

Lech-Lecha

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The verse says, “*Chochmah m’ayin timatzei—Wisdom, where can it be found?*” (Iyov 28:12). But it is one of those beautifully short and seemingly simple verses that, in the world of *Kabbalah*, speaks universes. . . and then some. This one is literally the foundation of *all* of Creation and life.

Iyov asked it as a question, but in *Kabbalah* it is actually a statement: *Chochmah*—from *Ayin* you will find it. *Chochmah* is the name of the second highest *sefirah* in the system, and *Ayin* is the name of the level of *Keser*, the highest. The light of *Ayin*, which is so spiritual that we call it “Nothing,” only becomes something that Creation can sense once it becomes the level of *Chochmah*.

The Vilna *Gaon* explains that this is the whole point of *Chochmah*, to act as a means to reveal God and what He is thinking. And just as it takes the *sefirah* of *Chochmah* to filter the light of *Ayin* for the worlds below it, likewise it takes *Chochmah* to see the hidden reality of God within the world and history.

That was Avraham. The *Gemora* says that before Avraham, there was no such thing as old age. You could live for hundreds of years and still look your youthful self. There was no such thing as growing old or of dying from old age.

But it also made it hard to know who was the father and who was the son, and people often got it wrong. That complicated a lot of things, so Avraham prayed that people should age as they get older, and look the part, gray hair and all. Thus was born *ziknus*—old age.

But that’s only a *Pshat* level. On a *Kabbalistic* level, Avraham was called *zaken*—elder—because the three letters of *zaken* are considered to be a *roshei teivos* for *zeh koneh chochmah*—this one has acquired wisdom. This is why we stand for an elderly person even if they are not known to be a *talmid chacham*: you can’t have lived that long and not have acquired a fair bit of *chochmah*.

That was not the *kabbalistic* part. The *kabbalistic* part is that Avraham was considered to be a *zaken* for a different reason. It was because he acted in the role of the *sefirah* of *Chochmah* by filtering the light of God and making it accessible to others who would have completely missed it. It's what he was doing here:

Avraham had all those who passed by and stayed call out in God's name. How did he do it? After they ate and drank and stood up to bless him, he would tell them, "Was it from mine that you ate? It was from that which belongs to God of the world that you ate! Thank, praise, and bless the One who spoke and created the world!" (*Sotah* 10b)

And so they did, and walked away having experienced the reality of the one true God because of Avraham *Avinu*. He saw something in life that others did not, and then figured out a way to translate his knowledge into terms that others could relate to. It was *chochmah* coming from *Ayin*. It's what all of history has been about, figuring out what God is thinking as He reveals it to us.

It would be an easy task if life didn't get in the way. Life is so phenomenally distracting and misrepresenting, and more than ever before. God is sharing His thoughts with us all the time, if you know to pay attention to them, and how. The trouble is that His intermediaries do such a good job of acting as if they are the originators of what they say and do, that people reading what they write and hearing what they say actually fall for it. They forget to say, "This is only this person's opinion. What truth about God can I extract from it?"

It is amazing how prophecies long ago predicted that the main antagonist of the Jewish people at the End of Days would be Persia, Iran in modern terms. And lo and behold, they have become exactly that. They have been forced to stop fighting their anti-Zionist war by proxy and get directly involved, arrogantly and stupidly escalating the war as if they want the War of Gog and Magog.

Israel for its part, right or wrong, feels the need to go as far with this war as Iran is prepared to make it go, and the world is willing to let it happen. But that world is the same one that allowed two world wars to already occur against all logic, as will this one too.

Against *human* logic, that is. Yes, it's humans fighting the war, preparing for more of it, and talking about what has happened and what might follow. To deal with all of this on this level alone is to cut God out of the picture, to deny ourselves the opportunity to know what He is thinking, and even why. It's the only reason why this war is happening. It's the only reason why *anything* happens.

Avraham *Avinu* figured this out on his own, and this week shows us the door that it

opened for him, and ultimately, for mankind as well. Our task is both easier and more difficult. Easier inasmuch we have his footsteps to follow in. Harder because mankind's deception has never been more sophisticated. If you want the truth about life and history, don't turn to *Yisb* (man). Turn to *Ayin* (God), and become a conduit for His Divine wisdom.