



Parshas Lech Lecha 2022, Secret of Existence

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel and Shaul Ben Berta.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. 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 commandment to leave his birthplace and hometown and go on an unknown journey led by G-d. Avraham quickly got his camp in order and began this unique voyage without delay.

Soon, he arrived in Cana'an accompanied by his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot. He is told by Hashem that his descendants will inhabit the very land that he is standing on. As he was exploring the land of Cana'an, a famine forced 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 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.

The Parsha concludes with the Mitzvah of Bris Milah. G-d appeared to the aging Avraham at 99 years old and asked him to circumcise himself and establish an everlasting bond between them.

Accordingly, the blessing made by each father at a Bris Milah is *"Lehachnisoh Bivrito Shel Avraham Avinu - to enter him (the baby) into the Covenant of Avraham, our forefather."*

However, a question comes to mind: At the end of last week's Torah portion, we read how Avraham's father, Terach, took the young Avraham on a journey of his own. Terach and his family went from Avraham's birthplace, Ur Casdim, to the city of Charan. Yet, we emphasize the journey at the beginning of our Torah portion. What was so consequential and different about Avraham's journey at the beginning of our Torah portion?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory gives a profound explanation in his book *Covenant and Conversation*. He writes that there is a monumental and significant difference between the two journeys.

The first one had a fixed objective with a predetermined destination, from the city of Ur Chasdim to the land of Canaan. While Avraham's journey had no specific goal other than fulfilling G-d's commandment. He was told, "leave your land, your birthplace, your father's home to a land that I will show."

Rabbi Sacks explains that the Torah introduces us to Avraham just as he embarks on a journey with no clear direction other than G-d because that is the Jewish story. We have wandered and traveled with no clear destination other than the land that G-d promised Avraham we would inhabit.

From our inception until today, the Jewish nation has used the original version of GPS to guide and steer us in the right direction, G-d's positioning system. Avraham's eagerness to secede and break from conventional wisdom set the stage for our unprecedented and remarkable survival.

As Mark Twain puts it, ***"What is the secret of Jewish survival? If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one-quarter of one percent of the human race. Properly, the Jew should hardly be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. All things are mortal but the Jews. What is the secret of his immortality?"***

The answer to Mark Twain's question is no enigma; from our inception, Jews willingly and deliberately went against conventional thinking at G-d's direction.

We have internalized the notion that there is so much more than the vanity of this world. But most importantly, we have adapted our life for G-d's wisdom, an endless and eternal sense of greater purpose.

The reason Avraham's journey was so significant, Rabbi Sacks explains, is that he began a domino effect that is still in motion today. Ironically, the journey with his father had set objectives yet failed to reach its destination. Avraham's father wanted to travel from their city of Ur Chasdim to the land of Canaan but only got the city of Charan.

However, Avraham's journey with no predetermined destination took him to the land we live in today. Although the path would seem puzzling to most, it was obvious to Avraham. Follow G-d's words and seek His grace and holiness in this physical world. Watch for opportunities to sanctify His holy name and proclaim His Oneness to all.

In our daily life, it is imperative to understand that true success stems from the ability to simultaneously be in and out of the box. To know when it is essential to follow conventional thinking and wisdom and when to break away to succeed beyond wild expectations. When to use the physicality of this world and how to recognize its shortcomings and weakness in relation to the holiness of our soul.

**"Jewish time sees us as travelers on the road
to a destination not yet reached;
wayfarers on a journey begun by our ancestors,
to be continued by our children."**

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*