

Lech Lecha

Note: The Amidah, part of the daily service, begins with the blessing, “Blessed are you, God, our God and the God of our fathers. The God of Abraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Ya’akov.”

And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. (Bereishit 12:2)

The Talmud (Pesachim 117b) explains the verse in the following manner: “And I will make you into a great nation,” and therefore, we begin the Amidah by saying the God of Abraham; “and I will bless you,” and therefore, we say the God of Yitzchak; “and I will make your name great,” and therefore, we say the God of Ya’akov. The Talmud does not explain the final phrase of the verse “and you shall be a blessing.”

Perhaps we can explain it in the following manner: In the Messianic era, God will extend a cup of wine to Abraham and ask him to make the blessing. Abraham will decline, and his rationale for declining will be because he had a son, Yishmael, who was not righteous. God will then ask Yitzchak to make the blessing, and he too will refuse on the grounds that he had a son, Esau, who was wicked. God then asks Ya’akov, who will refuse because he married two sisters.

Finally, God asks King David to make the blessing. King David agrees, as it is alluded to in Tehillim (Psalms) 116:13, where King David says:

I shall lift up a cup of salvations and I shall call out in the name of the Lord.

Therefore, when the verse says, “you shall be a blessing,” this is referring to King David, who will make the blessing on the cup of wine in the Messianic era.

Please say that you are my sister. (Bereishit 12:13)

Note: Abraham and Sarah left Israel due to the famine in the land and made their way to Egypt. Frightened the Egyptians would kill him if they discovered he was the husband of Sarah, Abraham requested that Sarah, when asked, say she was his sister.

While it is true Abraham was scared for his life and felt that if the Egyptians believed they were brother and sister, his life would be spared. He was asking Sarah to lie. Is such behavior acceptable?

When they were living in Israel, our forefathers had the status of Jewish people. When they traveled outside Israel, they had the status of a Noahite. According to the Noahite law, if a married couple seeks a divorce, the husband only needs to tell his wife, “You are no longer my wife.” And the wife needs to respond, “You are no longer my husband.” Therefore, when Abraham said to Sarah, “Say you are my sister,” that was tantamount to divorcing her.

As a result, there was no underhanded action on the part of Abraham. Abraham and Sarah were in Egypt; they were bound by Noahite law. By each saying, “We are brother and sister,” they were divorced.