

Parashas
Lech Lecha

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י"ג חשוון תשפ"ז

5787

י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הר"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינובין שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

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טיב הפרשה

תכלית הצרה - אמונה ותפילה

The Purpose of Suffering — Emunah and Tefillah

ב'י שמע ה' אֶל עֲנִיִּי: (טז, יא)

טיב המערכת

שובי אל גבירתך

Return to your mistress

The Gemara (Succah 53a) relates a story about two scribes who served King Shlomo. One day, King Shlomo saw the Angel of Death looking sad. King Shlomo asked him, "Why are you sad?" The Angel of Death replied, "Because I have been instructed in Heaven to take the lives of these two scribes."

Since King Shlomo wanted to save them, he instructed the demons to transport them to the city of Luz, where the Angel of Death had no power. The demons took the two scribes and carried out the king's command. However, when they arrived at the entrance to the city of Luz, the two scribes collapsed and died on the spot. The following day, King Shlomo saw the Angel of Death smiling and looking happy. King Shlomo asked him, "Why are you happy?" The Angel of Death replied, "Because in Heaven, I was instructed to kill the two scribes at the gates of the city of Luz. I did not know how I would be able to bring them there, since they were here with you. And yet, you yourself brought them to precisely the place where I needed them to take their souls."

After Hagar fled from Sarai, her mistress, and the angel found her, we might have expected the angel to tell her to return and perhaps promise her that from then on, things would be better for her. Perhaps he would convince Sarai to change the way she treated her. But that is not what happened. The angel commanded her (16:9), 'שובי אל גבירתך והתעני תחת' - "Return to your mistress and submit yourself to her hand." He did not allow her to continue fleeing, but he also did not promise her that things would improve from then on. He simply told her to return to the very place from which she had fled and continue suffering. We must ask: Why?

Everyone experiences difficulties and struggles in life, and we must always pray for things to improve. However, under no circumstances should we do something forbidden in order to "escape our troubles." This is the message the angel conveyed to Hagar, and it is also a lesson he teaches us: If it has been decreed in Heaven that you must suffer, you will not be able to escape it, because somewhere else, things will be the same or, Heaven forbid, even worse.

However, if you accept the will of Hashem Yisbarach, your reward will be great: הרבה ארבה את זרעך ולא יספר מרוב - "I will greatly multiply your offspring, and they will be too numerous to count." (16:10) Only HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows what is truly good for us. Sometimes, it is specifically through our difficulties that we are able to grow and succeed. The main thing is to remember what Moreinu HaRav, shlit"א, is accustomed to saying: "In the end, we forget the troubles, and what remains is the satisfaction and joy we have from what we have accomplished."

Tiv HaTorah – Lech Lecha

For Hashem has heard your prayer (16:11)

In Targum Onkelos, the word "ענין" is translated as "צלותיך," meaning "your prayer." At first glance, this interpretation is difficult to understand, since, as every yeshivah student understands, affliction and prayer are two distinct concepts. Affliction can serve as a reason to pray, but it is not prayer itself.

However, we can explain that Hashem's ultimate purpose in bringing affliction upon a person is to awaken his emunah and hope in Hashem and to inspire him to pray before Him. Since the purpose of suffering is prayer, we can indeed say that suffering is an inseparable part of prayer itself, and thus interpret the word "ענין" as referring to prayer.

The wording of the posuk itself also supports this idea, as it states, "For Hashem has heard your prayer." At first glance, it is difficult to understand what hearing has to do with affliction. It would seemingly have been more appropriate to say, "For Hashem has seen your affliction." Unless the posuk is teaching us that affliction exists for the sake of something that depends on being heard, namely, prayer.

This also resolves a well-known question regarding the opinions of the halachic authorities who maintain that a person is commanded to pray in times of distress (see the words of the Ramban in his Hasagos on the Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvos, and see Be'er Heitev, Orach Chaim 106:1). After all, praying in times of distress might appear to indicate that a person does not accept the decree of the Creator Baruch Hu and does not believe that His decrees are for a person's benefit. Why, then, should praying in such circumstances be considered a mitzvah? According to what we have explained, however, this is readily understood. HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not desire that a person remain in a state of distress. The purpose of the distress is solely to bring the person to pray, thereby demonstrating that everything depends upon the decree of the Supreme King. Consequently, prayer can no longer be considered an expression of a desire that opposes the will of Hashem Yisbarach. On the contrary, the Supreme Will is that the distress should be removed, and He yearns for the very prayer through which His Will will be fulfilled.

Perhaps Targum Onkelos specifically explained the word this way in the context of Hagar the Egyptian in order to teach us that this concept does not apply exclusively to tzaddikim. Regarding their prayers, Chazal have already stated (Yevamos 64a): "HaKadosh Baruch Hu yearns for the prayers of the righteous." Rather, this principle applies even to people of a lower spiritual standing who are not considered tzaddikim. It is true that HaKadosh Baruch Hu's yearning for the cries of the tzaddikim is especially powerful, as mentioned in the above passage. Nevertheless, our Creator also has compassion for the rest of His creations and desires to instill within them the emunah that He is the One who decrees everything and that all depends upon His Will. Therefore, He brings circumstances upon them that cause them distress, prompting them to pray to Him. When they are subsequently saved through His intervention, they will recognize that their prayers made an impression and that they emerged from distress into relief only because the Creator was favorably inclined

toward them.

Do not be surprised that we sometimes see people enduring distress for prolonged periods, and even after they have pleaded extensively in prayer, their salvation is still delayed, and they do not merit to see the light of relief quickly. If, as we have explained, the purpose of affliction is to cause a person to turn to his Creator, it would seemingly follow that he should experience salvation once he does so. However, we must understand that HaKadosh Baruch Hu examines the innermost thoughts of the heart. He alone knows whether a person's prayer stems from sincere and clear emunah or not. Sometimes, even when a person prays, he does not do so with the complete recognition that everything depends upon the decree of the Creator, and his hope in HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not wholehearted. His prayer is like that of someone who says, "If it helps, fine; if it does not, it will not hurt to try..." With a prayer of this nature, the person has not yet achieved the ultimate purpose of Hashem's Will. G-d knows that even after the person receives his salvation, he will still doubt the power of prayer and mistakenly think that perhaps his salvation would have come about anyway, without his prayers. Therefore, Heaven delays his salvation so that he will exhaust all his other efforts. When he realizes that none of these efforts and strategies has any real power to help him, and he understands that only Hashem has the ability to save him, the point of emunah hidden deep within his soul will inevitably awaken. He will place his hope solely in Hashem, and his prayer will emerge from the depths of his heart. Then, indeed, he will merit salvation. This is consistent with the teaching of the

holy Rebbe of Ruzhin zy"l, regarding the words of the pasuk (Tehillim 13:2-3): 'עד אנה ה' תשכחני נצח, עד אנה תסתיר את פניך ממני, עד אנה אשיח עצות בנפשי' - "How long, Hashem, will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I devise counsels within my soul?" These words contain an allusion to a person who is waiting for salvation, but it is slow in coming. When he laments his situation and asks his Creator, "How long, Hashem, will You forget me?" because his predicament seems to indicate that he has been forgotten "forever," and asks, "How long will You hide Your face from me?" he must answer himself that this situation will continue "how long shall I devise counsels within my soul?" In other words, as long as I continue devising natural strategies and plans to help myself, my salvation will remain delayed, because this demonstrates that my hope is not entirely in You. However, once I understand that none of my efforts and strategies has any real power, that salvation depends solely upon the Will of the Creator, and that a person has no other counsel but to place his hope in Hashem, then my prayer will stem from clear emunah, and I will indeed attain what I seek. Perhaps this is also the intention of the teaching cited in the Midrash (Devarim Rabbah, Va'eschanan 2): Rebbe Chiya the Great said: It is written (Tehillim 27), 'קוה', - "אלה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה' - "Hope in Hashem; strengthen yourself, and He will give your heart courage; and hope in Hashem." You should pray and then pray again, and there will be a time when they will grant you your request. The truth is that prayer has the power to be answered immediately. Therefore, as soon as distress befalls a

person, he is told, "Hope in Hashem!" If, after praying, he sees that his prayer has still not been answered, this indicates that his hope is not yet entirely in Hashem. His course of action, therefore, is to strengthen himself in emunah and then try praying again. This is why he is told, "Strengthen yourself, and He will give your heart courage." Strengthen yourself and fortify your emunah. Afterward, "Hope in Hashem" once again! Perhaps by now he has attained clearer emunah. Then, when he is instructed to return to prayer, he is told, "Pray and then pray again."

If even this prayer does not make an impression, he should strengthen himself and pray again and again. This is because prayer itself is an expression of emunah. Were it not for emunah, he would not pray at all. When a person prays repeatedly, he is, in effect, reviewing and reinforcing his emunah. This is a segulah for attaining greater clarity in emunah. This is similar to the teaching of HaRav HaKadosh Moshe of Kobrin, who interpreted the words of the pasuk (Tehillim 116:10) as an allusion: 'אֶמַנְתִּי כִּי אֹדֹב' - "I believed, therefore I spoke." I merited becoming a believer in Hashem because I spoke words of emunah and repeatedly reviewed them with myself. For repeatedly reviewing the principles of emunah is what brings emunah to life within a person's soul. Therefore, Chazal assure the person, saying, "And there will be a time when they will grant you your request." Ultimately, you will indeed merit clear emunah. Then you will merit having your prayer ascend before the One Who dwells in the highest heavens, and you will be remembered favorably with salvation and mercy.

‘ויהפוך ה'... את הקללה לברכה’

‘And Hashem turned... the curse to blessing’

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, a young man knocked on my door and told me that he had curses upon him, and he did not know how to free himself from them, despite having performed Hataras Nedarim and the annulment of curses...

I explained to him that the best way to free oneself from curses is to examine which halachos in the Shulchan Aruch we are not observing, whether unintentionally or because we are not paying attention. When we correct these matters, the curses no longer have power over us...

I thanked Hashem for sending my neighbor to remind me that I had not yet performed Hataras Nedarim. Every year, I perform Hataras Nedarim at home, with a clear and settled mind. This year, however, I had forgotten, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu sent me a reminder right to my door!

HaKadosh Baruch Hu speaks to us; we just need to listen!!!

Moreinu HaRav shlit"l

...

‘גבר עלינו חסדו’

‘His kindness has prevailed over us’

Because of my breathing difficulties, I have a bed with an electrically adjustable backrest, which I adjust with a remote control attached

to the bed, depending on my breathing needs at any given moment.

In the afternoon, the bed was made ready, and at night, when I wanted to go to sleep, I could not find the remote control. It turned out that no one had noticed it and that the heavy bed had been placed on top of the remote. To lift the bed, a strong man was needed, along with another person who could reach underneath it.

I realized that, under normal circumstances, I would not be able to sleep that night. I offered a prayer to the Creator of the World and asked Him to help me by sending someone who could lift the bed so that I would be able to sleep and prepare for the busy day ahead.

As soon as I finished praying, my married grandson walked in. I asked him, "What are you doing here at such a late hour?" He answered that he had come to pick up his wife. His wife had arrived earlier to speak with her grandmother, and since he happened to be in the area, he had decided to stop by his grandmother's home and accompany his wife back home.

I was so happy with this salvation, because in my heart, I had already resigned myself to the fact that I probably would not sleep at all that night.

He immediately lifted the bed frame and took out the remote control that had been trapped underneath the heavy bed. As a result, I was able to sleep and gather strength for the following day...

Moreinu HaRav shlit"l

סיב ההשגרה

Why are tzaddikim compared to these two trees? Unlike smaller trees, the tall date palm and cedar can be seen from afar. So too, the greatness of a tzaddik is recognizable from a distance. Furthermore, when most trees are cut down, new ones can easily grow from their shoots. But when a date palm or cedar is cut down, replacing it requires many years and tremendous effort. Similarly, when a great tzaddik departs from the world, finding someone capable of filling his place may take many years.

The following stories offer a glimpse into the Torah, humility, and extraordinary middos of the Tchebiner Rav.

The Tchebiner Rav related to his son-in-law, Rav Baruch Shimon Schneerson zt"l, that many visitors came to him simply to recount their painful experiences. Particularly among them were Holocaust survivors who found it difficult to share their suffering with their own families and needed someone who would listen.

The Rav admitted that listening to these accounts took precious time and often made it difficult for him to return to his learning. Nevertheless, he felt unable to turn away people who needed to unburden their hearts.

"There is no greater act of gemilus chasadim than listening attentively to a person in pain who needs to share his grief and suffering!"

A talmid once invited the Tchebiner Rav to his wedding. Although the Rav was delighted to attend, the chasan explained that he had to give a relative the honor of serving as mesader kiddushin. He was deeply concerned that the Rav might feel slighted.

The Rav reassured him that he had no hakpadah whatsoever and that he was happy simply to share in the simchah.

On the wedding day, the Rav arrived well before the chuppah and sat down to learn. When the chasan's father apologized for the long wait, the Rav smiled and replied:

"Why apologize? I am very comfortable here! At home, people constantly interrupt me with

טיב ה'מעשיות

The Holy Tchebiner Rav

In honor of the yahrzeit of Maran the Tchebiner Rav, the holy gaon Rav Dov Berish Weinfeld, zt"l, author of Dovev Meisharim, which was this week, on the tenth of Cheshvan. The Midrash Tanchuma (siman 9) explains the pasuk (Tehillim 92:13), **צדיק כחמר יפרח כארז** - The righteous will flourish like a date palm; he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon as follows:

questions and requests. Here, I can sit quietly and learn to my heart's content!"

The Rav later explained that he had deliberately arrived early to demonstrate to his talmid that he had absolutely no resentment about not being given the honor of officiating at the kiddushin. He wanted the chasan to approach his wedding with a completely peaceful heart.

An acquaintance of the Tchebiner Rav once invited him to his son's wedding, but the Rav was unable to attend. When the man later married off his second son, he did not send an invitation, assuming the Rav would not come anyway.

Upon meeting him, the Rav asked, "You married off your son? Why didn't you send me an invitation?"

The man replied that he had assumed there was no point, since the Rav could not attend every wedding.

The Rav explained: "Even when I cannot attend a simchah, receiving an invitation gives me the opportunity to bless the celebrants and pray for them. That alone makes the invitation worthwhile.

"Moreover, whenever I receive an invitation that I cannot accept, I calculate how much time attending would have taken and add that amount of time to my Torah learning. Since I cannot participate in every simchah, I use that time for Torah instead.

"Because you did not send me an invitation this time, I lost that additional opportunity to learn Torah!"

The Tchebiner Rav made a practice of reciting eighteen chapters of Mishnayos every day, divided between the hours before Shacharis and the time between Minchah and Maariv.

He once explained to a close talmid that he feared passing away on Erev Shabbos and remaining laid out until after Shabbos, when the levayah could take place. He therefore prepared Mishnayos by heart so that he would have them ready to review throughout Shabbos. This practice also reflects the traditional wordplay connecting Mishnah and neshamah, which are formed from the same Hebrew letters arranged differently.

Remarkably, the Tchebiner Rav passed away on Friday afternoon, the tenth of Cheshvan, 5726, and his levayah took place only after Shabbos.

A similar practice was followed by the holy gaon Rav Shneur Zalman, author of Toras Chesed, who also recited eighteen chapters of Mishnayos by heart every day, completing the six orders of Mishnah each month. He, too, was concerned that he might pass away shortly before Shabbos and used his daily preparation to ensure that he could review Mishnayos throughout Shabbos.

When his final day arrived, the Rav of Yerushalayim, Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l, declared that the heavenly angels were going forth to greet the Lubliner Rav. The gaon passed away on Friday night, the fifth of Nissan, 5662, and his levayah took place only after Shabbos. His shomer, Rav Nechemiah Cheshin zt"l, testified that the deceased's lips appeared to move beneath his tallis throughout Shabbos.

The Tchebiner Rav once received a visit from a young man of the holy Ziditchov lineage who, sadly, had abandoned Torah and mitzvos. The young man came seeking a blessing for a promising business opportunity.

The Rav agreed, but explained that a blessing needs a suitable keli, or vessel, upon which it can rest. He cited the account of Elisha Hanavi and the wife of Ovadiah (Melachim II 4:2): first, she had to provide a flask of oil; only then could t h e

blessing multiply it.

The Rav asked the young man to preserve at least one custom of his holy ancestors. He chose a simple practice: in the Ziditchov tradition, Tachanun was not recited on certain special days, including Erev Shabbos.

The young man happily accepted. But then he realized the problem: he did not pray at all, so he never recited Tachanun on any day! To fulfill his commitment meaningfully, he decided to begin davening Shacharis daily, reciting Tachanun on ordinary days while preserving his ancestors' custom on the designated days.

That small commitment brought him back to regular tefillah. As he drew closer to kedushah, the holy spark inherited from his ancestors was rekindled, and he eventually returned to complete teshuvah.

Through the Tchebiner Rav's remarkable wisdom, a seemingly insignificant custom became the beginning of a complete spiritual return.

One day, the Tchebiner Rav overheard two men in his waiting room lamenting the decline of the generations. They claimed that earlier rabbanim had thoroughly investigated every halachic question, whereas modern rabbanim merely consulted abridged sefarim and read out the rulings.

Pained by their disrespect, the Rav summoned them and asked them to select any volume of the Tur and Beis Yosef and open it to any page.

They chose Tur Even Ha'ezer and opened it in the unfamiliar laws of mi'un. The Rav immediately recited the entire passage from memory, followed by the corresponding discussions of the Beis Yosef, the Bach, the Perishah, and the Derishah, explaining everything with extraordinary clarity.

He then told them, "Do not disparage rabbanim, as though they decide halachah merely by consulting abridged sefarim. Every halachah is investigated thoroughly from its foundations!"

After the men left, the Rav revealed to a close associate that he had not studied that particular page

להכנס לכל חג ומועד באוירה והכנה ראויה
עם כל הנישמאק ובטעם נפלא

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להאיר הלבבות ולדומם הנפשות

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for fourteen years. He had been assisted from Heaven to uphold the honor of Torah and its scholars.

A young man once asked the Tchebiner Rav how one could attain such extraordinary greatness in Torah.

The Rav replied: "When there is geshmak in Torah—when one learns with passion and yearning—that is the way to become great in Torah!"

Torah cannot be treated merely as an intellectual discipline. A person must study with a thirst of heart and soul until its words penetrate deeply and become absorbed into his very being. The greater one's passion for Torah, the more one grows in it.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh expresses this idea beautifully on Parashas Yisro (Shemos 19:1), explaining that the giving of the Torah brought together the Beloved and the One who loves Him, bringing joy to Heaven and earth, "for this is the purpose of creation and its hope."

To develop such enthusiasm, one must recognize the immense privilege of belonging to Hashem's treasured nation, מְמִלְכֶּת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ - a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation (Shemos 19:6), and of studying His holy Torah. What a person truly values and cherishes becomes deeply rooted in his heart and is not easily forgotten.

May the merit of the Tchebiner Rav protect us and all of Yisrael. Amen.