

## Parshat Lech Lecha: Presence and Presents

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles  
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

After traveling to a strange land at Hashem's bidding, joining in a war to save his nephew Lot and then parting from him, Avram sees a vision in which Hashem promises him children. He takes him outside to see the stars and tells him, "So, shall your offspring be!" This is then followed by, "*Vehe'emin baHashem, vayachsheveha lo tzedakah* - And he trusted in Hashem, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." There is an ambiguity of the indefinite pronoun. Who does 'he' refer to?

Rashi explains that after Hashem promised Avram a son, he had complete faith in Him. It was this faith that Hashem found so righteous. Ramban disagrees. Avram's faith had already been tested and Hashem certainly considered him already righteous. Therefore, the verse must mean that Avram attributed this promise as an act of total kindness from Hashem that would never be dependent on merits.

The *Tiv Hatorah* explains that faith is never to be taken for granted. Even the great Avraham whose faith had already been tested understood that faith is always a work in progress. Avraham arrived at his faith through an intellectual quest, yet this promise Hashem gave him was completely against logic, for he and Sarah were old. Still Avram did not question. He accepted Hashem's promise on pure faith, points out the *Daas Schraga*.

Avram worked on his faith constantly, for it takes constant work to build the ladder from earth to heaven, says *Tallelei Orot*.

Rabbi Rabinowitz cites the *Chazon Ish* that it's easy to say we have faith when things are going well, but do we really attribute it all to Hashem? On the other hand, when things are not going according to plan, do we get frustrated that we are no longer in control, or do we attribute this too to Hashem? Which comes first for us, prayer or looking for a solution? Faith involves following Hashem on His terms, not on our desire for control. It's recognizing that everything is in His hands.

Since Torah itself is revelation, explains Rabbi Wolbe, there is no need for "faith". A man of faith is a man of equanimity, unswayed by external circumstances, for he knows that all is from Hashem. This was the greatness of Avraham Avinu. Recognizing Hashem as the Creator, he trusted in Hashem, in *YKVK*, the four lettered name that signifies the Lord of the supernatural. So, if this God that Avram knew so well promised him a miracle of a son against all odds, says the *Chasam Sofer*, Avram believed it and Hashem considered that as part of Avraham's righteousness. The *Chasam Sofer* and *Toras Chaim* both pick up a grammatical nuance in our verse. *He'emin* is the causative form of the verb *a-m-n*. What did Hashem consider the righteousness of Avraham Avinu? Not his own

faith, but his resolve to implant this faith in Hashem in his progeny, even if they did not yet exist.

The *Netivot Shalom* explains that in His role as Father, Hashem had already prepared the blessing of children for Avraham and wanted to bestow them on His son. But, like rain falling from the sky, the blessing needed a fitting vessel to contain it. Avram needed to become that vessel, to be worthy of this blessing. And he did when he accepted Hashem's promise of children with full faith. It was this that Avram gave Hashem the opportunity (so to speak) to bestow this gift upon him that Hashem recognized as his righteousness.

The *Mishchat Shemen* presents the analogy of two Jews. The one who is frum from birth is rewarded for observing *Torah* but not for struggling. The baal teshuvah, on the other hand who had to overcome many challenges gets rewarded not only for *Torah* observance but also for the struggles along the way. Rabbi Lopian maintains that Hashem continues to accrue credit to him for his previous struggles although he is no longer struggling. Similarly, if we work on improving a particular character trait, Hashem credits us with the struggle and continues to credit us even after we have improved. Rabbi Zusia disagrees and contends that we are only credited with the struggle of the moment.

## First Perek: What is a Mashal

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

"*Yishma chocham v'yosef lekach...*" What should one listen to? The simple answer comes forth in the next few verses which are *mashalim*. A *mashal* is a parable which portrays the external and then draws the person to form inner conclusions. For example, the story of Rabbi Akiva who stood at a stream and heard the fish talking. The little fish were trying to escape the big fish and a fox appeared and said, "Come up to me on dry land and I'll help you." The little fish scoffed, "Do you think we're fools? If we can barely survive in our own habitat, how do you think we can live with you?" This is a lesson meant to teach us about assimilation. If we're

barely surviving in our own habitat, how will we survive if we try to assimilate?

People think concretely. A *mashal* takes an abstract idea and gives it concrete form. *Dimyon* is making assumptions about the spiritual realities of life by looking at physical reality. In the physical world, the more you give away the less you have. That's a *mashal*. It's *dimyon* because life isn't about having but about being and the more you give the more you are. The material world is not a reliable teacher. Therefore, Shlomo Hamelech gives us *meshalim* to guide us.

*Mishlei* begins with the words, "A wise person will hear and he'll add on to it..." He'll draw new conclusions. The definition of wisdom is someone who learns from what is already there. The first type of wisdom is the flash of Hashem's creative energy that brought everything about. We didn't come into a world of nothing. There's air, earth, vegetation... This is all Hashem's *chochma*. The *Torah* begins with, "*Bereishit bara Elokim*- In the beginning Hashem created..." Everything is Hashem's wisdom. It's all in the *Torah* and one is expected to learn from it and draw conclusions.

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The next step is *binah* which is, "Meivin daver m'toch davar-Understanding one thing from another." *Chochma* is undifferentiated, it's all out there. A *chacham* should hear the *mashal* presented and draw conclusions. And the more he draws conclusions that are true, the more ability he'll have to see more. Rashi says *lekach* comes from the word, "to take." The *chacham* is the *baal hashemuah*-the owner of what he heard. The more he hears, the more he'll grasp.

"L'havin mashal umelitza diveri chachamim v'chidatam." Shlomo Hamelech tells us what our expectations should be from the great *mashal* of life. First there's taking it in and drawing conclusions. Then there's understanding one thing from another, so you see it all.

"L'havin mashal means looking at what the *mashal* -life is telling you. *Melitza* is what will be accepted by your heart. In the end your heart and emotions will determine what you will do. But the heart must listen to the conclusions of the mind. The *Baal Hatanya* would say it's all *mochin*. You have to let your mind control your heart. It doesn't mean don't feel. It means notice what your self- talk is. If you have the temptation to be a little dishonest, your mind may say, "At the end of the game, who do I want to be? I certainly don't want to be a thief." You have to bring your mind in not just to cool off your passion but to let your heart hear the right messages and allow it to navigate life properly. *Melitza* is learning to speak to yourself in a way that your heart will listen.

What should you let yourself hear? "Divrei chachamim v'chidotom- The words of the wise and their riddles." *Ralbag* says a *chidah* is something that's closed tight and difficult to understand. Who should you listen to on how to interpret life? Your own mind may take you one way or another and you may not know where the truth lies. Therefore, you have to consult people who have daat Torah, who've been there and understand. *Daat Torah* is integrated information, not just *chochma* but also *binah*. Your interpretation of reality may be prejudiced. Therefore, listen to how the *chachamim* see the *mashal*, how they interpret life through the lens of *Torah*.

## Hilchot Shabbat: Koreah Ripping

### Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

There's a disagreement between the *Poskim* whether opening food packages on *Shabbat* is permitted. There's a difference between glue -sealed packages like cereal boxes and heat -sealed packages like potato chips which have no external medium binding them together. *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa* quotes Rav Auerbach who brings an example of pairs of shoes that used to be sold tied and sewn together. They were joined together temporarily to be broken up later on. Similarly, food packages are sealed temporarily in order to be torn open later on and therefore may be opened on *Shabbat*. Other opinions hold that it is forbidden as it is analogous to opening an envelope which is forbidden on *Shabbat*. Therefore, it's most preferable to open all packages before *Shabbat*.

Milk cartons present another question. Tearing it open at the top forms a pourable spout. Many *Poskim* including Rav M. Feinstein forbid opening such cartons on *Shabbat*. Others rule leniently and permit it. Their reasoning is that the cartons are manufactured as a regular box and are then sealed. Since the carton was already a functioning vessel beforehand, forming a spout would not be making something new. Still it's certainly better to open it before *Shabbat*.

There are questions raised about opening a bottle on *Shabbat*. The issue is two -fold. The first is a *kriah* issue since only after the ring is broken does the cap become a functional cap. The other issue is creating a cap after twisting

it off which would involve *makeh b'patish*. Rav Auerbach's conclusion was to ask a basic question. Is there a way to effectively use the cap before breaking the ring? If so, so then it's not *makeh b'patish* because it was already a cap beforehand. If it can't be taken off without breaking the ring, then there's a problem. What was found was that the older metal caps couldn't be taken off without breaking the ring. However, the plastic caps could be wedged off with a knife without breaking the ring. A solution to getting around the *makeh b'patish* issue would be to puncture a hole at the top of the cap before opening so that it's no longer a functioning cap. Still it's always preferable to open all bottles needed before *Shabbat*.