

Abraham's Initial's Qualities Daf Yomi Message for Parshas Lech Lecho

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

The Midrash elaborates on the special qualities of Abraham prior to Lech Lecho. His defiance of Nimrod's orders, his smashing idols, his proclamation of the truth of G-d, are experiences of Abraham BEFORE his encounter in which G-d reveals Himself to him and commands him "Get thee out...unto the land that I will show thee." In the Chumash itself, however, there are a few passages relating to Abraham's earlier years, and on the surface, no spectacular achievement to warrant the Lech Lecho, which is the initial chosenness of Abram as the father of the Jewish people.

Yet, upon reflection one finds a clause in the chumash sufficiently indicative of Abraham's potential greatness. The Torah relates in the end of Parshas Noach that "'Terach took his son Avrom, his grandson lot and his daughter in law Sarai, and they went with them from Ur Kasdim to go into the land of Canaan" (Braishis 11:31) Though the passage begins with " And Terach took", in the singular, it continues, "and THEY went with THEM", in the plural. Terach and Avrom went with Lot and Sarai" (Rashi). Terach was given a leadership role as a sign of respect, but actually the journey was initiated by Abraham (RAMBAN). For Abraham sensed the assets of the high level of holiness in this land, which was later to become the Holy Land, and which is more conducive to the attainment of divine wisdom (see Sforno) . Abraham then, possessed the rare qualities of a tenacious searcher, with a profound urge to even go from place to place to seek the truth. He demonstrated the thirst to know, the incentive to understand, the passion to become an assiduous student. These were the qualities G-d found in Abraham, and which earned him the command LECH LECHO.

The original plan to go to Canaan was not realized immediately. They stopped midway at Choron and did not complete together the journey to the land of Canaan, (11:31). This may have been part of the divine plan that Abraham separate himself from his idolatrous father, and continue the journey on his own. However, it also proves that this journey was a most difficult one. The very plan to undertake it was a sign of great courage and stamina. This is too, the first time that the Chumosh records such a journey. This speaks well for Abraham even before the Lech Lecho revelation.

It is this zealous journey for the truth that occupies Abraham also after the encounter of Lech Lecho. This time it is not only for the purpose of growing

himself in divine wisdom and service of G-d, but also to promulgate himself his newlyfound truth. "And he called in the name of G-d" (12:8) means, according to the Midrash, (quoted by Rambaan), that Abraham called out the name of God in public, in order to promote and popularize the truth of G-d. More than a dozen times Abraham is found moving about from place to place for this cause of publicizing the omnipotence and awe of G-d: "And Avrom went" (12:4) " (and they went forth" (5), "And Avrom passed through the land" (6), ""And he removed from there into the mountain" (8) "And Avrom journeyed) (9) "And Avrom moved his tent" (18), etc.

Abraham had a great sense of mission, to conquer hearts to the truth of G-d. For this he moved about tirelessly. Indeed Isaiah's description (current haftorah) is most relevant: "And they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint ' (Isaiah 40:31)

" Run my friend, and be though like the roebuck..." (Shir Hashirim) 8:14) R. Bachya (Braishis 15:5) quotes a Midrash that this passage refers to Abraham. The knowledge of the truth of G-d so overwhelmed Abraham's mind and heart that his feet became light as of a roebuck to run from place to place to burst it out to fellow humans. Only by sharing the knowledge could his soul be calm.

On the American Torah scene today one can witness some of this blessed "moving about" inherited from Abraham. Several Torah institutions have become inflamed with the fiery zeal to spread out, aspiring to reach out with the message of Torah to more Jewish communities. Yet there there are still cities with Jewish settlements laying waste in Jewish darkness and ignorance of Torah, and waiting for the descendants of Abraham to enlighten them. Often the roads to reach them are rough and strewn with obstacles; yet to reach them is a must. In the above quoted passage in the Haftorah Isaiah speaks of flying, then running, then walking, all without fatigue. This order is not necessarily a weakening of energy. When the landing is difficult for flight, or when the roads of progress for Torah is not smooth for running, and thus OBSTINATE descendants of Abraham choose to "WALK", it is a greater sign of strength and tirelessness.

Shabbat Shalom

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