

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר בראשית

פרשת לך לך

9 NOVEMBER 2024

GOD'S BLESSING TO AVRAM

Chapter 12

2) "And I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great, and you will be a berachah.

(ב) וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְךָ שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה.

3) "And I will bless those who bless you and those who curse you I will curse and through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(ג) וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מִבְּרַכְיָךָ וּמִקְלָלְךָ אֲאָר וְנִבְרַכְנוּ בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפָּחַת הָאָדָמָה.

4) And Avram went as God instructed him, and Lot went with him, and Avraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.

(ד) וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי ה' וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בֶּן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן.

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*.
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 blessing?
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. Verse 3 says, *Through you all the families of the earth "shall be blessed."* Why doesn't it say, "Through you I will bless all the families of the earth," just as it says earlier (in verses 2 and 3), *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 have learned 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 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 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.]

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 Avra**h**am. 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 (as the *heh* represents Hashem's Name) – *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.]

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 only receive blessings 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. In addition, the words "*through you*" tell us that it is only through Avraham's merit that the rest of the world will receive even the blessing that comes through the angels. [This answers 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 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 instructed him* – he only went because God had commanded him, **not** because of any promise of reward. [This answers Question 6.]

THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508–1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title "HaKadosh" (the holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. The Alshich is most noted for his monumental Tanach commentary.

The Alshich uses his creative insight and encyclopaedic knowledge of Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash to weave together his profound interpretations. He simultaneously focuses on the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all with one or two concepts.

These sheets, distributed in memory of Yental *bas* Yitzchok, have been drawn from either the Alshich on Avos or Alshich on the Torah, published by Feldheim. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich's true greatness.