

א בִּסְל תּוֹרָה!

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ט' חשוון תשפ"ו · לך לך

The Covenant Between Hashem and אברם

By Benjy Gerber '28

In פרשת לך לך we are introduced to אברם when he is 75 years old. אברם leaves his home, at Hashem's command, and goes on many adventures including saving his nephew when he becomes a war hostage. It was after this event when אברם was 86 years old that he called out to Hashem to say that no reward he receives will be greater than a child of his own to inherit his house. Hashem says that his children will be as many as the stars and they will inherit the land he is currently residing in. אברם asks how he should know that Hashem will cause his family to inherit the land. So, Hashem asks him to take three cows, goats, and rams as well two types of birds and give them to Him. So, אברם takes the animals, splits them, fends off some predatory birds, and falls asleep. אברם has a dream where Hashem prophesizes to אברם about the slavery that will happen in מצרים, and when he wakes up, a smoking furnace and flaming torch go between the halves of the animals and Hashem makes a covenant with אברם to give him the land of כנען (בראשית ט"ז: י"ח). How do dead animals, a dream, a furnace, and a torch ensure a covenant between Hashem and אברם?

רש"י explains that the different animals are representations of the קורבנות brought on כיפור יום. This would explain אברם bringing these animals as it allows himself to be clean of sins. רש"י then says it

was the custom at the time for people making a covenant to split animals and walk between them, so too is Hashem (the furnace and torch as messengers) with אברם. Meaning, this was to make sure אברם knew that a covenant was about to be made. רש"י also offers an alternate interpretation where he says that the animals are different representations of our enemies, as it compares the animals used to our enemies (תהלים כ"ב: י"ג, דניאל ח: כ), and the birds represent בני ישראל, as we are often compared to doves. רש"י says this is a prophecy about how our future enemies will die (split in half) and בני ישראל will survive forever (not split).

רמב"ן, however, understands the animals as symbolizing the קרבן עולה and חטאת. These קורבנות were to show אברם all of the future קורבנות his kids will bring. And to explain why the birds were also brought the רמב"ן explains that Hashem asked אברם to bring every type of animal that would later be brought as קורבנות, so אברם brought the birds as well, because they will also be brought as קורבנות. This would also explain why אברם didn't split the birds, as one does not split birds for קורבנות (ויקרא א': י"ז).

We can learn from רש"י, who said that אברם brought קורבנות for the sake of ridding himself of sin before Hashem made a covenant with him, that when we turn to Hashem we should also work to better ourselves.

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Accepting Blessings With Trust

By Talya Spira '28

At the end of this week's פרשה, Hashem appears to אברהם and makes a promise to him. Hashem tells אברהם that his offspring will be numerous, and gives the מצוה of מילה for all future generations. Hashem then tells אברהם that he will have a son with שרה.

אברהם's reaction to this news is quite surprising: וַיִּפֹּל - "and אברהם fell on his face and laughed" (בראשית י"ז). אברהם, knowing that he is 100 and שרה is 90, actually laughs at this. So, what is the issue here? Well, in next week's פרשה, שרה is told the exact same news from an angel and she too laughs, וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ - "and Sarah laughed to herself" (בראשית י"ח). The difference is that Hashem becomes angered with שרה for laughing. The question is: Why isn't אברהם judged for laughing, but שרה is? רש"י explains that אונקלוס translates the laughter differently. By אברהם, he uses the word "חִיד" (to rejoice) implying that אברהם was not mocking but rather rejoicing in faith, whereas שרה was laughing in a mocking, unfaithful way.

This explanation only raises a new question: How can this same word be translated in two opposite ways? There is an interpretation given by Rav Daniel Kohen in the name of Rav Mattis Weinberg that the difference is not in the word 'laugh', rather in the following words: אברהם says, "can a child be born to a 100 year old man..." using general language and not referring specifically to himself. שרה, on the other hand, begins by describing her own situation, putting

herself in the center. אברהם laughs in disbelief that something could change from its normal state, while שרה laughs at the idea that her own body could be altered.

We can also see this from the tense of the verbs. אברהם speaks in the future tense, indicating that he believes the natural way of the world can still change. Sarah speaks in the past tense, showing that she believes that the way things are now is how they will always be.

אברהם's faith teaches us two lessons. The first is that we should not be self centered, especially when it comes to faith in Hashem and observance of מצוות. True faith requires us to look beyond ourselves and trust in a higher power. The second lesson is that we must accept ברכות with open arms recognizing that Hashem can and will do what seems impossible to humans.



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