



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Lech Lecha

"Stay Away From Evil and Do Good"

Our *parasha* states (*Bereishit* 12:1), "Hashem said to Avram, 'Go from your land, your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you.'"

Questions:

1 – The normal way for a person to leave is by first leaving his father's home, then his city, and finally his land. Why does the *pasuk* list it in the opposite order? **2** – Also, why did Hashem not immediately say to go to the land which He would show him? That would automatically include the necessity to leave his land and his father's home?

An Allusion to the Passing of a *Tzaddik*

Since we find ourselves in the week during which the great Torah scholar, the leader of *Sefardic* Jewry and world renown *posek* – *Moreinu HaRav HaGaon Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef zt"l* passed away, we will offer words of eulogy, based on the aforementioned *pasuk*. We asked why the sequence in the *pasuk* is reversed. Before a *tzaddik* passes away, his demise begins with his illness. At that point, he cannot be as involved with the world as he once was. He cannot deliver *shiurim*, nor can he attend important assemblies. However, he is still able to involve himself in the matters of his city, to whatever extent he is able. However, when his condition worsens, he can no longer be involved with the people in his city. However, he can still maintain a connection with his family members. However, ultimately, he must depart from them as well. An allusion to this can be drawn from the aforementioned *pasuk*, and this explains its sequence. There is a small measure of solace in the fact that *Maran zt"l* has left his sons to fill his place and benefit the masses. His *sefarim* have become mainstays amongst scholars, rabbis, *dayanim*, and *poskim*. In his responsa *Yabia Omer* there are 1207 *teshuvot*, and in *Yechaveh Da'at* there are 444 *teshuvot*. In total, this amounts to 1656 *teshuvot*. The *pasuk* states in *Yehoshua* (1:8), "לֹא יִסְכַּף הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה לְמַעַן תִּשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל הַפְּתוּבָה בּוֹ פִּי־אֲנִי תִּצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ וְאֲנִי יִשְׁכַּל" "The Book of the Torah should never cease from your mouth, and you should contemplate it day and night, so that you observe and do all what is written in it. For then your way will be successful, and then you will act wisely." The *gematria* of סִפְרֵ הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם is 1656 – the exact number of *teshuvot* in Rav Ovadiah's *sefarim*. This is why it states, "*Yom le'yom* (day to day) *yabia omer*, *ve'lailah* (at night) *yichaveh da'at*." This is because *Maran zt"l* worked on them day and night.

The World's Mistake



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Before we offer a second explanation, we will begin by stating that when a person is asked how he serves Hashem, you may receive different answers: there are some people who try never to do bad to anyone, not to injure or harm them, etc. They then feel good about themselves, thinking that they are acting in a friendly manner towards their environment and society. Then there are others who, while performing good deeds, nevertheless, do not distance themselves from evil. They retain their negative character traits, claiming that this is simply their nature, and they can do nothing about it. Furthermore, this is how they were raised and educated. This is especially true in our generation when many lecturers preach about how each person was created in a certain way and that they must learn to live with their character traits, despite the fact that they are faulty and not in accordance with the Torah. They say that one must accept the reality – this is simply how they are. However, our holy Torah teaches us that these approaches are absolute errors. Firstly, it is not enough simply to “*sur mei’ra*,” veer from evil, to fulfill one’s purpose in this world. Everyone is also obligated in “*asei tov*,” to do good. Man must actively perform the Torah’s mitzvot. The Torah has given us two groups of mitzvot: there are 365 negative commandments, which correspond to *sur mei’ra*, veering from evil. Then there are 248 positive mitzvot, corresponding to *aseh tov*, doing good. It is forbidden to separate the two groups of mitzvot, for they are two parts of a whole. Only by fulfilling them both will man fulfill his purpose in the world. Secondly, man must internalize that his duty in this world is to try and perfect his character traits. Therefore, even if he does good – if he does not distance himself from evil – he will remain impure.

The Zohar’s Understanding of the Pasuk

From the *Zohar* we learn an additional explanation of the *pasuk*. The *Zohar* teaches that Hashem’s intention was not to command Avraham in a physical, mundane departure. Rather, the primary purpose was for Avraham to leave the evil ways of his forefathers and their mistaken world-perspective, with which he grew up. The *pasuk* explains the sequence in which he was to leave them. It starts with the easiest departure – leaving the ways and behaviors of his land, which were influenced by the actions of the people living in his land. Afterwards, he should take leave of the ways of his city; these were influenced by individuals who lived in closer proximity to him and exerted a heavier influence upon him. Finally, he should leave the ways of his family, amongst whom he grew up and learned from the day he was born. Hashem therefore commanded Avraham to leave the mistaken perspectives and faulty character traits that he had grown accustomed to. Despite the fact that he had grown accustomed to them, and it is very difficult to change, nevertheless, this is man’s job in this world. Yet we must add why it was also necessary to then command, to go “to the land that I will show you.” It seems that this is coming to teach us that it is not sufficient to only leave the wicked path. Rather, one must exert effort to do good as well. This is hinted to by going to “the land which I will show you.” The first level of leaving the mistaken path is for the sake of readying oneself to courageously take a new path, hinted to by the words, “to the land



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that I will show you." We see therefore that one needs both *sur mei'ra* as well as *asei tov*, and one without the other is not enough.

Story About Those who Err in Their Path

We will relate a story about those who mistakenly think that the main thing is not to do evil, and by refraining from doing so, they fulfill their purpose in this world. There was once a wise man who arrived in a city. When he began to inquire about the city's inhabitants and their behavior, he was told only that they do not commit evil deeds, such as theft and the like. Finally he asked that he would like to hear for once what they **do** and not what they **don't** do. So what did the *Rav* do? He took a donkey's carcass and covered it. He sent his attendant to announce that there was a funeral for a righteous, hidden *tzaddik*, and that everyone should come and participate. The people gathered, not knowing who passed away. The *Rav* began to eulogize saying that this man was a lofty soul; he never stole, he always took a *taanit dibur* on himself, he refrained from speaking. He continued to say that he never ate meat or fish; he never responded to an insult; never slept on a bed; never changed his clothing his entire life. The people were in disbelief, because they had never known of such a great *tzaddik* living amongst them. When he finished the eulogy, he removed the cover from the donkey, and showed them what it truly was. The people wondered what he was doing. He told them that all of his words were true, and he had not lied at all. Had the donkey ever eaten meat or fish in its life? Had it ever slept in a bed? Had it ever changed its clothing? Nevertheless, it remained a donkey! This is because it only distanced itself from bad, but did not do good. "So too, you, ladies and gentleman. From the time that I arrived here, the primary thing is not doing bad. But there is no good being done. Such a person is similar to an animal. A person must do good if he wishes to rise and fulfill his life's mission."

Words of Mussar

We have discovered that for man to fulfill his potential in Divine service, he needs to first distance himself from evil and then to do good. However, if he just distances himself from evil but does not do good, he is no better than an animal which refrains from doing bad. Therefore, he must put forth the utmost effort to observe the Torah and mitzvot. On the other hand, to simply do good but persist in his evil ways is comparable to one who immerses in a mikvah while holding an impure insect. A Jew is required to do both, and he must remember that both groups of mitzvot were given at *Har Sinai*. Therefore, those who justify their behavior by saying that this is how they are accustomed to acting, and that these are their characteristics – this is a heretical perspective which is opposed to the Torah perspective. For this is the purpose of man in this world, to work in perfecting his character traits, and to use all of his inborn traits only for the good and not for the bad. For Hashem has given each individual traits which he must work on to improve. He cannot justify instilling fear in his household and, as a result, destroy his children's *chinuch* with the claim that this is his nature. Similarly, someone who possesses



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the trait of arrogance or miserliness and the like – he must rectify each of these *middot* as well as his mistaken perspectives. This is what Hashem commanded Avraham in his *nisayon*, his trial – “*Lech lecha*” – to distance himself from all of the bad *middot* and perspectives that were ingrained in him because of his land, birthplace, and father’s home. He was told to then go to the land and in the way that Hashem would show him. This is similarly the commandment of “*Lech lecha*” that applies to each individual. Each person must work on himself and perfect his soul by veering from evil and doing good. By doing so, he will fulfill his purpose in life.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka