



אשרינו

**SOUTH FLORIDA
CANDLE LIGHTING:**
6:34PM

MOTZEI SHABBAT:
7:27PM

A Weinbaum Yeshiva High School Torah Publication

PARSHAT LECH LECHA

אז~ חשוון תשע"א OCTOBER 15, 2010

RABBI HOROWITZ	1
JOSEPH HOSTYK	2
DAVID HOPEN	2
ARI MAZOR	3
TALI A LEN	4
TABLE TALK	4

TRUST ME

RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

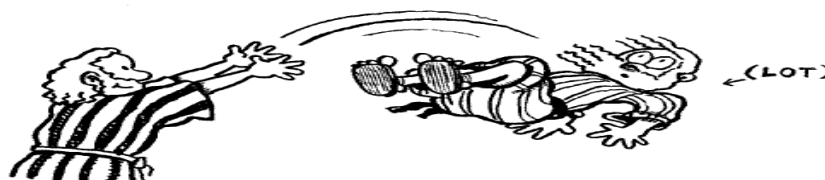
Hashem's first command to Avraham is "*Lech lecha me'artzecha*", to leave his childhood home and move to an unknown destination. This is one of Avraham's famous ten trials. At first glance, this is an obvious test of Avraham's faith. To uproot yourself from your homeland and your family seems exceedingly difficult.

Rashi highlights a problem in the pasuk that challenges the whole idea of this being a challenge for Avraham. Rashi questions why Hashem phrases his command to Avraham as "*Lech lecha*", go for **yourself**, as opposed to simply "*Lech*", go. Rashi answers that this move, as difficult as it seemed, was supposed to be "**lecha**", for Avraham's pleasure and benefit. When one reads the continuation of Hashem's statement, it becomes obvious that Avraham will indeed get a lot of wonderful things if he follows this command! Hashem promises: "I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great."

If moving to Israel held such great promise for Avraham, why wouldn't he jump at the chance to go? In his homeland of *Charan*, people are persecuting him for his philosophy and challenging his beliefs. On a personal level, Avraham and Sarah are struggling and failing to have children. When Hashem tells Avraham that if he goes to Israel he will become famous and have the family he's been dreaming of, Avraham did what anyone would have done! If so, then where was the challenge? What was the test?

Some commentaries suggest a beautiful way of solving this problem, which provides insight into our own relationship with Hashem. They explain that the challenge of "*Lech lecha*" was for Avraham to understand that just as this "test" was for the benefit and for the good of Avraham, so too all future things that Hashem would ever ask of Avraham were also for his benefit and good.

In Avraham's case, the benefit of trusting Hashem and leaving his homeland was obvious – fame and family. Sometimes in our own lives, the benefit of trusting Hashem is not quite as obvious. But our challenge remains the



AT FIRST, ABRAHAM TRIED TO DIVIDE THE LAND BY CASTING LOTS...

READY AND WILLING

JOSEPH HOSTYK ('13)

"And G-d said to Avraham: Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." (Breisheit 12:1)

The first mention of Avraham Avinu in the Torah is somewhat understated; Avraham first appears in the listing of Noah's descendants, and a few *psukim* later, Hashem tells Avraham, "I will make of you a great nation," and commands him to leave the land of his father- a seemingly strange way to introduce the great patriarch, the father of all of *B'nei Yisroel* and the first to believe in monotheism. Although many sources teach us Avraham's background, the Torah does not specifically give any additional details about Avraham and his incredible realization that there is one G-d. Even though the Torah does not provide us with stories of Avraham's theological arguments with the people around him, we call him "Avraham Avinu" (Avraham our Father). It does not mean that he is our genealogical father. Rather it refers to Avraham's ability to transmit his knowledge of Hashem to others. What is the Torah teaching us by introducing Avraham through his instruction by Hashem to leave his homeland?

There are two key insights we can learn from this introduction. First, we see that Avraham takes the initiative to listen to Hashem. Our sages teach us that "*lech lecha*," "go for yourself," is not a commandment given exclusively to Avraham. Rather, it is a universal call for all to heed. The promise made by Hashem, "I will make you into a great nation," is made to anyone who listens. Avraham is chosen not because of his revelation, but because he is spiritually sensitive and committed to listen to Hashem. Similarly, Hashem communicates with us every day. Do we listen? In addition, we see that Avraham is a man of action. Avraham is different from those around him, not only because of his belief in Hashem. Avraham is willing to build an entire lifestyle based on his faith. Avraham's leap of faith is just the beginning of his journey.

When reading about Avraham's desire to follow the ways of Hashem, we must reflect: are we working on our willingness to hear Hashem instruct us about the path to take? And are we then willing to take that path? Are we ready to be people of action, ready to move on to the next phase of our journey? These are questions posed by the story of Avraham. May the answers lead us to follow in the footsteps of Avraham Avinu.

Based on the insights of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rabbi Howard Zack, and Rabbi David Gottlieb

RISE ABOVE

DAVID HOPEN ('12)

Shifting from the tales of Creation, Adam's seminal fall from grace to the generation desolated by the flood to the story of our forefathers, this week's *parshah* marks the dawn of mankind's new beginning. God presents Avraham with the command of "*Lech lecha*", to follow His Voice into the unknown. Avraham is told to leave his homeland, his parents, and his former life behind and journey into a land God has not yet revealed. He is subjected to a life of constant travel and instability in a forbidding world, brimming with idolatry that mocks his mysterious faith and fiercely challenges his sacrilegious ideals. Yet Avraham abandons his entire past and surrenders his existence, all for an elusive request that provides no assurance, relief, or reason. Avraham is infinitely rewarded for his leap of faith, blessed to become the patriarch of an eternal nation. G-d avows to "bless him, make him into a great nation, and make his name great." The Ramban asserts that the entire world will all benefit from the magnitude of Avraham.

This is the inspiration that shaped a nation- the idea of leaving everything you have ever known behind and persevering against all odds. The 2010 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was recently awarded to Bob Edwards for his work and development of in-vitro fertilization. Edwards pioneered the birth of the first test tube baby. His treatments for infertility are embedded in medical history.

Continued page 3

David Hopen continued

Edwards faced extreme pressure and hostility for his revolutionary work, deemed blasphemous by the Vatican and unsupported by the British government. The Vatican labeled Edwards' advancements as immoral, lamenting the destruction of embryos never implanted, and claiming that his work was harming modern morality. In the face of such opposition, Edwards still forged innovative paths in science and became the father of the test tube baby. Edward's fundamental belief in the importance of his work has provided countless families with hope, immeasurable happiness, and the gift of life, as he was able to look into himself for strength.

Avraham's journey is timeless, one that paved the way for the era of his descendants and allowed them to transcend into the nation of God. The lesson of Avraham is the ability to rise above the limitations society attempts to create and follow the strength of your convictions.

AVRAHAM'S SUMMER OLYMPICS

ARI MAZOR ('14)

In *Parshat Lech Lecha*, Avraham passes seven of his ten *nisyonot*, tests. Despite their difficulty, Avraham passes these tests with flying colors. Similarly, *Hashem* encourages us to walk in the path of Avraham and wishes us to attain the level that Avraham was at, but how can Hashem demand this of us? Avraham was a great *tzaddik* and we are clearly nowhere near his level. How can we be expected to face the tests of Avraham?

The answer can be explained through the following *mashal*, parable. Imagine you are attending the Summer Olympics. You watch as all the athletes warm up and prepare themselves for the long jump. You can only imagine how hard they have trained for the last four years of their lives and what it means to them to be there. The first contender takes his position gets a running start. You are amazed when he jumps eight meters! The second jumps eight and a half, even more impressive! The final contestant surpasses them all and jumps nine meters, breaking the world record by .05 meters. A hush falls over the crowd for a second and then the explosion. The crowd goes wild. The entire audience is on their feet giving the athletes well-deserved applause.

All of a sudden, the guy next to you jumps onto the track and attempts the jump. He runs up, jumps, and for a second, you think he has a chance. Yet, he crashes to the floor. He picks himself up, barely four meters from the jump mark. For this man there is no applause, no explosion; security rushes in, grabs the man, and escorts him off the track. An apology is given to the crowd over the loudspeakers. But for some reason, maybe out of pity, you think to yourself, maybe this guy did not jump as far as the Olympic athletes, but he still did an outstanding job for an average guy like him. You realize that if this person would have put in the work and time, he would have had great potential to become an actual Olympic athlete. However, this guy thought he could attain the fame without the work.

That man made the same mistake that most of us make every day. We often think that Avraham was special because Hashem made him that way. In reality, being a *tzaddik* is a lot like being an athlete. Just as athletes excel because of the amount of time and effort they invest in practicing their sport, so too Avraham achieves the status of a *tzaddik* by working on himself and constantly improving his *midot*. We all can achieve greatness and pass our tests, only if are we willing to train and push ourselves. May Hashem give every one of us the strength to excel in our mission and to learn *lalechet bedarchei Hashem*, to walk in the ways of Hashem.

WHY WAIT?

TALIA LEN ('12)

"Avraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised." (17:24)

If Avraham keeps all the Torah's rules and restrictions, why does he wait to become circumcised until such an old age?

Here are three answers to this question:

1. A person is prohibited to cause himself pain. Therefore, even though Avraham had wanted to fulfill the mitzvah of *bris milah*, he could not do so since there was no Torah at the time. Therefore, he waits for G-d's permission in order to give himself a *bris milah*.
2. According to the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah 27a*), Avraham is not able to proceed with his circumcision because, in order to perform a *bris milah*, the *mohel*, himself, must have also had a *bris milah*. The Gemara goes on to say that G-d helps Avraham with his *bris milah* and so, Avraham, after the completion of his circumcision, is allowed to perform the act of *bris milah* on others.
3. In *Gemara Kiddushin (31a)* we see the statement, "One who performs a precept having been commanded to do so is greater than one who performs a precept without having been commanded to do so". It is human nature to rebel against things we are commanded to do. This is what makes fulfilling an obligation much greater than volunteering to do something. When a person offers help, he/she usually wants to do it. The opposite occurs when we are commanded to help our parents, give *tzedakah*, and *daven* with *kavanah*. G-d loves to see us conquer our *yetzer harah* and follow His laws and *mitzvot*. Avraham waits until G-d tells him to have a *bris milah* so that he can receive a greater reward for doing the *mitzvah*.

TABLE TALK HADASSAH TIRSCHWELL ('11)

In this week's *parsha*, Hashem tells Avraham "*Lech Lecha*," go, leave your household and your family and travel to the land I will show you. The Ramban writes that anything that happened to the Avot is an example of what will happen to all of the Jewish people in the future and that we should learn how to conduct our lives from the way the Avot lived their own.

There is a clear explanation for why Hashem commands Avraham to leave his land: Avraham is the solitary believer in a place where monotheism is a nonexistent concept. It is therefore necessary that Avraham leaves all of his previous relationships behind as he sets out to form a new nation and establish a religion. Nowadays, however, the Jewish people are a well established nation, and we live comfortable religious lives in communities that foster Jewish growth.

What do you think: **How does the command of "*Lech Lecha*" apply to us today?**

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