

פרשת כרך

As Avraham and Sarah leave for הרן for כנען, the Torah states, “וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט”¹ which at first glance, may appear to be a rather puzzling statement. At this point, neither husband nor wife had been recorded as having birthed any children; who could “וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ” possibly be referring to?

Rashi² explains that this is denoting those who Avraham had converted and brought under the Shechinah's wings;³ according to a *medrash*,⁴ Avraham would convert the men while Sarah would convert the women, and accordingly, the Torah ascribed to the couple the merit of having essentially made them. The Ibn Ezra⁵ adds that this is a reference to the souls to whom Avraham was able to show the truth while in Charan, having convinced them to serve Hashem. Additionally, Onkelos translates this pasuk to “וְיִתְּ לָאִוְרֵיתָא נַפְשָׁתָא דְשַׁעְבִּידוֹ לְאִוְרֵיתָא” the souls whom they had made subject to the law in Charan; evidently, Avraham was successful in bringing people back to monotheism while in Haran!

Interestingly enough, some of these followers and converters may have included members of Avraham's family. The Radak⁶ comments that Lot believed in Hashem too, professed a belief in Hashem, and joined Avraham not merely because he was the nephew of Avraham, but rather because he truly shared the beliefs of his uncle; in fact, he served as a proselytizer in his own right, actively sharing his religious views with others. This, says the Radak, is why the word עָשׂוּ is used in the pasuk and not the word עָשָׂה, as Avraham was not alone in his quest to reveal the religious truths of Hashem to the world; Rabbeinu Bechaye⁷ quotes a *medrash*⁸ that Yaakov was also converting people while also settling in the land where his grandfather had succeeded in converting others.⁹ Evidently, all of the Avos had gone on this path to nullify idol worship while publicizing the fundamentals of faith and singularity of Hashem.

These elucidations demonstrate the power and impact that a person can have, not only by having a tremendous amount of faith, but by spreading such firm religious convictions to others as well. In a passage in *Maseches Sanhedrin*,¹⁰ Reish Lakish uses this *pasuk* as proof that anyone who teaches Torah to the son of another person is credited with having formed that student, as Avraham and Sarah were given credit for forming the students who learned Torah from them. The unbridled belief that they exhibited in Hashem ostensibly resounded in tremendous ways with each person that they encountered, and with

¹ בראשית יב:ה

² רש"י בראשית יב:ה ד"ה אשר עשו בחרן

³ According to Rashi and Rabbeinu Bechaye, the simple understanding of the *pasuk* is that this is discussing the slaves and maidservants that Avraham had accumulated, but then why say נפש and not אנשים? Surely, there must be some spiritual significance behind the choice of words!

⁴ בראשית רבה לט:יד

⁵ אבן עזרא בראשית יב:ה

⁶ רד"ק בראשית יב:ה ד"ה ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן

⁷ רבינו בחיי בראשית יב:ה ד"ה ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן

⁸ בראשית רבה פד:ד

⁹ בראשית לז:א

¹⁰ סנהדרין צט:

that, Avraham merited the well-deserved designation of “אֲבֵהֶמוֹן גּוֹיִם נְתִתִּיקָה.”¹¹ While this title may prove to be out of reach for us, if we can model ourselves on the abundance of religious conviction held by Avraham Avinu, perhaps we can display our worthiness for the appellation of a “light unto the nations,” maintaining the awe-inspiring standard of faith that our ancestors exemplified on a consistent basis.

בראשית יז: י"א