

Parshas Lech Licha

This week is the third Parsha in Chumash Bereishis, Parshas Lech Licha. The first posuk translated as “go out for yourself”, for which Rashi famously explains that Avraham should go out for his own pleasure and benefit. Rashi’s choice of explanation is distinct, he states that the three promises by Hashem are to counter act the possibility that “on the road” or out in the world one may not be able to procreate, make money, or create a good name for themselves (as stated in posuk 2 and Rashi there).

Rashi’s uses the words “She’odea Tivacha Baolam”, “I will make your name known in the world”. Rashi uses the word with the root “Teva” which means nature, and coin, or reputation. Often, we the use of the word “Teva” as a coin or ring, (matbea), or seal (as learned in Sanhedrin 37a) or in Shabbas 33b as currency. But often it is used to mean nature. This is exceedingly important in my opinion, to explaining the narratives that transpired in this era in humanity. Adam- first human, who birthed all nations, knew of Hashem- after all it was his creator. Over the course of the following generations, the devolution in society was it seems mis behavior from a moral and ethical path. But Hashem was known in the world yet disrespected, and the punishment was to reset everything as the days of creation, where presumably all creations will know that Hashem is the Master of the Universe.

Then came the offspring of Noach- the next generation which challenged Hashem- unlike what was seen earlier. The tower of Babel was built- to challenge Hashem. As well, along with offspring like Nimrod- who

caused people to deviate from the idea that Hashem was the one true Master of the Universe. The result was the creation of different, disparate nations, with different languages, cultures, and societal rules. Even though they were all theoretically related to one another, they became separate entities from which new nations grew. Avraham was a descendent of Noach, his father Terach was the 9x great grandson of Noach. Noach was the 10th generation descendent from Adam. This means that every one of these nations were related, but more than that Avraham was a significant character in his time, he was from the royalty and lineage that existed at the time. This means, Nimrod, his relative, who threw Avraham into the fiery furnace, to try and prove away the rightful pedigree that Hashem is the Master of the Universe. Avraham was saved, but this story doesn’t make it into the text, perhaps, to prevent Avraham himself from becoming a deity. Therefore, what this means, when Avraham went down to Egypt and hid Sarah from Pharoah, he did not perform an outright miracle. He didn’t rely so to speak on an unnatural event from occurring, other than a story that optically looks like it was plausible to happen (Avraham hides his wife, to stave off the nature of Egypt at the time, which was royalty would poach their wife from a competitor. Avraham would have been at the mercy of the Pharoah, in terms of ‘natural’ order of things.) The fact that Avraham ends up meeting the Pharoah, who took his wife, and then realized the error of his ways and bestowed gifts on Avraham, means that Avraham was a significant force and recognizable entity. Again, Avraham didn’t have any less faith by hiding his wife, he was, acting within the confines of the natural order of things. There were heinous cultural traditions that

he couldn't circumvent, because this is not how the world works. Which I think is a reason why Rashi uses the word "Tivacha" to describe how Avraham's name was to be great. Furthermore, Avraham didn't perform any activity (with the knowledge that Hashem was protecting him) that is directly written in the text that could Chas Vishalom insinuate that Avraham himself was the maker of miracles, and heaven forbid cause that Avraham himself would become a deity.

This humility of Avraham is what makes him our forefather, that could have been bestowed on any of the other descendants of Noach and Adam. Kabbala and Chassidus tell us how lofty the soul of Avraham was and how holy it had to be to achieve this ability to act purely in the name of Hashem and without his own ego.

To add to this, Hashem records events in the Torah for a specific reason. When Pharoah bestowed gifts to Avraham, it meant that Avraham didn't owe Pharoah anything. There was no possibility for there to be a lien claim against the assets of Avraham. If Pharoah gifted things to Avraham without having the incident of Sarah, it is possible, that later, they would quid pro quo the gifts, and Avraham would be beholden to the word of Pharoah (we see later Avraham explains why he didn't take anything from Sodom, 14:23). Avraham was very specific and Rashi explains that Avraham was using Sarah to get treated well by Egypt and Pharaoh (12:13, and the receiving of the gifts 12:16) then Pharaoh still tried to act lewdly to Sarah, who called on her angel (Rashi) to afflict Pharaoh, for which Avraham was hastily sent away (end pf 12:19) and escorted out of the country by the command of Pharaoh (to protect

Avraham). If there was a future claim against Avraham for taking the wealth, Avraham can always say you were going to kill me and take my wife. Egypt's acts were similar to Sodom's while Sodom got punished, sooner, Egypt got similarly destroyed a few hundred years later after the Jews left Egypt, by the plagues. Avraham took the gifts, not for his own benefit, but as a foreshadow to his offspring which should also leave Egypt with wealth. Furthermore, Avraham didn't look to benefit as Rashi on 25:6 states that he gave away his wealth as he didn't want to derive benefit from the wealth that was given to him. The wealth was a means to an end, which was to help as many people as possible. As Rashi on 13:3 states that Avraham returned from Egypt to repay debts, because he depleted his resources helping people, prior to having gone down to Egypt to purchase food.

What we see is that everything that is being recorded is for a reason. Avraham was the descendent of Noach and Adam, who despite the world around him, went out from his father's house, and negated the entire world's view at the time that there was anything but a Master of the Universe. We are called Ivri (crossover) because of the Avraham having traversed the land, but more than this he was opposite the entire world. His power to recognize Hashem is a service we must all try to accomplish has his offspring. That is to find Torah and Hashem, and Hashgacha Pratis in everything that happens. Unlike Noach who built a Teiva, (which is one way of "going out into the world" and building a fortress, or Shem and Ever who didn't spread the light in the way that Avraham did. He was a candle in a dark room. He was about actively pursuing people to the righteous path. This is the

way of a Jew, and the way of “Vyafutzu Maynosecha Chutza”, and “Ufaratzta Yomo V’keidma...” Avraham was the first to “go out” and do this. But not in the way where he took the credit for himself, Hashem had to tell him almost, go out for yourself, meant to go out and act like you are the power that can and will spread the light, and where you will also derive pleasure from doing so. The benefits will be bestowed if one acts in the way of Hashem and serves Him and is engrossed in Torah.

The Alter Rebbe famously states in a Mamer on the Bris of Avraham (Torah Ohr 25b/26) on Avraham’s bris, that he waited all the years to perform the Bris, because Avraham wanted to achieve the highest level of Bris, that wouldn’t have been the same had he done it earlier. Avraham spent his life until the point of his Bris to achieve getting to the level of Bris that is invoked by Hashem (Milmala Limata, as opposed to the level of Milmata limala. As the level of bris is “Mi Y’aaleh Lonu Hashomayma” (the roshei teivos of the first letters of the words spell Mila, and the last Havayeh). The loftiest version of Bris is the one where it is by Hashem for us. We know Avraham spent his life seeking to draw out G-dliness from the spiritual sparks of the universe, based on the Rebbe Rashab’s explanation on “M’artzecha”, that the journey in the land was his way of uplifting the sparks of spirituality that was scattered in the world.

This mission, which is still true today, was begun by Avraham Avinu in his time, as he journeyed out of his father’s house, away from his will (Eretz, bilashon Ratzon), against the grain of the time.

Good Shabbos