

Lech-Lecha

THE WEISS EDITION

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints
לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת
הר"ר ישעי' זושא
ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם
גלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב
תנצב"ה

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת עזריאל
ב"ר חיים יצחק ע"ה
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לך לך *Lech-Lecha*

יב:א | 12:1

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ
וּמִבְּלִדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹרְאָה

*G-d said to Avram, “Go forth from your land
and from your birthplace and from your father’s house,
to the land that I will show you.”*

Where Our Story Really Begins

Avram’s accomplishments in the first several decades of his life are not recorded in the Written Torah. We are not offered even a brief description (as we were with Noach) of the righteous Avram who discovered the Creator on his own and risked his life to teach the world about monotheism—many years before G-d began to communicate with him.¹

Instead, the Torah introduces Avram by telling us that G-d commanded him to leave his home, his country, his family and

1. See Talmud, Nedarim 32a; Mishneh Torah, Hil. Avodah Zarah 1:3.

all that was familiar, and travel to the land that G-d would show him.

In doing so, the Torah defines the unique nature of Avram's—the first Jew's—relationship with G-d, distinguishing him and the Jewish nation from the rest of civilization.

All of humankind is capable of discovering G-d and committing to Him. What makes us unique, however, is that our primary relationship with Him lies not in our recognition of G-d and our decision to attach ourselves to Him, but in His choice of us as His people. Likewise, the primary significance of the mitzvos that G-d gave the Jewish people lies not in their impact on the individual or the world, but in G-d's desire that we fulfill these observances and adhere to His will.

The Torah therefore leaves out any background information about Avram's piety and the good deeds he did before G-d spoke to him. Instead, it begins with G-d's first command to him, "Go forth from your land," to emphasize that man's finite efforts to develop a meaningful relationship with G-d are utterly insignificant in comparison to the connection that is forged by G-d singling out the Jew and commanding him, and the Jew in turn observing G-d's commands.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, pp. 47-50

12:1 | יב:א

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*G-d said to Avram, "Go forth from your land
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It's About the Departure

Lech-Lecha begins with G-d's instruction to Avram, "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you."

Aren't the details about the place that Avram will be leaving superfluous? A journey to any new land automatically requires leaving your current location, and obviously your home and place of birth, so why mention them? Moreover, some details about where he would be relocating would surely have helped Avram plan and prepare for the journey, yet Avram was told only about his point of departure, but given no details at all about his destination!

With this command, however, G-d mapped out the steps a Jew must take to reach his ultimate destination in his Divine service. It is a journey of many steps, requiring that one transcend all his personal constraints and motives, in order to make the fulfillment of G-d's will the defining feature of his life.

These steps are hinted at in G-d's command to Avram.

"Go forth from your land": Land represents nature. This first command means: abandon your natural preferences.

“Your birthplace”: Your environment shapes your habits and lifestyle. This second step demands that you transcend the trends and influences of your surroundings.

“Your father’s house”: This alludes to your education, provided by the parents who raised you. This command tells you that in order to reach the “Promised Land,” your devotion to G-d must supersede your academic sophistication and intellectual achievement.

“To the land that I will show you”: To a person who devotes himself unconditionally to G-d, surrendering any personal preferences, calculations, or biases—the specific destination is irrelevant. His readiness to fulfill whatever G-d wills is always the same, regardless of the particulars.

—*Sefer Hasichos* 5750, pp. 96–100

14:13 | י"ד:יג

וַיָּבֹא הַפְּלִיט וַיֹּגֵד לְאַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי

The fugitive came and told Avram the Hebrew...

Food of Fanatics

In Parshas Lech-Lecha, a “fugitive” comes to Avram’s home and informs him that his nephew Lot has been taken as a prisoner of war.

The Midrash² elucidates this encounter:

The fugitive was Og. Why was he called Og? Because when he came, he found Avram busy with the mitzvah of *ugos* [spelled עוגות in Hebrew, similar to the name עוג, Og].

Literally translated as “cakes,” matzah is called עוגות in Shemos 12:39. According to the Midrash, Avraham was preparing matzah when Og arrived.

The Midrash continues:

Og’s intentions were not for the sake of heaven. Rather, he thought, “This Avram is a zealot. I’ll tell him, ‘Your nephew has been taken captive,’ and he will go out to war and be killed. Then I will take Sarai, his wife.

These seemingly unrelated facts about Og’s name and his motives are written in immediate succession because, evidently, seeing Avram’s preoccupation with the mitzvah of matzah upon his arrival played a critical role in molding Og’s plans.

Matzah is “food of faith.”³ Avram’s intense preoccupation

2. Bereishis Rabbah 42:8.

3. See Zohar 2:183b.

with this faith-building activity reflected his suprarational commitment to G-d—a relationship that focused more on faith than on reason.

Such a person, reasoned Og, is a fanatic, and prone to acting irrationally. He was therefore certain that despite the obvious risks and questionable outcome, Avram would unreasonably jeopardize his own life to try to save his nephew—likely, never to return.

Thus, the matzah that Og found Avram preparing when he arrived led him to conclude that if he told Avram that Lot had been taken captive, it would create the perfect opportunity for him to swoop in and take this “fanatic’s” wife as his own.

—*Reshimos*, no. 17

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The Reasonable Bad Guy

Og was a cynic,⁴ but he could respect humanitarian causes. So it's not surprising that when Avram's nephew Lot was taken as a prisoner of war, Og came to break the news to Avram and encouraged him to save his relative.

Yet the Midrash tells us that Og's motives were actually immoral:

Og's intentions were not for the sake of heaven. Rather, he thought, "This Avram is a zealot. I'll tell him, 'Your nephew has been taken captive,' and he will go out to war and be killed. Then I will take Sarai, his wife."⁵

Though the cause was justified and logical, Og didn't actually believe that Avram could be victorious over the mighty kings who had taken Lot captive. Rather, Og played on Avram's zealous nature, encouraging him to take on a suicidal mission, trusting that Avram would never return and Sarai would then be Og's for the taking.

This demonstrates the moral danger inherent in following a system of principles based on human understanding alone. A person who, like Og, is guided and motivated only by logic,

⁴ See Bereishis Rabbah 53.

⁵ Ibid, 42:8.

and not by a G-dly ideal that transcends reason, can justify having someone killed in order to take that person's wife, and all the while believe that he is doing the right, reasonable and humanitarian thing.

—*Reshimos, no. 17*



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הרה"ת אברהם יצחק
ב"ר רפאל ע"ה
עמר

גלב"ע ביום ט"ו מרחשון ה'תשע"ט
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מקושר לרבותינו נשיאנו הק'
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בן הרה"ח התמים יעקב מנחם מענדל הכהן ע"ה
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