



The Real Test of Lech Lecha

By David Benhamu, 12th Grade

In the beginning of this week's parsha Avraham is told by Hashem to leave his hometown and his father's land. Hashem tells him that if he goes, then He will make him into a big nation and a famous man. The mefarshim all comment that this point is one of the ten tests of Avraham. This poses a great question: how is this a test? If I told you to come with me to a new place and I will make you into a nation and you will be honored, why wouldn't you come?

The simple answer is that Avraham was in his hometown and he would now have to get up and leave everything behind. He is putting his faith in Hashem and letting Him lead the way. However, there is still one problem with this answer. As we know, Avraham was born in Ur Kasdim and his father was an idol worshiper there. According to some historians at that time Ur Kasdim was changing their rules. Whereas before you could worship any idol of your choosing, now everyone had to worship one central idol. Avraham's father did not adhere to this new method of worshipping, and was therefore banished from the town. They then moved to Haran. It was there that Avraham's father died and it was there that Hashem came to tell Avraham to leave. So, if this town wasn't truly Avraham's hometown, why should it be such a challenge for him to leave there?

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Becoming a Leader

By Hillel Schein, 10th Grade

Avraham Avinu is the most influential person who ever lived. How do we know? Well, he is the spiritual ancestor of all Jews, Muslims, and Christians. In other words, he is the spiritual ancestor of more than half of the world! The real question is how did he get to that position? Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks helps us learn an answer from this week's Parsha of Lech Lecha.

To become such a strong leader, one must divert from the common path and create their own. One must listen to the voice inside of him, telling him to leave everything behind: his land, his birthplace, and his father's house. In Avraham's case, this voice was Hashem. The common path in those days was to follow idols. We usually think of idols as their physical appearance, something that the human race has long outgrown. We should really think about what they represent: power-- something that is much more relevant nowadays. But Avraham didn't strive to be powerful like everyone else, he strived to be different.

One common challenge of being a leader is doing what you know is right even when everyone else is do-

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Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
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Transcribed by
Joseph Cohen

Brit Milah for Twins

Do you make two brachot for both of them or do you make one for both of them? Additionally, which baby goes first?

- Tur - each baby needs all the brachot. Also, citing the opinion of his father, he says that you only need one bracha of Milah for the twins. And it cannot be considered a bundled mitzvah because that only applies when it is two separate mitzvot.
- Rivash in the name of Ritvah - a Brit Milah with twins is not similar to when you are slaughtering a lot of animals, where they would slaughter 1000 chickens on one bracha. So, how can you say by Milah you would need two separate brachot? Because it is possible to slaughter two animals at one time. But when it comes to Milah, it is impossible to give them a Brit Milah at the same time. Further, he answers that you cannot do mitzvot at the same time, violating the prohibition of doing Mitzvot in bundles.
- Shulchan Aruch HaRav - if two babies are getting a Brit Milah at the same time, make sure you have both babies present and ready at the same time, so you won't have to make separate brachot. Meaning only one bracha is necessary if they are done at the same exact time.
- Shulchan Aruch - make one bracha for both babies
- Rama - the father should say one bracha for the two of them, but he should change the lashon of the bracha from the singular form to the plural, for he is now making the bracha on two people.

What if there are two Moel's present to perform the Brit Milah?

- Rashba and Rash - the first Moel should make the bracha and the second should answer Amen.
- Shach - however, the Minhag is, we do not create a situation where we would have two babies at once. We bring one baby Milah, create a Hefsek, then

bring in the second baby and make all the brachot.

What if you have one baby who's Brit Milah is supposed to be on this day, and another baby who Brit is not supposed to be on this day but he's getting a Brit Milah on that day anyway. Who comes first?

Yad Eliyahu - the baby whose Brit Milah is supposed to be on this day goes first, because he is the main reason for the Mitzvah and brings a higher level of Kedusha. Therefore Milah Bzmana comes first.

Other Poskim - we should have the baby who is not Bzmana come first, since the baby who is Bzmana can go at any time of the day. But what about Zrizim Makdimim L'mitzvot, therefore the baby Bzmana should go first? No, in fact every day we push off the baby who's not Bzmana we are further violating this concept.

If two babies are born on the same day, and they are both Bzmana, we do the Brit on the older baby first. However, truth be told, it does not make sense that the older baby goes before the younger one. Eight days after they both are born and the sun rises, they both have the obligations to get a Brit Milah. The fact when they are born has no credence, but rather when the Mitzvah falls upon the individual. Really, in order to maintain peace, we chose the older.

Binyan Shlomo - if there is a Kohen and a Yisroel that are going to get a Brit Milah on the same day, the Kohen goes first because of the Mitzvah of Vi-Kidashto.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Max
Blumenthal*

The Medrash Rabbah on this week's Parsha tells us that Rav Levi taught that there are only two times in the entire Torah that the words "Lech Lecha" are written. However, we don't know which time is Hashem's favorite. The first "Lech Lecha" can be found in the first pasuk of this week's Parsha. Here, Hashem tells Avram: "Go out from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." The second and final "Lech Lecha" occurs in Parshas Vayera. There it talks about Akeidas Yitzchak: Hashem tells Avraham, "Go out to the Land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you." Rav Levi says that the Akeidah was a bigger nisayon (test) than the test of Avram. Because of this, the second "Lech Lecha" is said to be more precious to Hashem.

It's very strange that Rav Levi was bothered by which time was Hashem's favorite. Why would anyone think that the test of leaving one's homeland is even comparable to the test of the Akeida? Most people can't even begin to imagine being the parent in that situation. Even more so Avraham, who was known for his great chesed and acts of kindness. The Nesivos Shalom, Rav Shalom Noach Berezovsky, (also known as the Slonimer Rebbe) gives an answer that we can learn a beautiful lesson from. He says that, certainly, the Akeida was a very challenging nisayon for Avraham; but, it was just a "one shot affair." Avraham was called to go up to the mountain, sacrifice Yitzchak, and then the nisayon would be over. However, the nisayon of "Lech Lecha" in our parsha is a test of beginning a journey that will affect Avraham and last for the rest of his life.

Everyone has their own personal nisayon in their lives. We are all challenged with the task of bringing shleimus (completeness) and fixing up our neshamos (souls) in our own personal fashion. These are our personal "Lech Lecha" moments. To rise above these challenges can take a lifetime to achieve. Many times, this change requires getting out of the box that is one's environment, society, and family, just as was the case with Avram in this week's Parsha. We never enter life with a clean slate. We all enter life with baggage whether it be emotional, financial, or family baggage. Sometimes the "baggage" is very good and extremely helpful. Other times the baggage can be a real handicap. The type of people that we are and the middos that we have are primarily not our own choosing.

When a person is given a mission in life and a goal to accomplish, it may involve ridding oneself of much of the baggage that he came with (one's land, birthplace, or family). Such a challenge is not a one shot deal. Rather, it accompanies us day in and day out. As difficult as the occasion may be, a lifelong challenge may indeed be a greater test than that requiring only a momentary rise. Hopefully, seeing what Avraham did and how he rose up and passed the test of his personal "Lech Lecha" will give us chizuk to pass our own respective "Lech Lecha" moments and once that happens we will be returned to Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh Bimheira Biyamainu!



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Hashem's Cherished People

By Aharon Cohen, 10th Grade

At the end of Parshas Lech Lecha, the Torah describes Hashem's command to perform the mitzvah of bris milah, and Avraham's subsequent fulfillment of the mitzvah. In order to truly appreciate the significance of this event, we must take a few minutes to contemplate the implications of the Torah's account of this mitzvah.

The parsha begins with Hashem's instruction to Avraham to leave his land, and follow Him to an unknown destination. We know that Avraham was seventy-five years old at the time, but the Torah doesn't mention anything about the first years of his life. The Torah doesn't explicitly state that he was thrown into a fiery furnace because of his staunch faith in Hashem (Bereishis Rabbah 38:13); nor does the Torah describe the ten years he spent in jail while in Egypt, as related by Chazal (Bava Basra 91a). One might think that the Mesiras Nefesh displayed by Avraham in those two circumstances would be a good starting point for the Torah's discussion of Avraham Avinu. Rather, as a result of the critical importance of Hashem's first conversation with Avraham, and Avraham's great display of faith in Hashem, the Torah chose to begin its narrative about Avraham there in order to record it for all future generations.

After recounting many of the trials and tribulations of Avraham's life, the Parsha concludes with the mitzvah of bris milah. After circumcising himself, Avraham was somehow able to reach an even higher spiritual level, to the point where he had an even greater connection to Hashem than described at the beginning of the parsha. Not only did the Creator speak with Avraham, He entered a covenant with him!

Avraham Avinu, as the first of the Avos and of the Jewish people, was privileged to have an extremely special relationship with Hashem. It's hard to comprehend how a human being was able to rise to such heights, to the point that one can merit entering into a covenant with Hashem. Despite the oppression Avraham faced both from his immediate family and the rulers that governed him, Avraham's relationship with Hashem was so strong that it became the basis for all of his descendants' relationship with Hashem.

One of the very foundations of our faith as Jews is the belief that a person has the ability to reach the level where Hashem will actually speak to him. Relatedly, a Jew who questions the veracity of the prophecies of our Avos or Moshe Rabbeinu doesn't just demonstrate a lack of belief in the Creator; furthermore, such a person shows that he doesn't believe such greatness is attainable by a human being.

We must believe in the awesome potential of every Jew to forge a relationship with Hashem. Let us take after our forefather Avraham and try to rise above our struggles to become the Jews we were always meant to be!

Good Shabbos!

STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOSEF SCHAFLER

In 1941, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch related an experience of over 50 years earlier, when he was just eleven years old:

"It was early in the morning of the Shabbos in which the Torah portion of Lech-Lecha is read, before the morning prayers, when I entered my father's room. I found him sitting at his table in very high spirits, reviewing the Torah reading of the week. Tears were streaming from his eyes. I was very confused, for I was unable to understand how the two come together - an elated mood and tears - but I didn't dare ask.

That Shabbos, as every Shabbos, father prayed till late. As was his custom during winter Shabosos, he made kiddush after praying and then went to pray mincha. After mincha, shortly before sunset, he sat to the Shabbos meal.

After Shabbos, father would test me on what I had studied during the week and on the mishnayos I had reviewed by heart. If he was satisfied, he would present to me a gift: either a story, whose moral he would point out and explain, or a manuscript of a maamer (discourse of chassidic teaching). This was the arrangement in winter of 1890-1891.

The same took place the evening following that Shabbos Lech-Lecha: Father tested me and then gave me the discourse 'Ner Chanukah 5643' as a gift. I very much wanted to know why father had been crying, and yet in such an elevated mood, while reviewing the Torah portion that morning. I stood there in confusion, unable to decide whether I should ask or not.

Father noticed my confusion said to me: 'Why do you stand there like that? If you wish to say something, say it...' I decided to ask.

Father answered me:

'Those were tears of joy.'

He explained: 'Once, in the early years of his leadership, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi told his chassidim: 'One must live with the times.'

'The younger chassidim asked the older ones what the Rebbe's statement meant. The elders discussed the matter between themselves. (Years later, Rabbi Schneur Zal-

man's son and successor, Rabbi DovBer, was to elaborate on this saying in his unique style of 'binah' - a broad, comprehensive treatment of his father's nuggets of wisdom. But when Rabbi Schneur Zalman first said these words, even the great chassidim struggled to understand their meaning.) Finally, Rabbi Schneur Zalman's brother, our great-uncle Rabbi Yehudah Leib, explained what the Rebbe meant.'

'One must live with the times' means that every day one should 'live with' and experience in one's own life the Torah portion of the week and the specific section of the week's portion which is connected to that day.'

'The Rebbe's chassidim, young and old, would study the daily section of the Chumash with Rashi's commentary. The Rebbe was telling them: One must live with the times. One must not only learn the daily portion, but actually experience it in one's own life.'

'The portion of Breishis,' continued my father, 'is a happy portion. G-d is creating universes and creatures and is satisfied 'that it is good.' However, the ending, which describes the corruption of humanity and G-d's 'regret' at its creation, is not so pleasant. Still in all, it is generally a happy Torah portion and in all Jewish communities there is joy and delight - we have begun the Torah anew. With the next week's reading, Noach, comes the flood. It is a depressing week, but with a happy ending - Abraham our father is born.'

'But the truly joyous week' father concluded, explaining his mood that morning 'is Lech-Lecha'. Every day of the week we live our lives together with Abraham.'

'Together with Abraham, the first to sacrifice his self to bring the message of G-dliness to the world. Together with Abraham, who bequeathed his self-sacrifice for Torah and mitzvos as an inheritance to each and every Jew.'

Adapted from Chabad.org

(Hillel Schein- Continued from page 1)

ing something else. Solomon Asch conducted an experiment in which a group of people was asked to look at sets of two cards; one card had one line on it, and the other had multiple lines of different lengths. They were asked to say which line on the second card was the same length as the one on the first card. However, there was one twist. Unbeknown to one participant, all of the others were told to pick the correct line for the first few cards and then start picking the wrong line. On a significant number of occasions the subject gave an answer he could see was wrong just because everyone else had done so. This is the power of the pressure to conform: it can cause us to say what we know is untrue.

Asch discovered one more thing in this experiment. If one other person were to choose the correct line, it gave the subject the strength to give the answer he knew was right. This is how Avraham became the leader of the majority of the population. He was the one that realized there must be a god. He was the one that left the home he grew up in and left everything he ever knew, simply because that was necessary to lead our nation to become what it is today.

(David Benhamu- Continued from page 1)

To answer this we ask another question: if Avraham had such different views than his father about worship, why would he not part ways with him after they left Ur Kasdim? We see that even though they had different views, Avraham was still his father's son. Once his father died, Avraham's plan could very well have been to settle down and make a life for himself in Haran. He would just continue to do what he had done previously and go about his life. But Hashem came in and said, "No Avraham I have bigger plans for you." He tells him not to settle down. Hashem says "Lech lecha- Go for yourself", yourself being key. No longer are you your father's son. Rather, you will go to a new land and start a new nation. This was the challenge: leave your comfort zone, go out and make a new nation that emulates you, and trust in me, Hashem, to help you.

We can take a great lesson out of this story. In life we could just stand by and go with the flow and we will have a good life. But if we want to really inspire others we have to get out of our comfort zone, take risks, and remember and remember that Hashem is the one guiding and helping us along the way. Have great shabbos.

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When Avraham defeated the mighty four kings, his victory entitled him to the spoils of war - a tremendous treasure. Even the king of Sedom acknowledged that this bounty was rightfully due to Avraham. However, Avraham Avinu shockingly walked away from it, leaving it to the inhabitants of Sedom. Rashi explains that Avraham, wanting all of his success to be credited to Hashem, left behind the wealth so the king of Sedom wouldn't have any claim in Avraham's success.

The Malbim adds an amazing second dimension to this explanation: Avraham did not want to keep the spoils of war because that would imply that he was entitled to it as a function of his personal involvement in the victory. Avraham recognized that this miraculous victory, like everything in life, is purely a result of Hashem's involvement. Therefore, he didn't feel it was his right to take it for himself, and he left the spoils of war behind with the king of Sedom.

In next week's Parsha, we see Avraham display the same deference to Hashem when he washes the dust off the boots of the travelers (Malachim) because, as Rashi explains, "dust on the feet" was an Avodah Zarah in those days. In reality, however, there is no Avodah Zarah like this. Therefore, the Shinover Rav explains that "dust on the feet" was not an actual Avodah Zarah, but rather the merchants bowed down to their feet to thank their feet for carrying them to successful business ventures. Avraham had them wash their feet because he wanted to show that their successes were dependent on where their feet take them, but the important part of business is up to Hashem, and Hashem alone.

The Bnei Yissaschar, in his Sefer on Chumash called Igra D'kala, writes that Avram is Roshei Teivos for Rabos Machshavos B'lev Ish - "Many are the thoughts in a person's mind." This is appropriate because the end of the Pasuk finishes with Va'Atzas Hashem He Sakum - "Hashem's plan will prevail." No matter what we think we can accomplish the outcome is determined only by Hashem. Avraham realized this and taught all of us, his grandchildren, to similarly give credit to the Rebono Shel Olam for all of our personal success.

Good Shabbos!

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