

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Lech Lecha	Oct 20, 2018	11 Cheshvan 5778	Gen. 12:1-17:27	Isa. 40:27-41:16	John 8:51-58

In this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha is usually translated as "Go from your country" (Gen. 12:1, NIV) or "Get thee out of thy country." (Gen. 12:1, KJV) The actual translation is "Go to yourself" as the word "go" implies a purpose to move toward destination. Thus, "Go to yourself" means you are moving toward your soul's essence and that is the ultimate destination.

The Scripture shows that Hashem called Abram when he was 75 years old (2023 After Creation). It seems that Hashem calls upon people on His whim, Heaven forbid. There should be questions like, what did Abram do before he was called by Hashem? After all, Abram was 75 years old. Where did Abram live and what did he do for a living? Why did Hashem call Abram? Why couldn't it be me? Such mysteries are answered in the Book of Jasher also known as the Book of Upright.

The word Lech Lecha (לך-לך) has a numerical value of 100 (20+30+20+30) which alludes to Abram that something will happen when he reaches that age. As we read earlier, Abram was concerned because of not having a child. (Gen. Ch. 15) Even Sarai was concerned and offered her maid, Hagar (Gen. 16:1-2) to produce a child.

The sages taught that when Abram looked upon the skies at night, he saw that he was childless. So when, Hashem said, "I will bless her [Sarah] so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." (Gen 17:16) And "Abraham fell facedown; he laughed" (Gen. 17:17) When Hashem changed Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, their *mazal* (usually translated as a luck, but the literal meaning is the blessing coming from Hashem) has changed and they were able to have Yitzchak. (Gen. Ch. 21) *Mazal* is a tool Hashem has given to all of us to perform His missions. He gives us *mazal* that we can handle to successfully complete the mission.

Name change is so important that in Genesis 17:1-5, Hashem explains why He is changing Abram's name to Abraham. Avram means "father of Aram" as AV mean "father" and RAM as the city of "Aram" since he came from the city of Aram Naharayim. Then, Hashem added *hei* (ה) and Avram became Avraham which means "*Av Hamon Goyim*" (father of many nations).

When Hashem comes to Sarai (שָׂרָי), Hashem changes her name to Sarah (שָׂרָה) (Gen. 17:15), then says that "she will be the mother of nations; kings of people will come from her." (ibid. v 16) Hashem removed *yud* (י) to *hei* (ה).<sup>1</sup> Sarah's *yud* was later added to Joshua's name to provide him with spiritual strength needed to stand against the spies' evil report on the Land.

In Genesis 11:31, we read that Terach took his family and began to journey to Kanaan. On the way, he stopped at Charan and settled. It is from here that Hashem called upon Abram to continue his journey toward Canaan. Hashem said, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you."

Hashem said, "Leave your country," a place where you were born? In this modern age, travelling is easy, but moving to another States or even a country requires some serious thoughts. During Abram's period, it was very dangerous to leave the protection of the family, or a tribe, or a city. If that isn't enough, Hashem said, "[Leave] Your people", leaving the people that you grew up with? Then Hashem said, "[Leave] your

<sup>1</sup> Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin, 2;6

father's household." You are leaving the protection, love, and comfort that was given to you. If all these three conditions are not enough, Hashem said, "Go to the land that I will show you." Hashem was very vague where He wants you to go and how He is going to reveal Himself to guide you to the proper place. Is it not better to prepare yourself by knowing whether the land you are going is good or bad? Oy vey! What is the point of all this? The Scripture wants us to know Abram's love for Hashem and his willingness to do for His Sake. Do we have what it takes to do as Abram did?

When we read the life of Abram, it sounds like a fairy tale. But in reality, Abraham's life was very harsh. It was a test after test. First, Hashem said to Abraham to leave Charan. He went to Canaan as commanded by Hashem and famine struck Canaan. (Gen. 12:10) Then Abraham went to Egypt and his wife was taken away from him by the Egyptians. When their ruse was discovered, he was forced to leave Egypt and arrived at Bethel (Gen. 13:3) and Lot left him. Lot was taken by the five kings during the battle (Gen. 14:12) and Abraham was forced to rescue him. (Gen. 14:14-16)

Despite Abraham's toil, he still did not have a child to continue his lineage. He said, "What can you give me since I remain childless?" (Gen 15:2) Hashem told him, "A son coming from your own body will be your heir." And Abram believed in Him. Only then "he was credited it to him as righteous." (Gen. 15:6)

Abraham's strife still continued as Sarai was barren and she gave her maidservant, Hagar to bear the fruit. He had to let go of pregnant Hagar as she mistreated Sarai. (Gen. 16:6) Abraham's trial continued in the next Torah portion, Vayera. His wife was taken by Avimelech. He had to let go of Ishmael and Hagar for the second time. (Gen. 21:11-14) Later, when Yitzchak became a young man, Hashem told Abraham to offer Yitzchak as a sacrifice to Hashem. (Gen. Ch. 22).

The sages taught that Sarai and Rachel were barren because Hashem wanted to hear the prayers of loved ones. They were considered righteous. As we studied in the past and to study in the future, Sarai and Rachel have not done any wrongdoings in their lives.

The question we need to ask ourselves is not what Hashem has not done for us as this question itself is blasphemy. But, have we accomplished what Hashem has given us with the *mazal* He provided?

Each step we take is a journey to our soul. Our *nefesh* gets dirty as we sin and it wants to leave our body. As we sleep, the *nefesh* leaves the body and goes to the place where it is pure and clean. It goes above toward the Gates of Chambers. The first Chambers to pass through is known as the Gates of Sapphire. When the *nefesh* arrives, the Gate rejects *nefesh* because of the dirt it carries and it returns to the body dirty.

The journeys that Abraham took is similar as our *nefesh*. During each journey, his soul is being cleansed and renewed that the *nefesh* enter the Gates of Sapphire. Even though he sought Hashem from the very early age, he lived in a place where idol worshippers were rampant. Therefore, he had to be cleansed of every aspect of *nefesh* during his journey. For this reason, Hashem commanded Abram to "leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you" to cleanse your *nefesh*.