

LESSON IN A BOX



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Torah Cafe



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LESSON 1 // SERIES 3

Almighty G-d puts us through tests all the time. What is the purpose of these tests? The Torah relates 10 tests, challenge after challenge, that Abraham experienced beginning with **lechlecha**-Go from your land, your birthplace, to the final **Lechlecha**-go to the land of Moriah and sacrifice Isaac. The Mishnah states that Abraham passed them all, proving his devotion to G-d.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot vol 25: Abraham's greatness is not in the fact that he came closer to G-d through his own independent efforts. Rather, his crowning achievement lies in the fact that G-d commanded him to do something-**Lechlecha**-and he did it. He did G-d's bidding with humility and subservience and without a moment's hesitation. The **Alte Rebbe** (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi) said that after Socrates died, he sought to enter Gan Eden, Paradise, and take a space alongside Abraham. He claimed that he too had been willing to surrender for his belief. The Heavenly Tribunal denied his request, explaining that Socrates had sacrificed his life for the values he personally held dear, whereas Abraham was willing to do so for G-d's values. **Nachmanides** explains that the purpose of a test is to take something from potential to reality. With the test of Akaydat Yitzchok, Abraham demonstrated his fear of G-d. Until now his fear of G-d was in potential but now his merit was complete. One can ask, why G-d needed to have this proof when he knows everything. **Rabbi Yosef Albo** explains that G-d will often visit hardship on a righteous person in order to train him/her, that intentions be reflected in actual deed. This way his love for G-d is strengthened. Every actual deed has a stronger effect on the soul than without practice. This training or experience is called **Nisayon**. A nisayon trains us to draw on the full extent of our skills and abilities. Through hardship and challenges we are forced to tap into strength we never knew we had. It is like peeling away another layer, deeper and deeper, into the reservoirs of one's talents to be truly realized. This potential is in fact available to us all the time, not just when we are on the ropes.

Abraham, our first forefather, who came to recognize the one G-d, did not endure trials and tribulations for his own benefit but as an enduring example, a *banner*

or flag, for the nations who may question why G-d loved Abraham and chose him to be the father of His chosen people. That he is the standard for what a person can and should be. Moreover, G-d is setting Abraham up as a model of faith for all generations, to appreciate what it means to be a Jew who truly believes in the one G-d, and is a devoted servant of G-d.

Finally, Chassidut explains **“Lech Lecha” means “go to yourself-into yourself”**. Although Abraham looked as though he was merely going from place to place on his journey, in truth, this journey was lecha, into himself. He was on a journey deeper and deeper into himself, to his innermost core which is a part of G-d. When we are each faced with material or spiritual struggles that threaten to defeat us, we must recognize, **that** pain is G-d’s call to action. It tells us, “Enough of this ‘getting by’ and being ‘good enough’. **Invest what you’ve really got.**”

At Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, the High Holy Days, we trust that we will come through our judgment successfully. The Torah states, “Hashem tests the righteous ones.” “All your people are righteous”. May we truly exemplify the righteous ones and use the inner strength we have to carry through the year as true servants of Hashem, fulfilling G-d’s will through Torah and Mitzvot. **In this way may we all merit to be “written and sealed for a Good and Sweet Year”!**

This lesson is gleaned from JLI Torah Studies which is taught at Aleph Learning Institute weekly throughout the year.

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