

Parashat Lech Lecha: haAm v'haAretz The People in the Land



Aims:

1. Learn about why Avraham was worthy of being chosen by Hashem
2. Understand the significance and specialness of living in Eretz Yisrael
3. Recognise the inherent connection between the Jewish people and Eretz Yisrael

Avraham: the Man, the Myth, the Legend

Last week, in Parashat Noach, we were first introduced to Avraham. Yet the passukim in both Parashat Noach and Parashat Lech Lecha give very few details into our forefather's life prior to being told by Hashem: "Lech Lecha, Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." (*Bereishit 12:1*)

What made Avraham worthy of direct Divine Influence? What did he do to deserve G-d's promise of: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth Shall bless themselves by you" (*Bereishit 12:2-3*)?

In light of the lack of explicit details in the parshiot, we are forced to look to Chazal, our Sages, for explanation.

Avraham was born into a society of idol worshipers and is even described as an idolator himself (*Rambam Mishne Torah Hilchot Avodah Zara 1:3*). However, even from his infancy he began to think about the existence of a singular Supreme Being: "How is it possible that this planet should continuously be in motion and have no leader—and who, indeed, causes it to revolve, it being impossible that it should revolve itself?" Avraham's inquiry concluded in the discovery of Hashem.

Whilst Avraham was on his journey, Migdal Bavel, the Tower of Babel was being built. This was a massive construction project which aimed to quite literally knock G-d off His throne in Heaven. The Midrash explains (*Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 24*) "If a man fell and died, they paid no heed to him, but if a brick fell they sat down and wept." It was with this backdrop that Avraham cursed and rebuked those involved.

Point to Ponder:

Do you think Avraham's opposition was due to the disregard for human life, or against the project as a whole?

Following this, Avraham return's to his fathers house and destroys his idols, and is thrown into a fiery furnace as punishment. Avraham survives, and is at this point commanded by Hashem to "Lech Lecha, Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." (*Bereishit 12:1*)

From these sources, we can perhaps explain that Avraham was worthy of being approached by Hashem, and of being the founder of His people due to his commitment to both people (bein adam l'chavero) and G-d (bein adam l'Makom). Perhaps we too can get closer to Hashem by attempting to be as committed to these things as Avraham Avinu was.

Alternatively, the Sfat Emet (a Chassidic leader of the 19th century), suggests that the words "Lech lecha" are being said by Hashem constantly, but only Avraham listened and followed them (*Sfat Emet* 5632). It is our challenge to constantly be looking and listening for Hashem's Hand and Call in the world.

Why Israel?

Avraham was commanded to leave his home, and everything associated with it, to follow Hashem to an unknown destination – Eretz Yisrael. But what is so special about this land? Why was the first commandment to the first Jew to move there?

The Mishna in Keylim (1:6) teaches that, "There are ten levels of holiness: The land of Israel is holier than all other lands." There is an inherent holiness to Eretz Yisrael, and for Jews who strive for holiness, this is a simple match.



**ANY
OTHER LAND**

**ERETZ
YISRAEL**

Additionally, there are many mitzvot which can only be done in Eretz Yisrael. As Rav Kook puts it: "All mitzvot may be categorized into two types. Some mitzvot that are "teluyot baAretz" - they can only be fulfilled in the Land of Israel. Other mitzvot are incumbent even outside of Israel." (Introduction to Etz Hadar) These mitzvot are agricultural, such as leket, pe'ah and shmitta, all of which require land and crops to be left to the poor. For a people whose objective is to follow mitzvot, it is obvious that we need to be in the place which we can fulfil as many as possible.

Moreover, Eretz Yisrael is a land of miracles. It is a land where the impossible is the reality. This is clearly evident in Israeli history from the last 100 years, and indeed simple existence in the Land is dependant on G-d's Divine provision. We have recently started to ask G-d for rain in Eretz Yisrael in our Shmona Esrei tefillot by adding the phrase "mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem." We are also aware that if we fail to behave in the way that we should, according to Hashem's will, then the land will not provide for us.

"For the land that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come. There the grain you sowed had to be watered by your own labours, like a vegetable garden; but the land you are about to cross into and possess, a land of hills and valleys, soaks up its water from the rains of heaven. It is a land which Hashem, your G-d looks after, on which Hashem, your G-d always keeps His eye, from year's beginning to year's end." (Devarim 11:10-12)

In Eretz Yisrael, everything is dependant on Hashem. Therefore, for His people, living in Israel acts as a reminder of G-d and of His mitzvot.

Peula Ideas:

Concrete
Concept

🔊 **Valuing people** – Avraham spoke out against the disregard for human life:

- Compliment Bang-Bang
- Balloon Debate (a group are in a hot air balloon that's too heavy – make your case for why you should stay! Alternatively, make a case for why someone else should stay)

Concrete
Concept

🔊 **Hearing/Seeing Hashem in the world** – Avraham recognised Hashem and heard His call:

- Key game (think about what extra precautions are needed to make it Covid-secure!)
- Blind-folded obstacle course
- Treasure hunt (to Eretz Yisrael!)

Concrete
Concept

🔊 **The uniqueness of Eretz Yisrael** – certain mitzvot can only be done there:

- Print photos of Israel and elsewhere (make some obvious and some really tricky!) and ask the chanichim to sort them. Use this as a trigger for Israel being unique, then develop this idea with why it is unique.

Concrete
Concept

🔊 **Eretz Yisrael is a land of miracles** – survival in Israel is dependent on Hashem:

- Print a list of events in Israeli History (you can go as far back as you want!). Which would you describe as miraculous?
- Pick a game where no-one follows the rules – whoever follows the rules gets bonus points