Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

תורת אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 17 Number 34

Brought to you by Naaleh.com

Ultimate Benefit- Parshas Lech Lecha

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

The phrasing of Hashem's command to Avraham to leave Charan contains within it the lessons we, Avraham's descendents, can derive from it. "Go for yourself from your land, your birthplace, and from the home of your father to the place I will show you." Rashi explains, "For your good, for your benefit." If Hashem promised Avraham such great rewards as the ensuing verses state, how could Avraham's following Hashem's command be a test of his faith? Doesn't the promised reward negate the challenge?

That is the exact point of the challenge and Avraham's rising above it. The Torah implies that although Avraham heard Hashem's promises, his motivation was not the reward. Instead, his motivation was to do Hashem's will and thus forge a closer bond with G-d.

This explanation, however, leaves us with a further question. How could obeying Hashem's command be for Avraham's benefit if these promised rewards do not come into play? We know that our ultimate purpose is doing Hashem's will. As Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller points out, the yetzer hara, the evil inclination, tries to deter us from attaining our higher goals. But now we have a tool to trick the yetzer hara into joining us to do a mitzva. We can tell him about all the material rewards in store for us. Naturally, the yetzer hara will believe he will have so many more tools at his disposal to entice us away from service to Hashem. Once we have disabled his wiles, we can now perform the mitzvot truly leshem shamayim, entirely for His service, with no ulterior motives. Undermining the yetzer hara is indeed of great benefit to us.
And yet, the benefits continue to accrue. True, Avraham was greatly blessed with material wealth. Material wealth, however, is meant to be a means to our goal. The rewards – of material wealth, of reputation, and of family connections – can become great tools in furthering one's service to Hashem. As Avraham used his wealth and his influence to increase the knowledge of Hashem's presence on earth, we can learn from our patriarch and use our blessings to expand ourselves in His service.
One greater, immeasurable benefit still awaits exploration, the benefit to our inner, true selves as we obey Hashem's commands. We know each action we do has a ripple effect on the world around us. But there is also an intrinsic benefit to our very souls for each mitzva that we perform. Each time we do Hashem's bidding, we not only improve our external world, but also improve the personal, intrinsic, internal world of our soul. In this respect, we are doing chesed with Hashem.

This concept requires some clarification. Chesed is performed by providing someone with something he cannot achieve on his own, whether it is food for his family or the ultimate chesed of a Jewish burial. It seems sacrilegious to say that there is something Hashem cannot achieve on His own. However, this is precisely the way He created the world. He created Man neither as a robot nor as an angel, but with the free will to perfect himself and his soul. This is the only gift we can give to He who has everything: our purified, perfected soul. As our Father, He wants us to experience this great joy, but as any human father knows, the child must learn to create that inner world of peace, serenity and wholeness within himself.

Our challenge is to recognize that in order to create new and stronger ties to our Maker, we must get out of the ruts we have fallen into, break old habits, so that what we do, even when they are prayer and mitzvot, does not remain just rote, physical action, but becomes internalized to change our essence and perfect our souls. We must desire not only to do, to give tzedakah and do chesed, but to be baalei tzedakah and baalei chesed. After all, we are not human doings, but human beings.
As our ancestor Avraham did, we must leave the constrictions and ruts created by our physicality (artzecha – the earth of our body), our natural instincts (moladitcha –your birthplace, genetic makeup), and the negative influences of our environment (beis avicha – your father's house), and search for our inner essence along the path Hashem will show us.

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 eretz." 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.

Continued on Page 2

Help support Naaleh by searching the web! For more information visit www.iGive/Naaleh.com & www.iSearchiGive/Naaleh.com

Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

תורת אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 17 Number 34

Brought to you by Naaleh.com

Parshat Lech Lecha: Relationship of Heaven and Earth

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Continued from Page 1

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- conducive 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.

Mishlei: Raising Children

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

In Mishlei, Chapter 4, it says, "Shema beni mussar avicha-Listen my son to the reproof of your father…" We want our children to listen to the Torah of their father - Hashem. Every child instinctively wants to find favor in their parent's eyes. It's up to us to let our children know what really pleases us. Let them see that what we want most is to let the words of Hashem sustain their hearts and that they not abandon Torah even when they have nisyanot. When we take pride in their moral behavior and in their obedience to Torah, it will leave a lifelong impression on them. But it has to be clear that we're on their team and that we love them.

The Likutei Maharan says a Jew must see Hashem's wisdom in every person and situation. The nature of seeking wisdom is to look for what's new and different and where one could find Hashem in reality. This is why being the bechor, the first child in the literal sense, the first one to see, was important to Yaakov.

"Take my words, and years of life will increase for you." Because He cares about us, Hashem will sometimes grant great Torah leaders extremely long lifespans. But we also see that many of them died young, such as the Arizal and the Ramchal. It's not just about biological years but about shenot chayim -years that one is really alive. Even when one is doing good things, one can be either be alive, connected, and full of vitality, or not. The Gemara tells us that when a person dies, they are called before the heavenly court by their name and age. The only days that are counted are the days they were really alive. It says about Avraham, "Bah b'yamim-He came with his days." Every day had arrived at its destiny. There were no lost days that couldn't be accounted for.

"In the way of wisdom I instructed you." It says in Pirkei Avot, "Who is a wise person, one who learns from every person." Teach your child to learn from every person and situation. People aren't invisible. When your child sees you treating the bagger at the supermarket or the taxi driver with respect because every person has something to teach us, your child learns to seek wisdom from everyone.

"I led you in the path of uprightness." Yosher means fairness. There's a mitzva to do hayashar v'hatov-that which is right and good in Hashem's eyes. There are areas in halacha where what's yashar isn't stated outright. It needs to be figured out. For example, if you want to sell your home, the halacha is that your neighbor gets the right to the first bid. This is because he'll gain more from having an adjoining place than someone else will. Don't dig up old complaints against him and try to get back at him now. Your children have to see you being fair if you want them to do the same. The way to being fair isn't exactly straight. It isn't always what's written in the law books. The Torah wants us to use our spiritual elastic to move into the space where we learn uprightness on our own.

"When you walk your steps will not be narrow, and when you run you won't stumble." If you know where you want to go, you'll get there. You won't let yourself be destroyed by all the petty ins and outs that come up.

Let me give you an example and tell you about the worst day in my life. Believe me, I've had serious things happen in my life, but this puts everything in the shade. I was in a New Jersey train station waiting for the train. There was me, a black guy, an older woman, and a fashionable young woman waiting at the other end. All of a sudden, the older woman collapsed. The black guy called for help, but it didn't come immediately. We had no idea what to do. The young woman ambled over and told us to do CPR. She directed us how to do it. We kept working on her until we got her pulse back. Then the train came, and the young woman got on leaving us to our own devices. I felt that now the woman's life was in my hands. All the other terrible things that happened to me, I knew it wasn't in my hands. I had done what I could.

If you know where you're going, you'll take steps and get there. Obviously, this young woman had no idea where she was going. I don't know why she got on the train. But one day she will have to account for thinking that her job or her social life was more important than a human life. I don't think she was evil but rather unthinking. You have to teach your children not to constrict their steps, to know where they're going and to keep going towards it.

Help support Naaleh by searching the web! For more information visit www.iGive/Naaleh.com & www.iSearchiGive/Naaleh.com