

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 25

Lech Lecha, Sicha 1

The Context:

The Midrashic tradition contains a detailed prequel of Avraham's early life and accomplishments, from his discovering G-d at a young age, to enduring persecution for his convictions and teachings. Yet, the Torah does not mention any of this biography when it introduces Avraham. The parsha opens simply with, "And G-d said to Avram, go out from your home... and I will make you into a great nation..."

The Ramban asks why the Torah elides this impressive backstory — how are we to understand Avraham's deservingness of these blessings without the information about his past?

The Explanation:

Typically, a religious person approaches G-d with their own intellect, personality, and emotions, and attempts to fashion a relationship with the Divine using these human tools. The relationship is necessarily limited, since our capacities are limited, the

person may have some connection with an aspect of G-d, yet they always remain resolutely human.

The relationship between G-d and the Jewish people is different because G-d initiated the choice of the people. It is not through the efforts or accomplishments of the people that a relationship was formed. It is because G-d chose Avraham and his descendants with His essence. The connection the Jew has with G-d, therefore, is not limited to his or her particular human qualities. They are lifted from the trappings of human limitation and are defined by the Divine choice in them.

This is reflected in the mitzvos given to the nations of the world and the Jewish people. The Noahide laws are concerned with the stability and flourishing of human society, the Jewish people's mitzvos are primarily a means to connect with a transcendent reality, with G-d.

Therefore, when the Torah wants to describe the monumental step in the development of the Jewish nation, it does not describe Avraham's personal spiritual journey he undertook with his own human

abilities. It opens with G-d's choice of him, conferring upon a command to fulfill, a means to connect with the Divine.

The Lesson:

When we encounter a Jew who is lacking basic knowledge of Torah and mitzvos, we might feel that we first should build their intellectual and emotional relationship with Judaism before introducing them to practical mitzvos. And even if we do encourage them to add in their observance, that is just a concession to the fact that it is too late or difficult to develop their foundational knowledge. Yet Avraham's introduction teaches us that the foundation of a Jew's connection to G-d is their

response to G-d's command to leave behind their place of comfort and fulfill G-d's commands.

The same applies to a fully observant Jew, they, too, must recall that the foundation of Torah is the self-sacrifice to fulfill G-d's will, no matter the difficulty that one encounters.

This also satisfies the Ramban's question: Because Avraham departed from his own, limited human perceptions and surrendered himself to the Divine decree, his blessings, too, were a departure from the natural realm, infinite blessings in reward for infinite sacrifice.
