

פרשת לך לך

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my wife, Devorah.

"לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ
אשר אראך" (יב, א)

**"Go for yourself from your land, from
your relatives, and from your father's
house to the land that I will show you."**

There are those who say that changing one's place of residence tears up a person's harsh verdict, as it says, "Hashem said to Abram, Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives" – followed by, "And I will make of you a great nation."¹

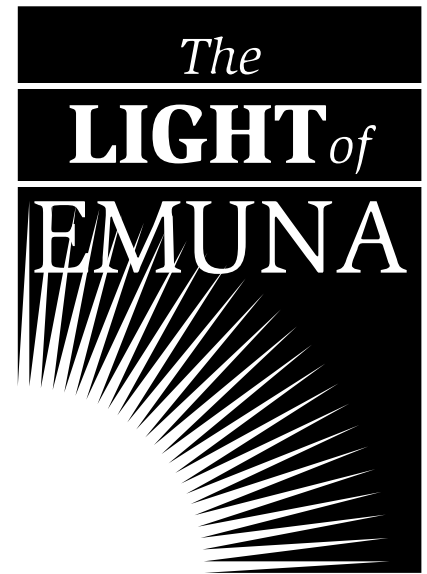
לך לך Go For Yourself

Life is a journey – a journey to our Father. It is a voyage of seeking that inner point, within our hearts. That point that every Jew possesses - a point of desire and longing for Hashem.

There are many obstacles along the way, many difficulties, and so many dark ports lacking light – we do not know how to continue – but there is no need to panic. This is the path that was prepared for us from the start and this is how it has to be. This is how HKB"H created the world, in this form. If everything went well for us, if everything succeeded, if everything was excellent, if everything was fabulous – we would possibly fall into forgetfulness, G-d forbid. But, if there are constant hindrances – there is no danger of overlooking - because we constantly gaze Heavenward. "Hashem help us, Hashem save us, Hashem we are shrouded in darkness, Hashem we cannot continue."

¹

ראש השנה טז:



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

Life is repeated brokenness and repair. There cannot be construction without demolition. There can be no rectification without prior impairment. When we acknowledge that this is the way life is, it is more agreeable.

"Go for Yourself" – to the place that our souls aspire and yearn for. We must remember that all of the delays and interferences, impediments and concealments are inseparable from the journey. **Absolutely nothing is excluded from Hashem's dominion.** Whatever occurs – Hashem is with us and by our side. There is no difficulty or challenge that is hidden from Hashem. Divine Providence escorts us at every step along our expedition. Everything leads us to the ultimate purpose. When a Jew relates to his complications, to the challenges that he endures, to his incessant withstanding – when he suddenly understands that Hashem is with him in the midst of the dark that he finds himself in at that moment – when we proceed with such *emuna* - it is much easier to continue.

The call of "go for yourself" is a call to every person to draw near to Hashem. The numerical value (*gematria*) of "לך לך" is 100. We must give all 100% to the voyage on which the soul drags the body to the coveted destination of clinging to Hashem. We must constantly move, constantly progress. We must forget ourselves for a bit, our desires – we must relentlessly attach to HKB"H's will, to incessantly seek hints and signs of how to

fulfill Hashem's wishes.

Avraham Avinu made so many souls in Haran and now Hashem commands him to leave everything and go. To where? To wherever I send you - follow Me. This kind of self-nullification is an amazingly exalted level.

Hashem speaks to us regularly, in so many ways. We must pay attention, to try to understand what Hashem wants of us. Therefore, we must seek solitude - there it is easier to pay heed to the voice of the soul, to seek and entreat of Hashem, Who calls us, to return to Him.

It is not possible to follow the desires of the body and think that the soul will also receive what it requires. If we obey the body, we weaken the soul. By contrast, if we comply with the soul, we weaken the body. We wish to exchange the fleeting, imaginary physical "paradise" for the true Gan Eden that is completely pleasurable - all attachment to Hashem. "Master of the World, help me that my entire life and all of my joy stem from my bond with You and not from yielding to my base urges."

In the heart of every Jew there burns a love for Hashem. We must simply remove the "Lot." Lot represents a covering, a shroud - we must remove the blockage of the heart so as to return and experience the G-dly light. That is what Avraham did when he separated from Lot.

"הפרד נא מעלי אם השמאל ואימנה" (יג, ט)

"Please separate from me: If you go left then I will go right."

Every moment has obscurity, sadness, laziness, confusion and wraths - all obstructing the heart. We must battle this murkiness and we must remove the impediment from the heart. We must perform much inner service - without it we remain embedded in all of our silliness. We feel deprived, we complain, we get angry, we become depressed, we blame ourselves and others.

When we begin to do internal work, when we begin to disconnect from silly things (even ever so slightly), from pedantry, from our tempers, from materialism, from our urges - when we fortify ourselves to detach ourselves from our present status to one that is slightly higher, we begin to reveal Hashem. We begin to comprehend that there is no alternative place or refuge aside from Hashem Himself. We can turn to Hashem and address him in second-person: "Hashem, I love You; Hashem, I want You." Just as anyone who has ever managed to go through the process of *teshuvah* knows.

The first stage in inner service is strengthening *emuna*.

Avraham Avinu was a pioneer and leader in *emuna*. At the age of three he already recognized his Creator. A mere toddler, surrounded by the physical world, was amazed by all of wondrous Creation and turned to ask, "Who created all of this?" The more he inquired, the greater his desire to identify the Creator of the World grew - the more Hashem opened gates for him and the light of *emuna* began to illuminate the world.

A person who possesses *emuna* is always happy. If everything is for the best, why should he ever be sad? Why should he ever worry? ***Emuna* is a quiet in the soul that is indescribable and immeasurable.** And if, despite all that, something disturbs our peace - we have *tefilla* - both the prescribed prayers and personal prayer. If we find the set prayers to be too difficult because our thoughts carry us off into other realms - personal prayer emits directly from the heart. There are no foreign thoughts. Even if we do not feel that we are deserving - we can offer: "Master of the World, I am owed nothing - but please have mercy on me, help me - I have no other address at which to seek help."

There are also other levels of *emuna*: "To believe that there is a Creator of the World is very simple *emuna*, even many non-Jews believe that there is a Creator. But, to believe that when someone humiliates us - it is really Hashem

humiliating us? That is difficult! There are rare individuals that can persistently maintain such a lofty *emuna*. *Emuna* dictates that all hatred is baseless hatred. Hatred spurs us to think, 'I am right to hate him! He embarrassed me! He cursed me! He took from me!' But, if we have *emuna* – who really did it to us? Hashem! So why hate the other person? **He is merely a staff in Hashem's hand!** We must have compassion upon the other person – for Hashem has chosen him as an implement of punishment rather than as vehicle for something positive.

Us, we have regular dealings with Hashem. Everything that happens to us is from Hashem! If we have *emuna*, we can never hate anyone in the world! We must love everyone! A woman who has *emuna* loves even her mother-in-law."²

When there is *emuna* – there is joy. Joy is the revelation of *emuna*. If a person is happy, it is a sign that he has *emuna*. Contentment is an indication that we are connected to Hashem. If a person is disconnected – he cannot be truly joyous. True bliss overwhelms all failure, pain and suffering. It is not dependent upon any externalities such as honor, money or pleasures. True delight is delight in Hashem.³

When we act for Hashem's honor – we experience exhilaration. The holy Baal Shem Tov once decreed that a certain Jew, who had not had children for many years, be blessed with a child. He was shown that because of this act he had forfeited his share in the World to Come because he had altered the established order that this particular couple was destined not to have any offspring. Upon being informed that he had lost his entire reward in the next world, he was filled with a tremendous joy. He exclaimed, **"From this moment on, I will finally be able to begin serving Hashem without the promise of reward – completely for His sake."**

Every action that we make, every thought that

² המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום

That is a direct quote, no editorializing. ;-)

³ אנוכי אשמח בה

crosses our minds – requires introspection, especially if it is extravagant or even partially superficial. "Hashem, help me that whatever I do be for Your honor. All because I love You."

When we speak to Hashem – as soon as we open our mouths to speak – we receive such joy and vitality. When Rebbe Nossan was taught the concept of *hisbodedus* he immediately recognized that it was the solution to all of his problems – for whatever pained him, for whatever worried him, for whatever confused him – he could speak to Hashem about it and - that is a tremendous source of joy.

Joy takes work. We must invest in happiness because it is the source of our attachment to Hashem. The holy Arizal testified about himself that everything he attained was due to the fact that he did every *mitzvah* with exhilaration.

Joy is possible only with humility and simplicity:

Moreinu Harav: True greatness is humility. We must instill within us notions of unpretentiousness, constantly. We must believe that we are less worthy than others.

Humility must not be confused with sadness or depression. It should not bother us that another person is superior to us. Other people's status only bothers empty people – they need to feel like they are better than others, otherwise they lose all enthusiasm. When a person is filled with Torah, awe, holiness and prayer – the success of others does not affect him. When we are humble, we strip away physicality, we are boundless – our souls are like dust before others. All of our vitality, enjoyment and strength stem from humility. The more humble we are – the more we merit liveliness, diligence, vigor. As soon as an arrogant person does not get his way, As soon as something does not go our way, arrogance causes us to become inert, desperate and bedridden. Humility is the key to loving others. A haughty person always dismisses and looks down on everyone else. He can invalidate 1000 people in minutes – he focuses on their negative features instead of noticing the good that they do.

To journey towards Hashem we must learn to love other Jews. **When souls connect, we immediately experience Hashem's Presence.** A spiritual person makes others the focal point. In a spiritual house, the occupants live for each other. The best way to bond with Hashem is via the interpersonal *mitzvos*. We must escape self-love.

We must never humiliate others. A certain destitute person once left the office of R' Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl happy and upbeat. The Rebbe had given him a substantial donation. As he left, he noticed a silver spoon and quietly slipped into his bag. When the absence of the spoon was noticed, the poor man was accused and it was found in his bag. He was brought to the Rebbe to show the Rebbe what type of people he was supporting with his

charity. The man protested his innocence, saying that the Rebbe had given the spoon to him. When they approached R' Nachum, he confirmed the man's story. Realizing who he was dealing with and inspired by *chutzpah* to take further advantage, he claimed that he was owed money for being falsely accused. Once again, the Rebbe agreed and offered the man an additional monetary gift, just so long as forgave those who had embarrassed him.⁴

Our relationship with Hashem is our link to our vitality and our soul. That is the beauty of the Jewish soul. A Jew who connects, who has a personal relationship with Hashem – tastes Gan Eden in this world. Our entire life is a journey to our Father. It is grueling at times, it can be dark – but, if we remember that Divine Providence guides us along the way – it is made pleasant.

תפילה

Master of the World! I want to recognize You - more so than I do now. I wish to feel Your Presence in my life, regularly. I want to feel that You are with me even when I am suffering, physically or spiritually – even when things do not go well, even when the light is hidden and it feels like complete darkness. Bring me close to You Father, arrange it please that all of my joy and vigor emanate from You – not from materialism or base urges.

Master of the World! Help me not waste so many precious moments that could have been spent connecting to You and experiencing Your Companionship. Like all of those *brachos* that I say without concentration, just so that I can begin eating or drinking – and subsequently I am so regretful that I lost out, despite having made a *bracha*.

Similarly, with my prayers. Especially when I stand for "*shemona esrei*" and I attend to all of my life's matters and do not focus on the words that escape my lips. If I could restrain myself from commenting on everything, I would experience Your Presence. If I would respond to humiliations with silence and accept them lovingly I would merit feeling You so close to You. And with *chesed* – help me pursue opportunities to perform them, because as soon as souls connect, we feel Your Presence. Do not allow me, Father, to squander so many chances to draw near to You, slowly but surely.

Master of the World! I want to reside with You – to feel that we are together all the time. I should sense, to the point of tears, how much you attend to me with so much kindness, love and compassion.

Master of the World! I wish to be worthy of all of this good. Help me.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

דוֹב

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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