Points to Ponder

Lech Lecha 5781

**וְאֶֽעֶשְׂךָ֙ לְג֣וֹי גָּד֔וֹל I will make your name great (12:2) - Rashi** comments that even though we will identify with each of the Avos, we will end the Beracha with Mogen Avraham. Why do we recognize Hashem’s relationship with  Avraham as the end point? Why not end with Yaakov -- having built on Avraham and Yitzchak? **Rav Moshe Weinberger shlita** recalled the comment of the Biala Rebbe ztl who noted that Avraham uniquely was able to relate as a brother -- even when distant (think Mitzrayim or Gerar) and that level of connection allows us to relate even to those with whom we do not have other things in common. It is what serves as a baseline for Am Yisrael -- at the least, we are all connected.

**וְאֶת־הַנֶּ֖פֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂ֣וּ בְחָ֑רָן  The souls that they made in Charan (12:5)** - What happened to these people? **The Pardes Yosef quotes Rav Chanoch Henoch of Alexander ztl.** who notes that the people believed more in Avraham than in his religion. When Avraham died, they didn’t take to Yitzchak and went back to their old lifestyles.

**הָל֥וֹךְ וְנָס֖וֹעַ הַנֶּֽגְבָּה Avram traveled southward (12:9)** - But Avraham ALWAYS travelled southward! What is the Chiddush? **Rav Aryeh Leibowitz Shlita** cited **Rav Yerucham Olshin Shlita** who noted that it is not only about what you do, but also that you DESIRE it. Sforno for instance, noted that Terach moved south because he desired spirituality. Although Avraham continued on that southward trip (See Bava Basra הרוצה להחכים ידרים) he did so with a desire to find Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the process. To quote Rav Leibowitz -- sometimes the Chiddush is in the consistency.

**וְאַנְשֵׁ֣י סְדֹ֔ם רָעִ֖ים וְחַטָּאִ֑ים The people of Sodom were evil and sinners (13:13)** - What is the intent of the word “Chataim”? **Rav Yerucham Gorelick ztl.** quotes the Brisker Rav who quoted the Nesivos who explained that when one regularly sins repeatedly it is almost hard to distinguish the person from the sin. Hence we note that the people were evil and sinners -- to note that the people were literally personifications of sin.

**וּמַלְכִּי־צֶ֨דֶק֙ מֶ֣לֶךְ שָׁלֵ֔ם And Malkitzedek the king of Shalem (14:18)** - Why are these Possukim inserted here in the middle of the discussion between the King of Sodom and Avraham. **Rav Yehuda Amital ztl.** suggested that apparently, the insertion of the seemingly out-of-place verses about Malkitzedek here come to tell us that Malkitzedek, the representative of the locus of justice in the world (Yirushalayim) came to congratulate Avraham on his achievement in redeeming the captive Lot. Over the course of this episode Avraham had undertaken various actions which were problematic; therefore, prior to his encounter with the king of Sedom, the Torah emphasizes that he acted properly, as confirmed by the representative of justice. Avraham believed that extraordinary measures were justified – meeting with the most contemptible people, endangering the lives of scholars, and even killing in battle – in order to free captives.

**בַּמָּ֥ה אֵדַ֖ע כִּ֥י אִֽירָשֶֽׁנָּה With what shall I know that I will inherit the land? (15:8)** - The Gemara Nedarim notes that Avraham’s descendants were punished for this seeming lack of trust in Hashem. How are we to understand this? Where was Avraham to receive **Kli Yakar** explains that knowing that your children will be exiled and punished and that you have a part in it, is punishment and painful. Even if the ultimate reason for their exile is not based on him alone, it is the awareness that he was not able to protect -- and was a contributor -- that was a punishment of major proportion.

**וַֽהֲקִֽמֹתִ֨י אֶת־בְּרִיתִ֜י בֵּינִ֣י וּבֵינֶ֗ךָ וּבֵ֨ין זַרְעֲךָ֧ אַֽחֲרֶ֛יךָ לְדֹֽרֹתָ֖ם לִבְרִ֣ית עוֹלָ֑ם To your children after you forever more (17:7)** - Why the extra wording? **Rav Zvi Sobolofsky Shlita** explained that this is the intent of the concept of Bris -- when something is accepted as a group, it lasts even when the initial people are no longer present. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would highlight that this is the intent of the Possuk -- it is not only when something is accepted publicly -- it is when the Mitzva is accepted by future generations that are like the first one. Just as Avraham accepted the responsibility for Bris, his children would approach Milah the same way.

Haftara: **נִסְתְּרָ֚ה דַרְכִּיֽ֙ My path became obscured from Hashem (40:27) - Reuben Ebrahimoff, the Haftaraman** explained that from time to time many of us may experience feeling “spiritually” disappointed. Usually this occurs when our expectations from Hashem have not been met. It may be normal for a person to distance himself or herself from Hashem. But wait, if Hashem is the source of all blessing, then why is it that when we feel abandoned, we abandon Hashem? We should reach towards Hashem for what we want, and that is to feel connected to Hashem.