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Dvar Torah Parashat Lech-Lecha

Over the next couple of weeks, the parshiyos will be discussing the incredibly difficult tests that Hashem put Avraham through. He had to leave everything behind and journey to a strange and undisclosed land, he was put through the kivshan ha'esh, 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 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 korban 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 obligated in the mitzvah of vihitgadita 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.

Shabbat Shalom!

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