

# Lech Lecha: Impacting the WZO elections

- Jonathan Schwartz.

Sermon to encourage participation in the WZO elections. What's the difference between Tov and Hana'ah? ("Lech Lecha...L'Haanasecha U'L'Tovasicha"). Gilui shechina in our lives, can only happen in connection with Eretz Yisroel.

Lech Lecha 5766

Idea: To encourage participation in the WZO elections

1. Former Brown University President Barnaby C. Keeny once noted that "At college age, you can tell who is best at taking tests and going to school, but you can't tell who the best people are." And he was a university president no less! It begs the question as to the function of the test as a predictor of life achievement. Anyone who recalls the challenge of the alphabet soup of SATs, MCATs, DATs GREs or LSATs knows just what I speak about. Let's face it. Tests are not necessarily indications of goodness of person.
2. Which is why one becomes extremely surprised when we come to this morning's Torah reading and begin to learn about Avraham's trip to Israel. "Lech Lecha Me'Artzeicha" we read. "Leave your land to the land of Israel" A test that the commentaries, for the most part, count among the 10 tests that Hashem gave him. What was the purpose of these tests? What were they going to be able to prove about Avraham and the future?
3. But allow me to ask another, more local question about the test of Lech Lecha. Rashi comments that the purpose of Lech Lecha, of the trip, was for Avraham – l'Haanasecha U'L'Tovasicha" for your benefit and your good. Why offer that information to Avraham? Wouldn't it guarantee his participation? What was the point of the test of Lech Lecha, if Avraham already knew the proper answers?
4. I believe that the answer comes down to the difference between two critical concepts and their use in motivating human experience. I speak of Hanaah – or that which is pleasurable on the one hand and that which is Tov or good on the other.
5. You see, the easiest drive in life is that which we do because we will derive pleasure, Hanaah out of it. Indeed, Freud recognized the concept and dubbed it the pleasure principle and it is not a difficult principle to understand – Man is naturally driven to do that which brings him pleasure. Sometimes determining that pleasure is naturally difficult and man must choose between that which give him pleasure now and a greater pleasure to be achieved later – but the motive to act is still that which man finds pleasurable.
6. Of course, there needs to be a recognition that such pleasure is subjective and therefore by definition limited in its scope. What is pleasurable to this man might not be pleasurable to another human being. And, what I find pleasurable now, I might not enjoy under different circumstances. No, as a scientific universal barometer of contentment, haana is limited. For that we have a universal judgement we call Tov or Goodness.

7. Tov speaks to a universal goodness – something no one can argue about. Like the Tov of creation that Hashem needed to see “Ki Tov” or when Moshe was born and the house became filled with light – “Ki Tov Hu” There is no dispute that in these situations there was universal goodness that emanated from those situations for Hakadosh Baruch Hu who is the source of all Tov, was clearly apparent in these situations. Unlike the subjective Ha’anah which is open to debate, one cannot fathom ignoring a situation that is Tov.

8. This, explains the Ran (Drashos HaRan), was the challenge of each of the 10 tests of Avraham Aveinu. If it had been so evident – had Hashem commanded Avraham as to how to act, there would have been no test at all. The challenge of the Nisyonot was in the fact that Avraham had the ability to opt out – an ability, explains the Slonimer Rebbe (Nesivos Shalom Berashis p. 69), that was expanded with each test and yet, Avraham continued to pass the tests – demonstrating not his ability to pass – but the stellar love he had for Hashem. He could have gone to Caanan for his personal benefit or even L’Tovato but he went for a different reason – Ka’Asher Deeber Eilav Hashem – simply because Hashem told him to go and he, as a servant of Hashem, constantly seeking Hashem’s spirituality in his life, declined to opt out and merely showed the stellar character he had.

9. But there was another purpose in Avraham’s trip – Avraham desired Gilui Shechina. He desired to be in the presence of Hashem and live that spiritual life. The Sforno comments that Avraham continued to move around until he had that Mareh Elokee –the acceptance from Hashem that he was with Avraham in this endeavor. That level of spirituality, says Rav Yehudah HaLevi (Kuzari, 2), that goal of achieving the centrality of Gilui shechina in our lives, can only happen in connection with Eretz Yisroel. Indeed, all of the Neviim received their Nevuos in or about the land of Israel clearly underscoring the strength of connection between Eretz Yisroel and the spiritual life even when in Chutz l’Aretz.

10. Which brings me to this year and this point in time. You know I abhor political discussions from the pulpit. Discussions of governmental policies whether Israeli or American, issues of political support or the virtues and disadvantages of Zionism religious or Secular are not in the role that I feel one should have from here. For in this room, we are about getting together to discuss Toras Hashem or to engage him directly in a mini-Gilui Shechina called Tefilla. But that quest for spirituality, for that encounter with God comes only through Eretz Yisroel -- As Shlomo noted at the dedication of the Beis HaMikdash – V’Hispalilu Eilecha Derech Artzam (Melachim I:8) – They shall pray to you through the land, the land, explains the Slonimer, referring to Eretz Yisroel but only with the recognition of Hashgachat Hashem, God’s daily intervention and centrality in the land of Israel.

11. We have a unique opportunity to effect Hashgachat Hashem in the land of Israel and, by extension, to the state of Jewry worldwide. For this coming June, together we can help bring over one billion dollars in potential support for Torah education and programs in Israel and the Diaspora. You see, the WZO (World Zionist Organization) meets every 5 years and works to select programs to support in Israel. The allocations are made by vote and the voters selected by election. We can easily become members of the WZO – and elect a Religiously sympathetic slate, from AMIT, or from the Religious bloc that will vote to allocate resources for Torah and

Hashgachat Hashem. The cost to us is a mere few moments in time on the computer and the gains enormous. And so this morning I beg you, to support Hashgachat Hashem, even if you are not sure of your current political views and especially in today's tumultuous Israeli political climate, by visiting the website [votetorah.org](http://votetorah.org) and registering and voting for Torah and Hashgachat Hashem.

12. Avraham took the chance. It's true, he might have benefited and might have found it to be undeniably Tov. But Chazal tell us he passed the test of Eretz Yisroel because he saw it not for personal gain but for Hashgachat Hashem – a means to be closer with Hashem. We have the opportunity to pass a similar test when the potential for personal gain might not be as apparent as well. By joining together to support Torat Eretz Yisroel, Mitzvot Eretz Yisroel we will truly merit the ultimate in Berachot – V'Techezena Eineinu BeShuvecha L'Tzion – to see the return of Hashgachat Hashem as central in Israel, V'Shaveha B'Tzedaka – and to be a part of the return B'tzedaka.