

פרשת לך לך Parshat Lech Lecha

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THE NAME GAME RABBI BEN SUGERMAN

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AVICHLAI SHEKHTER (22')

MEIRAV HOROWITZ (25')

ATARA KEEHN (23')

HILA BLANKA (23')

וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת שְׁמָךְ אֲבָרָם וְכַיְהָ שְׁמָךְ אֲבָרָם כִּי אָב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם גַּתְתִּיתִי

"Your name shall no longer be "Avram"; it shall now be "Avraham," because I have made you a father (Av) to a multitude

(Hamon) of nations" (Bereishit 17:5).

תְּנִי בָּר קְפָרָא: כֹּל הַקּוֹרָא לְאַבָּרָם "אַבָּרָם" – עֹזֶב בָּעֵשֶׂה. שְׁנִיאָמָר: "וְכַיְהָ שְׁמָךְ אֲבָרָם". רַבִּי אַלְיעָזֶר אָמָר: עֹזֶב בָּלָאו, שְׁנִיאָמָר: "וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד [אֶת] שְׁמָךְ אַבָּרָם".

One who calls Avraham by the name "Avram," transgresses a positive... and a negative command, as the verse says, "Your name shall no longer be Avram" (Berachot 13a).

The gemara certainly takes the name change of Avra-

ham very seriously to the point in which one is bound by both a positive commandment and negative prohibition to revert to his original name. The gemara goes on to teach us that Yaakov's name change to Yisroel is not irrevocable. It's acceptable to refer to Yaakov as Yaakov.

Why was Avraham's name change so critical and why didn't his son nor his grandson go through a similar name alteration?

There is a fascinating comment by Rabbeinu Bachye in Parshat Toldot (credit translation to Sefaria):

"The Torah simply tells us that the Philistines were so jealous of Yitzchak's success that they closed down wells which Avraham had dug in order to deny Yitzchak the opportunity of benefiting from his father's foresight. They wanted to deny Yitzchak the water he needed to sustain his herds and flocks. Eventually, Yitzchak stirred himself and he redug the same wells making sure he kept the names his father had given to these wells. The Torah reports this seemingly insignificant detail to acquaint us with the meticulous way Yitzchak adhered

to the norms his father had taught him. Perhaps, this is even the reason why the Torah never reports that Yitzchak's own name was changed, as distinct from the names of both his father and his son Yaakov. This would be a further illustration of the principle of **מזה כנגד מדת** that God responds in kind" (Bereishit 26:15:2).

The takeaway of this comment of the Rabbeinu Bachye is evident. The obvious courage of Avraham, who went counter culture to leave the ways of his idolatrous past, can't be overstated. Avraham had to both physically and spiritually leave his father's house to start a monotheistic revolution. Not only did he leave his home to run counter to his family, he opposed an entire world culture to promote a new movement.

At the very same time let's take time to also focus on Yitzchak, who had a role model. Yitzchak did not run counter to his father, in fact, just the opposite, he recognized the truth that his father communicated. Yitzchak studied and copied every aspect of his father, all the way down to the detail of retaining the names that his father used when reconstructing those wells.

It behooves us to carefully study and emulate the ways of our parents and Rebbeim. Careful adherence to the proper conduct of our mentors is a critical building block to our own development and maturation. Let's take the time to study and repeat the ways of our role models and faithfully transmit the beautiful *mesorah* that we have.

Good Shabbos.

WORDS TO LIVE BY

AVICHL SHEKTER (22')

Just a little while after Avraham arrives in Eretz Yisrael, a famine overtakes the land and he is forced to depart to Mitzrayim. As Avraham approaches Mitzrayim, he says to his wife, Sarah:

וַיֹּהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר הָקָרַב לְבֹא מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל שְׁרֵי אֲשֶׁתָּנוּ
הַנָּה נָא יָדַעַתִּי כִּי אֲשֶׁר יִפְתַּח מָרָא אֹתָה. וְהִיא כִּי יָרָא
אַתְּךָ הַמִּצְרִים וְאָמַרְתָּנוּ אֲשֶׁתָּנוּ זֹאת וְהַרְגָּזָה אֹתָה וְאַתָּךְ יִחְיֶה
אָמַרְתִּי נָא אֲחֹתִי אֲתָה לְמַעַן יִיטְבֵּלִי בְּעַבְרָה וְחִתָּה נְפָשִׁי
בְּגַלְלָה

"I'm nervous that when the Mitzriyim see you, they will want to take you. If they know you're my wife, they'll kill me and keep you. Please, say you're my sister, so that it will be good for me in your merit, and my soul will live because of you" (Bereishit 12:11-13).

Rashi explains that what Avraham meant by the words **לְמַעַן יִטְבֵּלִי בְּעַבְרָה** was "they will give me presents".

Rav Yosef Zvi Salant asks the following in his commentary, the Beer Yosef: What is Avraham talking about? Is he worried about wealth at a time like this? There must be a deeper idea here. The Beer Yosef suggests that Avraham should not have been worried that they would kill him because Avraham Avinu had a tremendous hidden secret weapon -- a weapon that they couldn't take away from him -- his *ko'ach ha'dibbur*, the strength of his speech. Avraham was unbelievable with words. If they were to surround him, he could just say, "Hey, wait a second, guys, can we just talk for a minute?", and he would get them into conversation, and ultimately be able to convince them. Avraham was worried that they would not even give him a chance to open his mouth, and he would be a goner. They would see this beautiful woman, kill Avraham on the spot, and then ask questions later. Therefore, Avraham requested that Sarah claim that she was his sister so it would at least give Avraham a chance to engage with the locals in dialogue. What does **לְמַעַן יִטְבֵּלִי בְּעַבְרָה** really mean? It is not referring to gifts. Avraham wanted Sarah to say that she was his sister so that he would be able to convince the Egyptians not to kill him. Avraham knew and appreciated what makes humans unique. As the Kuzari points out, man is above all other beings, as he can express himself through speech. Avraham wanted to use the gift of speech to have a positive impact on others.

Avraham Avinu's purpose in life was to bring people closer to Hashem. He valued his life because his mission in this world was bringing people closer to Hashem. That's the reward he wanted, not riches, but

to enrich others. We should all learn from Avraham to have the desire to positively impact others.

LOL!

MEIRAV HOROWITZ (25')

בַּפְלָל אַבְרָהָם עַל פָּנָיו יָצַח וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלֹבּוּ הַלְּבָן מֵהָ שָׁנָה
זָוְלָד וְאַם שָׁרָה הַבָּת תְּשֻׁעֵם שָׁנָה תַּלְדֵּד

"Avraham threw himself on his face and laughed, as he said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man a hundred years old, or can Sarah bear a child at ninety?" (17:17).

In this week's parsha, we learn that Avraham was told by Hashem that Sarah would soon become pregnant. We then see that Avraham reacts by throwing himself on the ground (as if he was bowing) and laughing.

In next week's parsha, Sarah is told by a *malach* that she will be having a baby -- she too reacted by laughing (Bereishit 18:13). The difference between these two situations is that after Sarah laughed, God asked why she did so. Why did God question Sarah's laughter and not Avraham's?

Rashi answers this question by saying that Avraham was laughing out of joy and faith. On the other hand, Sarah did not have faith and instead was laughing out of disbelief.

Why does Rashi assume that Avraham's laugh was out of joy and belief and Sarah's was not?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that, unlike Avraham, Sarah did not laugh immediately after she heard the message that she would bear a child. She waited until her aging body showed renewed signs of fertility and, only after she had physical proof that she would be able to give birth at her advanced age, she laughed and rejoiced. In contrast, Avraham knew as soon as he heard the *nevuah* that he would have a child with Sarah, and therefore he laughed out of joy and excitement about this miracle.

We can learn from this that although it is nice to have proof of all the miracles that God does, we should not need it or wait for it. We need to have *emunah*, even if there is no proof. Good Shabbos!

SMELLS GREAT

ATARA KEEHN (23')

When a bottle of perfume is sealed no one can enjoy its scent, but when you open it everyone can benefit. In this week's parsha, Hashem tells Avraham to leave his land and the house of his father and to go into the land that He will show him. Try to imagine the test that Avraham is being put through at this moment. He's being told to literally leave his whole life behind and go into an unknown place where he knows no one.

Think about if someone asked you to leave your friends and family that you grew up with, not knowing if you will ever see them again. Think about leaving behind the grocery stores that you are comfortable shopping in, the school that you've been settled in for a while. Despite that difficulty, this journey ended up being the greatest benefit to Avraham. Had Avraham stayed in Charan, he would have not been blessed with children because of the lack of kedusha in Charan. A lot of times we are in a situation that we shouldn't be in but we are in anyway. Why? Because we get comfortable. We're comfortable in the surroundings we are in. We're settled at our jobs. We are used to speaking to our parents in a certain way. And these can all be dragging us down. Now, one of two things can happen. Either you are told for whatever reason to leave those surrounding -- maybe you get fired from a job and have to leave, or maybe the way you speak to your parents is ruining your relationship. Or, you step out of your comfort zone -- you decide to quit the job, or you change your tone of voice. You do something about it. It can be scary and definitely uncomfortable. But Hashem always has something better in store for us if we make that change.

When Avraham left Mitzrayim, not only was his life changed but the entire course of the Jewish people changed as well. When we open that bottle of perfume, when we take that step out of our comfort zone, we can enjoy its scent and have everyone enjoy it as well. Because when we do good for Hashem, Hashem will do good for us too.

APPRECIATION

HILA BLANKA (23')

In this week's parsha, Lech Lecha, Avraham is commanded to leave his birthplace, Charan. At this point Avraham is 75 years old and is asked to uproot his whole life from his hometown. Regardless, he takes his wife, Sarai (Sarah), his nephew, Lot, and all of his wealth on an unknown journey to an unknown destination, due to his full *bitachon* in Hashem and His plan for Avraham's future.

Once Avraham had parked at his destination, Hashem came to him and told him that He would "assign this land" to Avraham's offspring. Even though we understand Sarah to be barren (from last week's Parshat Noach), this ensures that a miracle will happen and that they will ultimately have a big family. Right after this, we learn that Avraham immediately goes to build a *mizbeach*.

יבן שם מזבח לה' בגראה אליו

"And he built an altar there to Hashem who had appeared to him" (Bereishit 12:7).

One might think that he is building it out of gratitude towards Hashem for guaranteeing him and Sarah descendants for generations to come. However, the Ohr HaChaim suggests a different approach. He claims that for Avraham, the promise to have descendants and for those offspring to inherit the land was merely icing on the cake. Avraham was so grateful that Hashem considered him worthy enough to have an almost direct line of communication that it was enough for him to build the *mizbeach*. The Ohr HaChaim quotes an example from Tehillim where David HaMelech writes, - שְׁבָע שְׁתִיחוֹת אֶת פָנֶיךָ "In Your presence is perfect joy" (Tehillim 16:11).

We can learn from Avraham how to be thankful for opportunities we have regardless of the possible benefits and rewards that are to come along with them. Those are just the cherries on top of the already sweet ice cream sundae. We should be thankful for the countless opportunities that we have to speak to Hashem and consequently strengthen our relationship with Him, even though we don't have the same line of communication that our forefathers did. Despite everything, we need to appreciate our environment which allows us to grow as better people and *ovdei Hashem*. Have a Shabbat Shalom!

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