



Parshas Lech Lecha 2020, the test of wealth

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of Sasson Betzalel ben Batya and Sapir Bas Ariela. May they have a quick and complete recovery.

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward and Yosef Ben Zev Wolf. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha introduces us to the father of the Jewish nation, Avraham Avinu. He is given a command to leave his birthplace and hometown and go on an unknown journey led by G-d. Soon after Avraham leaves, he arrives in the land of Canaan accompanied by his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot. He is told by G-d that his descendants would inhabit the very land that he is standing on.

As he was exploring the land of Canaan, 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.

When they arrived at the border, Sarah was taken and brought to Pharaoh. 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 had them escorted out of his land.

The Parsha concludes with G-d appearing to Avraham at the age of 99 years old, telling him to circumcise himself to create an everlasting bond between him and G-d.

However, a question comes to mind: When Pharaoh realized who Sarah truly was, he quickly sent her back to Avraham with many gifts to appease them. As a result, Avraham left Egypt as a wealthy man. As the Pasuk writes (Bereishis 13:1) "וְאַבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בְּמִקְנֵהוּ בַּבָּקָר וּבַזָּהָב" - *Avraham was very rich with cattle, silver, and gold.*" But why did the Torah use the word "כבד" which could mean either burdened or heavy, instead of the regular term for rich - עשיר?

Furthermore, at the beginning of the Parsha, the Torah uses the word "כבד" when speaking about the famine. As the Pasuk writes (12:10), "וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מְאֹד לְגֹרֹ" - *There was a famine throughout the land, and Avraham went down to Egypt to live there, for the famine was very severe in the land.*" Why did the Torah use the same word in exact opposite situations, one being famine and the other wealth?

Rashi and many others explain that the Torah uses the term "כבד" because Avraham's possessions were extremely heavy. The word "כבד" has a few different translations, one is heavy, and the other is harsh or severe.

The "כבד" at the beginning of the parsha means harsh or severe. For it speaks about how bad the famine was and why Avraham and his family had to make the journey down to Egypt.

But the latter "כבד" is interpreted to mean heavy. When Pharaoh first took Sarah, he gave Avraham numerous flocks of cattle, a great deal of gold and silver, and many servants. When Pharaoh finally realized he had been lied to, he sent Sarah away with a further batch of gifts to appease Avraham. These two sets of gifts made Avraham very wealthy but made his possessions extremely weighty.

The Sforno explains that because of the amount and weight of his possessions, Avraham traveled very slowly. Avraham's leisurely pace began to bother Lot, who accompanied Avraham down to Egypt and received his own fortune. This resulted in arguments between them that occurred just a few Pasukim later and ultimately led to Avraham and Lot going their separate ways.

However, the *Chida* (Rav Chaim Yosef Azulai) in his *Sefer Penei Dovid* gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He translates "גבול" to mean burden, but not a physical burden, i.e. heavy, rather a spiritual one.

He explains that the Torah uses the term "גבול" because Avraham's wealth only burdened him and strained his relationship with G-d. For now, he had to take care of many flocks of sheep and cattle, giving him less time to pray and connect with G-d. As *Pirkei Avos* writes (2:7) *"the most possessions you own, the more worries you will have."*

But Avraham felt burdened because all this wealth meant nothing to him if he did not have a son. If he did not have a successor to continue on his path of teaching the world about G-d. When he embarked on this unknown journey, G-d promised him that he will be the father of a great nation, and yet, he did not have a child so far. Avraham felt burdened with his wealth because his main purpose wasn't fulfilled, *fathering G-d's chosen people.*

In our daily life, it is imperative that you do not put much worth and stock in material items but instead focus on bringing value to our life. Invest time, energy, and effort in matters that will provide you true fulfillment and satisfaction.

The euphoric high and excitement of materialistic things will always decline, forcing you to go a greater length to feel complete again. However, it's a never-ending cycle with no happy ending. But if your energy is not focused on materialistic things, your opportunities are endless, and happiness can be achieved.

***"Fill your life with experiences, not things.
Have stories to tell, not stuff to show."***

*Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*