

פרשת בהר

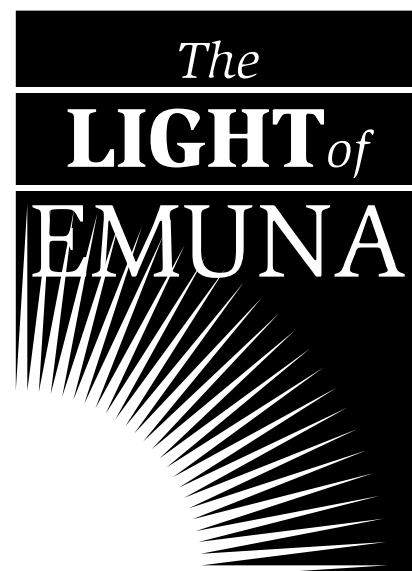
This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my dear wife, Devorah,
and in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our dear nephew, Jackie.

"וידבר ד' אל משה בהר סיני לאמר" (כה, א)
"Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount
Sinai saying."

Immediately after referring to *Har Sinai* the Torah teaches us the laws of *Shmita* (the Sabbatical year). Why does the Torah specifically mention *Har Sinai* when teaching the laws of *Shmita* – all of the *mitzvos* were taught at *Har Sinai* – why does the Torah not mention *Har Sinai* by every other *mitzvah*? A possible explanation: the topic of *Shmita* teaches and guides those who are preoccupied with earning a living, roaming the streets trying to bring home sustenance for their families, to **dedicate, at least some time to providing sustenance for their souls as well, by learning Hashem's Torah, which is the food for the soul.** Therefore, the Torah references *Har Sinai*, the mountain upon which the Torah was given expressly when dealing with *Shmita*. This is the lesson of the *mitzvah* of *Shmita*: after a person works his field for six years to arrange for his physical needs, the Torah instructs him to not perform any labor with the land and to engage, for at least a year, in spiritual matters - thereby igniting the soul to Torah and the service of Hashem. This benefits the person by adhering him to Holiness, even during the subsequent six years of manual labor.

Similarly, first thing every morning, before engaging in commerce, one should run to the *Beis Midrash* to *daven* and learn a chapter of *Mishnah*. This will assist him throughout the day so as not to become entirely mired in the inanity of this world – **the Torah that he learns in the morning binds him to sanctity.**¹

¹ ארון העדות



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

לטפס על ההר Climb the Mountain

All of a person's toil in this world is so as not to remain stagnant. A person cannot say: "This is the way it is, this is my nature, this is who I am" and remain inert. We must incessantly desire to be better and better. We possess an enormous ladder – its head is in Heaven and its feet are on the ground – we must continuously ascend higher. It is a lifelong task that never finishes. It is a duty of purification and sanctification. **Serving the Creator is the most amazing, delightful and the sweetest job that exists. It is the essence of good.**

We received the holy Torah as a gift from Heaven – it directs us how to live a good life, a happy life, a satisfied life, a pleasant life.

We receive *tzaddikim* as gifts – they provide us with the true flavor of *yiddishkeit* – we are guaranteed that if we connect to them, they will help us connect to Hashem.

We received hidden and secret powers that, if we merit following the path of Torah, these powers transform us into new people, angels – creations that we never were and that we never thought we could be – the opposite of what our natures dictate – and that is the greatest joy of all. We serve – we change – we turn towards the proper direction. We slowly start to understand that we

are only here for a short time and when we arrive at our ultimate destination, we will only have what we had prepared here. In this week's *parsha*, Hashem tells us, "For you are sojourners and residents with Me."² **If we acknowledge that this world is temporary, we will not be not broken by the lack of certain things – it is possible to manage without them when we recognize that the important matters are there, not here.** Chazal teach: this world is like an antechamber and the World to Come is like the parlor – prepare yourself in the antechamber to enter the parlor.³ We must pity those who make this world the principal; **we must pity ourselves when we forget the objective.**

A life of attachment is an amazing and magical life - warm and friendly, meaningful, savory and hopeful – in it, a person feels as if he is being held by the hand and escorted at every moment, protected in the shadow of the *Shechina*. It is a world of constant connection and bond to Divine Light. The opposite is a world of alienation and cold, treacherous and cruel, of those associated with vanity and chaos, who pander to their base existence and are addicted to their urges – it is a world of separation – a world of falsehood that distances a person from his essence, the source of vitality - it is a world of confusion, misleading and deceiving with its charms.

By contrast, the world of connection draws a person close to the source of his vitality and imparts the taste of true living, the source of perpetual enjoyment, a lofty and eternal graciousness.

The heart craves a relationship with G-d, to perceive the Divine Presence and to not look elsewhere. It feels sorry for those ensconced in darkness, shrouded in a world lacking substance and meaning, entangled in futility and emptiness, seeking solutions to their thirst and heartache in grit and grime. The heart is drawn to those blissful souls who have learned to quench their

souls' thirst and hearts' pining from immortal sources – from their connection to their Father in Heaven, those who seek the hidden Divine Light in everything in the world. This pure and clear good is hidden and obscured in every place and every object. It is very accessible to us because it is within us, literally.⁴

Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Likewise, **our entire lives are a climb up the mountain to become close to Hashem.** What is the definition of the world **אדם**? To be **likened** to the One Above (אדמה (לעליון) – we must be comparable to HKB"ח. He is our personal example.

If we wish to come close to Hashem – we must be people of truth. We must distance ourselves from lies to the extreme. "Hashem is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him with truth."⁵ **The more honest a person is – the more Hashem's light illuminates within him.**

A person must proceed with his own authenticity – he must recognize Divine Providence in every step of the way. He must seek real truth that is germane to him at the current moment and constantly – he must aspire to know what Hashem wants of him at every instant in connection with his mission towards himself and towards those around him. When he attains this insight – there is no greater joy.

When a person proceeds with his reality, it gives him immense power. When a person has *emuna* and *bitachon* that this is what Hashem wants of him, the *emuna* and *bitachon* literally produce salvation. There was an entrance exam to be accepted into the Chofetz Chaim's *yeshiva*. There was a certain widow whose son had failed the exam and was not accepted to the *yeshiva*. She reacted by parking herself on the steps of the *yeshiva*, sitting there day after day, refusing to leave. When asked why she was sitting there, she replied, "I have nowhere to send my child." Some passersby suggested to her that there were

² כי גרים ותושבים אתם עמדי (כה, כג)

³ אבות ד, כא

⁴ באור פני מלך חיים

⁵ תהילים קמה, יח – תפילת אשרי

other *yeshivos* for her to send her child – but she refused to move. Finally the Chofetz Chaim instructed the *yeshiva* to accept her child. He explained, “If she persistently sits on the steps, it is a sign that she knows her son’s salvation is precisely here.”

An honest person is one upon whom others can rely – his word is good and one need not suspect that he is duplicitous. Such a person can be *mekarev* many others because people quickly discern a scrupulous person. Truth draws near. **If something distances us from Hashem – it cannot be truth! We must flee from it.**

Moreinu Harav: There is no such thing as an irreligious (חילוני) Jew. Every Jew fulfills some portion of Torah. Every Jew is holy, we are forbidden from labelling any Jew as “wicked.”

We may never say: “I did *teshuva*, why can’t he.” We may never speak that way – we do not know what he has endured, we do not know when his time will come. **A Jewish soul that seems evil is really righteous – actually, the more iniquitous it seems, the more virtuous it is.** Because of its great potential - it is so afraid! It is latently scared because it knows that if it begins to perform *mitzvos* it will be compelled to see it through to the end – it would learn Torah day and night, be holy, be pure – completely! To commit so entirely seems so overwhelming. So, we tell them to start with half – but they cannot, because they are pulled to perfection. If we would show them and explain to them how one commits completely, how one sanctifies and how it need not be so difficult – they would all commit to *teshuva*!

If we wish to accelerate and expedite this process for them – we can only do so with a generous outlook. If we would learn to judge everyone favorably and not perceive people critically – there would be no wicked people in *Klal Yisroel* – everyone could return in *teshuva* in the blink of an eye.

“Master of the World, do not allow me to be anything other than who I truly am. Help me be

myself. Even if I am not so special, even if I am a simple Jew - help me feel as if I am Your only child, Father, **that You have only one child like me and I am exactly as You want me, with my specific successes, challenges, difficulties and my own particular ongoing battle to improve and develop.”**

We must look for the good in others and love every Jew – then everything will be good. We must realize that the way they seem is not who they really are. We must never be jealous of others, we must be happy for their successes, even if we are lacking in that very area. It is daunting, but not impossible. We must beseech Hashem for His assistance. We must also protect the honor of others – if we disgrace someone, we extinguish the light of their soul.

In 1908 there was a dispute between the two *Roshei Hayeshiva* of the Slutzk Yeshiva, R’ Isser Zalman Meltzer and R’ Pesach Pruskin. R’ Pruskin wished to start a new *yeshiva* in Shklov with half of the students. A *Din Torah* was convened and it ruled in favor of R’ Meltzer - R’ Pruskin was only allowed to take six students with him - one of them was R’ Moshe Feinstein. At the dedication of the new *yeshiva*, R’ Pruskin invited a guest speaker – none other than R’ Meltzer. Throughout his life, R’ Moshe would recount his admiration of R’ Pesach’s greatness and ability to overcome - once he received a *psak*, he completely let go of any resentment and even went so far as to honor his “opponent.”⁶

We must run away from anger and pedantry. We can never be sure that we would have acted any differently in someone else’s position.

The closer we get to the peak of the mountain, the more we begin to despise our negative attributes, our evil inclinations, the materialism around us, our urges. At a minimum, we no longer hold them out as ideal; we are not as impressed by them as we once were.

⁶ מאן מלכי רבנן

Our life's journey is towards holiness. When we begin to consecrate ourselves, we taste the deliciousness of *dveykus* (clinging). **There is no physical pleasure that compares.** The problem is that the *yetzer hora* appears to be a mountain. How can we surmount it? We can – with much prayer and crying. “Father, help me in this war – alone I have no hope.”

A person's sinful thoughts and negative desires afford him no respite. It seems as if there is no possibility of change. We must respond: there is no despair. The *yetzer hora* is deluding us. In actuality, he is nothing, he is mere cobwebs, he is imaginary, of no substance - a mirage.

We are soldiers in Hashem's army, holy servants. We are here to increase Hashem's Glory in the world. People look at us and assess us: how we sanctify our speech and avoid street talk, how we guard our eyes to not be distracted

from our true purpose. This is a lifelong, sacred struggle. It requires patience. **If we want HKB”H to be patient with us, we must be patient with ourselves and those around us. We cannot attain everything at once.**

If we fall – we get up and start afresh. That is our test. We must remember that we are the Jewish people, a holy nation that receives eternal holiness. **Our primary goal is not to be great, important or famous – we seek one thing: to serve with holiness and purity.**

Without *emuna* and *bitachon* it is impossible to serve Hashem, to reach the mountaintop. A Jew with *emuna* can endure all types of tribulations and still be the happiest person alive – he draws his vigor from someplace else, from *emuna*. How does a Jew support himself during *Shmita*? Hashem provides him with multifold crops before and after. **We need only have *emuna* and *bitachon*. Hashem forgets no one.**

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me be a man of truth. When I discover something real, something that brings me closer to You – help me grab it immediately, without calculation, without concern for what others will say, and not to act out of spite towards others. **Help me, Father, to not be afraid of anything,** exactly like Avraham Avinu.

Help me seek the truth constantly and in every matter – to recognize what You want of me. Do not allow me to evade the issue of what it is that You want - as I so often attempt to do because the answer is not always so easy or pleasant. But, **when I do manage to do Your will – there is no greater joy.**

Master of the World! Save me from anger and irritation. Help me to remember that I do not know everything; I do not see the whole picture, because if I would, there is a strong likelihood that I would think otherwise. I construct theories in my mind and it turns out that things are not quite that way, there are other factors. Then, I regret being so hasty and extreme. **Protect me, Father, from anger and impatience, strife and discord. Help me focus on the really important matters, the things that bring me closer to You, not those that distance me.**

Master of the World! Help me to hate base urges, to not covet physicality, that they not entice me – that I desire You more than anything else, truly - only the sacred, for it is the real delight in life. It is mere obstacles and impediments that distance us from this good that You hide away for those who fear You.

Master of the World – how long will we chase fantasies? Master of the World, may we merit constantly seeing the truth before our eyes. Master of the World, draw us to You.

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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