



From the desk of  
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## Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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### TORAT

### Parashat Lech Lecha

### HAMELECH

#### Tried and Tested

As the *parashah* opens, Avraham is presented with one of his life's challenges.

He is told by the Master of All, "Go, for your own good, from your land, from your birthplace, from your father's household, to the land which I will show you. [If you do so, then] I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will enhance your reputation. Your whole being shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you, I shall curse. Through you will be blessed all of the families of the earth."

Rashi comments that travel tends to minimize family size, financial assets and reputation. That is why Hashem singled out these blessings, guaranteeing to grant him children, wealth and honor.

#### What was the Test

Now, you may wonder: Here is an aged, childless man, on the most-wanted list by the merciless tyrant of a dictator in his homeland; son of the king's henchman who already turned him in to the authorities. Avraham would have burnt to a crisp if not for an unbelievable display of a miraculous salvation. He should not really need too many incentives to escape this place. Nonetheless, here he is showered with blessings and promises by His Heavenly Father in whom

he has placed his trust and experienced His salvation from raging flames. Avram is now 75 years old and his wife is 65. Does the promise of a son not talk to him? We would think it would. Maybe he is not desirous of wealth and honor, but at least the guarantee that his basic needs will be met and he will no longer be hunted? So why is this a test at all, to leave his birthplace behind? Any normal human being in such circumstances would happily pick up and run!

Some suggest that that was exactly the test. It was a test of motive. After being given such promises, why will Avram do it? Because of the money, honor and children or just because Hashem said to go? Indeed, the verse testifies, "And Avram went as Hashem told him to." He passed with flying colors. He did it for the right reasons.

Let us suggest an additional approach as well.

#### Something Doesn't Seem Right

Avraham's test was not so much his response to the original, "Get up and go!" as it was his response upon getting to the Holy Land and meeting up with disappointment after disappointment. First, he gets there and there is no food to eat. A famine. Where is the wealth that he was promised? Prosperity? Forget wealth, where is a slice of bread or two? Nothing. No choice but to descend to the neighboring land,



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Egypt. But things do not get much better. His wife is confiscated at border control. Who ever heard of that?! Here he is, on his holy mission to the holy land to finally father holy seed on the holy soil, and his wholly holy wife is ransacked, taken to be contaminated by a most unholy monarch of a most unholy heathen nation!

How is that for reward for a most loyal servant of Hashem?! But Avraham asks no questions. His *emunah* remains staunch.

Then he gets back to the holy land, parts ways with his wayward nephew, who claims to be his sole heir, only to come to his rescue when he is taken captive by four mighty empires.

Years pass. Still no children. His righteous wife advises him to take her maidservant as a wife. Maybe in this merit, Sarah herself will be blessed with fruit of the womb. But to no avail. Hagar gets pregnant and mocks Sarah, casting aspersions as to her degree of righteousness. More pain in Avraham's home.

And then, and then... Hashem asks Avraham to perform Brit Milah, a mitzvah which the Rambam says minimizes a person's desire to propagate. It seems to be taking one step further away from seeing his dreams realized. But Avraham asks no questions. He is a loyal servant. He goes ahead and does whatever his Patron in Heaven tells him to do.

### Like Father, Like Son

Avraham paved the way. He was a trailblazer. He was a first. He set the tone for all generations. Do not make any calculations. Just do. Just do exactly as you are told from On High. You will not lose out. Reward need not come immediately. We are in this world to do as we are told. To follow directions.

### The Maggid of Koznitz

One Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov suddenly laughed in the middle of the *seudah*. This was uncharacteristic, but the *talmidim* dared not ask for an explanation.

On Motzoei Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov characteristically asked his wagon driver to hitch up the horses and they set out for a journey. They characteristically came to a halt next to a run-down hut. The Baal Shem Tov knocked and asked the resident, "How was Shabbos?"

"Well," said the man, "I am not a man of means. But we usually try to have nice things for Shabbos. But, for some reason, this past week, things did not work out that way. As much as we tried, all we had for Shabbos was some bread.

"At first, it was depressing. But then I thought and said out loud, "Ribono Shel Olam, I try to get nice things to honor your Shabbos! It seems that this week, You want me to honor Shabbos with



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bread. That is Your Will. So I will accept it happily”!

“Encouraged, I began singing and dancing. My wife joined in.”

The Baal Shem Tov responded, “Your words and actions made a great impact On High. You and your wife will merit a son who will enlighten the eyes of Yisrael.”

Indeed, these became the parents of the famed Maggid of Koznitz.

### What Would You Do?

Two *balebatim* once sat before Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and typically complained about their dire straits. R' Levi Yitzchak asked them, “What would you do if you could run the world?”

One man answered, “I would see to it that there are no rich people nor poor people. Everyone will be equal.”

The other said, “I would make sure that there would be no wars. Everyone will live together peacefully.”

R' Levi Yitzchak chuckled and said, “I would leave everything exactly as it is. If this is how Hashem sees fit, it must be best.

### Safely in the Freezer

Reb Yankele Galinsky relates: In 1941, the Russians sent us – about 100 *yeshivah bachurim*

on a 4 week train ride to Siberia! For most people sent that way, it's a one way trip, with free burial in the snow! For those of us who survived, it turned out to be a lifesaver, because those who remained were annihilated by the Germans, may their names be eradicated.

In Siberia, we had managed to take with us some sefarim, several pairs of tefillin, even some megillos and shofaros. Who knows how long we would be here or how long we would survive? But at least we had these *cheftzei mitzvah*. It was very heart-warming.

But then one day, the Russian authorities had enough of this. They burned all of our religious articles! This caused a great deal of depression and exasperation, almost despair. We called for an immediate Atzeres Hisorerus. Each participant would say words of inspiration for a minute and a half.

One *bachur* quoted the verse (Yeshayah 40:27): Why do you say, Yaakov, and speak, Yisrael, “My path is hidden from Hashem, as if Hashem does not notice my plight”? Do you not know, have you not heard, Hashem is the Master of the entire world, He creates the ends of the world, He did not tire nor become weary, there is no way to fathom His wisdom.

The *bachur* then asked: How did the *navi* answer his question: It was a question of *hester panim*.



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What does it mean that Hashem creates the *ends* of the world?

He explained: Hashem does not have people suffer forever. With each decree He brings upon a person, He simultaneously sends it with an expiration date, unbeknownst to the sufferer. But it has an end-time. It is not forever.

The very awareness that a bleak situation comes with a time limit is very encouraging. During the plight, it seems endless. It is the feeling of endlessness which leads to despair. The awareness of the fact that suffering is fleeting and transient is very uplifting. Hashem decided a time for this to end, and in an instant, we can be out of here, in comfort and warmth. The redemption could be imminent.

These words spoken at that time were indeed a source of inspiration.

### Rough Times

A certain family was going through rough times. They were renting and each year, they had to find a new home. They had a certain amount of money put aside for purchase of an apartment, but nothing came up that suited their needs affordably.

Second of all, their *yeshivah bachur* was of age, a good boy put pretty standard and no good *shidduch* came up.

Third, the mother, who was the main breadwinner, received a phone call from her place of work that they are about to close down and she ought to look for a new job. She sent her resume to several places, but she was no longer youthful and her qualifications were quite specific and specialized, and nothing came up.

So here they were, from apartment to apartment, facing no income, with an *alter bachur*. The mother became bitter and irritable.

A friend of hers tried to help her reshape her attitude. She threw in a few lines of *emunah* and helped her to understand that despite all her difficulties, she still had plenty to be thankful for. Try focusing on all the goodness in your life and approach Hashem from a point of *simchah*. Hashem knows your situation and wants to see how you respond specifically in this situation.

The woman took the words to heart and began counting her blessings. Suddenly, everything changed! 180 degrees! She received a phonecall one evening from a real-estate agent, "Come right now! I've got the place that is just right for you, at a price you can afford! The owner has to sell it fast and move closer to his aging parents, so he must settle on a cheap deal. Come fast because this one is not going to be on the market for long!"

She dropped everything and went! That very night, they closed on the deal!



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A few days later, she gets a call from a workplace where she had sent her resume two months earlier. For her, it was optimal, exactly her line of work, what she was familiar with, and great pay. And they took her. She got the job!

They were just digesting these two great things, and they got a call from the *shadchan*... a great girl... and their son got engaged!

The woman then understood that her own attitude withheld the goodness that Hashem wished to shower upon them.

### The Big Picture

We must acknowledge that our vision is limited. We do not see the big picture. We see but a fraction, and sometimes get frustrated when things do not seem to make sense. There seems to be a lack of justice, too much suffering for the righteous and too much comfort for the wicked. Let us review the following story and reinforce our *emunah*.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi fasted for many days and prayed to be able to meet up with Eliyahu Hanavi. Finally, Hashem arranged for such a meeting. R' Yehoshua asked Eliyahu for permission to accompany him on his various missions. Eliyahu acquiesced, stipulating that the moment he demands explanation for his actions, the two will have to part ways.

So they go together and arrive at a poor man's house. The husband and wife eagerly greet them. They have not much, but they happily share their meager meal and provide them with a place to sleep. In the morning, on their way out, R' Yehoshua overhears Eliyahu asking Hashem to kill the cow of their gracious hosts. This was their one valuable possession and essentially, their whole source of livelihood. R' Yehoshua started bombarding Eliyahu with questions, but Eliyahu reminded him, "Do you really want to know and to cut your journey short?"

So R' Yehoshua kept quiet.

They travelled some more and came upon a rich man's house. As wealthy as he was, so was he stingy. He gave them nothing to eat and let them sleep on the floor. One wall of the mansion was in dire need of renovation. On their way out, Eliyahu prayed for its rebuilding and the wall immediately straightened up and appeared as new.

R' Yehoshua was flabbergasted. Why did this stingy fellow deserve such a miracle? But he remembered the rules and kept quiet.

They continued on their way and arrived at a large fancy shul. Inside were chairs of silver and gold, and finely dressed men sat upon them. One of them opened the discussion, "Who will tend to the needs of the poor?"



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Another responded, "They can make do with some bread and water, available in shul kitchen." All of the well-to-do citizens were satisfied with that approach and no one invited the wayfarers home. So they slept in the shul. In the morning, Eliyahu "blessed" them, "May you all be leaders."

R' Yehoshua, astonished as he was, kept his mouth closed.

They resumed their travels and as evening set in, they came upon a village. The inhabitants came out to greet them and invited them to rest in the best of their lodgings. All residents were eager to tend to their every need. Next morning, Eliyahu bid them farewell, saying, "May you have just one leader."

R' Yehoshua had had enough. He was ready for explanations, even at the price of terminating his excursion. Eliyahu told him: That first couple we stayed with... there was a decree from Heaven that the wife's time had come. In the merit of their hospitality, I prayed that their cow's life be taken instead.

That rich man? Right under the dilapidated wall was a hidden treasure. Had he taken care of the wall himself, he would have unearthed the treasure. Instead, I prayed for the wall to become fixed and for the treasure to remain hidden for now.

When we came to the city which was not interested in helping others, I said that they should have many leaders. A city with many leaders is bound to have much strife and discord. The hospitable city I blessed that they should have one leader. That is the foundation for unity and success.

Eliyahu reiterated: Many captains sink a ship; one leader settles a city. The success of the wicked is a step towards their downfall; suffering of the righteous is for their ultimate benefit.

### In Avraham's Footsteps

So let us follow in the footsteps of Avraham Avinu, never doubting Hashem's ways. This lesson is certainly applicable in marriage as well. Some people get married and expect immediate bliss. Then they get disappointed and frustrated etc. We must learn from Avraham Avinu to be patient. Life has challenges, ups and downs. Those who enjoy themselves in the here and now, often suffer later and longer. Those who face their challenges and take them in stride usually stand to benefit in a way which is real and lasting.

May we soon merit to greet Moshiach, speedily in our days.

**Fondly,**

**Mordechai Malka**