



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT LECH LECHA

A Deeper Craving

R' YY Jacobson shared a remarkable insight, quoting the *Chozeh* of Lublin.¹

At the end of Masechet Sotah, the Mishna discusses the final period of time before Mashiach's arrival. Among the list of descriptions, it writes: יְרֵאֵי חַטָּא יִמָּאֵסוּ, which is literally translated as "People will be repulsed by those who fear sin." Simply understood, this means that people with *yir'at Shamayim* will be scorned and the thought of fearing G-d will be degraded and laughed at.

Seeing beyond the negative interpretation, R' Zusha explained this statement in a different light. "Leading up to the era of Mashiach," R' Zusha illustrated, יְרֵאֵי חַטָּא יִמָּאֵסוּ – the Jewish world will reject a Judaism that's based predominantly on fear, because they're going to crave *d'veikut* – love and intimacy."

Yir'at Shamayim is the foundation of Judaism, but what makes it the foundation is that it's an expression of ultimate love, and that's the type of yir'at Shamayim that today, everyone is willing to absorb...

1) Brought down in the name of R' Zusha of Anipoli (one of the great masters of *chassidut*; the brother of the Noam Elimelech and student of the *Maggid* of Mezeritch)

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei

Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rachamim Ben Shifra Frida Bat Yaffa
Yitzchak Ben Naama Miriam Bat Bakol Esther Bat Frida
Yosef Chaim Ben Larissa Leah Yosef Haim Ben Elana
Chaim Mordehai Ben Sara Ita Rivka Hila Hodaya Bat Rachel
Angela Bat Sara Chana Bat Malka Ariella Bat Hila
Yaffa Bat Amelia Yakov Israel Ben Chana Gilad Ben Dorit

"Challenges are what make life interesting.

Overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

Journey of Love

We find something very interesting with Avraham Avinu between Parshiyot Lech Lecha and Vayera. In the former, Avraham possessed a very fiery spirit, as we find him trailblazing a revolution of belief in G-d, going against everyone else around him, as well as obliterating his father's idols, parting ways from Lot, fighting in a world war, and performing *brit milah*. Avraham seems to have the spirit of a fighter, a leader, someone born to revolutionize the world. Yet, in Parshat Vayera, he seems to have cooled off. He becomes known as being tremendously hospitable, not only having his tent open to anyone and everyone at any given time, but inspiring them by example to learn about and serve Hashem. Whereas this Parshah seemed to focus on his *gevurah* and might, the next focuses on his unbelievable acts and character of *chesed*, and how the kindest man exploited all his efforts to spare Sedom from destruction. What happened to Avraham's fire? Where did his energy and drive to challenge anything in his way go?

The Chatam Sofer provided a gorgeous answer, one that serves as a huge lesson and eternal *chizuk*. In Parshat Lech Lecha, Avraham was facing a mountain. The whole world was against him; they all believed in idols while he was single-handedly pushing the belief in G-d. He had to establish himself as a crusader for Hashem and used his fire to oppose all those that stood in his way. He had a lot of energy, and channeled it the right way through his zeal for Hashem.

As he entered later stages in his life, however, and went into the times of Parshat Vayera, his approach shifted. At that point, he was no longer an "outcast" but actually popular, having his home open to the world and being a public inspirational figure. He became a leader, and, being a good one, he channeled his energy from a fiery strength to a warm and loving influence. Now that he had followers, he realized that his stubbornness and zeal had to go; that's not what would bring people closer to Hashem. He had to do it through love and a smile.

This is what Hashem told him in the beginning – *lech lecha* – "go find yourself." Avraham wasn't just traveling from his hometown; he was on his life journey of finding himself. The best version of himself – one that can successfully influence the masses and bring them closer to *Boreh Olam*.

Many lessons are to be learnt from this incredible thought. Among them is Avraham teaching us that the most effective way of reaching others and touching their hearts is through warmth and love, beaconing light by one's own inspiring example. Moreover, like Avraham, we go through personal journeys to grow and connect to G-d on deeper and more profound levels. Never lose sight of that.

(Based on a d'var Torah recounted by R' Menachem Goldberger)