

TO THE PLACE G-D WILL SHOW US

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

G-d told Avram, "Leave your land, the place of your birth, and from the house of your father, for the land which I will show you." (Bereishis 12:1)

Parents like to teach by example. However, when it came to the Forefathers, the operating principle is, "Ma'aseh Avos siman l'banim" - the actions of the father are a sign for the children, meaning that all they did, made spiritual waves that affect our decisions in life to this very day.

In other words, when G-d issued this command to Avraham, HE did it with all of Avraham's descendants in mind as well. By inspiring Avraham to leave his homeland that day, the place where he was physically and spiritually rooted, HE gave Avraham's descendants throughout the ages the spiritual ability to do the same thing.

After all, would it not have been enough just to tell him to go? The posuk could easily have said,

"Leave your land for the land which I will show you."

However, when future descendants of Avraham were faced with staying in other countries or moving to Eretz Yisroel, they might argue, "Yea, maybe Avraham wasn't loyal to his land, and therefore felt no attachment to where he was anyhow. I like it where I am. People are nice to me. I pay taxes and am treated well. G-d understands what I mean."

Says the posuk: Leave YOUR land.

"Yea," the descendant might continue to argue, "but I was born here. Maybe Avraham had been born somewhere else and had already moved once, uprooting himself before G-d even came along. Therefore, maybe it is different for me."

Says the posuk: the place of your birth.

"Okay, that is fine. But my whole family lives here, my father and mother, my sisters and brothers . . . Maybe Avraham lived alone, only with his wife Sarah at the time. Leaving for Avraham might have been easier for him family-wise than it is for me . . ."

Says the posuk: and from the house of your father.

However, what makes all of this valid is the last condition of the posuk: for the land which I will show you. Moshe Rabbeinu, when trying to convince his father-in-law Yisro to follow them to Eretz Yisroel, referred to the land as:

Moshe said to Chovav ben Reuel the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moshe, "Travel with us to the place of which G-d said, 'I will give it to you'..." (Bamidbar 10:29)

Here, in this week's parshah, G-d refers to it "the land which I will show you."

The message is as follows. True, Eretz Canaan is a geographical location on a map, sandwiched in-between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. However, Eretz Yisroel is a place that exists in another dimension altogether, a spiritual dimension, one that exists above nature.

If you don't believe me, come and live here. If you can't do that right now, open an atlas and see how many tiny Eretz Yisroels you can fit into Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, etc. We're so small, physically-speaking, that the map drawer had difficulty fitting "Israel" onto the proper location (even more so after we gave away the Sinai desert). You can probably get more Eretz Yisroels into those countries, than you can get moons into the sun!

Yet, we are so BIGGGG in the news, as if they are the small countries, and we're the monstrous one. And, the war appears as if we have their number of soldiers and they have ours, so much so that they had to go and attack the United States of America just to force our hand!

From Heaven's point of view, Eretz Yisroel IS huge, and the rest of the world is small. As Rebi Yehoshua told his son in the Talmud, in This World, appearances are all backwards (Pesachim 50a). And, that's the way it will remain unless we begin to take the atlas seriously and shrink Eretz Yisroel to the size of Eretz Canaan, thereby, simultaneously increasing the rest of the nations of the world.

We have seen the mistake of doing that in the past. G-d willing, we will not make that mistake again now, in the present.

Shabbos Day:

And also Lot who had gone with Avram had sheep, cattle, and tents. (Bereishis 13:5)

Lot was Avraham's nephew, and an interesting character who resurfaces a couple of times in Avraham's story. His father had been Haran, who had died after he jumped into the fiery furnace from which Avraham had just been saved. As a good uncle, Avraham took care of his brother's son, Lot.

That was his body. However, his soul was from the root of Hevel. As the Arizal points out, his very name, "Lot ben Haran" has the head-letters: lamed-bais-heh, which spells "Hevel" backwards, for

both he and his father, Haran, came from the root of Hevel. They were in good company, for as we have seen previously, Hevel was the source of Moshe Rabbeinu's soul as well.

In the Torah, Haran's life is about as brief as Hevel's, or at least the account of it. However, his role in history was much greater, for he had come along to rectify the sin of Adam HaRishon and was guilty of idol worship. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 33)

However, says the Arizal, not only did he not rectify Adam's sin, but even he didn't believe in G-d until Avraham emerged from the fiery furnace unscathed. Thus, he was left to burn once he did enter the furnace, after the fact.

Take the name "Haran" and add the letter "aleph" and you have the name "Aharon," the brother of Moshe Rabbeinu and gilgul of Haran. Unbeknownst to Aharon at the time, the test of the golden calf was supposed to have been Haran's ticket to tikun, and would have been had Aharon been willing to give up his own life when the Erev Rav turned to him to make the calf.

It had been an honest mistake, the Midrash teaches, because Aharon had not fulfilled their demand for an idol to save his own neck. Rather, he had seen his own nephew, Chur, die at the hands of the Erev Rav when he first tried to stop them. For their sake, Aharon was trying to avoid more blood shed.

He did. However, the soul of Haran remained without rectification for many generations, says the Arizal, until Uriah the Kohen lived a righteous life. In the meantime, Chur (ches-vav-raish), Miriam's, Moshe's and Aharon's sister - came from Nachor (nun-CHES-VAV-RAISH), Avraham's other brother.

Eventually, by the time we finish the story of Lot, he has fathered two nations, Ammon and Moav, the latter of which eventually produced Rus, the ancestress of Moshiach. As well, says the Arizal, Rechavam, the son of Shlomo HaMelech comes from him down the road. Not to mention that, in gematria, his name (lamed-vav-tet = 45) equals the gematria of "adam," and in mispar katan ($45 = 4+5 = 9$) of "emes" - truth - (i.e., $1+40+400 = 441 = 4+4+1 = 9$). Not a bad "lot" in life for someone who wasn't so spiritually enhanced as his uncle Avraham.

Just another example of how history is not as simple as it reads on the surface. Leaders today wage their wars for new reasons, but the spiritual dynamics that drive them below the conscious level are all ancient, in fact Biblical. And this will become increasingly evident as the events of man continue to spiral out of control, and lead in directions for which no one intended at the start.

SEUDAH SHLISHIS:

In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goyim, made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorah, Shinab king of Admah,

Shemeber king of Tzevoyim, and the king of Bela (now Tzoar). (Bereishis 14:1-2)

And, what a war it was, at least for the time period. In the end, the war boiled down to Avraham and his trusty servant Eliezer chasing the enemy nations all around the land before defeating them VERY miraculously.

In fact, the miracle was so obvious that Malchi-Tzedek, king of Jerusalem proclaimed for all to hear:

Blessed be Avram to G-d, the Most High, the Owner of heaven and earth. Blessed be G-d, the Most High, who delivered those who wanted [to kill] you, into your hand. (Bereishis 14:19-20)

Now, from a historical point of view, it looked as if the rebellion began when it did because that is when they felt like rebelling. And, once the first group rebelled, the other kings had no choice but to step in and crush the rebellion. This, in turn, of course, led to war, which resulted in the capture of Lot, Avraham's nephew. This, then "dragged" Avraham into a conflict, though he had been greatly outnumbered, of which otherwise, he would have wanted no part.

Ha-ha-ha. That's not me laughing, that's Heaven laughing, for as the Yiddish expression goes (after translation, that is), Man plans and G-d laughs. In fact, someone wrote me and told me that George Bush would have attacked Afghanistan earlier had weather conditions not delayed him until the 22nd day of Tishrei.

I can't confirm that fact yet, but it doesn't matter anyhow. The fact is that after weeks of preparation and deliberation, George Bush Jr. finally let loose on Sunday, October 7th. However, according to the Jewish calendar in Israel, it was already (just barely) Monday, 22 of Tishrei - Hoshana Rabbah - the one day of the year that G-d judges the gentile nations as well as the Jewish people.

One person tried to convince me the other day that the Teimani pronunciation of the word "Gog," is to say the "g" (gimmel in Hebrew), the same way we do when we say "George." Then, something happened to the "r" (raish in Hebrew) sound along the way, though I can't remember what. But, when he was finished, we had "Gog m'Gog" (George Bush Jr., son of George Bush Sr.).

It was a nice try, but for all we know, it is true. After all, it is unusual that the son should be president two terms later, just when another conflict in the Middle-East and Asia has quickly duplicated his own father's dilemma. And, it is even more unusual that the son should have the same name as the father, "George."

How we take subtle historical coincidences for granted, and brush them off easily only because they are not blatant enough for our liking. It's like taking an exam in school, and then getting up and going over to the examiner to complain, "Hey! I don't like this question. It doesn't indicate enough what the answer is!"

You have to appreciate that point, because it could have happened during Clinton's era, but didn't, as if it was waiting for George Bush Jr. to get into the White House, something he did only after great

controversy. We forgot about that one already, didn't we? From a Torah point of view, such "suspense" is always a sign that Heaven is directly involved in the event in question, and that we, the Jewish people, are being given a chance to wake up and do teshuvah. The results, we are being told, are being made dependent upon our choice.

Not that I'm saying that Al Gore would have been the better choice. Apparently there is a tradition that the Great Wall of China was also called the "Wall of Al Magog." Isn't his father's name George, also?

Previously we quoted the now well-known source that has been making the rounds since the September 11th attack:

I will show you, but not for now, for these things will only come to be at that time, some after that time, and some in the Days of King Moshiach. "A star has gone forth from Ya'akov . . ." (Bamidbar 24:17). This teaches us that in the future, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will build Jerusalem and one star will spark within seventy pillars of fire, and seventy sparks will receive light from it in the middle of the sky. The other seventy stars will be swallowed within it. It will give off light and blaze for seventy days. At the end of the sixth day, it will become visible at the beginning of the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month. It will be gathered in at the end of seventy complete days and be visible in the city of Rome, and on that day, three great walls will fall and great hall will fall, and the power of that city will die. (Zohar, Balak, 212b)

However, at this stage of the game, as the American people keep up their bombing of Afghanistan and inspire more Islamic believers to voice their anti-American sentiments, weakening the hand of the Islamic moderates, the second part of the above quote all of sudden proves eerily interesting:

Then this star will become visible in the world, and it will instigate a great war from all four sides, and the faithful will not be forgotten amongst them, and in the middle of the world. Since this star gave off light in the middle of the sky, one great king will arise and control the world, and will become arrogant and cause a war in two sides, and he will overpower them and on that day the star will be broken. The Holy Land will shake 45 miles (?) after the Temple, and from one cave under the ground will become revealed, and from that cave will go out a mighty fire to ignite the world. When Moshiach becomes revealed the people of the world will be suffering trouble after trouble, and the enemies of the Jewish people will be prevailing. Then the spirit of Moshiach will be aroused, the evil Edom will be destroyed, and the Land of Seir will be burned with fire...

A great leader will emerge? Cause a war on all four sides? Take control of the world and become arrogant? Underground caves (we call them silos) from which great fires will fly out?

Don't bother looking for the next comment. It is too scary to write. Still, someone is going to write and ask, "Are you saying that . . .?" Allow me to answer you in advance: I am NOT going to say it. I am merely pointing out that wars waged on earth appear differently than the wars waged in Heaven amongst the Ministering Angels of the nations below, and are ultimately for the sake of saving the

Jewish people by great miracles for the sake of revealing G-d's dominion on earth as well as Heaven.

MELAVE MALKAH:

Changes That Last Forever: Installment #5 (Final Installment)

CHAPTER FOUR: Self-Perception & Change

"I don't think I could ever take a job where I would have to wear a tie everyday to work. And those starched white collars? You could strangle to death in those!"

"For a six-figure salary, believe me, you'd wear just about anything."

"I'm not sure about that . . . Anyway, I've got some job interviews lined up for this afternoon."

"Let me know what happens."

"Okay. See you later."

* * *

"David Samson, I'd like you to meet Mr. Harold Charles, director of personnel at Jones and Jones, one of the largest chemical companies in the United States."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Charles."

"The pleasure is mine, Mr. Samson."

"You can call me Dave."

"And you can call me Harold, Dave. Let's get right to the point. Your grades are just a bit better than average, but you've done well in the areas that concern us most. We'd like you to come work for us in management at one of our main plants."

"That's great, but..."

"Of course your starting salary will be \$85,000, plus bonuses for good performance, and benefits such as health care, and of course, access to the executive gym. After one year, if you like us and we like you, your salary will be doubled, plus bonuses, like free trips to the Orient..."

"Really?"

"That's just the beginning of it. We are a highly competitive company, and we need to rely upon our employees to help keep us that way. We do everything by the book, but know that people need

incentives to keep up performance. What do you say? Do you want to think about it for a week? Oh, and by the way, if you work for Jones and Jones, you have to look the part. Shirt and tie at least, everyday. It makes you feel good about yourself, and it makes us feel good about you."

"Ah... think about it? Yeah, for 30 seconds. I'll take the job!"

"Great. Take a month off after school, and then report to the main offices on the first of August. We'll be expecting you, and looking forward to having you join the company."

"Thank you, Mr. Charles, I mean Harold. Thank you very much."

* * *

"David Samson? Is that you?"

"Of course it's me. Who were you expecting?"

"The shirt-and-tie's a joke, right?"

"A joke? What? Are you kidding? I'm an executive now. Do you know what I earn a year?"

"Business sure changed you around. I remember two years ago you wouldn't even put on a white shirt, let alone a tie and jacket. It must be a good job!"

"It's a great job. And, you know what? I learned a very valuable lesson."

"What's that?"

"Self-perception is everything."

"What are you talking about?"

"I have to admit, that when I took this job I did it for the money. But two years later, this job has changed my life . . . the whole way I look at myself. I didn't know I had it in me to manage 35 people and a production line. I didn't know I could ever enjoy seeing myself get dressed up everyday for work! But I do, and I feel great, and it makes me wonder how much more I can do if I stop under-estimating my ability."

* * *

A ten year old can't imagine how he'll deal with going to high school. A fifteen year old can't relate to getting married and earning a living. A twenty year old can't image finding the money to buy a house. But somehow they all get the job done, in time, some day, some way.

The next most difficult thing to predicting the future is predicting how we'll feel in the future. Everyday brings change to our lives, sometimes changes so subtle that we don't notice the changes in ourselves. But over the years, the difference in our lives and way of thinking becomes quite obvious.

Perhaps one of the most debilitating mistakes people make is to assume that what they feel now is what they will feel later. They make decisions now for the future based upon the present. Their present self-perceptions dictate what they will become, and the direction they will go, though they may change dramatically in the near future.

"I didn't know I had it in me!" The person exclaims, after saving someone from drowning. "If I had thought about it for a second more, I probably wouldn't have jumped in."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not a saver of people; I'm no hero."

"How do you know that?"

"Because, until now, I've never been one!"

"But a crisis changed all that, right?"

"It certainly did. It drew potential out of me I wasn't aware of and it changed my whole self-perception. I'll never again underestimate my ability, or the ability of another, to do special things."

If you say, "I'm not righteous," then more than likely, you won't be. If you believe you're not a doer, then probably you'll have difficulty finding motivation, but not because you're inherently not righteous or lazy. Rather, it is because your self-perception dictates not to strive beyond your present position and attitude in life.

Crises and other types of unique situations help to break through old and rusty self-perceptions. Once negative self-perceptions change, then the person's whole life changes as well. Self-esteem goes up while negativity decreases.

In fact, one of the most constructive ways to achieve a level of growth is to assume success. Act as if you have already succeeded, and work to maintain that level. Stick with it, and eventually the growth will become yours for good, and all the benefits as well.

The basis of positive self-perception is belief in one's own potential. Everyday we wake up to a person, our self, who appears to have only as much "goods" as can be seen in the mirror.

It's not true. Within every individual are "buried treasures" - vast, miraculous, storehouses of potential to do all kinds of awesome things. There are successes within every person just waiting to happen, but which don't happen, simply because the person overlooks his or her own potential.

Potential is this abstract thing that you can't touch and you can't point to and say, "There it is!" It's there, and it's not, which is what makes it so elusive in the first place. However, wherever potential is or comes from, crises show us that there's much more of it than we might have previously suspected.

One thing is for certain: You can't know how much potential you have until you make an effort to find out. It doesn't mean always pushing yourself to your limit in everything you do. However, it does mean not assuming that somewhere, deep inside of you, there isn't the possibility to succeed at something you may never have tried to do before, or perhaps you have tried, but didn't succeed at previously.

Human beings were not created without a cause. We're not here just to muddle around, to survive and cope from day to day. Yes, life is a test. In fact, life is a crisis - a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be special and do special things, in our own special way.

Yom Kippur is the crisis within the crisis, to focus us on the reality of our potential, to see what we could be by coming face-to-face with what we weren't:

"Dear G-d, forgive us for not striving to go beyond our personally set boundaries, and for not striving to be the very best we could be... to be the tzelem Elokim you created us to become, a reflection of Your own greatness.

This is true not just of Yom Kippur once a year, but of everyday life as well.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston