachment – just as a miserly attitude is the pinnacle of separation. **When we have a magnanimous mindset – Hashem provides limitless abundance.**

Menasha, the elder son, did not envy; and Ephraim, the younger son, did not become haughty. Arrogance and jealousy are two sides of the same coin. **Jealousy stems from arrogance because, if we are conceited, we feel that everything is owed to us** – so, how can someone else have more than us.

Our task is to abolish our egos. We must constantly remind ourselves that everything is unearned gifts from Hashem. This must be done internally – not in a public way (e.g. those who say things like: it is nothing, it is silliness, it is not me, it is all from Hashem - but secretly, they are busting with self-importance). In our depths, we must remember that this is how Hashem created us – so why should we be so proud?! At every moment, we face challenges. We receive a compliment, we get excited, we think that, thank G-d, we are successful, what we did was lucrative and then we immediately exchange those thoughts with the acknowledgement that all of this honor is due to the way Hashem created us. These thoughts: “I am so wise,” “I am so handsome/pretty,” “I am so well respected,” “I am so righteous” – form a division between us

and HKB”H. When a person becomes smug, thinking highly of himself, he has no vessels with which to receive the light.

We live on our feelings of superiority over others. We must stop! **Rather than take joy in our advantages – we should find joy in our being Jewish!** In the end we will have Gan Eden and everlasting life. We have so many challenges of arrogance and ego. We get a taste of honor and we instantly forget our true selves. We must constantly tell ourselves – we are owed nothing, we are no more deserving than anyone else.

We must relentlessly pause and contemplate – to identify egotistical thoughts and admit them. We constantly quash our egos and they continue to

return. It is an ongoing struggle. When the Baal Shem Tov was old and sick, those attending to him overheard him *davening* to not fall into arrogance.

One who is truly humble is invigorated - because he is bound to Hashem. Is there any greater vitality than being attached to the Creator of the World? A person who lives with Hashem has an amazing life. He recognizes the spiritual dangers that he faces and he preempts them with prayer, begging and pleading. When he does not know what to do, he asks, “Master of the World, help me that I may feel in my heart what Your will demands. Show me the way.” **One who lives with Hashem learns to see the hand of Divine Providence in every occurrence.**

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me be happy for the success of others, especially spiritual successes, where it is most difficult. When I see someone else *daven* with excitement, even shedding tears, and he clearly yearns and longs for You, or when I see someone learn for hours with such pleasure, without getting up from his seat even once, I am not happy for him – I immediately think about where he is and where I am and what will become of me and when will I manage to be like him. Instead of thinking that we each have our own unique path, our own unique mission, instead of being delighted that he provides You with such pleasure, Father – I am envious.

Master of the World! How can I possibly recall all of the kindnesses that You do for me? And to thank You for them each day anew? When something good happens, when something goes smoothly, when something succeeds, when I find a solution to some dilemma that burdened me – it is easy to lift my head and say, “Thank You Father, You are so good to me.” But, how can I possibly remember everything else - those things that happened a while ago, and those that appear to be automatic and only when there is some mishap do we remember that we must say thank You for them as well, and those that seem to be so insignificant that they do not seem to require gratitude?

Master of the World! With the same sweetness that I say thank You for the good things that happen today – help me to say thank You for everything else. **They are all gifts from You.** Help me feel that when someone does something negative to me, G-d forbid – hurts me, humiliates me, pains me, causes me monetary damage– help me, Father, to realize, at that very moment, that it is You, Father, and not him – he is merely the stick in Your hand. **I should not get angry at him or hate him – I should feel mercy for him that he was unfortunate to be chosen to be a rod of affliction.** This is so difficult Father that it is literally impossible. We so badly wish to react in kind because we are so infuriated and insulted at that moment.

Master of the World! Help me feel - after every success that I experience, after every compliment that I receive, after every thank you that someone says to me for something that I did – that it was truly not me. In reality - I tried, I sacrificed, I gave up of my time – how can I feel that it was not me? **Help me remember, Father, that it was You Who gave me the desire, the strength and the joy to help another.** Help me remember that this is how You created me, with these traits and these talents – so what am I so proud of? Can I be conceited for things that were given to me as gifts? **Help me, Father, to be proud of and happy for one thing only – that I am Your child.**

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

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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 Mordy Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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