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IMPOSSIBLE? YES! BUT YOU CAN DO IT!

PARSHAS LECH LECHA

The king promised a huge reward for the first person who could climb the king's ladder and reach the top of the king's tower. The ladder was very high, and the higher that one climbed, the greater the distance was between the rungs. Many men attempted to climb to the top of the ladder. As they climbed higher, the climb became more difficult. At some point, all the men gave up. They said that it was an impossible feat. However, one man kept climbing. The man reasoned that if the king promised a reward, then it was a doable task. He climbed upwards with difficulty, until it became impossible for him to climb any higher. At that point, the man noticed a large red button just within his reach. He pressed the button and part of the wall on the tower slid open. A rope fell from the opening. The man grabbed onto the rope, climbed it and found himself inside the tower. There, he found a staircase which led to the top of the tower. The man attempted the "impossible" and succeeded!

In a miraculous fashion, our forefather, Avram and a very small army defeated 4 mighty kings. **Rashi** explains that Avram was concerned lest those miracles had used up his merits. Hashem told Avram not to worry, "*Fear not, Avram...your reward shall be very great.*" (Bereishis 15:1). Many commentaries including the **Radak** (Bereishis 2:2) and **Rabbi Yosef Chaim** in his sefer Aderet Eliyahu, explain that Avram's question was not referring to the reward that Hashem would give him in *Olam Haba*, the World to Come. Avram was wondering what meaningful reward there could be for him on earth since it would just be passed on to his servant, Eliezer.

Hashem told Avram that he **would** have a son who would be his heir. Hashem told Avram, "*Look towards the heavens and count the stars if you can count them. That is how numerous your descendants will be.*" (Bereishis 15:6) There are various interpretations explaining what Hashem was telling Avram. The one that is the most well-known is the **Midrash** that **Rashi** cites. According to that explanation, Hashem told Avram that he would no longer be affected by the astrological influences.

"Look towards the heavens and count the stars if you can count them. That is how numerous your descendants will be." (Bereishis 15:6)

Avram had seen through astrological calculation that both he and Sarai would be childless. Hashem said that was correct, that Avram and Sarai would not have a son. However, Avraham and Sarah would

indeed have a son. Hashem was going to change their names, giving them a new destiny, so that they would indeed have a son. **Gur Aryeh** says that we see this explanation within the words of the Torah. The pasuk says "*And Hashem took him [Avram] outside*". Why did Hashem have to "take" Avram outside? Hashem could have simply told Avram to "go" outside. The **Gur Aryeh** explains it means that Hashem "took" Avram outside of the influences of the astrology [Since then, Jews are not bound by the influence of the stars.]

After Avram went outside, Hashem told him, "*Count the stars, if you can count them. So shall your offspring be.*" **Rav Meir Shapiro** (as quoted by **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** in Torah.org and by **Aharon Yaakov Greenberg** in sefer Iturei Torah) asks, "What would be our reaction if someone told us to go out and count the stars?" Our reaction might be to simply ignore the request. We might say, "I know

that this is an impossible task. I know it is beyond the realm of possibility. Why should I even bother?" That was not Avram's reaction. What did Avram do? He went outside and started counting the stars even though it was clearly impossible. He attempted to do the impossible! Hashem told him, "Avram, you are trying to do the impossible." Avram responded, "But you told me to count the stars, so I tried to count them." Hashem said, "This is the way your descendants will be". In other words, Avram exemplified a specific attribute of attempting to do something that seemed impossible. This attribute will become part of the spiritual DNA of Avram's children, *Klal Yisrael*. The ability to look at a situation and not be discouraged by what seems to be impossible will not stop the Jewish people from trying to do it. Often, Hashem will reward them with abilities that they never thought they had, enabling them to succeed in their "impossible" task.

Rabbi Frand tells a story about a blind Jew who once came to Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. The Jew showed him two volumes of novel insights into Torah that he had written before he became blind. The Jew told

Rav Isser Zalman to look at a certain place in the book and said, "This piece was my last, novel thought and then I went blind." Rav Isser Zalman asked the Jew what he meant by saying that it was his 'last' novel thought. The blind man explained that when he wrote that particular insight, he was already older. He had worked for years on these volumes. When he reached that thought, he said to himself, "I've had enough. It is difficult to come up with new Torah insights. I am calling it quits. From now on I will learn, but not with the same intensity and thoroughness. I just don't have the strength anymore." The man told Rav Isser Zalman that immediately after that decision, he became blind. The man went to specialists seeking a cure. They examined him and told him, "You should have been blind 10 years ago." Why wasn't he blind long before? Because as long as that Jew served Hashem through writing his Torah thoughts, Hashem gave him the added ability to do so. Even though he was supposed to have lost his vision 10 years earlier, Hashem enabled him to see to write his Torah thoughts. When he decided to stop, he lost that extra ability that Hashem had given him.

As children of our forefather Avraham, we can attempt the impossible!

Even though we may think that we don't have the strength or ability to do something or to withstand that which life deals us we can go forward, with Hashem's help.

We may think that it is beyond our capability. But when we try, sometimes Hashem gives us strength that we would have never dreamed that we would possess.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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