

Parshat Lech Lecha: Relationship of Heaven and Earth

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In Parshat Lech Lecha, Hashem commands Avraham to leave his birthplace. Rashi questions this, Avraham had already left *Ur Kasdim* (his birthplace). What did Hashem mean to tell Avraham?

The Shem MiShmuel quotes the Ohr Hachaim, who explains a phenomenon in nature. The earth continually pulls towards the heavens and the heavens continually push it away. Subsequently, the equal forces that are generated keep the earth at its designated spot. Earth's deep desire for spirituality and spirituality's rejection of physicality is reflected in people. We are a dual combination of spiritual and physical and our lives are supposed to mirror that.

Torah and *mitzvot* teach us how to bring spirituality into our mundane lives. The do's tell us how to make the mundane spiritual and the don'ts tell us how not to make the spiritual

mundane. Judaism dictates all aspects of our lives, in contrast to Christianity and Eastern Religions which reject physicality and concentrate solely on spirituality. Pirkei Avot teaches, "Yafeh talmud Torah im derech erez." Torah is good with every day living. However, it is challenging to strike the right balance between them. Something purely spiritual rejects the physical. This brings to mind the argument of the angels with Moshe when he came to receive the Torah. The angels refused to give up the Torah, claiming that it was a spiritual entity. Moshe answered that the Torah addresses people, not angels, since they have no physical side to them.

If something is easy, it's taken for granted. If it's difficult we fight for it. Therefore, Hashem made spirituality resistant to physicality in order to create more desire within man for spirituality. The world outside of Israel is soaked with physicality. The land of Israel is "*eretz chaim*," a land

that produces life. There is a certain kedusha in the air. Hashem commanded Avraham to go there so he would live in the *kedusha*-conductive land.

Shabbat too is a day when the spiritual is much stronger than the physical. During the week there are great barriers between heaven and earth in order to arouse our desire for the *kedusha* of Shabbat. Shabbat is the vehicle of holiness in time. It is a day of spiritual growth, when sanctity becomes almost tangible. Even so, the power of Torah and the will to do good can help us combine the physical and spiritual so that even during the week and even in exile we can access spirituality.

May Hashem help us tap into the holiness of Israel and Shabbat, help us draw out its sanctity, and use our strength to serve Hashem with joy and enthusiasm.

Parshat Lech Lecha: Eternal Call

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

What was it about Avraham that he was chosen to be the father of the Jewish people? While the Torah tells us about the righteous character traits of Noach, not much is said of Avraham. The Ramban explains that one of the most pivotal events that showed Avraham's extraordinary faith in Hashem was when he was thrown into the fiery furnace in *Ur Kasdim*. The Ibn Ezra asks, why was this not written in the Torah? The Ramban answers that it would have been impossible to record it without mentioning the idolatrous beliefs of Nimrod, which the Torah did not want to do.

The Maharal in *Derech HaChaim* quotes the *Mishna* in *Avot*, "Love that is dependent on a thing will not last. Love that is not dependent on anything is eternal." The Torah says that Hashem chose Avraham, but it does not say why. This teaches us that Hashem's love for

us is eternal and not dependent on anything. But we do know that Avraham was chosen for his good deeds and we have many statements in the Torah testifying to this. The Torah says, "I am Hashem who took you out of *Ur Kasdim* to give you this land." The Ramban says Avraham merited to receive the land of Israel because of the self sacrifice he displayed at *Ur Kasdim*. How can we say he wasn't chosen for any reason? And if we say Avraham and the Jewish people were chosen randomly, why in fact were they chosen?

The Shvilei Pinchas explains that Avraham was considered a ben Noach and according to Jewish law he was not allowed to give up his life for Hashem. How then can we say that his act was meritorious? The Midrash says that Avraham was saved from the furnace in the merit of Yaakov, whose attribute is truth. Avraham understood in the deepest recesses

of his soul that he couldn't possibly stay alive if Hashem's name was at stake. He understood that the ultimate truth was to give up his life. When he decided to let himself be thrown into the furnace, he knew that he could potentially be forfeiting his life in the next world for doing something forbidden. Yet his love for Hashem was so great it wasn't contingent on any reward. The *Netivot Shalom* says, it was not such a wonder that Avraham wasn't burned in *Ur Kasdim*. The bigger wonder was why *Ur Kasdim* wasn't burnt by the fiery love of Avraham for Hashem. As a result of his actions, Avraham merited measure for measure that Hashem chose him and his descendants out of love not dependent on anything. Avraham's extraordinary strength and self-sacrifice was passed down through the generations. Our love for Hashem and His love for us is everlasting.



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 16 Number 34

Brought to you by Naaleh.com

Achieving Balance Chodesh Cheshvan

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shoshie Nissenbaum

The Bnei Yissachar writes that the month of Cheshvan is related to the tribe of Menashe. Its zodiac sign is a scorpion and it corresponds to the sense of smell. It is called *Mar Cheshvan* because emerging as we just did from the spiritually charged month of Tishrei, Cheshvan seems devoid of meaning. The sense of smell is less tainted than the other four senses, as it was not involved in the first sin of the *Eitz Hadaat*. If one rearranges the letters of Menashe one gets *neshama* (soul), which is connected to the sense of smell.

The Gemara in Brachot asks, how do we know that we need to make a blessing on a fragrance? We don't make a blessing on a beautiful song, but we have four different *brachot* related to the sense of smell. The

pasuk in Tehilim says, "*Kol haneshama tehalal kah.*" We must praise Hashem for every breath. When we smell the pleasant aroma of fruits and spices we should make a bracha.

Cheshvan is also called *Bul*. *Bet* is the first letter of the Torah, *vav* is the middle letter, and *lamed* is the last letter. *Bul* represents perfect balance, which is the latent energy found in Cheshvan. Everyone has a mental or written list to-do list for after the holidays. We feel an urge to get back on track and be more balanced. Cheshvan is the month closely related to Yaakov, who represents truth and *tiferet*, the perfect equilibrium between strength and kindness.

Let's explore the *akrav* (scorpion). The Midrash notes that Shlomo Hamelech completed building the first *Beit Hamikdash* in

Cheshvan. However, he was instructed to wait until Tishrei to dedicate it. Hashem consoled Cheshvan by telling her that the third *Beit Hamikdash* would be dedicated in her month. *Akrav* comes from the root word *ikar bayit*. This connects to *Rachel Imeinu*, who is called the *akeret habayit* (the mainstay of the home) of Yaakov. During the period of the first *Beit Hamikdash* there was a split in the kingdom. Most of the tribes rejected the kingdom of David and placed their loyalty with Yeravam ben Nevat, from the tribe of Efrayim, who formed his own kingdom in the north. Recharav, son of King Shlomo, remained king over Binyamin and Yehuda, some kohanim and part of the tribe of Shimon. Eventually, in the month of Cheshvan the two camps will unite once again and recognize King Mashiach, the descendant of David, as their leader.