

Haftorah Weekly

**Shabbat Lech Lecha – Yishayahu (Isaiah)
40:27-41:16**

In this weeks Haftorah, the prophet Yeshayahu gives us and the nations of the world an important lesson. To us, the message is clear from the first passuk: "Why do you say Yaakov, and declare Israel, 'My path is concealed from Hashem and my judgment eludes Him?'" . This means the Jewish people are pleading in their exile, as they feel despaired that their path to Hashem is hidden. They cry out in their suffering that Hashem is not judging them fairly and needs to repay them for the suffering. In other words that Hashem isn't being *nice* to them. Hashem's reply is of an assurance that Hashem will give strength to the weak, and those who has faith in Him will eventually triumph.

Then Hashem warns the nations of the world that they will be brought to justice. Even though they persist in idol worship; and say that they were brought up to worship idols, they will be embarrassed when they will find out their wrongdoings.

Some explain 'Who aroused from the east', as a reference to Avraham Avinu in our Haftarah

which would explain at least partially why this was chosen to be the Haftorah. Avraham Avinu stood up against his generation to show that there was a G-d. In fact, the Meiri teaches us that through lectures, writings and personal example Avraham Avinu convinced most of the world's population to believe in Hashem. This incredible accomplishment, against all odds, displays Hashem's interest and involvement in His world.

The Maharam explains 'Who aroused from the east', as a reference to the Mashiach that will come from the east. These two explanations show us a similarity between the two, people that the Mashiach too will have to inspire and educate the people to the true recognition of Hashem.

The connection between the Haftorah and Parshat Lech Lecha

Avraham's task was to bring the message of G-d to the nations of the world, and he succeeded. So too, the people must never lose hope in the troubled times in the exile, as Hashem will help them and eventually overcome them.

**Written By Rafi Katten with sources,
www.Torah.org, Artscroll, Binat Hamikraot**

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Lech L'cha

l,zkunnu lmrtn lk lk orct kt wv rnthu" (t:ch ,hatrc) "Ltrt rat .rtv kt lhct ,hcnu

This weeks Sedra opens with the famous Possuk where Hashem commands orct to abandon his native land, desert his home town and leave the house of his father.

The reh hkf, a classic commentary on Chumash, asks a fundamental question on this Passuk and his answer sheds light on the concept of making a self sacrifice. He asks why the Torah has to detail each step of removal that orct will have to take in order to reach the Promised Land. Surely these words are superfluous and it would be sufficient had it just written Ltrt rat .rtv kt lk lk? Furthermore what is the reason for the term לך לך, go for yourself, what is this extra emphasis teaching us?

Answers this Torah giant in his usual phenomenal way that Hashem was softening the blow for His faithful servant, as His request was a difficult one Firstly, orct is expected to leave his country which is the easiest of the three as a person only feels an allegiance to his own country over other countries if he has fame solely within his motherland. Secondly, it is demanded of him to move out of his home town which is more challenging than the previous request as he holds a personal relationship with his townsmen. Then finally he is told to forsake his own home which of course he feels the most attached to and most reliant on both financially and emotionally. The Torah in a delayed process in homing in towards the most treasured bond which he will have to sever.

However there was even one tighter bond which orct was required to sever in order to fulfil his mission of following G-d to an unknown destination. That is the relationship between a man and himself. orct is hence told lk lk, be prepared to leave behind who you are presently so that you can journey to discover your true self. Hashem was leading orct to vhrunv rv which is the epicentre of creation and subsequently the life source of man both physically and spiritually. By bringing orct back to the root of whom he is and where he comes from it would have an everlasting impact on his very being and therefore it was a journey where he would have to leave behind his old self so that he could actualise his new self.

Interestingly this is the reason why the destination is not revealed to him, similar the vshegv, as whilst he sojourned outside ktrah .rt then the lofty level of prophecy eluded him and his ability to fully comprehend the entirety of his spiritual capabilities was lacking. It was necessary for orct to be led into the Holy Land and to the place that represented his very essence in order for him to be able to actualise his complete potential .

We see from the words of the reh hkf that sometimes in life in order to become whom we really ought to be it requires different levels of sacrifice and even from time to time to shed the layers of the old self in order to become someone better. We also learn the importance of our homeland, ktrah .rt, in the quest to reach our full potentials.

Written by Shmuli Sagal

Words from the Wise

R' Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement, was born this week in the Hebrew year 5570. R' Yisrael always spent the majority of his day in service to Hashem, subjugating his own personal needs and requirements. His whole life was devoted to Hashem and His other creations.

One story that illustrates his Ahavas Yisrael, particularly powerfully, is as follows. His closer disciples always had access to his house, and when R' Yisrael was sleeping they would make sure that silence reigned supreme in the house so that the Rebbe should remain undisturbed. They resolved that if someone should come to the door asking for help, they would help him themselves or ask the visitor to wait until R' Yisrael awoke.

Everyone kept to this vigilantly and ensured that they spoke in a whisper and walked by tiptoe. However, the silence was broken by the purposeful strides of a man preparing to enter R' Yisrael's study. If the loud, fast-paced footsteps didn't wake the Rebbe, the knocking on the door certainly would. Just as he was about to knock on

the door, the disciples whispered loudly "Sir! One moment! Where are you going?"

The visitor replied that he required a letter of recommendation for his business from R' Yisrael. The disciples kindly but forcefully told him that he must wait until R' Yisrael wakes up. R' Yisrael awoke a short while later. Soon, the house was bustling and brimming with its usual activity and energy. R' Yisrael learned that while he had been asleep, a businessman had come to ask for a letter of recommendation.

"Why didn't you wake me?" asked R' Yisrael. "How did you have the heart to send away a Jew who needed help?"

R' Yisrael immediately attempted to discover the name of the man and his address. After doing so, he rushed over to the man's house to ask his forgiveness and fulfil his request.

Story adapted from 'A Story a Day' by Shimon Levy

Riddle of the Week

The shortest number of words in any Passuk in the Torah is 3. How many such Pesukim are there?

Previous week:

How many fish survived the *boiling* hot water of the Mabul?

All of them, the seas and oceans did not heat up, whereas the rain and the rest of the water did.

M'lacha of the Week

Zorea - Sowing

Zorea includes sowing (or planting) or anything that will help the seed or plant to grow.

Practical Application

Changing a plant's water will help the plant to grow, so is prohibited under the law of Zorea.

However, the M'lachah only applies in places where a seed/plant *can* grow, therefore dropping a seed in a tarmac road will not count as Zorea.

Bris Milah, Skin Deep or Spiritual Enthusiasm?

It says in Gemara Nedarim(.ck ps)

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav at the time that Hashem said to Avraham – "Walk in front of me and be perfect", a fear gripped him and he thought to himself, perhaps there is something bad about me, until Hashem said to him, "And I shall place my covenant between myself and you". And he was reassured.

"And he (Hashem) took him outside", Avraham said to Hashem, I looked at my Mazal and I saw that I am unable to have a child. Hashem answered "Leave your star-gazing, Klal-Yisrael are not governed by the stars".

These two events, the first being the episode of Milah and the second at the time of the Bris Bein hab'sarim both occur in this parsha. Two difficulties should immediately be raised, the first being the connection between the two events, why are they brought here like a story, one running into the other? The second being that they happened in the reverse order!

An apparent connection appears in Rashi on the second Passuk quoted in the Gemara about the Bris Bein hab'sarim. Rashi explains that the Passuk of "Vayotze oso hachutzo was Hashem explaining to Avraham that he was going to get rid of the power of his mazal by changing his name from Avram to Avraham, an occurrence which actually does not happen until Bris Milah, the first thing discussed in the Gemara. Thus the promise that Hashem was going to protect Avraham and make him the father of the nation that would carry out

Hashem's will for the rest of time was somehow sealed at the time of Bris Milah.

To understand this we need to understand what our Bris is:

A subsequent Gemara in Nedarim explains that the Gematria of Avram is 243 and the Gematria of Avraham 248, this refers to the last 5 limbs of the body which he gained control of. These are his two eyes, two ears and his makom habris. These are the places where one might sin 'against his own will', sometimes making him responsible for all his actions.

Additionally, the Bris Milah is not the removal of a physical imperfection in as much as it is the removal of a spiritual one. It is the symbolic notion of the handing over of the ability to remove the orlas halev, the covering the heart has which renders it impossible to change. The Maharsha on this gemara explains that the unique ability of changing ones characteristics was given and is given to every Jew at their bris. With this in mind we can understand the Gemara. The bracha of the Bris Bein hab'sarim was the tachlis and the bris milah was the means to that tachlis, therefore the Gemara relates it to the Bris Milah first. Also the symbolism in the Bris Milah is not that it is skin deep but that it penetrates all the way to the heart and gives us the chance to perfect ourselves and become closer to Hakodosh Baruch Hu.

Written by Mark Fishel

Gematria of the Week

The Mitzvah is called ברית מילה but why is this so? A nice explanation is hinted in the Gematria. The Gematria of ברית is 612. If you add on the Mitzvah itself, you reach 613. This is the same Gematria as תריג. Only once you have undergone the ברית מילה process do you enter the Jewish covenant and accept upon yourself the 613 Mitzvos.

(Peninim Mishulchon Hagro on י:ז)