

NO SECOND THOUGHTS

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

When G-d commanded Avram - his name had not yet been changed to Avraham - to go to the Land of Canaan, he was told to "Go for yourself, from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." (Beraishis/Genesis 12:1) Rashi explains that Avram was to go for his own good and his own benefit, that he would not merit to have children outside of the promised land, and that it was only in the promised land that his reputation and renown for righteousness would become publicized. Nevertheless, Avram's reality was that he had no idea where his destination was; he had no foresight as to what land he would be shown.

Chasam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer of Pressburg, 1762-1839, acknowledged leader of Hungarian Jewry of the time) expounds that Avram believed that he was destined for an unclaimed land. Avram was forty-eight years old at the time of the Dispersion following the destruction of the Tower of Babel (see 11:8-9). Now, a mere twenty-seven years later, there were still many lands that were uninhabited; Avram assumed he was destined for one of them. But to his surprise, when "Avram passed into the land as far as the site of Shechem, until the Plain of Moreh, the Canaanites were still in the land. And G-d appeared to Avram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' so he built an altar there to G-d Who appeared to him." (Ibid 12:6-7) He had the challenge of leaving his father's home for an unknown destination, and when he reached that destination, he discovered he was but a visitor; his descendants would not take true possession of the land for another 465 years. And what was his reaction? An expression of thanksgiving, an offering to G-d. No second thoughts.

How was he able to react this way? "So Avram went as G-d had spoken to him and Lot (his nephew and brother-in-law) went with him; Avram was seventy five years old when he left Haran." (Ibid v.4) When Avram did leave his father's home, as much as G-d had encouraged him with great benefits to come in his new homeland, he went, explains Rabbi Sofer, because G-d had told him to go. It did not matter that he was already of advanced age and its affects were already manifest, and it did not matter what he found when he got there; G-d told him to go so he went.

This challenge was but one of the ten great challenges the Avraham faced in his lifetime, a series that culminated with the Akeidas Yitzchak (Binding of Isaac; see chapter 22). Avraham did not simply meet these challenges because he was "Avraham". He became "Avraham" *because* he met the challenges. No second thoughts.

Life is filled with challenges, some small, some great. An Olympic track and field athlete understands that his coach will continue to raise the bar - not because the coach hates him and not

because the coach wants to see him fail. The coach wants him to grow stronger and more powerful and knows that this will only happen if the level of challenge increases. When challenges and stumbling blocks are placed in life's path, we have our great-grandfather Avraham to look up to and emulate. G-d is the ultimate "trainer" for He only gives us challenges we can meet. Let us meet them, let us be thankful for them, and let us grow.

Have a Good Shabbos!

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