



קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart



נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"a

Exactly Where You Are



Parshas Lech Lecha



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THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN SHLIT" A

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — The Ways of My Heart is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlit" a in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R' Dovid Steiman shlit" a teaches emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*, and for nearly two decades has shared his Torah — in English and Russian — with talmidim and readers around the world. He taught at Ohr Somayach and today teaches at Yeshiva Toras Dovid, both in Monsey, New York. He is the author of the sefer *The Ways of My Heart* / נתיבות לבי.



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may he merit much simcha and nachas with all his family.*

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Exactly Where You Are

Why Avraham Avinu was told to leave everything at seventy-five — and why the conditions a person finds himself in are the very place he was sent to grow

How is a person's personality built? The sefarim tell us that a person is shaped by his childhood, by the parents he has, by the place and the land where he was born.

That is nothing new. Parshas Lech Lecha says: *Lech lecha me'artzecha u'mimoladetecha u'mibeis avicha* — go from your land, from the place you were born, from your father's house. ¹ The pasuk brings out exactly the point we just mentioned.

Here is an interesting question. Avraham Avinu was seventy-five years old. He had already become the new person Hashem wanted him to be: a *baal emunah*, the *amud hachesed*, an *amud of kiddush Hashem*! He was no longer in any way the child who had been shaped by his parents, his place and his land. He had already proven that the Ribbono shel Olam could trust him completely. So why now is he told to leave all of it?

..... Nobody lands somewhere by accident

A person does not choose where he is born, or so it seems. He is born into this family, which is frum or is not, or which has difficult middos.

And so we say: is it our fault? Look at the parents we had. Look at the surroundings, the friends. We could blame

that until tomorrow, and it will not help.

Because every neshamah, before it comes down to this world, chooses exactly where it is going to be born. And what is that choice based on? On what it needs to be *mesaken*, to fix, here in this world. Each of us came here for a pur-

pose — to fix something — and the ne-shamah chooses the family, the surroundings, the land, because it knows

that only in those conditions will it be able to do what it came to do.

..... **How do we know what we came for?**

We do not know our purpose. It is very hard to know. But Chazal gave us a little guidance.

Whatever is the hardest thing for you to change in yourself — that is why you are here.

One person is lazy, so everything is hard for him. Another becomes angry very fast and does not know how to stop himself. He knows it is hard. So that is it; that is the thing.

And these middos hold a person back from growing. That is why every one of us has to take it as an awareness that something must be done — because otherwise it stays as it is. More than that: it gets worse. We do not find people who left a middah alone when they were young and found it better when they were older. It only becomes worse, and when a person is older we see it very clearly. Then it is much harder to change, and a person becomes *meyuash*, feeling he has no strength to fight it.

..... **"When the conditions change"**

Some of us say: we cannot grow here. These are not good conditions. First the conditions have to change.

It may be that the conditions will change. But often a person sees that he cannot change them. He is stuck, and he is stuck for a reason. And it just follows him. He changes his job, he changes his situation, and it comes along with him — until he changes himself.

There are people who complain to Hashem. *It is not my fault. Hashem brought me into this.* And so they stay exactly as they are.

Chazal teach us: *davka* in this time, *davka* in this place, *davka* in the conditions you are in right now — here is where a person reaches the purpose for which he came. The Nesivos Shalom brings the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos: *Do not say, when I have free time I will*

learn. ² It may be that from Shamayim they want precisely this. When you feel you have no time, when your head is not here, when you feel that you cannot — these are exactly the conditions in which Hashem wants you to do what you have to do.

And who said that when things get better, when everything is arranged, *then* we will be the big people everybody looks up to? Hashem wants it now, when it is hard and you are doing it anyway. This is what gives Him the greatest *nachas ruach*.

..... **Lech lecha — to yourself**

That is what Hashem said to Avraham.

Lecha means "to you" — to your own purpose, to the thing for which you came down into this world. And you reach it by leaving behind your land and your birthplace and your father's house: all the thoughts that tell us it is because of this, it is because of that, all the reasons why it cannot be done. Even after you have proven yourself the greatest person in the world, a *baal ma'amin*, and so on.

And where are we going? *El ha'aretz asher ar'eka* — to the land that I will show you. When you begin the journey, you do not know where it will take you.

That is complete trust in the Ribbono shel Olam, that He will guide you on the right way.

Chazal say that in the way a person wants to go, that is the way he is led. ³ Some people make their journey much longer, for whatever they need to go through to get there.

We have to be ready to say: this is our journey, this is where we are, and we are going to reach our purpose. And to believe in it strongly. Because without that, it shakes, and it falls apart. We need to be not only strong, but unbreakable in *emunas Hashem*. Easier said than done.

..... **He sat in the corner with a Tehillim**

I heard a story about the Pittsburgher Rebbe, from the years of the war in Europe.

Before the worst began, there were decrees. A Yid could not go outside without the yellow star, and he could not go

outside with a beard. So he stayed at home. He understood whom he was dealing with.

One time he forgot. Someone had come to see him, and he walked out completely spaced out. Officers noticed him, and he was arrested and taken to a jail where many Yidden were sitting.

They sat there discussing among themselves who might save them — perhaps an askan, perhaps someone from outside. He did not want to hear any of it. He sat in a corner and took out a Tehillim. *I am a Yid. I have a beard because I am a Yid. Only You are going to save me.* And he said Tehillim the whole time.

Then a truck came to take them away. They were all put onto it, and he climbed on too. And an officer stopped him. *You — get down.*

He thought it was the end. The truck drove off.

And the officer said to him: I watched you. All of them sat and worked out who was going to save them. You decided that only G-d is going to save you. Go. Disappear from here.

That is how he came out, and saved his life.

Everybody has his own conditions, and everybody can say *I cannot, I cannot.* And in the end, we have the Ribbono shel Olam. We take out the Tehillim — and He can do everything.

..... His word to every Yid

The Nesivos Shalom writes something very strong: the word of Hashem to Avraham is the word of Hashem to every Yid. Each of us has a piece of Avraham Avinu inside him. *Go from your land, from your birthplace, from your father's house.*

A person should know that he is going to grow precisely in the conditions he is

in right now. Even when the yetzer hara comes and starts making him crazy — it is a present from Heaven. It pulls him in every direction, and he says: I have a purpose, and I am going to work toward it here.

When a person has a calm life, and everything is served on a golden plate, he will never reach the purpose of his life.

How did Avraham Avinu reach his madreigah? He was born among idol-worshippers. Everybody around him was selling avodah zarah. And one man stands up with a new idea — there is One G-d, Somebody created this world — and they all point their fingers at him and say he is crazy. And he stayed strong, until he became the first of all the *ma'aminim*.

Let us take our difficulties as a present: the Ribbono shel Olam gave us this so

that we could grow and come closer to Him.

And He gave it to us because He believes in us. That is so important to know — because a person cannot grow unless he knows that somebody believes in him.

May Hashem give us the siyata dish-maya to find the way to grow, right here, in the conditions we are in today, and may Hashem take us out of them, l'geulaseinu b'karov.

MEKOROS

1. Bereishis 12:1 2. Avos 2:4 3. Makkos 10b