



## PARSHAS LECH LECHA – DAVID FOSKETT

וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו מִן־בֵּית אֵל עַד הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה שָׁם אֶהְלֵה בְּתַחֲלָה בֵּין בְּיַת אֵל וּבֵין הָעֵי :

"He [Avrom] proceeded on his journeys from the South to Beis-el to the place where his tent had been at first, between Beis-el and Ai." (Bereishis 13:3)

Why did Avrohom Ovinu return to the place from where he first encamped upon his descent to *Mitzrayim*?

Rashi explains that Avrohom was teaching us an important lesson in *derech erez*. The *Gemoro* in *Arachin 16b* teaches us that we should always go back to the same host from whom one has received hospitality (unless one has been subject to any sort of harassment, *chas vesholom!*). Otherwise, as the *Gur Aryeh* points out, this could either lead to harming the reputation of the host or depicting the guest as a seemingly dissatisfied customer.

The *Ba'alei Mussar* approach this from another perspective. When Avrohom came down to *Mitzrayim*, he was penniless. Now that he had acquired immense wealth in *Mitzrayim* as a consequence of the episode between Soroh and Pharaoh, he could have afforded to reside in better accommodation, yet he still went back to the original place. This comes to reinforce the idea that we should not deviate from our ways; even if our financial situation improves.

Additionally Rashi supplies us with another reason why Avrohom went back. Avrohom descended to *Mitzrayim* with no money and thus he wished to repay the debts to those whom hosted him upon his descent.

Alternatively, the *Wellsprings of Torah* documents an idea by the Rabbi of Kazimir who suggested that it was not a monetary debt but rather a debt of a spiritual nature. Wherever Avrohom went he spread the concept of monotheism, belief in one G-d to whom all of mankind had to serve. In this manner, many people took heed of his teachings and adopted monotheism. However there were those whom he met that argued with him saying, "If what you say is true, why should G-d allow you, his faithful servant, to undertake such an arduous journey [to *Mitzrayim*] instead of receiving the reward of living in peace?" Unable to answer this and similar questions Avrohom left and continued on his way. After the miracle which Hashem performed in *Mitzrayim* whereby the country was plagued and he, Avrohom, was permitted to leave with an abundance of wealth, Avrohom was now able to 'repay the debt' of the non-believers and prove to them that he was rewarded.

Looking back at Rashi's interpretation of the debt as monetary - aside from learning the lesson of paying off our debts at the earliest opportunity – we are left with another question: Why did Avrohom's hosts allow him to stay in the first instance? After all, he seemingly had no money going into *Mitzrayim*? I once heard in the name of Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein shlit'a (son-in-law of Rav Elyashiv zt'l) that Avrohom's trusting face reassured his hosts that he would settle his balance when he had the funds to do so.

This idea lends well to the next scene whereby Avrohom tells Lot that they should part from one another (see Bereishis 13:8). Rashi there quotes a *Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 41:6)* that tells us Avrohom and Lot shared similar facial features. From this we can conclude why Avrohom was so eager to split from Lot because he was worried about his good reputation, built on his trustworthy 'face' being spoiled by his look alike nephew whose characteristic were quite the contrary.

A *moshel* I once heard from Rabbi Dovid Kaplan shlit'a puts this thought of trustworthiness into perspective: There was once a frum man driving down the motorway when he noticed on the hard shoulder a man wearing a *Capel* standing next to a broken-down car. He naturally pulled over to offer his fellow Jew a helping hand. As the two men got to work recharging the battery they began to *schmooze*. The man asked the man with the broken down car in which neighbourhood did he live, to which Shul did he belong. But before he could go any further the man responded saying, 'Oh I'm not from here. In fact, I'm not at all Jewish.' Astounded, the frum man asked, 'Why then do you don a skullcap?' 'Oh, you mean this?' responded the man, "Well, I've noticed that every time someone breaks down wearing one of these on their head someone always come to help.' The *nimshal* is that Avrohom Ovinu initiated the precedent that we should all aspire to being a trustworthy people.