**Lech Lecha 2015**

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Conversion and Kiruv part 1

Ohr Gedalyahu 43-45:

The Gemara in Chagiga 3a says that tells us Avraham was the first to convert people. Rav Gedalia Schorr says Avraham created the concept of monotheism and conversion. The act of conversion is someone having the ability to uproot himself from his past and becoming a part of the Jewish nation.

As Chazal say in many places, such as in Yevamos 22a, a person that converts is like a newborn baby. Avraham gave to all future generations this concept of being able to start new, in a positive way.

The Rashbam comments on pasuk 12:3 where Hashem tells Avraham that “all people will be blessed through him.” The Rashbam gives a deeper pshat and says we are all just grafting off from Avraham Aveniu. Grafting is b’kiztur, the process of taking a part of one tree and using it to grow together with another tree. We all just attach ourselves to the Avraham’s branch. So too, a convert is allowed say Elokei Avraham because he also has a connection to him. This is the coach of Avraham. He planted within us the strength and ability to uproot ourselves from the past to begin anew and become a new creation.

In addition to that, Avraham also rooted in each of us the ability to pass tests and overcome challenges. We wouldn't be tested unless we could overcome it, as Avraham said "I stand myself like a wall." The Medrash explains this to means having the ability to stand like a wall against the yeitzer hara. (See Lech Lecha 2013 divrei torah, what Rabbi Zilberstein says there).

Chidushei Ha’Rim: What’s pshat in nusach by candle lighting on Chanukah? We say “u’partzu chomos migdali” “you breached these walls”? We have to look at every aveira like a wall. Meaning, you cannot cross possibly cross it, you cannot go through to do that aveira. (badal menay meaning some aveiros we are completely separate from, for example idolatry or shatnez. While other aveiros we are not completely separate from such as chametz on Pesach. We are used to eating chametz the entire year therefore on Pesach extra precautions and decrees were enacted in order to prevent us from potentially eating chametz. (See Pesachim 11.)) The Greeks tried to breach this wall when they came and wanted to negatively influence us with their culture. The reason we succeeded in not assimilating is because of Avraham. Like we said earlier, he was the one who implanted the ability within us the ability to stand up to the culture around us, to be able to draw a line and say ‘No, I can’t go past that wall’, I can’t do that sin.

That's the explanation of the Mishna in Avos, in beginning of fifth perek that says Avraham Aveinu had 10 tests. The Tosefos Yom Tov asks why the Mishna says Avraham **Aveinu**? The word Aveinu which means our father implies that there are children. We are the products of Avraham and his actions. The Mishna wanted to teach us that just like Avraham Aveniu had ten tests and passed all of them, we as his children have the ability to withstand our own tests.

Every person needs to know he was created with great abilities and strengths. Each person’s strengths are unique to that individual, that only he can fully tap into and use in a positive way. You need to use those capabilities and apply it when necessary.

As Chazal say in Avos Perek Beis: Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai says if you learned a lot of Torah do not give yourself credit because this is what you were created.

This is what is expected of you. You need to use your time wisely, don’t wait for tomorrow. If you don't use the time and abilities that you are granted properly, then they will be taken from you. (Medrash Shmuel explains this Mishna as telling us not to hold the Torah for yourself rather share it with others.)

**This parsha is not only about Avraham and doesn’t only apply to him. Hashem tells each and every one of us ‘Lech Lecha’. You were sent into the world for a purpose. Some people need to leave their land or place of birth, meaning separate yourself from the gashmius. The more a person is able to remove himself from all the gashmius and tap into the ruchnius, the greater the potential for positive results. You weren’t given cochos (strengths) to be able and indulge in the gashmius of this world.**

The pasuk says lech lecha, which literally means go for your own good. Why does the pasuk need to say this? Even if there was no benefit for Avraham, Avraham should listen solely because Hashem commanded him. Why did Avraham need the promises and reassurances that this would be beneficial for him? When a person does an action he needs to know what he is getting involved in. Hashem wanted to explain to Avraham that what he was doing would affect all future generations and that this was a serious task he was undertaking. So too, we need to realize that all of our actions are incredibly important in Hashem's eyes and know the enormous and lasting effect that we have when we do something, either for the good or the bad.

There is a lot to learn about kiruv in general.

The Yalkut Mefarshim brings from the Maritz Chiyutz on Chagiga 3, that he says Avraham was the first person to teach people about Hashem and tell them to serve Him. The pasuk says, 12:5, “the souls they made in Charan.” Rashi explains that this refers to the people Avraham and Saara converted, that it was as if they created them (similar to the Gemara quoted earlier from Yevamos).

The Gemara in Sanhedrin 99 says someone who teaches his friends son Torah it’s as if you created them, and it quotes our pasuk as a source, that says "the soul he made in Charan."

In short, **the more a person builds himself, learns, and works on himself, the more he will be able to affect others directly and indirectly.**

**The Chazon Ish explains why he wanted to be isolated and just work on himself for many years. He brings a mashal of a pitcher that is surrounded by cups. If you just pour from the pitcher to the cups, then you will run out eventually. However, if you keep pouring water into the pitcher that is at the center then it will fill up the pitcher and overflow into the cups as well. The nimshal is that if a person constantly has the Torah source he will be like the overflowing pitcher that is always helping others as well.**

(See parsha Vayeira 2015 part 2)

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