



Wembley Synagogue

לְךָ לְךָ

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Lech Lecha

לְךָ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ - Go for yourself from your land (12:1)

Many commentators point out that the progression of this verse seems to be in reverse of the logical order. First, Abraham left his father's house, then he left the city of his birth and finally he left his land. Why then did Hashem tell him to leave his land first, then his birthplace and only then his father's house? Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik explains that each of these departures was significant in its own right. There is a specific difficulty in leaving one's land, a different difficulty in leaving one's birthplace and yet a third in leaving one's father's house. Thus, Hashem was actually giving Avraham three distinct mitzvot, and he would be rewarded for each of them separately.

Had the commandment of departure been presented in the logical order, it would have been a single mitzvah, the departure from the land, with the other two departures merely the preliminary stages of this departure. First he would leave his father's house, severing the first of his bonds with his land. Then he would leave his city, severing the second and finally he would sever all bonds and emigrate from the land itself. But the fundamental mitzvah would have remained departure from the land. Therefore the order of the commandment was reversed. First he was commanded to leave the land, and then his birthplace and his father's house, a clear indication that each was a mitzvah in its own right. (Source: The Parsha Anthology)

אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה - To the land that I will show you (12:1)

R' Menachem Yurowitz once pointed out to the Steipler Gaon that if the letters of the word אֶרֶץ (I will show you) are spelled out א becoming אָלֶף (aleph) ר becoming רֵישׁ (reish) and so on, the gematria (numerical value of the word) when the letters are added together equals 832 which is the same gematria as אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Eretz Yisrael)

The Baal Haturim explains that אֶרֶץ (I will show you) has the same gematria as בְּעַנְנִים - 'in the clouds.' This hints to the fact that Avraham was guided by the clouds to the appropriate land.

וְהָיָה בְרַכָּה - You will be for a blessing (12:2)

Rashi comments that in these words Hashem promised Avraham that even though His name would also be identified with Isaac (as we say in the Shemona Esrei, Elokei Yitzchak – the G-d of Isaac) and with Jacob (also in the Shemona Esrei the G-d of Jacob), nonetheless the blessing would conclude only with Avraham's name – (as we say at the end of that blessing in the Shemona Esrei – Magen Avraham). It seems that Avraham merited this distinction by being the first person who recognized Hashem's existence. Even though the Rabbis tell us that Isaac equaled his father's achievements (Shemot Rabah 1:1) and that Jacob may even have exceeded them (since he was called בְּחִיר שְׁבָאֲבוֹת - the select one of the forefathers – see Bereshit Rabah 76:1), Avraham merited greater distinction because it was he who first established Hashem's faith in the world. From this we learn that when a great man initiates any major endeavour, then even though his descendants and successors may carry it to higher levels than he was able to, it is still known as his accomplishment. (Source: Darash Moshe- Commentary of R' Moshe Feinstein)

וַיַּעֲבֵר אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם שְׂכָם עַד אֵלּוֹן מוֹרָה וְהַכְנַעֲנִי אֶזְרָא בְּאֶרֶץ - Avram passed through the land to the place of Shechem and the Canaanite was then in the land (12: 6)

What is the connection between these two things?

When Avram came to Eretz Yisrael, the Canaanites were engaged in conquering the land of Israel from the children of Shem (Rashi). Usually, during a war, armies are very cautious, and all strangers are questioned to make sure that they are not spies for the other side.

The Torah is emphasizing that although the Canaanites were presently in the land and it was a time of war, Avram was miraculously protected by Hashem and very easily went through the entire country without hindrance. (Source: Sefer Sha'ar Bat Rabim)

אֲמַרְי נָא אֲחוּתִי אַתְּ - Please say that you are my sister (12:13)

How could Avraham say that Sarah was his sister to save his own life, placing her at risk of being captured?

Ramban says Avraham unintentionally committed a great sin by bringing his righteous wife into a compromising situation in an attempt to save his own life. He should have trusted in Hashem that He would save them. In fact, Avraham's departure from the land of Canaan to Egypt as a result of the

famine was also a sin, since he should have trusted in G-d to save him from hunger. As a result of Avraham's mistake, the Egyptian exile was decreed on his descendants.

Abarbanel says that Avraham was willing to sacrifice his life to save Sarah from being abducted. However he realized that if he would have been identified as Sarah's husband they would have killed him and abducted her in any case. Therefore allowing himself to be killed for her sake would have seemed totally futile. Avraham's actions here could be compared to Aharon's sanctioning of the golden calf, for Aharon knew that if he would have objected to the calf Bnei Yisrael would have killed him in any case – so what was to be gained?

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל לוֹט אַל לֹט אֵל נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ ... כִּי אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנַחְנוּ - Avram said to Lot, "Please let there not be any strife between me and you.....for we are brothers (relatives) (13:8)

Question: Why did Avram emphasize his association with Lot?

Answer: Avram told Lot, "People should always avoid conflicts, especially with relatives and good friends." (Source: Iturei Torah)

אִם מְחוּט וְעַד שְׂרוּד־נֶעַל וְאִם־אֶקַּח מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ - If so much as a thread to a shoe strap; or if I shall take anything of yours."(14:23)

The *Gemara (Sotah 17a)* says that because Avram refused to take from the King of Sodom even a thread or a shoe strap, his children (the Jewish people) merited receiving two *mitzvot* from Hashem: the *mitzvah* of putting a thread of *techeilet* (blue thread) in the *tzitzit* and the *mitzvah* of putting *retzu'ot* (straps) in the *tefillin*. Why are the *tallit* and *tefillin* worn specifically during *shacharit* prayers?

According to the *Gemara Berachot 26b* Avraham initiated *davening* to Hashem each morning. (*shacharit*). Therefore, during his *tefillah* (Avraham's *tefilla* – as he initiated *Shacharit*) we don the *tallit* and wrap the straps of the *tefillin* around the arm and head. When Avram spoke to the King of Sodom, he first mentioned the thread and afterwards the shoe strap; thus, we first don the *tallit*, which has in it the thread of *techeilet*, and afterwards the *tefillin*, which have the leather straps. (Source: Ateret Zekeinim 25)

וְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן תִּשְׁעִים וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנָה בְּהִמְלֹךְ אֶת בֶּשֶׁר עָרְלָתוֹ - Avraham was ninety nine years old when he was circumcised. (17:24)

Avraham observed the entire Torah (*Yoma 28b*). Why did he wait to circumcise himself until he was so old?

The *Gemara Kiddushin 31a* says גְּדוֹל מְצוּוֹה וְעוֹשֶׂה יוֹתֵר מִמִּי שֶׁאִינוֹ מְצוּוֹה וְעוֹשֶׂה - "One who performs a *mizvah* having been commanded to do so is greater than one who performs a *mitzvah* without having been commanded to do so." The one who is obligated is more worried and anxious in case he does not fulfill (the *mitzvah*) than the one who is not obligated and therefore his reward is greater (*Tosafot*). Therefore, Avraham performed all *mitzvot* with the anticipation that when Hashem commanded him he would do them again and receive the greater reward. Unlike all other *mitzvot*, the circumcision can be performed only once during a person's lifetime. If he had circumcised himself voluntarily, he would not be able to do it again anymore as one who is commanded and thus receive a greater reward. Hence, with this *mitzvah* he waited till he would be commanded to do so. (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִמְלֹךְ אַבְרָהָם וְיִשְׁמָאֵל בְּנוֹ - On this very day, Abraham and his son Yishmael were circumcised. (17:26)

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 28 teaches that this day was Yom Kippur. It was befitting that the first Brit Milah take place on Yom Kippur, for the goals of Yom Kippur and circumcision are one and the same. Milah perfects the human body; similarly through repentance, Yom Kippur returns man to spiritual perfection. (Source: *Pirkei Torah*)

In the merit of this day – the day on which Avraham and Yishmael performed Milah at their own personal risk- they each received a reward equal to 12 – the numerical value of זֶה (Zeh). Avraham merited having twelve tribes of Bnei Yisrael as his descendants and Yishmael too, merited the twelve princes mentioned in the Sidra of Chayei Sarah (25:16) (Source: *Kol Dodi*)

Mitzvot in the sedra: The sedra of Lech Lecha contains one positive *mitzvah* – the *mitzvah* of circumcision (17:10)

Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 4.14pm



Shabbat ends: 5.21pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson