

- (ב) וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדְּלָה שְׁמִי וְהָיָה בְרַכָּה.  
 (ג) וְאֶבְרַכְּהָ מִבְּרַכְיָךְ וּמִמְקַלְלֶךָ אֲדָר וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה.  
 (ד) וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי ה' וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶתוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בְּנֵי־חֵמֶשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן.

However, God did not want Avram to think that it was a sign of Divine displeasure that He had not yet appeared to him. He wanted Avram to understand that it was merely due to the fact that he was still outside the Land of Israel. God therefore told him, לך לך — go to the Land of Israel and “connect to yourself,” to your higher spiritual roots; there you will see actual Divine visions and not just hear a Divine voice.” This is the meaning of the phrase, “to the Land that I will show you”: Hashem was saying, “Go to the Land where I will show you visions, the Land where you will attain a greater closeness to Me and experience a higher level of Divine revelation.”<sup>14</sup> [This answers Question 5.]

Answer to  
Question 5

## GOD'S BLESSING TO AVRAM

Consider the following questions:

1. Why did God need to promise Avram all these rewards? Surely Avram would do God's bidding without any promise of reward, just as he had done at the *Akeidah*.

14. The Alshich notes that the Torah makes a point of telling us that this indeed occurred when Avram arrived at his destination. For verses 12:6–7 state, *Avram traveled though the Land [of Israel] ... and God appeared to him and said ... Avram built an altar there to God Who had appeared to him*. The seemingly redundant terminology is not redundant at all: Avram built an altar to thank God for appearing to him — an experience he had not had during his years of living in *chutz la'aretz*.

2. God promised Avram that He would: (a) make him into a great nation; (b) bless him; and (c) make his name great. Why did He make these particular promises rather than others? What do they mean?
3. What does God mean when he tells Avram, “*you will be a berachah*”? How can a person be a *berachah*?
4. What is God’s point in informing Avram that He would bless those who bless him (and curse those who curse him)? Why should this be of particular concern to Avram?
5. The *pasuk* says, *through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* Why doesn’t it say, *and through you I will bless* all the families of the earth, just as it says earlier in the *pasuk*, *I will bless you and I will bless those who bless you*?
6. Why do we need to be told that *Avram went as God instructed him*? It is obvious from the narrative that this is what Avram did!

In answering these questions, we shall once again see how the Torah is teaching us the great difference between living in the Land of Israel and outside of it.

We learned above<sup>15</sup> that according to the constellation under which Avram was born, he was not destined to have children, but that by moving to Eretz Yisrael he would remove himself from the influence of the constellations. Therefore God promised him, “Go to Eretz Yisrael, for there I will give you offspring and *I will make you into a great nation.*” [This answers Question 2a.]

We also learned above that by leaving his father’s house to go to Eretz Yisrael, Avram was removing himself from the jurisdiction of the angels and placing himself under God’s direct

Answer to  
Question 2a

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15. See Alshich 12:1 above.

supervision. This is what God meant in His promise, “*I will bless you*”: When you get to Eretz Yisrael, I Myself will bless you — not through an angel or some other intermediary. [This answers Question 2b.]

Answer to  
Question 2b

The next phrase, *I will make your name great*, was a hint that God would make Avram’s name longer, adding the letter *heh* so that it would become Avraham.<sup>16</sup> And this change of name would have significant consequences: In effect, Hashem said, “While your name remains Avram, you need Me to bless you. However, when your name becomes Avraham — when My Presence will cleave to you, for I will reside within you<sup>17</sup> — *you yourself will be a berachah.*” This means that Avram would have the ability to bring blessings upon himself; Hashem would thus not need to bless him anymore. [This answers Questions 2c and 3.]

Answer to  
Questions  
2c and 3

However, Hashem would still need to bless other people. Which people? Says the verse pointedly, *I will bless those who bless you*. God will bless these people Himself — unlike the other families of the world, who will receive blessings only indirectly, through an angel. As Hashem continued, *and through you all the families of the earth “shall be blessed”* — emphasizing the passive form, since everyone else would receive their blessings indirectly.<sup>18</sup> [This answers Questions 4 and 5.]

Answer to  
Questions  
4 and 5

It is clear from all that we have explained that God did not promise Avram abundant blessings in order to encourage him to obey His command; Avram had no need for incentives to do

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16. This occurred when Avram was 99 years old (*Bereishis* 17:1). He had come to Eretz Yisrael when he was 75 (*Bereishis* 12:4).

17. The letter *heh* added to Avram’s name represented Hashem, for it is the last letter in the Tetragrammaton (יהוה-ה). See *Rabbeinu Bachya*, *Bereishis* 17:5; see also *Da’as Zekeinim Mi’ba’alei Tosafos*, *Bereishis* 17:1.

18. The Alshich adds: The words “*through you*” *all the families shall be blessed* tell us that it is only through Avram’s merit that the rest of the world will receive even the blessing that comes through the angels.

(6) Avram traveled through the Land until he came to the area of Shechem, to Elon Moreh; at that time the Canaanites were in the Land.

(7) God appeared to Avram and said, “I will give this land to your offspring.” [Avram] built an altar there to God Who had appeared to him.

(8) He moved on from there to the mountains east of Beis-El and set up his tent, with Beis-El to the west and Ai to the east, and he built there an altar to God and called out in God’s Name.

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God’s bidding. God was simply telling him the great differences between living in *chutz la’aretz* and in Eretz Yisrael, informing him that he would be able to come much closer to the Divine Presence in the holy atmosphere of the Land of Israel than in the impure lands of the nations. [This answers Question 1.]

But lest someone come away with the mistaken impression that Avram chose to obey God’s command because of the blessings he had been promised, the Torah testifies that this was not the case. *And Avram went as God had told him* — he went only because God had commanded him, not because of any promise of reward. [This answers Question 6.]

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## AVRAM RECEIVES TWO GIFTS

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Consider the following questions:

1. Why do we need to be told so precisely where God appeared to Avram (*Elon Moreh*, which is in the area of *Shechem*)?
2. Why do we need to know at this point that *the Canaanites were in the Land*? What connection does this have to the rest of the narrative?