

דרכים בפרשה לך לך

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ויאמר ה' אל אברהם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל
(בראשית יב:א) הארץ אשר אראך

Thrice daily, we daven *Shemoneh Esrei*. At its very beginning, we invoke the names of our *Avos HaKedoshim*: אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, ואלקי יעקב.

Chazal tell us that these correspond to the *berachos* Hashem gave to Avraham Avinu: "ואעשך לגוי גדול" — this is what is meant when we say *Elokei Avraham*. "ואברכך" — this refers to *Elokei Yitzchak*. "ואגדלה שמך" — this corresponds to *Elokei Yaakov*. One might have thought that the *brachah* should conclude with all three names. But the *pasuk* concludes, "והיה ברכה" — *you*, Avraham, *you* are the *brachah*. And so we end with *מגן אברהם*.

When examining Avraham Avinu's great test, the *meforshim* wonder: what exactly was so difficult? Here you have a man with no money, no children, and no fame. Even if he felt he had a mission in life, he had no realistic way to fulfill it. Then Hashem tells him, "לך לך מארצך ... אל הארץ אשר" — go to the land that I will show you, and there you will become great, famous, wealthy, blessed with children — everything! So what's the challenge? Who wouldn't accept such a promise?

The answer may be understood through a *maschal*. A father says to his son, "I know you're busy, but please bring me a bottle of seltzer from the storage room. If you do, I'll give you a million dollars." Of course, the son quickly does it. But can he then proudly declare, "I've fulfilled the mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim*"? Hardly — he did it for the money!

So too, the *nisayon* of Avraham was this: will he follow Hashem's command because of the promised blessings, or will he do it *lishmah* — purely because Hashem commanded him, without thought of reward or *matan secharah b'tzidah*?

Rav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל (*Darash Moshe*) offers another dimension. Avraham was seventy-five and Sarah sixty-five. If Hashem is the *Hakol Yachol*, why must they relocate at all? Couldn't Hashem fulfill all these blessings right where they were? Yet such a question never entered their minds. Without hesitation, without rationalizing, they followed Hashem's word — leaving everything behind for an unknown destination.

Rav Moshe writes that this is why we conclude the first *brachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei* with *מגן אברהם*. Three times a day, we are given the opportunity to attach ourselves to that strength — to the unwavering *emunah* of Avraham Avinu.

We, too, sometimes find ourselves in situations that make no sense. We've done everything right, and yet, it's not working. "Why is Hashem sending me *there* and not *here*? What does He want from me?" But then we remember *Avraham Avinu* and whisper *מגן אברהם* — drawing strength from his decision to trust Hashem without question. That same inner strength still lives within us.

This week marks the *yahrtzeit* of Rav Meir Shapiro זצ"ל (י' חשוון תרצ"ד). Rav Meir envisioned a world where *yeshivah bochurim* would be respected and valued — where their Torah learning would be recognized as vital to *Klal Yisroel's* future. With this dream, he built the magnificent *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin* — complete with indoor plumbing, a rarity at the time. Of course, such a project required massive funds. Careful plans were made for the Rav to travel to America to raise money.

When Rav Meir arrived in New York, however, every plan collapsed. Meetings were canceled; doors were closed. Standing at the train station with his suitcase, he lifted his eyes to Heaven and began to daven: "אמרת מטה רגלי חסדך" — *ה' יסעדני*. "If I say, 'My foot has slipped,' Your kindness, Hashem, supports me."

He repeated these words again and again — and from his heart composed the famous *niggun* to that *pasuk*. He understood that when a *Yid* feels completely lost, like he is collapsing; buckling under the weight of the great burdens he carries, yet still trusts that Hashem has a plan — *from there* comes the *yeshuah*: *חסדך ה' יסעדני*.

At that very moment, a man approached him and asked what was wrong. Upon hearing his story, the man suggested he try a small *shul* in a suburb of Philadelphia; perhaps they could help. Rav Meir went, met the *rav* and president — both *amaratzim* — and was introduced, mistakenly, as "a professor from a girls' school in Poland." Things seemed only to worsen.

Realizing the *mispallelim* were also not scholars, he set aside his prepared *drashos* and spoke simply — about *Parshas Shemos*: about the infants thrown into the river, about Yocheved and Miriam saving *Moshe Rabbeinu*, and about the dangers that faced *Bnei Yisroel*.

Among the listeners was a child who understood that just as Moshe saved *Klal Yisroel*, perhaps Rav Meir too could help save Yidden. He begged his father to assist. The father donated generously — enough to cover the *yeshivah's* needs.

אם אמרת מטה רגלי חסדך ה' יסעדני. From the strength of *Avraham Avinu* came the strength of Rav Meir Shapiro — and from their strength, ours. Each time we choose to believe, even when we cannot understand, we are tapping into the everlasting power of *מגן אברהם*.

מדרכי אפפול, Good Shabbos,