

דרכים בפרשה לך לך

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ויאמר ד' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך
אל הארץ אשר אראך - *And HaShem said to Avram, Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you"*

The placement of words in the Torah is never incidental. There are many examples throughout the *gemara* that a *derasha* is made based on the *s'michus* (juxtaposition), asking, "Why was this pasuk next to that pasuk?" At times the *gemara* will establish an important halacha as a result and at other times some practical advice.

Even when the two pesukim are in different parshiyos, we still look for a common denominator. The last posuk of Parshas Noach concludes, **וימת תרח בחרן** - *And Terach died in Charan*, followed by the first pasuk in our parsha, **ויאמר ד' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך** - *And HaShem said to Avram, Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you"*, seem to tell a straightforward story: Avram's journey away from Charan. However, the Midrash notes (see Rashi) that these two pesukim are not in chronological order. Terach actually died sixty years after this event. The Midrash explains that Avram did not want to cause a *chillul HaShem* by people questioning how he could walk away from his own father to serve HaShem. Therefore, the Torah already mentions the father's death now.

During my years in Yeshiva, there was another great lesson that I heard from these pesukim, many times over from my Rebbeim (in various forms, but all more or less the same idea):

The previous pesukim tell the story of Terach. Terach was getting on in age and he finally decided to pick up from Ur Kasdim and go to the Land of Canaan. Yet, the pasuk informs us that he died in Charan, never reaching his intended destination. It is not that he didn't have enough time to get there, he did, but he ended up settling along the way.

Our parsha picks up with Avram's journey away from the same place, headed in the same direction. Unlike Terach, Avram succeeds where Terach had failed. This begs us to examine the difference of approach between father and son.

Yes, the goals were identical at the start, but the mindsets were completely different. Terach made a personal decision to relocate, but there was nothing forcing him to be there. No one would be disappointed if he didn't get there in the end. If at some point he would ask himself what happened to his dream of

Canaan, he would have many excuses based on circumstantial distractions that would satisfy him without any guilty feelings. For Avram, it was a different story. Avram was commanded by HaShem to go on his journey. Any shortcomings would need to be answered. Avram could not afford to make an error as there was now a Higher Power driving him to do so. No excuse would be acceptable and he would not become a victim of circumstance as he was now a man on a mission.

The Torah tells us that "Avram set out to go to the Land of Canaan, and he reached the land of Canaan". The S'forno points out that unlike Terach who departed for the Land of Canaan but came only to Charan, Avram actually reached Canaan.

These were words that we would hear on this parsha, at the beginning of a long winter session in yeshiva. It was usually during these months in yeshiva that the men would be separated from the boys. Of course, all the boys in yeshiva would set themselves lofty goals to accomplish by the time Pesach came around, but only a select few would actually accomplish their goals crossing the finish line.

Of course, these ideas do not need to be reserved for the Yeshiva. Not too long ago, we all set goals for ourselves for this new year. The same holds true for anyone that trying to really accomplish something.

So why is that so many of us tend to fall short?

I recently asked a great Rosh Yeshiva and a brilliant well-accomplished doctor how they managed to accomplish their lofty levels. The Rosh Yeshiva said that he would constantly ask himself, "am I where HaShem wants me to be at this moment?" Similarly, the doctor responded that at each step of the way, there was the feeling that, "at this moment I am doing what I am supposed to be doing, and by keeping at it, I will get there."

These people did not fail because there was something higher that was pulling them. Everyone wants, but there is wanting and there is *wanting*. If a goal is set with no concrete plan on how to get there, there is no way the goal will be achieved. Just writing #goals won't help. The moment the first setback arrives, the plan falls to the wayside.

This Rosh yeshiva added that he finds that when setting goals, it is also important for people to build into their plan something that will require picking up right after a moment of failure, so that the towel is not thrown in right away. Everyone has a bad day, but the question is what comes next?

We must ask ourselves if we are serious about our goals and aspirations. Will we follow the example of Terach and be just another underachiever or Avraham Avinu, setting examples for the future?

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפּעל