



DAF KESHER

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DVAR TORAH DO NOT GIVE UP HOPE

“אין ליהודי להתייאש משום דבר” – A Jew should never give up hope on anything,” said Reb Tzadok Hakohen (Harav Tzadok Hakohen Rabinowitz, זצ"ל, of Lublin, 1823-1900, in Divrei Sofrim 16). Not giving up hope is not only a nice middah (character trait). Not giving up hope is also not merely a self-help strategy to stay in a good mood. It is also not just a technique to make sure good things happen through positive thinking. Not giving up hope, says Reb Tzadok, is a fundamental aspect of being Jewish.

“The entire building of the Israelite Nation,” he says, “began only after all had totally given up hope on Avraham and Sarah ever having children.” Who would have ever thought that this barren couple would ever be able to give birth to a child? Even after the angel brought news of Hashem’s promise of the birth of Yitzchak, Sarah herself laughed – could it be that I and he will have a child?! Why did Hashem wait so long for Avraham and Sarah to build a family? Because, says Reb Tzadok, He wanted to teach the Jewish People not to give up hope at all, to trust that nothing is outside of Hashem’s reach. That is the foundation of the Jewish People.

David Hamelech taught this: “Even if a sharp knife is on your neck never give up hope on Hashem’s mercy” (Berachot 10a). Avraham Avinu lived with this consciousness; he went to war against the four kings to save Lot after everyone had given up hope on rescuing the people of Sodom. He took Eliezer with him – Eliezer, who had the same name Moshe later gave to his son: “אלקי אבי בעזרי” – The G-d of my fathers helped me, and saved me from the sword of Pharaoh” (Shemot 18:4). The numerical equivalent (gematria) of אליעזר is 318, one more than יאוש – 317). The king of Sodom had even legally given up hope on ever regaining the wealth of Sodom, so he said to Avraham, “Give me the people, and take for yourself the property” (Bereishit 14:21). The property had already undergone יאוש and רשות שינוי – that is, the owners (the king and people of Sodom and the other cities) had given up hope on regaining it, and it was also transferred from the thieves (the four kings) to you (Avraham). So it is legally yours.

Not only does a Jew not give up hope on physical salvation; he also does not give up hope on spiritual salvation. Even if he has sunk to a level where teshuvah is difficult or, apparently, impossible, he should not despair of transforming himself. Even if he feels that he is mired in this-worldly physicality, he should not give up on his own spiritual elevation.

Jews do not give up hope on the final redemption – but, ironically, “אין בן דוד בא ... עד שיתייאשו מן הגאולה” – The Son of David (the Mashiach) will only come,” says the Gemara, “after Israel has given up hope on the redemption” (Sanhedrin 97a). The prophet expresses this: “Who would have believed that which we hear?” (Yishayah 53:1). That is why the prophet told Israel, “Look to Avraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you” (Yishayah 51:2), for the formation of the Jewish Nation through Avraham and Sarah only began after all had given up hope on them having any children, any continuity. But just as Avraham and Sarah did have a child after total despair, so the Jewish People can be redeemed “after Israel has given up hope on the redemption.”

SOURCE GUIDE: AVRAHAM'S TRUST

Immediately after Hashem told Avraham that his descendants will be like the stars, the Torah says, "He trusted in Hashem and considered it 'tzedakah'." That verse (Bereishit 15:6), especially its last three words, "ויחשבה לו לצדקה," raises a number of difficulties, including: What was so praiseworthy about Avraham trusting Hashem? This source guide focuses on Rashi's the Ramban's, and the Malbim's readings of this verse.

A. The Verse and Its Context

Our verse (6) appears in a passage immediately following Avraham's war against the four kings:

<p>1. Bereishit 15:1-7</p> <p>(1) After these things, the word of Hashem came to Avram in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Avram; I am your Shield; your reward is exceedingly great."</p> <p>(2) And Avram said, "Hashem, G-d, what will You give me, since I am going childless, and the steward of my household is Eliezer of Damesek?"</p> <p>(3) And Avram said, "Behold, You have given me no seed, and behold, one of my household will inherit me."</p> <p>(4) And behold, the word of Hashem came to him, saying, "This one will not inherit you, but the one who will spring from your innards – he will inherit you."</p> <p>(5) And He took him outside, and He said, "Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So will be your seed."</p> <p>(6) And he trusted in Hashem, and considered it צדקה.</p> <p>(7) And He said to him, "I am Hashem, Who took you out of Ur Kasdim, to give you this Land to inherit it."</p>	<p>בראשית טו:א-ז</p> <p>(א) אחר הדברים האלה הנה דבר ה' אל אברם במחנה לאמר אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך שכרך הרבה מאד.</p> <p>(ב) ויאמר אברם ה' אלקים מה תתן לי ואנכי הולך עירי וכן משק ביתי הוא דמשק אליעזר.</p> <p>(ג) ויאמר אברם הן לי לא נתת זרע והנה בן ביתי יורש אתי.</p> <p>(ד) והנה דבר ה' אליו לאמר לא יירשך זה כי אם אשר יצא ממעי הוא יירשך.</p> <p>(ה) ויצא אתו החוצה ויאמר הבט נא השמימה וספר הכוכבים אם תוכל לספר אתם ויאמר לו פה יהיה ירעה.</p> <p>(ו) והאמן בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה.</p> <p>(ז) ויאמר אליו אני ה' אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים לתת לך את הארץ הזאת לרשתה.</p>
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B. Rashi and the Ramban

A number of items in the expression ויחשבה לו צדקה are unclear: I. Who is the subject of the word ויחשבה? II. Who does the pronoun לו refer to? III. What is the meaning of צדקה in this verse? Here is Rashi's approach:

<p>2. Rashi on Bereishit 15:6</p> <p>"He considered it צדקה" – The Holy One, blessed be He, considered it as a merit and צדקה because of the trust that he trusted in Him.</p>	<p>רש"י על בראשית טו:</p> <p>"ויחשבה לו צדקה" – הקב"ה חשבה לאברם לזכות ולצדקה על האמונה שהאמין בו.</p>
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Rashi supplies answers to our three questions: Hashem is the subject of the word ויחשבה. The pronoun לו refers to Avraham, and ויחשבה, in this verse, means a merit. But the Ramban finds Rashi's explanation difficult:

<p>3. Ramban's Commentary on Bereishit 15:6</p> <p>But I do not understand what [special] merit this is. Why should he not trust the trustworthy G-d. Avraham himself is a prophet, and "G-d is not a man who lets one down" (Bamidbar 23:19). How could the one who trusted [in Hashem] enough to be ready to slaughter his only son and go through the rest of the trials not trust and believe [what is merely] a good tiding?</p>	<p>רמב"ן על בראשית טו:</p> <p>ואיני מבין מה הזכות הזאת, למה לא יאמין באלקי אמן, והוא הנביא בעצמו, "ולא איש קל ויכזב" (במדבר כג:יט), ומי שהאמין לשחוט את בנו היחיד האהוב ושאר הנסיונות איך לא יאמין בבשורה טובה?</p>
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Based on this difficulty Ramban goes in a different direction:

<p>4. Ramban's Commentary on Bereishit 15:6</p> <p>What is correct in my eyes is that the Torah here says that he</p>	<p>רמב"ן על בראשית טו:</p> <p>והנכון בעיני כי יאמר שהאמין בה' וחשב</p>
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<p>trusted in Hashem and thought that it is through Hashem's righteousness that He will give him offspring no matter what – not because of Avram's righteousness and as a reward. Even though He told him "Your reward is exceedingly great," he had thought that it will be dependent on his actions. But now that Hashem promised Avram that he should not worry about sin and that He will give him offspring, he trusted that this matter is clearly destined by G-d, truth that He will not retract. For it is Hashem's righteousness and will not be stopped. This is in line with the follow verse: "I swore. A matter of righteousness (צדקה) emanated from My mouth, a word and it will not be retracted" (Yishayah 45:23).</p>	<p>כי בצדקו של הקב"ה יתן לו זרע על כל פנים, לא בצדקת אברם ובשכרו, אף על פי שאמר לו "שכרך הרבה מאד." ומעתה לא יירא פן יגרומ החטא. ואף על פי שבנבואה הראשונה חשב שתהיה על תנאי כפי שכר מעשיו, עתה כיון שהבטיחו שלא יירא מן החטא ויתן לו זרע, האמין כי נכון הדבר מעם האלהים, אמת לא ישוב ממנה, כי צדקת ה' היא ואין לה הפסק, כענין שכתוב, "בי נשבעתי יצא מפי צדקה דבר ולא ישוב" (ישעיה מה:כג).</p>
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According to the Ramban it is **Avraham** (not Hashem, like Rashi says) that is the subject of **נִתְקַדְּשָׁה**. He considers Hashem's promise as an act of Divine righteousness that will not be retracted. He offers a second explanation:

<p>5. Ramban's Commentary on Bereishit 15:6 Or it is saying that Avraham trusted that he would have offspring to inherit him no matter what. And the Holy One, blessed be He (as opposed to Avraham, as in the Ramban's first explanation) considered His promise as an act of Divine righteousness, as in the verse [where Yosef tells his brothers] "G-d considered it for the good" (Bereishit 50:20 – that Yosef coming to Egypt was an act of Divine righteousness that was destined to happen) ...</p>	<p>רמב"ן על בראשית טו:ו או יאמר כי אברהם האמין שיהיה לו זרע יורש על כל פנים, והקב"ה עוד חשב לו ההבטחה הזו שהבטיחו צדקה, כי בצדקת ה' יעשה כן, כמו "אלקים חשבה לטובה" (להלן נ:כ) ...</p>
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[The Ramban then compares the use of **צדקה** in this verse to its use in Tehillim 106:31.] According to the Ramban it is not Avraham's trust in Hashem that is considered a specially meritorious act, but Hashem's promise to Avraham that either Avraham (his 1st explanation) or Hashem (2nd explanation) considers as an act of Divine righteousness that will come no matter what.

The Sforno seems to go in Rashi's direction, but might allow us to answer the Ramban's objections. The reason that the verse ends with "Hashem considered Avraham's trust as a meritorious act," says the Sforno, is to make sure we do not think that Avraham's subsequent question, "How do I know that I will inherit the Land of Israel?" expresses a lack of trust in Hashem (the Sforno explains that Avraham here did not question G-d's promise but asked for assurance that his descendants will inherit the Land regardless of their lack of righteousness).

C. The Malbim

The Malbim (Harav Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel, זצ"ל, 1809-1879) reads this verse in the context of an aggadic comment by our Sages (Nedarim 32a) about verse 5. When the Torah says Hashem took Avraham outside to look at the stars, Avraham was being told, metaphorically, to leave his astrological beliefs. Avraham had seen, through his astrological calculations, that he was not destined to have children. Hashem told him that he would be able to break out of the bounds of determinism. Avraham considered this gift, the ability to break out of predetermined limitations, as an act of Divine Goodness (**צדקה**), not an act of Divine Justice (**משפט**):

<p>6. Malbim on Bereishit 15:6 "He (Avraham) considered it צדקה – When he looked into and investigated what merit would cause Hashem to change his predetermined fate – whether it was because of his own actions and merit or merely because of Divine Lovingkindness – he was too small in his own eyes to consider himself as worthy based on Divine Justice (משפט). For Avraham did not think he had the merit or good actions to make him worthy of</p>	<p>פירוש המלבי"ם על בראשית טו:ו "ויחשבה לו לצדקה" - ר"ל אבל כאשר עיין וחקר באיזה זכות ישנה ה' את המזל וישדד את המערכה בעבורו, אם הוא על פי מעשיו וזכותו, או הוא מצד החסד לבד, היה קטן בעיניו שיחשוב שזה הוא ע"פ מעשיו מצד המשפט, כי נדמה לו כי אין</p>
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this. Instead he thought that this was the result of lofty Divine Goodness (צדקה) and Hashem's Lovingkindness, not a result of human merit.

לו זכות ומע"ט שיזכה בהם, וחשב שה' עושה לו זה מצד הצדקה העליונה וחסד ה' שלא מצד זכות.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO ERETZ YISRAEL? BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

Hashem commanded Avraham to leave his home and go to the Land "אשר אראך – as I will show it to you." Avraham's relationship to Eretz Yisrael was not to be revealed all at once, but rather, as Hashem unveiled it to him, one stage at a time.

When he arrived at Shechem, Hashem appeared to him and says: "לזרעך – To your offspring I will give this Land" (Bereishit 12:7), and he built an altar there. This was Avraham's first step in forming a connection with the Land.

After Avraham returned from Egypt and separated from Lot, Hashem told him: "לך – to you will I give it, ולזרעך – and to your offspring forever" (Bereishit 13:15).

He then built a second altar.

The author of the Kli Yakar commentary (Harav Shlomo Efraim of Luntschitz, זצ"ל, 1550-1619) says that at time of the building of the first altar, the Land was given only to Avraham's descendants. Avraham himself had no portion in it until he built the second altar.

Usually, an inheritance advances from one generation to its successor. But, Eretz Yisrael is first assured to future generations, and only then can the current generation appreciate its link to the Land. Eretz Yisrael is given first לך ולזרעך, and then לך ולזרעך.

This would even be true in the future, when the Land would be apportioned among the twelve tribes. According to the Talmud (Bava Batra 117a), the generation of the wilderness would, in a sense, inherit the Land from their children, those who would enter the Land.

Many of us can imagine our descendants having a real bond with Eretz Yisrael, but as for ourselves, it remains a dream of a distant future.

But the covenant between Hashem, the Jewish People, and the Land of Israel is complete only when we acknowledge that we are as entitled to the Land as are our children.

שבת שלום ומבורך

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We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.