

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Lech Lecho

13 Cheshvan, 5781 – October 31, 2020

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Lech Lecho**

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית י"ב, א': ויאמר ה' אל-אברהם לך-לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל-הארץ אשר אראך:

רש"י ד"ה לך לך: להנאתך ולטובתך שם אעשך לגוי גדול, וכאן אי אתה זוכה לבנים. ועוד שאודיע טבעך בעולם:

בראשית י"ב, ב': וְאָעֲשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְךָ וְשִׁמְךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:

רש"י ד"ה ואעשך לגוי גדול: לפי שהדרך גורמת לשלשה דברים ממעטת פריה ורביה, וממעטת את הממון, וממעטת את השם,

לכך הוזקק לשלש ברכות הללו שהבטיחו על הבנים, ועל הממון, ועל השם:

Bereishis 12:1: Hashem said to Avrom, "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you."

Rashi Heading - Go forth: For your benefit and your good at your destination. I will make you into a great nation. Here, you will not merit to have children.

Bereishis `12:2: And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing.

Rashi Heading - And I will make you into a great nation: Traveling causes three things: 1) it diminishes procreation, 2) it reduces money, and 3) it decreases fame. Because of this, Avrom required three blessings: 1.) a blessing for children, 2.) a blessing for money, and 3.) concerning fame.

Synopsis

In the first verse of our Torah portion, Lech Lecho, the Torah tells us that Hashem commanded Avrom to leave his father's house. However, the Torah phrases Hashem's words in a repetitious manner. G-d told Avrom, "לך לך – Go to/for yourself." It would have sufficed to tell him to go.

Rashi answers this by telling us that G-d commanded Avrom to go *for* his benefit and good. In other words, Avrom would become a great nation *because* he left his father's house and traveled to Israel.

In the very next verse, Rashi tells us that "Traveling causes three things. It reduces procreation, money, and fame. That is why Avrom required three blessings. He needed one for children, one for money, and one for fame. Rashi is telling us that Avrom received these blessings *even though* he traveled. To assure that he would have children, money, and fame, Hashem had to give him additional blessings. Rashi seems to offer two contradictory explanations. He first says that Hashem blessed him because he traveled. Then Rashi goes on to say that he was blessed despite traveling.

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We can understand this based on the well-known saying that¹ "מעשה אבות סימן לבנים", the actions of our patriarchs and matriarchs serve as a harbinger of what will take place with us, their children (descendants) in the future." However, it goes beyond that. Their actions are not merely a sign for us. They bring about our future. They not only indicate our future, instead they provide us with the necessary strength to fulfill our mission.

Our Avos were attained an extremely lofty spiritual level. Despite that, they had both bodies and souls. Hence, both their bodies and souls influence our future, and empower us to fulfill that which we must. This is the basis of Rashi's comments. His first explanation speaks to Avrom's body and the second to his Neshomah. Despite Avrom's elevated level, his body was physical. This is the reason for Rashi's first comments. He tells us that Hashem told Avrom his travels would be² "For your benefit and your good. There I will make you into a great nation. Here, you will not merit to have children." These were this-worldly rewards which the body understands.

Rashi's second explanation is addressing Avrom's Neshomah. Indeed, travel can diminish certain material things. However, his Neshomah was oblivious to this. It performed Hashem's command simply because He said so. He accepted the yoke of Hashem's kingship, and nothing else was relevant. Mitzvah observance, at this level, connects the Jew with the indivisible essence of Hashem. Even though "Traveling causes three things: 1) it diminishes procreation, 2) it diminishes money, and 3) it reduces fame, he merited 1.) a blessing for children, 2.) a blessing for money, and 3.) concerning fame. That was so because of his unique connection with Hashem.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Parshah, Lech Lecho, the Torah tells us of Hashem's command to Avrom to leave his home³. "Go forth from your land and your birthplace and your father's house to the land that I will show you." In the original Hebrew, The Torah adds a word that seems to be redundant. Instead of the Torah simply saying "go," it says לך לך, which we would translate as "go for yourself." This presents us with a question in understanding the simple meaning of these words. The Torah could have said, "לך – go," and G-d's command would have been clear. The Torah is never redundant. To answer this question, Rashi explains the meaning of "going for himself." Hashem told Avrom to go for his benefit. In Israel, he

1. This saying is based on the words of the Sages (Bereishis Rabbah 48, 7), Hashem said to Avrohom, you provide a "sign" for your children."

2. See Rashi's comments to Our Parshah, Bereishis 12:1.

3. Our Parshah, ibid, ibid.

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would merit to have children. If he remained in his father's home, this would not happen. In other words, the going "לך" is "לך," for himself, for his benefit. Hashem making him "a great nation" is the result of his following His directive to "go."

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

At the beginning of our Torah portion, Lech Lecho, the Torah tells us that Hashem commanded Avrom to leave his father's house. However, the Torah phrases Hashem's words in a repetitious manner. G-d told Avrom, "לך לך – Go to/for yourself." It would have sufficed to tell him to go.

Rashi answers this by telling us that G-d commanded Avrom to go for his benefit and good. In other words, Avrom would become the father of a great nation *because* he left his father's home and traveled to Israel.

In the very next verse, Rashi tells us that "Traveling causes three things. It reduces procreation, money, and fame. That is why Avrom required three blessings. He needed one for children, one for money, and one for fame." Rashi is telling us that Avrom received these blessings *even though* he traveled. To assure him that he would have children, money, and fame, Hashem had to give him additional blessings. Rashi seems to offer two contradictory explanations. He first says that Hashem blessed him because he traveled. Then Rashi goes on to say that he was blessed despite traveling. This question is quite obvious, but nonetheless none of the commentaries do not deal with it.

A Mystical Explanation

Every part of the revealed aspect of Torah also exists on a deeper, mystical level. We see this clearly throughout Chumash Bereishis. The majority of this book consists of stories about our forefathers, their children (the tribes of Yisroel), and concludes with our exile in Egypt. On the surface these are stories, but upon scratching the surface we discover deep teachings.

We can see this clearly by examining many of these stories through the lens of the well-known saying that⁴ "מעשה אבות סימן לבנים", the actions of our patriarchs and matriarchs serve as a harbinger of what will take place with us, their children (descendants) in the future." Their actions are not merely a sign for us; they 1.) are the cause of what occurs with us, and 2.) they provide us with the ability to deal with these events.

For example, the Torah tells us that⁵ "Avrom descended to Mitzrayim." This actually caused our

4. This saying is based on the words of the Sages (Bereishis Rabbah 48, 7), Hashem said to Avrohom, "you will provide a "sign" for your children."

5. Our Parshah, Bereishis 12:10.

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nation's long exile in Egypt⁶. The Torah later tells us that "Avrom came up from Egypt... laden with cattle, with silver, and with gold." This caused us, his descendants, to be redeemed from Mitzraim.

Furthermore, everything which our patriarchs did, was with both their bodies and souls. This is why Rashi's comments seem to contradict each other. His first explanation addresses Avrom's body, and the second to his Neshomah. Despite Avrom's elevated level, his body was physical. This is the reason for Rashi's first comments. He tells us that Hashem told Avrom his travels would be⁷ "For your benefit and your good. There I will make you into a great nation. Here, you will not merit to have children." These were this-worldly rewards which the body understands.

Rashi's second explanation is addressing Avrom's Neshomah. Indeed, travel can diminish certain material things. However, his Neshomah was oblivious to this. It performed Hashem's command simply because He said so. Avrom accepted the yoke of Hashem's kingship, and nothing else was relevant. Mitzvah observance, at this level, comes from the soul's essence. Therefore, it connects the Jew with the indivisible essence of Hashem. Granted, "traveling does cause three things; 1) it diminishes procreation, 2) it diminishes money, and 3) it reduces fame. Despite that, he merited 1.) a blessing for children, 2.) for money, and 3.) fame. That was so because of his unique connection with Hashem. His connection with G-d totally transcended logic.

A Practical Lesson from Rashi

The Rebbe constantly sent Shluchim to all corners of the globe. In fact, more and more couples are regularly being sent as the Rebbe's emissaries. This mirrors the mission for which Avrom was sent, as we said earlier, to "Go forth from your land and your birthplace and your father's house to the land that I will show you." We inherited the ability to fulfil this mission from Avrom; "The actions of our patriarchs and matriarchs serve as a harbinger of what will take place with us, their descendants."

Some may claim that it will be detrimental to leave their land, birthplace, and father's house. Their home is totally dedicated to serving Hashem. How can they go to an unknown land? The Alter Rebbe refutes this claim⁸. He teaches that Hashem's command to Avrom to "go forth from his land" refers to the descent of Avrom's soul into this world. From this we understand that "your land, your birthplace, and

6. Zohar Section 1, Page 81, b.

7. See Rashi's comments to Our Parshah, Bereishis 12:1.

8. Torah Ohr, at the beginning of our Parshah.

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your father's house” are all lofty spiritual levels. Despite the spiritual heights of these levels, Avrom’s soul was told to “go forth from his land.”

As long as a Jew heeds Hashem’s call in the same manner that a soldier obeys his commander, his venture will be, as Rashi taught us, for “his good and his benefit.”

(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecho, 5725)

I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות

מרת אסתר שת' שרבני

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