

Parshat Lech Lecha: The Mysterious March

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Hashem commands Avraham, "Go for yourself from your land...to the land that I will show you." Why didn't Hashem say clearly where to go? Rashi explains that it was to endear the final destination to Avraham. As the Ner Uziel explains, anticipation of a gift while unwrapping it enhances the gift. Secondly, Hashem wanted to reward Avraham Avinu for every step of the journey. Perhaps, as the Netivot Chaim suggests, Hashem did not want Avraham to be disappointed every time he did not reach his goal, or alternately perhaps, as the Bad Kodesh suggests, not knowing when or where it would end made the journey even more challenging, multiplying the reward for each step. But as Rabbi Matlin further explains, while we are rewarded for each step in preparation of a *mitzvah*, it's not the same as the reward for the actual *mitzvah*. Had Hashem told Avraham Avinu the destination, he would have received the reward only for preparation. Not telling him earned him reward for the actual *mitzvah* of lech lecha, the command to go. Further, had Avraham known the final destination, he would have taken the shortest route and merited fewer rewards.

Ozrot HaTorah citing Chazal and the Chafetz Chayim z"l, supports the assertion that Hashem rewards man for every step he takes for a *mitzvah* by bringing proof from Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian King Merodach sent a letter to King Chizkiyahu.

Nebuchadnezzar, the main scribe at the time, happened to be "out to lunch" when this letter was drafted. Upon his return, he asked what had been written. He was told about its salutation, "Greetings to King Chizkiyahu, greetings to the City of Jerusalem, greetings to the great God." Nebuchadnezzar understood that greeting God last on the list was an affront to His honor. He ran, trying to catch the runners before the letter was delivered, but he succeeded in running only three and a half steps before the Angel Gabriel stopped him. Had he succeeded in finishing his fourth step, Vashti would have completed her reign and Esther would not have been able to ascend the throne to foil Haman's plan. If the evil Nebuchadnezzar was rewarded for each of the three steps he took to honor God's name, how much greater was Avraham Avinu's reward for each step he took, and how much reward will be in store for each of us for each step we take and each challenge we face to obey Hashem's commands.

By not knowing his destination in advance, Avraham had to rely completely on Hashem every step of the way, a process that furthered his humility, explains the Sefas Emes. Further, it raised the journey and the Land to the spiritual level of eternity so that the Land could become an eternal inheritance to Avraham's descendants, not just a temporary reward to Avraham alone.

Life is always an open-ended journey. A Jew

must take each step with faith in Hashem, writes Halekach Vehalebuv. As the Mesameach Zion writes, we each must find our own path toward *kedushah* and toward forging a relationship with Hashem. We all struggle through the darkness, and it is the struggle that forges the relationship. That's why Hashem tested Avraham ten times, each time making a closer bond.

Rabbi P. Friedman notes that no soul knows its ultimate destination. Life is full of twists and turns, of unseen challenges. Only with faith in the direction of Hashem can man navigate life's pathways. Therefore, one should be careful to ask Hashem constantly for direction and for His help, and to attribute one's success to His guidance. One should remember to say, "*Im yirtze Hashem*/If God so wills," or, "*B'ezrat Hashem*/With God's help," when beginning or completing a project. When one believes he is in control rather than Hashem, he severs his relationship with the Creator. The Chasam Sofer says, we thank God for two things in the blessing of borei *nefashot*. First, that He created souls, that He gave us life. But we also thank God for what we lack, *v'chesronan* and their deficiencies. It is these deficiencies that force us to turn to God and ask for His help. And Hashem has already promised us, through His words to Avraham Avinu, that He will always be with us and never abandon us, for He will lead us *el ha'aretz asher arekhalto* the land that He Himself will show us.

Builder of Her Home Respect and Mutuality in the Home

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Kavod (respect) in the house must be mutual. The husband and wife must have faith in each other. They must believe that their spouse is with them, has traits they admire, and in turn is capable of admiring their traits. Once that mutuality is achieved, they can use these traits to develop themselves, their home, and their children. For instance, if your husband is a man of integrity, you could validate that in him, try to mirror it, and make it the basis of your mutual admiration. Doing this will make you respect each other and build each other.

It's a chain reaction. The wife initiates giving *kavod* and the husband mirrors it. Then they build each other and the atmosphere of the house changes. Their children breathe the air of a different kind of home. When children aren't content with the path of Torah one will often find that the husband and wife don't respect each other. The atmosphere of the house isn't one of building together and the kids breathe in an—"I gotta do what I gotta do to make myself happy," atmosphere." And that does not lend itself to spiritual growth.

The values and basis of *kavod* between a couple is what's genuinely admirable within them. When the *kavod* is based on exalted values, the couple builds each other. It's never too late to try this. It's the woman who initiates and has the ability to change things. When a woman gives *kavod* to her husband because of his integrity, compassion, dedication, or moral strength, she shows that she values what he's giving. The *kavod* will feel authentic and not an act or manipulation. If she relates

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to whatever it is she is showing respect to as the most important value, by the nature of things it will come back to her. She is going to become like this as well. For instance, if a wife admires her husband's compassion it's going to strengthen both the husband and wife's

compassion. He'll value his wife's capacity to love compassion. Her love of his validation will make her more compassionate. This is how mutual building takes place automatically without either one of them necessarily planning it. It's not, "I'll do this so she'll

become that." It's not a game of chess. When our spiritual longings are validated, then the person who does the validating becomes the source of your higher self, the one you love, and the one who builds you.

The Treatment of G-d's Names

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Ari Jacobson

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch teaches, when one writes a letter one should be careful not to write Hashem's name in any language. This is based on a Gemara which recounts that in the aftermath of the Chanuka story, the chachamim wanted to institute that anyone who wrote a letter or document and made reference to the date should insert "in the name of *Yochanon Kohen I'Kel Elyon*." It was a way to counteract the decree of the Greeks who prohibited praising or making reference to Hashem. Then they dropped the idea, realizing that if Hashem's name would be used so often it would end up scattered on the street.

The Shach rules that the prohibition of erasing Hashem's name only applies to the seven actual names of Hashem. It does not apply to names in other languages and to descriptions of Hashem even in Hebrew. However, one may not treat it in a degrading fashion. A Torah scroll that falls into disuse must first be placed in a *keli cheres*, an earthenware box or a plastic container, to insure proper respect. So too all holy objects that contain the name of Hashem such as *tefillin* and *mezuzot* must be placed in a container before burial. Torah books that don't contain verses or names of Hashem but contain words of *Torah*, require burial, although not in a container. *Divrei Torah* sheets and weekly Shabbat newsletters may not be discarded but must be put in *sheimot* to be buried. The Netziv ruled that if it was printed for temporary use, there's no requirement for burial and it can be wrapped

and discarded. However, this is not the universally accepted custom.

The Rogotchover Gaon writes that that one should not write *bet heh* on top of a letter because *heh* represents one of the letters of Hashem. Jewish law states that even if you begin writing Hashem's name it may not be erased or discarded in a disrespectful way. Others disagree and permit it. They maintain that the *heh* is the first letter of Hashem and not the first letter of Hashem's actual name. It is proper to be stringent and to write instead, *beit samekh daled*.

A person once got very angry at another person and spray painted Hashem's name all over the person's furniture. Rav Auerbach ruled that it was permissible to erase it because the person's intent when writing it was not for a holy purpose but to hurt the other person. This is based on a ruling in the Talmud that the name of Hashem written by a heretic is devoid of sanctity and may be erased.

A young teacher was once teaching about the seven names of Hashem. She wrote the names with intent exactly how they were spelled on the board. In this case the halachic ruling was that the names could not be erased and the board had to be buried. A minimum of three words of a verse in Tanach may not be discarded. This is why one should be careful not to write verses on invitations which may be thrown away. Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled that Torah cassettes and CD's may be discarded

as they are not actual words of Torah on paper. So too, Torah essays on computer may be erased as there's no actual writing.

The Mishna in Avot tells us, "*Kol hamechabed et ha'Torah gufo mechabed al habriot*. One who honors *Torah* will merit honor." The Pele Yoetz tells us that this teaches us that one who honors Torah books will merit respect from others. The *tzadikim* of old would personally dust their Torah books. When the Steipler would take out the wrong book by mistake he would read a line or two before putting it back so as not to treat it with disrespect.

If a *sefer* drops on the floor, the instinctive Jewish response is to kiss it. If someone is carrying a *sefer*, he gets priority in coming into a room. One should not lean on a *sefer*, bang on it, or put other books on top of it. There are *halachot* that determine what can be placed on top of each *sefer*. A Chumash has precedence over a Nach. A Nach is accorded greater honor than a Mishna or Gemara as the written *Torah* was directly dictated by Hashem. One should not sit on a bench that has a *sefer* on it. It is considered disrespectful to leave a *sefer* open when one has finished learning. According to *kabbalah* it can cause one to forget one's learning. *Seforim* in the bedroom should have a double cover or should be placed in a closet. In case of need, one can rely on a single covering if it is not transparent, as long as the books in question are printed and not handwritten.