

PARSHAS LECH LECHA



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SHIUR PRESENTED IN 5779



SOARING ABOVE STARS



GOING OUTSIDE OF TEVAH

In this week's parsha, we are introduced to Avraham Avinu and we learn about his development, and climb toward perfection. You have to know that Avraham Avinu was the first person who decided to restore Hashem's faith in mankind; he was the first person to attempt to live like Adam - to live in the way Hashem intended when He created Adam. And all of Avraham Avinu's challenges that he went through were a preparation for his children, and for us as well, to learn from and to live by.

One of Avraham Avinu's challenges was the challenge with children. The parsha describes that after the war of four and five kings, Hashem came to Avraham promising him great rewards, and Avraham replied: *מה תתן לי ואנכי הולך ערירי* (Bereishis 15:2-5) - *what can You give me? I am childless*

And Avram said, You have not given me offspring. What benefit do I have with everything You have given me? And Hashem responded, telling Avraham (verse 4), *the one who comes forth from your belly will inherit you*, and then the next passuk says (verse 5): *He took him "outside" and told him, look into the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them, so shall be your offspring.* Now, Avraham Avinu's question was: "What have You given me" and Hashem's response was "Let's step outside." What's the connection here? Rashi comments on the meaning of *ויצא* and *החוצה* as follows:

לפי פשוטו הוציאו מאהלם לחוץ לראות הפוכים, ולפי מדרשו אמר לו צא מאצטגנינות שלך שראית במזלות שאינך עתיד להעמיד בן, אברם אין לו בן, אבל אברהם יש לו בן, שרי לא תלד, אבל שרה תלד; אני קורא לכם שם אחר וישתנה המזל. ד"א הוציאו מהללו של עולם והגביהו למעלה מן הפוכים, וזהו לשון הבטח מלמעלה למטה

Its simple meaning is: He brought him outside his tent so that he could see the stars. The Midrashic explanation is: go forth from (i.e. give up) your astrological speculations - that which you have seen with the constellations - that you will not raise a son; Avram indeed may have no son but Avraham will have a son: Sarai may not bear a child but Sarah will bear a child. I will give you [other] names, and your מזל will be changed. Another explanation: He brought him forth from the terrestrial sphere, elevating him above the stars, and this is why He uses the term "look," when He said "look at the heavens" - for this word signifies looking from above downward (Breishis Rabbah 44:12)

Rashi says that the simple meaning of why Hashem took him out was to see the stars. But the Midrash explains that in the beginning, Avraham Avinu was aware - and it had been conferred with major astrologers - that neither he nor Sarai will have children and Hashem was telling him to disregard those predictions. The wording of Chazal (Aggadas Bereishis, Perek 37) on this matter is as follows:

צא לך מן המידה הזו, שנאמר ויצא אותו החוצה וגו' (בראשית טו, ה), ומה אמרו לך הכל אברם אינו מוליד ושרי אינה יולדת, שנאמר ושרי אשת אברם לא ילדה (בראשית טז, א), אימתי אתם מולידין, ולא יקרא עוד את שמך אברם וגו' (שם בראשית יז, ה), אף שרי אשתך לא תקרא את שמה שרי וגו' (שם בראשית י"ז, א). הוי אברם אינו מוליד, אבל אברהם מוליד שרי אינה יולדת, אבל שרה יולדת, שנאמר ותהר ותלד שרה

Hashem said to Avraham, "Go out from this 'middah' as it says "He took him outside." You are right, Avram and Sarai won't give birth, but Avraham and Sarah will give birth.

YOU ARE A MIRACLE

The direct command and instruction of *צא* from Hashem to Avraham was that he should go out from this *middah*. Astrologers had no hope for Avraham Avinu's future - his future was blank - and according to the laws of nature, he would have no descendants.

We are all descendants from "unnatural" situations. Sometimes you see a child born to parents in a miraculous way, so you look at the child in a different way. You should know that each one of us is that child. We all represent miraculous births. We have to understand what Hashem was telling Avraham, "I want you to go out of this *middah*." Hashem was telling him that in truth he cannot have kids, since Hashem created a world of *tevah*, but Hashem told him, "I am showing you that a person can free himself from being subjugated to *tevah*; I am showing you a doorway - *צא לך מן המידה הזו* - you have an opportunity to walk through this door and not be subjected to the laws of Nature."

The Midrash Tanchuma (Chaye Sarah 6:3) says further:

רבי יהודה בר סימון ורבי חנן בשם רבי יוחנן אמרי, העלהו למעלה מפפת הרקיע, שנאמר: ויצא אותו החוצה ויאמר הבט נא השמימה. אין אומרין הבט אלא מלמעלה למטה. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, מי שפחת המזל מתירא הימנו. אתה שאתה עליו הרם ראש עליו

Rabbi Yehuda, the son of Shimon and R. Chanan, in the name of R. Yochanan, declared: He lifted him above the arc of the sky, as it is said: And He brought him forth abroad, and said: "Look (הבט) now toward heaven" (Gen. 15:5). One does not use the word "הבט" unless he means to look from above to

below. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Anyone who is beneath the constellation of his birth is fearful of it, but you are raised above it.

POWER TO SUBJUGATE TEVAH

Hashem lifted up Avraham Avinu above the arc (*kippah*) of *shamayim* and said to him that now, you are higher and greater than the *tevah* because you are above it! And then Hashem told him *הִבֵּט נָא הַשְׁמַיִמָה*. It doesn't say, "lift up" your eyes to the Heavens, rather it says "look" (*הבט*) to Heavens, "like a person who looks from above, downward." This is because Hashem elevated Avraham *הִרְקִיעַ מִכַּפֵּת הַרְקִיעַ*, and He told him "look down" like a person on a higher plane looking down - *אֵין אוֹמְרִין הִבֵּט אֶלָּא מִלְמַעְלָה לְמַטָּה*. Hashem was commanding Avraham Avinu to walk out from the door of *tevah*; Hashem was telling Avraham that he has the ability to raise himself above *tevah* instead of being subjugated to it. Hashem said, "You, Avraham, can now have the *tevah* subjugated under you, and that's how you will have children! And if you rise above *tevah*, you will be *zoiche!*" And then Hashem added the most amazing thing: *כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ*, meaning that your descendants will also be above the Heavens. Klal Yisroel will be elevated above *tevah*! Now, the simple meaning of this verse is that your children will be as numerous as the stars, but how is being numerous as the stars an example of being above nature?! There are 1.4 billion Chinese in the world - does that mean that they are above the stars? So the meaning of this is that your children will also be above the Sun and the Arc of the sky. Hashem said that Klal Yisroel will be elevated above nature.

SEVENTEEN YEARS OF SUFFERING

Many people face difficult, sometimes seemingly insurmountable challenges in their lives, but they still exist. I get letters from people who suffer unimaginable suffering the mind cannot grasp, yet they still exist.

I want to share with you a recent fax that I received from a man who suffered for many years after a devastating hemorrhagic stroke. This person was a *choshuve* Lomed Torah, who was a Cheder Rabbi seventeen years ago and was committed to serving Hashem "day and night." His Kibud Av was above and beyond, with a tremendous *simchas hachaim*. After suffering the stroke, he was put on a respirator. His wife was first told to make plans to leave him, to forget about him, because he was not going to get any better. But he miraculously recovered, and has since then, returned from hopeless situations numerous times with clear miracles. His wife does her best to research the latest treatments and therapies and to defy the doctors who time and again gave up on him. He was eventually able to walk again, with assistance, and return to some learning with concentration and understanding. Unfortunately, his ability to swallow deteriorated to the point that he could no longer eat. For years now he has not eaten or had a drink in a normal fashion. The doctors also pronounced that he would not speak again due to repeated pneumonias. He needed a tracheotomy performed, as well, numerous times. His interest to speak is only to be able to learn Torah again. He suffers greatly, but has no complaints against Hashem. A few weeks ago he had a major setback. He had an internal rupture due to an infection and the doctors gave him a "zero chance of survival," but he survived again. However, since then, he needed an operation with full anesthesia every two days to clean up the infection and to stitch it. When the wound was 99% closed, it ruptured slightly again, and we are awaiting the latest developments. Rabbosai, this man is alive due the fact that *וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחַוְצָה* - no human being could naturally exist like this for seventeen years and keep getting up and continuing!

EIN MAZAL L'YISROEL

The Gemora (Shabbos 156a) asks how do we know there's no mazal with Yisroel, and it says we know it from the verse *וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחַוְצָה* which ends off with *כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ*.

דָּאָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: מַנִּין שְׂאִין מִזֵּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל? שָׁנְאָמַר: "וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחַוְצָה", אָמַר אַבְרָהָם לְפָנָי הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, "בֶּן בֵּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אוֹתִי", אָמַר לוֹ: לֹא - "כִּי אִם אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמַּעַרְבֵי"

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: From where is it derived that there is no constellation for the Jewish people? As it is stated [with regard to Avraham]: "And He brought him outside. Avraham said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, "Behold, You have given me no offspring, and one born in my house is to be my heir" (Genesis 15:3). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: No, the one that will come forth from you shall be your heir (Genesis 15:4).

Now, a person has to know that *אֵין מִזֵּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל* does not mean that there is not *מִזֵּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל* - but what it means is: if you "go out" of your mazal, if you are *וַיֵּצֵא הַחַוְצָה* - if you tell Hashem, "I am an offspring of Avraham Avinu (who is called *rosh hama'aminim*), and I am *ma'amin ben ma'amin*, and I believe that if I chose to rise above the events and rules of Nature, I can be *zoiche!*"

I will tell you an interesting thing that you may not have known. Do you know where else in the Torah it says *וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחַוְצָה*? It says this regarding Yosef HaTzadik. The wife of *Potiphara* grabbed Yosef and said, "Sin with me," and he ran "outside" - *וַיֵּצֵא הַחַוְצָה*. Do you know what the Midrash (Breishis Rabbah 87:8) says on this? How was he able to run out? With *zechus Avos!*¹

THE GREATEST SOURCE FOR BITACHON

Where do you find *zechus Avos*? We find this by Avraham Avinu, when Hashem told him *וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחַוְצָה* and *כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ* - if you find yourself in a situation where, *עַל פִּי טַבַּע* (naturally), you can't overcome your challenge, and *עַל פִּי טַבַּע* you

¹ וַתִּתְפָּשֶׁהוּ בְּבִגְדוֹ וְגו' וַיֵּצֵא הַחַוְצָה (בראשית לט, יב), קִפְץ בְּזָכוֹת אָבוֹת, הַיֵּאִר מִה דָּאֵת אָמַר (בראשית טו, ה): וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתוֹ הַחַוְצָה

should succumb to it and give in - you should know that you are not subject to *tevah*. It extends even to this area. People find themselves addicted to different things and Yetzer Horas, and they feel completely overwhelmed. They have to know this and say to themselves - צא לך מן המידה הזו - you are a descendant of Avraham Avinu, אין מזל ואין טבע לישראל, you are not subjugated even in this area. However, you have to start the התעוררות (reawakening) by choosing “to go out” of your *tevah*. This is the inheritance that Avraham Avinu left for us! This is the greatest source and the power source for bitachon. The ability that we have within ourselves to be boteach, has been bequeathed to us by Avraham Avinu. We can be facing tremendous and awful challenges, but we can overcome them.

THE WORD “SUFFERING” IS NOT IN HIS DICTIONARY

I recently met a man by whom I was overwhelmed. He’s an interesting fellow. He is in the medical field, and he’s a wise fellow, too. Hashem blessed him with a lot of wisdom. The suffering that he went through and continues to go through defies all imagination. If there is something called suffering, he has met up with it. I cannot tell you all the stories, but I can tell you the following. When he was a young man, he was married to a woman with whom he had three children. Then in his 20s, he got cancer which he struggled to overcome. Before he finished his treatments, his wife got cancer, and she eventually died from it, leaving him with three young children and dealing with his own cancer. The guy, Boruch Hashem, survived that cancer, but then a couple years later he was diagnosed with a different type of cancer. Now, this person was diagnosed with the worst possible type of cancer that people simply dread mentioning their names: pancreatic and colon cancers. He went through fourteen major surgeries, but he lived to talk about them. He loves nothing more than sitting and learning, as much as he can. He loves davening intensely. We all witnessed this man learning and davening throughout the day during his recent visit, one day after another, making it look like it was a “walk in the park.” The sufferings that he endures are unbelievable until today, but this is only a small part of his suffering, if you can imagine that. I’m amazed, I am at awe to simply look at him, because when I look at him, I see Hashem’s strength, I see something that defies all *tevah* - the guy should have been gone years ago, just from the amount of his sufferings alone! And all this person wants to do is to continue having strength to learn Torah and to be able to daven with less suffering! A life “free of suffering” is not in his dictionary. But because he is a descendant of Avraham, he is in the shadow of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

THE BIGGEST BRACHAH!

There is a Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 2:12) that says the following:

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אברהם, מה יש לי לומר לך ומה יש לי לברכה, שתהא שלם, צדיק לפני, או שתהא שרה אשתך צדקת לפני, או שיהיו כל בני ביתך צדיקים, צדיקים הם לפני, מה יש לי לברכה, אלא כל בנים שעתידים לעמד ממך יהיו כמותך, מנון, שכן קתיב: ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך

Hashem said to Avraham Avinu: What can I tell you? How can I bless you? That you should be a complete tzaddik before Me or your wife should be a tzadekes? You and your wife are already tzaddikim! My brocha is that all the children who will come from you will be like you, as it says, ‘So shall be your offspring.’

Every one of us has this opportunity to keen into this power, but we have to believe and accept that this is the biggest brocha that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave Avraham Avinu, and that we are the source and the recipients of this brocha! And if you believe you have that power - you can rise above every challenge. There’s nothing that’s a challenge. No situation is absolute. No situation is definitive. If a doctor tells you, על פי טבע, you are gone - you know what you should say to him? “You are right. But I have one remaining option - I can step out of the *tevah*.” And they will look at you with their eyes curled up and ask you if you are already delirious: “Excuse me, what are you talking about stepping outside of Nature?” And then you will say to them, “Yes, I’m going to step ‘outside’. I am going to do what Hashem showed my great-great grandfather, Avraham Avinu, and I will follow in his footsteps.”

Do you know what the verse (15:6) says after Hashem gave Avraham this brocha? It says ‘והאמין בה’ - “And he trusted Hashem.” When Avraham heard this brocha, he trusted Hashem. This means that Avraham Avinu totally trusted Hashem, with the highest level of Emuna possible! When he received this blessing, even though he did not have a child immediately, he went straight to Amazon or whatever the store was in that pre-Amazon era, to buy the nicest, best crib available in those days, and he was sure it was going to be a healthy boy. He was sure of it, it was absolute! ‘והאמין בה’. And because Avraham Avinu had such *emunah* in Hashem, he said, “Hashem just told me that I am not *meshubad* (subjugated) to *tevah*. So they tell me that my wife and I cannot have kids - so what?” Sarah was already way past the age of having kids! The gemora (Yevamos 64b) says that she didn’t even have a womb!² Yet, she had a child - Yitzhak. And we are the witnesses to that. So every time you see another Jew you have to think - there is hope, there’s hope.

You know how many people are struggling with having children? Every time they look at their friends and other people who are walking around the street with babies, they should think, “It’s not going to be that hard for me to have one child, I just need one!” All these people are descendants of צא לך מן המידה הזו. You are not subject to *tevah*!

RELYING ON THE CHESSED OF HASHEM

Now, I want to share with you a Gr”a as an amazing “cherry on top of a pie.” The verse (ibid) says - ‘והאמין בה’ - And the big question is: why did Avraham trust in Hashem, why wasn’t he afraid that he might “mess up?” We know that Yaakov

² אמר רב נחמן אמר רבה בר אבוןה שרה אמנו אילונית היתה שנאמר (בראשית יא, ל) ותהי שרי עקרה אין לה ולד אפי' בית וולד אין לה

was afraid that he might mess up! So why wasn't Avraham Avinu afraid like Yaakov (that he would not have sufficient merits)? So the Vilna Gaon (Mishlei 25:15) writes an incredible idea: ,והיינו משום שויהשבה לו צדקה, כלומר כל מה שנותן לו ה' הוא צדקה ואינו בשבילו כלל כתב בזהר והאמן בה' ולא היה מתירא כלל אפילו שמא יגרום החטא, (It says in the Zohar that 'he believed in Hashem' and wasn't afraid at all, even about the possibility of losing out due to sin, because Hashem considered it for him as an act of tzedakah, of chessed; meaning, whatever Hashem gave him was out of Hashem's kindness and not at all because of his own zechus). The Gr"a explains that if something comes to you because of your zechus, you can lose it, but if something comes because of צדקה (i.e., chessed), then you can trust and rely on Hashem that you will get it. When we leave the warmth of Shabbos, we say the following words in our *Havdalah*, קל ישועתי אבטח ולא אפקד (Yeshaya 12:2). Now, have you ever thought about this pasuk? Why are you so בטוח (confident), and what are you being *boteach* in? Says the Gr"a, the word קל refers to Hashem's *middas hachessed*, and if I rely on the *chessed* of Hashem for my *yeshuah* (salvation), then אבטח ולא אפקד - I won't be afraid, שמא יגרום החטא! Do you hear this marvelous thing? It's unbelievable!

Many people are afraid when I tell them to have *bitachon*. They often say that they have no merits and that they are not tzaddikim. So I ask them, "Who told you that you have to be a tzaddik to have bitachon?" And they say, "If you are not a tzaddik, Hashem is not going to help you out." I tell them, "You know, my friend, you are right - Hashem won't help you, because with that attitude you are saying to Hashem, 'Hashem, I am not expecting *tzedakah* from You. I've got to deserve it, and to deserve it, I've got to have a zechus. I am no better than Yaakov Avinu, and maybe I don't have that zechus!" But Hashem says: "That's wrong!" *Kel yeshuasi* - my *yeshuah* will come from קל - the *middas hachessed* - and therefore אבטח ולא אפקד. Because of Avraham Avinu's יהשבה לו צדקה - and it was *kulo chessed* - he believed Hashem absolutely. And when someone saw Avraham Avinu buying a full layette set for a boy, someone might have asked him, "Don't you think you are 'jumping the gun' a little bit? You are already planning a bris, and a seudas *hodaah*? You are 99 years old, your wife is 89 years old!" And Avraham told them, ונאני בקהקדה בטחתי (Tehillim 13:6) - I believe, I trust in Hashem's *chessed*, and therefore, יגל לבי בישועתיך - my heart right now is already rejoicing for Hashem's *yeshua*! I have no doubt it's going to come."

Rabbosai, this is the tool that we have to learn and employ when we face difficult situations in life. And we will face those situations in our lives: whether it's finding a *shidduch*, getting better from a sickness, finding a house, or having *nachas* from our kids. Even the smallest things in your life, too. So although it may seem to us that it won't happen, remember, if it's קל ישועתי - if you believe in Hashem's *chessed* (and it says חסד קל כל היום [Tehillim 52:3] - Hashem's *chessed* is all day long, He's always open for *chessed*), then אבטח ולא אפקד.

✧ IN SUMMARY ✧

When Hashem took Avraham Avinu "outside," He showed him that not only could he "step outside" of the limited bounds of *tevah*, but that all of his future descendants would have the potential to be elevated above the *tevah*. Many people who continuously face and overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges, are the living testimony that, as children of Avraham Avinu, they have inherited this amazing *zechus Avos* to be *zoiche* to transcend the realm of the metaphysical world when faced with adversity. In the coming week - no matter what the particular challenge I may be going through - I will strengthen my *emunah* in Hashem's *yeshua* because I am the descendant of Avraham Avinu who bestowed on me this most powerful *brocha* - to soar above the stars and not be subjected to them! And when I face my adversity, I will do so without fear, because I will rely only on Hashem's *chessed* and not on my own merits - קל ישועתי אבטח ולא אפקד.