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In the Torah portion of Lech Lecha we read about the "Brit Bein Habetarim - the Covenant of the Pieces," that G-d made with our forefather Abraham. It was then that G-d promised to give Abraham the land of Israel as an inheritance for his descendants forever.

Among the many things G-d told Abraham was that his children would one day be exiled in Egypt. However, G-d promised that their exile would end. Not only would they return from their exile but "afterwards they will go out with great wealth."

The intent of G-d's promise of "great wealth" was not simply as payment for their suffering. In truth, G-d's statement that "afterwards they will go out with great wealth" revealed the entire purpose behind their descent into Egypt.

At first glance this is difficult to understand. Had G-d asked the Jewish people to relinquish the "great wealth" they were promised in order to hasten the end of their suffering they would have surely agreed. Nonetheless, we find that G-d did not offer them this choice, as the "great wealth" they were to obtain in Egypt was of particular significance.

What was this "great wealth" that required the Jewish people to endure a bitter exile for hundreds of years, and why was it so important?

The inner purpose of the Jews' descent into Egypt was that through their service of G-d, the "sparks of holiness" that that country contained would be refined and elevated. Indeed, the Jews' Divine service was successful, as it states, "And a mixed multitude (erev rav) also went up with them," for the numerical equivalent of "rav" is 202 - i.e., all 202 sparks of holiness that Egypt possessed were successfully purified.

This, then, is the "great wealth" that the Jews brought out of Egypt with them. Indeed, it was for the Jewish people's own benefit; had it not occurred, Abraham would have had a valid complaint to level against G-d.

But what was the benefit that they derived? Every soul has its own unique role in the mystical process of "elevating the sparks." By purifying the specific "sparks" he encounters throughout his life, the Jew brings redemption to his own soul, and to the world at large.

The lesson to be derived from all this is that the Jew's function is to involve himself in the material world for the express purpose of elevating these hidden sparks of holiness. For with these sparks we will merit to greet Moshiach imminently. (Adapted from Volume 3 of Likutei Sichot, L'Chaim 5761, #643)

"Go out of your country...to a land which I will show you." (12:1) The Hebrew word for "I will show you" can also be interpreted to mean "I will reveal you." It is through man's service of refining the earthly plane that his true potential is revealed. Regardless of a Jew's position in the world, he is connected with G-dliness and can thus elevate the world, revealing the G-dliness within it. (Lubavitcher Rebbe /240)

[Several verses later] it is written 'Avram kept travelling southward,' (12:9). Here we have the beginning of the mystery of birurim [extricating]. By decree of Divine Providence man goes about his travels to the place where the "sparks" that he must purify await their redemption. Tzadikim, who have vision, see where their birurim await them and go there deliberately. As for ordinary folk, The Master of the Universe brings about various reasons and circumstances that bring these people to that place where lies their obligation to do the work of birurim. (HaYom Yom)

"At eight days old shall every male child be circumcised." (17:12) A Jewish male enters into the covenant of Abraham at the tender age of eight days, before he can possibly understand the significance of the act, because brit mila involves the essence of the soul, which exists on a level far above human understanding and comprehension. The mitzva binds the soul to G-d, Who is also beyond our understanding and comprehension. (Sifrei Chasidut /289) (www.ascent.org.il)

"The Canaanites were then in the land" (12:6) The Torah itself attests that the Canaanites then ruled the Promised Land. Yet G-d granted it to Abraham, pledging "To your offspring I shall give this land"; later in our Parshah (15:18), G-d goes a step further, saying "To your offspring I have given this land"--already given, in the past tense.

Therein lies a lesson for all generations of Jews. Although we may find ourselves in galut, under the dominion of nations more powerful than ourselves, this does not in the least affect our ownership of the Holy Land. The land of Israel is ours by Divine bequest, and no force on earth can take it from us. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) - chabadonline.com

"And told it to Abram the Hebrew" ("Ivri") (Gen. 14:13) The word "Ivri" comes from the root word meaning, "side," for Abraham stood alone on one side, while all the world opposed him. (Breishit Rabba)

"Look now toward the heaven and count the stars...so shall your seed be" (Gen. 15:5) Just as the stars in the sky appear from afar to be tiny specks of light, yet, in actuality, each one is an entire world, so, too, are the Jews: In this world Jews may be the object of scorn and derision, yet, in truth, the Jewish people are great and mighty, the foundation of the world's very creation. (Baal Shem Tov) (L'Chaim 5754 #289)

A noted Rabbi had come to the Rebbe for yechidus before his eldest daughter was to be married. "Forgive me for mixing into your personal life," the Rebbe told him at the conclusion of their meeting, "but I have a request of you. Let your beard grow. It's appropriate for a man of your position.

"And," the Rebbe added with a smile, "it's appropriate for the new phase that will begin in your personal life. After all, soon you're going to become a zeide (a grandfather), and you should look like a zeide!"

The Rabbi happily agreed to the Rebbe's request, and asked: "Perhaps I should also change my style of hat (the Rabbi would wear a round hat) to that worn by the Rebbe?"

"No," the Rebbe replied with a wave of his hand, "that's a superficial matter. I have followers who think that by putting on the same hat I do, and having it dented exactly as I do, they'll establish a connection with me. That isn't the way.

"The way to establish a connection is to invest energy in the same areas in which I invest my energy." (From: To Know and to Care - Vol. 2)

THE ALTER REBBE USED TO REFER TO ATZILUT AS "ABOVE." THEY SAY THAT BECAUSE OF INTENSE EMOTION, WHEN WRITING THE WORD HE COULD GET NO FURTHER THAN "ATZI -." (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, CHESHVAN 10)

*People might tell you, "When you come to work, leave your spirituality at home. Don't bother us with your peculiar lifestyle, your ethics, search for meaning... That's all nice, but this is business. This is the real world."
There is only one real world, and it belongs to one real G—d.*