

ISSUE #149

י"ג חשוון תשפ"ז
24/10/26



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת לך לך

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם, לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה. (בראשית יב, א)
Hashem said to Avram, "Go for yourself from your country, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." (Bereishis 12:1)

This week's *Sidrah* begins with Hashem commanding Avrohom Avinu to leave his place of origin and journey to the land of Canaan. This was one of the *nisayonos* through which Avrohom Avinu demonstrated his greatness. By passing ten tests of faith, he displayed his absolute belief in Hashem.

The Meforshim observe that the stages of disengagement mentioned in Hashem's command are presented in reverse order from their actual chronological sequence. In reality, a person first leaves his father's home, then his hometown and extended family, and only afterwards does he leave his land. If that is the case, why is the order reversed?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* cites his father, R' Leib *zatzal* (in Meorei Sheorim), who explains that the *nisayon* faced by Avrohom Avinu was not merely about physically leaving his land, hometown, and father's house. Rather, the main challenge for Avrohom Avinu was to distance himself from the spiritually contaminating influences present in those places. R' Leib supports this explanation by referencing a teaching of Chazal (*Midrash Rabbah* 39:1): שְׁמָעִי בֵּת וְרֹאִי: רַבִּי יִצְחָק פָּתַח (תהלים מה, יא): שְׁמָעִי בֵּת וְרֹאִי: *R' Yitzchok introduced this parshah with a possuk (Tehillim 45:11): "Hear O daughter, and see, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house."*

This teaching of the Midrash, citing the *possuk* שְׁמָעִי בֵּת וְרֹאִי in reference to the beginning of our *Sidrah*, requires clarification. What lesson is being conveyed here? The Meforshim explain that the Midrash is elucidating that this phrase refers to Avrohom Avinu and reveals the true nature of Hashem's opening command to him regarding leaving his hometown. Avrohom Avinu was tasked with שְׁמָעִי וְרֹאִי, *hearing* and *seeing* the word of Hashem, and the prerequisite for this was עֲזַבְתָּ אֶתְּכֵחִי וְאֶתְּבֵיתְךָ, *forget your people and your father's house*. Avrohom needed to forget all the influences from his birthplace and upbringing in order to fully dedicate himself to following Hashem's will and command.

This Midrash explains the principal aspect of the challenge that Hashem presented to Avrohom with the directive of לֵךְ לְךָ. Avrohom was required to detach himself from the negative influences and beliefs he had acquired during his childhood, especially from his father's wicked household. He also had to distance himself from the harmful traits of the people around him, including those of evil individuals like Nimrod. Only by purifying himself and becoming as innocent as a newborn could he fully receive Hashem's messages and reach the great spiritual heights destined for him.

Thus, the Midrash addresses the sequence of the *possuk*. Since the command of לֵךְ לְךָ primarily refers to Avrohom's separation from previous beliefs and influences, the Torah presents his challenges in ascending order of their impact. The influence of one's country is certainly less than that of one's birthplace, while the hold of one's parental home is even more significant. First, a person detaches

from the influence of their country since the connection is not as strong. Next, they distance themselves from the impact of their hometown, and only after considerable time do they forget the attitudes and mindsets absorbed from their parental home.

R' Leib emphasises that Avrohom Avinu's achievement in uprooting the foreign ideas and beliefs that were deeply embedded in him since childhood was an extraordinary feat, almost impossible to accomplish. His ability to fully extricate himself from the way of life and philosophies of his earlier environment was truly beyond the ordinary capabilities of a person.

The Rosh Yeshiva highlights that even Avrohom Avinu's ability to mentally detach from his previous surroundings depended on his change of physical location. It was only through this change of place that Avrohom could aspire to purify himself and fully embrace Hashem's words as a new person.

This idea - that a person's physical surroundings are crucial for spiritual growth - is further illustrated by an insight from R' Yechezkel Levenstein *zatzal*, regarding the Mishnah (*Pirkei Avos* 6:9) that states:

אמר רבי יוסי בן קסמא, פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ופגע בי אדם אחד וכו'. אמר לי, רבי, מאיזה מקום אתה. אמרתי לו, מעיר גדולה של חכמים ושל סופרים אני. אמר לי, רבי, רצונך שתדור עמנו במקומנו, ואני אתן לך אלף אלפים דינרי זהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות. אמרתי לו, בני, אם אתה נותן לי כל כסף וזהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם, איני דר אלא במקום תורה, וכו'. וכן כתוב בספר תהלים על ידי דוד מלך ישראל (תהלים קיט, עב): טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף.

R' Yose ben Kisma said: Once I was walking on the road, when a certain man met me... He said to me, "Rebbi, from what place are you?" I said to him, "I am from a great city of scholars and sages." He said to me, "Rebbi, would you be willing to live with us in our place? I would give you thousands upon thousands of golden dinars, precious stones and pearls." I replied, "My son, even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would dwell nowhere but in a place of Torah." ... And so it is written in Tehillim (119:72) by Dovid, King of Yisroel, "I prefer the Torah of Your mouth above thousands in gold and silver."

R' Yechezkel questions why the Mishnah does not mention the name of the individual who was conversing with R' Yose ben Kisma. Typically, Chazal refer to great individuals by name, or at least use a respectable title, such as *מעשה בְּחֶסֶד אֶחָד*, *an incident with a pious person*. Shouldn't the man who offered a substantial fortune for R' Yose to move to his city warrant an honourable mention?

R' Yechezkel explains that in fact, this man's love and appreciation of Hashem and His Torah were severely lacking. He should have been willing to leave his hometown and relocate to the city of Torah where R' Yose resided. By choosing to stay in the place where his wealth was, he revealed where his true priorities lay. Therefore, R' Yechezkel concludes, the man does not deserve any honourable mention.

We learn from the above about the importance of removing foreign and negative influences to achieve great spiritual heights. Additionally, we see how crucial our physical surroundings are, as they can profoundly transform a person. May we all strive to live in a place filled with Torah and in the company of Talmidei Chachomim, which will enable us to experience genuine spiritual growth.