

# ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1586

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NOV. 9<sup>TH</sup> 2024 • ח' מרחשון תשפ"ה

פרשת לך לך  
PARSHAT LECH LECHA



**Lech Lecha: #Blessed**  
Rabbi Judah Mischel  
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**A Promise is a Promise.  
But It Requires Action.**  
Jen Airley Page 72



לך-לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל-הארץ  
בראשית י"ב:א'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT LECH LECHA ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:08 PM • HAVDALA 5:21 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:00 PM

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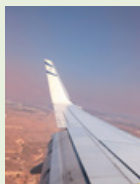
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## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

 KIDDUSH LEVANA

7 Days After Molad: 9 Marcheshvan/ Motzei Shabbat Nov. 9

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 14 Marcheshvan/ Thurs. night Nov. 14



### COVER IMAGE

This photo was taken this summer as we landed back in Israel. The feeling of returning to our country is a special one that cannot be beaten! We made Aliya from London in August 2011 and just celebrated our Bar Mitzvah Aliyaversary. We live in Yad Binyamin.

Photographed by Naomi Feinmesser

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



## OTHER Z'MANIM



	Lech Lecha		Vayeira	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:08	5:21	4:04	5:18
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:26	5:24	4:22	5:21
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:27	5:22	4:23	5:19
Alon Shvut	4:24	5:22	4:20	5:18
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:24	5:22	4:20	5:19
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:24	5:22	4:20	5:19
Netanya	4:24	5:22	4:20	5:19
Be'er Sheva	4:26	5:24	4:22	5:20
Rehovot	4:25	5:23	4:21	5:19
Petach Tikva	4:08	5:22	4:04	5:19
Ginot Shomron	4:23	5:21	4:19	5:18
Haifa / Zichron	4:13	5:21	4:08	5:17
Gush Shiloh	4:23	5:21	4:18	5:17
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:25	5:23	4:20	5:19
Givat Zeev	4:28	5:22	4:23	5:18
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:24	5:22	4:20	5:19
Ashkelon	4:26	5:24	4:22	5:21
Yad Binyamin	4:25	5:23	4:21	5:19
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:14	5:19	4:10	5:15
Golan	4:20	5:19	4:16	5:15
Nahariya/Maalot	4:22	5:20	4:17	5:17
Afula	4:22	5:20	4:17	5:16

**Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem):** Lech Lecha - 6:00PM • Vayeira - 5:56PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;  
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

**Daf Yomi: Bava Basra 137**

### JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat**  
Nov. 6 - 16 / 5 - 15 Marcheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	<b>5:07-5:15</b>
Sunrise	<b>6:00-6:08</b>
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	<b>8:41-8:46</b>
Magen Avraham	<b>8:04-8:08</b>
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	<b>9:35-9:38</b>
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	<b>11:22-11:23</b>
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	<b>11:52-11:53</b>
Plag Mincha	<b>3:37-3:33</b>
Sunset (Including Elevation)	<b>4:49-4:43</b>



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL  
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When I was in *yeshiva* many years ago, the only way to get in contact with our loved ones in the United States was a toll-free AT&T phone number that one would call collect, and the operator would connect us to our American relatives. Being in a *yeshiva* with many Americans, I remember how whenever it was playoff season, the guys who couldn't wait to find a relevant newspaper the day after the game would call that AT&T toll-free number and then ask the operator if they happen to know who won that day's game. This is how many guys stayed connected to the sports teams they followed while they were overseas.

While this can be viewed as an interesting anecdote, it also demonstrates how different cultures can be. *Baruch Hashem*, we have hundreds of thousands of Jews who have made *aliyah* from North America, South Africa, Australia, England and so many other countries who come to Israel and connect to the Land and People, all the while keeping strong ties to the culture and people of the

countries that they came from. Therefore, it isn't surprising that they also are interested in the politics of the countries they came from and wish to express their legal right to have an influence on the changes in those countries, all the while as proud Israelis.

Whenever elections come around, I encourage everyone I can to go and vote and give their voice. Democracy is really a Torah value. Rabbi Ken Spiro writes about this beautifully in his book, *WorldPerfect – The Jewish Impact on Civilization*, where he shows how modern democracy was inspired by the Torah. So I tell people to go and express this value, and not to sit on the sidelines while changes happen to the country they came from.

The OU in North America developed a program called TEACH. The cost of tuition for private Jewish day schools in America is so high that many feel they have to go bankrupt to give their children a religious education, or have to make the horrible decision not to send their children at all. The OU's TEACH coalition has been extremely successful raising hundreds of millions of dollars for the Jewish community and Jewish schools. The money raised goes toward non-religious aspects of school, paying for textbooks, buses, secular studies, and everything that can defray the costs so that Jewish education doesn't become prohibitive for religious Jews.

The main reason they have had this success is because our communities have voted for politicians and officials who care about this

**The unveiling of the matzeiva  
of the Israeli soldier and hero**

**Ori Moshe Borenstein** ז"ל

**will be held at the  
Mount Herzl military cemetery  
in Jerusalem,**

**Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>  
(9 Cheshvan) at 12:30pm**

*The Borenstein family*

[www.jewsofstowrowiec.com/ori-borenstein](http://www.jewsofstowrowiec.com/ori-borenstein)





cause and understand that tax dollars should go to the tax-payers. When people make *aliyah*, no matter their political affiliation they still can vote and have an influence in so many ways for the Jewish community in America.

In this context, I want to give a tremendous *yashar koach* to Chana Spivack, OU Israel's volunteer coordinator, who has spent every day for the last several months helping people who want to vote from abroad by answering questions and explaining the process of submitting absentee ballots. She has had a positive influence by helping so many express their legal right to vote.

This past Sunday, we had an event which enabled people to come and register, fill out ballots, and vote online, depending on what rules each state requires (and each one has different rules to keep track of). It was beautiful to see so many come out and how helpful it was to American citizens here in Israel. The event required a tremendous amount of effort, and I want to thank everyone on my staff who stepped up to the plate to help out. Thank you to OU-certified made in Israel Ben & Jerry's for bringing a tremendous amount of ice cream, and to the anonymous donor who sponsored this event. The factory even sent over the Ben & Jerry's stand they send out to big events (and is available to rent for

events you may be

planning), which lent a fun atmosphere to our building as well.

Thank you and *kol hakavod* to everyone who came out, who helped with the event, and those who voted for their interests and values.

In this week's *parsha*, Avraham Avinu is commanded, "Go for yourself from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house." We are told that

we should not forget where we came from, and to continue to have a positive influence wherever we are. That means that even as proud Israeli Jews, living in our homeland, we continue to take interest in and give our voice for the values we believe in, and OU Israel hopes to continue to facilitate these events and those like them in the future.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

[aberman@ouisrael.org](mailto:aberman@ouisrael.org)

**May the Torah learned  
from this issue of Torah Tidbits be  
in loving memory of our dear friend**

**Yehuda Leib Berren ז"ל**  
**יהודה לייב בן אהרון יצחק ז"ל**  
on his 4th Yahrzeit

**Aliyah L'kever:**  
**ט' מרחשון, Sunday,**  
**November 10th, 1:30pm**  
**Har HaMenuchot,**  
**Gush תת, Section 7, Row 8**

**Zoom: 816 5862 6171, Password: 094976**

**ה.נ.צ.ב.ה.**



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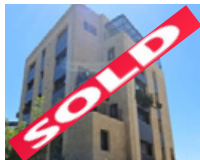
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## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

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# Everyone Is / Can Be a Big Tzaddik

Avraham, the original and defining Jew, saw beyond limitations. To him, every one of the wicked people of his time represented a potential *tzaddik*. He knew that the transformation that he had personally experienced – coming to G-d from a family background of idol worship – was open to anyone anywhere.

This may be part of the contrast between Avraham and Noach. Noach was given 120 years to build the ark, providing him with the context and the perfect prop to warn, to teach, and to cajole his immoral contemporaries towards a better path (Rashi to Bereishit 6:14). Yet, when the flood came, it was only he and his family who entered that ark. There were no *nefesh asher asu*, no “souls that he had transformed” to join his family and be similarly saved. Noach’s world remained corrupt and needed to be completely destroyed.

Avraham, on the other hand, lived in similarly degenerate times, but his world was not destroyed (Avot 5:2-3; see Rashi there). Avraham’s care, guidance, and teaching brought Teshuva to the world and helped them avert catastrophe. His household included multitudes of people whose lives he and his wife Sarah had transformed and shaped, *hanefesh*

*asher asu beCharan* (Bereishit 12:5).

What made Avraham so successful where Noach had failed? Noach was an FFB (Faithful From Birth). He was the only one who had **remained** faithful while the world experienced moral decline. Noach held on to his faith with his fingernails as he watched others around him drop like flies. He had no paradigm and no picture of what it could look like for someone to find their way back. Avraham, on the other hand, was a *Baal Teshuva*, a convert, who knew from his own experience that the past is not a prison. He brought that optimism to bear on his view of others, truly believing in those who he was trying to help.

That optimism is not limited to those – like Avraham – who had traveled on that journey themselves. Every one of us has had the chance to see transformational growth in others who have overcome challenges of faith and observance or of trauma and addiction. We must recognize that those stories are not limited to the heroic individual but represent the human condition, the power in every soul to release themselves from past limitations. We all can share Avraham’s optimism about every person that we encounter – including ourselves - seeing their boundless potential for good. ■



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OU Israel identified a need that many English-speaking *olim* and visitors have to navigate the complexities of Kashrut in Israel. As part of our mission to help Anglos live and thrive spiritually in Israel, in 2019 we launched **The Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education** to help people better understand and keep Kosher in Israel. Directed by Rabbi Ezra Friedman, our Center for Kashrut Education provides *shiurim*, articles, videos, and Kashrut guides. With over 6,000 questions annually, our Kashrut hotline continues to be a tremendous resource.

Kashrut Questions in Israel? Call or WhatsApp **Rabbi Friedman** at the Kashrut hotline: 050-200-4432.

This week, we released a new Kashrut Education Center video:  
**Shuk Machane Yehuda – Kosher or Not? Fruit & Vegetables**

Each week we will share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English speaking *olim* with their *klita* and impacting Israeli society.



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## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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### PARSHAT LECH LECHA

The parsha introduces the Jewish people. Avraham journeys to the Land of Israel, is promised the Land, spends time in Egypt due to a famine, separates from Lot due to their great wealth, and rescues Lot when he is taken captive in war. Avraham is promised the Land, though told his descendants will spend 400 years in slavery. Sarah has no child, Hagar bears Yishmael, Avraham is promised that Sarah will bear a child. He is given the mitzvah of mila, circumcision, as a sign of the covenant.



#### 1ST ALIYA (12:1-13)

Avram (while we refer to him as Avraham his name begins as Avram and is only changed later) is told to journey to the Land he will be shown. There he will achieve fame, fortune and family. The family journeys with Shechem as their first stop. G-d appears to Avraham and promises him the Land. He builds an altar. A famine forces the family to seek relief in Egypt.

The Torah is the story of promises. Avraham is given three personal promises and upon entry into the Land, one national one. He is told he will have fame, fortune and family. And his people will inherit the Land.

G-d makes promises to man. Unsolicited, perhaps undeserved. Though we come to know Avraham as a great man, the Torah is mum on any background to receiving these promises. For it is a story of G-d's desire for

a people – it is His reach to us. Unsolicited. Although the Midrash describes Avraham's discovery of G-d, the Torah itself is not interested in that. It is interested in G-d's desire for a people; His reach for man, not man's reach for Him.



#### 2ND ALIYA (12:14-13:4)

The family goes to Egypt fleeing famine. Paro sees Sarah and she is taken to his palace. Avraham is lavished with wealth because of her. Paro sends them away. The family returns to where they began, laden with wealth, to call in the name of G-d.

Avraham's 3 promises, fame, fortune and family, will be fulfilled one by one. First fortune. Promise fulfilled – Avraham returns to the Land from Egypt laden with wealth.

Note the parallel in this story to that of the Exodus from Egypt. Avraham journeys to Egypt because of famine, Paro suffers a plague, he leaves with great wealth; so too the Jewish people journey to Egypt in a famine, suffer plagues and leave with great wealth.

What does it mean that Avraham called in the name of G-d? Ibn Ezra says either he prayed. Or he called people to embrace G-d. Avraham engages the people of the Land in knowledge of one G-d, a pursuit that exposes the people to him, eventually bringing him fame.



#### 3RD ALIYA (13:5-18)

The herds of Avraham and Lot are so numerous that their shepherds quarrel. They need to separate. Avraham allows Lot to choose – you go left, I right.



You go right, I left. Lot chooses the lush area he sees around Sodom and Gemora. Avraham is told by G-d to look over the Land for he will have it all forever. And his children will be as numerous as the sand of the earth. He moves to Hevron and builds an altar.

Avraham and Lot have flocks, a nomadic occupation. Shepherding is not the stuff of nation building; agriculture is stable, concrete and the stuff of nations. So, while wealthy, the wealth is nomadic. But, the promise of fortune has been granted.

And this choice of Lot bodes ill for Lot's inclusion in the legacy of Avraham. After all, at this point, Lot is the only family member. Will the promise to Avraham's family pass to Lot? His choice of an area of lush green but evil people makes his judgement suspect.

The choice of beauty without consideration of principles has been a bit of a problem in the Torah so far. Eve looked at the fruit and it was beautiful. Before the flood, the men looked at the women and chose wives. Lot looks at the Jordan Valley and it looks like the lushness of Egypt.

Looks deceive; for while beautiful, each of these failed to consider principles of commands and ethics. Looking will be replaced for the Jew by hearing, Shema, listening to the Divine Command. Seeing beauty will be usurped by hearing the Command.



#### 4TH ALIYA (14:1-20)

4 Kings make war with 5 Kings. Lot is taken captive. Avraham rescues him, returning all the spoils and captives. The King of Sodom comes out to greet Avraham, as does Malchizedek the King and Priest of Shalem. Malchizedek blesses Avraham to G-d and blesses G-d for protecting Avraham.

The promise of fame has been achieved. After the heroic rescue of Lot, Avraham finds himself in the company of Kings. And of note, is the religious language of Malchizedek, blessing Avraham with G-d's name. Avraham's reputation, his fame, is that of a man of faith, a man of G-d.

2 of the 3 promises Avraham received, those of fame and of fortune have been achieved. The remaining 2 – of children and of inheriting this Land are tougher.

And lest we think that G-d promised a deserted Land to Avraham, this pitched battle of 9 kings belies that. Not only has Avraham been promised that his children will inherit the Land while he has no children, he has been told he will inherit a Land that is hotly contested. While man could, on his own, achieve fortune and fame, a childless elderly couple cannot achieve children and the Land without Divine intervention.



#### 5TH ALIYA (14:21-15:6)

The King of Sodom offers Avraham the spoils; Avraham demurs. G-d promises Avraham that he need not fear, for He will be his shield (magen). Avraham protests – I have no children. G-d promises that his children will inherit his promises. He shows him the stars and promises that his children will be as those. Avraham believes Him.

G-d promises to be Avraham's shield, his "magen"; Malchizedek used the same expression, that G-d was Avraham's "magen". Hence the description we use in tefilla of Magen Avraham.

G-d says to Avraham, "do not fear". Who said Avraham is afraid? What is he afraid of? Rashi comments that Avraham is worried that he has been showered with so much from G-d already that perhaps he does not

deserve to have the remaining promises granted. The remaining 2 promises are big ones; children and the Land of Israel. Perhaps I no longer deserve those. Some promises are conditional – you deserve it, you will get it. Perhaps he has used up all his merit and deserves no more. G-d tells him to not fear for his merit is great.



#### 6TH ALIYA (15:7-17:6)

After promising Avraham that he will have children, G-d again promises to him that He will give him the Land of Israel. Avraham queries as to how he will know this for certain. In a dramatic ceremony of cut birds and a deep sleep, Avraham is told his children will be strangers and afflicted in a foreign land for 400 years, leaving with great wealth. Avraham will die in peace. G-d makes a covenant to give the Land to Avraham's offspring. Sarah has no child. She gives Hagar to Avraham and Hagar becomes pregnant. Sarah sends Hagar away. An angel tells her that her offspring will be many. Her child will be cantankerous but powerful. Avraham is 86 when Yishmael is born. At age 99 Avraham is told to walk before G-d. His name is changed to Avraham.

For the first time, Avraham is told that the promise of the Land will not be fulfilled in his time. His children will be slaves, afflicted, and leave with wealth after many years.

In a fascinating parallel, the story of Hagar is that same story. Hagar is a servant, as the

Jews will be slaves. She is sent away, as the Jews will be slaves in a foreign land. Hagar is told she will have a son who will be a great nation, engaging with many. Just as the Jewish people will leave Egypt with wealth.

The promise to Hagar is that Yishmael will be an international force to reckon with, just as the Jewish people will leave and conquer the land with great wealth.

This parallel story, to my mind, is not to point out the similarities but to point out the glaring difference. Yishmael will be a great nation in this rough and tumble world of ours, where people struggle and prosper. He will be good at that. Avraham's children will be a great nation by virtue of their covenant with G-d.

The Torah is contrasting a nation, Yishmael, unopposed by G-d, living in this world, down here on earth, void of the mystery of the spiritual world, the world of the Divine. Avraham's nation is to be guided by the Divine Hand, engaging with Him, achieving its greatness in the elevated world of mystery and spirit, the Divine world.

We will see this exact same parallel in the journey of Hagar and Yishmael and Avraham and Yitzchak at the Akeida. An earthly story paralleling an elevated story.



#### 7TH ALIYA (17:7-27)

Avraham is told to circumcise his family as a sign of the covenant between him and G-d. He is startled at the promise that Sarah will have a child at age 90, he 99. He suggests that Yishmael could be the next generation of the Jewish people. No, while Yishmael will be great, Yitzchak will be the next generation.

Avraham is reluctant to give up on Yishmael as the heir to the Jewish people. Perhaps

**Condolences to  
Meyer Goodstein and family  
on the passing of his brother**

**MILTY Z'VI**

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



this is Avraham's persistent kindness – he sees good, even greatness in Yishmael. But that type of greatness is not sufficient: greatness comes in different shapes and sizes. Yishmael is great in his way, the ways of this world. Yitzchak will be great in a different way, in the world of the spirit, of the Divine, of ethics. There is greatness amongst the nations of the world: but Jewish greatness is different.

## HAFTORAH

### YESHAYAHU 40:27- 41:16

The prophet Yeshayahu reminds Israel of the Almighty's power. Hashem has the ability to "renew the vigor" of those who put their faith in Him.

Highlighting the theme of strength and fortitude, the prophet turns his attention to the idolatrous nations of the world and offers the following message. He emphasizes the greatness of Avraham, after arriving in Canaan, pursuing and defeating four mighty kings. "The islands saw and feared: the ends of the earth quaked."

There is a message to be heeded by the people of the world when witnessing the

power of Israel. Seeing the remarkable power of God and his people should inspire nations to abandon their sinful idolatrous ways.

The prophet also spotlights the eternal promise that the Jewish nation will be rewarded for their loyalty to God. "Do not fear for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God...Behold all those incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded; those who quarreled with you shall be as naught and be lost." ■



## STATS

3rd sedra of 54; 3rd of 12 in Bereishit.

Written on 208 lines, ranks 23.

7 Parshiyot; 3 open, 4 closed.

126 p'sukim - ranks 13th.

1686 words - ranks 18th.

6336 letters - ranks 19th.



## MITZVOT

1 positive mitzvah: Brit Milah.

A total of 5 sedras have only one mitzvah (another 17 have none and six have 2 or 3 - that accounts for 28 sedras, over half of the Torah's 54).

## A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES  
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

שא נא עיניך וראה .... כי את כל הארץ אשר אתה רואה לך אתננה ולזרעך (יגיד, טו)

"Lift up now your eyes and look...for all the Land which you see, to you will I give and to your seed" (13:14-15)

What is the need for G-d to instruct Avram to "see" the Land? G-d's promise to give over the Land to Avram and his family is not enough?

The Meshech Chochma (Rabbi Meir Simcha Hacoheh of Dvinsk 1843-1926) answers that when G-d promised the Land of Israel to Avram, it was occupied by the Canaanites (13:7). Avraham even must purchase the Cave of the Patriarchs, when Sarah passes, at an exorbitant price. Although, it seems very clear that Avraham lacks any ownership of this Land, Avraham understood that the holiness of this Land was intact and G-d's presence dwelt here. It is for this reason that G-d urges Avraham to "look" at the Land. G-d is instructing Avraham that even though all the signs you see on this Land seem to show no clear indication that the Land is being given to you, yet I beseech you to "lift up your eyes" and see beyond that. By raising your view to a lofty more spiritual plateau, you will be able to recognize the ways of G-d are carried out. You will then perceive how the Land of Israel is sanctified and being given to you and your descendants, even when all signs are the contrary. The Land of Israel is more holy than all other lands, which its holiness never dissipates.

Shabbat Shalom



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## THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

# Persons Not in the Parsha

I try to focus these weekly columns upon individuals who are barely mentioned in the weekly Torah portion. They often have an important, but insufficiently appreciated, role to play.

Thus, for example, last week I chose Nimrod as my person in the *parsha*. He was a “strong” man in many ways, knowing the Almighty while defying Him. He was autocratic, violent, arrogant, perhaps the first true demagogue on record.

But that was last week’s *parsha*, *Noach*. His name no longer appears in the Chumash. While he is certainly absent in this week’s *parsha*, *Lech Lecha*, I will attempt to demonstrate how he still plays a role in this week’s Torah episode.

I will also attempt to demonstrate that

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in this issue of Torah Tidbits  
be לעילוי נשמת

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חיים ישראל פינחס

בן משה אהרון ז"ל

on his twelfth yahrtzeit  
”ב מרחשון

Susan Israel and family

Avram, later renamed Avraham, albeit surely the dominant figure in this week’s *parsha*, is to some extent “missing” therein.

We already know quite a bit about Avram having read last week’s *Parshat Noach*. There we “met” his father Terach, his brothers Nachor and Haran, and his nephew—Haran’s son—Lot. We also learn of Haran’s premature demise, although we remain curiously ignorant of the circumstances of his death. We are told about the family’s origins in a place called Ur Kasdim, the “fiery furnace of the Chaldeans.” We are introduced to Avram’s wife, Sarei, and are alerted to her infertility issues.

We then are informed of the plan, seemingly instigated by Terach, to embark upon a fateful journey, leaving Ur Kasdim to reach Canaan, but settling instead in a place called Charan. There, Terach, at age two hundred and fifty, dies.

It is then, in the opening words of this week’s Torah portion, that the Lord Himself enters center stage and commands Avram to leave all the above behind except for his wife Sarei and nephew Lot and head for “the land which I will show you,” which we soon learn is Canaan. Avram is then a seventy-five-year-old!

What is “missing?” It is my graduate school education in the field of developmental psychology that prompts me to ask this question. Missing are the many intervening years between the young Avram, subordinate to his father’s travel plans and struggling sympathetically with his young wife’s infertility, and

his first direct encounter, nay conversation, with the Master of the Universe.

Missing are the reasons for his family's flight from Ur Kasdim, the circumstances of Haran's death, the significance of Terach's intention to move the family to Canaan, but especially the role of Avram in all this drama.

Most glaringly, what is missing is even the slightest account of Avram's religious development. There is no mention of any relationship whatsoever with the One Above until the Lord's command that he leave behind his land, his birthplace, and his father's domicile.

A critically important segment of Avram's youth, formative years, and maturation is missing. This gap is troublesome, and it is left to our Sages to fill in the "missing link," to tell us the "rest of the story."

And in the process, to expound upon the nature of the conflict between good and evil, in our case between Avram and, yes, Nimrod!

Here, in my free translation from the Aramaic, is the gist of the passage in *Bereshit Rabbah* 38:19 which addresses some of these questions:

Rabbi Chiya, the son of Rabbi Ada of Jaffa related: Terach was an idolater and dealt in the sale of idols. One day, he left the store in charge of his son Avram in his stead.

Along came a customer eager to purchase an idol. Avram asked him, "How old are you?" To which the customer responded, "Almost sixty!" Avram retorted, "A man almost sixty wishes to worship a day-old idol?!" The customer was ashamed and quickly departed.

Along came another customer, a woman this time. She brought with her a tray filled to the brim with fine flour. She asked Avram to distribute the flour as an offering to one of

the idols on her behalf. She departed.

Avram then grasped a sledgehammer and smashed all the idols except for the largest one to smithereens. He then placed the hammer in the hands of the intact largest idol.

Father Terach then returned and exclaimed to Avram, "What is all this wreckage?" To which Avram responded, "You see, dear father, this woman came into the shop with a flour offering for the idols. Immediately each idol protested and demanded the entire offering for itself. So, the largest idol grasped the hammer it is now holding and smashed all the others to bits."

Terach was incredulous. "Stop mocking me, Avram," he retorted. "You darn well know that these idols are dumb, deaf, and powerless!" To which Avram retorted, "May your ears take note of what your mouth just admitted!"

Terach then surrendered Avram to ...  
NIMROD!

The Midrash continues to report upon the great theological debate between Nimrod and Avram, during which the former tries to convince the latter to accept his idol, namely a fiery furnace. Avram naturally refuses and is

May the Torah learned from this TT  
be in loving memory of and לע"נ

ר' חיים בן זרח ז"ל

Chaim Greenberg ז"ל

גלב"ע ב-ו' חשון התשכ"ו

and

יהודית בת הרב יהושע דב ז"ל

Julia Fink-Greenberg ז"ל

גלב"ע ב-ט' חשון התשס"ו

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.



thrown into the furnace. His brother Haran, standing by, is conflicted and hedges his bets. He says to himself, "If Avram is consumed by the flames, I'll side with Nimrod. If Avram emerges unscathed by the flames, I'll side with Avram."

Avram emerges unharmed by the fire. Nimrod then orders Haran to worship the furnace or be tossed into it. Haran, siding now with Avram, refuses and is immediately cast into the furnace but is denied the divine miracle that saved Avram and dies in the fire.

That is the gist of the Midrashic passage, a story which many of us, including myself, first heard from our kindergarten teachers. It took me until the fourth grade, as I recall, before it occurred to me to ask my teacher why such an important narrative, which explains so much about Avram's personal growth, faith, and courage, is omitted from the biblical text—a question for which I've yet to find a satisfactory answer, and challenge you, dear reader, to ask yourselves.

We do take away from this Midrash a number of important conclusions about the development of religious belief and about good versus evil.

We learn that Avram came to the idea of monotheism on his own, in part through

careful observation of the folly of idolatry. It is because of his self-initiated search for truth that he drew close enough to the Almighty to gain access to His favor and direction.

We learn again about the extremes of which tyrants are capable, which include the annihilation of those of their constituents who do not comply with their idolatrous demands.

We learn of the futility, exemplified by Haran, of an ambivalent wishy-washy faith commitment, of betting on the "winner" in the contest between belief systems.

As always, we have only just begun our search for the full story of the Nimrods of the world and of our forefather's "missing years" and ultimate transition from Avram to Avraham, the "father of many nations."

Stay tuned, and with the Lord's help we will encounter a fully grown Avraham and a different kind of enemy, in next week's torah portion, *Vayera*. ■

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# The Power of Example

So familiar are we with the story of Abraham that we do not always stop to think about what a strange turn it is in the biblical narrative. If we fail to understand this, though, we may fail to understand the very nature of Jewish identity itself.

Here is the problem: Until now the Torah has been concerned with humanity as a whole. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel are human archetypes. The former represent the tensions between husband and wife, the latter the rivalry between siblings. Both are stories about individuals and both end tragically, the first with paradise lost, the second with bloodshed, fratricide and death.

Then comes another pair of stories – the

Flood and the building of Babel – this time about society as a whole. Each is about the tension between freedom and order. The Flood is about a world where freedom (violence, lawlessness, “everyone doing what was right in their own eyes”) destroys order. Babel is about a world where order (the imperialist imposition of a single language on conquered peoples) destroys freedom.

All four narratives are about the human condition as such. Their message is universal and eternal, as befits a book about God who is universal and eternal. God as He appears in the first eleven chapters of Genesis is the God who created the universe, made all humanity in His image, blessed the first humans, and who - after the Flood - made a covenant with all humankind. The God of the universe is the universal God.

Why then does the entire story shift in Genesis 12? From here onward it is no longer about humanity as a whole but about one man (Abraham), one woman (Sarah), and their children, who - by the time of the book of Exodus - have become a large and significant people, but still no more than one nation among many.

What is happening here? Does God lose interest in everyone else? That surely cannot

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be the case. At the end of Genesis, Joseph says to his brothers:

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

*(Gen 50:20)*

It may be that the phrase “many lives” means no more than the lives of his own family (so Targum Yonatan understands it). But the plain sense of the phrase *am rav*, “a great people,” suggests Egypt. Not until Exodus are the Israelites called *am*, a people. Joseph is saying that God sent him not merely to save his family from famine, but also the Egyptian people.

That too is the point of the book of Jonah. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, the Assyrian city, to persuade the people to repent and thus avoid their own destruction. In its closing words God says to the prophet:

“Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?”  
*(Jonah 4:11 (and see Malbim ad loc.))*

God is concerned not only with Israel but with the Assyrians, despite the fact that they would become Israel’s enemies, eventually conquering the northern kingdom of Israel itself.

Amos famously says that God not only brought the Israelites from Egypt, but also the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir (Amos 9:7). Isaiah even prophesies a time when the Egyptians will worship God, and He will rescue them from oppression as he once rescued Israel (Isaiah 19:20-21). So it is not that God loses interest in humanity as a whole. He feeds the world. He sustains all life. He is involved in the history of all

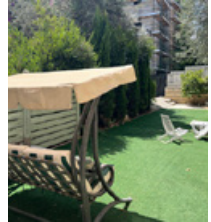


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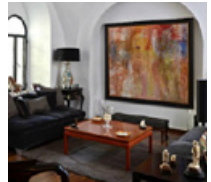
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nations. He is the God of all people. Why then the narrowing of focus from the universal human condition to the story of one family?

The philosopher Avishai Margalit, in his book *The Ethics of Memory*, talks about two ways of thinking: “i.e.” and “e.g.” The former speaks of general principles, the latter of compelling examples. It’s one thing to talk about general principles of leadership, for instance – think ahead, motivate, set clear goals and so on. It’s another thing altogether to tell the story of actual leaders, the ones who succeeded, the role-models. It is their lives, their careers, their examples, that illustrate the general principles and how they work in practice.

Principles are important. They set the parameters. They define the subject. But without vivid examples, principles are often too vague to instruct and inspire. Try explaining the general principles of Impressionism to someone who knows nothing about art, without showing them an Impressionist painting. They may understand the words you use, but these will mean nothing until you show them an example.

That, it seems, is what the Torah is doing when it shifts focus from humanity as a whole to Abraham in particular. The story of humanity from Adam to Noah tells us that people do not naturally live as God would wish them to live. They eat forbidden fruit

and kill one another. So after the Flood, God becomes not only a Creator but also a teacher. He instructs humanity, and does so in two ways: i.e. and e.g. He sets out general rules – the covenant with Noah – and then He chooses an example, Abraham and his family. They are to become role-models, compelling examples, of what it means to live closely and faithfully in the presence of God, not for their sake alone but for the sake of humanity as a whole.

That is why five times in Genesis the patriarchs are told:

“Through you all the families, or all the nations, of the earth will be blessed.”

(*Gen. 12:2, Gen. 18:18, Gen. 22:18, Gen. 26:4, Gen. 28:14*)

And people recognise this. In Genesis, Mal-tizedek says about Abraham, “Praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand” (*Gen. 14:20*). Avimelech, king of Gerar, says about him, “God is with you in everything you do” (*Gen. 21:22*). The Hittites say to him, “You are a prince of God in our midst” (*Gen. 23:6*). Abraham is recognised as a man of God by his contemporaries, even though they are not a part of his specific covenant.

The same is true of Joseph, the only member of Abraham’s family in Genesis whose life among the gentiles is described in detail. He is constantly reminding those with whom he interacts about God. When Potiphar’s wife tries to seduce him he says, “How could I do such a great wrong? It would be a sin before God!” (*Gen. 39:9*).

To the butler and baker, whose dreams he is about to explain, Joseph says:

“Interpretations belong to God.” (*Gen. 40:8*)

When he is brought before Pharaoh to

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interpret his dreams, he says:

“God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” (*Gen. 41:16*)

Pharaoh himself says of Joseph:

“Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” (*Gen. 41:38*)

Jews are not called on to be Jews for the sake of Jews alone. They are called on to be a living, vivid, persuasive example of what it is to live by the will of God, so that others too come to recognise God and serve Him, each in their own way, within the parameters of the general principles of the covenant with Noah. The laws of Noah are the “i.e.”. The history of the Jews is the “e.g.”.

Jews are not called on to convert the world to Judaism. There are other ways of serving God. Malkizedek, Abraham’s contemporary, is called, “a Priest of God Most High” (*Gen. 14:18*).

Malachi says a day will come when God’s name “will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets” (*Gen. 1:11*).

The prophets foresee a day when “God will be King over all the earth” (*Zechariah 14:9*) without everyone converting to Judaism.

We are not called on to convert humanity but we are called on to inspire humanity by being compelling role-models of what it is to live, humbly, modestly but unshakably in the presence of God, as His servants, His witnesses, His ambassadors – and this, not for our sake but for the sake of humanity as a whole.

It sometimes seems to me that we are in danger of forgetting this. To many Jews, we are merely one ethnic group among many, Israel is one nation-state among many, and God is something we talk about only among ourselves if at all. There was recently a

television documentary about one British Jewish community. A non-Jewish journalist, reviewing the programme, remarked on what seemed to her a strange fact that the Jews she encountered never seemed to talk about their relationship with God. Instead they talked about their relationship with other Jews. That too is a way of forgetting who we are and why.

To be a Jew is to be one of God’s ambassadors to the world, for the sake of being a blessing to the world, and that necessarily means engaging with the world, acting in such a way as to inspire others as Abraham and Joseph inspired their contemporaries. That is the challenge to which Abraham was summoned at the beginning of this week’s Parsha. It remains our challenge today. ■

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## PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# Malkeinu... Avinu

This week's selection from the 40th and 41st prakim of Sefer Yishayahu offers a primary message of encouragement and hope to a people who believe that Hashem has turned away from them, as the opening words reveal ("nistera darki meiHashem"). The navi reminds Israel that G-d is THE Eternal Creator Who does not tire nor flag and who invigorates and strengthens those who trust in G-d.

It is also important to note that the opening p'sukim of our haftarah are the closing part of the well-known "Nachamu, Nachamu Ami" prophecy – the nevu'ah that opens the section of consolation of Sefer Yishayahu. But, whereas the beginning of the chapter, the part that we read on the post-Tish'a B'Av Shabbat, portrays G-d's omniscience and power, His

greatness and domination, the chapter's second part, that which opens our haftarah, focuses upon Hashem's desire to establish a closer bond with Man and, conversely, the ability of Man to connect with the Divine.

It is actually this very theme that forms the clear connection to our parasha. Consider: throughout the first two parshot of the Torah, we read of G-d speaking to individuals – Hashem speaks to Adam, He speaks to Chava and He speaks to No'ach. But we are never presented with a *relationship*, we never see a conversation or discussion. Simply, there was the Master and the servant. No more than that.

But all of this changes in this week's parasha. For the first time we find the creations connecting with the Creator. In parashat Lech L'cha both Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu succeed in creating an actual relationship with G-d. They are put to the "test" by G-d and they *pass* those tests. Hashem is not simply instructing Man or commanding Man. For the first time, He is reaching out to Man..... and Man responds. There is a connection, there is a



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bond....and, therefore, there is now a relationship – one yearned for by humanity and one desired by the Divine. It is here that we learn of Hashem’s promise to build a great nation from Avraham’s descendants and where we read of G-d’s two covenants with the “first Jew”: Brit Bein Hab’tarim and Brit Milah.

Once we realize this “additional” uniqueness of these first Matriarch and Patriarch of our nation, we better appreciate the prophet’s message to the people who cried out that they, and their “path” or “cause”, has been “hidden from Hashem”. Yishayahu’s encouraging message is not simply that G-d is eternal and all-powerful, nor is it only that He is capable of redeeming the despondent nation. The underlying idea, the significant lesson that the navi shares with the people, is that Hashem wants more from them than simple obedience; ***G-d desires a real relationship with them!***

It is for this that Yishayahu teaches how Hashem Himself will give strength to the weary and courage to the fearful. And it is why he reminds them of G-d’s reassurance that “b’charticha v’lo m’asticha” – “I have chosen you and not rejected you”... because you are “zerah Avraham ohavi”, the descendants of **Avraham, who loved Me**. The navi hoped to explain Hashem Himself will help us

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draw closer to Him and meet the challenges He places before us.

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# Recognizing Hashem

ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן (בראשית יב:)

*And the souls they had acquired in Haran (Bereshit 12:5)*

The Rambam in Hilchot Avoda Zara (1:3) states that from when Avraham was a child he was curious as to how the world functions. His heart was restless until he grasped the truth. He had no teacher but deduced single handedly that there was a Creator of the world. The Rambam posits that at the age of forty, Avraham recognized God. Yet, when is the first time that God speaks with Avraham?

God first appears to Avraham and tells him: “Lech Lecha”- when Avraham is 75 years old! Incredible. One would have thought that once Avraham recognizes God (at the age of 40), Hashem would respond and speak with Avraham and tell him – great, someone finally recognizes me as the Creator. You got it- now let us strike a covenant. But nothing! God waits **35 years** to communicate with Avraham. Why the gap?

Imagine during those thirty-five years Avraham was challenging those around him, trying to convince them that there was a God who is in charge of creating and managing the world. They likely asked him – really, how do you know? Did he speak with you? Have you had any communication with this God?

How can you prove He exists? Avraham had to prove God’s existence without any help from God, but through nature. He could not point to a supernatural miracle. Yet, despite the obstacles he built a loyal following who shared his religious visions. These were “*the souls they had acquired in Haran*”.

Knowledge entails a dynamic element – the truth cries out and one has a need to share it with others. Often one is inspired by a great vort and has to share it with others. Avraham was able to share and convince others of God’s existence, despite his lack of any personal communication with God.

As Rav Soloveitchik (Masoret Harav) explains, modern man has been alienated from God for so long. We do not hear from God directly, yet, we have that unequivocal commitment and belief in God. Avraham set it into our DNA. Although we cannot see or hear God, we know He exists and we feel a close connection to Hashem. It is that unwavering Emunah that we transmit to our children and to others around us. We need to recognize God through nature as Avraham did. To realize that it is a miracle that the sun rises and sets in a daily pattern. That all the trees and flowers that bloom around us are not just the workings of mother nature – but that mother nature has a father!

Especially during the challenging times that we are experiencing, we need to recognize the hand of Hashem in the open and covert miracles that are transpiring around us. May we be able to strengthen our Emunah and Bitachon like Avraham Avinu and transmit it to future generations. ■





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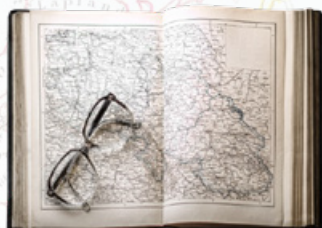
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# The Reward for Every Step

*“Vayomer Hashem el Avram lech lecha mei-artzecha u’mimoladitcha u’mibeit avicha el ha’aretz asher ar’eka* – Hashem said to Avram, “Go away from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”” Here we have the first recorded command that Avraham Avinu receives from Hashem. Midrash Rabbah elucidates, Hashem deliberately withheld the exact location to increase Avram’s anticipation and thus make the land “more beloved in his eyes,” as well as to reward Avram for each step that he took towards his destination. Why was it necessary for Avram to receive a reward for each step that he took? What is the deeper lesson here and its relevance to each of us?

Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz *zt”l* understands that had Hashem told Avraham Avinu the final destination, settling the land would have been the goal, and the journey towards that goal would be considered a *“hechsher*

*mitzvah*” – just a preparation to achieve the mitzvah. Yet, Hashem wanted to reward Avraham Avinu every step of the way and therefore expressed His directive “to go to the land that I will show you,” so that the steps themselves were transformed into a mitzvah.

This perspective offers us a paradigm shift in how we view our relationship towards mitzvot. Instead of seeing mitzvot as a burden, we can look at them as G-d given opportunities so He can continuously reward us and benefit us. *“Halachah”* is related to the world *“halichah,”* to walk, as each step of our lives is replete with opportunities to do the Will of Hashem and experience His goodness.

*Rabbeinu Bechaya zt”l* notes that the phrase *“lech lecha”* is related to the Hebrew word *“lichluch,”* the dirt or grime that sticks to a person from his surroundings. Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* explains that Hashem is commanding Avram, *“Lech lecha! Leave the negative influences that you have accumulated in your home environment! Further, you will be rewarded for every step that you take to move past these forces.”*

Therefore, Avram is first told to leave his land, then his birthplace, and finally his father’s home, which is the hardest to disconnect and separate from. This emphasizes how important it is to make a conscious effort, one step at a time, to break away from negative influences that we may have grown up with.

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Rav Tuvia Weiss ז"ל in *Sha'arei Tuvia* shares that this is perhaps one reason that we say the brachah "*shelo asani goy*," every day, even though it should be sufficient to say it once in our lifetime. Rather, this brachah reminds us of the importance to maintain our separateness, to activate our Jewish pride in not allowing non-Torah influences to be part of our culture.

Like Avraham Avinu, we too must take the command "*lech lecha*" and constantly choose to move away from adverse ideologies and perspectives that are antithetical to Torah living. Like Avraham Avinu, we too will see everlasting reward. ■

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# RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAMP HASC

AUTHOR OF BADERECH: ALONG THE PATH OF TESHUVA (MOSAICA 2021)

## Lech Lecha: #Blessed

Renowned for their selfless hospitality and legendary *hachnasas orchim*, the Machlis family is a paragon of self-sacrifice in generous giving. The *kidush Hashem* and positivity radiating from the Machlis home has filled Yerushalayim with light for decades. Each Shabbos, hundreds of guests are welcomed, countless Jews and non-Jews alike have passed through their home, enjoying a Shabbos or Yom Tov *seudah*. Entering their holy abode, one is greeted with open arms, showered with kindness, nourishment and a deluge of *blessings*.

A brilliant *talmid chacham* and beloved teacher of Torah, Rav Mordechai Machlis readily overflows with sage words of encouragement and *chizuk* to those who approach him. On one occasion, a group gathered in the Machlis home sought his blessings, and the Rav readily complied with all their personal requests, blessing them one by one for good health, happiness, *shalom bayis*, *parnassah* and the fulfillment of every need.

One of the petitioners, a middle-aged gentleman, asked for blessing for success. Rav Machlis asked him what he did for a living. It turned out he was a pediatric oncologist trained to address the rarest, most intensive cases of childhood cancer. Rav Machlis was at a loss for words. How could he bless the visitor for “success”? If

he prayed that the doctor should have an abundance of *parnassah* from his work, it would be like asking for more children to be in dire need of his medical specialty, *chas v’shalom*....

Suddenly, there was a sparkle in Rav Machlis’s eyes. “I bless us that there should be no more illness, no more sickness in the world,” he exclaimed. “Everyone should be healthy — and except for birthing centers, may there be no need for hospitals! Your field of expertise should become obsolete, just a faint memory. Then, people all over the world should pay you generously to come and speak, sharing your remarkable story of being part of that strange historical phenomenon that once was called ‘pediatric oncology’.

וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדְּלֶה שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה  
בְּרַכָּה: וְאֶבְרַכְךָ מִבְּרַכְיָךְ וְנִמְקַלְיָךְ אֲזָר וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּךָ כָּל  
מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה:

I will make you a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you;

And all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.” (12:1-3)

Chazal relate that the wise and righteous Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa had a special *koach* and skill in praying for the sick. When Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakai’s son fell seriously ill, he turned to his student and cried, “Chanina, pray for my child so that he may live!”

Chanina ben Dosa promptly placed his head between his knees, davened for Hashem’s mercy, and the boy recovered. (*Berachos*, 34b)

“Every day a voice goes out from Chorev and declares, כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלֵן בְּשֵׁבִיל חֲנִינָא, בְּנִי ‘All the world is nourished *bishvil* Chanina!’” (*Berachos*, 17b). While the *p’shat*, the simple meaning of *‘bishvil’* is ‘for the sake of’, the Baal Shem Tov, *zy’a*, says *shvil* can also be translated as ‘path’ or ‘pipeline’. Reb Chanina’s prayers and blessings opened a channel or path for Hashem’s outpouring of *shefa*, bounty, goodness and blessing. All the world was nourished and blessed through the spiritual ‘pipeline’ of Rebbe Chanina.

Rashi comments on our pasuk (12:2): וְהָיָה בְּרַכְיָהּ, הַבְּרָכוֹת נְתוּנוֹת בְּיָדְךָ; עַד עַכְשָׁיו הָיוּ בְיָדִי, בְּרַכְיָהּ לְאָדָם וְנֹחַ, וַיִּמְעַכְּשׂוּ אֶתְךָ תְּבַרְךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר תַּחְפֹּץ, “*And you shall be a blessing*: “The blessings are entrusted into your hand. Until now, they were in My hand; I blessed Adam and Noah. From now on, you may bless whomever you wish!” How did Avraham Avinu, and Rebbe Chanina, merit to bless others?

טוב עין הוא יבורך, “One with a good eye will be blessed” (*Mishlei*, 22:9). Alternatively translated, this pasuk reveals, ‘One with a good eye *should be the one to bless*.’ To bestow a blessing upon another, we need to see, acknowledge and affirm their worthiness. We honor them by seeing what they need and sharing our hopes and prayers for their wellbeing. Implicit in blessing is being *tov ayin*, ‘with an eye to the good’, with respect for the other person and an appreciation of their goodness.

Indeed, the *Mirrer Mashgiach*, Reb Yerucham Levovitz, *zt”l*, teaches that the effectiveness of one’s blessing depends on one’s selflessness, magnanimity and *ayin tovah*. Their ‘pipeline’ is open to the extent that they see the good in, and truly desire the wellbeing of, another. Thus, the source of Avraham Avinu and Rebbe Chanina’s ‘powers’ was none other than their

total selflessness, and this is how they merited to become conduits of blessing for the whole world.

Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai says that Avraham Avinu wore a medallion with a precious jewel with healing powers, and anyone suffering illness who gazed at it was immediately cured (*Bava Basra*, 16b). The *tzadik* Rebbe Moshe of Kubrin, *zy’a*, asserts that this jewel was not ‘magic’, rather its *koach* was rooted in the trait that Avraham himself exemplified — great *chesed*, kindness to others. Furthermore, Avraham bequeathed to each of us this ability to bless, uplift and heal others. Whenever a Jew engages in selfless kindness, practices hospitality and blesses others heartfully, he or she awakens the healing power of Avraham. And this is how anyone, even “all the families of the earth,” can merit to bless themselves through Avraham.

May we open our hearts in selfless kindness, and our eyes to see the good. May we open the gates of blessing, healing and salvation for all of Am Yisrael and all the good people of the world. And let all our troubles and *tzaros*, illness and pain, become but faded memories, relegated to history books and tellers of ancient tales.

In honor of the Yahrzeit this week of our great teacher, Rebbetzin Henny Machlis, a’h ■



# THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING WITH OU ISRAEL

**SUNDAY  
NOV 10**

**2:00PM**

Men's Gemara Chabura

**Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld**

@ **OU ISRAEL CENTER**

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NOV 11**

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**TUESDAY  
NOV 12**

## COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

**9:15 AM**

Understanding Tefila

**Rabbi Yossi Goldin**

**11:15 AM**

Chumash B'lyun

**Rabbi James Kennard**

**12:20 PM**

Unpacking the Messages  
of Chazal

**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

**10:15 AM**

Meaning in Mitzvot

**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**



## MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,  
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

**10:00AM -2:00PM**

Weekly Kollel Boker

**Rabbi Avi Herzog,  
Rabbi David Fine,**

**Rabbi Ian Shaffer,**

**Rabbi Dovid Wolpe**

**7:30 PM**

Safrut Chabura

**Final Session of Zman  
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner**

# THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING WITH OU ISRAEL

**WEDNESDAY  
NOV 13**

## **COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN REHAVIA**

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,  
24 Ussishkin Street, Rechavia

**9:15AM**

Holy Poetry **Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler**

**10:15AM**

Contemporary Issues in Halacha and  
Hashkafa **Rabbi Anthony Manning**

**11:25AM**

Wisdom of Rav Kook **Rabbi Aaron  
Goldscheider**

**12:30PM**

Medieval Jewish History  
**Dr. Deborah Polster**

## **WED. EVENING**

**8:30 PM**

The Bais-Halachic Controversies  
**Rabbi Aschi Dick @ Ohel Yitzchak  
Synagogue**, Keren HaYesod Street

**THURSDAY  
NOV 14**

## **COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA**

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,  
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

**9:15 AM**

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

**10:30AM**

Parashat HaShavua **Rabbi Baruch Taub**

**11:15AM**

Trailblazing the Text of TaNaCh  
**Rabbi Neil Winkler**

**12:20PM**

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**

**2:00 PM**

@ **OU Israel Center**  
Men's Gemara Chabura  
**Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld**

**8:30 PM** The Bais in Partnership with  
Kehilat Hashiveinu, Men's Chabura with  
**Rav Noam Koenigsberg.**  
Ramat

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Leah Naomi bat Tova  
Pesach ben Sarah Frieda  
Rina Feigle bat Rivka  
אברהם יהושע בן פרל באהדנא  
לב אייזיק בן אולגה  
יהונתן בן מחלה

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אורה בת ראינה



# YIZKOR REMEMBER

On Succot Yizkor is recited to commemorate the memory of our departed loved ones. It is the tradition of many to pledge to contribute tzedaka in memory of those who have left this world. Please consider making a contribution to the OU Israel Center, which will help to support the on-going Torah learning and many community programs of the OU Israel Center.

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**MONDAY NOVEMBER 18, 8:30PM**

RSVP at [www.ouisrael.org/events/hub-opening](http://www.ouisrael.org/events/hub-opening)

Location: The OU Israel Women's Hub | 2 Radak St. Rechavia

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- Keynote Address with **Mrs. Jen Airley** on the topic of The Strength of the Jewish Woman
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OU Israel | Women's Division

Join us on Monday evenings at 7pm for

## *Torah Tapestries*

A weekly Parsha shiur with Rebbetzin  
Shira Smiles

Opening shiur (Nov. 18)  
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**Location: OU Israel Women's Hub  
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## REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

DIRECTOR OF OU ISRAEL WOMEN'S DIVISION

# Every End is a New Beginning

The past few weeks have been difficult ones for Klal Yisrael in general. The yishuv where I live, Mitzpe Yericho has been hit hard. Within the span of 2 days, we lost two precious lives. Yishai Mann Hy”d and Aviad Naiman Hy”d both died in service of their country, leaving behind parents, children, siblings, friends, and an entire Yishuv to mourn their loss. A third member of the yishuv was severely injured a couple of days later (please daven for Evyatar Menachem Chaim ben Zehava). Yet, amid all the loss, the Yishuv also experienced moments of great simcha — woven between the sorrow came the news of a few precious new babies born into the community.

Naturally, the entire community wanted to help out in whatever way they could. Numerous sign up sheets went around, offering opportunities of bringing food to the families. Being one of the last ones to sign up, I didn't get much choice of what to bring, I took what was left - hard-boiled eggs for a family in mourning and chickpeas for a family celebrating a Shalom Zacher. I didn't give it much thought until later when I noted that both of the foods I was assigned are rooted in Jewish

traditions and they symbolize the exact same thing. We eat round foods both at times of death and times of birth to remind ourselves that life is a cycle, a continuum of beginnings and endings that forms an ongoing journey.

Thinking about it further, I realized that this is exactly the message of Simchat Torah as well. We end the Torah reading cycle with Parshat v'Zot Habracha and then immediately begin again with Parshat Bereishit. Every end is a new beginning. Each new beginning builds on the cycle that came before it. Our learning is one level deeper this year, building on new insights we gained last year, the same way that each generation of new neshamot builds on what the generation before accomplished.

This idea of cyclical time is woven into every aspect of the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah, the start of a new year, doesn't stand alone—it draws from everything from the previous year, allowing us to achieve even more based on what we've already accomplished. We also find this concept in Rosh Chodesh, the beginning of each new month, and in Shabbat, which marks the close of one week and the start of another. Judaism gives us numerous opportunities to mark time, to celebrate endings and appreciate what has been accomplished in the past and at the same time, to contemplate new beginnings and look towards the future.

This concept is also very relevant to the changes and transitions that are taking place at OU Israel in general, and for the Women's



Division (L'Ayla) specifically. As many of you know, OU Israel will be moving out of the current OU Israel Center building on Keren Hayesod Street, but b'ezrat Hashem, our programming will only be increasing. Our headquarter offices will be moving to Har Hotzvim and our programming will be moving to neighborhoods around Yerushalayim, and around Israel, in an effort to service Anglo Olim of all ages, demographics, and locations.

The past 25 years in the current building have been incredible. Tens of thousands of people have walked through the doors of the OU Israel Center building, always leaving inspired and invigorated. The amount of Torah learned in the building is unbelievable, but equally important are the friendships and connections that were formed, giving Olim a sense of family and community. Our time in the current building is coming to a close but here too, we find that every ending is a new beginning. As we look to the future, we hope to build off of the success of the past, to continue to grow and expand.

We have already begun to offer three full mornings of shiurim in various neighborhoods in Yerushalayim to both men and women (see center spread) with a great lineup of teachers. In addition to our full schedule of shiurim for the general public, I'd like to briefly outline the programs we have designed specifically for the Women's Division:

**1. Rosh Chodesh Seminars** - Our popular monthly seminars will be taking place at Beit Knesset Yeshurun. Our inspiring shiurim will be followed by a beautiful Hallel with Rikka Razel, offering women the opportunity to start their month off with a powerful

combination of Torah and Tefilla. We piloted this program in Elul and had an amazing turnout of approximately 200 women!

**2. Nach Yomi Yimei Iyun** - For women who are learning Nach Yomi or who just enjoy Tanach shiurim, these yimei iyun will take place at a very central location (soon to be announced).

**3. Women's Tiyulim** - We will continue to offer our Tanach Tiyulim, seeing the words of Tanach come alive at sites around Israel.

**4. The Women's Hub** - We are thrilled to announce the grand opening of the OU Israel Women's Division Hub. All of our women's evening programming will take place on Monday evenings in our new Hub, which is located in a 4-story building on Radak Street in Rechavia. This programming includes: the ATID midrasha evening for young Olim, the Dorot intergenerational choir, Rebbetzin Shira Smiles's weekly Parsha shiur, parenting classes, our mother-daughter pre-Chagm program, the Bat Mitzvah and Beyond program, our NextGen monthly events, Women's Performance Community events, and more.

We are working on additional morning venues for weekly women's shiurim and our Young Mothers' Club. Once all of this is in place, we will begin working on offering satellite Women's Division programming in Anglo communities around Israel.

We are very excited about all of this growth and expansion, but also recognize that change can be challenging. We know that many of our classes and programs have been a mainstay in people's lives for years, so we understand that changes in timing and location may not be convenient for everyone. In an effort to continue to serve everyone, a

professional videographer has been hired to ensure that our regular shiurim are recorded and uploaded to our Youtube channel in a very timely manner.

It is our sincere hope and prayer that the close of this incredible era will also mark the beginning of an exciting new phase, and that the achievements of past decades will be multiplied many times over, reaching Olim across the entire country. Thank you all for your patience and support as we transition into this new chapter. May we see much Hatzlacha in this endeavor and Besorot Tovot for all of Klal Yisrael! ■

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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

PROGRAM DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL CENTER

*Parshat Lech Lecha* opens with Hashem's instruction to *Avram* to leave behind his ancestral homeland and depart for the Land of Israel. It is in this Land that he *will become a great nation, be blessed and his name will become great*. **Rashi** explains that in addition to *Avram's* name becoming greatly recognized for his accomplishments, that there is more being alluded to in the words- *V'Agadla Shemecha*- and your name will be great.

זהו ואגדלה שמך, הריני מוסיף אות על שמך,  
שעד עכשיו שמך אברם מכאן ואילך אברהם,  
ואברהם עולה רמ"ח כנגד איבריו של אדם

*And this is the meaning of and I will make your name great. I will add a letter to your name, for until now, your name was Avram. From now on your name will be Avraham, and Avraham equals 248, corresponding to the parts of the human body.*

So according to *Rashi*, when Hashem promises *Avram* that his name will become great, it is an allusion to the fact that Hashem will add an additional letter to *Avram's* name and he will be known from then on as *Avraham*, and that the numerical value of his new name corresponds the parts of the human body. How are we to understand this interpretation offered by *Rashi*? What is the significance of *Avraham's*, new, "great name" corresponding to the parts of the human body?

In a fascinating teaching, the **Avodat Elazar, the Kozshnitzer Rebbe zy'a**, explains that when we first are introduced to *Avram*,

his name connotes that he is the *Av Ram*- he is the "father" if you will, of teaching the world about *Romemut Hashem* - that there is one G-d who exists above and beyond this world. However, as he enters into *Eretz Yisrael*, his understanding of our relationship to Hashem evolves to become more complete as reflected in the promise *V'Agadla Shemecha* your name will become great. His new name *Avraham* which corresponds in *gematria*, to all the various parts which come together to form a complete human being, represents the transformation to a more complete spiritual clarity. *Avraham* ceases to teach the world solely about *Romemut Hashem*- but also begins to teach the world about *Gadlut Hashem*- the greatness of G-d.

The Rebbe explains further, that the term *Gadlut*- greatness can only be measured when an item is placed near something that is smaller or less than the item that is *gadol*. So too, *Avraham's* new name represents a spiritual evolution in *Avraham's* own understanding of his relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, which he begins to share with the entire world.

The name *Avram*- marks the beginning of his spiritual journey, teaching others about the one G-d who exists beyond our world, however the more sophisticated understanding, represented by his new name *Avraham*, represents a transition where he begins to teach the world that Hashem is paradoxically also *gadol* - Hashem is great and imminently present in our lives, even as



His presence remains beyond our physical capacity to see or grasp.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may each of us merit to heed this powerful teaching from the *Rebbe of Kozshnitz*, and work to embrace the paradox that represents a more complete, heightened spiritual awareness, that though Hashem may be physically beyond us here in this world, His great presence is indeed imminent and here with us, in each and every moment. ■



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With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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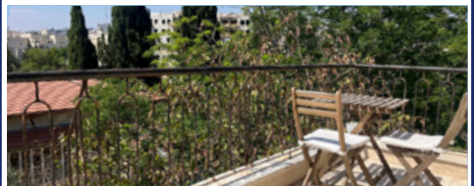
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## GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN  
RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION  
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# The Origin Story

Jewish history was born thousands of years ago. In that sacred moment, Hashem forged an eternal covenant- the Brit Bein Habetarim- with Avraham, laying the foundation for the journey of our people and setting the stage for generations of destiny.

The covenant took shape following an earlier nighttime dialogue between Hashem and Avraham. Hashem had promised Avraham that he would father a great nation. Yet at this point, Avraham remained childless, assuming that his non-Jewish servant would be his heir. To reassure him, Hashem guided him outside, pointing to the heavens. He assured Avraham that, just as the stars are beyond counting, so too would his descendants be uncountable.

In likening Avraham's children to the stars, Hashem crafted an analogy between the Jewish people and celestial lights. We, like stars suspended in perpetual orbit, hover above history, unaffected by earthly forces. Just as natural laws governing the earth do not affect the stars, so too are the Jewish people governed by laws beyond those that shape other nations. Our history is distinct, transcendent, and eternal.

This starry promise soothed Avraham's worries, and the Torah registers his quiet acceptance.

והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה

### FROM CHILDREN TO LAND

At this stage, the conversation shifted from Avraham's descendants to the question of inheriting the Land of Israel. Twice before, Avraham had been promised this Land. Upon his arrival in Israel, Hashem pledged that his descendants would inhabit it. After Lot's hasty departure, the promise was renewed. Yet much had changed since those initial assurances. A brutal war was waged between powerful empires and ruthless warlords over the territories of Israel. The promised land seemed occupied by formidable kingdoms and entrenched armies. Near Yerushalayim, a city had formed around a religious center led by Malki Tzedek, a priest-king. This Land was neither barren nor abandoned. Instead, it was fiercely contested by stronger, established powers. Avraham could scarcely envision how he might inherit a Land so firmly held by powerful rivals.

Confused, he asks Hashem

במה אדע כי אירשנה

Avraham's question to Hashem did not suggest disbelief in the divine promise. Rather, he was confounded by the seeming improbability of such a promise materializing amidst the harsh realities surrounding him. Avraham did not doubt Hashem's intent, power, or commitment to deliver the Land. Yet, he was perplexed by the "how" of it: how could such an improbable event come to pass?

The mighty empires appeared deeply entrenched, and the forces around him too formidable to be dislodged. And "when"

would it come to be? Time was slipping by, and Avraham, advancing in age, saw no sign that Israel was within reach. It wasn't disbelief but rather confusion over a divine assurance that appeared to defy the present reality.

### AN INDIRECT RESPONSE

Unlike His response to Avraham's earlier question about having children, Hashem did not provide a straightforward answer to this inquiry about Land. While fathering children was a promise which would be "easily" attained, the route to settlement in Israel would be more arduous and bewildering.

In responding to Avraham's question, Hashem emphasized two crucial elements that would shape Jewish history. Firstly, Hashem cautioned Avraham that the path to settling Israel would not be smooth:

ועבדום ועיינו אותם ארבע מאות שנה

"They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years." Before receiving Hashem's promised Land, we would descend into Egypt for centuries of slavery and affliction. This harsh sentence, perhaps, was a punishment for the jealousy and betrayal in the sale of Yosef or for smaller missteps, even by Avraham himself, including this moment of questioning (Nedarim 32).

However, the descent to Egypt was not a single event but a template for Jewish history. The phrase *גם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי*, particularly the word "גם," which signifies a recurring phenomenon, suggests that our people would **repeatedly** face oppression from those who oppose Hashem's presence in the world, and wage a proxy battle against His representatives.

### INTEGRAL TO OUR MISSION

Our servitude in Egypt though, was not solely a punishment but is integral to Jewish



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mission. We are tasked with inspiring humanity to higher monotheistic and moral ground, yet no one enjoys "disrupters" who challenge prevailing complacency and convention. The road of Jewish destiny—and the journey toward dwelling in the Land of Israel—would be fraught with hardship and strain, part of our nation's timeless calling. Only after enduring a harsh and painful exile in Egypt would we receive Israel. Furthermore, this exile would serve as a template for Jewish history, foreshadowing future cycles of persecution.

### IT BEGINS IN ISRAEL

Additionally, Hashem informed Avraham that adversity would not begin in Egypt. The phrase *גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם* does not refer solely to Egyptian servitude but rather to the struggles within the Land of Israel itself. Though the concluding phrase *ועבדום* and *ועיינו אותם* points to persecution and slavery

in Egypt, the earlier phrase of גר יהיה זרעך לא captures the struggle to establish Jewish presence in the land of Israel itself. The struggle of Jewish history would arise immediately, in the effort to inhabit a Land divinely promised to us. From the outset, we would face opposition from those who sought to deny Hashem's children their rightful place in His chosen Land.

Throughout Sefer Bereshit, even before Egyptian oppression, and despite our forefathers often finding favor among the local inhabitants, our presence in the Land of Israel was fiercely contested. Avraham could barely secure a small plot to bury Sarah. Yitzchak's repeated attempts to dig wells and cultivate the land were met with hostility. And after a twenty-year exile in Aram Naharaim, Yaakov returned to face Esav and his 400 mercenaries, escaping that threat only to confront the aftermath of his daughter's abduction by local chieftains.

Each of our Avot recognized that the challenge encapsulated in the phrase גר יהיה זרעך לא להם had already begun during their lifetimes, even while residing within the borders of Israel. They understood that they were not yet "owners," but rather "guests" or גרים. Avraham, in his negotiations with the people of Chevron, identified himself as גר - "I am both a stranger and a resident." Yitzchak, instructed by Hashem to remain in the land during a famine, was told גור בארץ הזאת - "sojourn" in Israel as a visitor, and he immediately encountered local resistance to his attempts to settle. Similarly, Yaakov, upon returning to the Land, humbly remarked, עם לבן גרתי - acknowledging that even after years in Aram, he had not established a permanent home in Israel.

We are currently living through this narrative of Sefer Bereshit. Though we have physically returned to our Land, we still struggle for recognized sovereignty over it. Sefer Bereishit is alive in 2024, we are living its story and conducting its struggles.

### FORFEIT

The second crucial point Hashem conveyed to Avraham was the timing of full inheritance of the Land. It would not occur in Avraham's lifetime, nor in that of his children or grandchildren, but rather in the fourth generation. Only after the sins of the indigenous locals reached their tipping point could his descendants fully inherit the Land.

כי לא שלם עון האמורי עד הנה

At that time, the sins of the inhabitants would have reached such depths that they would forfeit their right to live in Israel.

Our claim to the Land of Israel rests upon the surrender of other nations, for only when those who dwell here relinquish their aspirations can ours firmly take root. Hashem's Land, too spiritually delicate, cannot bear the heavy burden of sin and corruption. When its inhabitants stain and pollute this sacred soil, they relinquish their hold on the Land of Israel. Only a people devoted to holiness can inhabit a realm that knows no tolerance for evil.

Soon after receiving this information, Avraham witnessed it unfolding before his eyes. The twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were eradicated from the map of Israel. Their crimes were severe, yet they would not have warranted annihilation had they existed elsewhere. Their sins paled in comparison to those of the generation of the Flood. Yet, they were consumed in a hail of fire, for the Land of Israel could not endure their



immoral ways. The tragic saga of Sodom and Gomorrah serves as a poignant reminder that this sacred land does not permit the stain of immorality to persist.

The journey to settle Israel is a historical process in which all other nations reveal themselves unworthy of living on this Land and we are summoned to create a society of godliness and morality under Hashem's watchful gaze.

This process continues today. The local inhabitants have proven themselves incapable of inhabiting the Land. This soil cannot absorb murder, rape, the burning of innocents, death chants, and the revelry in innocent bloodshed. Gradually, their grip on the Land is weakening, just as the Emorites lost their thousands of years ago.

Jewish history unfolds in cycles. What has happened before unfolds anew. We hope this current cycle is drawing to its end. We pray to Hashem to witness the heresy and immorality of those who still occupy His Land. We plead for Him to remove them and replace them with His people. And we ask for His help in our own struggle—to transform ourselves from mere strangers into those who will eternally dwell in the Land of God. ■



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BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA  
SHMIDMAN  
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## Renewal in Every Stride

HAFTORAH - YESHAYAHU 40:27 - 41:16

וְקוֹיָהּ ה' יַחְלִיפוּ כַחַּ יַעֲלוּ אֲבָר כַּנְּשָׂרִים יְרוּצוּ וְלֹא  
יִיָּגְעוּ יִלְכוּ וְלֹא יִיָּעֲפוּ:

But they who trust in Hashem shall renew their strength, they raise wing as eagles, they run and do not become tired; they shall march and not grow faint.

Yeshayahu's words in the Haftorah paint a picture of Hashem's unfailing support for those who trust in Him. But why does he use the term *יחליפו כח* - "exchange" or "transform" strength - rather than the more straightforward *נתן כח*, "give strength"? And what's the significance of flying, running, and walking?

The Malbim explains that there are two distinct types of exhaustion: *עיף* refers to physical exhaustion which is replenished through rest and nourishment while *יגע* is mental and psychological exhaustion.

Relieving this fatigue requires emotional and psychological renewal, often found in self-encouragement, spiritual connection and community support.

Yeshayahu's message is steady and timeless: there are times when we cannot fly or even run, yet we must continue forward, even if only by foot. Hashem renews our strength to fit each moment, helping us to walk when we cannot soar. By pairing running with overcoming mental exhaustion and walking with overcoming physical exhaustion, Yeshayahu understands and underscores that our journey may be challenging and even overwhelming, but Hashem is with us at every step. During these difficult and painful times, we may find ourselves walking, with no strength to run or fly. We should find strength knowing that putting one foot in front of the other is still moving forward. ■

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## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS  
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL  
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# Rav Kook: Love for All Humanity

For almost two thousand years the experience of the Jew living in foreign lands, often being brutally persecuted, left us with little opportunity to interact positively with our gentile neighbors.

Rav Kook sensed that things would dramatically shift with the Jewish people's return home. With autonomy and a renewed sense of self-actualization, we as a people could finally fulfill one of our most exalted aspirations. Namely, to take responsibility for healing the world.

The goal to be a guiding light to all the nations was a mission first articulated by God

to the founders of our faith: Avraham and Sarah. This mission was conveyed to them in a most dramatic way, with a change to their very names.

### AVRAHAM AND SARAH

The Talmud (Berachot 13a) elucidates Avraham's and Sarah's change of name. Their original name *Avram* and *Sarai* were a reflection of the fact they functioned as leaders for their own community. The addition to their names symbolized a significant transition.



They were to go beyond their own cohort and expand their concern to 'a multitude of nations.'

Rav Kook comments that it is natural for a person to be nationalistic. In the same way that we express a natural love for our immediate family we also feel bound to the people of the nation.

However, Avraham and Sarah attained a spiritual level in which they perceived that true love and devotion cannot remain limited to one's peers. Authentic care and concern for others is boundless. It stretches to all of humanity. (*Ain Aya, Berachot 1:174*)

In this same passage the Talmud makes the assertion that uttering the name of Avraham using the original format (*Avram*) is a serious transgression. Rav Kook explains that the wrongdoing is not only uttering the wrong name. To regard Avraham as being only 'Avram' is a failure to appreciate and give

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voice to the grand vision of a Jewish people's singular role in bringing God's wisdom and the Torah's inspiration to every nation. (*Ain Aya, Berachot* 1:176)

### AVRAHAM IMPACTS THE NATIONAL SCENE

One of the very first episodes the Torah reports concerning the life of Avraham was his role in impacting the larger society that surrounded him. He, together with his small group of armed disciples, entered into battle. Avraham makes a monumental contribution on the world stage. After the victory the King of Sodom offers him the spoils of war. Avraham responds by saying that he refuses to take anything, "not even a thread or shoe string" (*Bereshit* 14:23).

The Talmud (*Chullin* 88b) notes that as reward for having refused to accept the thread and shoe strap, Avraham's progeny would receive two mitzvot: the thread of blue of *tzitzit* and the strap of *tefillin*. What is the meaning of this teaching beyond the similarity in items? Rabbi Moshe Taragin suggested that the *tzitzit* and *tefillin* are public displays of the uniqueness of the Jew. Both are traditionally worn all day and are in prominent view by others. Although Avraham had boldly made his impact in the larger society, he was not to waver from a distinct way of life that was unique to the Jew.

Finding the right balance between the Jewish people's inwardness and her role in impacting humanity is highlighted in another memorable episode in the life of Avraham. Rashi in the opening of Parshat Vayera takes note of the fact that the name of the place where Avraham underwent his circumcision is specified. The Torah does not usually mention specific sites. Additionally we already know from earlier in the Torah's



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text (*Bereshit* 14:16) that Avraham's home was in the plains of Mamre.

Rashi explains that the location is given because it was Mamre who had given [encouragement] advice regarding the circumcision. Therefore God honored Mamre by appearing to Avraham on his land.

Rav Kook wonders why Avraham would need encouragement to fulfill a command of the Almighty. Could it be that Avraham, God's faithful servant, entertained doubts whether he should fulfill God's will? Why did Avraham find this trial more challenging than many others he overcame? Rav Kook answered that Avraham was afraid that if he circumcised himself, people would no longer be drawn to seek him out. The unique sign of *milah* would set Avraham apart from other people. People would avoid seeking his instruction.

Therefore, this directive disturbed

Avraham. It seemed to negate the very goal of his life's vision - bringing the entire world to recognize "the name of God, Lord of the Universe" (Bereshit 21:33).

Mamrei advised Avraham to heed the word of God. There was a divine plan not to be questioned. It was necessary to nurture the sanctity of the Jewish people. The elevation of the world will come specifically through the uniqueness of Israel and the light it will spread to all people (*Midbar Shor*, p. 197).

### **DARKNESS AND THE NEW LIGHT OF DAY**

It is most noteworthy that Rav Kook, in his landmark commentary on aggadot of the Talmud, opens by addressing the unique role that the Jewish people play among the other nations.

The topic of the first Mishna in all of Shas discusses the obligation to recite the Shema both morning and night. The text of the *mishna* reads that the exact timing of the night corresponds to the time that the Kohen would enter his home to eat terumah (the kohen's portion). It seems peculiar to associate the night time reading of the Shema with a curious law related to the Kohen.

Rav Kook exquisitely explains that there is deep symbolism. The night represents the long dark exile of the Jew. In the gloom of the Jewish people's experience of life they were forced to conduct his holy service in private. Jewish life was focused inward with the emphasis on our spiritual survival and prevailing as a people. The Shema recited at night characterizes this mode of Jewish expression.

The new day with the appearance of light represents the Jewish people returning to her Land. In a redemptive era the Jew no longer needs to cower and keep out of sight. The

Kohen's daily sacred service is done publicly. A full spectrum of people were invited to gather in that sacred setting of the Temple - Jew and non-Jew alike. Reciting the day time Shema is intended to be a call that is heard beyond the confines of our own people - all humankind is summoned to recognize and acknowledge one God and the Torah's morality and light.

### **A SPIRITUAL REVIVAL**

In his inimitable fashion Rav Kook writes in his classic work *Orot*, how the rebirth of Israel in her ancient Land will bring universal blessing to the world. Not only the Jew, but all mankind will become more conscious of the radiance of God and His light in the world:

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Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at [Aarong@ouisrael.org](mailto:Aarong@ouisrael.org) at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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# ERETZ HEMDAH

## ASK THE RABBI SERVICE

RAV DANIEL MANN



## An Avel Attending a Seudat Hodaya

לעילוי נשמת  
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** I was saved from a dangerous situation and was advised to make a *seudat hodaya*. One of the people I would most want to take part is my daughter-in-law (=d<sup>il</sup>), but she is in *aveilut* for a parent. Is it permitted for her to come, and if not, may I invite her anyway and leave it up to her, or perhaps delay the *seuda* until after her *aveilut*?

**Answer:** We will take a brief look at the Halacha and also the personal side.

The prohibition on *simcha* for an *avel* is most severe during *shiva*, but the *gemara* (Moed Katan 22b) says that an *avel* for a parent may not go to a wedding for twelve months. The *gemara* struggles with a category of happy social interaction called *simchat merei'ut* (of friendship), and the *halacha* is that it is forbidden for twelve months (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 391:2).

Two main parameters are crucial on ruling in various cases. 1. How festive is the event? 2. How important is it for the *avel* to be there? Weddings are the pinnacle of festivity, yet an *avel* can go to his child's wedding because a proper wedding is unfeasible without him (see Rama *ibid.*). The Rama (*ibid.*) cites a *machloket* about taking part in

the *seuda* of a *brit* and *pidyon haben* (considered low-intensity celebrations) in which the *avel* is not a principal. The Rama concludes: "The custom is to not eat at any meal in the world for the whole twelve months, if it is outside the house."

There is a *machloket* about taking part in a *seudat siyum*. The Shach (YD 246:27) says that an *avel* during the twelve months may take part in it (see also Geshet Hachayim I, 22:2:6). The Beit Lechem Yehuda (to YD 391:2) says he may only do so if he is making the *siyum*, and the Chochmat Adam (166:2) is skeptical about permissibility in light of the Rama's *minhag*. I did not find discussion of a *seudat hodaya*, but it is parallel to a *siyum* in that they are optional *seudot mitzvah* (see Living the Halachic Process VI,H-3) that are not particularly time sensitive (see Shach *ibid.*) and are done in a not overly festive manner.

Since, based on the above, it is legitimate for your *dil* to take part in the *seuda*, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with inviting her. Even if the stricter opinion is more accepted in her environs, if she believes her parent would want her to be lenient, this is an important factor (see Shach, YD 344:9). There are ways for your *dil* to take part even if she is generally *machmira*. Since



the main problem is joint celebratory eating rather than assembling with others (see Tosafot, Moed Katan 22b), she can be there for mingling and for the words of Torah and thanks (if there is not music playing). Another possibility, which allows even eating, is for the *avel* to have a (real) job at the event (see Gesher Hachayim ibid.). On the other hand, whatever is being considered, you should stress to her that you do not want her to alter her practice in this aspect of *kibbud av va'em* in order to honor you (this is important general advice regarding in-laws).

You have no outright obligation to make a *seudat hodaya*, and there are other ways to thank Hashem (including *tzedaka* and adopting laudable practices, while stating that it is *bli neder*). Since there is no strict time limit, it can make sense under the right circumstances to put off the *seuda* for weeks or a couple months so that your *dil* can take part normally, considering her centrality.

However, in most healthy relationships, it is not expected that an *avel's* limitations should change the broader family's life in a major way. (Depending on family size and sensitivity of its members, it can sometimes even be unwise). "Bending over backward" to make sure the *avel* does not miss things can also sometimes put pressure on the *avel* to take part when they do not feel comfortable doing so. We would generally say that open communication and avoiding subtle pressure on the *avel* is the best way to go

about it from your perspective. Hopefully your *dil* will reciprocate with full understanding if it makes sense for you to go ahead with a *seudat mitzvah* that she may choose not to take (full) part in. ■

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# Transitions

**Dear OU Parenting,  
My 14 year old daughter just started high school and I'm not sure how involved I should still be in her life. She seems to need a lot of space.  
J.L.**

Dear J.L.,

When a child moves into adolescence there are so many changes. It's great that you are aware and acknowledging these challenges. It is a time when they begin to look more like an adult, have stronger opinions and are forming a strong sense of self. One of the more challenging aspects of this adjustment is learning how to deal with a teenagers' new found independence. Parents tend to ask themselves how much parenting and guidance is now necessary or acceptable for a 14 year old. Especially for parents dealing with a first adolescent this can be daunting. On one hand you want to be a responsible parent and on the other hand you don't want to be overbearing. You want to give your child the space to grow, mature, and become responsible and capable without choking their process.

Here are a few basic guidelines to keep in mind while finding your footing. A parents' primary responsibility is to keep their child safe and healthy. While accompanying your

new adolescent on her journey to adulthood, make sure you keep those guidelines in mind. However old your child is, you're still the parent. Knowing where your teenager is at all times, knowing who they are with and deciding what time they are to be home are basic considerations. As your child moves into middle teenage years it's important to involve her in the discussion regarding rules and boundaries. It may mean that parents compromise on a later curfew as long as the child calls to update parents where they are. This also allows the child to take on some responsibility of their own. Coordinating expectations makes things clear and leads to less arguments.

Every parent is different and can decide how strict or lenient to be with their teenager but strong boundaries and guidelines are essential in keeping your child safe and secure. It sends them the message that you care and you're confident in your role. In a teenager's often chaotic life – especially these days, when parents show understanding of their struggle yet stay committed to being involved, it indeed makes them feel more secure.

Along with setting boundaries it's important to be available when they are ready to share and discuss. Then you become a clear and important voice in the midst of their confusion. Even if you can't solve their issue you can listen and become an anchor for them.

If you find that you've overstepped your bounds every once in a while or didn't follow

up as you should've, forgive yourself and keep practicing. As long as you're coming from a place of wanting to connect to your child and keep her safe the message is clear. You care!

It's a dance, a balance and a skill like anything else that will improve over time.

Be"hatzlacha ■

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to **parenting@ouisrael.org** (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

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# Shagririm Asks

**Bianca asks:** I found my friend a good match where the personality and values are in alignment. However, the guy has been married previously and my friend is nervous to date someone who's divorced. Do you think that this is something that she should be concerned about and if not, how can I encourage her to go out with him?

**Aleeza Answers:** Everyone comes to a relationship with things we like and also things we don't prefer. In this case, it is clear that divorce is something your friend doesn't prefer, and it's understandable that she's uncomfortable dating a man who's been divorced. That being said, divorce is increasingly common these days for many reasons and is not necessarily an indication of something negative or problematic.

What I've noticed about men who have

gone through divorce is that they often have a stronger awareness of what a relationship entails and are willing to put in the effort required to establish a healthy, successful relationship. They have taken the time to evaluate what worked and what didn't work, and have more clarity around what they're looking for in a partner. And they have typically done some real self-reflection, perhaps even therapy, and are emotionally ready for the commitment of marriage. Overall, I find that there are benefits of dating someone divorced.

At the same time, we can't ignore your friend's discomfort with this match suggestion. I've observed that many people start their dating journey declining suggestions like this one and after dating for a while, they start to reconsider. If your friend is at an early dating stage, she might be more apprehensive about saying yes to a man who's divorced.

I recommend telling her that you're not asking her to change her opinion on dating divorced men in general, but that you're asking her whether she'd consider going on a date with this specific man just to see if he might be someone she'd like to get to know better. If you know him well enough to vouch for his character, share that with her—your trust in him should offer her some reassurance. And if she's still not open to it at all, table it and revisit the conversation in several months.

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Ultimately, respecting her final decision is important. And if he's not for her, I hope you find him another wonderful woman instead. ■

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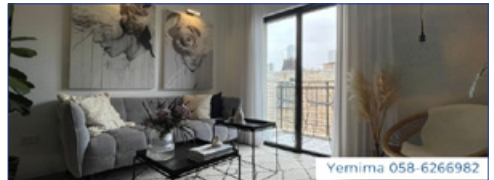
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# A Promise is a Promise. But It Requires Action.

In the year 1948 from creation of the world, Avraham is born and here in Parshat Lech Lecha we are officially introduced to him by learning of his first test, that of being sent on his new life journey: ..לך לך אל הארץ אשר אראך. You, Avram, are to leave all comforts, your birthplace, family and all that is familiar to you and go to an undisclosed destination, a Land that I will show you. There, in that Land, I will bless you and make you into a great nation.

This parsha is replete with foreshadowing our nation's plights as well as promises made to us through Avraham. Every detail of our parsha shares insight of what is to come: once Avraham gets to Canaan, he's already faced with the obstacle of a famine, and must leave for Egypt. He comes back up to Canaan with wealth and cattle.

Avram rises to become a warrior fighting against the odds to save his nephew Lot, and is blessed by the king. Most notably, we learn of the Covenant Between the Parts, ברית בין הבתרים, where Galut is foretold yet ultimately Eretz Yisrael will be our eternal heritage. The parsha continues with the barren couple conceiving Yishmael through Hagar but are also promised that a son, to be named Yitzchak, will be born to Avraham and Sarah and stem the great nation and God's special bond.

One can look at the parsha and wonder "Why?" Why such roller coasters? Why the tests, hardships and difficulties? If Hashem promises we will be as many as the sand and stars and the Land will be ours, then why can't He just deliver without "going down" before the big "up"? Why do we need to go into exile before we are redeemed?

In truth, however, it's the opposite. How many of us would have given up on the "downs in life, had we not been revealed that there is, in fact, going to be an "up". Meaning, it's these very promises by Hashem that give the strength to continue.

The lessons in our parsha, at the very start of humanity, are most encouraging. In every stage of difficulty, Avraham rises to greater heights. With every investment of effort and energy along with his steadfast commitment to Hashem and his unwavering faith, not only is Avraham and his family rewarded, but also are all those who he inspired along his journey as well as us, present day Am Yisrael.

Ramban teaches us in our parsha: כל מה שאירע לאבות, סימן לבנים. Whatever happened to our forefathers is a portent for the children. Trial after trial, tribulation after tribulation, Avraham stays loyal in his perfect trust and faith. And we, thousands of years later, are to learn and follow so we



too will reap those rewards and promises. We invest, we reap.

הזורעים בדמעה ברינה יקצורו

Last week, at the shiva house of Hillel Eliyahu Ovadia Hy”d, his father shared that he was comforted by this as well. He explained to me that the very fact that they immigrated to Israel from France, and I from America are testimony to the fulfillment of Hashem’s promise to Avraham.

Agreed. We are part of something much bigger, something much larger than ourselves.

As Rachel Imenu’s Yahrzeit is approaching on י”א חשוון, there’s another promise I hold on to, awaiting its fulfillment.

מנעי קולך מבכי...יש שכר לפעולתך...ושבו מארץ אויב...יש תקווה...ושבו בנים לגבולם (ירמיהו לא)

“Restrain your voice from weeping...for there is reward for your accomplishment... they will return from enemy land...your children will return to their border.”

Hashem promised that in Rachel’s merit Israel would be redeemed. Just as she performed acts of kindness to her sister Leah without letting any jealousy rule, so should Hashem not be zealous to punish Am Yisrael for bringing idols into the Mikdash.

Indeed, actions speak louder than words. יש שכר לפעולתך.

Return our brethren from enemy lands! Bring our nation Home! כבד היום.

Avraham and Sarah are the beginning, leading the way for the rest of humanity. מעשה אבות, סימן לבנים.

Together they lead a life of tests and growth, of action, of holding on to faith and hope, of inspiring and teaching those around them of Hashem’s Oneness, of following God to the Land of Israel, and of promises made through them to the Jewish nation.

May we have the strength to follow in the path of Avraham and Sarah and thereby be worthy to see the fulfillment of Hashem’s promises quickly, in our days. ■

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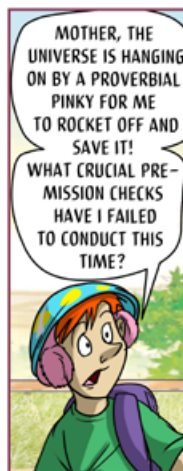


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### LECH LECHA: PERSONAL GROWTH AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

In Parashat Lech Lecha, God's command to Abraham to "go forth from your land" is more than a physical journey, it is an existential quest. Rav Kook interprets *Lech lecha* as a directive to seek out our deepest selves, to journey toward our truest potential.

Abraham is not merely leaving a location but transcending limitations of identity, culture, and place, moving toward a fuller realization of divine purpose. For Rav Kook, each individual is thus called to "go forth" from the confines of habit and convention, moving toward the infinite possibilities of the soul.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offers a complementary yet expansive vision. He argues that Abraham's journey establishes the foundation of a moral society, one where individuals are bound by a covenant that holds them accountable not only to God but to one another. For Rabbi Sacks, Abraham's journey sets a precedent: personal growth must serve the collective good. It's a reminder that spiritual elevation does not isolate us; rather, it commits us to a greater moral responsibility toward humanity.

Together, Rav Kook and Rabbi Sacks portray Abraham's journey as both a personal

quest and a societal mission. As we "go forth," inspired by their teachings, we are invited to seek inward growth that propels us outward, to transform ourselves in ways that elevate the communities around us. Abraham's journey, then, is our own—a call to step into a vision larger than ourselves, rooted in divine purpose and human responsibility.



**CHANA KENTON**  
10TH GRADE, NEVE DANIEL

### THE POWER TO CHANGE

At the very beginning of the parsha, Avraham is promised a large and blessed lineage. "And I will make you into a great nation and your name shall be a blessing... and I will make you exceedingly numerous... you shall be the father of a multitude of nations... count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your offspring be."

Upon hearing these blessings, Avraham asked "How will I know that I will inherit it?... seeing I have no children?" When Sarah was told she would be pregnant, she laughed! Both of them found the idea of having children at their old age ridiculous. The Aggadat Bereshit tells us that their doubt was not due to a lack of faith; rather, as astrologers, they had seen their decree to be childless. God says "Your name shall no longer be called Abram, but Abraham. Abram cannot have children, but Abraham can."

Later, Avraham has the ׀ (hei) added to

his name, and shortly after Yitzchak is born. By virtue of this change, the infertility that was decreed no longer carried any meaning.

In these past few weeks, we have gone through an intense period of spiritual growth in hopes to receive a good decree for the year ahead.

One might ask why we pray, or repent at all during the rest of the year. If our fate has been sealed, what is the point?

The parsha answers this question with an important lesson. When we change ourselves, our decrees can also change. Through his actions and tests, Avraham went through a process that changed who he was. A name is a deep representation of who a person is in his soul. When Avram became Avraham, it was an external reflection of his new internal identity.

An alternative meaning of the word Lehitpallel, which means 'to pray,' is 'to introspect'. Self analysis is necessary in order to improve. Just as Avraham transformed through his relationship with God, we too can evolve and redefine ourselves. God gave us the gift of prayer as a tool we can use to change the outcome of our lives.

May we all have the strength and willpower to build ourselves up towards a year of success and victory. ■

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