



דרכים בפרשה

לך לך



ויהי רעב בארץ וירד אברם מצרימה לגור שם כי כבד הרעב בארץ

There was a famine in the land, and Avraham descended to Mitzrayim to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land (12:10)

The parsha begins with the nissayon of Avrom Avinu going “*El ha’aretz asher ar’eka*”. He is told to give up everything and travel to an undisclosed location. His journeys lead him to *Cana’an*, his final destination.

However, after arriving in *Cana’an* and experiencing a famine, Avrom picked up and went down to *Mitzrayim*. How are we to understand this action? Perhaps the famine was part of the test? What happened to his *mesiras nefesh*?

Based on the *Mesilas Yesharim*, there is a simple answer:

יסוד החסידות ושורש העבודה התמימה שיתברר *The foundation of saintliness and the root of perfection in the serving of HaShem lies in a person coming to see clearly and recognizing as a truth the nature of his duty in the world.* Avrom Avinu knew his purpose. He needed to spread the *dvar HaShem*. He wanted everyone to know that *HaShem echad*, and that there is a *borei olam*. Chazal tell us that he imparted these ideas through *hachnosas orchim*. When people would come through his tent, he would give them room and board free of charge, without requesting any payment other than hearing the *dvar HaShem*.

This was his *raison d’être*, and nothing would stop him from accomplishing it. With a famine raging in *Cana’an*, Avrom had nothing to offer the people passing his tent.

Therefore, Avrom went down to *Mitzrayim* to continue fulfilling his *tachlis* in life.

The Ramban however, heavily criticizes Avrom’s decision to leave *Cana’an*. ודע כי אברהם אבינו חטא חטא גדול בשגגה וכו’ *Know that Avraham Avinu mistakenly sinned a great sin etc.* He should have had *bitachon* that Hashem can save a person anywhere. It was this sin that would eventually cause the *Bnai Yisroel*’s descent to *Mitzrayim*. ***(Please note: even if the Ramban is allowed to criticize the Avos, we certainly are not!)***

The Maharal and many other *meforshim* vehemently opposed this view. Among the questions: Assuming that this was a great sin, can one fathom that Avraham would repeat the same sin yet again in *Grar* (20:2)? Furthermore, would one think that *Yitzchak Avinu* would then repeat his father’s sin as well (26:7)?

Our *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Harav Chaim Stein Zt”l* offered the following idea to understand the Ramban’s criticism. He explained that there are two competing realities in life. There is a world of danger that halachically obligates one to act in a certain manner. One may not place themselves in a dangerous situation. If they find themselves in a *makom Sakana*, e.g., with the danger of starvation, according to halacha, they are one hundred percent obligated to pick up and go to a place where no danger exists. But then there is a second reality, and that is the world of *bitachon*. With true *bitachon*, a person may say, “Just

as Hashem can save me over there, He can do the same over here.” But this requires honesty. When confronted by a lion, with its mouth open wide; at that very moment, is Hashem the greater reality or is it the sharp teeth of the ferocious lion? It is not enough to say the words, “Emunah and bitachon”. One must truly and deeply believe it and live that way.

Eliyahu Hanavi and Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai are two of the examples the Rosh Yeshiva gave. They ran away from authority into a situation of danger with no food. But the food was never a consideration because if Hashem can give them food in one place, He can provide it elsewhere in a cave (or wherever) as well.

But they were not born on that level; no one is! They needed to work to get there. The *nisayon* of leaving everything and going to Cana’an came to Avrom at an earlier stage. Avrom didn’t feel he was one hundred percent ready to place himself in danger, so he went down to Mitzrayim to procure the necessary provisions.

The Rosh Yeshiva concluded that the “sin” was that had Avrom pushed harder and remained, it would have been a transcending moment that would have elevated him at that moment to a level greater than any other.

There are moments that we all face in life when we are faced with challenges. Very often, there are easy ways out. But then we must stop and think back to Avram. ומי יודע? Who knows? Perhaps this is one of those transcending moments that if taken advantage of, we can elevate to a level that would normally take a lifetime to achieve.

My Rebbe, Rav Anshel Helman shlita used to say over the following mashul from Rav

Gifter *zt”l* (when discussing *haba litaher mesayin oso*- how one must push themselves as much as he can, and then Hashem takes over), which I would like to repeat it over here for our vort.

There was a king who had promised that the one who successfully climbed to the top of a tower/mountain/ladder, would be rewarded greatly. Everyone lined up to give it a try. Many climbed rung after rung, step after step, only to eventually give up, feeling that it was impossible. But one person kept on pushing further, saying that if the King said it could be done, then there must be a way. As he would come to his last bit of strength, he would push yet a little further, because the king said it could be done. On his last possible effort, the rung felt different; this time it was a lever that pulled him to the top.

We can say the same thing over here. The Aibishter wants us to trust in Him. He places us in situations where we are asked to trust and push ourselves much further than we normally would. It is at that moment that we can either give up or say to ourselves, “If Hashem placed me here, then there has got to be a way; Hashem will show me the way.” ומי יודע - who knows? Maybe this challenge is the opportunity of a lifetime.

כלל ייסרוֹל היא ליעקב - Klal Yisroel is faced with numerous challenges. Many decisions need to be made. Hashem should give everyone the clarity and proper guidance necessary to make the right choices.

Good Shabbos, **מרדכי אפּפּעל**

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