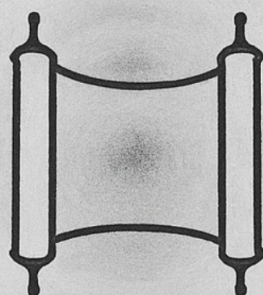


בס"ד

The Maggid of Mezritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Lech Lecha



Dedicated To:

טנייה מלכה בת דינה דבורה
דפואה שלמה

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Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

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Siman #20

Introduction

In this Maamer, the Maggid of Mezritch opens the words “לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך” (“Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house”) as an inner allegory for the soul’s descent and ascent through stages of divine wisdom. Avraham’s journey becomes the soul’s inner odyssey — leaving behind its native spiritual environment to uncover hidden levels of *Chochmah*, *Binah*, and *Daas*, uniting the highest divine wisdom with the most physical realms.

And Hashem said to Avram, “Go for yourself from your land and from your birthplace, etc.” The explanation: there is a yud at the beginning and a yud at the end, which correspond to supernal wisdom and lower wisdom.

And the distinction is this: supernal wisdom presently comes from the higher source. By way of analogy—when a person wants to make a vessel, he first sketches a form so that he will not forget his thought, and afterward he fashions it. Initially this existed in his wisdom; afterward he forms it in his intellect, and afterward he brings it from potential into actuality.

And lower wisdom existed previously in the world and afterward departed from it, and when one sees the thing before him, he then recalls it. This is “he saw a deed and remembered a law.” For “Hashem founded the earth with wisdom,” so wisdom is in the earth—that is, in physical things—and whoever is truly wise, when he sees a deed before him, he perceives the wisdom within it.

And this is the secret of yibbum (levirate union), for at first he was his brother and now becomes his father. For through daas one ascends to the level of chochmah, and that is “father.” Likewise, through daas placed into a matter, one reaches the wisdom within it.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ
וְגו'. פִּירוּשׁ, כִּי יו"ד בְּרֵאשׁ יו"ד בְּסוֹף, וְהוּא
חֻקָּה עִלְיָא וְחֻקָּה תַתְּמָא.

וְהַחֲלוּק הוּא בְּזוֹ, כִּי חֻקָּה עִלְיָא הִיא בָּאָה עִתָּה
מִמְקוֹר הָעֲלִיּוֹן. עַל דְּרָךְ מַשָּׁל, כְּשֶׁהוּא רוֹצֵה לַעֲשׂוֹת
אִיזָה כְּלִי, הוּא עוֹשֶׂה רְשִׁימוֹ תַּחֲלָה אִיד לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדִי
שֶׁלֹא יִשְ�כַּח מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ, וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ הוּא עוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָהּ,
וּמִתַּחֲלָה הָיָה דָּבָר זֶה בְּחֻקָּתוֹ, וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ מִצִּיר
אוֹתוֹ בְּשִׁכְלוֹ, וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ הוֹצִיא אוֹתוֹ מִכֶּחָ אֶל הַפַּעַל.

וְחֻקָּה תַתְּמָא הִיטָה קוֹדֵם בְּעוֹלָם, וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ
נִסְתַּלְקָה מִמֶּנּוּ, וְכִשְׁרָאָה דְּבָר זֶה לְפָנָיו אַז נִזְכַּר
אוֹתָהּ. וְזוֹהוּ רָאָה מַעֲשֶׂה וְנִזְכַּר הִלָּכָה. כִּי ה' בְּחֻקָּה
יִסַּד אֶרֶץ, אִם כֵּן הַחֻקָּה הִיא בְּאֶרֶץ, פִּירוּשׁ
בְּדָבָרִים גִּשְׁמִיִּים, וְיִי שֶׁהוּא חֻקָּם כְּשֶׁרָאָה מַעֲשֶׂה
לְפָנָיו הוּא בָּא אֶל הַחֻקָּה שֶׁבָּהּ.

וְזוֹהוּ סוֹד הַיְבוּם, כִּי מִתַּחֲלָה הָיָה אָחִיו וְעַכְשָׁו נַעֲשֶׂה
אָבִיו. כִּי מִחֻמַּת הַדַּעַת הוּא בָּא לְמַדְרַגַּת חֻקָּה, וְזוֹה
הוּא אָב, וְכֵן בְּדָבָר זֶה מִחֻמַּת הַדַּעַת שְׁנוּתוֹ בְּדָבָר זֶה
הוּא בָּא אֶל הַחֻקָּה.

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And this is the wisdom of Shlomo who said, “I said, I will be wise, but it is far from me,” for he sought to reach wisdom, for “the Torah issues from wisdom,” and he was wise and desired to grasp the reason for the matter—that the red heifer purifies the impure and defiles the pure. The meaning: when he saw something coarse, he would elevate it to its source. And there are times when he would descend into the lower levels, even though he did not wish to, in order to extract sparks from there—like the way of a man who goes after a woman.

And this is the meaning of the verse: for Avraham was now in a test and in the lower realms—in the land of Egypt. And Hashem said to Avram: “Av” (father) signifies *chochmah*, “ram” (exalted) signifies exaltedness, and that is the yud at the beginning. “Go for yourself from your land”—from the higher land—and “from your birthplace and from your father’s house”: “his house” refers to his wife, which is *binah*. “To the land that I will show you”—that is the lower *chochmah*—so that “I will make you there into a great nation,” meaning: when he elevates the lower levels, then proselytes (souls from below) are added to him.

וזה חכמת שלמה שאמר אמרתי אהבתי חכמה והיא רחוקה ממני. כי הוא היה רוצה לבוא אל החכמה, כי אורייתא מחכמה נפקת, והוא היה חכם והיה רוצה לבוא אל הטעם מדבר זה כי פרה אדמה מטהרת טמאים ומטמא טהורים. פירוש, בשרא דבר מגונה היה מעלה אותו אל שורשו. ויש עתים שהוא היה בא במדרגות התחתונים אף שהוא אינו רוצה, הוא כדי להוציא משם ניצוציו, על דרך דרכו של איש לחזור אחר אשה.

וזה פירוש הפסוק, כי אברהם היה עתה בנסיון, והוא במדרגות התחתונים בארץ מצרים. ויאמר ה' אל אברהם, א"ב הוא חכמה ר"ם הוא רוממות והוא יו"ד בראש, לך לך מארצה, והוא מארץ עליון, וממולדתך ומבית אביך, ביתו זו אשתו, והיא בינה, אל הארץ אשר אראך, והוא חכמה תתאה, כדי שאעשהך שם לגוי גדול. פירוש, אם הוא מעלה ממדרגות התחתונים אז ניתוספו בו גרים.

[NOTE Summary

The Maggid teaches that the command to Avraham, “לך לך,” reveals two manifestations of divine wisdom: *Chochmah Ila'ah* (Supernal Wisdom) and *Chochmah Tata'ah* (Lower Wisdom). Supernal Wisdom is the pristine, creative insight that emanates directly from the Infinite — like the initial flash of conception before form. Lower Wisdom, however, exists already embedded in the world; it lies dormant within physical things, waiting to be rediscovered through perception. Thus, when a wise person “sees a deed,” he recalls the law and the divine order that resides within it.

This is the meaning of “Hashem founded the earth with wisdom”: even the physical world conceals divine intelligence. The Maggid illustrates this with the parable of an artisan who first sketches a design in his mind so as not to forget it — symbolizing the Supernal Wisdom — and only later fashions it in reality, representing the Lower Wisdom that manifests in the world.

By engaging the world with *Daas* (inner awareness), a person can ascend from comprehension to insight, uniting with the inner *Chochmah*. This is the secret of *Yibbum* (levirate marriage): at first “he was his brother,”

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but through this union he becomes “his father,” symbolizing ascent from the emotional to the intellectual, from being influenced by the world to influencing it with divine consciousness.

Shlomo HaMelech’s words, “I said, I will be wise, but it is far from me,” express the paradox of the seeker — that wisdom cannot be seized through intellect alone, for the Torah itself issues from a plane higher than reason. Even the paradox of the Red Heifer, which purifies the impure and defiles the pure, stems from that level of *Chochmah* where opposites unite. When Shlomo perceived impurity, he sought to elevate it back to its source, redeeming fallen sparks from the lower realms.

So too Avraham’s descent to Egypt was a spiritual mission, not a fall. “לך לך” means: “Go for yourself,” ascend through descent — from your “land” (your natural spiritual state), “from your birthplace” (your emotional identity), and “from your father’s house” (your intellectual comfort), to the “land I will show you,” the lower *Chochmah* where the Divine becomes manifest in matter. By doing so, “I will make you into a great nation,” for every descent and refinement draws new souls, new sparks, and new divine light.

Practical Takeaway

The Maamer invites us to view every personal challenge or descent not as failure but as a divine assignment — an opportunity to reveal hidden wisdom within the physical world. When we engage life’s ordinary or even lowly moments with awareness, we can transform them into vessels of holiness. True wisdom is not found in separation from the world but in perceiving the Divine within it, remembering “the law” through every “deed.” Each test, like Avraham’s, is Hashem saying: “Go for yourself — discover Me within what appears farthest.”

Chassidic Story

Once, the Maggid of Mezritch observed one of his disciples struggling with a difficult passage in Torah and growing disheartened. The Maggid said to him, “You must not seek G-d only in what you understand. Seek Him in the very place where you lose understanding.” The student asked, “How can I find Him there?” The Maggid replied, “Because when you lose the light of your own intellect, you enter His light.”

This story embodies the Maamer’s message: the journey “לך לך” — leaving the land of the familiar intellect — allows one to reach the divine wisdom that pervades all things, transforming descent into revelation.

END NOTE]

Siman #21

“I am El Shaddai; walk before Me and be perfect.” Our Sages said: Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him, fulfilled the entire Torah. It is necessary to understand — how did he fulfill the entire Torah?

אני אל שדי התהלך לפני והיה תמים. אמרו רז"ל
אברהם אבינו עליו השלום קיים כל התורה כולה.
ויש להבין, איך קיים כל התורה כולה.

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And we shall explain this matter. It is known as a great principle that all 613 commandments are branches of the Torah, and the Torah is the inclusive totality of the commandments, and each part of Torah is a commandment.

וּנְבָאָר זֶה הָעֵנִי, כִּי יָדוּעַ כִּי כָלֵל גָּדוֹל הוּא שְׁכָל תַּרְנִיג מִצְוֹת הֵם עֲנָפֵי הַתּוֹרָה, וְהַתּוֹרָה הִיא כָלֵל הַמִּצְוֹת, וְכָל חֵלֶק מִהַתּוֹרָה הִיא מִצְוָה.

And before the giving of the Torah, Avraham Avinu had only the commandment of circumcision. Yet within this one commandment was contained the vitality of all the Torah — the life-force of all the commandments — condensed within it.

וְקוֹדֵם מִתֵּן תּוֹרָה לֹא הָיָה לְאַבְרָהָם אַבְיָנוּ עָלָיו הַשְׁלֹם אֵלָּא מִצְוַת מִילָה, וְהָיָה בְּזוֹ הַמִּצְוָה הַחַיּוּת שְׁכָלֹל בְּכָל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה — הַחַיּוּת שֶׁל כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת — שְׁכָלֹל כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה בְּזוֹ הַמִּצְוָה דֶּרֶךְ צִמְצוּם.

Afterwards, at the giving of the Torah, that inner vitality expanded into many branches. But before this, it existed only in a state of contraction — all the life and all the details compressed within it.

וְאַחֵר כֵּן, בְּנִתְיִנַת הַתּוֹרָה, הָיָה הַתַּפְשֻׁטוּת עַל כָּמָה עֲנָפִים. וְקוֹדֵם לָזֶה לֹא הָיָה רַק דֶּרֶךְ צִמְצוּם — כָּל הַחַיּוּת וְכָל הַחֲלָקִים בַּתּוֹכָהּ.

Therefore, when he fulfilled the commandment of circumcision, he understood through it all the spiritual branches related to the Torah and directed his intention toward them all. Thus he was said to have fulfilled the entire Torah.

וְלִפְיָכֹךְ כְּאֲשֶׁר קָיָם מִצְוַת מִילָה, הִבִּין מִזֶּה כָּל הָעֲנָפִים הַשְּׂמִיכִים לַתּוֹרָה, וְכֵן פָּנַת בָּלֶם, וְלָכֵן נִקְרָא קָיָם כָּל הַתּוֹרָה.

Likewise, we observe in a small child that he is constantly angry about whatever is done to him, whether great or small. For there are 365 negative commandments, and in his childhood they are all contracted into this one emotional trait.

וְכֵן אֲנוּ רוֹאִים בְּתִינוּק שֶׁבִּילְדוּתוֹ הוּא תָּמִיד בְּכַעַס גָּדוֹל עַל כָּל מַה שְּׁעוֹשִׂים לוֹ, בֵּין דָּבָר גָּדוֹל בֵּין דָּבָר קָטָן. כִּי יֵשׁ שׁ"ס הַמִּצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה, וּבִקְטָנוּתוֹ הֵם בָּלֶם מִצִּמְצוּמִים בְּמַדָּה זֹאת.

It is like idolatry, which is considered equivalent to transgressing the entire Torah — all of them included in one root emotion. When the child grows, the branches become distinct, each finding its own place among the prohibitions.

כְּמוֹ עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה שֶׁשְּׁקוּלָהּ כְּכָל הָעוֹבֵר עַל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה, וְעַל כֵּן כְּשֶׁנִּתְגַּלָּה נִפְרִים הָעֲנָפִים, שֶׁבִּקְטָנוּתוֹ הֵם בָּלֶם מִצִּמְצוּמִים בְּכַעַס הַשְּׁקוּל כְּעוֹבֵר עַל כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה, וּכְשֶׁנִּתְגַּדֵּל נִפְרָו הָעֲנָפִים.

Therefore it is written “El Shaddai,” meaning the One Who said to His world “Enough,” for this is the quality of contraction (*tzimtzum*). The name “Shaddai” thus relates to the holy covenant — the foundation of Divine limitation and expression.

לְפִיכֹךְ אָמַר אֵל שַׁדַּי, שֶׁאָמַר לְעוֹלָמוֹ דִּי, שֶׁהוּא מַדַּת הַצִּמְצוּם כְּנֻפָּר, וְזֶהוּ כִּי הִכְנִי מִסוּד בְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ הוּא נִשְׁדָּי.

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[NOTE Summary

The Maggid of Mezritch explains that the command “I am El Shaddai; walk before Me and be perfect” reveals how Avraham Avinu could fulfill the entire Torah before it was given. The Maggid teaches that all 613 mitzvos are branches of one unified essence — the Torah itself. Before Sinai, this divine vitality existed in a concentrated form, entirely contained within one mitzvah: circumcision. Through performing this single mitzvah with total awareness, Avraham accessed the inner life-force that includes and animates all commandments, thereby “fulfilling the entire Torah.”

This principle, the Maggid adds, reflects the mystery of *tzimtzum* — divine contraction. Just as Hashem said to His world “Enough” (*Dai*) and compressed infinite light into finite creation, so too the Torah’s infinite expressions were once compressed into one act of covenant. In this concentrated mitzvah of circumcision resided the soul of all divine service: self-limitation for the sake of holiness, channeling infinite vitality through finite form.

To illustrate, the Maggid compares this to a child whose entire emotional range is undifferentiated. The child’s anger encompasses all potential reactions in one raw, undivided state. As the child matures, this energy unfolds into distinct emotional expressions. So too, before the Torah’s revelation, the spiritual “branches” of the mitzvos were hidden within one root; only after the giving of the Torah did they unfold into separate commandments.

Practical Takeaway

Every mitzvah, even the simplest act of holiness, contains within it the essence of all others. When performed with complete consciousness and devotion, a single deed can connect us to the totality of divine will. The call of *El Shaddai* — “enough” — reminds us to find infinity within limitation, to reveal boundless holiness within finite, daily actions.

Chassidic Story

Once, the Maggid of Mezritch noticed a disciple praying slowly and tearfully, trembling with awe. Afterward, he asked him what verse he had been reciting. The student said, “I could not move past *Shema Yisrael*; it felt as though all the Torah was inside those words.” The Maggid replied, “Indeed, when the heart opens fully, even one word of Torah can hold the light of all 613 mitzvos.”

This story captures the essence of the Maamer: that divine infinity can dwell within a single, devoted moment — just as Avraham’s one mitzvah contained all of Torah itself.

END NOTE]