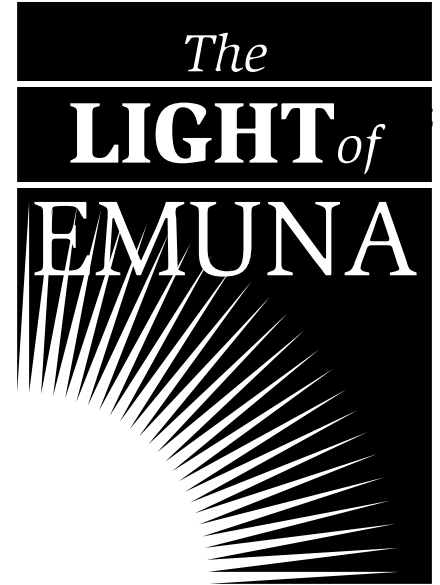


פרשת בא

This adaptation is dedicated in honor
of my dear wife, **Devorah**,

and our dear daughter, **Tehilla**.

ולרפואה שלימה: רצה בת רחל - העניא בת פריידל
מנחם מרדכי בן אופירה – רבקה בת שימה לאה - מיכה חיים בן שרה



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

"ויאמר ד' אל משה בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי
את לבו ואת לב עבדיו" (י, א)

"Hashem said to Moshe: 'Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants'"

What does "I have hardened" mean? Did HKB"H not want Pharaoh to do *teshuva*? So why did He harden his heart to the point that he did not accept HKB"H's word? Rather, this is HKB"H's way – He warns a person the first time and a second and third time – and if he still does not mend his ways, He seals his heart from *teshuva* so as to collect the debt of his sins. This is "for I have hardened his heart."¹

גאלת נפש

You Redeemed the Soul

A Jew must never forget the Exodus from Egypt. "Remember this day that you left Egypt, from the house of bondage."² Not only remember – literally live it. It is a command: "In every generation, we are obligated to see ourselves as if we left Egypt."³ Why is this so important? It is

¹ שמות רבה יג, ג

² זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים (יג, ג)

³ בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים (הגדה של פסח)

important because the Exodus was not merely a liberation from physical oppression. **It was primarily a redemption of the soul. It was the escape from subjugation to nature towards pure *emuna* that there is "nothing aside from Hashem."** (אין עוד מלבדו) Who is a real person? **Only one who has the wisdom to know and discern that there is a Master and Director Who rules and orchestrates everything, from Whom everything is.**

Whenever a person forgets that there is "nothing aside from Hashem" – he becomes either depressed or arrogant. If he succeeds – he becomes arrogant. If he fails – he despairs. Until our final day, we must study the idea that "there is nothing aside from Hashem" (אין עוד מלבדו). For, we do not really know it. **Whenever we experience any sadness, anger, worry – whenever we feel we are owed something that we have not received, whenever we see something as negative in our lives – it is a clear sign that we have an issue with "there is nothing aside from Hashem" – it is not 100% clear to us.**

From the moment that a child is born we tell him that there is nothing in the world aside from HKB"H. He learns to say *Shema Yisroel* – Hear O Israel, Hashem, our G-d, is One. He learns and his parents learn with him that whatever happens in life, positive or negative, is all actually good. With HKB"H, everything is good. **What appears**

to us to be good, what appears to us to be less good and what we cannot even fathom as good – is all from Hashem because “there is nothing aside from Hashem.”

A person can complain about his wife for years and think that she is terrible. He can complain about his child's Rebbe in school or his neighbor who does not say hello or his child who causes him so much aggravation – and he is certain that the trouble is due to them. Then, he suddenly comes to some realization, some understanding and he recognizes that his troubles are to be found within him. If he would look at and perceive life otherwise – everything would appear entirely differently. **He would realize that it is not his wife, it is not his neighbor and it is not his children. It all depends on his knowledge. “If you have knowledge – what do you lack? If you lack knowledge – what do you have?”⁴ Knowledge is the proper perspective – that it is all Hashem – that “there is nothing aside from Hashem.”**

All that we ask for and all that we need is what we request in the first *bracha* of requests in *Shemona Esrei* (after the three opening *brachos*) – “Who grants knowledge to man.”⁵ **The first thing that a person asks for is knowledge. There is only one piece of information in this world – to know Hashem, to have *emuna* in Hashem, to live the reality of Hashem. If a person has *emuna* that everything is from Hashem and that whatever happens to him in life is for the very best – he need not be anxious about any problem. If something undesirable happens – it is for the best, it provides atonement.**

Pharaoh received so many signs as to what Hashem wanted of him. Yet, he still did not understand. **Our problem is that each of us has a “little Pharaoh” in our heart that instills self-importance and ego, seeks honor and forgets that it is all from Hashem. It prevents**

us from recognizing the signs. Pharaoh remained arrogant to the end. He claimed to be his own creator. “My river is my own, and I created myself.”⁶ We must nullify the husks of Pharaoh that are contained in each of us. We must return all honor to Hashem and remember that it is all from Him – all of our successes and all of our failures. **If we do so, we will not suffer arrogance or sadness.**

The world is built of difficulties. Everyone in the world has ups and downs. When a person is experiencing an “up” - he is ensconced in light, he sees the path clearly. Everything that he does in serving Hashem is illuminated for him and he finds flavor and beauty in life. By contrast, when he encounters “down” days, when he is mired in darkness, when he cannot see the way – almost nothing he does succeeds and it seems as if Hashem is pushing him away. The *yetzer hora* gears up to cast him into depression, to make him feel worthless. **What he needs more than anything else is complete *emuna* that the darkness will pass in a little bit and the good days will return. This is how HKB”H created His world. Night is followed by day.**

This world is built of tribulations. Every person endures challenges in his life – whether with finding a spouse, earning a living, raising children, maintaining peace in the home, keeping healthy – all types of challenges. **Only with *emuna* can we withstand whatever transpires.** Have *emuna* that Hashem knows what He is doing with each of us. Have *emuna* that He does what is absolutely best for you. We must have complete *emuna* that our salvation will sprout from here – precisely via this route, by way of these difficulties. This is the exact path that your soul must traverse to reach its correction.

In the most difficult moments, in the darkest gloom, remember that Hashem is with you and He knows exactly what you are going through. He lives our suffering. HKB”H told

⁴ דעת חסרת מה קניית? דעת קניית מה חסרת? (קהלת רבה ז, כג)

⁵ אתה חונן לאדם דעת

⁶ לי יאורי ואני עשיתי (יחזקאל כט, ג)

Moshe to “come to Pharaoh” – should it not have been “go to Pharaoh?” **“Come” – i.e. you and I will go together. You have nothing to fear from him. I will come with you. Hashem is always with us. We are never alone.** HKB”H’s greatest delight is the service that people perform in this world, struggling with darkness, enduring such harsh suffering – the world crushes them - yet they continue. **“I am at the pinnacle of darkness but I know that You are with me. I fortify my *emuna* that it is all from You, Father, and it is all for the best.”**

Much *emuna* was needed to leave Egypt. They still had not recognized Hashem – they did not even know His name. “I will be what I will be.”⁷ That is My Name for now and you must have *emuna* in Me, leave everything behind and follow Me. Everyone else follows idols and false gods – you follow Me.

HKB”H sent them such great sparks so that they would have the desire to leave everything and escape. There was no time for preparation – “nor had they made provisions for themselves.”⁸ Fleeing from Egypt - there is no time to think, to worry about what will be. If we begin to think too much, we are liable to remain there, G-d forbid. This is what happens to every *Baal Teshuva* - he receives a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, a flash of great light. **He suddenly feels as if some higher power takes him by the hand and leads him.** It is such a great Divine light that it is beyond human cognizance. It illuminates his soul and causes him to want to abandon everything – and begin a completely new life, one that is entirely unknown to him. He begins to run after this light, leaving everything else behind - because Hashem does not send these sparks every day. In these moments, when a person is sent this great light, he merits the realization that “there is nothing aside from Hashem” – that there is only Hashem in the world. Later, it is taken away from him and he struggles the rest of his life for it to become a

part of him. Just as happened at Har Sinai, when the Jewish people saw HKB”H and saw that “there is nothing aside from Hashem” – but it was just for that moment.

There are constant mishaps, incidents and new problems in life – we must always say, “This too is for the best” and continue with joy. This is such a tremendous challenge! It requires such incredible *emuna*! So much so, that R’ Akiva needed 22 years to learn this *emuna* from his Rebbe, Nachum Ish Gamzu - that Hashem only does the very best. **If a person says, “This too is for the best” in response to every occurrence – he avoids all of life’s suffering. He witnesses miracles and wonders.**

The term “Jew” (יהודי) derives from the term “gratitude” (הודיה). **A Jew constantly thanks and sings. Whatever Hashem does is good. Hashem is always with us. Hashem walks with us. Hashem never abandons us. A Jew who never loses his *emuna*, even momentarily, and is happy in every one of life’s situations – is saved from all troubles.**

We are accustomed to say thank you when some deficiency is alleviated. However, if the need was filled beforehand, are we not required to thank? **We must thank even more! We must not wait until Hashem takes away from us to start appreciating what we have.** We must regularly pause, look to Heaven and say, “Thank You, Master of the World, for everything.”

The more we strengthen our interpersonal relationships – the stronger our connection to Hashem gets. The holy Torah, in this week’s *parsha*, teaches us the first *mitzvah* that Hashem gave the Jewish nation – the sanctification of the new moon. We seek the tiniest element of the new moon and when we find it, *Beis Din* proclaims, “Sanctified, sanctified.” **When we do not find anything good in our friend – we must keep searching. Eventually, we will find.** Moshe Rabbeinu looked for the point of light of the new moon but could not find it. HKB”H helped him and said, “You see that tiny speck that is almost indiscernible? Look for that

⁷ אקיה אשר אקיה (ג, יד)

⁸ וגם צידה לא עשו להם (יב, לט)

and sanctify it.” As small as it is – it is big and amazing. Sanctify it - because it will flourish and grow until it becomes a great light.

It is much easier for us to disqualify, to see flaws, to distance ourselves from certain people - than it is to find a positive element. We must try – just as Moshe Rabbeinu tried and, when we try, HKB”H helps and we find. A positive aspect is a tremendous concept. Identifying the good and admiring it in others is holy service. We connect to Hashem with this. Great *tzaddikim* engage in this constantly. That is how they inspire Heaven’s compassion and bring the Redemption closer. **There is no such thing as a completely evil person. Every Jew has a holy soul. Every Jew is a Divine creation.**

We must also look at HKB”H with a benevolent outlook. We are too sad, too unhappy, we feel as if we are deprived, unaccepted by others. We believe that certain things do not happen to others, only to us. We think, “Everything goes smoothly for our neighbor - but what about me?” **We forget that there is One Above Who orchestrates everything 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,” G-d forbid. The closer we get to the concept of “there is nothing aside from Hashem,” that everything is from Hashem and for the best, even the humiliations – life transforms into a much happier life.**

!!! אין עוד מלבדו !!!

תפילה

Master of the World! Help me live that phrase, which, when I heard it for the first time, I felt like it was one of the greatest gifts that I ever received in my life: Whatever happens to you in life – lower your head.

When I have to leave drive off my street to pick up the “Light of Emuna” *Parsha* sheets from the printer and a car without a driver is sitting in the middle of the street and I cannot get past it - I begin to honk like a crazy person... because they are waiting for me. “What kind of *chutzpah* is this?” I get angry. Then, I am already not with You, Father, because when we get angry, we disconnect. Then, when the driver hurriedly returns, striking his chest in apology (as if to say, *Ashamnu, Bagadnu*) - I am so ashamed that I did not lower my head and I did not learn to give the benefit of the doubt and wait patiently.

Or, when I stand in the assembly hall in a place where I can see the Rabbi well and, slowly, people, who arrived later than I did, enter and elbow their way in front of me and, within two minutes, they are entirely in front of me without me realizing how it happened. Rather than lower my head and guard my joy – I begin to jostle with additional people who try to do the same thing. Then, I am already not with You, Father, and not with the Rabbi. I am with my sorrow and anxieties and I have lost everything.

And so it is with so many occurrences throughout the day - where I repeatedly see that, to lower my head in submissiveness and to forego, forego, forego, is the greatest pleasure there is. For that means being connected to Father in Heaven and that is the greatest pleasure I know.

Grant me this, Father.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos!

Dov Elias

Notice: The foregoing is my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita*. It 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 helping with some of the Hebrew expressions. Thank you to my wife, Devorah, for proofreading and commenting on the “working draft.”

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ו' שבט תש"פ - February 1, 2020