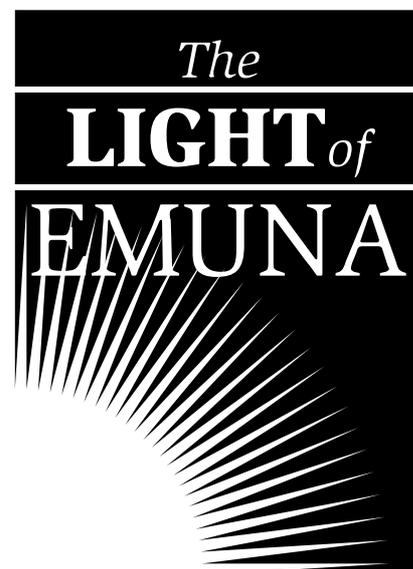


פרשת שמיני – שבת פרה

This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my dear wife, Devorah,
and my dear daughter, Chaviva.



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

"ויהי ביום השמיני קרא משה לאהרן ולבניו ולזקני
ישראל" (ט, א)

**"It was on the eighth day, Moshe
summoned Aharon and his sons and
the elders of Israel."**

The natural world follows a seven-day cycle - the same seven day cycle during which Hashem created the world. The eighth day is above the laws of nature. Why is it said that "on the eighth day there was a festival before Him on high like the day that He created Heaven and Earth?" Because the Jewish people merited the eighth day - it was the day of the construction of the *Mishkan* - through *teshuva*, they introduced a new course to the world - via the *teshuva* that they did for that grave sin.¹ **And *teshuva* is joy.**

"ויהי ביום השמיני" (ט, א)

"It was on the eighth day"

For seven days, Moshe Rabbeinu assembled and dismantled the *Mishkan* - and on the eighth day, which was *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, they inaugurated the *Mishkan*. This teaches us that any *Mishkan* (especially the ones in our hearts) that is designed to contain the Divine Presence must be established on one foundation: constant renewal. Rebbe Nachman taught that we must seek one thing throughout our lives: **to begin anew, here and now.** We must never despair, we must never forego our true desires, we must never cease *davening* for what we truly want.

No *tzaddik* ever attained perfection unless they obstinately refused to despair. No matter what they endured, they reinforced themselves and attained what they achieved. **It is forbidden for a Jew to lose hope.** In our essence, we are good, having no real connection

to evil. We must be fully convinced that we will yet merit everything that we yearn for. Only good and holiness is relevant to us, even if the route to them is littered with obstacles. **Our true label is "beloved children of Hashem." Just as the Father is holy - the children too are holy.**

We must be satisfied with our lot. We must remember that we are children of Hashem. There is no one who is not at least partially good. Even serving Hashem by rote is a good thing. Every simple Jew, who lives according to the Torah, has a connection to *yiddishkeit* and serving Hashem. We may not belittle our talents because of other areas in which we are inept. Every tiny movement towards holiness is savored. **HKB"H does not focus on quantity - He prefers our desires, longings and efforts.** We must push ourselves away from bad, even slightly - some yearning, more refined speech, a small foregoing or restraint, giving someone the benefit of the doubt. **These seemingly inconsequential efforts are not insignificant at all.** They create quite the stir in Heaven.

We observe *tzaddikim* who are great in Torah, righteousness, holiness - and we want to be like them. We must not overlook the fact that their exalted levels also began with small acts - *davening* with concentration, a holy thought and refinement after refinement in a particular attribute. The same is true for learning Torah -

¹ שפת אמת

letter by letter, line by line – and we slowly begin to understand and progress. These small simple things drive our journey towards sanctity.

But, we must climb cautiously. This week's *parsha* relates how the sons of Aharon jumped ahead of themselves. The *Midrash* tells us, "Since the saw their father enter with Moshe, burn the incense with fire from Heaven and return having seen the *Shechina*, they said, 'We too will do so and bring the Heavenly fire down as well.' Immediately, 'a fire came forth before Hashem and consumed them.'²³

We must reassure ourselves – see the good in ourselves and take joy in doing so. Then, we will be able to look kindly at others – searching for elements of good that are hidden inside, in the depths of their souls. Even if we cannot see the good, even if they appear to be entirely without value, complete failures, horrible people – if HKB"YH considers them to be worthwhile, so must we. Therefore, **we must learn this way of judging favorably – love everyone.**

Do you ever feel like you have already given up, like you are not worthy, you do not focus while praying, you get angry at your spouse, you yell at your children, you eat more than you should, you waste money, you do stupid things (and we all do stupid things because we are human)? When we feel this way, Rebbe Nachman's essay "Azamrah" on the *pasuk* in *Tehillim*: "I shall sing to my G-d as long as I exist"⁴ was written for us. It was written for those who are dejected and feel like they have no more strength, that they will never make it, that they are worthless, or they see others as worthless. "A little more and there is no wickedness and you shall consider his place and he is not there."⁵ If we contemplate this aspect, the smallest element, where he is not evil – we will suddenly see that he is not a *rasha*, but is rather a *tzaddik*. This tiny facet is his true essence and all of the negatives are mere

nonsense. We can do this for our friends and we can do this for ourselves. This is the teaching that draws so many to Rebbe Nachman's teachings - because he gives us hope. We must have *emuna* that we have it in us, that we are capable. Even if we are tired and weary and we are so beaten by fate – Hashem gave us this "bad luck" of troubles, difficult children, problematic relatives, etc. **We must seek that point that is "a little more and there is no wickedness" – where we are definitely righteous and that point can revive our souls.**⁶

Consider how we view events in our lives – what outlook do we have? If we recognize that everything happens to cure, correct, refine, cleanse, purify and bring us closer to Hashem – **everything is transformed into a much easier burden to bear.** But, if we forget that there is Divine Providence and there are no accidents – it is truly possible to despair and become broken. "We have no right or reason to look at what is going on by someone else – why he has certain things that we do not. We must not ask questions. Everything is from the Creator of the World Who administers everything and knows precisely what we must endure to draw close to Him. **There is only one thing that matters: there is a Creator – turn to Him, speak to Him, ask of Him.** That is the path on which Hashem guides us and we must have complete *emuna* that our salvation sprouts specifically from there, by way of our particular hardships."⁷

We cannot comprehend the methods of the Creator of the World. For exactly that reason we must fortify our *emuna*. "What appears to be strict justice is entirely compassion. It is for the best! There is no bad in the world. Whatever Hashem does is for the very best. If things appear to be bad, it is only our perception. We must have *emuna* that it is really good. We cannot try to understand it intellectually! We must strengthen our *emuna*. No matter what happens – we turn to *emuna*. **Hashem is all good and there is no evil.** Everything requires

² ויקרא י', ב

³ מדרש הגדול

⁴ אזמרה לאלוקי בעודי (תהילים קכו, ב)

⁵ ועוד מעט ואין רשע והתבוננת על מקומו ואיננו (תהילים לז, י)

⁶ באור פני מלך חיים

⁷ סוד ההתחזקות

tefilla in order to be attained. Without *tefilla* we cannot receive. If we encounter difficulties - Hashem wants our prayers. There is a light of *emuna* that descends into the world – simple and wholesome *emuna* that everything is for the best. We must express gratitude for everything. People *daven* and thank Hashem for half an hour and they receive a cure or a large sum of money and they are relieved – the affliction has passed! Do not become confused! The evil inclination brings us different types of people who tell us, ‘There is logic! There is intellect! You know what you see – how can you say it is for the best?! People are suffering! Look around.’ We must resist and strengthen our *emuna*! We must never abandon this lifelong task! It is the ultimate truth! **Fortify *emuna*!!!**⁸

This Shabbos we read *Parshas Para*. There are many types of *tumah* and all of them soil the soul. But, there is one type that is most oppressive – *tumah* from a dead body. It is the father of all *tumah*. It is a death of the spirit, a loss of the longings and yearnings for our Father in Heaven; it is the loss of our hearts, G-d forbid. How to we cleanse this *tumah*? With the ashes of the *Para Aduma*. Why? We do not know - it is an inexplicable decree that we cannot fathom. **We cannot understand Hashem intellectually! We must have *emuna*.**

A Jew must reinforce joy – joy in our relationship with Hashem – speak to Him, make Him our partner in whatever we are going through – and watch how much joy and vitality we will receive. **Right now, we are here, alive, healthy, breathing – be happy, stop worrying constantly about what was and what will be.** Stop looking to the side and noticing how others are happier ... we must be happy with our lot. **One who is not happy with what he has is liable to cool off, to lose his *yiddishkeit* and fear of Heaven.**

Moreinu Harav: Rebbe Nachman taught that there is no despair whatsoever. Even in the direst crisis – if a person stops for five minutes

and focuses on joy, dances and sings – everything transforms for better. **We must always enter our homes with a smile** - our families do not need to know about our worries. If we cannot muster a smile, we should sit on the steps and practice smiling, imitate happy faces and only then enter the house with an illuminated countenance. Doing so will earn us all of the miracles in the world. Our task is to be happy at all costs, constantly saying “it is all for the best.” That is our primary challenge. If we incessantly say “this too is for the best” we will escape all of our tribulations – we will enjoy amazing wonders. We must work on this before we are confronted with suffering and we will thereby avoid them.

We must never entertain even a moment of depression, for there is no cause for depression. We must have *emuna* that every Jew is able to attain all of the best in materialism and spirituality – every possible success. We must be happy that we are Jews, that we keep Shabbos, that we are able to put on *tefillin*, that we pray – these are diamonds worth millions. We should experience limitless joy because Hashem fashioned us in His image, for His honor – that we may learn and *daven*. **He will annul all of the harsh decrees and suffering.**

If we committed a sin – we do *teshuva*. Hashem always loves us. Hashem is prepared to forgive and pardon all of our sins and bring us back to Him – He wants only that we exhibit a bit of regret, that we feel pangs in our hearts, that we truly want to correct, that we desire our vitality to stem from holiness and not from our base urges. “I’m sorry Father for everything that I have done that distanced me from You. Help me repair the damage. Help me be like You want me to be.” ***Teshuva* is so amazing that with a single thought a person can transform reality.** *Teshuva* works even in thought.

The holy Berdichever never began *davening* until he acknowledged that he was less worthy than all of the other congregants. Once, a certain Jew, who had committed a very serious transgression, came to *shul*. The Berdichever thought about it

⁸ המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום

but realized that he had never done anything like this. If so, he could not be worse than this Jew; he left the *shul* and refused to *daven*. He sat and contemplated and was very upset until he thought, "Had I performed that iniquity, I would never have been able to show my face in *shul*. In that way, this Jew is better than me." The Rebbe returned to *shul* and was able to *daven*. It is so true – **no matter what we have done, we do teshuva and proceed.** The evil inclination consumed us, we could not overcome, but, at least now, after we have done *teshuva*, we can attend *shul* to honor Hashem.

A person tries something once or twice and fails – he gives up – it is not for him, it is for *tzaddikim*. What about the prayers, the tears, the desire? Desire is a powerful force. If a person's entire essence and all of his longings are towards piety – he will ultimately prevail! **What a person attempts with tears, hisbodedus, crying and prayers cannot be taken away**

from him. All of our success comes from our refusal to despair, that we start afresh. Even when there is no hope left in the nature – if a person wants Hashem and holiness – **Hashem alters nature.**

We are obligated to fortify ourselves. Life requires persistence. **Hashem is with us in all of our downfalls and He helps us get back up.** If we reflect, we will find that the expansion began in the suffering. It may be difficult, but we must feel Hashem's compassion.

We cannot get close to Hashem without patience. Patience is not merely waiting; it is feeling that even though the door seems to be closed in my face, I redouble my efforts. I do not abandon my desire; I do not stop fighting my urges. Hashem is very proud of one who continues to crave despite his difficulties, who does not lose hope, who has *emuna* that there is a Father in Heaven Who directs everything.

תפילה

Master of the World! I wish to strengthen my love of others, Help me Father. Like on Purim, when I love everyone and they love me – help it be that way all year round. **That the joy that melts hearts and connects souls should be our lot constantly.** No one can rattle me because I know that it is all from You and not those who appear to annoy me. Help me have patience for everyone, that I merit gazing generously at all, that I easily judge them favorably – like the *tzaddikim* do and like You do with us, Father.

Master of the World! I wish to strengthen my fear of Heaven. I wish to feel like You are always watching me. I wish to be embarrassed before You Father, at least as much as I am ashamed in front of people. Specifically, I beg You help that I protect the property of the public as well as I guard my own possessions. For example, when I tear off paper towels in *shul* and I use much more than I need – but at home, I am much more careful because there - it costs money. At home I turn off the faucet when I'm done, but elsewhere I let it run without a second thought. Help me, Father, that I take care to leave any place that I use clean and tidy as I find them, just as I do at home. Help me remember that even if no one is watching me – You Father watch me. More than that – **help me be a mensch.**

Master of World! Help me have a positive outlook. **Help me not judge people by their appearance or how they speak.** So often, I meet people and form a negative first impression – but once I get to know them a little better, I am surprised to see who they really are, how important they are, what wonderful characteristics they have, how much fear of Heaven they have and how much Torah they know. **Help me reveal the hidden gem inside each person. Help me not disqualify anyone based on how they look or sound. Master of the World, help me be a mensch.**

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

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