

PARSHAS LECH LECHA
**IMITATION IS THE
 HIGHEST FORM OF
 CONNECTION**



Imagine you're in your kitchen, erev Shabbos Kodesh, cooking up a storm. And on the stove is a delicious pot of chicken soup. You're adding in the final touches, the final ingredients — a little bit of pepper, a little bit of salt, stirring it here and there. You put in some of those Osem croutons — why you put them in your actual soup pot, nobody knows other than you. But you're there cooking it away, and it's mamash almost ready.

And then your two-year-old comes into the kitchen, opens up the cabinet that's sitting on top of the stove — and a chocolate chip falls in. A dairy chocolate chip.

Thankfully, there is a concept called batel b'shishim. If a small, accidental amount of a forbidden (non-kosher) food or ingredient mixes into a permitted (kosher) food, the mixture remains kosher provided the permitted food is at least sixty times the volume of the forbidden ingredient. In this case, the soup is going to be permitted to eat and enjoy!

This concept also applies in life. Klal Yisrael is called shishim — or shishim ribo, six hundred thousand. There is an idea of being bateil b'shishim: of being part of the klal, of being mevatel ourselves to and becoming one with the tzibur. To be mevatel ourselves means that we are willing to become one with something that's bigger than our individual selves.

The truth is, we are meant to be mevatel ourselves even beyond the tzibur. Allow me to explain: You see, everyone has their own wills, their desires, and their wants in life. But ultimately, the job of a Jew is to align our desires with Hashem's desires. That's really the goal: to live in that realm of alignment. And that requires us to be mevateil ourselves.

I used to think the concept of bittul — self-nullification — was a negative thing. It's actually the opposite. It's the most positive thing in the world. Being mevatel ourselves is not thinking that "I'm a nobody," and that "I'm less than." Rather, when a person is mevatel himself to Hashem, then the most amazing thing happens: he actually becomes bigger. It's like the little chocolate chip that falls into the chicken soup pot. The chocolate chip's identity becomes redefined; it is now one with the chicken soup and no longer maintains its dairyness. It's now chicken soup!

We don't want to be small. We want to be big. Right? Right! The quickest, and most practical way to do that is to be mevatel ourselves, to liken ourselves to Hashem. How so? By doing what He wants us to do, by acting accordingly, by following in His ways. When we do that, we become so much bigger than perhaps we ever could have imagined.

The Bas Ayin tells us, in this week's parsha, a beautiful idea. He says: Avraham Avinu was the first person to call Hakadosh Baruch Hu "Adon," a Master — to refer to God as a Melech. Ein melech b'lo am — there is no king without a nation. Yes, God is the Creator. But that's shayuch to everything — that's relevant to all of creation, not just humanity: God created the angels, and He created the mountains and the stars and the moon and the sun. God in the realm of Creator — that's true for every creature. And that's what He's called: a Creator.

But this idea that God is a Melech, a King — and that people can connect to that God by emulating Him and being like Him — that was the chidush of Avraham Avinu. Avraham Avinu was the first to call Hashem "Adon," a Master... a King! The Bas Ayin explains that Avraham accepted upon himself the aspect of God's sovereignty, of the malchus of Hashem. But before Avraham, there was not a single person who related to this realm of kingship, of sovereignty.

A king represents the fact that now there's a people who follow in His ways, who emulate him. Malchus represents a relationship, a connection with the Divine. Avraham Avinu understood this.

This is what makes Shabbos so incredibly special. Only the Jewish people were given this gift of Shabbos Kodesh. Because Shabbos represents malchus: "Yismechu b'malchuscha shomrei Shabbos" — those who keep Shabbos rejoice in Your kingship. It's that element of connection and "likeness" between the Jewish people and God. A goy who keeps Shabbos is chayav misah, because he is not shayuch to this "likeness." Only a Jew is called אדם, whose mission statement calls for אדמה לעליון, to be like G-d! It's only a Jew that has the capacity to relate to Kodesh and to imitate G-d. This is the concept of "Mah Hu rachum" — just like God is merciful, we are meant to be merciful, etc.

They say "Imitation is the highest form of flattery." Flattery means "I admire you." But a higher level, a higher madrega, is imitation. You can look up to a parent/teacher/friend/sibling/mentor/rebbe, and that's wonderful. But it's a much higher level of closeness when you start to emulate their lofty ways. When you act and behave like them, that is a much greater thing. Because imitation is actually the highest form of connection. It's true with people and certainly it's true in terms of our relationship to our King, to Hashem, to the Master of the Universe.

And this is the hidden meaning of לך לך, go to yourself. The Bas Ayin reads these two words as lech leCHA, go to the letter "ך" (kaf). The letter Kaf is used as a prefix to mean "like." It's a letter of דמיון, of likeness! The calling of lech leCHA was saying "Go towards the letter kaf! Be like Me! Act like Me! Emulate Me! Imitate Me!" Avraham tapped into this bechina (aspect) of דמיון, of likeness, of being אדמה לעליון!

My friends, to live in this way requires humility. It requires hisbatlus. It requires us to say "I may be small on my own, but if I just throw myself in the pot of chicken soup, I'll become so much bigger."

Let us take the message of lech leCHA and strive towards that letter kaf — that kaf hadimyon — to liken ourselves to Hashem. Because the more we imitate Him, the more connected we are going to be.

Wishing you a holy and beautiful Shabbos!
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