



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

פרשת לך לך

ויאמר ה' אל אברם, לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אצקך. (בראשית יב, א)
Hashem said to Avram, "Go for yourself from your country, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." (Bereishis 12:1)

The Meforshim note that the stages of disengagement are listed in reverse order of their chronological sequence. One first leaves his father's home, then his hometown and extended family, and only afterward his land. Why is the order reversed?

R' Leib *zatzal* in Meorei Sheorim explains that this *nisayon* of Avrohom Avinu, was not merely to physically leave his land, hometown, and father's house, rather the main challenge for Avrohom Avinu was to distance himself from the spiritual contaminating influences within those places. R' Leib brings proof to this by quoting a Midrash: רבי יצחק פתח (תהלים מה, יא): שְׁמַעֵי בַת וְרֵאֵי וְהִטִּי אָזְנִי וְשָׁכַחֵי עַמִּי וּבֵית אָבִיךָ, *R' Yitzchok introduced this parshah with a possuk in Tehillim (45:11): "Hear O daughter, and see, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house."*

The Midrash explains the true nature of the challenge that Hashem presented to Avrohom. He was tasked with removing all the negative influences and beliefs that he had acquired during his childhood and the many years he spent in his father's wicked household. Additionally, he had to distance himself from the negative traits of the people surrounding him, including those of wicked individuals such as Nimrod and others. Only by purifying himself and becoming as innocent as a newborn could he fully receive Hashem's messages and achieve great spiritual heights.

With this Midrash, the sequence of the *possuk* can now be understood. The Torah lists Avrohom's challenges in ascending order of when they took effect. The influence of one's country is certainly less than that of one's birthplace, while that of one's birthplace can in no way compete with the hold of the parental home. Firstly, a person detaches himself from the influence of his country since the connection is not as great. Subsequently, one distances himself from the impact of his hometown, and only after much time does one forget all the attitudes and mindsets absorbed from one's parental home.

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (6:9) states:

אמר רבי יוסי בן קסמא, פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ופגע בי אדם אחד, ונתן לי שלום, והחזרתני לו שלום. אמר לי, רבי, מאיזה מקום אתה. אמרתני לו, מעיר גדולה של חכמים ושל סופרים אני. אמר לי, רבי, רצונך שתדור עמנו במקומנו, ואני אתן לך אלף אלפים דינרי זהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות. אמרתני לו, בני, אם אתה נותן לי כל כסף וזהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם, איני דר אלא במקום תורה, וכו'. וכן כתוב בספר תהלים על ידי דוד מלך ישראל (תהלים קיט), טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף.
R' Yose ben Kisma said: Once I was walking on the road, when a certain man met me. He greeted me and I returned his greeting. He said to me, "Rebbi, from what place are you?" I said to him, "I am from a great city of scholars and sages." He said to me, "Rebbi, would you

be willing to live with us in our place? I would give you thousands upon thousands of golden dinars, precious stones and pearls.” I replied, “My son, even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would dwell nowhere but in a place of Torah.” ... And so it is written in Tehillim by Dovid, King of Yisroel, “I prefer the Torah of Your mouth above thousands in gold and silver.”

R' Chatzkel Levenstein asks why the Mishnah doesn't mention the name of the individual who was conversing with R' Yose ben Kisma. Generally, Chazal mention great people by name or at least refer to them with a respectable title such as *מְעֻשָּׂה בְּחֶסֶד אֱדָה*, *an incident with a pious person*. Shouldn't the man who offered enormous wealth for R' Yose to live in his city deserve an honourable mention?

R' Chatzkel explains that the man's love and appreciation for Hashem and His Torah were severely lacking. He should have been willing to leave his hometown and move to the city of Torah where R' Yose lived. By remaining in the place where his fortune was, he displayed where his true priorities lay. Therefore, R' Chatzkel explains, the man does not deserve any honourable mention.

We find this idea, of how crucial surroundings are to one's spiritual growth, in the Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 408) with regards to the *Arei Miklat*. He explains the reason the unintentional killer was to be exiled specifically to the city of Leviim. The Leviim were dedicated to the service of Hashem and were not spending their time toiling in the fields and busy with worldly matters. Because of their elevated spiritual status, even the land they were living on became infused with *kedushah*. Hence their land was chosen to act as a possible atonement for the accidental murderer.

It is clear how important and necessary it is for one to live in a place of Torah and the vicinity of Talmidei Chachomim. This has the power to transform a person and is a prerequisite for sincere spiritual growth.

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