

RAISING CHILDREN IN A WORLD OF TORAH

ויקח אברם את שרי אשתו...ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן ויצאו ללכת ארצה כנען ויבאו ארצה כנען¹

We see from the פסוק above that אברם and שרי "made people in חרן". If we were to take this at face value, it would not make sense historically. Literally speaking, it would seem to say that אברם and שרי birthed and raised children during their sojourn in חרן. Yet, we know from last week² that שרי was childless! Therefore, we must take a different approach. The פסוק on our תרגום אונקלוס says "נפשתיא דשעבידו לאורייתא בחרן" - "the souls whom they subjected to the תורה in חרן". From this אונקלוס, the מדרש³ brings down that anyone who converts non-Jews is said to have "created them". We see this idea manifested in הלכה. We know that a גר has no ties to his original family.⁴ A נפקא מינה would be if G-d forbid, a parent were to pass away, the גר would not observe שבעה.⁵ We see this message evident in other areas, especially within each and every one of our daily lives.

The גמרא⁶ says the world is destined to exist for 6,000 years. The first 2,000 years are years of nothing, the second 2,000 years are years of תורה, and the last 2,000 are years of משיח צדקנו. However, we know based on the present that we have well overspent on those years of תורה, encroaching upon the years of משיח. We recently started the 5779th year from Creation. Therefore, we have just over 220 years until the year 6000. The longer we prevent משיח from coming, seemingly the less time of משיח we're going to have. However, this topic is way beyond the scope of this work and my paygrade, and we will leave it to those who are more intelligent to answer. Getting back to our discussion, we just said there are [supposed to be only] 2,000 years of תורה. The question is, if you start counting them from מתן תורה, which would seem to make sense, you're at a crossroads, as מתן תורה took place in the year 2448 from Creation, well after the 2,000 years of nothing should've concluded! Rather, the גמרא says we start counting from the time when אברם and שרי started missionizing. This is when תורה was first starting to be spread throughout the world. This makes sense historically, as אברם was 52 at this point. It is evident from a close reading of the פסוקים that אברם was born in the 1948th year from Creation. The 52 years since his birth to this point brings the total to exactly 2,000.^{7,8}

While mathematically we have reconciled history and the גמרא, we have yet to answer the deeper connection between teaching תורה and raising children. We see that

¹ בראשית יב.

² שם יא.

³ בראשית רבה לט. יד.

⁴ יבמות צז.

⁵ שו"ע יורה דעה שעד.

⁶ עבודה זרה ט.

⁷ אבל, יש מחלוקת על זה. עיין תוספות שם ד"ה "וגמירי", תוספות שבת י: ד"ה "ושל", ומדרש סדר עולם רבה.
⁸ עיין תורה תמימה בראשית יב הערה י לדעת את החשבון (אבל תוס' מחלק על זה. עיין הארה ז לראות צד השני)

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just as there is a מצוה to honor and fear one's parents, so too there's a מצוה to honor and fear one's רב.⁹ The גמרא¹⁰ says that a parent can be מוחל on their כבוד. However, it's a question by a רב. We can therefore infer that the level of כבוד bestowed upon a רב must be greater than that bestowed upon a parent.^{11,12} This הלכה highlights the importance of a רב in one's life. The aforementioned משנה says the reason is because while your parents brought you into this world, your רב brings you into עולם הבא. According to the משנה¹³, this world is only a preparation for עולם הבא. Therefore, it makes sense why the one who gets you there is more important than the one who brings you here.

With this, we can understand what was so special about אברם and שרי's missionizing הקב"ה that we count the years of תורה from them. The reason the אבות start from אברהם and not any of the 20 generations before him¹⁴ was because he set us up for life, spiritually. All of אדם's world was destroyed by the מבול, and we don't see נח laying the foundation for בני ישראל in a significant sense. The Jews are referred to as the children of their first רב, who started the מסורה that continues to this very day. We should be זוכה to learn from אברהם אבינו about setting a steady foundation for generations to come, continuing a מסורה that's lasted almost 4,000 years. If we do this properly, we will be זוכה to see the המשיח [שני] אלפים, speedily in our days.

⁹ ויקרא יט.לב

¹⁰ קידושין לב.

¹¹ שו"ע יורה דעה רמב"א.

¹² בבא מציעא לג.

¹³ אבות ד.טז

¹⁴ שם ה.ב