

Points to Ponder  
Lech Lecha 5778

**Lech Lecha (12:1)** – The two times we find the phrase Lech Lecha utilized are here and in preparation for the Akaida. The Midrash notes that the one by the Akaida must be more important than the one here. But what is the connection between these tests? And how can leaving a land possibly be more important or beloved than losing a child? **Rav Schlessinger Shlita** suggests that in order to live in the land of Israel there are many sacrifices that one needs to make. Until this very day, the challenges of moving to Eretz Yisrael are special to Hashem, hence the discussion.

**And you will be a blessing (12:2)** – **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that one has the obligation to be a blessing. The truth is that when one makes this his mantra in life everything is a blessing for him.

**And the souls they created in Charan (12:5)** – **Rashi** quotes that Sarah and Avraham made Geirim. But what type of Geirus did they do before Matan Torah? How good could such a Geirus be if it happened without a Beis Din? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlita** noted that the entirety of the Geirus consisted of Kabbolos Ol Malchus Shomayim which did not need a Beth Din. Avraham must have taught the converts the Halachos of Avodah Zara with the Halachos of the other 7 Mitzvos Bnei Noach. This was the conversion process for which a Yachid Mumcheh like Avraham sufficed.

**So that they will be good to me because of you (12:13)** – Was Avraham really willing to give his wife to harlotry merely to receive gifts? (**Ramban** even argues that this was a mistake of Avraham who did not show strength of Bitachon here) Was he interested in bribery and not Tzinyus? Did he ignore the factors of family and Chessed? **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** explained that Avraham knew that Galus is so overpowering that it could infect his children in the future with the desire to disburse and disband. In particular it was the Jewish women who were at most risk and losing their support of the Jewish nation was potentially catastrophic because in general, the women were always more supportive of the Jewish nation than their male counterparts (think Nashim Tzikaniyos, Bnos Tzlofchad etc). They derived their strength from the paradigms of the women who demonstrated the same strength in history. Hence, Avraham and Sarah agreed to the Pharaoh plan in order to set the tone of strength of the future of Am Yisrael.

**From a thread to a shoe lace (14:23)** – In the merit of the denial of the gifts from the king of Sodom Avraham's children merited the strings of Tzitzis and the straps of Tefillin. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would remind us of the comments of the **Haflaah (Panim Yafos)** who noted that this is the reason that we put on the left shoe first – as a reminder of the connection between the shoe and the tefillin (worn on the left) which was a reminder of the shoe strap that Avraham gave up. Rav Schachter Shlita added that we find a similar historical connection to the concept of saying Lchaim which is a response to the drinking that anesthetized the killer before he received his death sentence – so as to contrast, they would say L'Chaim and not death. Rav Schachter reminded us that one should recite the LChaim after the Beracha and an initial sip – as a reminder of Malkitzedek who forgot to put Hashem first.

**And the sun was setting and a deep sleep befell Avraham (15:)** – The Yalkut Shimoni quotes Rav Yehoshua of Sakinin who explains that sleep is the beginning of all sorts of trouble. **Rav Altusky ztl.** explains that we are dealing with sleep for no reason. Any deviation from one's set schedule in Avodas Hashem serves as the basis of the beginning of Nefilah – of failure.

**Count the stars if you can (15:5)** – It sounds as if the challenge is one based on size – that the nation will be so great in the future that the people will not be able to be counted. However, **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** noted that the difficulty in counting the stars is based both on size and proximity. The stars are shining from so many distance points that getting an accurate count of them is impossible. Rav Schwab pointed out that the same can be said of the Jewish people who are so great in so many ways and whose impact on the world from future to past and from past onto present is so great the numbers won't make any sense.

**Walk before me and be Tamim (17:1)** – **Sforno** notes that the word Tamim here refers to completeness. In other words one needs to be complete in his Yiras Shomayim. How does one achieve that Sheleimus? **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** explained that torah is referred to as Temima. It is both Sheleima and bring Sheleimus to the person studying it. An established Torah schedule leads to Sheleimus as we learn from Yaakov. If one achieves it one is primed to Sheleimus.

**Haftorah – Yeshayahu 40** – **Rav Berel Wein Shlita** explains that in all of Tanach, the strongest indictment against paganism is in Parshas Lech Lecha, and its Haftorah is similarly unsparing. Just as Avraham's opposition to paganism set him against the rest of the world, so too does the faith of the Jewish people set them apart. There is a high price for standing up for morality in an immoral world, yet as the prophet Isaiah assures us in this Haftorah, God will never abandon us.