

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Lech Lecha 5785

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Hashem blesses Avraham.

וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְגֹי גְדוֹל וְאַבְרָם כֹּהֵן וְהִיא בְרָכָה:

“And I will make you a great nation; and I will bless you. I will increase your name and you shall be a blessing.” (Bereishis 12:2).

What brocho is this? Is this connected to the previous verse of, “Go to the land that I will show you?” Does the Torah reveal, specifically, what was unique about Avraham?

The Torah specifically states why Noach was the one to enter the tieva and save his family and the local animal population. “וַיִּזְכֶּה מֵצָא תָן בְּעֵינֵי ה'” “And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.” (Ibid 6:8). The Torah does not say anything of the kind about Avraham. It says he was born to Terach. (Ibid 11:27). Avram, as he was then named, was the eldest of the eldest going back ten generations to Shem. Shem was the main inheritor of Noach. More importantly, Shem was the ruler of Canaan. Thus, Avram had the progeniture claim on the land. However, Hashem was blessing Avram with more. Why did Avraham merit the extra blessings and appearances from Hashem?

There are a few more hints in the Torah. It tells us about Avram, indirectly. His younger brother, Haran, died, survived by his son, Lot. Avraham took Sarah as a wife, even though she was barren. The pasuk says, “וַתְּהִי שָׂרַי עֲקָרָה אֵין לָהּ וְלֹד:” “And it was to Sarai barrenness, and she had no children.” (Ibid 11:30). The extra wording tells us that Sarai was not only barren to Avram, but she had no previous children. It could be she was married, previously, or it could be she married Avram later in life, after her childbearing years, and had not had any children prior to him.

Another hint about Avram is that he went with his father from Ur Kasdim to Charan, heading in the direction of Canaan. (Ibid 11:31). It was obvious that he would go, as the land belonged to him. What is extra is that he was accompanied by his wife, and his nephew, Lot. What is special about going with Sarai is that it could be they were not married at the time. While the pasuk says she was Terach’s “daughter-in-law” (ibid) and it says Avram took Sarai as a wife (ibid 11:29), it could be Avram married Sarai immediately before leaving or upon reaching Charan. Terach would take Sarai because she was his adopted daughter. “Also, in fact, she is my sister.” (Ibid 20:12). She was Avram’s sister through adoption by Terach. Avram agreed to allow Sarai (perhaps prior to marriage) and Lot to accompany them even though the land really only belonged to him. When they got stuck in Charan and Hashem told Avram to continue on to Canaan (ibid 12:1) Avram voluntarily decided to take Lot with him (ibid 12:5). This selfless attitude was very telling.

When Avram traveled to Canaan he did not settle in the cities nor near any major establishments. Instead, he settled in the mountains. (Ibid 12:8). He did not purchase land nor assert his dominance. He waited for Hashem to provide that to him. At the time, he was not very wealthy in animals. Only after the episode in descending and ascending from Mitzrayim did he acquire livestock wealth. (Ibid 13:2). He could have afforded and fit in the cities. This quiet attitude was also rewarding.

Hashem provided Avram with a blessing. He will make Avram into a great nation and his name will go out greatly in the world. He will be blessed with wealth and success, his progeny will have longevity, and the world will be blessed by his name; and he will be protected from his adversaries. (Ibid 12:3). The pasuk reveals Avram's motivations. "And Avram went just as Hashem spoke to him." (Ibid 12:4). It was not the "for you" or the wealth and blessings that motivated Avram to go. He went simply because Hashem told him to go. His sole motivation shows his worthiness.

When Avram settled near Shechem, which is in middle of the land and on the main mountain passage going east-west. He did not go into Shechem, though. He came "up until the place of Shechem, until the plains of Moreh." As Avram was staying away from the population, living like a hermit with his wife, nephew, and servants, Hashem appears to him with the second promise. This land will one day belong to your offspring. (Ibid 12:7). Avram built a mizbeach to honor the occasion. However, he did not build it exactly in the plains of Moreh. The pasuk says, "and he built it there." (Ibid). However, its context is the next pasuk. He moved to the hill country between Beisel to the west and Ai to the east, and that is where he built the mizbeach. (Ibid 12:8).

There are two possible locations for this mizbeach. It is important to know because this mizbeach is referred to a few more times. Avram returns to the place where he built the mizbeach. (Ibid 13:4). "They arrived at the place of which Hashem told him about, Avraham had built an altar there." (Ibid 22:9). The akaidas Yitzchok, tagging of Yitzchok, was at this same place. The Torah tells us where it is: between Beisel and Ai. When Avram returned from the south he returned until Beisel, where he was before. (Ibid 13:3). Beisel, formerly known as Luz, was renamed by Yaakov. (Ibid 28:19, and consistent with its formulation, the Torah uses the names at the time when Bnei Yisroel received the Torah, not necessarily the name of the place at the time of the events).

Therefore, the place was the eastern outskirts of Beisel before reaching Ai. This is the simple location of the place. Another explanation of the place is not literal but directional. When the Torah says between Beisel and Ai it means a location that is between them on the north-south axis. In other words, not directly on the path between the two cities but somewhere north or south of them, but between them. This is the same as the location of "between your eyes." It is not literally between the eyes, but it is the frontal lobe of the head, located on an axis plane between the eyes. The location that is just south of both Beisel and Ai and located between them is Yerushalayim. At the time it was a small threshing town called Shalem, and the Har Habayis was vacant. That could be the location of where his mizbeach was; the location where many years later the Beis HaMikdash would be built. It was south but also between Beisel and Ai.

May all the brochos given to Avraham be fulfilled.