

KushnerComments

Parshat Lech Lecha

Friday, October 27, 2017 ז השון תשע"ז

From the Lower School

1. Who went with Avraham to Cana'an?
2. Why did Lot want to go to Sodom, a land that was so wicked?
3. What happened to Lot in the battle of the four kings and the five kings?
4. Why was Sarai's name changed to Sarah?
5. How old was Yishmael when he had a *brit milah*?

— Questions by Ethan Felderman, Jesse Flumen, Ilan Usdan

Answers can be found on the last page.

From the Middle School

Hashem is Here, Hashem is There, Hashem is Truly Everywhere

Over the next couple of weeks, the *parshiyos* will be discussing the incredibly difficult tests that *Hashem* out Avraham through. He had to leave everything behind and journey to a strange and undisclosed land, he was put through the *kivshan haesh*, and he even had to offer up his own child as a sacrifice, which contradicted everything that he had preached to the surrounding cultures who often performed this barbaric practice. A question that always bothered me was how could Avraham possibly pass all of these tests?

In order to answer this question, I would like to take a look at the *hagadda* that we read on Pesach, in the paragraph of *Baruch HaMakom*, we refer to *Hashem* as *Makom*. This name is not a common name of His, therefore, why on *Pesach* do we mention

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his name **THREE** times (once in *Baruch HaMakom*, once before *Dayenu*, and once after *Dayenu*)!?

The story of our redemption commences with our ancestors participating in idolatry (“*Mitchila ovdei avoda zara...*”). We then learn about our forefather *Avraham*. *Avraham* was the first to realize that the practice of idolatry was incorrect. While *Avraham* had no knowledge of who his creator was or what He was all about, he (*Avraham*) still refused to worship any idol no matter how urgent the situation was. For example, rather than bowing down to *Nimrod*'s idol, *Avraham* allowed himself to be thrown into the furnace. He would rather die for a G-d he did not know than bow down to the abomination that *Nimrod* called a god because to *Avraham* the concept of *Hashem* was *Makom* (lit. place); while he did not know *Hashem*, as stated in *parshas Vaera perek vuv pasuk gimel* “*Vaera el Avraham... ushmi lo nodati lahem,*” he knew *Hashem* was in every place and in everything.

Avraham's faith was put to the test again when he had his first interaction with *Hashem*. *Hashem* tells him to go away to a mystery land of which He will reveal later. *Avraham* just picks up his things and departs. Once again, *Avraham* was able to do this because his unique belief in *Hashem*, since he believed *Hashem* was everywhere and in every thing it did not matter to him where he lived because *Hashem* would be everywhere he went.

We see that *Avraham* did not necessarily understand *Hashem*'s ways; rather, he just accepted everything for what it was. We see this explicitly as *Avraham* was on his way to bring *Yitzchok* as a *korbon* to *Hashem*. In *parshas Vayera—perek chaf beis—pasuk daled* it states, “*Bayom hashilishi vayisa Avraham es einav vayar es Hamakom meirachok.*” I would like to suggest that the *p'shat* of the *pasuk* is, *Avraham* saw *HaMakom* (*Hashem*) from afar. In other words he did not understand the reason why *Hashem* commanded him to do this, the reason was far from him, but nonetheless he was able to make-out that *Hashem* was there and had His reason even if it seemed far off.

Now back to the (*Haggadah*). We begin the *Hagaddah* by blessing and giving thanks to *Hashem* for giving us the concept and name of *Makom* to relate to. The reason why we use this name throughout the *Haggadah* is because on this night we are

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obligated in the *mitzvah* of *vihigadita livincha*; it is essential to relay this concept of *Hashem* to our children. We must prevent against the fate of the son who is unable to ask. This son is likely to follow the path of the wicked son (as explained in Understanding the text), so we must tell our young impressionable children that no matter what *Hashem* does there is a reason behind it. Even if things are clouded over they must understand *Hashem* is *Makom*, *Hashem* is in every place.

- Mr. Binyamin Yehuda Bromber — MS, Judaic Faculty

True Chinuch

In this week's Parsha, when Avraham prepares for war, the passuk uses the phraseology "*Vayarek et chanichav*" "And he armed his disciples" (14:14). Rashi comments that the word "*chanich*" here connotes starting off, or an introduction. This dovetails nicely with the colloquial use of the word "*chinuch*" in the context of educating a child, which is preparing him for what he or she is going to do later in life. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch similarly explains that this word is similar to *chanak*, which means creating appropriate boundaries to direct one's self-growth.

Another way to view this word's etymology is that it originates from the word "*chen*," meaning "favor." Before becoming jaded by others' influences, children can find favor in many things. A child can enjoy even the most mundane activity as long as he or she does not pick up on any negative vibes from others. This makes children highly impressionable. *Chinuch*, therefore, is the process of directing a child towards what is actually favorable and what is not.

Shlomo HaMelech says in *Mishlei* "*Chanoch lana'ar al pi darko; gam ki yazkin lo yisur mimenu*," "Train a child according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not turn away from it" (22:6). This means that we should do and show enjoyment in the things that we want our children to value. These values will stick with them for life. It's not so much about what we preach inasmuch as it is about how we act. If we involve ourselves in truly valuable activities both *bein adam lachaveiro* and *bein adam laMakom*, our

From the High School

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children will be positively influenced and those will be the things that they will want to involve themselves in as well.

This character trait of finding *chen* in the important things is important beyond *chinuch*, too. We should strive to be optimistic people, always searching for the best in everyone we meet and in every situation we encounter. If we focus on the good rather than the bad, we will be much happier and therefore, more successful. However, it's important that we also constantly reconfirm for ourselves that our main priorities are *mitzvot*, *Torah*, and *avodat Hashem*. Our making an effort to associate these priorities with positivity and joy makes all the difference in creating a life where these are our true guiding values. When Avraham "arms his disciples," he is not only preparing soldiers ready for war, as these are in fact his followers that he had previously educated in the service of Hashem (Rashi 14:14). So too, when we begin a new endeavor, we should make service to Hashem our main priority.

- Ms. Sarah Stiefel — HS, Learning Lab

Answers to questions on page 1

- (1) *Sarai, Lot*, and the souls they "made" in Charan
- (2) He saw that the land was good there
- (3) He was kidnapped
- (4) To receive a *beracha* from Hashem
- (5) 13 years old

Shabbat Shalom from
JKHAR/KYHS!