דרכים בפרשה לך לך

R' Mordechai Appel, is an alumnus of the Telzer Yeshiva and the author of Derachim Beparsha.



הבט נא השמימה וספור הכוכבים אם תוכל לספור אותם

Look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.

Hashem tells Avraham Avinu, "לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך." Avraham is told to leave his home, his family, and everything familiar, and go to a place Hashem will show him. Hashem promises to make him into a great nation, yet Avraham and Sarah have no children. How will this promise ever come true?

Avraham listens to Hashem and travels to Eretz Canaan. But almost as soon as he arrives, the Torah tells us, "ויהי רעב בארץ." There is a famine in the land. Rashi explains that this was one of Avraham's ten tests. Avraham had done what Hashem asked him to do, yet things seemed to be getting harder, not easier.

Avraham and Sarah still have no children. The years pass, and it is hard to see how Hashem's promise will ever come true. From Avraham's point of view, the future looks very uncertain.

It is at this point that Hashem takes Avraham outside and tells him, "הבט נא השמימה וספור הכוכבים אם תוכל לספור אותם." Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Hashem then promises him, "כה יהיה זרעך." Your children will be as many as the stars.

Hashem is teaching Avraham to look beyond what he sees right now. Avraham sees a couple with no children and has difficulty imagining how he will become the father of a great nation. Hashem shows him the stars to remind him that what seems impossible to us is not impossible for Hashem. The One Who created the world יש מאין, bringing something into existence from nothing, can do things we cannot imagine.

Let's look at how this applies in our own lives.

Imagine a boss who wants to promote an employee. Before giving him the new position, he gives him a difficult assignment to see how he handles it. The employee has no idea what is going on. He goes home complaining that his boss is making his life miserable. If only he knew what his boss had in mind for him!

We sometimes react the same way when things don't go as planned. We see what is happening right now and assume things are going wrong, without realizing that we cannot see the whole picture.

Think about someone going for a job interview. He prepares, gets dressed up, and walks in hoping this is the opportunity he has been waiting for. But the interview doesn't go well. He gets nervous, his answers come out wrong, and he walks out thinking, "That's it. I blew it." On the way home, he is already replaying the interview in his head and thinking about what he should have said.

But how does he know what Hashem has planned for him? Perhaps this job would not have been right for him. Perhaps a much better opportunity is waiting for him, one he might never have found if this interview had gone well. Right now, all he sees is a door closing. He cannot see what may be waiting around the corner.

Of course, we cannot know that every disappointment will lead to something better in the way we expect. But we can remember that what we see right now is not the whole story. A failed interview does not mean a failed future.

Dovid Hamelech expresses this idea in Tehillim: "אשא עיני אל ההרים מאין יבא עזרי." I lift my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come? Chazal connect "ההרים" to "ההורים," our forefathers. The Midrash teaches that even when a person feels he has run out of options, he should not lose hope in Hashem. Dovid continues, "עזרי מעם ה' עושה שמים וארץ." My help comes from Hashem, Who made heaven and earth.

The same Hashem Who created heaven and earth can do things we never thought possible. When we cannot see a way forward, we need to remember Who is guiding our lives. Avraham could not see how Hashem's promise would come true, but that did not mean it could not happen.

Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin explains that sometimes a difficult situation is what brings a person to turn to Hashem, daven with more feeling, and strengthen his bitachon. The very difficulty that worries him can help prepare him to receive a brachah. The Beis Halevi explains that when everything is going well, a person can easily forget how much he depends on Hashem. Difficult times remind us where our help really comes from.

This brings us back to the stars. Hashem could have left Avraham thinking about everything he did not have. Instead, He told him to look up and remember what Hashem could do. When we face a setback, we may see only the problem in front of us. But our circumstances do not limit what Hashem can do.

Bitachon does not mean knowing how everything will work out. It means remembering that we see only a small part of the picture, while Hashem sees it all. We may never understand why a particular door closed, but we can trust that Hashem knows what we cannot see.

When the way ahead looks impossible, we lift our eyes. We remember Avraham, who was shown the stars when the future seemed so uncertain. Our help comes from the One Who creates יש מאין.

We see what is in front of us. Hashem sees what can be.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי ע. אפפעל