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בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
LECH LECHA

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

After having gone through a terrible ordeal in facing the ruler of Egypt, Avram Avinu, now laden with cattle, silver, and gold, makes his way to the land of Israel.¹ In describing his journey, the Torah states, "וילך למסעיו" which translates as, "And he went to his travels." This phrase seems to imply something deliberate about the journey, and indeed Rashi² points out that Avram specifically chose to stay at the same inns he had previously visited.

The Ralbag,³ though, has a different explanation. Pointing out that the previous *Passuk* states that Avram was weighed down by all of his possessions, the Ralbag explains that 'his travels' means that Avram proceeded very slowly, so as to not burden the cattle and cause them to die. While this seemingly makes sense, the Ralbag later⁴ points out a problem with this explanation. Avram sorely desired to stay in Israel, and only left because of a terrible famine.⁵ Now that he could safely return to the Promised Land, one would think he would do so as expeditiously as possible. As for the cattle, Avram was exceedingly wealthy, and he even had a promise from Hashem that he will remain wealthy. Losing a few of the herd seems to be a small price to pay in order for Avram to return to the land that Hashem had promised him. Why was he so concerned over the welfare of his livestock?

The Ralbag answers that while it is true that Avram was ensured of his wealth, that didn't absolve him of his responsibility to his possessions. Everything that Hashem gives us is a *Brachah*, and it would be careless to take from Hashem's abundance so thoughtlessly. When a person is blessed with plenty, it's easy to lose an appreciation for the value of what they own. But if that person were to recognize that every penny is a gift from Hashem, every penny would take on a special significance. Our belongings were given to us to keep us healthy, give us peace of mind, and allow us the opportunity to do *Mitzvos*. This charge is not to be taken lightly, and not something to be squandered.

Hashem lovingly gives us all of the tools we need to serve Him; by recognizing that fact, we will have an easier time spending our money in the right places.

1 Bereishis 13:2-3

2 *ibid.* s.v. וילך למסעיו

3 *Biur HaMillos* 13:3

4 s.v. התועלת הששי

5 Bereishis 12:10

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

How does this idea translate into our daily living? What if I'm ten years old, and don't have my own income? The truth is, this idea applies to all of our resources, - it even applies to using our intelligence and our senses!¹

We tend to 'waste' our resources when we feel that there is an unlimited supply. However, the more we recognize that these were given to us for a purpose, the more we can properly channel these gifts towards that purpose.

How do we connect to this idea, let alone implement it in our own lives?

We can relate to this idea with the following example. We sometimes hear about politicians who have used funds of their office to further their personal goals. There is public outrage - how can you squander the money we gave to you, the monies weren't given for that purpose!

Make this idea personal! How would we feel if we gave someone money, and they spent it irresponsibly? Reflecting on this idea - that Hashem provides for us with a purpose in mind, can be beneficial in pushing us to use our resources in a responsible way.

1 *Shaarei Teshuva, Sha'ar 2, par. 12*

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"One should learn Mussar every day... as the way to soften the Yetzer Harah is through the words of Chazal"

- Mishnah Berurah, 1:12

AN INVESTMENT IN TIME

Rob Cohen* is a successful accountant, having expanded the firm that he took over from his father. His days are very busy, and he often finds himself travelling out-of-state to meet the demands of his profession. Nevertheless, if you'd ask Mr. Cohen where his passion lies, he'd tell you in a heartbeat. "Volunteering. I really love to help out when I can."

Rob's story begins back in his graduate school days. "I was still in school, and helping out my father during breaks, just to get some experience in. Though I was born into an 'accounting family,' it was never really my thing, and I wasn't sure if this was the direction I wanted to go. I didn't know, though, what it is that I wanted to do. One day, a friend of my father's told me, 'Making money is all well and good, but knowing you, Rob, you're going to want to do something special with your skills.'"

He was right - I realized that besides the profession, I wanted to be able to help others with what I knew how to do. And beginning back then, I started to help out organizations with whatever knowledge and skills that I had."

A typical day in Rob Cohen's life has him answering hundreds of emails, fielding dozens of calls, and sometimes travelling long distances for clients. Somehow, though, he finds time to advise non-profits, sometimes even meeting after midnight, if he can't meet beforehand.

Rob Cohen has become much more knowledgeable since his college days. "Like my father's friend said, it's not about the money. Sure, I help out financially, but I find that there is something more precious than money, and that's time. I save these organizations money by helping them out, but I also save them a lot of time. For me, it's a great investment - just an hour out of my day can save someone a week or two. It's a win-win!"

By investing his time wisely, Mr. Cohen leverages his skill set into building communities.

**Based on a true story, name has been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Despite his vast wealth, Yaakov Avinu was careful not to waste needlessly.¹ Nevertheless, when it came to doing *Mitzvos*, he was willing to give all of his money away.²
- The attribute of generosity can manifest itself in two ways. One can be generous with their resources to help others, or one can generously pamper themselves with wasteful spending.³
- Because of the strong lure of money, Avraham Avinu gave his men diamonds and pearls prior to fighting the four kings so that they not get distracted by the loot during the battle.⁴
- By approaching Hashem with the attitude that He owns everything and that we are solely dependent on Him, our *Tefillah* will be more readily accepted.⁵

1 Rashi s.v. ויותר יעקב on *Bereishis* 32:25

2 Rashi s.v. אשר כריתי on *Bereishis* 50:5

3 *Orchos Tzadikim*, Gate of Magnanimity

4 *Tosfos* s.v. אלא on *Chullin* 47b

5 *Chidushei HaLev*, *Vayikra* p. 159