



From the desk of  
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

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

Religious Court of Elad \* Batei Hora'ah \* Religious Services \* Marriage Licensing \* Kashrut \* Mikvaot \* Eiruvim

### TORAT

### Parashat Vayetsei

### HAMELECH

#### Peaceful Return

As Yaakov Avinu prepares to leave Eretz Yisroel, he speaks of Hashem giving him bread to eat and clothing to wear and of his peaceful return to his father's home. It is interesting to note that Yaakov says, "*Veshavti beshalom*" and not "*leshalom*". In Gemara Berachot 64a, Rabbi Avin HaLevi teaches that when taking leave of a friend, one should say, "*Lech Leshalom*" and not "*Lech Beshalom*." Yitro told Moshe, "*Lech Leshalom*," and Moshe thereafter went to begin his illustrious career as leader of Klal Yisroel. Dovid Hamelech told his son, Avshalom, "*Lech Beshalom*," and not long later, Avshalom met his untimely demise. Dovid Hamelech certainly meant to bless him. Nonetheless, Hashem put in his mouth words which bear an opposite connotation.

Some Rishonim say not to make a big deal over this (Rabbeinu Yerucham, Ra'avad brought in Ran). But the majority of Poskim bring it (Rif, Rosh, Rabbeinu Chananel, Rokei'ach, Ramban; Mogen Avraham 110:9, Mishna Berurah 110:17 and many more), so we ought to watch what we say.

#### One King and Two Dreams

What is the difference between "*Lech Leshalom*" and "*Lech Beshalom*"?

Let us explain with a parable. There was once a man named Reuven who had a dream. In his dream, he saw the king ascending a ladder. The king reached the halfway point and then Reuven woke up. In the morning, Reuven felt the need to share his dream with the king. So he took a basket of figs and went to the palace. He

informed the guards that he had dreamt about the king. Shortly thereafter, the king called for Reuven, curious to hear what his subjects were dreaming about him. Reuven presented his gift and proceeded to tell over his dream. The king was quite pleased and ordered his servants to take out the figs and return to Reuven his basket full of gold coins.

Reuven returned home a very happy man. His neighbor Shimon wanted to know why he was so gleeful. Reuven eagerly told his story. Shimon was quite impressed, and came up with a sequel. The next day, Shimon was off to the palace with a basket of fruit and a fabricated dream. He arrived at the gates and informed the guards of the reason for his visit. He, too, was granted an audience with the king. But he tried to outdo his neighbor. He told of how he saw in his dream, that the king climbed the ladder all the way to the top.

The king became fuming mad. He ordered his servants to lock up Shimon immediately. Shimon, surprised and anxious, blurted out, "But, but, my neighbor had a similar dream and got rewarded! Why am I being punished?!"

The king explained, "Reuven dreamt that I was halfway up the ladder; that means that I am in the prime of my career. I still have many rungs to move up. You dreamt that I already got to the top. That means that I have nowhere to go but down!

So, too, "*Lech Leshalom*" means – keep on going up. "*Shalom*," besides for peace, also means perfection and fulfillment of purpose. "*Lech Beshalom*" connotes – go with the degree of



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perfection you have already achieved," leaving no room for improvement. That is why "*Lech Beshalom*" is said to one who passed away, for this world is the one for accomplishing. The next world is designated and designed for enjoying the fruits of one's labor.

### The Avnei Nezer and Rabbi Tarfon's Mother

This idea is further illustrated by the following anecdote. When Rav Avraham Sochatchover (author of Avnei Nezer) was a young lad, he contracted a serious illness. His father travelled to Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk to ask for a blessing for a complete recovery. The father told the Rabbi that his son was an outstanding pupil. The Rabbi brushed aside the praise and said, "That's called learning?!"

The father was taken aback, for his son was indeed considered extraordinarily diligent for his age.

He returned home and was happily surprised to see his son completely healthy. The boy asked his father, "What did the Rabbi say?"

At first the father was ambiguous. He did not want to repeat what he had heard. The boy persisted. He wanted to know. Finally his father acquiesced and said it like it was, prefacing it with, "I did not really understand why he said this."

Young Avraham heard the Rebbe's words and his eyes lit up. "Father," he said, "this is just like the story of Rabbi Tarfon!"

He went on to explain that Yerushalmi Peah (1:1) tells a story of Rabbi Tarfon's *kibud eim*. When Rabbi Tarfon was ill, the Sages came to visit him. His mother implored, "Please pray for my son, for he honors me to a very great degree."

They asked, "What does he do?"

She related, "One time, I was walking in the courtyard on Shabbat and my sandal broke. I had no choice but to continue walking barefoot. My son, Tarfon, noticed and he placed his hands under my feet, step by step, until I reached my bed."

The Sages responded, "Even if he would do that a million times, he would not have achieved half of what the Torah demands of a son!"

The question arises: why did the Sages find it necessary to minimize his seemingly valiant act?

The answer is that they did not want it to seem that Rabbi Tarfon had already achieved his maximal potential. With all his greatness, they wanted to make it clear that there is so much more he can do. They felt that saying it in this manner would be a merit for his recovery, so that he can continue to strive and perfect his mitzvah performance.

Young Avraham felt the same way about himself. When he heard how the Rebbe of Kotzk belittled his achievements, he was not insulted. He understood that it was done for his own benefit, in an effort to tell Hashem, as it were, that this lad has so much more to yet accomplish and it would really be a shame to end his career so early. It was the Rebbe's best attempt at putting in a good word for him in Heaven, and it seemed to have worked.

### What Are You Doing?

The Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik, visited the United States towards the end of his lifetime. Throngs of people assembled to greet this venerable sage. One of the assembled was a former pupil. He introduced himself to the Rav,



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and the Rav asked him, in Yiddish, "*Vus machst du?*" (literally, what are you doing?)

The *talmid* responded, "Baruch Hashem, I opened a business and it is quite successful."

The Rav did not respond.

A short while later, the Rav turned to him again and asked, "*Vus machst du?*"

The *talmid* thought to himself that either the Rav had not heard him, or his memory was going at his old age. So he responded, "Baruch Hashem, I opened up a business, and it's going well."

Again the Rav seemed to not hear him. Several minutes elapsed, and for the third time, the Rav asked, "*Nu, vas machst du?*"

Not knowing what to do with himself, he had no choice but to patiently give the same answer.

The Rav then turned to him and said, "Do you think I did not hear you the first two times?! You did not understand my question! I asked you what you are doing and you tell me what the *Ribono Shel Olam* is doing!" 'Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for fear of Heaven.' When you tell me about your financial success, that is all Hashem's doing. If I ask you what are you doing, that means in the realm of Torah and *mitzvot*."

The Rav went on to explain the *pasuk* in this week's *parashah*. When Yaakov discusses bread and clothing, he attributes it totally to Hashem – "And He will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear." However, when he discusses achieving "*Shalom*," which Rashi explains in this context as referring to being wholesome and free of sin, not having been influenced negatively from Lavan's surroundings, there he does not say, "And You return me *beshalom*." Rather, he says, "And I

return *beshalom*," because Yaakov knew that the burden of spiritual achievements lies upon the doer. Certainly, we need Hashem's help in this area as well. Nonetheless, in contrast to bread and clothing, maintaining spiritual levels is much more the focus of our arena of work and accomplishment.

### Return in Peace

Why, then, did Yaakov speak of his return "*beshalom*" and not "*leshalom*"?

Ben Yehoyada explains that the whole problem of telling a living person "*Lech Beshalom*" is because it has a connotation, "Go in peace but do not return in peace." Yaakov, from the start, was focusing upon his return; so it was totally fine to speak of his return in peace because that means that his whole excursion, from start to finish, should be peaceful.

We also find (Rosh Hashana 25a) Rabban Gamliel blessing Rabbi Yehoshua, "Come in peace," and in our Shabbat prayers, we address the Shabbat bride, "*Bo'ee veshalom ateret ba'alalah*," because, as mentioned, we are speaking of their arrival, not their departure.

In conclusion, we learn from this several lessons. First, how to wish well our friends and relatives as they depart. Second, that the realm of our accomplishments is in the spiritual field. No matter how many hours a day we spend at work, our time spent learning Torah and involved in *mitzvot* is our true living. Third, when anticipating contact with possibly negative influences, we ought to offer a prayer and exercise caution, so as to achieve a sin-free and peaceful return.

Fondly,  
Mordechai Malka