

Parshas Lech Licha

In this week's Parsha, Lech Licha, we learn about Avraham's travels and various exploits as our forefather. If the Torah is not a history book, why does it recount specific stories with details? For example, what bearing does Avraham's hiding his wife or getting involved in the fight between the four and five kings have on our Avoda as Jews?

An approach to the answer is derived from a Sichra on the Parsha from Chelek 1 in Lekutei Sichos. The Rebbe delineates that the first posuk of the Parsha- Lech Licha Martzecha...is a representation of the soul's journey into this world. The soul, created in a very high, lofty spiritual place, travels down worlds until clothed in the physical body. One may think this separates and creates distance from the source, and the Rebbe explains the opposite. That the soul, even in the physical body, is here, protected and watched by Atzmus-Hashem Himself. Each word of the first posuk represents another level and deep connection that the soul in its source retains even when "going out."

This journey is part of the service of a Jew and how they relate to the world around them. Elsewhere, for example- following Sukkos, where we state, "And Yaakov went on his way," that is, we who leave the shrine of spirituality from the month of Tishrei and "go out," so to speak, as Avraham did, into the material world. This departure can be Chas Vishalom, a distancing between the Yid and Hashem. The Rebbe, therefore, is explaining, and found in this Parsha, that this journey is

known and necessary, is part of the Avoda of a Yid, and remains a challenge (through the recognition of the necessity of the travels), can be overcome, and the Yid remains close with Hashem. This is experienced explicitly by living with the Torah and practicing the Mitzvos.

Based on this introduction, we can now understand why the Torah gives us specific narratives about the life of Avraham and how it relates to our Avoda. Avraham, our forefather, modelled out the journey-initially test by Hashem- of himself and the journey of a Yid. Even though, according to the Midrash, there were other tests we only know of because of Mepharshim (such as the fiery furnace at Ur Kasdim), which happened earlier, The Torah only recounts the Lech Licha. Not every test is a "fiery furnace" or requires actual Mesiras Nefesh of our life; instead, it is the experience the Neshama has leaving the confines of the upper spiritual realms to journey into a physical body. This journey in the physical world is a test that we all experience daily. We "go out" and engage with the physical mundane materialism. Yet, we know we can do so as a Yid, with Torah and Mitzvos infused in all that we do, and in this way, we 'pass' the test as Avraham did.

Furthermore, the Torah explicitly tells us about certain journeys. These are specific experiences that Avraham went through as a model to apply to our journeys. Such as the experiences with Lot and his shepherds, Avraham hiding his wife, or Avraham's involvement in the fight of the 4 and 5 kings. In each of these, Rashi explains the subtext, the miracles, and the models that apply even to our lives. We can engage and cower in the face of

adversity and believe we must follow the ways of the world around us. Avraham did the opposite; he stood up for his beliefs (and was respected for it in each of the incidences. With Rashi, we can explain Avraham's approach to dealing with adversity and apply his moral choices to our own experiences). Avraham was called Ivri- as he stood opposite what the rest of the world did.

One point of evidence is that these experiences are to teach a lesson and not be historical recounting because the posuk references regions and lands that were named much later (such as Amalek or Dan) as would have been called for sometime later (based on Rashi telling us this). So, the accuracy isn't for historical credibility but for the moral journey that applies to us.

The final level of the soul's journey is "El Eretz Asher Arecka," to the land I will show you. This means that after our journey, we can achieve the reward Hashem has in store for us; this is on a metaphysical level. Let us say that "to the land which I will show you" refers to the reward of the general Jewish population, which refers to Mashiach. That means that once we've collectively achieved our journey, we will arrive at the end, the land Hashem has for us; this is Mashiach, and we may welcome that portion of the journey sooner than later.

May this Shabbos bring peace and tranquillity in the world, peace among the Jews, and may we daven for the ending of the physical war and the defeat of our physical and existential enemies.

Good Shabbos.