

## Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

### פרשת לך לך

ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך  
**“Hashem said to Avram: Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you”**  
**(12:1)**

Why did Hashem command Avraham to leave three places – his land, his birthplace and his father’s home? Why not just tell him to go on a journey to the land that Hashem would show him? The Malbim explains that Avraham was instructed to physically leave his homeland as a symbolic way he was instructed to physically leave his homeland as a way of symbolically showing his separation from their destructive ideology and character traits. A person’s ideology and character is influenced by the norms of the country in which he lives, his neighbors and their actions, and his family. In commanding Avraham to go to Eretz Canaan, Hashem focused on the departure from these three places to indicate that Avraham should leave the mindset of these three groups of people behind and develop his own independent ideology and character. In order for this break in his outlook on life to work, Avraham had to leave these people behind.

Every person is brought up in different surroundings. No matter where a person lives, he is subject to influences from friends, neighbors and family, how they act, how they think, their attitudes, etc. These have a definite influence on a person, which could be positive or negative. Avraham was told by Hashem to take steps to break away from these influences and become independent. Each person has to ask himself whether his surroundings are having a positive impact on his life and, if not, whether he needs to make a similar break and emulate Avraham’s journey away from the influence of his neighbors and his family.

ויהי רעב בארץ וירד אברם מצרימה לגור שם כי כבד הרעב בארץ  
**“There was a famine in the land and Avram descended to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land”** (12:10)

The posuk says that, because of the famine, Avraham sojourned in Egypt. Seforno notes from the language of the posuk that Avraham went temporarily, not for a permanent stay. We find a similar thought in the Haggadah, where we note that the sons of Yaakov told Pharaoh that they were only coming to Egypt for a short, temporary stay to Egypt for a short, temporary stay and not with long-term plans. In his commentary on the Haggadah, the Maharal explains that what is noteworthy about this comment that they were staying temporarily is that they had this mindset from the very moment that they arrived in Egypt. Even when they first stepped foot in this foreign land, they reminded themselves that this was not their true home and that the ideas espoused by the people of this land were antithetical to Torah. The fact that the Jews were able to remain separate and maintain their identity during the years of slavery was because they had had this mindset from the outset and always remembered that they were different.

R' Dovid Kviat, in his sefer Sukkas Dovid, comments that the sons of Yaakov learned this from Avraham. When Avraham went down to Egypt, he too kept in his mind from the moment of his arrival that his stay was temporary and that he could not be drawn into Egyptian society. The strength of the Jewish people in Egypt was drawn from the example of Avraham Avinu. מעשה אבות סימן לבנים – The actions of the forefathers are a sign for their descendants.

We too would do well to learn this lesson from Avraham Avinu. We see from this how important one's attitude and mindset is in serving Hashem. When one finds himself in an environment which is not ideal to the Jewish soul, he must know from the very beginning that it is only temporary. When one goes to college or the workplace, one has to go in with the attitude that this is not one's true home. If one reminds himself that his true calling lies not in these foreign places but in Torah and mitzvos and he will be able to sojourn there and overcome the challenges that these environments can present.

The same is true of marriage in the sense that adopting a positive attitude from the outset will enable the marriage to work. If one goes into it with the commitment to work out whatever difficulties come along the way, it will be so. Too often, people give up and are not willing to work through challenges. Starting off with confidence that it will work is the key.

ויהי אברם בן תשעים שנה ותשע שנים וירא ה' אל אברם ויאמר אליו אני קל שקי  
התהלך לפני והיה תמים

**“When Avram was ninety-nine years old, Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him: I am El Shaddai; walk before Me and be perfect” (17:1)**

Why did Hashem wait until Avraham was so old before giving him the commandment to circumcise himself? The Malbim explains that Hashem wanted Yitzchak to be as holy as possible from the moment of his birth. Therefore, Hashem waited until Avraham was old and had declined physically, becoming less physical and more spiritual, before giving him a son. Not only that, but once Avraham was old and weak, Hashem commanded him to circumcise himself in order to make him even weaker than his already weakened state. At that point, Hashem granted Avraham a child because in this manner Yitzchak's birth was completely supernatural. Because of the supernatural circumstances surrounding his birth, Yitzchak and his descendants were born with the ability and tendency to transcend nature and rise above it. This special quality is still implanted within us to this very day.

When a child is born, he can inherit natural tendencies from his parents which will make it easier for him to make the right decisions in life. This serves as a strong message to parents. The purity of the parents and the way in which they conduct themselves will affect the type of child which is born from them.

ואתנה בריתי ביני ובינך וארבה אותך במאד מאד

**“I will set my covenant between Me and you and I will increase you most exceedingly” (17:2)**

R' Dovid Kviat asks: Why are there two different blessings recited when one performs the mitzvah of bris milah? He answers that there is one blessing recited for the physical act of milah and one blessing for the entrance into the covenant of Avraham that is represented by this act. As Rashi explains, the bris milah is a sign of the covenant that Hashem made with Avraham, promising His love to Avraham and his descendants and promising them Eretz Yisrael. When one has a milah, it represents that he is

a participant in this covenant. In fact, the Rosh says that the second blessing, “Who commanded us to bring him (the child) into the covenant of Avraham Avinu,” is a blessing of thanksgiving to Hashem rather than a blessing for a mitzvah. We thank Hashem for making us a part of His special nation.

בעצם היום הזה נמול אברהם וישמעאל בנו

**“On that very day was Avraham circumcised with Yishmael his son”  
(17:26)**

Why does the posuk tell us that Avraham circumcised himself on “that very day”? The Kli Yakar explains that Avraham performed his circumcision in a public ceremony. Avraham was not embarrassed to do a mitzvah. When we do mitzvos, we should hold our heads high and be proud that we are Jews. Even in exile, while it is not always best to flaunt our Jewishness, we should not feel the need to hide who we are.

The Tur begins his sefer with the teaching of Yehuda ben Teima in the fifth chapter of Pirkei Avos that one should be bold as a leopard. He explains this to mean that even if people make fun of us for the way in which we do mitzvos, we should not be deterred from serving Hashem as we know we must. We should resolve to serve Hashem as best we can and not let the opinions of other interfere. The Tur saw fit to open his sefer, a work of halacha, with this thought because being proud of our Jewishness and our mitzvah observance is extremely important.