

The Making of a Jew

-based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol 25, Lech Lecha 1

Nachmanides asks concerning the opening of our Torah-portion, "G-d said to Abram, 'Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will become a (source of) blessing,'" that this does not explain itself entirely. For why would G-d state that he should leave the land and that G-d would do good for Abraham before stating that Abraham was a servant of G-d and that he was righteous and whole. Normally the verse would state, "Walk in My ways, hearken to my voice, and I will do good for you. However, here G-d promises Abraham good just for leaving the land, without giving any reasons for the reward?



The question thickens: Abraham was 75 years old at this point, and was already cast in a burning furnace for his monotheism, and dedicated himself to influencing others, which all lead to G-d's telling Abraham, "G-d said to Abram, 'Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house...,'" and yet there is no mention of any of Abraham's righteousness. While by Noach, G-d states, "Noah was a righteous man; he was faultless..." And yet, the Torah says nothing of Abraham's righteousness?!

The answer is that the nation of Israel began with Abraham, who was the first Jew. And concerning Abraham himself, is uniqueness among his birthplace and even of his father's home began with, "G-d said to Abram, 'Go....'" Regardless that before this Abraham recognized his Creator, has already served G-d with self-sacrifice, and publicized G-d to the people. This is the Torah emphasizing the essence of Abraham and of every Jew: The greatness of all other nations is based upon their work in getting close to G-d. However, by the Jewish People, their primary closeness to G-d and their existence as Jews are from this that G-d chose them. As our Sages state (-Passover Haggadah), "And nor Omnipresent brought us close to Him and separated us from the nations, and brought us close to His unification." And not through this that they of their own accord elevate themselves to recognize the Creator of the world and to connect to Him. And being that this goes from Creator, it is understood that the Children of Israel are not only another category, alike all other creations that became close to G-d. Rather, they are a completely different essence of existence.

So too is the difference between the *Seven Noahide Mitzvot*, which are primarily connected with concept of maintaining civility of the world. The wholeness of the world and of the Human Race is achieved by the *Offspring of Noach* observing their mitzvot. Thus, the mitzvot of the *Offspring of Noach* are as if they were given to observe them even from their own "intellectual resolution." Contrary to this is the mitzvot of the Children of Israel, which are not just a quantitative difference, but a qualitative difference, of the *Seven Noahide Mitzvot*, in which their primary essence is of "Tzavsa (an etymology of Mitzva) V'chubur - Connection" with the Creator. And being that there is an infinite non-comparison between Creator and creation, and thus, creation doesn't maintain an identity in face of the Creator, thus, this "tzavsa" cannot be created through the intellect, feeling, work or elevation of the creation, but rather, it can only be offered by the Creator, that G-d chose Israel and these mitzvot. This is what the Torah is emphasizing by Abraham the first Jew, that his uniqueness and virtue is not one of his virtues and not by any service of his capacity, but only from, "G-d said to Abram, 'Go....'" That G-d separated and made him unique. Abraham's entire cleaving to G-d began when G-d commanded to him, and he observed G-d's mitzva.

The Lesson: All of Torah, and especially the "actions of our (fore)fathers are signs for (their) children": One can think that in order to begin observing mitzvot and to become nearer to G-d one must first learn about Judaism, about the laws of the Torah, and specifically about G-d and the connection begin G-d and the world in general, and with Israel in particular, in other words, in refining and preparing oneself for the acknowledge of all of the above clearly, and so too, when you meet another Jew which was not previously observant not in action, and not in knowledge, one may think that he must first prepare the other before he can bring him to observe the mitzvot -- upon this comes the lesson of our Torah-portion, "G-d said to Abram, 'Go....'" - just actually do the commandment of G-d! Not only is this the first in order, but this is the main thing in serving G-d. For our connection to G-d comes from observing G-d's commandment. So too, with the service of every individual when one is learned in the *Talmudic* teachings and the *Kabbalistic* teachings, when it comes to the observance of a mitzvah he is to know that the actual observance is but of as we say in the blessing upon every mitzva, "Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to...."

This expresses itself precisely in the inner-meaning of the G-d's commandment to Abraham, "Go from your land --Hebrew: Eretz, from the etymology of Rotzon - Will; distance yourself from your own will--, from your birthplace --from your habits and emotions--, and from your father's house --your intellects, which are the parents to one's emotions." And it is only by stepping out of one's self (will, emotions, and intellects) that one can reach the goal of the, "Go," which is to reach, "to the land that I will show you --G-d's will (eretz - rotzon)." This then answers Nachmanides' opening question: It is through the mere, "Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you," that we reach the ultimate essence of a mitzva, the *tzavsa* with G-d, that of the observance of a mitzva being because it is the commandment of G-d, thus we transcend beyond the limitations and definition of creation.

This is also hinted to within the essence of the reward, the blessings mentioned in the verse:

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A Word From The Rabbi -continued.

Firstly, the wording emphasizes that the reward is coming from G-d, and not just that "it will be": "I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you, I will make your name great." Secondly, the only true 'greatness' exist but by G-d. Among creations, of their own right, there exist true greatness. Thus, the greatness within creation, "I will make you into a great nation. I will make your name great," comes only from cleaving to G-d. So too with the other expressions of the blessing only express themselves when Abraham cleaves to G-d. Thus, the "and you will become a blessing," which means as Rashi explains, "Blessings are entrusted to you. Until now they were entirely in My hands: I blessed Adam and Noah; but from now on you may bless whomever you wish." More than this, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse he who curses you." The mere blessing Abraham causes automatically the blessing of G-d to the blesser of Abraham, and so too in the reverse.

And through serving G-d in the fashion of, "Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house," of everyone in their spiritual service, it will be fulfilled the, "to the land that I will show you," in its practical meaning, that G-d bring every Jew to the Land of Israel, the greatness of "wholeness of the land" and even more than this (-Deuteronomy 12:20), "G-d will broaden your borders," the lands of "Kini, knizi, and Kadmoni," --which also these lands were included in the covenant G-d made with Abraham, being that that was the covenant concerning all *Ten Lands* (and not just the *Seven Lands* that Joshua conquered for the Children of Israel)-- with the true and complete redemptions by our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our days, practically and tangibly so.