



Parshas Lech Lecha 2019, striving for completeness

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in honor of Binyamin Ben Shira. May he experience a swift and complete recovery.

This week's Parsha Perspective has also been dedicated in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward. May his soul be uplifted, and may his memory be a blessing.

Our Parsha introduces us to the father of the Jewish nation, Avraham Avinu. He is commanded to leave his birthplace and hometown and go on an unknown journey led by G-d. Soon after Avraham leaves, he arrives in Cana'an, accompanied by his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot. G-d tells him that his descendants will inhabit the land he is standing on.

As he was exploring the land of Cana'an, a famine struck, forcing him to travel down to Egypt to buy food. Fearing that the Egyptians would kill him to take his wife Sarah because of her immense beauty, Avraham asked her to allege that he was just her brother.

Sarah was taken and brought to Pharaoh when they arrived at the border. In retaliation, G-d struck Pharaoh's palace members with a plague, causing Pharaoh to realize that he was deceived and quickly released Sarah. He gave Avraham and Sarah many gifts and escorted them out of his land.

We read about the dispute between the shepherds of Avraham and Lot. The shepherds of Abraham did not allow their flock to graze on any land not their own.

But Lot's shepherds allowed their cattle to eat wherever they wanted. The argument was that letting their animals to pasture without permission is not only stealing. Worse yet, it is a desecration of Avraham's honesty and his belief in G-d. So Avraham and Lot decided to go their separate ways, Lot went to Sedom, and Avraham stayed in Israel.

However, a question comes to mind. When G-d appeared to Avraham and gave him the mitzvah of Bris Milah, he said, "*Ani Kel-Shakai, Hishalech Lefanai Veheyeh Tamim*" — "*I am the Almighty G-d; you must walk before Me, and be whole.*" Why does G-d tell Avraham Avinu to "*be whole*" and then tell him to remove a portion of his body?

Furthermore, the Gemara in Nedarim (31A) states that Avraham Avinu was not called "*שלם*" — "*complete*" — until he was circumcised. It also uses a different word entirely than the Torah: it says "*שלם*" rather than the Torah "*תמים*." Why are two different words being used to refer to the same thing?!

The Rambam writes in the laws of Bris Milah in Mishnah Torah that there are two separate commandments regarding Bris Milah. The first is that every male must **get** circumcised, whether when they turn eight days old or after. The second is that once they get a Bris Milah, they must **stay** circumcised for the rest of their lives.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the two different Hebrew words correlate with the two separate commandments. The word *שלם* corresponds with the mitzvah of getting circumcised.

The reason is that, even though we are created in the image of G-d, we are not considered "*complete*" without G-d in our lives. Therefore, we remove an aspect of ourselves to make space for G-d's presence; only then are we genuinely complete.

On the other hand, the word **תמים** corresponds with the mitzvah of **staying circumcised**. When the Torah uses the word **תמים** in this and last week's Parsha, it is used as a verb and is associated with the action of going.

It says in our Parsha (17:1) *"Hishalech Lefanai Veheyeh תמים"* — *"Walk before Me, and be whole,"* and in Parshas Noach (6:9), *"Noach Ish Tzaddik תמים Hayah Bedorosav Es-Ha'Elokim Hishalech Noach"* — *"He was a righteous man, complete in his generation; Noach walked with G-d."*

The Lubavitcher Rebbe continues: when a baby girl is born or a baby boy is circumcised, they begin to receive their soul from G-d and become "**שלם**," complete. However, being "**תמים**"- **whole with G-d** means bringing G-d into your life in a practical and physical manner — an endeavor we seek to accomplish each day. Since G-d is infinite, it is always possible for us to obtain a deeper and more profound relationship with Him.

In our daily life, it is imperative to understand that, in order to live a fulfilling and meaningful life, we must never become satisfied with our successes — this applies to both our spiritual and physical lives, too! We must always strive to aim higher and reach further than what we have currently.

Whether it means we take on a more challenging project or adjust our goals, we must not be complacent with our achievements —for that is the beginning of the road to failure.

***"He who is content with what has been done
is an obstacle in the path of progress."***

*Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*