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TOURO TORAH

• Lander College for Women • Divrei Torah Newsletter • Parshas Lech-Lecha •

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Ben 'Adam Le-Chavero: Prerequisite for being a Good Jew

By Hinda Friedman

This week's *parshah*, *Parshas Lech-Lecha*, begins with Hashem telling *Avraham* to leave his homeland. The most climactic portion of this week's *parshah* is found at the end, when the *Bris Bein Ha-Besarim* takes place. In between these two interactions with *Hashem*, *Avraham Aveinu* has many human interactions. Beginning with his travel down to *Mitzrayim*, he makes sure to bring gifts for *Par'oh*. On his way back, the Torah writes, "*Va-Yelech Le-Masa'av*," and *Rashi* explains that *Avraham* returns to the same inns he stayed at on the way to *Mitzrayim* in order to repay his debts to the innkeepers. This is a clear example of basic *middos tovos*. Also, we see that *Avraham* is exceedingly careful about *gezel*, stealing, and does not want his sheep grazing on others' property. He even risks his life and fights against mighty kings in order to save his nephew *Lot*. When the king of *Sedom* offers *Avraham* gifts, he refuses to take anything by way of compensation.

Rav Beinish Ginsburg, quoting his rebbe, Rav Gedaliah Anemer ztz"l, brings a beautiful explanation for this seemingly build-up of *ben 'adam le-chavero* encounters that conclude with the epitome of a *ben 'adam la-Makom* experience at the *Bris Bein Ha-Besarim*. He explains that *Avraham* was already exemplary in the area of *ben 'adam la-Makom*. He had recognized Hashem, rejected the entire concept of *'avodah zarah*, and followed Hashem wholeheartedly when he was told '*Lech-lecha*.' He had passed those tests with "flying colors." What was left for him to fulfill now was to excel in *ben 'adam le-chavero* as well. He had to demonstrate that to be the father of *Klal Yisrael*, it is not enough to have a superb connection to Hashem. Rather, one must be exemplary in his interactions with others as well. Once he had proven himself to be a *ben 'adam le-chavero* master, he is able to be a part of an everlasting *bris* with Hashem.

One learns from this that to be a good Jew, it is not enough for one to excel in his/her relationship with Hashem, in *davening*, in learning, or in *berachos*. A prerequisite to any such relationship is to be a *mentsch*. One needs to make sure that he/she is careful in his/her treatment of others. To be a true *'oved Hashem*, one needs to be an outstanding person first.

Have a beautiful *Shabbos*!

“ it is not enough to have a superb connection to Hashem. Rather, one must be exemplary in his interactions with others as well. ”

-Hinda Friedman

Eretz Yisrael: Our Present and Hope for the Future

By Elana Fisher

In this week's *parshah*, *Lech-Lecha*, Hashem promises the gift of *Eretz Yisrael* to *Avraham* many times. The *Ramban* (on *Bereshis* 15:18) explains that each one of these times is for a unique purpose. The first time is when *Avraham* enters the land, Hashem says, "To your descendants, I will give this land" (*Bereshis* 56:¹). Here, Hashem does not elaborate on the extent of what this gift of the land entails. Therefore, based on His words, the implication is that Hashem is referring to only the land in which *Avraham* had already crossed which was "as far as *Shechem*, up until the plain of *Moreh*" (*Bereshis* 12:6).

Once *Avraham's* merits increase in *Eretz Yisrael*, Hashem adds, "Raise now your eyes and look out North, South, East, and West. For all the land that you see, to you I will give" (*Bereshis* 13:14-15). *Ramban* explains here that the seeing with his eyes is not literal in the sense that the gift of the land was limited to what *Avraham* saw. Rather, it is meant in a general sense; Hashem will give all the lands of the *Cana'anim* that *Avraham* could in theory see, in all directions.

Next, in *Bereshis* 15:18, Hashem elaborates even further, by adding the borders of the land and mentioning the names of the peoples whose lands are included in the promise. In addition, Hashem seals a covenant with *Avraham* over those lands, in order to ensure that no sin of the Jewish people would ever lead to His revoking this promise.

Lastly, when Hashem commands *Avraham* to give himself a *bris milah*, He says, "I will give to you and your offspring after you... the whole of the land of *Cana'an* for an everlasting possession" (*Bereshis* 5¹:²). Here, Hashem is emphasizing that even if *Avraham's* offspring were to be exiled from their land, they will eventually return and re-inherit it. No matter what, *Eretz Yisrael* belongs to *Avraham's* offspring.

In short, each time that Hashem mentions the land as a gift for *Avraham*, He adds more details. So at first, *Avraham* is just promised the land that he physically passes through. Then, he is promised the idea of the land. Following that, he is promised the entire land with its boundaries, and a covenant that seals the gift from Hashem. Finally, Hashem (continued on page 3...)

“ While it may be difficult to be hopeful during these hard times, we must try to internalize the lessons of *parshas Lech-Lecha*. No matter what, “*Am Yisrael Chai*.” ”

-Elana Fisher

Increasing the *Shalom*

By Faige Weinfeld

“The *mal'achim* knew how important it is to seize the opportunity to increase *shalom*.”
-Faige Weinfeld

Bereshis 12:11 states:

“הנה נא ידעתי כי אישה יפת מראה את” “..Now I know that you are a beautiful woman.” *Avraham*, they ask about *Sarah* in order to *Rashi* raises the obvious question, “How is it possible that *Avraham*, who had been married to *Sarah* for decades already, did not know that she was beautiful?” *Rashi* comments that due to *Sarah's* modesty and saintliness, *Avraham* never knew the extent of her beauty. This caused *Avraham* to realize what an exceptional person *Sarah* really was.

possibly enhanced this marriage. Yet, when the *mal'achim* (angels) come to bless *Avraham*, they ask about *Sarah* in order to **endear her to her husband** (*Bava Metzia* 87a). *Sarah*, again, is endeared to *Avraham* as he is made to realize *Sarah's* extreme modesty. This increased the *shalom bayis* (peace of home) in their marriage. The *mal'achim* knew how important it is to seize the opportunity to increase *shalom*. Any *shalom*, even an amount that is seemingly small, that is added to a relationship is extremely valuable! Moreover, even if there is already *shalom* within a relationship, creating more *shalom* is of great importance.

(continued on page 4...)

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz derives a very vital message from this seemingly small interaction. *Avraham* and *Sarah* represent a quintessential Jewish marriage, and it appears to us that nothing could have

(...continued from page 2) promises that this gift will be eternal; even if *Avraham's* offspring are kicked out of the land, they will eventually return, because it will always be theirs.

Immediately after *Hashem* commands *Avraham* to have a *bris milah*, which is the culmination of *Hashem's* covenant with *Avraham*, *Hashem* tells *Avraham* that He will bless *Sarah* with a child (*Bereshis* 5¹:5⁰). Not only does *Hashem* promise *Eretz Yisrael* to *Bnei Yisrael* forever, but also He ensures that *Klal Yisrael* will continue, even when the prospects of that occurring seems most unlikely.

From these promises to *Avraham*, we can gain some comfort regarding the tragic and difficult events in *Eretz Yisrael* today. Given the recent stabbings and shootings in *Eretz Yisrael*, one could erroneously believe that we are losing our hold on the Land and our future as a nation. If one adds to this the relative silence of the world and media misrepresentation of the violence against the Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*, it is easy to understand how one can be discouraged and despair.

The events of this *parshah* should strengthen us. *Hashem* promises the land to *Avraham* and his descendants in four different ways, making it very clear that *Eretz Yisrael* belongs to *Avraham* and his offspring *eternally*. Then, *Hashem* takes it one step further and blesses *Sarah* with her child, as if to say that *Klal Yisrael* does not need to worry about being wiped out. Even though the terrorists persist, *Hashem* is watching over us, ensuring that the Jewish people and its Land forever endure. While it may be difficult to be hopeful during these hard times, we must try to internalize the lessons of *parshas lech-lecha*. No matter what, “*Am Yisrael Chai!*”

Lech Lecha: Fulfilling the Ratzon Hashem

By Sarah Lederer

According to the Rambam, Avraham Avinu was given ten nisyonos from Hashem, beginning with "Lech Lecha Me-'Artzecha". The Ramban in Bereshis 12:1, says that the nissayon for Avraham was leaving a land in which he had lived for so long, his birthplace, and where all of his family remained. In the *Sefer 'Asara Nisyonos* (page 83), the author asks a few questions about how this possibly could have been a nissayon for Avraham. Didn't Avraham want to leave the idolatrous place in which he was raised? Since he was the only one to believe in Hashem, wouldn't he be happy to leave and start anew somewhere else? The answer is that it is very difficult for a person to leave his house, to leave a place in which he is settled, as challenging as it is to live there. Leaving one's house is difficult, because it goes against the nature of man. Despite the difficulty of this nissayon, Avraham took his wife, servants, and household and traveled a great distance to an unknown place without asking any questions. Avraham overcame this nissayon by understanding that this was the ratzon Hashem, and if it is ratzon Hashem, how can he not fulfill it to the best of his abilities!

Another reason that *Lech Lecha* was a nissayon for Avraham is because Avraham had worked so hard in his 'avodas Hashem in Charan. This is the place in which he found the Creator! He and Sarah dedicated their lives to publicizing Hashem's name, and now he is being told to leave all of it to journey to a place where no one will even know who he is. The nissayon for Avraham here was to realize that even though it may seem that it might be ratzon Hashem to continue calling out in the name of Hashem, it was truly the ratzon Hashem to leave and listen to His commandment. Hashem is saying *Lech Lecha* is my ratzon!

Many times we may think that a certain way/action is ratzon Hashem or vice versa; Hashem may send something our way that does not seem like the right thing for our growth and 'avodas Hashem. In order to overcome this nissayon, we must be able to realize and recognize what the true ratzon Hashem is and to accept anything that Hashem sends our way. Rather than being frustrated, we must fulfill the Will of Hashem out of love and joy, in whatever form He may send it. Let us all merit to act with the same courage and willingness that Avraham displayed in his nissayon of *Lech Lecha Me-'Artzecha* - to be submissive to His ratzon and to serve Hashem in the truest of ways.

“Leaving one's house is difficult, because it goes against the nature of man.”

-Sarah Lederer

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This concept can be applied to all relationships. If we can increase the shalom between ourselves and our fellow Jews, then we have achieved something of great significance. Eretz Yisroel is currently in a situation in which there is much terror and cha-

os, and we yearn for there to be peace there. May we take the message of this week's parshah and increase the shalom we have between us and our fellow Jews. Then, with Hashem's help, our efforts at shalom can serve as a zechus (merit) for shalom on a grander scale.

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