

Talking to Myself about the Parsha (Lekh Lekha)

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There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham Avinu, to make known the greatness of God's patience. All the generations got God angrier and angrier until Avraham came and received the reward all could have had (Avot 5:3).

The Bartenura comments that Avraham Avinu did as many good deeds as all of them could have done, and so, they were all protected in his merit.

The Tiferes Yisroel writes (in his commentary Yakhin):

The reward he received is that which they all could have had, namely, to be under the wings of the Shekhinah; to be worthy of Divine revelation and bond (brit) as was made with Avraham Avinu; to have their descendants receive the Torah; to have miracles and wonders performed on their behalf; and to be worthy of prophecy. These precious gifts were initially intended for all of humankind. But as a result of the sins of those early ten generations, all of humankind was rejected, with the exception of Avraham and the cream of his descendants, Yisrael.

Well, technically, this isn't from the parsha, but it's about the parsha and I'm a big fan of Avraham Avinu, so I'm going for it.

What does it mean that one person—*one person!*—can do as many good deeds as the rest of the people in the world? Can I even do as many good deeds as I can do?! Are there gifts to which I was entitled and forfeited? Are there gifts others have forfeited that I might claim? (Definite “yes,” to that last

one; *Chagigah* 15a).

Avraham Avinu definitely models *Pirkei Avot*: He would rather obey God than be right; he's quick to do a mitzvah as soon as he knows it needs to be done, even if he doesn't understand why (see 3:11–13 and 22). He's walking the walk (maybe *lekh lekha* means that too). So his attitudes and descendants are still around, and aren't ever going away.

So, the gauntlet has been thrown: When will my deeds reach, or even touch, the deeds of my ancestors (*Yalkut Shimoni* I, 830)? I don't know. But I do know that I can't ignore the challenge. If Avraham Avinu was unafraid to be thrown into a furnace, to leave his home, etc., I ought to be brave enough to face my fears and weaknesses.

I can't afford to be scared. I can't let down my people, my descendants, myself or my God. The losses would be too great, perhaps even greater than those on *Yakhin's* list