Points to Ponder

Lech Lecha 5780

**לֶךְ־לְךָ֛ Lech Lecha (12:1) - Rashi** asks why Hashem didn’t tell Avraham where he was going. He offers 2 reasons -- to make the land exciting to him and also to give him reward for each step. Rashi seems to be suggesting that uncovering surprises makes a person more interested in that which he is receiving. **The Steipler ztl** noted that this is also apparent in one’s learning too. If we knew everything from the beginning we would not be as excited about the journey of Limmud HaTorah. Loving the process helps one love the treasure that is the result of the hard work put into the Torah.

**וּמִמּֽוֹלַדְתְּךָ֖ וּמִבֵּ֣ית אָבִ֑יךָ  Go from your land and birthplace  (12:1) - Ramban** wonders what the connection between leaving all of these places and the good things to come is all about. He explains that Hashem was telling Avraham that staying in a place of persecution where you every step is a defensive one is not ideal. Go to the land I am sending you to, and it will be good. The focus would now be a positive Emunah test. **Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita** added that when it came to Avraham, growth in Avodas Hashem meant leaving the practices of previous generations. This would not be so for his children who would do the exact opposite. For them, Avodas Hashem growth would be in learning from the Avos.

**וַיֵּרָ֤א Hashem appeared to Avraham (12:7)** - Why does Hashem only appear to Avraham AFTER Avraham follows the command of Lech Lecha?  **Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** suggests that one who wants to stick to Hashem belongs in Eretz Yisrael. Only there does Hashem appear to him and only there will He make a Bris with him. Thus, Hashem tells Avraham to go to the land and thereafter He appears to him.

**וַיִּשָּׂא־ל֣וֹט אֶת־עֵינָ֗יו Lot lifted his eyes and saw the fertile area of the Jordan valley (13:10**) - It is incredible that Lot, Avraham’s nephew would choose to live among the people of Sodom. The environment seemed foreign for someone with his background. **Rav Nosson Wachtfogel ztl.** explained that once someone sees something, the Yetzer HaRa can be strong. A person needs to guard his eyes for that reason.

**תֶּן־לִ֣י הַנֶּ֔פֶשׁ וְהָֽרְכֻ֖שׁ קַח־לָֽךְ: Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself (14:21)** - **Rav Pam ztl**. notes that Avraham was held responsible for returning the souls to Sodom for as a result, these souls were never exposed to Hashem. In fact, the Gemara (Nedarim 32a) includes this as a reason for why Avraham’s children were sent into slavery.  A similar experience is found with Timna who wanted to join in with Bnei Yisrael but was rejected and joined Eliphaz instead. Rav Pam noted that we need to be open to Kiruv even if we are not trained -- we have caring hearts for our fellow Jews and should open our hearts for the chance to share the beauty of a life of Mitzvos.

**ידֹ֨עַ תֵּדַ֜ע כִּי־גֵ֣ר | יִֽהְיֶ֣ה זַרְעֲךָ֗ Your offspring will be strangers (15:13**) - We refer to Avraham’s children as Zera. Why? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted **Tosafos (Yevamos 22b**) who notes that there is a difference between Zera and Ben. Ben refers to a biological child irrespective of whether he follows in the path of the parent. At the same time, Zera only refers to Zera Kasher and not Zera Pasul. However, it includes future generations similar to a seed that grows the trees that will grow into the tree of the same species well into the future. Rav Schachter added that the promise of Eretz Yisrael to the Zera means that the land is promised to the children of Avraham who observe the Torah. This is why in Birkas HaMazon we mention the Torah taught by Hashem as a condition for getting the land. Further, our receiving the land is predicated on the intention to build a Beis HaMikdash to serve as a base for Kappara via Korbanos.

**דַּמֶּ֥שֶׂק אֱלִיעֶֽזֶר: Eliezer from Damascus (15:2)** - Why is Eliezer referred to with these terms? Rashi cites the gemara (Yoma 28b) that the word Damesek refers to the fact the Eliezer would take from his teacher and share it with others. **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that this is the most apt description of Eliezer. Most people content themselves with studying and perfecting the teachings of their teachers. Eliezer was not content with being a receiver in life. He dug deep to really understand the teacher (Doeh like a well) and then carried out the depth of the teaching into the world at large (Mashkeh).

**Haftara: בִּקְד֥וֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל תִּתְהַלָּֽל: And you shall rejoice in Hashem, in the holy one of Israel you shall praise (Yeshayahu 41:16) - Rav Shlomo Kluger ztl.** explained that there are Tzaddikim who normally would deserve to receive the Shechinah but do not because their generation is not worthy of the experience. That is the intent of the Possuk here -- if you scatter the Reshaim, the stock of the Tzaddikim will rise. As a result the holy ones will sing His praises.