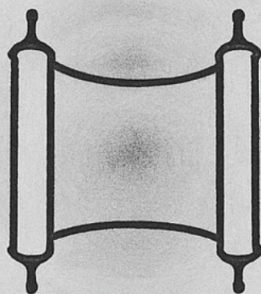


בס"ד

**Reb Meir of Premishlan**

**Divrie Meir**

**Parshas Lech Lecha**



*Dedicated To:*

טנייה מלכה בת דינה דבורה  
דפואה שלמה

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## Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

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Parshas Lech Lecha

ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך יב, א

**And Hashem said to Avram, “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you” (Bereishis 12:1)**

Once, a Jew came to the Rebbe, Rabbi Meir'l [of Premishlan], with his request that he be saved with seed that is lasting. The Rebbe, of blessed memory, asked him, “Have you ever learned in cheder the first verses of Parshas Lech Lecha with Rashi?”

The Jew answered, “Yes.” The Rebbe, Rabbi Meir'l, said to him, “If you have learned and you remember, recall now what Rashi says on the first verse here — ‘You are not worthy to have children...’ — and translate each word, word for word.”

The Jew said, “I know it as my teacher taught me — here, ‘you will not have children.’” The Rebbe, Rabbi Meir'l, said to him, “We are from Ashkenaz; therefore, we must speak in the Ashkenazic tongue and translate slowly: ‘Here’ — הִיעֵר, ‘not’ — אֵי נִישֵׁט — ‘you merit’ — אַתָּה זֹכָה, ‘you will merit to be’ — צו קינדער — ‘children’ — וועסטו זוכה זיין.”

“And now,” the Rebbe continued, “say the translation joined together: ‘Here — not — you will merit to be — to children,’ and the meaning is — do not be an adulterer, and you will merit to have children.”

### [NOTE Summary:

This teaching recounts how Rabbi Meir of Premishlan guided a Jew who longed for children. The Rebbe asked if he had learned the opening verses of Parshas Lech Lecha with Rashi. When the man confirmed, the Rebbe urged him to recall Rashi’s words, but to translate them slowly in Ashkenazic Yiddish. The adjusted translation revealed a positive message — “Here... not... you will merit... to children” — reframing the phrase to mean: avoid immorality and you will merit offspring. The Rebbe thus turned what seemed like a negative statement into a constructive spiritual directive.

### Practical Takeaway:

The way we interpret words can shape our destiny. Even when something appears negative, reframing it through a lens of faith and upright conduct can reveal blessing. Clean living, moral integrity, and guarding oneself from sin are channels for Divine blessing and fulfillment.

**END NOTE]**

פעם אחת בא יהודי להרבי רבי מאירל [מפרמישלאן] בבקשתו שיושע בגרע של קינמא. שאל אותו הרבי ז"ל, האם למדת פעם בחדר פסוקים הראשונים של פרשת לך לך עם רש"י.

ענה היהודי, כן. אמר לו הרבי רבי מאירל, אם למדת ואתה זוכר, הזכר נא מה שרש"י אומר בפסוק הראשון כאן — אי אתה זוכה לבנים כו' — ותרגם כל תבה מלה במלה.

אמר היהודי, אני יודע איך שהמלמד שלי למד אותי, כאן לא יהיו לך בנים. אמר לו הרבי רבי מאירל, הרי אנחנו יוצאי אשכנז, על פן צריכים אנחנו לדבר בלשון אשכנז, ולתרגם לאט: כאן — הִיעֵר, אֵי נִישֵׁט, אתה זוכה — וועסטו זוכה זיין, לבנים — צו קינדער.

ועכשו תאמר התרגום בחבור יחד: יהירר נישט, וועסטו זוכה זיין צו קינדער. והפננה היא, אל תהיה נואף ותזכה לבנים.

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וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד בֵּית אֵל עַד הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיָה שָׁם אֶהְיֶה בֵּתחֲלָה בֵּין אֵל וּבֵין הָעַי יג, ג

**And he went on his journeys from the south and until Beis El, until the place where his tent had been at first, between Beis El and between the Ai (Bereishis 13:3)**

The words of the holy Rebbe, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, may his merit protect us, in explanation of Rashi on the verse, “And he went on his journeys” — that on his return he paid his debts. When our forefather Avraham, peace be upon him, went into exile, he remained like one in debt to many people, for he had inclined to instill in their hearts faith and trust.

And they had known of the promise, “And I will bless you, and I will make your name great...” (Bereishis 12:2), yet here all their faith was concealed from them, for they saw that Avraham had to go into exile. But he reassured them that they would yet see that good would sprout from this, and that all the blessings that Hashem, may He be blessed, had promised him would yet be fulfilled.

And on his return, when he came back with wealth and great honor, he paid all his debts, for they all saw that he had been blessed with all the blessings. Consequently, all their questions were repaid, and it was clarified to them that he had spoken truth in his words.

### [NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, interpreting Rashi on the verse “And he went on his journeys” (Bereishis 13:3), explains that Avraham’s return from exile was more than a physical journey — it was a repayment of spiritual debts. When Avraham first went into exile, many people who had been inspired by his words of faith and trust in Hashem began to doubt, for they saw him forced into hardship despite the Divine promise, “And I will bless you and make your name great” (Bereishis 12:2). Avraham reassured them that this too would lead to good, and the blessings would be fulfilled. When he returned in wealth and honor, all saw the promise realized. Their earlier doubts were resolved, and his truth was confirmed in their eyes.

### Practical Takeaway:

Challenges in life may cause others — and even ourselves — to question our path and Hashem’s promises. The way to “repay our debts” is to stay steadfast in faith and continue walking the journey, confident that the end will reveal the goodness hidden in the process. Our steadfastness can restore faith not only within ourselves but also in those we influence.

דברי הרבי הקדוש הרבי ר' מאיר מפרמישלאן זכותו יגן עלינו בפרוש רש"י על הפסוק "וילך למסעיו" — שבחזרתו פרע הקפותיו. דכשהלך אברהם אבינו עליו השלום בגלות היה נשאר בעל חוב להרבה אנשים שנטה להחדיר בלבם אמונה ובטחון.

והמה ידעו בהבטחת "ואברכה ואגדלה שמך וגו'" וכאן נסתרה להם כל האמונה כי ראו שנצטרך אברהם לילך לגלות. והוא הרגיע אותם שעוד יראו שיצמח מזה טובה ועוד יקיים בו כל הברכות שהבטיחו השם יתברך.

ובחזרתו, כשחזר בעשירות וכבוד גדול, פרע כל הקפותיו, כי ראו כלם שנתברך בכל הברכות, וממילא נפרע להם כל הקשיות ונתברר להם שצדק בדבריו.



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### Chassidic Story:

Once, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan was approached by a man burdened with doubt. He had followed the Rebbe's advice in business but had suffered losses. Rabbi Meir told him a mashal: "A man once lent a farmer seeds, promising that they would yield abundance. The farmer planted them, but the field looked bare for weeks. Passersby mocked him for trusting the lender. But come harvest time, the field overflowed with grain — and the farmer repaid his debts with joy. Faith, too, is a seed. Give it time, and the blessings will sprout." The man regained his resolve, and later, his situation turned for the better — confirming the Rebbe's words.

END NOTE]

וְאִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לֵה' מְאֹד יג, יג

**And the men of Sodom were wicked and sinful toward Hashem exceedingly (13:13)**

There are four types of people: one who says, "What is mine is yours and what is yours is mine"—this is an unlearned person. "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours"—this is a median trait, though some say it is the trait of Sodom (Avos 5:10).

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּאָדָם הָאוֹמֵר שְׁלִי שְׁלֶךְ וְשְׁלֶךְ שְׁלִי עִם הָאָרֶץ, שְׁלִי שְׁלִי וְשְׁלֶךְ שְׁלֶךְ זֶה מִדָּה בִּינוּנִית, וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים זֶה מִדַּת סְדֹם וְכו' אֲבוֹת פ"ה מ"י

I heard from my teacher and master, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, to ask: why do they call it the trait of Sodom if one might say it is a neutral trait? And just as the commentators asked in Parshas Noach about those who interpret unfavorably where it could be interpreted favorably.

וְשִׁמְעָתִי בְּשֵׁם מוֹרֵי וְרַבֵּי רַבִּי מְאִיר מִפְּרִי־שְׁלָאן לְתַמַּח, לָמָּה אוֹמְרִים שֶׁהִיא מִדַּת סְדֹם מֵאַחַר שֶׁיֵּשׁ מְקוֹם לִדְמוֹת שֶׁהִיא מִדָּה בִּינוּנִית, וְכֵמוֹ שֶׁהִקְשׁוּ מִפְּרָשֵׁי הַתּוֹרָה בְּפֶרֶשְׁת נֹחַ עַל הַיֵּשׁ דּוֹרְשִׁין לְגַבְּאֵי בְּמִקְוֶה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לְדָרֵשׁ לְשִׁבְחָהּ.

Also, why indeed is it the trait of Sodom if he says "what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours," and he has no desire for what belongs to others, only his own?

גַּם לָמָּה הוּא בְּאֵמַת מִדַּת סְדֹם כְּשֶׁהוּא אוֹמֵר וְשְׁלִי שְׁלִי וְשְׁלֶךְ שְׁלֶךְ וְאִין חֶפֶץ בְּשֶׁל אֲחֵרִים רַק בְּשֶׁלּוֹ.

See Rashi there, and this is his wording: for we find with Shmuel the Ramite, as it says (I Samuel 7:17), "and his dwelling was in Ramah, for there was his house"—he desired nothing of others, only his own. If so, why do they call it the trait of Sodom?

וְעֵין שֵׁם בְּרַש"י כִּי וְזֶה לְשׁוֹנוֹ שֶׁפֶן מְצִינוּ בְּשִׁמוּאֵל הַרַמְתִּי שְׁנֵאֲמַר בּוֹ (שִׁמוּאֵל א ז, יז) וְתִשְׁכְּתוּ הָרַמְתָּה כִּי שֵׁם בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה חֶפֶץ בְּשֶׁל אֲחֵרִים רַק בְּשֶׁלּוֹ כִּי, וְאַם כֵּן יֵשׁ לְתַמָּה לָמָּה אָמְרוּ הַיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים שֶׁהוּא מִדַּת סְדֹם:

It can be explained that all is one statement, and there is no dispute: there are people whose inside is not like their outside.

וְאֶפְשָׁר לִדְמוֹת שֶׁהִכָּל מֵאֲמָר אֶחָד הוּא וְאִין חוֹלֵק בְּזֶה, דְּהִנֵּה יֵשׁ אֲנָשִׁים שֶׁאִין תּוֹכָם כְּבָרָם,

With their mouths they say, "what is yours is yours," as if they desire nothing from others, but in their hearts they plot evil thoughts—to rob their fellow or cut off his livelihood. This is the trait of Sodom.

וּבְפִיָּהֶם הֵם אוֹמְרִים שְׁלֶךְ שְׁלֶךְ שֶׁאִין חֶפֶצִים בְּשֶׁל אֲחֵרִים, וּבְלִבָּם חוֹשְׁבִים מְחַשְּׁבוֹת רָעוֹת לְגִזֹּל אֶת הַחֵבֶר וּלְקַפֵּחַ פְּרִנְסָתוֹ, זֶה הוּא מִדַּת סְדֹם:

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As I heard in the name of the holy righteous master: “And the men of Sodom were wicked and sinful toward Hashem exceedingly.” It should have said “exceedingly toward Hashem”—why is “toward Hashem” before “exceedingly”?

כְּאִשֶּׁר שְׁמַעְתִּי בְשֵׁם הָרֵב הַצַּדִּיק הַקָּדוֹשׁ וְאִנְשֵׁי סֹדֶם  
,רְעִים וְחַטָּאִים לַד' מֵאֵד דְּהִנֵּה לִיה לְמִימַר מֵאֵד לַד'

Rather, “they were wicked” refers to their bodies, “and sinful” refers to their wealth, “toward Hashem exceedingly”—meaning, in their mouths they claimed their hearts were for Heaven.

אֵלָּא שֶׁהֵיוּ רְעִים בְּגוּפָם וְחַטָּאִים בְּמַמּוֹנָם לַד' מֵאֵד  
רָצָה לִזְמַר שֶׁאֲמָרוּ בְּפִיהֶם שְׁלֹכָם לַשָּׁמַיִם

And this is what our sages said: “One who says what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours—this is a median trait, but there are those who say it is the trait of Sodom.”

וְנָה שֶׁאֲמָרוּ חֲזו"ל הָאוֹמֵר שְׁלִי שְׁלִי שְׁלִי שְׁלֹךְ שְׁלֹךְ זֶה מִדָּה  
,בִּינוּנִית', אֲכֹל יֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים

Meaning, those who *say* such things with their mouths—“what is yours is yours”—but in their hearts are men of blood and deceit, seeking ways to rob their fellow, this is truly the trait of Sodom.

רָצָה לִזְמַר שֶׁהָאוֹמְרִים כֹּה בְּפִיהֶם שְׁלֹךְ שְׁלֹךְ וּבְלִבָּם  
הֵם אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים וּמְרָמָה מְבַקְּשִׁים דְּרָכִים לְגֹזֵל אֶת  
,תְּכַרְו' זֶה וְזֶה וְדֹאֵי מִדַּת סֹדֶם

But one whose heart is true and says sincerely, “what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours,” not desiring what belongs to others—this is a median trait, and there is no dispute about it.

אֲכֹל הַדְּבַר אֱמֶת בְּלִבָּבוֹ וְאוֹמֵר בְּאֵמֶת שְׁלִי שְׁלִי שְׁלֹךְ  
שְׁלֹךְ שֶׁאֵין חֶפֶץ בְּשֵׁל אֲחֵרִים 'זֶה מִדָּה בִּינוּנִית' וְאֵין  
חִוּלָק בֵּינָה

### [NOTE Summary

Reb Meir of Premishlan examines the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avos* (5:10), which describes four personality types in relation to possessions. One who says “What’s mine is mine and what’s yours is yours” is usually considered average, yet some call this the *trait of Sodom*. He questions: how can this attitude be evil if it expresses simple fairness and contentment with one’s own? Reb Meir explains that the distinction lies in **inner truth**. There are people whose words say “what’s yours is yours,” implying generosity or respect, but whose hearts secretly plot to exploit, deceive, or undermine others. Outwardly they appear honest; inwardly they seek to gain at another’s expense. This duplicity is the essence of Sodom, whose people claimed righteousness while being inwardly corrupt.

When the Torah says, “And the men of Sodom were wicked and sinful toward Hashem exceedingly” (Bereishis 13:13), the verse should grammatically read “exceedingly toward Hashem.” The reversal hints, says Reb Meir, that their sins were not only against God but *in the name of God*—they justified selfish cruelty with pious claims. They were “wicked in body and sinful with wealth”—greedy and self-serving—but spoke as though “their hearts were for Heaven.” Thus, when the sages say “some call it the trait of Sodom,” they mean those whose mouths speak fairness yet whose hearts conceal envy and deceit. However, one who sincerely says “what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is yours,” with no jealousy or greed, truly possesses a balanced, upright trait.

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### Practical Takeaway

The holiness of character is measured not by words but by motives. Saying “what’s mine is mine” can be an act of selfishness or an act of integrity, depending on whether the heart aligns with the mouth. Chassidus teaches that divine service begins with *tocho kebaro*—inner and outer harmony. The path of Sodom is hypocrisy masked by piety; the path of holiness is honesty without pretense. Every Jew must therefore examine not only their actions but also their intentions: do I truly wish others well, or do I secretly hope for their loss? True righteousness is transparent kindness.

### Chassidic Story

Once, a wealthy man from a nearby town came to Reb Meir of Premishlan asking for advice about a business rival who had cheated him. The man said bitterly, “Rebbe, I will not rest until I take back what is mine.” Reb Meir smiled and said, “Then you have already lost it twice—once when he took it, and again when you let it live inside your heart.” The man protested, “But it’s only justice!” Reb Meir answered, “Justice without mercy is Sodom. Ask yourself: do you seek what is yours, or do you crave that he should have less?” The man stood silent. “If you can bless him to have what is his,” Reb Meir concluded, “then Hashem will surely return to you what is truly yours.” **END NOTE]**

וּמִלְכִּי צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וַיְיִן וְהוּא כֹהֵן לֵאלֹהֵי יִד, יח

**And Melchizedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine, and he was a priest to G-d Most High. (14:18)**

“And Melchizedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine.” One might wonder why it does not say, “And Melchizedek king of Shalem, priest of G-d Most High, brought out bread and wine.”

וּמִלְכִּי צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וַיְיִן וְהוּא כֹהֵן לֵאלֹהֵי יִד, יח  
עָלִיוֹן. וְלִכְאוּרָה קֹשֶׁה וְלָמָּה לֹא כָתִיב וּמִלְכִּי צֶדֶק  
מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם כֹּהֵן לֵאלֹהֵי יִד, יח הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וַיְיִן

I heard from my teacher and master, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan: when two tzaddikim meet, each learns from the other the good traits that are within him.

וְשִׁמְעָתִי בְּשֵׁם מוֹרֵי וְרַבִּי רַבִּי מְאִיר מְפָרְמִישְׁלָאן,  
דְּהֵינָה יָדוּעַ כְּאֲשֶׁר שְׁנֵי צַדִּיקִים יִתְוַעְדוּ יַחַד לְוִמַּד כָּל  
אַחַד מִחֲבֵרֵי מַדּוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת שֶׁיֵּשׁ בּוֹ

When Avraham our father met with Shem, who is Melchizedek, each absorbed the virtues of the other.

וְכַאֲשֶׁר אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ נִתְוַעַד עִם שֵׁם הוּא מִלְכִּי צֶדֶק,  
לְמַד כָּל אַחַד מִמֵּדוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת שֶׁל חֲבֵרוֹ

This is the meaning of “Melchizedek king of Shalem brought out”—from the word *motzi* (to bring forth), meaning he drew out and elevated sparks.

וְזֶה הוּא הַפְּרוּשׁ וּמִלְכִּי צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא מְלִשּׁוֹן  
מוֹצִיא נְצוּצוֹת

He learned from Avraham the qualities of kindness and hospitality—giving bread and wine.

הֵינּוּ שֶׁלְמַד מֵאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ מַדּוֹת גְּמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים  
'וְהַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים, שֶׁנֶּתַן לָהֶם לֶחֶם וַיְיִן

## Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Lech Lecha

And “he”—the word refers to Avraham—learned from Melchizedek, from whom he studied Torah in his beis midrash.

והוא, פרוש תבות והוא קאי על אברהם אבינו, שלמד מן מלכי צדק שהיה לומד תורה בבית מדרשו,

Thus both tzaddikim contained within themselves all good traits—Torah and deeds of kindness.

והיה בשני הצדיקים כל המדות הטובות תורה וגמילות חסדים

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said another explanation, humorously: Shem the son of Noach was old and sat in yeshiva in the days of Avraham.

אמר רבי מאיר מפרימישלאן באופן אחר בדרך הלצה, והנה נודע כי שם בן נח היה זקן ויושב בישיבה בימי אברהם אבינו עליו השלום,

For there were ten generations from Noach to Avraham, so Shem was already very old, sitting and teaching people the ways of Hashem.

כי הרי עשרה דורות היו מנח עד אברהם, ונמצא כי בימי אברהם אבינו עליו השלום כבר היה שם זקן מאד, והיה יושב בישיבה ומלמד לבני אדם דרך השם יתברך.

When Avraham began to recognize his Creator and teach others the path of Hashem, Shem heard that a young man was gathering students and teaching divine service.

וכיון שהתחיל אברהם אבינו עליו השלום להכיר את בוראו והתחיל ללמד לבני אדם דרך השם, והיה שומע שם בן נח שעמד אחד רב בשנים ומלמד לבני אדם דרך עבודה

He asked about him—“Who is this and what is his nature?” They told him: “He brings in guests, gives bread to the hungry, and always engages in acts of charity and kindness.”

והיה שואל עליו מי הוא זה ומה טיבו, והשיבו לו שהוא מכניס אורחים ונותן להם לרעבים, ומאכיל ומשקה לכל עובדי דרך ועוסק תמיד בצדקה וגמילות חסדים.

Shem said, “If so, he is a host, but not a teacher of Torah.” He wondered why so many students were drawn to him.

ואמר שם בן נח אם כן הוא מכניס אורח, אבל לא רב ורבי ללמד לבני אדם תורת השם, והיה לפלא בעיניו על שמתקבצים אליו התלמידים.

When they finally met face to face, Shem wanted to test Avraham—to see if he had any inner service of Hashem beyond kindness and hospitality.

וכיון שנתוודעו עתה ונתראו פנים אל פנים יחד, רצה שם בן נח לחקור על הדבר ולהיות על קנקנו של אברהם לראות מה טיבו, אם יש בו עבודה חוץ ממדה שהוא מכניס אורח

Therefore it says, “And Melchizedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine”—he displayed this good trait of feeding the hungry, to test whether Avraham possessed anything beyond it.

ונמצא זה שפתוב ומלכי צדק מלך שלם הוציא להם ויין, רצה לומר זו המדה הטובה שהוא נותן להם ויין לרעבים וצמאים ומתנהג בגמילות חסדים זה הוציא, מן הכלל

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“And he was a priest to G-d Most High” means that Shem saw Avraham had, besides kindness, also true service of Hashem—with Torah, prayer, and perfection.

לראות אם יש בו באברהם חיוץ לזה גם כן איזה דרכי עבודת השם יתברך. והוא כהן לאל עליון, רצה לומר ראה שגם חיוץ ממדה זו הוא כהן לאל עליון, ועובד השם יתברך בתורה ועבודה גם כן בתכלית השלמות. והוא כהן לאל עליון.

Thus concludes his holy words—words of the wise are gracious and lips shall kiss them.

עד כאן תרף דברי קדשו, ודברי פי חכם חן ושפתיים ינשקו:

“And Melchizedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine, and he was priest to G-d Most High.” In the name of the holy Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, he interpreted:

ומלכי צדק מלך שלם הוציא לחם ויין והוא כהן לאל עליון. בשם הרב הקדוש רבי מאיר מפרימישלאן, זצ"ל שפירש,

“Melchizedek”—who can justify (*matzduk*) the King of the world, the Holy One Blessed be He, whether in affliction or in goodness?

ומלכי צדק. מי יכול להצדיק מלכו של עולם הוא, הקדוש ברוך הוא בין בעקבא בין בטובא,

“King of Shalem”—the one who is master of peace, who is a tzaddik complete in all mitzvos.

מלך שלם. פרוש מי שהוא אדון השלום, שהוא צדיק השלם בכל המצוות.

“He brought out bread and wine”—this tzaddik is able to bring forth and bestow upon the world blessing, life, and sustenance.

הוציא לחם ויין, צדיק זה יכול להשפיע לכל העולם, שפע ברכה חיים ופרנסה.

“And he was a priest to G-d Most High”—meaning, a priest is one who has power over the Supreme, as our sages said: the Holy One decrees, and the tzaddik nullifies it.

והוא כהן לאל עליון, פרוש כהן הוא שר על עליון בביכול, כמו שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל, הקדוש ברוך הוא גוזר וצדיק מבטלו, ודברי פי חכם חן

### [NOTE Summary

Avraham’s encounter with Melchizedek (Shem) reveals two dimensions of holiness meeting in harmony: Torah and Chesed. Rabbi Meir of Premishlan teaches that when two tzaddikim meet, each one draws out the sparks of holiness and learns the other’s virtues. Thus, Melchizedek, king of Shalem, “brought out bread and wine”—he drew forth the sparks of Avraham’s kindness, learning from him the trait of generosity and hospitality. At the same time, Avraham absorbed from Melchizedek the inner quality of Torah wisdom, learning in his beis midrash. Both tzaddikim thereby became complete—each embodying both Torah and good deeds, intellect and action.

Rabbi Meir humorously adds that Shem, though aged and revered, wondered about this young Avraham who gathered followers through kindness rather than scholarship. To test him, Shem “brought out bread and wine,” imitating Avraham’s way of giving, to see if Avraham had deeper avodah beyond chesed. Upon meeting, he recognized in Avraham not just a host but a true “priest to G-d Most High”—a man who united Torah, prayer, and love of Hashem. The test revealed Avraham’s full spiritual stature, integrating outward kindness with inward devotion.



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In another layer of interpretation, “Melchizedek king of Shalem” is read allegorically: *Melchizedek*—one who justifies the King, accepting all decrees of Heaven with love; *King of Shalem*—one who is whole in peace and mitzvos; *brought out bread and wine*—one who channels divine blessing and sustenance into the world; *and he was priest to G-d Most High*—a tzaddik whose holiness can even annul harsh decrees, as our sages taught: “The Holy One decrees, and the tzaddik nullifies it.”

### Practical Takeaway

The meeting of Avraham and Shem embodies the ideal balance between Torah study and kindness. True service of Hashem requires both inward devotion and outward generosity—wisdom without warmth becomes sterile, and kindness without spiritual grounding lacks endurance. Every person must strive to unite these two paths: to learn from others’ strengths, to draw out sparks of holiness wherever they appear, and to bring both compassion and Torah into every act of life.

### Chassidic Story

Once, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan was asked why he constantly praised others, even those considered simple or unlearned. He replied, “When two souls meet, each one has a spark the other lacks. If I honor every Jew, I draw from his spark, and he draws from mine. That is how we complete each other.” One day, he encountered a poor villager who gave away his last loaf of bread to a traveler. Rabbi Meir turned to his students and said, “This man has just taught me anew what it means to bring out bread and wine—to draw kindness from the heart and make a dwelling for the Divine.”

### END NOTE]

אחר הדברים האלה הנה דבר ה' אל אברם במחזה לאמר אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך שכרך הרבה מאד טו, א

**After these words, the word of Hashem came to Avram in a vision, saying: “Fear not, Avram, I am your shield; your reward is exceedingly great.” (15:1)**

“In the verse, ‘We seal with him and not with them’ (Pesachim 117b).” I heard that Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said: Avraham instituted the morning prayer (*Shacharis*) so that he could pray early and thus devote the rest of the day to welcoming guests—feeding and giving them drink himself—through which G-d’s Name would be proclaimed in the world.

בפסוק כה חותמין ולא בהם (פסחים קיז:). שמעתי  
שאמר רבי מאיר מפרמישלאן כי אברהם תקון  
שחרית כדי להתפלל בהשקמה ויוכל להכניס אורחים  
כל היום ולהאכילם ולהשקותם בעצמו ועל ידי זה  
יתפרסם אלקותו ותברך שמו

He desired to fulfill this mitzvah personally, not through a messenger, because “a mitzvah performed by oneself is greater than through one’s agent.”

ורצה דוקא לקיים בעצמו לא על ידי שליח כי מצוה  
בו יותר מבשלווחו

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But Yitzchak instituted *Minchah* because he would pray throughout the day until that time, and the hospitality that was his father's practice he arranged through others—through a messenger.

אָבֿל יִצְחָק תָּקַן מִנְחָה כִּי הִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל הַיּוֹם עַד זְמַן מִנְחָה, וּמִלֵּאכֶתוֹ בְּהִכְנֶסֶת אוֹרְחִים מִלֵּאכֶת אָבִיו, בְּעֶשְׂתָּהּ עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ עַל יְדֵי אַחֲרִים

Likewise, Yaakov instituted *Arvis*, for he prayed all day until evening and relied on others to carry out the hospitality of his father and grandfather.

וְכֵן יַעֲקֹב תָּקַן עֶרְבִית כִּי הִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל הַיּוֹם עַד הָעֶרֶב, וּבִטָּח גַּם הוּא לֹא הֵנִיחַ מִלֵּאכֶת אָבִיו וְזָקְנוֹ וְקָדְמָיו, הִכְנֶסֶת אוֹרְחִים עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ

Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Avraham: “Since My honor is so great in your eyes that you would not entrust this mitzvah of hospitality to any messenger, wishing that My G-dliness be publicized through you personally—”

עַל כֵּן אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְאַבְרָהָם אִם כָּל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדִי בְּעֵינֶיךָ שְׂלֵא הֶאֱמַנְתָּ לְשׁוּם שְׁלִיחַ בְּמִצְוַת הִכְנֶסֶת אוֹרְחִים כְּדִי שִׁיתְפָּרֶסֶם בְּעֶצְמָךְ אֱלֻקוּתִי, בְּעוֹלָם

“Therefore, I am your shield”—meaning, in return for your personal devotion, I Myself will be your protector, and so we conclude the Amidah “Shield of Avraham” and not of them—measure for measure.

עַל כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מָגֵן לָךְ, וּבָךְ חוֹתֵמִין מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם וְלֹא בָהֶם, מִדָּה כְּנֻגָּד מִדָּה

The holy Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said, regarding the verse (Mishlei 13:25) “The righteous one eats to the satisfaction of his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall lack,” that the tzaddik eats—though his soul is already satisfied—so that his guest too may eat his fill.

הַרֵב הַקְּדוֹשׁ רַבִּי מַאִיר מִפְּרִימִישְׁלָן ז"ל אָמַר עַל פֶּרוֹשׁ הַפֶּסוּק (מִשְׁלֵי יג, כה) יִצְדִּיק אָכַל לְשֹׂבַע נִפְשׁוֹ וּבִטָּן רִשְׁעִים תִּתְחַסֵּר, שֶׁהַצְדִּיק אוֹכֵל אֶף עַל פִּי שִׁשְׂבָּעָה נִפְשׁוֹ, כְּדִי שֶׁהָאוֹרֵחַ גַּם כֵּן יֵאָכֵל כְּדִי צָרְכּוֹ

But “the belly of the wicked shall lack”—he denies himself food so that his guest will also go hungry, and this seems good in his eyes.

אָבֿל בִּטָּן רִשְׁעִים תִּתְחַסֵּר, הֵינּוּ הוּא אֵינוֹ אוֹכֵל וּבִטָּנוֹ תִּתְחַסֵּר מִתְחַמֵּת הָרָעָב, וְכֵן זֶה שְׂוֵה לוֹ כְּדִי שֶׁגַּם הָאוֹרֵחַ לֹא יֵאָכֵל כָּל צָרְכּוֹ

But Avraham our father was the true tzaddik and the greatest master of hospitality. He would eat together with each guest so that they might eat to full satisfaction and be strengthened.

אָבֿל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ ז"ל הִיָּה הַצְדִּיק הָאֲמִתִּי וּבִעַל הַמִּכְנִס אוֹרְחִים הַכִּי גָדוֹל, וְהִיָּה אוֹכֵל עִם כָּל אֶחָד, וְאַחַד כְּדִי שִׁיאָכְלוּ כָּל צָרְכָם וְיִסְעֲדוּ לָבָם

Therefore he required a good “maagen” (stomach). Thus, the Holy One blessed be He promised him: “I am your shield”—I will give you a good stomach. These are the words of the holy Rebbe, spoken with humor and grace.

וְלִזֶּה הִיָּה צָרִיךְ מֵאָגֵן [מַעֲי] טוֹב, עַל כֵּן הִבְטִיחַ לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְאַנְכִי מָגֵן לָךְ אֲתֵן לָךְ מֵאָגֵן טוֹב, עַד כָּאֵן דְּבָרֵי הַרֵב הַקְּדוֹשׁ הִנֵּל עַל דְּרָךְ צַחוּת

## Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Lech Lecha

### [NOTE Summary

Reb Meir of Premishlan reveals the inner reason why the Amidah concludes with the words “*Shield of Avraham*” and not “*Shield of Yitzchak*” or “*Shield of Yaakov*.” Each of the three Patriarchs established a daily prayer that reflected his personal form of divine service. Avraham Avinu instituted Shacharis, the morning prayer, because he longed to begin his day with communion with Hashem, and then spend every remaining hour engaged in acts of hospitality—feeding and giving drink to strangers with his own hands. He did not send servants to do this for him, for as the Sages teach, “*Greater is the mitzvah performed by oneself than through a messenger.*” His goal was that G-dliness would be revealed through his personal actions, that the Name of Hashem should be known through kindness and love.

Yitzchak, by contrast, established Minchah, praying until the afternoon while his hospitality was handled through others. Yaakov instituted Maariv, continuing in the same path—trusting that others carried out his family’s legacy of welcoming guests. Thus Hashem said to Avraham, “*Since you wished to honor Me yourself, refusing to rely on others so that My Divinity would be publicized through you personally—therefore I Myself will be your shield, and in you the blessing will be sealed: ‘Shield of Avraham.’*”

Reb Meir continues with a tender parable: The verse says, “*The righteous eats to the satisfaction of his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall lack*” (Mishlei 13:25). The tzaddik, even when full, eats a little more—so that his guest may feel comfortable eating his fill. The wicked man, however, withholds even from himself, so that his guest will remain hungry as well. Avraham was the true tzaddik, eating together with each traveler so they could eat freely and feel at peace. For this, says Reb Meir with gentle humor, Avraham needed a “*maagen tov*”—a good stomach. Hashem therefore promised him, “*I am your maagen, your shield.*”

### Practical Takeaway

Hospitality in Avraham’s way is not just about giving—it is about sharing. The act of sitting and eating with another person transforms generosity into unity. When we give from ourselves directly—not through delegation—we reveal the living G-dliness that dwells within kindness itself. To be a “shield of Avraham” means to live with open hands and a warm heart, guarding others through love and personal presence.

### Chassidic Story

Once, a poor traveler came to Premishlan late at night. Reb Meir was already seated at his modest meal when the man knocked at the door. Instead of sending his attendant, Reb Meir himself ran to open, welcomed the stranger, and seated him beside him. As they ate together, the guest began to cry, confessing that he had not eaten in two days. Reb Meir smiled and said, “Then tonight you will taste double—once for your body and once for your soul.” When the man finished, Reb Meir whispered, “Now that you are full, I too feel satisfied. This is what it means that Hashem told Avraham, ‘*I am your shield*’—for one who protects the dignity of another is himself protected by Heaven.”

END NOTE]

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וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו קְחָה לִי עֵגְלָה מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְעִז מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְאַיִל מְשֻׁלֶּשׁ וְתֹר וְגֹזֶל טו, ט

**And He said to him: “Take for Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” (15:9)**

Regarding the grandchildren who are not the glory of their ancestors—who possess nothing of their own and live only through the merit of their forefathers—Rabbi Meir of Premishlan said:

על הנכדים שאינם תפארת אבותם, דלית להו מגרמיהו כלום ואוכלים אך בזכות אבותיהם, אמר רבי מאיר מפרימישלאן:

“And the bush (Sneh) was burning with fire” (Shemos 3:2)—the *sneh* is a barren tree, yet it is not consumed, meaning: the children may lack fruits of their own, but are sustained by the light of their forefathers.

והסנה (שמות ג, ב) מאי אילן סרק, אף על פי כן איננו נאכל, הינו הבנים שאינם עושים פרות מעצמם, אף על פי כן נזונים מזכות אבותם.

When such a person once sat at his table, and fish were brought before him, our holy Rebbe said: “Among fish (*de-bit*—in the foreign tongue) there are large ones and small ones. The large fish are very good, but the small ones—chew and spit them out.”

וכששבת אצלו איש כזה, כשנתנו דגים על השלחן, אמר רבנו הקדוש: יש במים דבית (בלע"ז דגים) גדולים ורבית קטנים, הרבית הגדולים הם טובים מאד, אבל הקטנים—תלעס ותרק.

To one such man he said, “Take for yourself a *heifer threefold*”—meaning, a wagon drawn by three horses; “a goat threefold”—three brazen-faced collectors; “and a turtledove”—that is, speak words of Torah; “and a young pigeon”—meaning, redeem people with kindness.”

לאחד מהם אמר: קח לך עגלה משלשת, רצה לומר עגלה עם שלושה סוסים; ועז משלשת—ושלושה עזי פנים לגבאים; ותר—ואמור תורה; וגוזל—והני גואל את הקריות.

### [NOTE Summary

Reb Meir of Premishlan interprets the verse “Take for Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon” (Bereishis 15:9) in a deeply allegorical way. He explains that it alludes to later generations who live on the spiritual credit of their ancestors—grandchildren who are not the glory of their forefathers and who possess no merit of their own. Like the burning bush that was not consumed, these descendants, though spiritually barren, continue to exist through the residual holiness of their parents and grandparents.

In his characteristically witty manner, Reb Meir adds that when such self-contented individuals came to his table, he would remark humorously that among fish there are big ones and small ones—the big ones are nourishing, but the small ones one should “chew and spit out.” Spiritually, the “big fish” symbolize tzaddikim who have depth and substance, while the “small fish” represent those who appear devout but lack inner vitality. To such a man he once said playfully: “Take for yourself a threefold heifer” (meaning a wagon with three horses); “a threefold goat” (three brazen-faced collectors); “a turtledove” (speak words of Torah); and “a young



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pigeon” (redeem people with kindness). Through this wordplay, Reb Meir conveyed that a person must use every gift—strength, courage, speech, and compassion—for holiness rather than self-importance.

**Practical Takeaway**

Even if one feels spiritually “small” or unworthy, they can still attach themselves to holiness through acts of giving and kindness. The lesson of Reb Meir’s humor is profound: external piety without compassion or learning is like a small fish with no nourishment. But when a person uses even the little they have to bring light and goodness to others, they become truly alive, sustained not only by ancestral merit but by their own awakened heart.

**END NOTE]**