

פרדס שלמה PARDES SHLOMO

On Parshat HaShavua

Insights beginning from **pshat**, developing
through **remez**, merging into **drush**, and finally
coalescing into **sod**

בעזרת החונן לאדם דעת
שלמה עמאר ס"ט

תשרי תשפ"ו

ספר זה מוקדש ביראה ובאהבה לכבוד הקדוש ברוך הוא
רבון כל העולמים, שבחסדו הגדול ברא את הכל והנחה את
דרך התורה להאיר את העולם.

בהכרת טובה עמוקה להשם יתברך, אשר זכני ברחמי
הרבים ללמד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות, ולהשלים את
המלאכה הזאת, הנני מגיש ספר זה כקרבן על מזבח התורה.
יהי רצון מלפניך, השם אלקינו, שיהיו דברי תורה זו לרצון
לפניך ולתועלת לכלל ישראל, להרבות כבוד שמים ולקדש
שמך הגדול.

בתפילה שספר זה יאיר לעוסקיו ולכל הנזקקים לדברי
תורתך, ויזכו כל עמך בית ישראל להמשיך בדרך הישר
והקדושה.

שלמה עמאר ס"ט

תשרי - תשפ"ו

כגן 8
פציה"ק ירושלם ת"ו

בס"ד

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בס"ד

ח' סיון תשפ"ה

הן ראיתי את ספרו היקר של מהיר במלאכתו הרב ד"ר שלמה עמאר נ"י מטינק ניו ג'רזי שהוא ת"ח איש ספר ורופא מומחה. ספר נחמד זה הגיגי מחשבה ופנינים יקרים על פרשיות התורה, ערוך בטוב טעם ודעת, וכולל רעיונות נפלאים, חכו ממתקים וכולו מחמדים, דברים המושכים לבו של אדם לתורה ויראת שמים. הספר כתוב וערוך בשפה האנגלית לתועלת הרבים ששפה זו שגורה על פיהם. ברכתי להרב המחבר נ"י שרבים יהנו לאורו, ויזכה עוד רבות להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה כאות נפשו הטהורה.

באהבה

אשר וייס

B'siyatta D'Shmaya

8 Sivan, 5785/June 4, 2025

I have taken a look at the precious book of a **מְהִיר בְּמַלְאָתוֹ** — one who excels at his work (*Mishlei* 22:29), Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Amar, *neiro ya'ir*, of Teaneck, New Jersey, who is an expert *talmid chacham*, author, and doctor. This book is highly recommended; it is reflective, with much thought and pearls of wisdom on the *parshiyot* of the Torah, written well with logic and knowledge, including marvelous concepts. **חָכוּ מִמֶּתְקִים וְכָלוּ מִחֻמְדִּים** — *His words are sweet and entirely lovely* (*Shir Hashirim* 5:16). His words draw people toward Torah and fear of Heaven. This book is written in the English language for those who are fluent in that language.

My wish for the author, *neiro ya'ir*, is that many people will benefit from his light. May he be privileged to write many more works to make the Torah great and glorious, according to the desire of his pure soul.

Sincerely,
A.Z. Weiss

ספר זה מקדש לזכר אהובי לבי, הורי היקרים

מימון בן חנה ז"ל

מירה בת זהרה פנינה ע"ה

נשמותיהם תהא צרורות בצרור החיים

בחייהם האירו דרך התורה, המצות והחסד, והורו לנו
את דרך הישר והקדשה

בזכותם, ובתפלה לעילוי נשמותיהם, הנני מגיש ספר זה
כדי להדריך ולרוות את הדורות הבאים בלמוד התורה
ובמרדף אחרי הצדק. יהי רצון שיהיה ספר זה גשר בין
העבר לעתיד, לאחד לבבות בעבודת השם.

שלמה עמאר ס"ט

With profound gratitude to the Holy One, Blessed Be He, who grants wisdom to the humble and insight to those who seek His truth, I, Shlomo Amar present this modest work, *Pardes Shlomo* for the benefit of Am Israel. I am but a vessel, unworthy of the task, yet sustained by the merit of my revered teachers, Rabbi Baruch Rosenblum and Rabbi Shaked Bouadanna whose Torah illuminated my path. I acknowledge the support of my beloved wife, Rivka Chaya and My Children Michal, Gaddiel and Yaakov whose kindness strengthened my resolve, and whose steadfastness enabled this Sefer's completion. May this work find favor before the Almighty and bring merit to all who study it. Any errors herein are mine alone, and I beseech the reader's forgiveness for my shortcomings.

Shlomo Amar

Teaneck NJ
Tishrei 5786

Acknowledgments

With deepest gratitude to the Almighty, I thank my siblings Linda, Gina, Albert and their beautiful families whose constant encouragement and trust illuminated the path to this book's completion. To my dear friends, (you know who you are), your thoughtful discussions and steadfast belief in this project carried me through moments of doubt. I am also grateful to my community, whose traditions of learning and kindness shaped this work. May this book reflect the blessings of our shared journey and may all your kindnesses be repaid with divine goodness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bereishit	1
Noach	4
Lech Lecha	8
Vayeira	16
Chayei Sarah	23
Toldot	28
Vayitzei	33
Vayishlach	35
Vayeishev	42
Mikeitz — Chanukah	48
Vayigash — Asarah B'Tevet	51
Vayechi	56
Shemot	63
Va'eira	71
Bo	77
Beshalach	85
Yitro	89
Mishpatim — Shekalim	97
Terumah	103
Tetzaveh — Zachor — Purim	108
Ki Tisa — Parah	114
Vayakhel-Pekudei — Hachodesh	119

Vayikra	126
Tzav — Pesach	132
Shemini — Sefirat HaOmer (1).....	138
Tazria-Metzora	149
Acharei Mot-Kedoshim — Sefirat HaOmer (2)	153
Emor — Pesach Sheini	159
Behar-Bechukotai — Sefirat HaOmer (3) — Shavuot (1).....	162
Bamidbar — Shavuot (2)	172
Naso	176
Beha'alotcha	181
Shelach Lecha	189
Korach	195
Chukat	201
Balak	208
Pinchas	212
Matot-Masei	219
Devarim — Shabbat Chazon — Tishah B'Av	225
Va'etchanan — Shabbat Nachamu	235
Eikev	241
Re'eh — Elul (1)	246
Shoftim — Elul (2)	252
Ki Teitzei	259
Ki Tavo	265
Nitzavim-Vayeilech — Rosh Hashanah (1)	272
Rosh Hashanah (2).....	282
Ha'azinu	290
Sukkot (1)	293
Sukkot (2)	301
V'Zot Haberachah	307
Glossary	311

BEREISHIT

WITH REGARD TO the second day of Creation, the Torah states:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-לֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וְיִהְיֶה מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לַמַּיִם: וַיַּעַשׂ אֱ-לֹהִים
אֶת הָרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ
וַיְהִי כֵן:

Hashem said, "Let there be a raki'a amid the waters, and let it separate between water and water." And Hashem made the raki'a and separated between the waters that were beneath the raki'a and between the waters that were above the raki'a. And it was so.

(Bereishit 1:6-7)

What is the nature of this *raki'a* — this division between the upper and lower waters? *Targum Yonatan ben Uziel* comments: "Hashem made a *raki'a* whose breadth was three fingers" (based on *ibid.* 1:7). One wonders what it was that compelled him to reveal that the thickness of the barrier separating the earthly world below from *Shamayim* above is three fingerbreadths. Where else do we find the concept of three — or perhaps even three fingers — that might afford us insight into this curious aspect of the *raki'a*?

Chazal teach that we can learn Torah either *lishmah* or *shelo lishmah*, the latter being for ulterior motives such as honor, greed, or jealousy-driven competitiveness (*Pesachim* 50b). They also reveal that as

long as one's learning is *shelo lishmah* and for an ulterior motive, it will remain low — below the heavenly *raki'a* — and will not ascend above to its proper and final destination in the upper waters of *Shamayim* (cf. *Berachot* 17a).

Now, we all want our Torah learning to rise to the highest levels of *Shamayim* and reach the *Kisei Hakavod*, but what are the parameters that prevent our words of Torah from being motivated *lishmah* and attaining their due purity and elevation? And ultimately, how can we transform our *shelo lishmah* into *lishmah*?

Chazal astutely warn: הַקִּנְיָה וְהַתְאַוָּה וְהַכְּבוֹד מוֹצִי־אִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם — *Jealousy, desire, and honor take a man out of the world* (*Pirkei Avot* 4:28). What does it mean to be taken out of the world? Conceivably, it could be the consequence of failing to fulfill one's purpose in the world. And what is one's most primary purpose if not to learn Hashem's Torah *lishmah* and enable one's learning to ascend to *Shamayim* and the *Kisei Hakavod*?

Perhaps, then, in underscoring הַקִּנְיָה וְהַתְאַוָּה וְהַכְּבוֹד as the three negative character traits that remove a man from the world, Chazal are alluding to the three fingerbreadths. These fingerbreadths constitute both the *raki'a's* thickness and the three traits that prevent a person's Torah that was learned *shelo lishmah* — out of competitive jealousy, greed-driven desire, or a thirst for honor — from penetrating to the “upper waters” and reaching the Celestial Throne.

However, we can indeed transform our *shelo lishmah* into *lishmah*, for Chazal assure us: לְעוֹלָם יַעֲסוֹק אָדָם בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוָה, אֲפִילוּ שֶׁלֹּא לְשִׁמְחָה, שְׂמִתּוֹן: שֶׁלֹּא לְשִׁמְחָה — *A person should always occupy himself with Torah and mitzvot, even shelo lishmah, because out of [acting] shelo lishmah he will come to [do so] lishmah* (*Sanhedrin* 105b). We can ensure that transformation only by controlling those negative traits that drive us to act for the sake of an ulterior motive.

According to *Sefer Vayikra* (2:1), a poor person brings a *korban* in the

Beit Hamikdash that consists of nothing more than flour with a bit of oil and frankincense poured upon it. Materially, this *minchah* offering is the simplest of all sacrifices. It is far from the bull or sheep that people of means would bring, but its humble nature makes it intrinsically devoid of any ulterior motives. There is neither jealous competitiveness nor greed-driven desire nor a thirst for honor that motivates the impoverished Jew to offer mere flour.

Furthermore, the *kohen* who receives this poor man's flour takes his priestly portion by means of a *kemitzah* (handful), which is a three-fingered grasp employing the index, middle, and fourth fingers alone (excluding the thumb and pinkie). This is expressed in the following *pasuk* in *Vayikra* (2:2): וְקִמֵּץ מִשָּׁם הָלֵא קֶמֶץ — *He shall scoop from there a handful*. Why isn't the *kohen* instructed to take a full fistful of flour? Why this unique three-fingered grasp?

This is related to the fact that three fingers is the thickness of the *raki'a* separating the earth from the heavens, as explained in this *parashah*. The *kohen* is involved in breaching this divide, as he is the person moving the *korban* from earth to *Shamayim*. This is evidenced by his title in Hebrew — כֹּהֵן. There are 50 levels of understanding with which Hashem created the universe, and which correspond to the distance of earth from Hashem's wisdom. When Yaakov Avinu slept in Beit El (as seen in *Parashat Vayeitzei*), he saw a ladder that connected earth with *Shamayim*. Thus, using that metaphor, a person brings the *korban* from level zero to the *kohen* at the 25th (כ"ה) level, the midpoint, and the *kohen* then brings the *korban* to the 50th (נ) level with the three fingers.



NOACH

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱ-לֹהִים וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס: וַיֵּרָא אֶל-לֹהִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה
נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל בָּשָׂר אֶת דְּרָכּוֹ עַל הָאָרֶץ:

The earth had become corrupt before Hashem, and the earth was filled with violence. Hashem observed the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.

(Bereishit 6:11-12)

וַאֲנִי הִנְנִי מְבִיא אֶת הַמַּבּוּל מִיָּם עַל הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחֵת כָּל בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים
מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ יָגוּעַ: וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וּבָאתָ אֶל הַתֵּבָה
אַתָּה וּבְנֶיךָ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וְנִשְׁי בְנֶיךָ אִתְּךָ:

And I, behold, am bringing the flood water upon the earth to obliterate all flesh in which there is a breath of life from beneath the heavens; everything that is on the earth will perish. Yet I shall uphold My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. (ibid. 6:17-18)

כִּי לִיָּמִים עוֹד שְׁבַעָה אֲנִכִּי מִמָּטִיר עַל הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה:

For in seven more days, I shall bring rain upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. (ibid. 7:4)

RASHI WRITES THAT the word חָמָס (violence) refers to theft, and that the corruption of all living beings was engendered through immorality and idolatry. Incidentally, many commentators elaborate that, in truth, immorality and idol worship are themselves expressions of theft, inasmuch as one feeds his desire with what is not his (such as another's wife) or usurping wood or stone from Hashem's trees or rocks to fashion an idol and, ironically, worship something other than Him, the objects' very Source.

How might we perceive a connection between these three sins and Hashem's retribution, which He administers *middah k'neged middah*? Let us consider how we see theft, immorality, and idolatry reflected in the *Mabul* itself, its 40-day period, and even in the *teivah* (ark), which possessed retributive features, its ultimate function of salvation notwithstanding.

Why punishment by water?

David Hamelech praises Hashem for limiting the vastness and might of the earth's waters: גְּבוּל שְׁמֶתָ בַּל יַעֲבִירוּן בַּל יָשׁוּבוּן לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ — *You set a boundary, they cannot pass, they cannot return to envelop the earth* (*Tehillim* 104:9). However, the fate of the generation of the *Mabul* teaches that this bulwark is not immutable and may, instead, become contingent upon our behavior. When we respect moral thresholds and, for example, do not steal from one another, the earth's expansive waters are held at bay. Yet when we lose our sense of those boundaries, to the extent that “the earth [is] filled with חָמָס” and “all flesh [has] corrupted its way,” the organic boundaries divinely set within nature give way, *middah k'neged middah*, and the world experiences inundation.

Additionally, as the *Kli Yakar* (based on *Bereishit* 6:17) notes, the Gemara states that one who has relations with an *eishet ish*, another man's wife, is put to death by strangulation (*Sanhedrin* 107a). Chazal further state that although the four death penalties of *beit din* are now nullified,

the Heavenly judgment meting out those penalties remains. One who is therefore punishable by strangulation simply drowns (*Ketubot* 30a-b).

Those who practice *avodah zarah* perpetrate a deed that is regarded not only as a single sin amongst the Torah's many prohibitions, but as an act that runs contrary to the entire Torah (*Sifrei Devarim* 54:4). The Torah is likened to water, as the *pasuk* says, הוֹי כָּל צָמֵא לָכוּ לַמַּיִם — *All who thirst, go to the water* (*Yeshayahu* 55:1; see as well as Rashi in this *pasuk*), and just as water naturally runs from high to low places, one who learns the Torah must first humble himself, abandoning the heights of arrogance for the lows of simplicity, modesty, and acceptance of authority. The idolater, who rejects the waters of Torah, thus perishes, *middah k'neged middah*, by water.

Why a 40-day period?

The Hebrew word for theft, גָּזַל, has a numerical value of 40 (ג being three, ז being seven, and ל being 30), suggesting the *middah k'neged middah* nature of the *Mabul's* duration relative to stealing.

Additionally, immorality (in the case of intimacy with another's wife) gives rise to illegitimate children termed *mamzeirim*.¹ The Talmud, with the help of Rashi, states that an embryo is definitively formed after 40 complete days, stating: אִינָהּ חוֹשֶׁשֶׁת לִילָד — *[A woman discharging on the 40th day] need not be concerned that it might be an offspring* (*Niddah* 30a, Mishnah *Niddah* 3:7). Rashi, therefore, comments here (*Bereishit* 7:4) that the *Mabul's* 40 days corresponded with the people's having aggravated the Creator to form *mamzeirim* in the womb in accordance with their debased intimacy.

As already mentioned, perpetrators of idolatry undermine the entire

1 *Mamzeirim* are either persons born of illegitimate relationships, or their descendants. Often in English, especially in antiquated usage, such people are pejoratively referred to as "bastards."

Torah, which was given, in its entirety, in 40 days. The vehicle of their demise thus persists for 40 days.

Why preserve survivors in a *teivah*?

Surely there were other means at Hashem's disposal to shelter and save. There is a Gemara, for instance, that cites Rabbi Yochanan's opinion that the *Mabul* did not inundate Eretz Yisrael (*Zevachim* 113a), so why not simply bring all who would endure there?

Let us consider the possible retributive role the *teivah* might have played — not for all life (which perished without) — but for those sealed within it for a year.

The *teivah*'s divinely specified measurements were 300 *amot* in length, 50 *amot* in width, and 30 *amot* in height — with a window of one *amah* in the roof (*Bereishit* 6:15-16). The Hebrew letter corresponding to the numerical value of 300 is ׁ; that corresponding to 50 is ׂ; and that corresponding to 30 is ׃. These combine to form the root ׁׂ׃. Adding a ׂ, representative of the window's single *amah*, to make the word *malei* forms the word ׁׂ׃ׂ (tongue). For example, we may use the tongue to rebuke or pray, yet according to sources such as *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* (22:9; 23:3-4), Noach never succeeded in admonishing the masses to repent nor did he beseech Hashem for mercy on their behalf.

The Midrash likens Noach to a captain who saves himself yet abandons his ship (*Devarim Rabbah* 11:3). In his righteousness, Noach survived *Shamayim*'s catastrophic judgment, but he failed to use that spiritual stature — and concomitant intensity of persuasion and prayer — to save his generation. *Middah k'neged middah*, he was thus sequestered for a year in the *teivah*, a dimensional embodiment of the tongue, whose powerful potential he forsook.



LECH LECHA

וַיֹּאמֶר י-הוה אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
אֲרָאָה: וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ גְּדוֹל וְאַבְרָכְךָ וְאֶגְדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְּרָכָה... וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כְּאֲשֶׁר
דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו י-הוה ...

Hashem said to Avram, "Get yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I shall show you. And I shall make you a great nation; I shall bless you; and I shall aggrandize your name. And you will be a blessing..." And Avram went, as Hashem had spoken to him... (Bereishit 12:1-4)

WHY DOES THE tone of the divine communication shift from **וַיֹּאמֶר** **יֵהוָה**, in *pasuk* 1, to **כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו**, in *pasuk* 4? We see such a fluctuation elsewhere, when Hashem commands Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Sinai, **כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יִעֲקֹב וְתִגִּיד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** — *Thus will you say to Beit Yaakov (the House of Yaakov) and tell Bnei Yisrael (Shemot 19:3)*. The verb **תֹּאמַר**, explains Rashi, is gentle and suited for educating the women of Beit Yaakov, while **וְתִגִּיד** is harsh, like tough tendons (**גִּידִין**), and better suited for the men of Bnei Yisrael, who will be firmly taught the Torah's punishments and halachic exactitude.

The verb **דִּבֶּר**, seen here, is also known to connote severity, as seen in the following Gemara (which quotes *Bereishit* 42:30):

לְמִימְרָא דְכָל דִּיבּוּר לְשׁוֹן קָשָׁה? אִין, כְּדִכְתִּיב: “דְּבַר הָאִישׁ אֲדֹנֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲתָנוּ
קָשׁוֹת וַיִּתֵּן אֲתָנוּ כְּמַרְגְּלִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ.”

“Is every [scriptural] usage of דיבור indeed harsh?” [ask Chazal in the
Gemara.] “Most certainly, as it is written, דְּבַר הָאִישׁ אֲדֹנֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲתָנוּ
קָשׁוֹת וַיִּתֵּן אֲתָנוּ כְּמַרְגְּלִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ — The man, lord of the land, **spoke**
with us harshly, denouncing us as spies of the land.” (Makkot 11a)

Why, then, does Hashem’s verbiage with Avram transform from gentle to harsh?

The *Rishonim* differ regarding the order of Avraham Avinu’s ten trials, and even which trials constitute the ten. Rashi (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3) holds, for example, that לָךְ מֵאֲרָצְךָ was the third test, with the first test consisting of hiding in a cave from Nimrod for 13 years and being thrown by Nimrod into a fiery furnace. Yet the Rambam (*ibid.*) places Avraham Avinu’s leaving his homeland as number one, without including the earlier trials of living in hiding and the furnace. Both, however, agree that the tenth is *Akeidat Yitzchak*, a trial that also employs Hashem’s command of לָךְ קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְךָ אֶת יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלָךְ לָךְ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם: לָךְ קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְךָ אֶת יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלָךְ לָךְ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם: לָךְ קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְךָ אֶת יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלָךְ לָךְ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם: לָךְ קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְךָ אֶת יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלָךְ לָךְ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם: לָךְ קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְךָ אֶת יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלָךְ לָךְ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם: — Take, please, your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak, and **get yourself** to the land of Moriah, and offer him up there as a sacrificial offering upon one of the mountains that I shall show you (*Bereishit* 22:2).

Consider Chazal’s curious approach to these two instances of לָךְ לָךְ in Avraham Avinu’s trials, as narrated in the Midrash:

אָמַר רַבִּי לֵוִי: “שְׁתֵּי פְעָמִים כָּתִיב לָךְ לָךְ, וְאִין אָנוּ יוֹדְעִים אִי זֶה חֲבִיבָה אִם הַשְּׂנִיָּה
אִם הָרִאשׁוֹנָה.”

Rabbi Levi said: “Lech lecha is written twice, and we do not know which is more precious [in Hashem’s eyes] — the second [when He told him, ‘Take, please, your son... and get yourself to the land of Moriah...’] or the first [when He commanded Avraham to leave his homeland].”

(*Bereishit Rabbah* 39:9)

The Midrash ultimately decides that the second is more precious, but why the uncertainty? Could Avraham Avinu's leaving his land and birthplace possibly compare to his readiness to offer his beloved son upon the sacrificial altar?

Perhaps Chazal are implying that it is not the act of leaving itself that profoundly affects, but in what state of mind one leaves.

We initially asked why the divine communication to Avram in the earlier trial shifts from the gentle וַיֹּאמֶר to the harsh דִּבֶּר three *pesukim* later. What occurred between these *pesukim*? What shift, perhaps, did Avraham Avinu undergo within himself that the scriptural fluctuation might be reflecting?

Rashi comments that because the road — in the sense of prolonged, constant travel in pre-industrial times — diminishes intimacy and childbearing, one's finances, and one's notoriety (as a nameless traveler), Hashem assured Avram, "I shall make you a great nation" from the countless generations to issue from you; "I shall bless you" with wealth; and "I shall aggrandize your name." This is וַיֹּאמֶר, the gentle, comforting pledge of well-being that will make the ordeal of uprooting, journeying, and starting anew all the easier.

But then Avram, in his boundless love of Hashem, decided he would heed the divine imperative regardless of these promises. He would follow Hashem irrespective of circumstance, even in childlessness, poverty, and perpetual anonymity. Any reality that the One true G-d would establish for him would be a welcomed reality, simply for being His will. This is דִּבֶּר, the harsh, inner work in which the man of Hashem excels, and the brutal bending of one's will to unconditionally embrace only Hashem's will, in order to receive the bounty and blessing that Hashem Himself has assured.

This recalls a Talmudic debate as to whether or not performing a *mitzvah* with ulterior motives, *shelo lishmah*, is meritorious. Maintaining

that acting in such a way is indeed praiseworthy, the Gemara quotes the following *Baraita*:

וְהַתְּנִיָּא, הָאוֹמֵר: "סָלַע זֶה לְצִדְקָה בְּשִׁבִּיל שְׂיָחִיו בְּנֵי", וּ"בְשִׁבִּיל שְׂאֲזֻכָּה בָּהּ לְחַיֵּי
הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא" – הָרִי זֶה צְדִיק גָּמוּר.

לֹא קָשִׁיָּא: כָּאן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, כָּאן בְּגוֹיִם.

Isn't it taught in a Baraita: If one gives charity, saying, "I give this sela² for charity in order that my children may live," or, "I give it in order that through it I may merit life in Olam Haba," is he still considered a full-fledged tzaddik? [If so, what was wrong with the king bringing offerings so that the Jews would pray for his life and the life of his children?]

[The Gemara answers:] This is not difficult. Here, [in the case of one who makes his charity conditional yet is considered to be a tzaddik,] it is referring to a Jew. However, there, [where Cyrus was not given credit for his good deed because it was conditional,] it is referring to gentiles.

(Rosh Hashanah 4a)

In this case, addressing previous evidence to the contrary, the Gemara concludes that in the *Baraita*, ulterior motives are found meritorious regarding a Jew, but are found lacking regarding a gentile.

Rashi explains that a Jew's heart is always directed toward *Shamayim*, such that in the face of hardship he does not express indignation toward Hashem, but ascribes his misfortune to appropriate punishment for his sins. When things don't go well for a non-Jew, however, he feels affronted and protests his misfortune. This means that a Jew who gives *tzedakah* for ulterior motives will never regret giving should his wishes not come to fruition; he will ascribe the failure to his own lack of merit and remain thankful for the opportunity to have been charitable. Yet a non-Jew

2 A *sela* was a type of silver coin in ancient Eretz Yisrael that equaled two *shekalim*.

whose ambition ultimately goes unmet will bitterly regret any ostensible kindnesses he undertook to curry favor in Hashem's eyes.

A Jew's heart points toward *Shamayim*, and that spiritual direction and connection is all that he truly wants in the end. Even if he didn't get what he had hoped for, he remains content and committed, because his deepest longing is always for Hashem alone, regardless of agenda and success. In its purest form, this unconditional joining with the One true G-d expresses itself in readily surrendering one's life rather than rejecting Him. The Jew's shouldering tribulation without indignation is thus born of his father Avraham Avinu's submitting to Nimrod's fiery furnace.

At Avraham Avinu's death sentencing, the Midrash relates that his brother Haran decided he would avow allegiance to whoever emerged victorious. Should Avraham Avinu win and be miraculously saved, he would side with Avraham Avinu, yet if the fire consumed his brother, he would side with Nimrod. Avraham Avinu emerged from the furnace unscathed; therefore, Haran declared, "I am with Avraham." They threw him into the flames, and he died (*Bereishit Rabbah* 38:13).

Heir to Haran's spineless wavering is his son Lot. As Avraham Avinu heeds the command of לֶךְ לְךָ and leaves Charan for Canaan, he perhaps feels responsible for his brother's death and encourages his nephew Lot to accompany him, as the *pasuk* says, וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט — *Lot went with him* (*Bereishit* 12:4). Though Lot is also uprooting and leaving his homeland, this is not a לֶךְ לְךָ moment for him; it is merely a passive וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ. Lot most likely leaves with the same conviction with which his father aligned with Avraham Avinu, and with his own best interests at heart, he follows his uncle to Canaan.

The Alshich teaches that a person, being comprised of body and soul, can depart from a place only in body, leaving his soul behind (cf. the Alshich's *Torat Moshe* on *Vayikra* 23:33). One can physically

leave Mitzrayim, for example, yet remain spiritually enslaved there. Conversely, one's body can remain in a place as an empty shell, while his soul aimlessly wanders. Ideally, when we embark, we do so fully, with both body and soul.

Avraham Avinu is the model for this ideal. The phrase *לך לך*, translated here for colloquial convenience as “get yourself,” literally means “go to yourself” in the sense of unreservedly and comprehensively going, leaving neither body nor soul behind. Then, one is indeed going toward one's true, evolving, maturing self.

Some say that *לך לך* implies *לך מן לכלוך* — *get away from filth* and forsake your dark past wholeheartedly, never leaving your soul mired in the muck while appearing only outwardly clean. Decamping merely physically while leaving the soul behind inevitably engenders problems. Though all may seem prosperous for a time in the new locale, as soon as a formidable challenge presents itself, one reverts to old emotional and behavioral patterns.

Lot certainly journeyed to Canaan in body and, at least materially, reestablished himself quite well, but his soul indisputably remained in Charan:

וְגַם לְלוֹט הָהֵלֶךְ אֶת אֲבָרָם הָיָה צֹאן וּבָקָר וְאֹהֲלִים: וְלֹא נָשָׂא אֹתָם הָאָרֶץ לְשִׁבְתָּ
יַחְדָּו כִּי הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְשִׁבְתָּ יַחְדָּו: וַיְהִי רִיב בֵּין רָעִי מִקְנֵה אֲבָרָם וּבֵין
רָעִי מִקְנֵה לוֹט...

And also Lot, the one who went with Avram, had flocks, cattle, and tents. The land could not withstand them living together, for their possessions were substantial, and they could not dwell together. And there was contention between the shepherds of Avram's livestock and the shepherds of Lot's livestock...
(Bereishit 13:5-7)

Here, amidst discord with Avram, Lot is not merely ascribed passive action like before, as the *pasuk* states, *וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט* — *Lot went with him*

(ibid. 12:4). Rather, he has grown still further from Avram's לך לך than when they first set out. His soul — languishing for so long in Charan — has now atrophied, his inner self is eclipsed, and he is embodied and defined by that passivity: הָהֵלֶךְ אֶת אַבְרָם. He is “the one who went with Avram,” nothing more than that. Even his substantial wealth, comments Rashi, is the byproduct of simply having gone with his uncle, not his own merit. Having moved so askew from “go to yourself,” he could not be further from his true self.

In light of the impasse between them, Avram tells his nephew:

אֵל-נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ... הִפָּרֵד נָא מֵעָלַי אִם הִשְׁמָאֵל וְאִימְנָה וְאִם הִימִין
וְאִשְׁמְאִילָהּ:

Please let there be no contention between me and you... Please separate from me. If you go left, I shall go right. If you go right, I shall go left.
(ibid. 13:8-9)

And what does Lot choose? He “lived in the cities of the plain and deployed tents through to Sedom,” whose people were “depraved and sinful toward Hashem, excessively” (ibid. 13:12-13). Lot’s unabashed decision to settle in Sedom is the final hammer blow in his spiritual decline.

Interestingly, what is Lot’s *tikkun*, his decisive spiritual restoration? After the destruction of Sedom and Amarah, he and his daughters give rise to the nations of Moav and Ammon (ibid. 19:36-38). Furthermore, from Moav emerges Rut, David Hamelech’s great-grandmother, who — in her undeterred will to join the Jewish people — declares to her mother-in-law Naomi:

אֵל תִּפְגְּעֵי בִי לְעִזְבֹּךְ לָשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ כִּי אֶל אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכִּי אֵלַי וּבְאֲשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֶלֶּיךָ
עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאֶל-לֵהֲיָךְ אֶל-לֵהֲיָי:

Do not press me to leave you, to forsake you, to turn back from

pursuing you. For where you go, I go. Where you abide, I abide. Your people are my people, and your G-d is my G-d. (Rut 1:16)

This constitutes the ultimate לך לך — the unparalleled unconditional embrace of Hashem and the quintessential actualization of self.

