

בס"ד

דברי תורה ד'צבי אליהו
DIVREI TORAH

לך לך

Lech Lecha

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Enjoy

Rabbi Adam Singer

Life was meant to be a pleasure. Mitzvahs, the 613 commandments given to the Jewish people, should bring you pleasure. If it's more fun to break the rules than to play by them, you are in the wrong game.

The greatest satisfaction in life comes from playing by the rules, playing well, and winning. If it feels like the laws of Judaism might constrict, confine or otherwise leave you unsatisfied look again. Look deeper. Ask for more information. It could be that what you think you can't have, is actually permissible. It could be that what you are denied is not good for you anyway, or that you will be stronger or better by avoiding it. And what the Torah asks of you could be far more blissful than it is now, if you know better how to do it and what it's all about.

The Torah hints to the importance of pleasure and the purpose of G-d's commandments in the first verse of this week's parsha. G-d commanded Abraham to leave his parents house and travel to a destination which was revealed to him later.

In Hebrew, the verse reads, "lech lecha, me'artzecha" (Breishis 12:1) which means "Go for yourself from your land". The words, "go for yourself" sound a bit strange in english and even stranger in Hebrew. What did G-d mean when he told Abraham to go "for himself"? Why didn't G-d just tell Abraham to go? Why did he need to go "for himself"?

Rashi (11th cent. France) quotes a medrash which explains that "go for

yourself" means go for your pleasure and for your good. When G-d commanded Abraham to leave his home he was telling him that fulfilling this commandment would be both good and enjoyable. We expect that listening to G-d and being "good" will make us, well, good. We expect that being G-dly should make us good, but we don't necessarily expect it to be much fun. We don't expect a life of being good to be a life of pleasure, but that is only because most of us are working with the wrong definition of good.

When the Torah relates this episode of Abraham it is introducing the entire concept of G-d's relationship with the Jewish people. G-d's commandment to Abraham to "go for himself" is the first commandment given to the man who will be the father of the Jewish people. It is the model for all of the mitzvahs commanded to Abraham and his descendants. A life of mitzvahs should be a life of both goodness and pleasure.

Life is the adventure of finding and understanding the joy and challenge in the obstacles, pleasures and experiences G-d has laid out for us. Mitzvahs are both the guidebook and the definition of success. Every mitzvah is its own unique pleasure. Each mitzvah reveals a new dimension how to relate more deeply to our world, our Creator, ourselves, and often to each other. While stress and pain are sometimes unavoidable, the goal of life is to find that path where we feel contentment and joy in serving Hashem through the performance of mitzvahs.

Find joy in your life this week. Find a mitzvah. Understand it. Consider it. Look for how this single act can bring more joy in

your life. Perhaps it is through the simple understanding that you are doing something good. Perhaps it is the pleasure of Shabbos candles, the delight in a warm Shabbos meal, a good wine for Kiddush, or maybe the calm meditative state of speaking to G-d in the prayer of the Shemonah Esrei, or the satisfaction of knowing that you are strong enough to keep yourself from eating non-kosher food. Find pleasure and goodness in your life and enjoy the life of mitzvahs G-d has blessed us with.

May we all be blessed to enjoy all of the pleasures and goodness G-d has set before us in all of the Mizvahs. GOOD SHABBOS!!!

Step by Step

Rabbi Yerucham Schochet

Introduction

This *Parsha* describes a few scenes from the life of *Avram* (Abraham as he was known then). First was his departure from *Uhr Kasdim*, followed by his forced detour to *Mitzrayim* (Egypt), and the abduction of *Sarai*. Following their return, *Avram's* shepherds get into an argument with the *Lot's* shepherds, and as a result, *Avram* asks *Lot* to please separate from him. *Lot* chose the area near *Sodom* and *Amorah*, while *Avram* took the land of *C'nan*. Later, there was a great battle and *Lot* was captured by the Four Kings and *Avram* rescued him. *Hashem* appeared to *Avram* and promised him the land and also a living heir. When *Avram* asked for a sign, *Hashem* forged the *Bris Bein Habesarim* (Covenant Between the Parts) with him. After ten years in Israel, *Sarai* suggested

that *Avram* take her faithful servant *Hagar* as a concubine. *Avram* acquiesced and *Yishmael* was born. When *Avram* was ninety nine years old, *Hashem* changed his name to *Avraham*, gave him the *Mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* and promised him that he would have a son, *Yitzchak*. Later, *Sarai's* name was also changed to *Soroh*. *Avraham* preformed the *Mitzvah* of *Milah* on himself, *Yishmael* and the rest of his household.

Rishon

Hashem told *Avram*, at the age of seventy five, to leave his home and go to a foreign land. *Avraham* went, but when he got there, there was a famine so he had to go down to *Mitzrayim*.

Sheini

In *Mitzrayim*, *Sarai* was taken to *Pharaoh* to be his wife. *Hashem* sent an angel to smite everyone in *Pharaoh's* house with *Tzara'as* (Commonly translated as leprosy), so *Pharaoh* realized that he had started up with the wrong man. He gave *Avram* presents and sent him on his way with *Sarai*.

Shlishi

Avram's and *Lot's* shepherds argued over grazing habits. As a result, *Avram* and *Lot* parted ways. *Lot* went to *Sodom* and *Amorah* and *Avram* went to *Eretz C'nan*.

Revi'i

Lot is captured by the Four Kings and *Avram* rescued him.

Chamishi

The King of *Sodom* wanted to pay *Avram*, but he refused. After that *Hashem* appeared promised *Avram* a son.

Shishi

Hashem appeared to *Avram* and promised him that his descendents would inherit *Eretz Yisrael* (The Land of Israel). When *Avram* questioned this, *Hashem* forged the *Bris Bein Habesarim* with him. After ten years in *Eretz Yisrael*, *Avram*, at the suggestion of *Sarai*, takes *Hagar* as a concubine, and she gives birth to *Yishmael*. *Hashem* changed *Avram's* name to *Avraham*.

Shevi'i

Hashem gave *Avraham* the commandment of *Bris Milah* and changed *Sarai's* name to *Soroh*. *Avraham* did the *Mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* to himself, *Yishmael* and all of the males in his household.

Questions

1. How old was *Avraham* when he left *Charan*? How old was he at the time of the *Bris Bein Habesarim*?
2. Who was *Lot*? Who was *Amrafel*? Who was *Malki Tzedek*?
3. What gift did *Pharaoh* give to *Soroh*?
4. In what merit did *Lot* get wealthy?
5. Where did *Lot* settle? Where did *Avraham* settle?
6. How many men did *Avraham* take with him to fight the Four Kings?
7. To what are the descendents of *Avraham* compared? Why?
8. Who was *Avraham's* concubine? Who was her son? What prophesy was given concerning him?
9. What was *Avram's* name changed to? What was *Sarai's* Name changed to?
10. What special *Mitzvah* was given to *Avraham*?

Answers

1. He was Seventy Five when he left *Charan*, and Seventy at the time of the *Bris Bein Habesarim*.
2. The son of *Haran*, who was *Avraham's* brother. *Nimrod*. *Shem* the son of *Noach*.
3. The Island of *Goshen*
4. He became wealthy because even though he was very greedy, and he would have profited greatly by revealing that *Avraham* was really *Soroh's* husband, he never let the secret out; therefore to reward him, *Hashem* made him wealthy.
5. *Lot* settled close to *Sodom*, while *Avraham* settled in *Chevron*.
6. One, his faithful servant *Eliezer*. The numerical value of '*Eliezer*' is 318.
7. They are compared to the stars of the heaven, and to the sand on the seashore. Both of these are too numerous to count. The inference is that if we are righteous, then we are like the stars of the heaven, no-one can touch us. However if we act in the opposite manner, then we will be downtrodden like the sand on the seashore.
8. *Avraham's* concubine was *Hagar*, her son was *Yishmael*, and she was told that he would be a "Wild man, he will need everyone else and everyone will need him."
9. *Avraham* and *Soroh*.
10. The *Mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*.

In two days, tomorrow will be yesterday
