

THE MIND'S EYE

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Avram traversed The Land until the place of Schem until Elon Moreh and the Canaanites were then in The Land! And HASHEM appeared to Avram, and He said, "To your seed I will give This Land!" And he built an altar to HASHEM Who had appeared to him. (Breishis 12:6-7)

Why did Avram build an altar to HASHEM then at that time? The Midrash says, "We learn from here that it is a requirement for a person to bring an offering to HASHEM upon hearing good news." Avram was the recipient of two important and deeply gratifying pieces of information. 1) He will have children and 2) his children will inherit The Land. So immediately Avram made a public proclamation of thanks.

There are a few curious points to ponder about this account. In the words just prior to the promise of The Land, the verse spells out that "the Canaanites were then in The Land". Are these not the same gigantic people that seemed so intimidatingly large to the spies and the Nation of Israel when they were on the cusp of entering The Land? So sizable was their appearance that an entire nation was scared to confront them.

Here we have one man and his childless - barren wife and their loyal entourage. The Midrash also tells us the Canaanites looked at Avram with derision as if he was a "crazy old man". To the fleshy eye it must have looked like a great impossibility.

A normal person would have every right to break out into uproarious laughter, like if I took my son to the observatory tower of the Empire State Building and while surveying the grandness of the city, I declared, "Boy, someday this will all be yours!" I'm likely to get a look that says, "Yeah right!"

What's Avram's reaction? He makes a Kiddush! This opens the window into the mind of Avram Avinu, our great father and how he perceived the world around him.

Rabbi Yosef Kehanaman, ztl. the Ponevitcher Rebbe was somehow spared and he miraculously made his way to Eretz Yisrael in the middle of the Holocaust. Only later did he learn of the tragic fate that had befallen his wife, eleven children and his entire town including the Yeshiva at the hands of the Nazis. Old and not quite broken he settled in Bnei Brak and still during the war years he was frequently seen surveying by day and even at night with a candle what was then a sand dune at the

highest point of the "city". He was asked by people who observed his behavior, "What are you doing?" He would say, "Here I am building the world's largest Yeshiva. Over here will be the study hall. Here will be the dorm and here the dining room..."

The responses were less than encouraging. He was told, "Are you crazy? Rommel is on the border of Israel and is about to do here what what's been done in Europe. Torah is a thing of the past. We have no bread to eat and you talk of building a Yeshiva! You must be crazy!" His is reported to have answered, "You're right I am crazy! Now if I went running through the streets of Tel Aviv breaking windows, you would excuse me- 'the unfortunate man he went mad from tzuras-suffering!' The truth is I am mad! However my mishigas -insanity is not to break windows but to put windows in!"

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One gets an eerie feeling that although Avraham never saw the hill tops of Jerusalem filled with Jewish families observing Shabbos and even though when he left this world he only had the one son Yitzchok (to whom "the blessings" applied) and two Bar Mitzva age grandchildren, his heart was brimming with Divine promises. He envisioned them with detail and clearly- as real- in the realm of **the mind's eye**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).