

א ביסל תורה!

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What We Learn From Avraham's Trials

By Anna Szalat '28

In this week's פרשה, we read about the tests of אברהם. We recently finished reading the whole תורה; as we are restarting again we are going through the whole process of how our nation was made. In משנה אבות ה:ב it says "עשרה נקיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו..." "their were 10 generations between נח and אברהם; in ה:ד we read "עליו השלום ועמד בקלם אברהם and he withstood them all." What can we learn from אברהם's tests?

After נח, Hashem chooses אברהם to give a mission to. According to Rabbi Shuber Spero, it is obvious in the text that נח was chosen because he was righteous in his generation. For אברהם the text isn't that clear and suggests that to understand who he was one must continue reading about, how he responded to ה' command and how he became our founding father.

Both רש"י and רמב"ם comment on the list of these 10 tests one of which is in the very first פסוק in this week's פרשה ויאמר ה' אל-אברהם לך-לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך, פרשה "אל-הארץ אשר ארצך" "And אברהם: go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you" (בראשית י"ב:א).

The אור החיים asks why is this a test. Was this a real challenge? After all, אברהם's father תרח already left the land of אור כשדים with אור and אברהם, שרי ה' is also telling אברהם that he will make his nation great and bless him with many other things. אברהם never questioned the rewards or waited to receive them, he left right away, because ה' asked him to go and not for all the rewards. If אברהם had asked ה', who is known for his chesed, to help the poor it would not have been that great of a challenge, but to leave his father's house and his land was probably not easy and not a natural

thing to do, even more so in the 10th test when ה' commanded אברהם to sacrifice his son. We see that אברהם successfully passes the test by confirming his belief that the objective is to respect ה' command no matter how hard it is.

According to Rav Botchko in Hegyoneh Moshe, אברהם could have felt some uncertainty with being the founding father of ה' righteous nation. The 10 tests of אברהם were part of his journey to becoming the leader of all the Jewish people. אברהם couldn't have been so successful with his descendants if he just stayed in ארם, surrounded by his family and all the familiarity. Each of אברהם's challenges consisted of receiving some information, and the trials were to see how אברהם would respond. In some instances, he remained silent (like in the first one), in some he asked questions, like by the בתרים בין, and in others he argued passionately, like in the destruction of סדום. However, אברהם never protested and so he passed his tests.

Why, then, did ה' need to test אברהם? Hashem is omniscient and doesn't need to test someone to know how he will react, so what is the purpose of these tests? According to רמב"ם (מורה נבוכים ג) this is to show the world how His faithful servants listen to Him. אברהם's actions and tests became a lesson and inspiration to others. According to רמב"ן the primary benefit of the test is for the person being tested, by living through a particular experience certain potential qualities of the individual's character are actualized and made real. From each of his trials, אברהם emerged a better and wiser person, and his אמונה was strengthened. Just like אברהם had to go through tests to build his structure of אמונה and connection with Hashem we do too. The שפת אמת relates the word נס to ניסיון. Just as a miracle is Hashem's way of helping us by going above the limitations of nature a ניסיון asks us to go above our limitations for the sake of Hashem. In conclusion, we can learn from this פרשה and אברהם אבינו

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that there is a benefit to overcoming challenges and each hardship that comes our way even if sometimes the understanding of Hashem's plan can come later or be unclear for us. We should have the אמונה that it is for the good and try to be as strong as אברהם אבינו.

What can we learn from אברהם and לוט's relationship?

By Theo Fraenkel '28

and לוט's relationship is an interesting one. אברהם, לוט's nephew leaves חרן with אברהם. They are very close as the פסוק describes him "ההלך את-אברם" "travels with אברם." The פסוק uses the word את rather than עם to show that לוט was more than just a companion with אברם, but a companion of אברם.

If אברם and לוט had this tight bond between them, why then did אברהם feel the need to send לוט away? Although לוט knew אברם very well, they had divisions between them. In the same פסוק that describes אברהם and לוט's relationship it describes לוט's fortune as "צאן-יבקר וְאֶהֱלִים". For someone who was so connected to אבינו, אברהם was only concerned with wealth, as there is no mention of his hospitality or other such spiritual achievements. Also, Rav Hirsch notices that from the word "וְאֶהֱלִים" we know it's the long form of the word, signifying that his tents were separate from אברהם's. It must be that if לוט feels the need to live separately from אברהם, he doesn't trust him. While small, this causes the rift between אברהם and לוט.

The פסיקתא רבתי explains that because לוט valued his wealth and saw himself as apart from אברהם, "ולא-נשא אתם הארץ", "the land could not support them staying together; for their possessions were so great that they could not remain together." פסיקתא רבתי points out that if לוט had raised his sheep and cattle and protected his fortunes together with אברהם's, there would have been enough space for both of them. Only when you keep things separate do you need chests to protect valuables, separate tent circles, separate grazing areas, and separate flocks. Because of these unnecessary

space constraints, אברהם and לוט's shepherds began to fight. אברהם, out of concern for his relationship with לוט, suggests that he move to different areas so they would not compete for resources. לוט chose to live in סדום which at the time was "כגן ה'" "like the garden of Hashem," despite its inhabitants being "רעים וְחַטָּאִים לַה' מֵאֲדָם".

Even though לוט doesn't see אברהם's spiritual mission, over-values wealth, chooses to be separate from him, and chooses to live in a superficially beautiful place full of sinners, אברהם does not hold this against לוט. At the very least אברהם still valued לוט because they were family. When לוט was in trouble, אברהם didn't hesitate to rescue him. וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אַחִיו וַיֵּרָק אֶת-חַנְיִכָיו וְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ שְׂמֹנֶה עָשָׂר. "When אברם heard that his kinsman's [household] had been taken captive, he mustered his retainers, born into his household, numbering three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as ידן."

From לוט and אברהם's relationship, we learn how to treat our fellow Jews. Even when they have different values than we do or don't understand why we practice Judaism, we still have to treat them well, because they are a part of Am Yisrael. We should also aim to not put up barriers between us and other Jews. We need to trust in each other and take advantage of everything we collectively have. When we begin to value אחדות as Jews we bring the גאולה closer.



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