



# Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



## BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

RABBI BEN SUGERMAN

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AKIVA ROSENTHAL ('20)

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NAOMI REICHENBERG ('22)

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REBECCA HENNER ('22)

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BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

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If the Torah dedicates one-fifth of its real estate to tell us of the episodes of our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, it must be not just important but fundamental. The Ramban, R' Moshe ben Nach-

man, our 13th century medieval commentary, maps out for us the principle of *מעשה אבות סימן לבנים*, the events that occur with our Patriarchs and Matriarchs are the blueprint for history of the Jewish people. The Ramban emphasizes this theme throughout Sefer Bereishit.

The Ramban writes in this week's parsha (12:6), "An innocent reader may wonder at these stories, thinking them to be superfluous. But in truth they are all presages of future events in the lives of our people. When

something happens to any of those three prophets that we refer to as "The Avot," the prophet was able to deduce from his experiences what was destined to happen to his descendants" (for someone who wants to see this more of this in the Ramban, see Ramban to Bereishit 25:23, 26:1, 27:20, 29:2, 33:26, 34:18).

Rabbi Mordechai Kornfeld, a former Rebbe of mine and a fantastic resource for those learning the Daf Yomi ([Dafyomi.co.il](http://Dafyomi.co.il)) adds to this Ramban that not only can this be expressed through the events that occur in the Torah, but even through the Talmud as well. The Gemara Brachot teaches us that Avraham instituted shacharit, Yitzchak instituted mincha, and Yaakov instituted maariv.

Each of the tefilot can be understood through the lens of *מעשה אבות סימן לבנים*.

A very brief historical sketch looks like the following:

Avraham institutes shacharit. Shacharit is the beginning of the day; Avraham is the beginning and genesis of the Jewish people. Avraham is exiled to Egypt and

returns and fights wars with the tribes living in Israel. This represents the historical period of the beginning of the Jewish people that takes us from the exile of Egypt all the way to the entrance and conquest of the land of Israel, up to the point where we are ready to construct the Beit Hamikdash — 480 years from the Exodus to the building of the first Temple.

Yitzchak institutes mincha. The time for mincha is the start of the afternoon where the sun is at its strongest. Yitzchak spent all the years of his life in Israel solidifying and concretizing all the work that was done by his father. This represents the golden age of the Jewish people that takes us through the first and second Temple periods -- another 900 years.

Yaakov institutes maariv. Maariv is at the beginning of night, which is a time of darkness and uncertainty. Yaakov spent most of his years exiled from his home and family and lived under constant persecution by his enemies. This represents the period following the destruction of the second Temple, roughly the last 2000 years. Obviously, night ends with the beginning of the next day, which heralds the coming of the Mashiach, which will hopefully come speedily in our days.

## STRIVE FOR PERFECTION

AKIVA ROSENTHAL ('20)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Lech Lecha, we meet Avraham, the first of our forefathers. Avraham is known for his chesed and desire to accomplish any task Hashem sets forth for him. Avraham passes the ten tests Hashem gives him, including attempting to offer his son as a sacrifice, in order to determine whether Avraham is a worthy candidate to be the father of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks quotes the Ramban, who doesn't believe Avraham is as perfect a role model as he seems. For example, the Ramban believes that Avraham should have stayed in Israel during the famine because he should have trusted Hashem to save him. Instead, Avraham puts himself and Sarah in danger by going down to Egypt. Another idea is that Avraham shouldn't have spoken badly about his own wife to Hashem by saying she is old and unable

to have children. So why do we overlook these missteps by Avraham?

The Ramban answers simply that Avraham, just like us, couldn't have relied on a miracle from Hashem. So what was the purpose of the Ramban questioning Avraham at all?

One answer is because revealing our mistakes denies us the right to blame Hashem for our misfortunes. This is seen in the Torah when Avraham tells Sarah to pretend to be his sister so he will not be killed. Even in this bleak scenario, Avraham doesn't abandon Hashem, showing us that Hashem has a plan for us and it's better to connect to Him than deny Him completely.

Rabbi Sacks offers a solution to how we let Avraham's insult of Sarah go unaccounted for. He quotes a pasuk in Kohelet,

כִּי אָדָם אֵין צְדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא

“There is none so righteous on earth as to do only good and never sin” (Kohelet 7:20). This pasuk is written by the wisest of all men, Shlomo, who sins knowingly by abusing his power to have an excess amount of horses, wives, and money.

Rabbi Sacks explains that nobody is perfect and we should aspire to be like Avraham, not because he isn't perfect, but because he strives to improve.

## DOING MORE FOR YOUR OWN BENEFIT

NAOMI REICHENBERG ('22)

Parshat Lech Lecha starts off with Hashem saying to Avraham:

לֶךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹרְאָךְ

“Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.” Many mefarshim ask what “lech lecha” actually means. The literal translation is “go for yourself,” but how is Avraham going for himself if Hashem is commanding him to? Does Hashem mean this literally?

Rashi famously explains that “lech lecha” literally means that Avraham should go for his own benefit. Hashem is explaining to Avraham that this will be for his own good. He promises Avraham that if he goes

for himself, He will make a great nation come from him.

At first glance, it might seem extremely obvious that Avraham should take this opportunity and roll with it. What could be so difficult? Hashem is offering him so much! While reflecting on this idea more and more, it becomes clear that this would not be an easy task for Avraham. Leaving a comfortable place is extremely difficult no matter how great the reward will be. Hashem is presenting Avraham with a tremendous decision.

Many of us relate to this and experience conflicts like Avraham's in our own lives. Which seminary/yeshiva should I go to? Which summer program will be the most meaningful for me? What does Hashem want from me? Am I doing the right thing? We ask ourselves these questions endlessly, to the point that we often forget that Hashem wants what is best for us. He is our father and He is holding our hand throughout the entire process. He's screaming: "lech lecha," "GO FOR YOURSELF;" for your personal growth. He is ready to help us, but we have to really want to do something for ourselves before He can step in.

This pasuk is here to teach us that once we want what's best for ourselves, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will handle the rest. Eventually, everything will fall into place and we will go for ourselves, not for anyone else. Once we start to make decisions based on what is best for fulfilling our mission and not what is best for every other person in our lives, we will ultimately succeed. May we all merit to achieve "lech lecha," to go for ourselves and to do more for our personal growth and our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

## GO FOR YOURSELF

REBECCA HENNER ('22)

A person is getting into the car to leave his house for good, moving to a completely new place. He sits in the driver's seat, and asks one of the passengers to turn on Waze. The only catch is that the passenger gets to decide what city, state, and country they will be moving to. To make it even worse, the person does not even tell the driver where he is driving, and the driver and his family will only find out once they get there. This *meshal* illustrates the complicated conversation and set of instructions that Hashem gave to Avraham in this week's parsha, Parshat Lech Lecha.

Hashem instructs Avraham to leave everything he knows, and to go on a journey to the place which He tells him to go.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמְמוֹלַדְתְּךָ  
וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ

"And Hashem 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" (Bereishit 12:1).

Hashem does not tell Avraham his destination, yet Avraham, being the tzadik that he is, does as he is told. At first glance, this mission may seem unloving and uncaring of Hashem, however it is really the opposite. To explain how this is actually an act of chesed by Hashem, Rashi describes Hashem's true intentions in sending Avraham on this mission. He writes:

לְהִנָּתֵן לְךָ -- "for your (Avraham) own benefit and for your (Avraham) own good." This is what Hashem is saying when He says "lech lecha" and not "lech lecha," meaning "go for Me," Hashem.

Sometimes when we are doing mitzvot we wonder why Hashem needs us to do a certain thing. Why does Hashem care if we keep kosher? Why does Hashem care if we daven? Mitzvot may seem like a burden which Hashem is tasking us with. This parsha helps us answer these questions because we learn that rather than viewing mitzvot as burdensome, we can view them in a positive light. Every single mitzvah we do is for our benefit. Hashem commands you to do a mitzvah for you, לך, not for Him, בשבילי. Even though sometimes it may be hard to realize, we must recognize that Hashem is on our team and only wants the best for us.

Avraham understands this and shows us the importance of *zerizut*, patience. If someone tells a little kid that he is going for ice cream, he would likely run to the car as fast as he could, anticipating the exciting occasion. However, if he is told that he is going to the dentist, he would likely procrastinate. The way we approach doing mitzvot all depends on our perspective. If we view going to do mitzvot like going to the ice cream store, we will rush to do Hashem's commandments. We must learn from Avraham, who fulfilled Hashem's commandments without procrastination and feel excitement when following the Torah.

# SETTING THINGS STRAIGHT

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Lech Lecha, we are introduced to Avram, the first person to have a relationship with Hashem and to be tasked with spreading Hashem's ideals. After being told "lech lecha," or "go for you," by Hashem, Avram receives several life-altering blessings. Avram then heads to Canaan with his wife, Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and all of their possessions. Once he gets to Canaan, the pasuk states:

וַיַּעַתֵּק מִשָּׁם הַהָרָה, מִקְדָּם לְבֵית-אֵל  
וַיֵּט אֶהְלֵה בֵּית-אֵל מִיָּם, וְהָעִי מִקְדָּם,  
וַיְבַן-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ ה', וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה'

"From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to Hashem and called out to Hashem by name" (Bereishit 12:8).

Avram seems to do the opposite of what is expected. When someone wins the lottery, they buy mansions, yachts, and private jets, and live luxurious lives. Avram was just given a plethora of blessings: a great nation, a prominent name, protection from Hashem, and the land of Canaan. Instead of settling and establishing himself in the land, Avram chooses a temporary living situation and pitches a tent.

Rabbi David Forman explains that Avram's actions were the exact opposite of the actions of the generation of the Tower of Bavel. These people traveled east to build an established, permanent city for themselves and wanted to make their reputation known for generations to come. On the contrary, Avram travels east to build a temporary home for himself and calls out Hashem's name. Avram's mission was to repair the world after the previous generation's self-obsession. His selfless nature and understanding of Hashem's control over the world made him the perfect person for this task.

We live in a self-obsessed society. Many people believe they have complete control over everything that happens to them and are entirely engulfed by their own lives. We learn from Avram that there is more in this world; there is an all-powerful being, Hashem, that is controlling every detail. As Jews, we are given the incredible opportunity to connect with Hashem and realize that our lives should not be solely about maintaining our own reputation.



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