

# פרשת שמות

This adaptation is dedicated in honor of my wife, Devorah;  
and in honor of my daughter Ariella's birthday.

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

"ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה" (א, א)  
"And these are the names of the  
Children of Israel who came to Egypt"

The term "names" appears to be superfluous. It teaches us that the Jewish people are as beloved as the starts of the Heavens. The word "names" is used here and it is used in *Tehillim*, "He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, when the Jewish people descended to Egypt, HKB"H counted our numbers as we were. Since we are comparable to stars, He named us all – as it says, "And these are the names of the Children of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

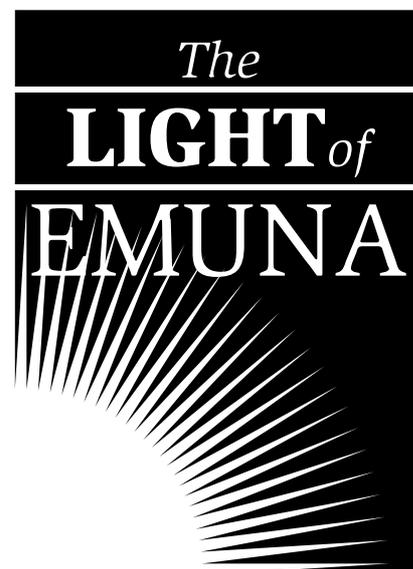
"וינהג את הצאן אחר המדבר" (א, ג)  
"And he guided the sheep far into the  
wilderness"

Nowadays, everything is so difficult. It is difficult for us to say a kind word, to judge favorably, to be happy for another's success, to learn, to *daven* with concentration, to act for the sake of Heaven, to understand that everything is for our very best – it is so tough.

What can we do? We must beg Hashem. How? By pleading, crying, *hisbodedus* and unlimited prayer. Without a myriad of prayers - we cannot attain anything. **Our base urges and our negative attributes are part of our nature and nature cannot be changed without *tefilla*.**

What do we do in the interim? We strengthen ourselves with joy, find delight in every bit of progress - remember that our Father in Heaven is fully aware of every tiny motion towards

<sup>1</sup> מונה מספר לכוכבים לכולם שמות יקרא (קמז, ד)  
<sup>2</sup> שמות רבה א, ג



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

holiness and He is so ecstatic over them. We must be happy that every word, every prayer, request and entreaty brings us closer to Hashem, closer to the joy – **complete and sincere joy derives from proximity to Hashem.**

Anything holy cannot be easily brought to fruition – we must persist with much exertion and through many challenges. The *Gemara* states: "Hashem gave three great gifts to Israel. All came through afflictions: Torah, Eretz Yisroel and the World to Come."<sup>3</sup>

Matters of sanctity must be brought about with power, tears and begging – that we may merit acting for Heaven's sake and not our own, that we may truly be good parents, good spouses, to *daven* with focus, to truly perform kindnesses without reservation, to not speak *loshon hora*. They do not develop automatically, bringing them about is quite strenuous – we must lift our heads and plead incessantly – we must implore, scream, whisper – **"Father, help me, for alone, I am incapable."**

**Moreinu Harav:** Why was Moshe interested in the wilderness/desert – was he really trying to find superior pasture? R' Avraham, son of the Rambam, explains: Moshe sought seclusion, unsatisfied with being close to civilization, he

<sup>3</sup> שלוש מתנות טובות נתן הקב"ה לישראל וכולן לא נתנן אלא על יסורים. אלו הן: התורה וארץ ישראל והעולם הבא (ברכות ה.).

wished to be beyond the view of others, where no other man had set foot, where he could reach his own perfection, to cling to Hashem genuinely, to know that there is nothing aside from Hashem, to recognize that he had no connection to this materialistic world.

The physical body is merely a receptacle for the soul so that it does not ascend before its appointed time. There are those who constantly worry about the vessel, renovating it. There is a diamond inside! The diamond is the main thing. **Polish the diamond! We are G-dly! Why are we busy polishing the jewelry box?!**

Every person is given two options: "Behold, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil ... you shall choose life."<sup>4</sup> Must we instruct people to choose life? The *pasuk* reveals that in this world, everything is transposed – death appears to be life, materialism and passions seem to be the "good life!" Life – Torah and holiness – appear to be death. Therefore, the Torah warns us to be careful – what we may think is life, is really the opposite – Beware!

A person must spend time each day speaking privately with his Creator – relating all that is in his heart. We must do this in isolation, without distractions - ideally, in a secluded area in nature, with trees and flowers – one can draw strength from nature. This is applicable to all Jews, no matter what stage of spiritual development one finds himself at. **We must converse with Hashem, sing to Hashem.** All of creation sings to Hashem. When we are alone with Hashem, we are enveloped in His Essence.

**So many *tefillos* and supplications are needed so that we may begin to go beyond ourselves, to begin to feel for others, to truly experience the pain of another.** We may not be satisfied with merely fulfilling our obligation to pray. Moshe Rabbeinu was not content to merely know of the suffering of his people – he left the magnificent palace of Pharaoh to endure their

<sup>4</sup> ראה נתתי לפניך את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע ... ובחרת בחיים (דברים ל, טו-יט)

suffering and afflictions personally. The Baalei Mussar teach that it is impossible to genuinely experience the pain of another unless we imagine as if everything that is happening to him, all of the challenges and suffering, are happening to us, G-d forbid. We must learn from the examples of great *tzaddikim*, who felt the pain of every Jew. There is a story told of one of the *kiruv* yeshivas – there was a young man and woman who were engaged to be married and had sent out their wedding invitations. Several days before the wedding was to take place, the bride mentioned, in passing, that she had once been married to a non-Jew. The news was like a thunderbolt to the groom because he was a Kohen and her previous "marriage" prohibited her to him. The groom's Rabbi took them to see R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l – maybe he could find a solution. They arrived at R' Shlomo Zalman's home after midnight. Luckily, the light was still on and they were invited in. The Rav came out of his room and listened carefully. Unfortunately, the answer was as expected and the Rav told them that they were *halachically* prohibited from marrying. As he gave them the sad news, he burst into tears, so heartrending that it was difficult to stand in his presence. He experienced their pain as if it were his own. He could not be consoled. Despite the fact that he could not find a solution in *Halacha* – his compassionate heart provided a solution – his tears tore through the gates of Heaven and salvation was delivered to the couple. The very next day, a Jew from Argentina arrived. When he heard about the conundrum – he reported that he knew the "non-Jew" well and he was, in fact, Jewish – he just refused to acknowledge his heritage and tried to hide it. Accordingly, R' Shlomo Zalman permitted the couple to marry.

**Master of the World; grant me a heart to feel the agony of others and to be delighted by their successes.** Aharon Hakohen was the elder brother – yet, he was so thrilled by Moshe's success that he earned becoming the symbol of encouragement and generosity. "When he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> וראך ושמח בלבבו (ד, יד)

**So many *tefillos* and supplications are needed so that we may be better spouses.** Marriage is a bond that requires constant renewed connection. It is unlike the relationship of a parent and child, which is natural. Spouses must perpetually give, influence, enlighten and be impressed. **They must connect through their souls, not their cellphones.** They must thank each other, be excited by everything they do for each other – even after decades together. If we learn to express gratitude at home, the Shechina is in the home. Peace in the home is our primary challenge. It is much easier to maintain an amicable relationship with friends – we do not spend 24 hours a day with them. We must never leave the house angry, in an argument – if we do, we will be unable to accomplish anything. We must appease and placate before we leave. It is too difficult? We do not believe that after all of the damage that we have done, things can be fixed? “Master of the World, place the proper words in my mouth. Show me the way – for only You know how I can correct what I have destroyed.” **Most important – never criticize – no criticism, no reprimands, no comments.** We must restrain ourselves at all costs. Criticism only ruins and damages – nothing good comes of it. Via critiques – we lose everything! We must instill joy. When a wife asks her husband for something and he complies – at that very moment - so much abundance descends.

“A woman of valor – who can find”<sup>6</sup> – means finding the positive traits in one’s wife, every day, anew. A new trait - every time. A man must realize that his wife possesses qualities that no other woman in the world has – and he must tell her completely and sincerely: “Many women have amassed achievement, but you surpass them all.”<sup>7</sup> “Master of the World, help me, because this is a lifelong mission. **Help me remember that when there is peace in the home, there is Divine Assistance, there is abundance, there is blessing – there is everything.** Help me understand that a spouse it not found only once, a spouse is found every

day afresh – **if** we live in peace and with love.

**So many *tefillos* and supplications are needed so that we may be better parents** - that we be able to show our children love, to form warm and deep bonds with them. If a child has such a bond with his parents, he will not be ruined. Children are very perceptive as to whether their parents have time for or interest in them.

We must merit inundating them with love and encouragement – each one individually. We must tell them how wonderful they are and how happy we are with them. We must build a positive self-image for them that will last a lifetime. “Help us, Father, to remember that children encounter difficulties – other children insult them, humiliate them – and when they come home and receive support, respect and love – it cures them, giving them security and strength. **May we recall that the key to raising children is love and limits – primarily love.**”

“One evening I took a walk with one of my children. We sat on a bench in one of the parks in Bnei Brak, as I always do when I have something to talk to one of them about. I find that they listen and absorb better outside the house. Suddenly, a young man of about 17 sat on the bench opposite us and burst into tears. We were startled and did not know what was happening to him. Then, I recognized him. He was a local boy who had deteriorated rapidly and terrorized the residents of his neighborhood. Now, he sat on the bench and cried. I went to him, put my hand on his shoulder, and asked if I could help him. After a few minutes, he said something that absolutely stunned me, **‘If my dad would have walked with me one time, just once, as you are doing with your son, I would not be where I am today. If my father would have put his hand on my shoulder, just as you did right now, even once, I would not have descended to my current situation!’**”

**So many *tefillos* and supplications are needed for desire itself.** That we may continue to desire even after failing. That our desire not dissipate. When there is desire – there is service of Hashem, joy and vitality – it is our highest

<sup>6</sup> אשת חיל מי ימצא (משלי ל, י)  
<sup>7</sup> רבות בנות עשו חיל ואת עלית על כלנה (שם כט)

aspect. It is our engine. The route to Hashem is via desires and longings – fresh starts. Even if we have not yet discovered, but we continue to seek – the search itself is essentially the discovery. **Yearning for light – is the light.**

A certain Jew once told Rebbe Nachman “I want to be a good Jew.” He answered, “Do you also want to want?” His intent was “will you continue to want even if you do not receive what you ask for?” Hashem loves our desire. Sometimes, we are inspired. But we stop because we think that we cannot do *teshuva* at this age, with this wife, with these children. So, we throw the inspiration away. Hashem wants us to continue to yearn, to say, “I want. Father, I want but it is so difficult. I have no strength to change on my own. Help me. But, I want. I want.”

**True desire can accomplish anything.** True desire allows for no excuses. We are our desires. We can tell the *yetzer hora*, “True, I have sinned, I have fallen – but I am my desire – and I desire only Hashem! I cannot explain the rest – I only want Hashem.”

**So many *tefillos* and supplications are needed to attain *emuna*, happiness, humility and so many other wonderful and important things.** When we have tried for so long and nothing progresses, we must scream. The screams that the Jews originally emitted in Egypt initiated redemption. “And they cried out and their outcry went up to Hashem.”<sup>8</sup> A scream without words – like the shofar. Or a silent scream, the scream of the heart – when it reached our Father in Heaven - it effects wonders.

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## תפילה

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**Master of the World! Grant me *emuna* that I too am capable.** That I can act for Your sake - for Your honor and not my own. When I succeed, when I manage to do something good, when I bring joy to another – especially when someone compliments me or is impressed by me – I forget that it is You, Father. I am so pleased with myself. I feel so good. I usurp all of the honor for myself. Help me, Father, to intend, at the outset, that whatever I do should be for Heaven’s sake. I want people to be impressed by the deed, not by me. They should praise You, Father, not me. Instead of thanking me and praising me – they should praise Your name and acknowledge Your greatness. If they nevertheless honor me, help me remember (at exactly that moment) that **the honor is Yours, that without You I cannot even move a finger.**

**Master of the World! Grant me *emuna* that I too am capable.** That I can eat only to sustain my body, without deriving pleasure – to eat with my mouth but my hearts can continue to long for You, Father. When I eat, I am entirely engrossed in the food, I enjoy it so much, I derive so much pleasure from it, I am so preoccupied with it throughout the day. There are so many things that I find to be delicious that it seems unrealistic to believe that I could ever eat just to sustain my body. But, because I am certain that attachment to You, Father, is an infinitely greater pleasure, I beg that You help me in this, that I may merit clinging to you when I eat.

**Master of the World! Grant me *emuna* that I am capable.** That I can experience the pain of others as if it were my own pain and the joy of others as if it were my own joy. There should be no distinction. I am so far removed from this attitude. There are rare occasions on which I feel for others wholeheartedly. Generally, I participate in alleviating their suffering but in all honesty, it does not hurt me, it is superficial, out of courtesy, because others listen to me and I try to have some impact. Help me, Father, to imagine that it is happening to me, G-d forbid, for only that will help me truly experience the pain of others. Help me, Father, to be like those *tzaddikim*, who have such large hearts that they hardly act for themselves – they are so immersed in dealing with others. **Help me, Father, to have *emuna* that I too am capable.**

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov Elias

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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