

“Parshat Hashavua- One Text-- Many Voices”

פרשת לך לך

בראשית טו:ב-ד

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם יְהוָה מֵה־תִּתֶנְּנִי וְאֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ עֵרִירִי וּבֶן־מִשְׁקָה בֵּיתִי הוּא דֹמֶשֶׁק אֱלִיעֶזֶר: וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם הֲלוֹא נָתַתָּה זָרַע וְהִנֵּה בֶן־בֵּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אֹתִי: וְהִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר לֹא יִירָשְׁךָ זֶה כִּי־אִם אִשְׁרָיִם יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ הוּא יִירָשְׁךָ:

And Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am going childless, and the steward of my household is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, You have given me no seed, and behold, one of my household will inherit me." And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one will not inherit you, but the one who will spring from your innards-he will inherit you."

Ellen Morgan- Class of 2023- “ Rashi- Investigates a Definition”

Rashi (France, 1040-1105) has a question on the word “עירירי”. This was the first time this word appeared in the Chumash so Rashi looks in other places in Tanach to see if the word was used previously. He finds this word in *Sefer Melachi* and it is clear from there that “עירירי” means heir or child. From *Sefer Iyov*, Rashi sees that when a yud is at the end of a word it transforms it to the opposite of the original word. Therefore “עירירי” must mean “no heir”. I think that the word “עירירי” is saying that there is no one left to carry on your name and that you will have no family members to pass your legacy onto. Avraham pleading to Hashem for children is very weird since Hashem already promised him children. I think this is why a unique word is used to highlight Abraham’s request. He is reminding God that He did so much for him but what he really wants and needs now is a child!!

Jacob Plumb- Class of 2021- “Analyzing the Chizkuni”

The Chizkuni (France, 13th century) writes that Avram was promised in Perek 12 that his descendants would inherit the land, implying that he would have descendants. However, he hadn’t questioned the promise until now because he thought that his prayers would give him enough merit to have a kid. Then he realized that it had been a long time since the promise was made, and that perhaps he had sinned in some way, breaking off the promise.

I agree with the general idea of the Chizkuni, that Avram was prompted to discuss the promise with Hashem only now. However, my thinking differs in why Avram only brings it up in this instant. Avram was the quintessential “Middos Man”, in fact, the *Ktav VeHakaballah* (German, 19th Century) describes him as *Rosh ha Ma'aminim*-the head of the believers. It cannot be that he stopped believing in the powers of his prayers. Instead, I suggest that after Hashem promised that his offspring would inherit the land, Avram was content to settle down and establish his house in the holy land. The promise then took a passive role on Avram’s

priority list until after he returned with the spoils from fighting Chedorlaomer. At this point it occurred to him that he wouldn't have any of his own children to inherit the wealth. This realization caused Avram to bring his lack of children back to the center of his attention. In my opinion, this would serve as a better transition into the Chizkuni's conclusion, that perhaps Avram had done something to break off the promise.

Isaac Gateno- Class of 2020- Modern Commentary "The weight of childlessness"

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, born 1948 in London, points out how anticlimactic Avraham's response seems to be. After being told by G-d that He would act as Avraham's shield and protector, his response is to mourn over his lack of children? It seems like a bit of a strange time and place to mention such a desire. Rather, Sacks posits, for Avraham and many of those unable to reproduce children of their own, the weight of childlessness is simply too overwhelming to bear. It brings with it a magnitude of hopelessness which seems inescapable. Avraham's melancholic answer to G-d's decree highlights just how depressed his childlessness has made him. It shows us the desperation with which he sought after a child of his own, and further reveals the intense feeling of despair experienced by those unable to bear kin of their own seed. It was this powerful emotion that kept Avraham from being happy, even during a time of seeming prosperity and success in his life.

Source: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/lech-lecha-infertile-nation/>

Rabbi Ari Kellerman- Upper School Judaic Principal- "Is it really about the money?"

Avram had amassed a lot of wealth in his life, but with all we know how G-d values the spiritual over the physical, it's hard to imagine Avram worrying about who would inherit his 'stuff'. More likely, Avram was disappointed that he wouldn't leave a *spiritual* legacy to any children. That's certainly a priority we see many times throughout the Torah. Most notably, Moshe Rabbeinu, though he had two sons, does not actually leave his legacy to them, but to Yehoshua. I often wonder why Avram merited to see his child, Yitzchok, carry on his legacy, while Moshe did not. Interestingly, it seems Avram's name change was the clincher for his ability to pass on the tradition to his sons. Curiously, it was Yehoshua's name change which allowed *him* to carry on a legacy. We know that the reason for the mitzvah of Chalitzah is to carry on the family name as well. It seems like an important thing for us all to consider, how important this first mitzvah in the Torah - Peru U'Revu - really is.