

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Lech Lecha



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Torah Wellsprings - Lech Lecha

Everything is for the Good

Rav Pinchos Koritzer zt'l said: "Until parashas Lech Lecha, the world was unhappy and confused. Afterwards, the *chesed* of Avraham is aroused, bringing salvation into the world." In parashas Bereishis, we discuss תהו ובהו, in parashas Noach we deal with a flood and the punishment of *dor haflagah*. But in parashas Lech Lecha, we discuss Avraham Avinu. It is a time when goodness comes to the world. We hope we will see the goodness revealed at this time and the salvation of Klal Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael and beyond.

Sometimes, events and happenings appear to us as bad initially, but ultimately, we see that everything that transpired was for the good.

The Chovos HaLevavos (Bechinah 5) writes, "When you look at the world, and the episodes that are painful and hard for us, you should look at the outcome, and you will see a great wonder. Many things happen to us that we don't want, but in the end, it turns out to be good for us. Once, travelers slept next to a wall. A dog came and urinated on one of them. He awoke and went to wash up. While he was away, the wall collapsed and fell on all the others. He was the only one to survive. Many times, things like this occur." Initially, we think it is terrible, but it is all for the good.¹

The Ramban (in his kuntres on emunah) writes that Avraham became the great tzaddik because he passed ten tests. These were tests of his belief in Hashem's kindness

and love, even when everything appeared otherwise.

Therefore, it states, והאמן בה', that Avraham believed in Hashem. והאמן is written here without a yud. The Agra d'Kalah explains that yud is chachmah, and Avraham's emunah was without *chachmos*. He could have asked several times, "How can this be good?" Logic defied it. But Avraham believed in Hashem with emunah peshutah, without needing to understand.

Hashem told Avram to go אל הארץ אשר אראך, "To the land that I will show you."

The Baal HaTurim writes that אראך is gematriya 222, the same as בעננים, clouds. The Baal HaTurim writes, "This tells us that clouds went before Avram, showing him the way."

As we have discussed, אראך is gematriya בעננים, which means when it is cloudy, when things are dark and unclear, and there are tzaros in the world, at those times, אראך, Hashem is revealing himself to us. Hashem bestows His kindness when it appears to be dark and negative.

The clouds on Har Sinai are called הערפל (Shemos 20:18), and the Baal HaTurim writes that הערפל is gematriya שכינה. The Nesivos Sholom explains that this indicates that Hashem is there when it seems dark and concealed. The Torah says הערפל אשר שם האלקים, "The opaque darkness where Hashem was there." This is as it states (Malachim 1, 8:12) ה' אמר לשכן בערפל, "Hashem said that He will dwell in the thick darkness." Hashem

1. Someone complained to Reb Moshe Klirs zt'l (rav of Teviria) about his many problems. The rav replied, "Why do you only tell me half of the story?"

"What is the other half?" the man asked.

"I don't know. The other half hasn't happened yet. But there is another half – the salvation that will come in the end."

and His kindness are present when it appears so dark.

Hashem told Avraham לך לך, to come to Eretz Yisrael, and Hashem promised him that he would become wealthy and successful there. Avraham listened and came to Eretz Yisrael; instead of wealth and prestige, he had to deal with poverty and hunger. He traveled to Mitzrayim, where there was food. The *leitzanei hador*, the scoffers, laughed at Avraham and his beliefs. But after Avram's short stay in Mitzrayim, he became wealthy, as it states (13:2-3) ואברם כבד מאד במקנה בכסף ובזהב, "Avram was very loaded with cattle, with silver, and with gold. And he went with his journeys..." Rashi writes, "He went to pay up his debts."²

The Chasam Sofer says that the debts were the answers he owed the mockers, their unanswered questions. Now, he was able to pay up and give them answers. He could say, "I arrived in Eretz Yisrael without money, and now I am very wealthy. Now you see that Hashem is leading me."

The Ramchal teaches that a person should set an hour each day to think about the

tzaddikim of the past and to ask oneself, "What did they do that caused Hashem to love them so much, and what can I do to be similar to them." He says this is easy to do, and it is the best counsel for fighting the yetzer hara.

So, let us think about Avraham's ways and emulate them. Avraham passed ten difficult tests. He believed in Hashem's kindness even when things appeared terrible. He believed that everything was for the good. Hashem loved Avraham, as it states (Yeshayah 41:8) אברהם אהבי, and when we go in his ways, Hashem will increase His love for us.

With Emunah, Everything Becomes Good

We must believe that everything is for the good and that everything is from Hashem. The belief itself has the potential to turn everything around and cause the good to occur. Sifsei Tzaddik writes, "When one believes in nature, matters generally don't change, but when one believes in Hashem, things can change in a moment."³

2. Literally, when he returned from Mitzrayim, he went to the lodging places he stayed during his descent to Mitzrayim and paid up his outstanding debts.

3. Reb Nissin Gaon related the following story:

A wealthy person also wanted to benefit from his wealth in the next world, so he sought to help a poor man who had lost all hope. He spoke to several poor people, but they all had some hope. One said he has a wealthy uncle who sometimes sends him money; another said he performs small jobs here and there that provide him with a meager income. This wasn't the type of tzedakah he sought. He wanted to help someone and save his life. He wanted to help someone with no source of income and no hope at all.

Finally, the wealthy person found someone scrounging for food in the garbage. "He has certainly lost all hope," the wealthy man thought. "I will give him a lot of money." However, after speaking to him, he discovered that even this poor man hadn't lost hope. The poor man said, "The Creator of heaven and earth has supported me in the past, and I am certain He will continue to do so. מאשפות ירים אביון, 'From the garbage, Hashem elevates the poor.' I am now in the garbage, but Hashem can raise me to wealth and riches."

The wealthy man laughed at this poor man's wishful thinking, but realizing he wouldn't find the poor person he sought, he buried his money in a cemetery.

Years passed. The wealthy man lost all his money. One day, he remembered that he had once buried a bundle of money in the cemetery, so he took a shovel and headed out to the cemetery.

The police caught him digging in the cemetery, a serious crime, and he was arrested.

The Midrash says that when Sarah was taken captive in Mitzrayim, she lay on her face all night and davened. She said, "Ribono Shel Olam! Avram was saved with Your promise [because Hashem promised to protect Avram], and I was saved with emunah [I believe Hashem will protect me]. Yet, Avram is now outside [and away from danger], and I am in the pot [in grave danger]."

The Divrei Yisrael zt'l writes that it seems from this Midrash that Sarah's main point was that since she had emunah, she should have been saved even more than Avraham, who had received a promise. But this is difficult to understand. Avraham had a promise, a guarantee that Hashem would protect him, while Sarah hadn't. This should explain why Avraham was safe while Sarah wasn't.

The Divrei Yisrael gives a beautiful answer. He says that when one has emunah that Hashem will help, it will certainly be so. He is even more guaranteed than if one receives a promise.

Let us elaborate so we will understand this great lesson:

How would you feel if a great tzaddik told you that everything would be good, you will be protected and wealthy? How would you feel if Eliyahu HaNavi gave you this promise? How would you feel if Hashem, Himself, promised this to you? Everyone would be thrilled to hear that. However, to believe that Hashem will help is even greater. When you have emunah that Hashem will help, it will undoubtedly transpire.

This is what Sarah was saying. Avraham was safe and out of danger, and he received Hashem's word. I have more than that. I have emunah in Hashem that He will save me. Emunah is the highest level and the greatest guarantee. So why is my life in danger now?"

Rabbeinu b'Chayei writes, *הבטח בה' כאילו*, "When one has bitachon, it is like Hashem promised him." When he has bitachon, he can feel confident that Hashem will help him. He can view it as though Hashem told him everything will be good. And as the Divrei Yisrael reveals to us, he can be even more confident, because emunah and bitachon are the strongest guarantees that everything will be good.⁴

The court didn't believe his claim that he was searching for his own money.

The rule of the land was that he could appeal the court's decision and bring the case before the mayor. He went to the mayor and told him his story. The mayor said, "Don't you recognize me? I was the poor person rummaging for food in the garbage. You told me there was no hope for me, and now you see that Hashem can do anything. He brought me to the highest levels, from rags to riches. I am now the mayor of the city."

Perhaps he reached those high levels because he knew his poverty was from Hashem and believed that Hashem could change his destiny. As the Sifsei Tzaddik teaches us, when one knows that every situation is from Hashem, it is possible for the situation to change.

4. The daughter of Rebbe Nochum Yassar zt'l was in the hospital, and the prognosis was bleak. The doctors predicted she would be niftarah very soon. He went to the mikvah because he knew that after his daughter was niftarah, he would be an onen and wouldn't be able to go.

After the mikvah, he studied the laws of kriya and of onen (applying to mourners) because he wanted to perform the halachos correctly. (Reb Nochum Yassar was a tremendous talmid chacham, a rav, yet he reviewed the halachos quickly from the sources to refresh his memory.)

Then he left his home to go to the Bikur Cholim hospital in Yerushalayim, with a group of rabbanim accompanying him. Suddenly, he remembered that he needed a knife to perform kriya, so he returned home, got a knife, and continued to the hospital. He told the people who were walking with him (one of

Everything is from Hashem

It states (16:2) ותאמר שרי אל אברם הנה נא עצרני ה' מלדת, "And Sarai said to Avram, "Behold Hashem has restrained me from bearing children..."

The Midrash says that Sarah said, "I know why I don't have children. It isn't as people say that I need a kameia (amulet) or a refuah. I don't have children because 'עצרני ה' מלדת, Hashem has prevented me from bearing children." She understood that it was bashert, that it was Hashem's plan.

The Sifsei Tzaddik writes, "This teaches us that we shouldn't attribute [what occurs in life] to nature, only to the Master of the world." It is easy to blame people, nature, and the like, but the wise and the righteous know that everything is Hashem's decree.

The Mishnah (Tamid 1:2) discusses the *goral* that the *kohanim* drew daily to determine which *kohanim* would participate in the *avodah*. The Mishnah states, זכה מי שזכה, "The one who won the *goral*, won." The Tiferes Yisrael asks that these words seem superfluous. Certainly, the *kohen* who won the *goral* was the one who merited to do that part of the *avodah*.

He answers that the Mishnah is saying זכה the *kohen* who wins the *goral*, מי שזכה, is the *kohen* that Heaven determined was worthy and fitting to do this *avodah*.

In other words, he didn't win by chance. He won because this was Hashem's plan and decision.

Someone said to the Chazon Ish zt'l, "I want to play the lottery today. Please tell me which numbers to choose."

The Chazon Ish replied, "It isn't the numbers that win the lottery; it is the person. If you are destined to win, the numbers you choose will appear in the lottery. If you aren't the person destined to win, no matter which numbers you choose, those numbers won't show up at the *goral*."

The same applies to all areas of life, including the *parnassah* one does, one's mission in life, the good times, and the not-such-good times. They are all determined from Above. They don't happen by chance. Therefore, Sarah said 'עצרני ה' מלדת; she understood that she didn't have children because this was Hashem's decree and not due to some natural matter.

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 39) tells a story of a traveler who saw a house on fire. He asked, "Could it be that this house has no owner?"

Just then, the owner peeked out from the window and said, "I am the master of this house."

Similarly, Avraham looked at the world and the disasters that occur and asked, "Could it be that this world has no leader?"

whom was Reb Nota Tzeinvert zt'l), "Chazal say that one must say the brachah דיין האמת with joy. So, I have to find a way to be happy."

He said, "Hashem is going to take my daughter, which means Hashem is speaking to me." He jumped, "Hashem is speaking to me!" With this thought in mind, he felt he could say the brachah in the spirit Chazal required.

When they arrived at the hospital, Reb Nochum Yassar told the people accompanying him, "I have to conceal the solace I feel in my heart now because my wife will not understand."

As he entered the hospital, he was greeted by the doctors greeted with good news. His daughter was conscious, and she would survive!

Reb Nochum began to dance. Now he could be happy in front of his wife. His daughter will recover!

Hashem peeked at him and said לך לך. Hashem told him, "I am the master and the leader of the world."

Avraham believed in Hashem before. Some Midrashim say that Avraham believed in Hashem from age three. The Rambam says that he believed in Hashem from age forty. But now, when he was seventy-five, Hashem taught him that even when there is strife and suffering in the world, even then, everything is ordained from Him.

In Hashem's Caring Hands

It states (Yeshayah 28:16) הַמֵּאֲמִין לֹא יִחְיֶה, which can be translated as, "When one has emunah, he has no worries" (Beis Aharon p.143, quoting Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l). When people have emunah, they can be compared to a child who feels secure and confident in his parent's arms. They know they are in Hashem's caring hands, so why worry?

The Chofetz Chaim's son said that his father would often say the words (Shmuel 1, 30:6), וַיִּתְחַזַּק דָּוִד בַּה' אֱלֹקָיו, "Dovid strengthened himself in Hashem, his G-d."

The pasuk refers to one of the most challenging moments in Dovid HaMelech's life, and perhaps it was even the hardest moment, r'l.

This is what occurred: The Navi tells that at one point in Dovid HaMelech's life, he lived in Tziklag with his two wives, six hundred of his warriors, and their families.

At a time of war, Dovid left the city with the six hundred warriors, and when they returned to Tziklag, he discovered that his two wives and the wives of the six hundred warriors and their children were taken hostage.

וַיֵּשֶׁא דָּוִד וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ עַד אֲשֶׁר אֵין בָּהֶם כַּח לִבְכוֹת, וּשְׁתֵּי נָשֵׁי דָּוִד נִשְׁבּוּ אַחֲיָנֵעַם הַיִּזְרְעֵלִית וְאִבְיָגַיִל אִשְׁתּוֹ נָבַל הַכְּרַמְלִי, וַתֵּצֵר לְדָוִד מְאֹד כִּי אָמְרוּ הָעָם לִסְקָלוֹ כִּי מֵרָה נָפֶשׁ דָּוִיד וְהָעָם אִישׁ עַל בְּנוֹ וְעַל בְּנֵי בָתָיו, "Dovid and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept, until they had no more strength to weep. Both of Dovid's wives had been

captured... Dovid was very distressed, for the people were ready to stone him, for the souls of all the people were embittered, each over his sons and daughters." The Malbim explains that they wanted to stone him because they felt that Dovid was guilty and had acted irresponsibly. If he had left some of his warriors in Tziklag, they could have protected the women and children.

At this time, Dovid felt alone. He didn't have family to support him (his wives were captured), and he didn't have friends to give him a kind word because everyone blamed him. The situation was dire, as Chazal (Bava Basra 8:) state, שְׁבִי קֶשֶׁה מְכֻלָּן, captivity is the worst. The women and children were in grave danger. וַתֵּצֵר לְדָוִד מְאֹד, Dovid was very worried and upset.

But even then, וַיִּתְחַזַּק דָּוִד בַּה' אֱלֹקָיו, "Dovid drew strength from Hashem, his G-d." He remembered that Hashem was with him, and this gave him strength. He had bitachon that Hashem would help him.

He gathered an additional four hundred warriors, attacked his enemies, and brought back home all the hostages. No one was missing. No one was harmed or scathed.

The Chofetz Chaim would often repeat the words וַיִּתְחַזַּק דָּוִד בַּה' אֱלֹקָיו because, in all situations, we can attain strength and hope from our bitachon in Hashem.

A Holocaust survivor who lost his children in the war asked the Pnei Menachem zt'l to ask his father, the Imrei Emes zt'l for chizuk, to comfort and console his broken spirit.

The Imrei Emes told the Pnei Menachem to write to the survivor this story of Dovid HaMelech in Tziklag. The Imrei Emes said, "Write to him that if he will remain strong, everything will be returned to him."

The Pnei Menachem asked his father, "How can this Holocaust survivor possibly get his children back? The women, children, and wealth taken from Tziklag were

returned, but this man lost his children. How can he get his children back?"

The Imrei Emes replied in brief, "Write him my answer."

Once, the Pnei Menachem went to be menachem avel a father who lost his son, and the Pnei Menachem told him this story. The Pnei Menachem added, "The truth is that everything will come back. Although we don't understand how it could be, but behold Eliyahu comes to every bris, although we don't see him." The Pnei Menachem was saying that there are things we don't see and that we don't understand, but they are true nonetheless. Somehow, the lost child will return.

At another time, the Pnei Menachem said in his father's name, the Imrei Emes zt'l, "In the future, we will understand that death is nothing but an illusion." This is because the neshamah lives forever. So it is easier to understand how everything will be returned in the end.

Mazal

When a child is born and at a wedding, people wish the baalei simchah "mazal tov." So, apparently, the concept of mazal applies to Klal Yisrael. Furthermore, the Gemara (Moed Kattan 28.) states, בני חיי ומזוני, children, life, and parnassah are determined by mazal." Yet, the Gemara (Shabbos 156.) also says, אין מזל לישראל, that Yidden aren't under the influence of the mazal. So, which one is it? Are they under the influence of the *mazalos* or not?

Tosfos writes that both statements are true. Yidden have a *mazal*, but it can be changed by performing great mitzvos. Tosfos writes, על ידי זכות גדול משתנה, through a great merit, his mazal can change.

This topic is related to this week's parashah, because Avraham said to Hashem (15:2-3) מה תתן לי ואנכי הולך ערידי... הן לי לא נתתה זרע, "What will You give me, since I am going childless... Behold, You have given me no seed, and behold, one of my household will inherit me."

Rashi and the Gemara (Shabbos 156.) add that Avraham said, "I see in the stars (*mazalos*) that I am not able to bear children." Knowing astrology, Avram saw no hope for him to bear children.

The Gemara (Shabbos 156.) says that Hashem told Avraham, "Go away from your astronomy because אין מזל לישראל, Bnei Yisrael aren't tied down to the mazal."⁵ Rashi (on the Gemara) explains, "With tefillah and merits, one's mazal can improve."

Tosfos says that a great merit can change the mazal, and Rashi writes that tefillah can also change one's mazal.

What is an example of a great merit that can change one's mazal? The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that emunah is an example of a great merit.

Hashem told Avraham two things: that he will bear children, and his children will inherit Eretz Yisrael. Avraham believed he would have children, but he wasn't certain they would inherit Eretz Yisrael. For the inheritance of Eretz Yisrael, Avraham requested proof. Avraham said (15:8) ה' אלוקים, "Hashem, Elokim: How shall I know that I will inherit it?"

Why did Avraham believe for certain that he would bear children but wasn't certain that his children would inherit the land?

The Chasam Sofer answers that attaining Eretz Yisrael depended on the Canaanites' refrain from doing teshuvah. Avraham knew

5. Rashi writes it slightly differently: "Hashem told him צא מאצטגנויות שלך, leave the astrological calculations that you see in the stars that you won't have a child. אברהם won't have a child, but אברהם will bear children. שרי won't bear children, but שרה will bear children. I will change your name, and your mazal will change."

that if the Canaanites did teshuvah, the land would remain with them.

From this Chasam Sofer we learn the following two lessons:

1) We learn the strength of teshuvah. Whoever does teshuvah, his aveiros are forgiven. Even the Canaanites had the potential to do teshuvah.

2) A second lesson is that emunah is a *zechus gadol*, a great merit that changes one's mazal.

So, let us strengthen ourselves to live with emunah. This was Avraham's approach to life, and with emunah, we will be emulating his ways, and we will have a great merit that can change and improve our mazal.

Bitachon

One of the best praises one can give a friend is to say he is a *baal bitachon*. Every morning, in the *brachah* of *אהבת עולם* we say, *אבינו מלכנו... בעבור אבותינו שבטחו בך*, "Our father, our King...in the merit of our forefathers who trusted in You..." In this *brachah*, we don't mention any other praises of the avos besides their bitachon. The Shem Mishmuel (Miketz 5675) proves from this that having bitachon is the highest form of praise.

We say in Shemonah Esrei, *ומושיע עוזר*, "Hashem is] a king Who helps, saves, and protects." Reb Avraham, the son of the Vilna Gaon zt'l explains that when one says Hashem is *עוזר*, helps, it implies that he does hishtadlus, and he trusts that Hashem will *help* him.

מושיע refers to a person who doesn't even do hishtadlus. He trusts that Hashem will save him and grant him his needs, even when he doesn't do hishtadlus.

מגן, protect, is when, for Hashem's honor, he does something dangerous, and he trusts that even then, Hashem will protect him.

We conclude this *brachah* with *מגן אברהם* because Avraham's level of bitachon was on the level of *מגן*, protection. Avraham battled four powerful kings, and he allowed himself to be thrown in the furnace at Ur Kasdim rather than bow down to idols. He did dangerous things, but he had a high level of bitachon, and he trusted that Hashem would protect and save him. Hashem told Avraham (Bereishis 15:1) *אל תירא אברהם אנכי מגן לך*, "Do not fear, Avram, I will protect you."⁶

There is no one happier than someone who trusts in Hashem, as we say (Tehillim 84:13) *אשרי אדם בוטח בך*, "Fortunate is the man who trusts in You," and it states (Tehillim 146:5) *אשרי שא-ל יעקב בעזרו שברו על ה' אלויו*, "Fortunate is he whose hope is in Hashem his G-d." He lives a life without worry and fear, and Hashem bestows His kindness on him, as it states (Tehillim 32:10) *הבוטח בה' חסד*, "For the one who trusts in Hashem, kindness will surround him."

The Abudarham (motzei Shabbos) says that the entire chapter (Tehillim 91) *ישיב בסתר* doesn't have the letter *זיין*. This chapter discusses bitachon, and it hints that when one has bitachon, he doesn't need *כלי זיין*, weapons. His enemies will fall before him in the merit of his bitachon.

6. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explained that *אנכי מגן לך* (and the *brachah* *מגן אברהם* in Shemonah Esrei) means that Hashem will always protect the pintele Yid, the spark of Judaism, that is embedded in every Yid. Even if one committed many severe aveiros, rachmana litzlan, there remains a part of the Yid's soul that is pure and holy. Hashem protects that spark that it should never be extinguished.

The Gemara (Succah 29.) says the Jewish nation is compared to the moon. The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt'l noted that the moon is always there, only sometimes we don't see it. Similarly, the spark of a Yid is always present, only sometimes it is concealed, and cannot be detected. But the holiness is there, his spark can be ignited, and then he will return with teshuvah sheleimah.

Zera Kodesh writes that people think they must be tzaddikim to have bitachon. They know their aveiros, they feel unworthy, so they believe that bitachon doesn't apply to them. "This thought comes from the yetzer hara, but it isn't so. Hashem is kind to the good and to the bad. בטחון means טח, to paste, to connect oneself to Hashem."

Chazal (Tana d'Bei Eliyahu 22:2) write, "Everyone is obligated to say, 'When will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers.' We aren't on Avraham's high level of emunah and bitachon, but we should strive to go in his ways as best as possible."

Bitachon Helps us Pass Nisyonos

The Mishnah (Avos 5:3) states, עשרה נסיונות, "Avraham was tested ten times, and he passed them all."

The Bas Ayin says that Avraham passed the tests because he had bitachon. He trusted that Hashem always meant his good, and all of Hashem's mitzvos were for his benefit, so why shouldn't he obey? When you know something is for your good, you want to do that thing. Avraham passed all his tests

because he knew it was always for his benefit to do Hashem's will.

According to the Rambam (Pirush HaMishnayos, Avos 5:3), Avraham's first test was לך לך, to leave his homeland to go to Eretz Canaan. He passed this test because he believed that if Hashem sent him to Eretz Canaan, it would certainly benefit him. The Bas Ayin writes:

"It was surely difficult for Avraham to leave his birthplace and his father's home, where he was raised and was accustomed to his entire life, and go to a foreign land. He didn't even know where he was going! But he trusted that Hashem only does kindness. His trust in Hashem gave him the strength to pass this difficult test. It states, ואברהם בן חמש, 'Avraham was 75 years old when he left Charan.' 75 is the gematriya of בטחון. The pasuk is hinting that Avraham was able to pass this test and leave Charan due to his bitachon. Because with emunah and bitachon in the Creator of all worlds that everything He does [and commands] is for the good, one has the strength to keep the mitzvos and to pass the most difficult tests."⁷

This is implied in the words (Tehillim 37:3) בטח בה' ועשה טוב, "Trust in Hashem, and do

7. Reb Yehudah Diner Shlita, rav of beis medresh Divrei Shir, Bnei Brak, observed that when people are worried or upset, they ask למה, "Why did this occur?" or מה יהיה, "What will be?" The gematriya of למה is 75, as is are the words מה יהיה. The solution is בטחון, which is also gematriya 75.

Likutei Moharan (68) teaches, "When the yetzer hara realizes that Heaven is about to send down money to a person, the yetzer hara arranges that this person should have a reason to become angry... חמה means anger and also חומה, a wall. The anger becomes a wall, preventing the intended recipient from receiving the bounty."

The Meor Einayim (Brachos) expresses it this way: Anger is called avodah zarah, and it is forbidden to benefit (הנאה) from avodah zarah. He writes, "If a person becomes angry as he is earning his parnassah, the money that he earns from this transaction is תשמישי עבודה זרה, and it is forbidden to benefit from it, and therefore, he will lose the money so that he won't benefit from it. Therefore, overcoming anger will benefit you in this world and the next one because anger is literally Gehinom..."

This is an example of avodas Hashem becoming easier when the benefits of that mitzvah are known. It is hard to overcome anger, but knowing how much we can lose from becoming angry, that it means losing opportunities to receive money and parnassah, this will help us overcome the temptation for anger.

And even when we don't know the reasons for the mitzvos, we trust in Hashem that all the mitzvos are for our benefit, which motivates us to perform all the mitzvos.

good." When you trust in Hashem and have bitachon, you will be able to do many good deeds.

Parnassah

The pasuk (Tehillim 37:3) בטח בה' ועשה טוב, "Trust in Hashem and do good," also applies to the pursuit of parnassah. When one has bitachon, he knows Hashem can sustain him even if he works less. With bitachon, one will have more time to serve Hashem. This is the meaning of the pasuk בטח בה' ועשה טוב. With bitachon, one has more time to do good.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (Bereishis 58:5) writes, "The amount decreed for a person to earn on any given day will certainly occur. Even if he hides in a room within a room, the money will pursue him and reach him. The chacham (Sefer HaPnanim, Shaar HaEmunah) writes, 'If a person runs away from his parnassah like someone running from death, his parnassah will run after him even quicker and will catch up to him.' So, why should you work so hard, with all your strength, the entire day, from sunrise until sundown? Even if you work part of the day, you will certainly earn the same amount of parnassah as if you worked all day."

The Agra d'Kalah writes that this lesson is hinted at in the words לך מארצך. Hashem was telling Avraham that he should leave the notion that everything happens according to nature and instead trust in Hashem. אל הארץ אשר אראך, Hashem will prepare the means of parnassah that you need. You don't have to search for new ideas how to earn parnassah other than the plan Hashem arranged for you.

אברם, the Agra d'Kalah says, is roshei teivos רבות מחשבות בלב איש, "There are many thoughts in man's heart." People are constantly thinking up ideas of how to amass wealth. ועצת ה' היא תקום, we should follow Hashem's counsel and engage in the parnassah that He prepared for us.

Avram's name was changed to אברהם. The extra ה can be written out fully in three ways: ה"י, ה"א, ה"ה. The filler letters spell ה"י, and the Shlah HaKadosh (Shaar HaOsiyos 46, א) explains that it comes from the pasuk עצת ה' היא תקום. The roshei teivos of ה"י are אם ירצה ה', "If Hashem wills it."

So, instead of רבות מחשבות בלב איש, many thoughts of how to earn parnassah, follow עצת ה', Hashem's counsel, the parnassah He prepared for you, ה"י, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, תקום, that will be enough for you to earn your parnassah.

Overcoming Fear

When you tell someone, "Don't be afraid," you are saying, "There is reason to be afraid, but be strong, and don't let yourself fall into panic and fear." But when you ask someone, "Why are you afraid?" you are saying there is nothing to fear.

Dovid HaMelech says (Tehillim 27:1) ה' אורי וישעי ממי אירא ה' מעוזי ממי אפחד, "Hashem is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? Hashem is my life's strength; whom shall I dread?" He said this as a question because there is absolutely no reason to be afraid. There is nothing to fear because we are in Hashem's caring hands, and everything is from Him.

It can be compared to a person dancing at a wedding dressed in a bear costume, and a young child is frightened thinking it's real. The child's father shows him it's just a costume, and the child understands and calms down.

The Chinuch (mitzvah תקמ"ו) discusses the mitzvah to build a gate on a roof (מעקה לגג). The Chinuch writes, "Hashem's nation is guided by Hashem. Everything that happens to them, the good and the bad, happens due to Hashem's decree. As Chazal (Chulin 7:) say, 'A person doesn't knock his finger unless it was decreed Above.' Nevertheless, a person must protect himself from the dangers of this world." The Chinuch is saying that no one will fall off the roof if it

isn't Hashem's decree; nevertheless, we must make hishtadlus that everyone stays safe.

Therefore, we shouldn't worry about the future, even during these difficult times in Eretz Yisrael. We should take all necessary precautions, but that is solely as far as our deeds are concerned – our hearts shouldn't be afraid.

In the Hoshanos, we say, ...הושענא דגן מדלקת..., "חַיטָה מִחֹגֶב... נֶפֶשׁ מִבְּהִלָּה, "Save the crops from fire... the wheat from locust... the soul from panic." The Chofetz Chaim zt'l said that crops are totally consumed in fire, locust completely destroys wheat crops, and so, too, a person's soul is totally ruined from בְּהִלָּה, worry and panic.⁸

It states (Tehillim 140:8) סְכוּתָה לְרֹאשִׁי בְיוֹם נֶשֶׁק, "You protected my head on the day of battle." The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni (תתפ"ח) says that this refers to when Dovid battled Golyas, and Hashem protected his head. Rav Shach zt'l asked that it wasn't solely the head that needed protection. The entire body needed protection! The answer is that Dovid was praising Hashem that even during war, Hashem protected his mind from panic and despair.

We add here a good counsel, and fortunate are those who listen to it: Don't listen to the news. The gain from knowing the information is small, while the loss is significant. The news broadcasters don't give

over the news with emunah. They are out to frighten people, so people will get addicted and listen to them again and again. When missiles fall, we must run to a guarded protected place, and similarly, when missiles of kefirah are being fired over the radio waves, it is imperative to run to a safe place where we won't hear it.

The problem is that no sirens go off when kefirah attacks. When a missile is shot from Gaza, sirens remind people to take cover, but there are no sirens to remind us to escape and save our neshamos from the poisonous information being transferred through the airwaves. Everyone must be cautious on his own, and guard himself and his children from the news.⁹

The Golden Nights

The long nights of the winter have begun, and these are extraordinary times for serving Hashem.

Rebbe Hershele of Zidichov zt'l said that the winter nights have *kedushah* like *chol hamoed*. Rebbe Hershele of Zidichov zt'l added that the *tefillos* said before alos hashachar are answered, and they are similar to *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l once said on *motzei Simchas Torah*, "The Great Days have passed. Now come the Great Nights."

8. When the Belzer Rav zt'l lived in Tel Aviv, he would bake matzos erev Pesach in Kfar Chabad. Once, it was late, and the driver was rushing to get to the bakery in Kfar Chabad on time. The Belzer Rav asked the driver to stop the car, and he got out. He stood on the side of the road for a few moments. People heard the Belzer Rav say to himself, הושענא נפש מבהלה, that Hashem should save us from panic and confusion. Zrizus is needed, but we should never lose our equilibrium and peace of mind.

People asked the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law what attribute of his father-in-law impressed him the most. He replied that it was his tranquility. Even when the Chofetz Chaim went through difficult times, he never lost his peace of mind. And this is because of his emunah in Hashem.

9. Reb Moshe Sternbuch Shlita relates that the Satmar Rebbe zt'l was against putting out a daily newspaper. He permitted the publication of a weekly newspaper based on his view of Israeli politics. Still, he felt that a daily newspaper would inevitably write, in addition to the news, the reasons things happen. These analyses often border on kefirah, because a Yid believes that everything occurs because this is Hashem's plan. It isn't because of what this person said or what that person did. Everything is Hashem's plan.

Once, after Simchas Torah, the Beis Aharon *zt'l* said, "We are approaching the regular, standard days of the year, but when I remind myself of the long winter nights, I am relaxed."

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* explained, "The Beis Aharon was a *masmid*, and he learned the same number of hours each day, winter or summer. So why was he calmed by the long winter nights? When one wakes up early, and it is cold outside, he throws off his blanket to wake up – those are the special moments of the winter that he looked forward to."

After Simchas Torah, the chassidim came to the Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* and said, "We are about to travel back to Russia, but after being here, how can we return to the cold Russian winter?"

They were hinting that they would miss the "warm" inspiration and holiness they experienced in Belz on the *yomim tovim*.

The Rebbe replied with a *mashal*:

In Chelm, it was warm by day and cold at night. The elders of Chelm gathered for a meeting. They sought a way to trap the sun so it would keep shining and spreading its warmth at nighttime. They said, "When we look out at the horizon, it seems that the sun sets into the earth. Therefore, we will put large pots on the ground where the sun sets, the sun will set inside the pots, and we will capture the sun and have the sun for the nighttime, too."

They set out the pots at the horizon and waited for nightfall. But it snowed, and the pots filled with snow and ice. The people of Chelm were devastated, but the wise men of Chelm told them, "This isn't a problem. Take out your shovels and spades, remove the ice and snow, and you will find the sun underneath."

They brought their shovels and spades and began working to uncover the sun. As they worked, they became hot from the physical labor. "Our plan worked," they shouted gleefully. "It is getting hot. It must be that we captured the sun."

The Belzer Rebbe was hinting to them that if they invest energy and excitement in avodas Hashem, they will remain warm, literally and figuratively, throughout the long Russian winter.¹⁰

Don't Give Up on Ruchniyus

In this week's parashah, Avraham Avinu comes to Eretz Yisrael, called Eretz Canaan. His father, Terach, also attempted to take his family to Eretz Canaan, but he stopped in the middle and settled in Charan. As stated at the end of last week's parashah (11:31), ויקח תרח את אברם בנו... ויצאו אתם מאור כשדם ללכת ארצה כנען, ויבאו עד חרן, "Terach took Avram his son [and the rest of his family] and went forth with them from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Canaan. They came as far as Charan and settled there."

Going to Eretz Yisrael signifies going to the kedushah. Many people desire to attain kedushah but inevitably encounter difficulties along the way and give up. This is what happened to Terach and his family. They came to חרן, which means anger. This alludes to the attribute of *din*, which attempts to stop people from achieving their spiritual goals.

When obstacles arise, most people give up and settle wherever they are. But Avraham pushed forward and reached Eretz Yisrael.

The lesson for us is to work to overcome all obstacles and continue trying. Yes, you will stumble, but you must get up and try again. If you remain stubborn in your goals,

10. Rebbe Fishel Stripkover *zt'l* would say that Hashem can cause it to snow over an entire city just to test one *bachur*, to see whether he will wake up to learn Torah despite the cold.

you will reach the kedushah you strive to attain.¹¹

It states (13:18) וַיֵּאָהֶל אַבְרָם וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֵלֶימָמְרָא, "Avram pitched his tent, and he came, and he dwelt in the plain of Mamre."

The *trop* on וַיָּבֹא and וַיֵּשֶׁב is תְּבִיר. (It isn't so often that the *trop* תְּבִיר is found on two consecutive words.) The translation of תְּבִיר is broken. Avraham's specialty was that even when he broke, which means when he fell from his high levels, he continued. This attitude enabled him to reach אֵלֶימָמְרָא and Eretz Yisrael.

When one falls spiritually, his reaction should be, "What should I do now?" Instead of moping over the past, think about what you can improve and accomplish in the future.

In Parashas Bereishis (Bereishis 2:20), we learn that Adam named all the animals. Then Hashem created Chavah, but the Torah only tells us that Adam named her Chavah after she ate from the Tree of Knowledge. It states (3:20) וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה כִּי הִיא הִיְתָה אִם, 'Adam named his wife Chavah because she was the mother of all life,' and this is written after the story of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge (see Rashi, 3:20).

We derive from this a vital lesson. Chavah ate from the Tree and convinced her husband, Adam, to eat from the fruit, as well. This brought devastation and destruction to the world. What should Chavah do now, after committing such a severe sin? Should she fall into a depression and mope over the destruction she caused? Adam named her Chavah, meaning she must remember that all life will come from her. Every human being will be her descendant. With this name, he was telling Chavah to focus on the

positive she could still accomplish in the world. The entire world will come from her! There is no time to brood over the past.

This is the only way to react to mistakes. Moaning over the past will stop us in our tracks. We should instead focus on improvement and the future.

The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l gives an innovative explanation to the words לֹךְ לֹךְ... מִבֵּית אָבִיךָ. Avraham's father was an idol worshipper. Avraham could have thought, "How can I serve Hashem? What yichus do I have? What importance do I have?"

Furthermore, the Rambam says that as a youth, Avraham also worshipped avodah zarah. If he would focus on where he comes from and the aveiros he performed, he would feel broken and unworthy of serving Hashem. Hashem, therefore, told him לֹךְ לֹךְ, leave these negative thoughts and move on to greatness.

Many people suffer from similar negative thoughts. They think, how can I serve Hashem after I committed an aveirah? Hashem replies, לֹךְ לֹךְ, go away from those thoughts, focus on the future, and serve Hashem.

The pasuk states (Bereishis 3:21) וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם, "Hashem made for Adam and his wife shirts of skin, and He dressed them."

What is the uniqueness of this clothing? Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "Hashem made them honorable, good clothing... Perhaps it was made from the skins of the tachash, an animal that existed in Moshe Rabbeinu's time, which Moshe used to cover the aron and the utensils. The skins had many colors, as Unkelos tells us. Chazal say that the clothing that Hashem gave Adam and

11. The Kotzker zt'l (Siach Sarfei Kodesh, Inyanim Shonim, Avodas Hashem 43) teaches that there's a tall ladder going down from heaven to earth, and Hashem brings down neshamos to this world with this ladder. Then Hashem takes the ladder away and says, "Now, come back to Me." Some lose hope and don't even try. Some jump up and fall, and then they lose hope. But some jump repeatedly until Hashem has compassion on them and He brings them up to Him.

Chavah had pictures of all the animals in the world drawn onto it. The Midrash says that Hashem dressed them in clothes of the kohen gadol."

Notice that these honorable clothing were given to Adam and Chavah after they sinned! They ate from the Tree of Knowledge, and Hashem gave them this honor! This is because Hashem doesn't want us to feel distressed or overcome with hopelessness. Even after a grave aveirah, Hashem wants us to remember our greatness and intrinsic honor.

Rabbeinu b'Chaya notes that it doesn't state ללבוש, that Hashem gave them clothes to wear. It says וילבשם, that Hashem Himself dressed them. Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "The pasuk expresses Hashem's love and compassion for His creations. Even after they sinned, He doesn't stop loving them. He corrects them and is kind to them."

Rabbeinu b'Chaya adds, "We also find Hashem acting this way to their descendants, the generation who lived in the desert. It states that Hashem Himself sent them *mann* (הגני ממטר לכם לחם מן השמים). Although they sinned as Adam did, Hashem didn't stop loving them, and His kindness didn't leave them. The *mann* continued to fall like before. Also, by kriyas Yam Suf, although they had *avodah zarah* with them, Hashem didn't refrain from splitting the sea for them. These are examples of Hashem's kindness."

Appreciate Your Deeds

In the *Tzetzal Kattan*, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l writes, "Every moment that one isn't learning Torah, especially when one is sitting idle in his room or lying on his bed and can't fall asleep, he should think about the mitzvah (Vayikra 22:32), ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל. He should conjure up a great, awesome fire, burning up to heaven, and for Hashem's honor he overcomes his nature and throws himself into the fire to honor Hashem. Hashem considers a good thought like a deed. So, he wasn't idle. He performed the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem."

A person might have these lofty thoughts of *mesirus nefesh* at night, but when morning arrives and the alarm clock rings, and now his test is לך לך, to get up and out of bed, the test becomes much harder.

This is because people want to do great deeds, and they don't value "mediocre deeds." They are ready to be *moser nefesh* and throw themselves into fire for Hashem but aren't prepared to wake up on time to learn Torah or to do other relatively easy actions.

When Avraham lived in Ur Kasdim, Nimrod gave Avraham an ultimatum: Either he bows down to the idols, or he would be thrown into the fire. Avraham chose the furnace.

According to the Rambam, Ur Kasdim isn't counted among Avraham's ten tests, and we wonder why not. Isn't choosing the furnace over idol worship a more significant test and accomplishment than לך לך? We also wonder why the test of Ur Kasdim isn't written explicitly in the Torah.

We can answer that it is because it is often easier for people to do great deeds than mediocre ones. Perhaps it was easier for Avraham to choose the furnace over worshipping idols than לך לך, to leave his father's home.

The Beis Aharon (p.2:) writes, "Be very happy and let everything you do for Hashem's service be very precious in your eyes. Think, 'I won't sell this merit for all the money in the world!' This also includes one good word, a good thought, or a good deed. Perhaps it was done in just a moment, but it won't be lost and will do great things for you and perhaps the entire Jewish nation. Is there any greater joy than accomplishing something that is the purpose of creation? Do whatever you can, be it small or big. As people say, 'Whatever you grab in the market is worthwhile.'"

The following tale is told about the Golem of Prague:

One week, the local fishermen didn't catch any fish for Shabbos, so the Golem of Prague was sent to the sea to fill a large sack with fish. A long time passed, and the Golem didn't return, so people went to check up on him. They found him standing in the sea, struggling against the waves, trying to catch fish. They signaled for him to return home. The Golem showed them that the sack was only half full. They told him, "We don't need any more fish."

Hearing they didn't need more fish, the Golem turned the sack over and freed all the fish.

This story can be used as a *mashal* to illustrate the foolishness of people who think, "It's either all or none." They strive for perfection, and anything less than that is worthless to them. But a wise person understands that whatever he gains is precious, even if he falls short of his goals.