

HKB“H's Directive: “To the Land that I Will Show You” Is the Incredible Key to Solving All of the Mysteries and Uncertainties along the Journey of Life

In this week's parsha, parshas Lech Lecho, we read: **“ויאמר ה' אל אברם, לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך, ואעשך לגוי גדול”** Hashem said to Avrom, **“Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”**

It is a well-known and accepted principle that all the pesukim in the Torah are eternal and are relevant in each and every generation. The Maor Einayim (Noach) states this principle as follows: **“הנה ידוע כי התורה היא נצחית ובכל אדם”**; similarly, concerning our possuk, the Degel Machaneh Ephraim writes: **“כי התורה היא נצחית”** — the Torah is eternal and is relevant and applicable to every individual in every period of time. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to examine how this heavenly directive to Avrom: **“Go for yourself from your land,”** applies to all individuals in all generations. Additionally, what vital lesson must we learn from this divine directive?

Let us begin our journey with the enlightening comment of the Zohar Chodosh (Midrash HaNe'elam, Lech Lecho 30b) that these pesukim apply to every neshomeh that descends from the heavenly realm of the world of the neshamos to this world — to clothe itself in a physical body:

“ויאמר ה' אל אברם, זו היא הנשמה שהיא אב' ללמד את הגוף, ורם' עליו שממקום רם ונשא באה. ומה אומר לה, לך לך מארצך וממולדתך, מדירתך וממקומך ומהנאתך ומבית אביך... אל הארץ אשר אראך, כלומר לגוף פלוני, לגוף קדוש, לגוף ישר... וילך אברם, זו היא הנשמה שהיא אב' לגוף ורם' ממקום הרמים, כאשר דיבר אליו ה', להיכנס באותו הגוף שנצטווה להנהיגו וללמדו.”

Hashem's statement to Avrom is elucidated as Hashem's directive to the neshomeh — this neshomeh that is to act as a father figure to educate the physical body. Hashem instructs the neshomeh to leave its heavenly abode and to enter a particular body. When the Torah states that Avrom went, this refers to the journey of the neshomeh from its place on high to its designated body. The neshomeh follows Hashem's instructions just as Avrom did — entering the body that it was commanded to guide and teach.

Let us address HKB“H's statement to Avrom and to all of the neshomos that come into this world: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”** -- **to the land that I will show you.** Moreover, what was HKB“H's reason for not revealing the ultimate destination from the onset? Rashi provides an answer to this question: **“אשר אראך, לא גלה לו הארץ מיד כדי לחבבה בעיניו, ולתת לו שכר על כל דיבור ודיבור”** — to endear it to him, and to reward him for each and every statement about the land. Rashi's source is the Midrash (B.R. 39, 9) which adds: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך, ולמה לא גלה לו כדי לחבבה בעיניו, וליתן לו שכר על כל פסיעה ופסיעה”** — to reward him for each and every step he takes toward the land.

Notwithstanding, the Midrash deserves further explanation. Even had HKB“H revealed the land to Avrom, he still would have deserved to be rewarded for each and every step of his journey to an unfamiliar land. After all, he only undertook this journey, because he possessed incredible faith in Hashem and because Hashem commanded him to do so. So, what additional reward or benefit accrued to Avraham by HKB“H not revealing the destination from the get go?

The Mysterious Journey of Life Is Full of Obstacles and Hidden Curves

With the help of the One Who imparts knowledge to mankind, my heart stirred with a wonderful idea. Hashem's instruction "אל הארץ אשר אראך" — **to the land that I will show you** — contains a valuable message concerning the way to properly serve Hashem. It is worthwhile for every Jew to review this message over and over again throughout his life. If we examine man's lifelong journey in this world, from the moment of his birth and his very first breath, until his neshomeh departs from his body and returns to HKB"H, we find that the entire journey is shrouded in mystery.

No human being has a clue what is in store for him in this world. Will his journey be smooth and straightforward or will it be complicated and full of obstacles? Will the course be steady and even-keel or full of ups and downs? A human being is incapable of solving this great mystery from the very onset. Where will he be required to spend his life? What ordeals and experiences will he have to endure? What mission has HKB"H given him to fulfill in this lifetime?

Yet, it is essential for all Torah-observant Jews to remember that the key to unraveling these mysteries and uncertainties was already revealed by HKB"H to Avraham Avinu, the first Jew in the world. Avraham was confronted by a world full of idol-worship, he shattered all of the idols in his father Terach's house and merited to reveal the presence, oneness and ways of HKB"H in this world.

Behold! With HKB"H's very first revelation to Avrom, He confronts Avrom with the following provocative directive: "לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומביתך" -- **Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.** With these words, HKB"H provided Avrom with the secret code to unravel and solve all of life's mysteries and uncertainties. These four words -- "אל הארץ אשר" -- **to the land that I will show you** — are the key! In other words, do not imagine that I will reveal to you from the very beginning where you are destined

to go and what challenges you will have to overcome. These matters are concealed and known only to HKB"H, King of the Universe, Who knows all of our secrets.

Nonetheless, there is a promise from HKB"H inherent in this directive: "אל הארץ אשר אראך" — **to the land that I will show you** — I will not abandon you on this journey. For, on your own, you will be unable to navigate your proper path in life; you will surely stray, like a lost sheep, not knowing whether to turn right or left. Rest assured that I will be with you every step of the way throughout life's journey — guiding you in the right direction, helping you overcome all of the obstacles in your way — until you arrive at the correct destination — the destination and purpose for which you came down into this world.

This Directive "אל הארץ אשר אראך" Echoes Continuously throughout Space and Time

It is well-known that just as HKB"H is eternal, so, too, his spoken word is eternal and everlasting. This is expressed by the prophet (Yeshayah 40, 8): "ודבר" "אלקינו יקום לעולם" — **the word of our G-d shall stand forever.** Similarly, we find at Matan Torah, at the Revelation at Sinai (Devorim 5, 19): "את הדברים האלה" "דבר ה' אל כל קהלכם... קול גדול ולא יסף" — **these words Hashem spoke to your entire congregation on the mountain . . . a great voice, never-ending.** Rashi comments, as the Targum does: "קל רב ולא פסק" — **a mighty voice which did not stop.** In other words, the supernatural voice with which HKB"H delivered the commandments at Har Sinai never ceased — it continues on to this very day.

This provides us with an additional insight into the words of the Zohar Chodosh cited above. The first directive HKB"H delivered to Avraham Avinu: "לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומביתך" -- **Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you** — reverberates throughout the universe throughout all generations. Every Jew descending from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov that is destined to be born into the world hears Hashem's voice issuing this directive to him: "לך לך מארצך"

“leave your heavenly abode, and descend to the physical form that I will designate for you in this world.” — **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”** —

Whenever a Jew is uncertain as to which path to take, which course of studies to pursue, or which business activity to get involved in, he must tune in his spiritual hearing to receive Hashem's supernatural voice calling out to Avraham and his descendants: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”** — whenever you arrive at a crossroads in life, I will direct you along the correct path and show you how to reach the destination where you are meant to fulfill your earthly mission.

This in fact is the lesson conveyed by the Midrash (B.R. 53, 14) discussing the possuk regarding Hagar (Bereishis 21, 19): **“ויפקח אלקים את עיניה ותרא באר מים ותלך ותמלא את החמת מים ותשק את הנער”** - **“אמר רבי בנימין, הכל בחזקת סומין עד שהקב"ה מאיר את עיניהם, מן הכא ויפקח אלקים את עיניה”**. In Hagar's moment of desperation, the Almighty opened her eyes and revealed a well to her; she walked to the well, filled the flask with water and gave her son to drink. Rabbi Binyamin states that all people are considered to be blind until HKB"H illuminates their eyes. Along his journey, man may seek water or any of his other needs; it is essential that he always remember HKB"H's promise: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”**. This will insure that HKB"H will open his eyes and guide him to his intended destination in this world.

According to the Word of Hashem They Would Journey According to the Word of Hashem They Would Encamp

Sadly, though, this is precisely the problem. Due to our countless sins, an iron curtain has been created separating us from our G-d. The prophet describes this situation as follows (Yeshayah 59, 2): **“כי אם עוונותיכם — rather, your transgressions have separated between you and your G-d. This barrier also separates us from the divine promise of: “אל הארץ אשר אראך”- to the land that I will show you. As a consequence, we continue to live with the status, chas v'shalom, of those who are presumably blind, since we do not merit having HKB"H open our eyes.**

To remedy this unfortunate situation, we must reestablish our relationship with Hashem by performing wholehearted, complete teshuvah for all of our transgressions; thus, we can pulverize the impenetrable barrier separating us from Hashem. This will allow us to pray to Hashem to open our eyes and guide us along the proper path, as He promised Avraham Avinu and all of our neshomos as they descended to this world: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”** - **to the land that I will show you.** Furthermore, this will guarantee the fulfillment of the remainder of the promise: **“ואעשך לגוי גדול ואברכך”** - **And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”** As a result, HKB"H will join us each step along the way, insuring our success.

This ties in amazingly with a vital lesson the Shelo HaKadosh teaches us (Parshas Behaaloscho) concerning the possuk in Bamidbor (9, 18):

“על פי ה' יסעו ועל פי ה' יחנו, ואחר כך כתיב (שם ט ב), על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו. יש רמז מוסר בכאן, על כל פעולה או תנועה שהאדם עושה, יאמר אם ירצה השם או בעזרת השם. למשל בלכתו בדרך יאמר הנני נוסע בעזרת השם יתברך, ובדעתי לחנות במקום פלוני בעזרתו יתברך אם ירצה, וכשבא למקום החניה אז יחזור ויתן שבח ויאמר, הנה בעזרת הש"י באתי הנה, ובדעתי ליסע לזמן פלוני בעזרתו יתברך אם ירצה, נמצא שם שמים שגור בפיו בשעה שעולה במחשבתו, ובשעת מעשה, ככה בכל פעולותיו.”

The Torah states that Bnei Yisroel journeyed and encamped in accordance with Hashem's command; subsequently, it states that they first encamped and then journeyed in accordance with Hashem's command. The Shela HaKadosh derives from these pesukim that one should have Hashem in mind and request His assistance with all on one's endeavors. As one embarks on a journey, he should say, “I am going with G-d's help”; and I plan to rest in a particular place “if it is Hashem's will.” Upon arriving at one's destination, he should thank and praise Hashem by stating, “With G-d's help I arrived here, and I plan to return at a certain time, with G-d's help and if it pleases Him.”

Following this wonderful advice and having Hashem in mind as we begin and conclude every activity we undertake — in accordance with the dictum of **“על פי”** — **ה' יסעו ועל פי ה' יחנו** — is a fantastic way to connect with Hashem and to remind Hashem, as it were, of His promise to the neshomos preparing to descend to this world: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”** — I will guide you and open your eyes to find the correct path in life.

The Purpose of All Mitzvos Is to Connect with Hashem

Continuing along this exalted path, let us proceed to explain in greater depth why HKB”H chose to guide Avraham and his offspring, the children of Yisroel, to their intended destinations — **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”** — without revealing said destinations at the onset. Instead, we are dependent upon Hashem and His kindness each and every step along the path of life — requiring that He open our eyes and illuminate for us the desired path to take.

First, let us recall what we have learned in the Gemoreh (Makkos 24a): **“שש מאות ושלוש עשרה מצוות נאמרו לו למשה... בא חבקוק והעמידן על אחת שנאמר — six hundred and thirteen Mitzvos were commanded to Moshe. . . along came Chavakuk and established one basic requirement, as it says (Chavakuk 2, 4): A righteous person will live because of his faith.** The Maharal of Prague explains the Gemoreh’s statement, in Chidushei Aggados (ibid.) and Tiferes Yisroel (Chapter 55), as follows: **“כי על ידי אמונה יש לאדם דביקות בו יתברך, שהוא מאמין כי אין עצם האמונה רק הדביקות בו יתברך, שהוא מאמין — by means of a person’s faith, he is able to attach himself to Hashem; faith and being connected with Hashem are one and the same.**

We can understand this noble concept better in light of a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayishlach 170b). HKB”H gave us 248 positive commandments, Mitzvos aseh, corresponding to a human being’s 248 limbs; he gave us 365 prohibitions, Mitzvos lo ta’aseh, corresponding to a human being’s 365 sinews. This teaches us that the purpose of fulfilling the taryag (613) Mitzvos is as a means of connecting our 248 limbs and 365 sinews with HKB”H, the Giver of the Torah.

This is the clarification of Chavakuk’s statement that all of the taryag-Mitzvos hinge on one basic requirement — **“emunah,”** faith — as he said: **“וצדיק באמונתו יחיה — a righteous person will live because of his faith.** Seeing as the purpose of fulfilling all of the Mitzvos is to be connected with Hashem, it turns out that the basic principle underlying all of the Mitzvos is **“emunah”** in Hashem. Believing that all of our needs and existence depend only on Hashem, results in a person’s constant connection with Hashem.

This explains very nicely the phraseology of the possuk: **“וצדיק באמונתו יחיה” — a righteous person will live because of his faith** — due to our emunah, we merit to remain intimately connected with Hashem, the source of life. As the possuk states so eloquently (Devarim 4, 4): **“ואתם הרבקים בה’ אלקיכם חיים — you who are intimately connected to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today.** We see clearly that this intimate connection with Hashem is the conduit that sustains those who maintain this type of intimate relationship with Hashem. Therefore, concerning emunah in Hashem, which creates this intimate attachment, the possuk states: **“וצדיק באמונתו יחיה — a righteous person will live because of his faith.**

Prayer Is Based on the Awareness that We Owe Our Entire Existence to Hashem

If we take a moment to consider the matter, it is clear that the source of man’s connection with Hashem, the conduit of life, hinges on man’s awareness that his livelihood and successes depend solely on Hashem. For, the moment that a person believes that he is responsible and deserves credit for his own success, he no longer requires this intimate connection with Hashem, and he becomes detached from the conduit of life. In fact, the possuk in parshas Ekev (Devorim 8, 11) strongly admonishes us:

“השמר לך פן תשכח את ה’ אלקיך... פן תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת, ובקרר וצאנך ירביון וכסף וזהב ירבה לך וכל אשר לך ירבה, ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה’ אלקיך המוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים... ואמרת

בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה, וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל."

"Take care lest you forget Hashem, your G-d, by not observing His commandments, . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase — and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, you G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery, . . . And you may say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!' Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth."

Now, come and see what we learn from the Maharal of Prague in Nesivos Olam (Nesiv HaAvodah Chapter 3). He teaches us that praying to Hashem depends on the awareness of the person praying that it is impossible to exist in this world without the constant bounty that one receives from HKB"H. It is for this reason that our prayers to Hashem encompass every single detail in our lives.

This also explains why the Members of the Great Assembly instituted the recitation of the following praise to Hashem in the berochoh of "Modim" three times a day in Shemoneh Esreh: **"על חיינו המסורים: ועל נשמותינו הפקודות לך, ועל נסיך שבכל יום עמנו, ועל נפלאותיך וטובותיך שבכל עת ערב ובקר — for our lives that are committed into Your hands and for our neshomos that are entrusted to You; and for Your miracles that are with us every day; and for Your wonders and favors that are at all times — evening, and morning and after afternoon.** In this prayer of gratitude, we express our tremendous faith that we cannot exist without HKB"H; in this manner, we attach ourselves to Hashem, the source of life.

Next, let us appreciate the enlightening words of the Chasam Sofer in Toras Moshe (Ekev 57b) addressing the formula of the berocheh recited after one drinks water: **ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, בורא נפשות**

רבות וחסרונן, על כל מה שבראת להחיות בהם נפש כל — **"חי, ברוך חי העולמים — Blessed are Thou, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates numerous living things with their deficiencies; for all that You have created with which to sustain the life of every being. Blessed is He, the life of the worlds.**

With this berocheh we express our gratitude to Hashem for two things — firstly, for the simple fact that he created us: **"בורא נפשות רבות"**. Secondly, we thank Hashem for creating us deliberately with deficiencies: **"וחסרונן"**. This insures that we will need to seek out Hashem to fill our needs and deficiencies; thus, we are constantly aware of Hashem's favors and thank Him on a regular basis for filling our deficiencies. This deliberate creation of deficiencies is the more significant of the two matters. For, due to these deficiencies: **"ברוך חי העולמים"** — we will merit having a relationship with HKB"H both in this world and the World to Come.

"To the Land that I Will Show You" to Justify a Reward for Each Step

Based on what we have just learned, we can now understand why HKB"H chose not to reveal the intended destination to Avraham at the beginning of his journey. Had He provided this information at the onset, Avraham would not have needed to remain connected to Hashem with each and every step in order to insure that he was headed in the right direction. Therefore, HKB"H chose to guide Avraham blindly with the promise: **"אל הארץ אשר אראך"** — to the land which I will show you. As a result, he remained connected perforce with HKB"H each and every step of the journey.

We have also shed some light on the statement of the Midrash: **"אל הארץ אשר אראך, ולמה לא גלה לו כדי לחבבה בעיניו, וליתן לו שכר על כל פסיעה ופסיעה"** — why didn't He reveal to Avraham the ultimate destination? In order to make it precious in his eyes and to reward him for each and every step. By not revealing the land to Avraham, he was forced to remain connected with Hashem each step along the way, in order to receive constant directions.

Consequently, he deserved to be rewarded for each and every step, since he did not take a single step without recognizing Hashem's presence and remaining connected with Hashem. The Torah attests to this fact by stating: **“וילך אברם כאשר דיבר אליו ה'”** – **so Avram went as he was instructed by Hashem.** He remained connected with Hashem throughout his journey, so that Hashem would illuminate his eyes to head in the proper direction.

We can also appreciate how this matter is relevant to each and every Jew without exception. For, we have learned from the Zohar Chodosh that HKB”H instructs every neshomoh before it descends to this world: **“לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר”** **“-- Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.** This, therefore, is an important lesson for each and every one of us. We must strive to remain connected with Hashem throughout our lifelong journey. Moreover, whenever we encounter uncertainty as to which path to choose, we should remember that HKB”H promised us before we were even born: **“אל”** **“הארץ אשר אראך”** – that He would open our eyes, so that we would know which path to follow.

It is clear as day, therefore, that we must raise our sights toward Hashem, in order for our innermost beings to appreciate and grasp His clear cut instructions. If, however, we forget Hashem, chas v'shalom, and mistakenly believe that we control our own destinies – espousing the philosophy of **“כוחי”** **“ועוצם ידי”** – it is analogous to one who seeks guidance from an expert, but talks to someone else, rather than paying attention, while the expert is trying to guide him. Under these circumstances, it is quite clear that he will stray from the correct path like a lost sheep.

A Fundamental Lesson Regarding a Shidduch from the Holy Maharid of Belz, zy”a

Let us conclude our discussion with a true and telling story involving one of our great leaders, the holy, master, Rabbi Yissachor Dov of Belz, zy”a. When his son the incredible Rabbi Mordechai of Bilgoria, ztz”l, was a young man ready to entertain shidduchim,

the Admor Rabbi Shlomo Chanoch of Radomsk, ztz”l, proposed a potential shidduch. The girl was a family relative of his, from distinguished lineage, whose wealthy father was offering a sizable dowry.

Despite all of the apparent advantages, his father the Rabbi Maharid, zy”a, was not interested in hearing about this shidduch. He explained his reasoning as follows: I do not want my son to wake up in the morning and concern himself with business matters. I want his first thoughts in the morning to focus on the fact that there is a Creator of the universe whose majesty fills the entire land. Thus, he will rise with alacrity to serve the Holy One Blessed Is He. Then he turned to his son, Rabbi Mordechai, and said to him:

Be aware, my son, that they proposed a match for you from a distinguished and wealthy family. I refused the proposal, because it is important to me that when you get up in the morning from your sleep, you will be in need of a source of revenue and will seek heavenly assistance.

This will insure that when you utter the words: **“מוודה אני לפניך”** – **I give thanks to you** – they will be words that emanate from the heart with sincerity and deference. For, when a person realizes that he is dependent on his G-d, he commits to serve Him properly. On the other hand, if you join a wealthy family that will provide you with a substantial dowry and a guaranteed livelihood, I fear that you will never attain this degree of reverence and service of Hashem.

This incredible story illustrates the vital lesson of: **“אל הארץ אשר אראך”**. It was imperative to the Rabbi Maharid, zy”a, that his son, the great Rabbi from Bilgoria, zy”a, should have to look toward the heavens each day in anticipation that Hashem would provide him with sustenance. This would guarantee that his son would remain connected with Hashem throughout his entire life, in keeping with the dictum: **“ואתם הדבקים בה”** **“--אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום”** -- you who are intimately connected to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today.