

Our *Parashah* opens: "Hashem said to Avram, 'Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" Later, Avram (later known as Avraham) wanders further--throughout the Land of Canaan, to Egypt, and to the land of the *Plishtim*.

In contrast, we read about Avraham's idolatrous ancestors (*Yehoshua* 24:2--a verse quoted in the *Pesach Haggadah*), "Your forefathers--Terach, the father of Avraham and the father of Nachor--always dwelt beyond the [Euphrates] River." They remained in one land and were not asked to wander from place to place. Why?

R' Gedaliah Silverstone *z"l* (1871-1944; rabbi in Belfast, Ireland and Washington, D.C.) explains that there is a positive aspect to Avraham's wanderings and, likewise, to those of the Jewish People throughout our millennia in exile. Specifically, it serves to publicize the Name of *Hashem* throughout the world. R' Silverstone writes: When one has a pleasant-smelling air freshener, he walks through all the rooms of the house with it so that its aroma will be distributed throughout. In contrast, when one has foul smelling tar or gasoline, he keeps it in the cellar or garage so that its aroma will not be widely-distributed. Likewise, when it comes to idolators such as Terach and his ancestors, it was better for mankind that they remain in one land. In contrast, it is to the world's benefit that Avraham and his descendants travel widely. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Korban Pesach* [1939 ed.] p.30.)

Shabbat

R' Yaakov Moelin *z"l* (*Maharil*; 1365-1427; Germany; his customs are a major source for the practices of *Ashkenazic* Jews relating to prayer) cites a *Midrash* stating that Eliyahu Ha'navi sits under the *Etz Ha'da'at* / Tree of Knowledge on *Motzai Shabbat* and records the merits of those who observe Shabbat. Consistent with this *Midrash*, R' Yaakov ben Asher *z"l* (the "*Ba'al Ha'turim*"; Germany and Spain; 1269-1343) writes that it is customary to recite hymns on *Motzai Shabbat* that speak of Eliyahu Ha'navi. [Many contemporary *Siddurim* and *Bentchers* include such songs.]

R' Chaim Menachem Yaakovson *shlita* (Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: *Shabbat* is a Jew's connection to eternity. Before Adam Ha'rishon ate from the *Etz Ha'da'at*, he was destined to live forever. After he ate from that tree, he became destined to die, and he also was burdened with a more physical nature than he had before. This is reflected in the curse given to him (*Bereishit* 3:19), "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, from which you were taken--for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Previously, Adam did not have to work in order to eat. On *Shabbat*, likewise, we do not work, which is indicative of a partial return to Adam's lofty level before his sin.

R' Yaakovson continues: We are taught that Eliyahu Ha'navi never died. This is not merely a personal achievement for Eliyahu Ha'navi; it also is an indication of the connection that all Jewish people have to eternity--to Adam's state before his sin, on one end, and the World to Come, when we will regain Adam's original level, on the other end. Thus, it is fitting that Eliyahu Ha'navi, the man who achieved eternal life, sits under the *Etz Ha'da'at*, where mankind temporarily lost its right to eternal life, and records the merits of those who observe *Shabbat*, which reconnects us to Adam's status before his sin.

(*Mei Be'er: Nehora D'Shabta* p.121-123)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.



Sponsored by

Harold and Gilla Saltzman,

on the *yahrzeit* of his mother, Rebecca Saltzman

(*Rivka Rachel bas Yehuda Leib a"h*)

"After these events, the word of Hashem came to Avram in a vision saying, 'Fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you; your reward is very great.'

"And Avram said, 'My Lord, Hashem/Elokim! What can You give me seeing that I go childless, and the steward of my house is Damasek Eliezer?'" (15:1-2)

Rashi z"l explains: After the miracle of defeating the four kings, Avraham worried, "Perhaps I have already received, in the form of this victory, reward for all my good deeds." *Hashem* reassured him, "Your reward is very great."

Rashi continues: The nickname of Avraham's slave Eliezer ("*Damesek*") is short for "*Doleh u'mashkeh*"--he draws from Avraham's wisdom as one draws water from a well, and he gives others to drink, *i.e.*, he teaches others. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Noach Weinberg *z"l* (1930-2009; founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Aish HaTorah*) asks: *Hashem* promised Avraham great reward in *Olam Ha'ba*. Why does Avraham reply and ask for children? Children are a wonderful gift, R' Weinberg writes, but nothing can compare to the promise of reward in the World-to-Come!

He explains: Avraham wanted children only so that he could father the Jewish Nation and fulfil his mission of turning the wayward world back to *Hashem*. He wanted to bring the entire world to *Olam Ha'ba*, and this required him to have a fitting heir. Why wasn't Eliezer a fitting heir? Because he did nothing more than pass on his master's teachings, like one who draws water from a well and gives it to someone else to drink. He did nothing to build himself spiritually.

(48 *Derachim L'Torah* p.163)

"How shall I know that I am to inherit it [Eretz Yisrael]?" ...

"He said to Avram, 'Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own ...'" (15:8, 13)

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik *z"l* (1903-1993) explains Avraham's question and *Hashem's* response. Avraham asked: "How can I be confident that my descendants will remain devoted to the Land which You are promising them?" *Hashem* answered: "Know with certainty that your children will suffer a long exile during which they will pine for the Land. During the long night of the exile, they will have one dream, one hope--to reach *Eretz Yisrael*. This will ensure that they will remain forever loyal to the Land."

(Quoted in *Haggadah Shel Pesach: An Exalted Evening* p.55)

"Why do you say, Yaakov, and declare, Yisrael: 'My way is hidden from Hashem, and my judgment has been passed over by my Elokim?'" (Yeshayah 40:26 -- from the Haftarah)

R' Saadia Gaon *z"l* (882-942; Egypt, *Eretz Yisrael* and present-day Iraq; author of the earliest known work on Jewish Thought) writes: The prophet is rebuking the Jewish People for thinking that *Hashem* is not aware of our situation in the exile and that He is not judging us fairly. Rather, we are assured by the prophets that He knows what is happening to us and will redeem us, either at the preordained time, or earlier if we repent. (*Ha'Nivchar B'emunot V'de'ot* 8:2)

"And there was a Riv / quarrel between the herdsmen of Avram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock ... So Avram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no Merivah / quarrel between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.'" (13:7-8)

Why does the Torah change from the masculine form "*Riv*" to the feminine form "*Merivah*"?

R' Yerachmiel Shulman *z"l Hy"d* (*Menahel Ruchani* of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) explains: *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* states, "Sins are barren and do not bear fruit, while *Tzedakah* bears fruit, as it is written (*Yeshayah* 3:10), 'For they shall eat the fruits of their deeds.'" It is human nature, explains R' Shulman, that one quickly forgets the kindness that another did for him, whereas he remembers another's wrongdoings for a long time. *Hashem* acts in the opposite way, however: "Sins are barren and do not bear fruit"--they are forgotten, while "*Tzedakah* bears fruit"--*i.e.*, long-term benefits for the doer.

In a related vein, continues R' Shulman, R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz *z"l* (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) answers our question as follows: There was a "*Riv*" between Avraham's shepherds and Lot's shepherds. The masculine form is used because it had not yet become a quarrel that had the potential to "bear fruit" and create lasting enmity. Avraham said: Let us nip this quarrel in the bud before it becomes a "*Merivah*," using the feminine form to indicate the ability to "bear fruit."

(*Peninei Ha'shlaimut: Sha'ar Ha'savlanut* 1:6)

"So Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him ... and they left to go to the land of Canaan." (12:4-5)

R' Moshe Shoham *z"l* (approximately 1740-1820; rabbi of Dolina, Ukraine) asks: Of course, if he went as *Hashem* commanded, then he left to go to Canaan!

He explains: We read about Avraham's father at the end of last week's *Parashah* that he took his family and "They departed ... from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Canaan." Why did he not make it? Terach had an ulterior motive: he needed to flee Ur Kasdim, so he decided to go to beautiful *Eretz Yisrael*. Such a person does not deserve the Holy Land. In contrast, Avraham's only intention was to fulfill *Hashem's* command; he left only "to go to the land of Canaan." (*Divrei Moshe*)

"When Avram heard that his kinsman [Lot] was taken captive, he armed his disciples ..." (14:14)

The *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 32a) teaches: Why was Avraham punished that his descendants were enslaved in Egypt for 210 years? Because he took Torah scholars to war! [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yitzchak Arieli *z"l* (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav) notes that *Mashiach* will be a descendant of Lot. [*Mashiach* will come from King David, who came from Ruth the Moabite, who was a descendant of Lot.] We see how *Hashem* brings the cure--the roots of the Final Redemption--from the very same source as the malady--the first exile, *i.e.*, both are results of Avraham's rescuing Lot.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha'geulah* p.55)