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This week's dvar Torah is sponsored by the Glowinsky family in loving memory of **Avraham Chaim ben Avraham z'l**, on the occasion of the yartzheit 28 Tishrei

Go Forth

Ten generations after Noach, the Torah introduces us to Avram - who becomes Avraham Avinu, the father and founder of Am Yisrael.

Parshas Lech Lecha begins with the Torah narrative shifting from the story of humanity to the story of one man and his wife: Avraham and Sarah. Hashem calls out to Avraham when he is seventy-five years old, with the words that launch the story of the *Umah Yisraelis* (the Jewish nation).

The parsha opens with the first (in the Torah text) of Avraham's ten tests (Avos 5:3):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ
- *And Hashem said to Avram: Go for yourself, from your land, and from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you* (Bereishis 12:1).

Read at the level of *pshat*, this verse seems to be a Divine travel order.

Yet, upon closer consideration, the lashon of the Torah begs to be explained.

Firstly: לֵךְ. לֵךְ. Why the double lashon (language), when "lech" alone means "go", and surely would have sufficed?

Secondly: אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה - *"to the land that I will show you."* Why doesn't Hashem explicitly tell Avraham the name of the place where he is to journey to?

Rashi explains לך לך as *"for your benefit and for your good."* The command here is understood as Avraham's gain, not a loss. As Rashi says: *"And there I will make you into a great nation, but here, you will not merit to have children. Moreover, I will make your character known in the world"* (Rashi to Bereishis 12:1).

It is also compelling to note that Hashem commanded three levels of departure: *from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house.* Leaving a country is hard. Leaving the place you were born is even more challenging. Leaving your father's house - one's deepest roots - is the greatest test of all.

Yet Rashi highlights for us something remarkable about the Divine blessings that follow.

Travel, notes Rashi, diminishes three things: children, money, and fame (Rashi to Bereishis 12:2). Therefore, Hashem answers with three blessings to make up for what would normally be diminished: *"I will make you into a great nation" - children; "and I will bless you" - with wealth; "and I will make your name great" - renown.*

Hence, the three levels of departure - three levels of difficulty, are repaid with three levels of reward. What the journey costs, the promise repays.

As for the ambiguity of the destination: *"to the land that I will show you,"* Rashi

explains: *"He did not reveal the land to him immediately, in order to make it dear in his eyes and to give him reward for every command"* (Rashi to 12:1).

The Torah, and Chazal's understanding, are teaching us that every step of a difficult journey - especially when the end result is unseen and unknown - earns its own reward. Avraham had to walk with trust in Hashem - and himself - before he could walk with clarity.

Later in the parsha we see another aspect of this leaving. Only when Avraham finally separates from his nephew Lot does the word of Hashem return to him, as Rashi explains: *"As long as the wicked man was with him, the Divine speech withdrew from him"* (Rashi to 13:14). The journey for himself meant complete departure from the past - including the influence of Lot, which stood between him and closeness to G-d.

These lessons from the beginning of Avraham's journey teach us something fundamental about how Hashem leads us through our lives, and how we choose to take those journeys.

In our own lives, we are so often (proverbially) asked "to go" - to journey forth - into uncharted, and unknown waters. We may find ourselves in a new stage of life, facing a difficult decision, the reality of our children growing up and leaving home, or a situation, or change, that we did not choose. During these times, we think it would be helpful, and comforting, to know the destination when the journey begins.

However, the Torah here teaches us that Avraham was not given the end result either. He was given a Divine command, as well as a promise, but at this point, nothing more than that.

This holds a tremendous life lesson for us, as well as our children and students. As Avraham faced tests, so do we. Yet, as the man of faith, Avraham forged ahead, because he understood he was not told only to give things up from his past. He was promised by G-d what the giving up would build in the future.

Perhaps we, too, should view our journeys in the same way: not as what we will lose from this journey, but as what we stand to gain.

Through what the journey will teach us about ourselves and our strengths, through the closeness to Hashem we strive to attain, and through the meaningful relationships we will build along the way.

Avraham went forth not knowing where he would go, and became the father of a nation that walks in his ways.

May we have the courage to go forth when life calls upon us to do so. May we trust that Hashem always guides us on the proper path that is uniquely tailored for each one of us. And in this way, may we merit to become, like Avraham Avinu, a blessing to all around us.

■ ברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום

Michal Horowitz is a Torah educator who lectures nationally throughout the United States, as well as internationally. Thousands of her shiur recordings are available online. She is a regular presenter for the OU Women's Initiative and the author of *Abled: Living With a Disability*, a Torah View (Mosaica Press). Michal lives in Woodmere, NY, with her family.

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