

PHILOTORAH

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵּי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתִּשְׁלַח מִהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לְחוּלֵי קוֹרוֹנָה – בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעַם הַיְּהוּדִי, וּבְעוֹלָם,
וּלְנַפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טָרוּר וְאַנְטִישִׁמִּיּוֹת – בְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם, עִם שְׂאֵר חוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages;
may He send R'FU'A SH'LEIMA to the many injured;
and may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel**



...לֵךְ-לָךְ בְּאֶרֶץ וּבִמְבוּלָתָהּ וּבִמְבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ:

YERUSHALAYIM in/out for Parshat **LECH L'CHA**

October 27-28, '23 • י"ג מרחשון ה'תשפ"ד

5:19PM **PLAG 4:46PM** • **6:31PM** **R' Tam 7:11PM**

For other locales, click on the Z'MANIM link



This Motza"Sh, 2:00am Israel Summer Time becomes 1:00pm Israel Winter Time

PhiloTorah (170ll) - **1** - all@once file

CALNOTES



Kiddush L'vana

Last opportunity for kiddush L'vana this month is Motza'ei Shabbat Parshat Lech L'cha (Oct 28), all night.

Tal Umatar Livracha

Speaking of Marcheshvan, since Sunday, the 7th of the month, we in Israel have been asking for blessed rainfall in our weekday Amida, in the bracha of BAREICH ALEINU, with the words V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA. In Chutz LaAretz, TAL UMATAR begins at Maariv of Tuesday December 5th.

11 Marcheshvan

Thursday, October 26th is the 11th of Marcheshvan, the *yahrzeit* of Rachel Imeinu. (Also, the birthdate of her son, Binyamin.)

Rachel Imeinu is most associated with RACHAMIM, something which we need a lot of these days (and always).

Marcheshvan

This month is one of the two variable months of our fixed calendar. It is regularly assigned 29 days - as it has this year, but in years called

SHALEIM, it has 30 days. In K'SEDER years, it has 29 days. And in CHASEIR years, like this one, it has 29 days.

Regular, K'SEDER (or K'SIDRAN) years occur almost 30% of the time. They have 354 or 384 days, depending upon whether the year is a P'SHUTA (one Adar) or M'UBERET (two Adars).

Missing or defective, CHASEIR years occur a little more than 25% of the time. They have 353 or 383 days.

Full, SHALEIM years (with both Marcheshvan and Kislev having 30 days) occur almost 45% of the time. They have 355 or 385 days.

The most common year-types of our calendar are P'SHUTA-SHALEIM, which have 355 days - the *gimatriya* of the word SHANA.

5784

To review, this year's year-type is coded MEM-ZAYIN-CHET. The MEM is for M'UBERET, a 13-month, 2-Adar year. The ZAYIN is for Shabbat, the first day of Rosh HaShana. The CHET is for CHASEIR, both Marcheshvan and Kislev has 29 days this year.

MEM-ZAYIN-CHET years occur 5.8% of the time, with the last one before this year being 5757, that's 27 years ago.

Knowing our calendar is in the spirit of the mitzva of **הַיְּזוּרֵי הַזֶּה לָכֶם**.

LECH L'CHA

3rd sedra of 54;
3rd of 12 in B'reishit



Written on 208 lines, ranks 23rd

7 Parshiyot; 3 open, 4 closed

126 p'sukim - ranks 13th - same as R'ei;
smaller than R'ei in other categories

1686 words - ranks 18th

6336 letters - ranks 19th

Ranks 7 of 12 in B'reishit - all categories

Shorter than average p'sukim, which
accounts for the drop in rank for words
and letters

MITZVOT

1 mitzva (positive), namely, BRIT MILA

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

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of
a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is
Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha;
(Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive
mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the
perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes

Kohen - First Aliya 13 p'sukim - 12:1-13

[P> 12:1 (9)] G-d tells (note the softer
VAYOMER rather than the harsher
VAIDABER) Avra(ha)m to leave his
land, birthplace and father's home and
go to "the Land which I will show
you".

SDT: LECH L'CHA - GO FOR YOU
(or for yourself) - How do we understand
L'CHA? Famous question.

Rashi says that it means "for your
benefit", G-d was sending Avram to the
future Eretz Yisrael so that he would
father a great nation, so that he would
be able to have children, so that he
would be blessed.

Kli Yakar says that L'CHA is only used in
the context of Eretz Yisrael.

Abravanel says that L'CHA means you,
without your father (who had begun the
journey with you).

Ramban says that it is the style of the
language (without a necessary further
meaning. - Otzar M'forschei HaP'shat

SDT: "Leave your land, birth-
place, father's house." Ramban explains
that each "point of departure" was
progressively more difficult for Avra-
ham. Leaving one's land is difficult, even
more so if he was born there. Leaving
one's family is most difficult. Ramban
says that the Torah is showing us the
great extent of Avraham's love of G-d.

Someone raises a question on this Ramban. What was so difficult in Avraham's leaving the place where he was ridiculed, persecuted and thrown into a fiery furnace for his beliefs? Would he not have left joyfully? The question actually carries the answer. The Ramban was pointing out a significant aspect of human nature. No matter how bad conditions are, how much a person wants a better life, there still will always remain a sadness and regret for the "good old days" and "the old country" - even when they weren't so good. This aspect of human nature explains a lot of Jewish History.

G-d promises that a great nation will descend from him (Avraham) and that he will be a blessing for all (his descendants and all the world).

SDT: Avra(ha)m is promised great rewards and benefits for listening to G-d. Yet pasuk 4 states that he went "as G-d had spoken to him". His ALIYA is considered a test of his faith. He passed this test because he came to the Land because G-d asked him to, not for any material promises.

The call to the Jew to come on Aliya continues. THE only real "right" reason to come is because it is a mitzva and this is what G-d wants of us. MITZVAT HAMELECH and R'TZON HASHEM. All blessings that will follow are fringe benefits. And the difficulties one might encounter are parts of the test of our faith. Avraham Avinu led the way when

there were no Aliya Shlichim and no Nefesh b'Nefesh to facilitate Aliya and K'lita. Actually, there was One Shaliach Aliya and One supporter, and He is still and always in that role.

Coming on Aliya via EL AL is easier than Avraham and Sara had it. But it is no less of a command by G-d to the descendants of that special first couple of the Jewish People.

Avra(ha)m was 75 years old at the time he came to Eretz Yisrael with Sara(i), nephew Lot, and many people who were brought over to monotheism by Avra(ha)m and Sara(i).

[P> 12:10 (29)] Driven from the Land by a famine, Avraham and Sara go down to Egypt. Their plan is to say that they are brother and sister, rather than risk Avraham's being killed.

SDT: Midrash P'li'a points to this episode as proof that one may violate Shabbat to save someone else's life. The idea that one may violate one Shabbat so that he will be able to keep many Shabbatot of the future - from V'CHAI BAHAM - is part of the understanding of the Torah's permission (requirement) to violate Shabbat to save one's own life. This permission can be seen to be extended by Avraham's request to Sarah that she put herself at risk to save him. In other words, not only can one violate (most) mitzvot to save himself, one may also violate mitzvot to save someone else.

Levi - Second Aliya

11 p'sukim - 12:14-13:4

In Egypt, Sarai's beauty is noticed by the people and she is taken to Par'o's palace. Avra(ha)m, as her "brother", receives many gifts. Par'o and his household are afflicted by G-d as a punishment for taking Sarai. When Par'o realizes that Sarai is actually the wife of Avra(ha)m, he confronts him, returns Sarai to him and then asks them to leave Egypt.

Avra(ha)m and company, laden with riches, return to Eretz Yisrael via the Negev. Avra(ha)m returns to the Altar he had built and continues to proclaim G-d's Name.

Avraham, on the run from his hometown, a stranger in a strange land, has his challenges and tests. Avraham loaded with wealth and prominence, has new challenges and tests. Poverty and famine are tests; so is wealth. And it is hard to know which is harder.

In the opening passage of Rosh Chodesh Benching, we ask G-d for many things -- long life, a life of peace, blessings, etc. There is one thing we ask for twice - Yir'at Shamayim, fear of G-d. Why? Because after asking for it the first time, we ask for a life of wealth and honor. If we are blessed with that, then we must humbly ask for Yir'at Shamayim again, because wealth sometimes blinds a person to his gratitude and obligations to HaShem. It

is relatively "easy" for a poor person to believe in G-d and pray to Him. Wealthy people often have a difficult time with that. (There are other explanations, as well.)

Shlishi - Third Aliya

14 p'sukim - 13:5-18

Lot also has great wealth, too much to remain together with Avra(ha)m. Quarrels between their shepherds (caused by disparate ethical standards - we are taught) lead to a parting of the ways. Avra(ha)m gives Lot "first choice" of territory, and he (Lot) chooses the then fertile area of S'dom and the Jordan Valley. The Torah makes a point of telling us of the wickedness of S'dom society, an obvious criticism of Lot's distorted priorities.

This, too, is a recurring theme in Jewish life, containing warnings for us all - sadly, many Jews moved away from Jewish neighborhoods to places with country clubs, golf courses, and other "important" things; often the shuls and schools were far away from their new home... they seem to have made the Lot choice.

Only after Avra(ha)m parts company from Lot, does G-d once again appear to him, encouraging him to look over the whole land to the north, south, east, and west, which will some day belong to his descendants. G-d also tells him that his descendants will be

too numerous to count. (Hidden message: They will sometimes be lowly, like the dust of the ground, trodden underfoot by our enemies. Contrast this with the later comparison to the stars of the heavens, which has the opposite, positive, connotation.)

Avra(ha)m settles in Hevron and builds an altar to G-d.

SDT: One commentary says that although Avraham knew that his spirituality was compromised by Lot's presence, he nonetheless did not chase Lot away until he had no choice. Avraham felt a moral obligation to take care of Lot (including saving him even after they parted) even though he knew that G-d was "keeping His distance", so to speak, with Lot around. There are some interesting ramifications for us, of this behavior of Avraham's. How do we view time spent doing chessed and kiruv, or Hachnasat Orchim, at the expense of Torah learning and personal growth. Think about it.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 20 p'sukim - 14:1-20

[P> 14:1 (24)] This portion tells of the battle between the Four Kings and the Five Kings and of the capture of S'dom, including Lot. When Avra(ha)m hears (from Og, "refugee" from the Flood) of Lot's capture he sets out to rescue him, taking with him a force of 318. Or...

Rashi refers to the Gemara which suggests that Avraham took only his servant Eliezer with him to rescue Lot. The numeric value of the name Eliezer = 318. As G'matriyas go, this is one of many. What makes it very unusual, is that Rashi says it and bases it on a number in the text of the Torah.

Avra(ha)m launches a successful surprise attack and frees the people of S'dom. Victory is celebrated with a religious ceremony of thanking and blessing G-d in the presence of Malki-Tzedek (a.k.a. Sheim son of No'ach). A tithe of the spoils of war is given to this servant of G-d.

- Rashi tells us that AMRAFEL, king of Shin-ar is none other than NIMROD who was the one who tossed Avraham into the fiery furnace for challenging paganism in public and espousing belief in One G-d. Irony, is it not, that Avraham has this opportunity to do successful battle against Nimrod.

- Malki-tzedek is king of Shalem. Onkeles identifies Shalem as Yerushalayim. SHALEM is the part of the city's name contributed by Sheim. Avraham gave it the first half after the Akeida - YERU.

The English version of SHALEM is SALEM. There are 30 (out of 50) US states with a Salem - some states have more than one). Salem, Massachusetts, is the biggest and most well-known.

There are 39 places in the world called Jerusalem (in 21 different countries). There are 5 Jerusalems in Mexico...

Chamishi 5th Aliya 10 p'sukim - 14:21-15:6

The king of S'dom offers Avra(ha)m great wealth. Avra(ha)m refuses to take as much as a "thread or shoelace".

SDT: It is said that in the merit of the refusal to take even a shoe-strap or thread, we have the mitzvot of Tallit and T'filin - both of which we wear at Avraham's t'fila - SHACHARIT.

Avra(ha)m did accept payment on behalf of his allies who helped him.

[S> 15:1 (21)] Afterwards, G-d appears to Avra(ha)m in a vision and again promises him great rewards for his faithfulness. Avra(ha)m, still childless, expresses his disappointment, but resignation, that Eliezer will be his heir. G-d assures Avra(ha)m that he will indeed have his own child to follow in his footsteps.

G-d then takes Avra(ha)m outdoors and promises him that his descendants will be as countless (and exalted) as the stars in the heavens.

The GR"A cites the Talmud's mention that Avraham Avinu was the first person to address G-d as ADON (Master). We acknowledge this by beginning Shacharit - Avraham's davening - with the poem Adon Olam.

Being compared to dust and sand and to the stars is not just a matter of numerousness, but also to the quality of life. We can be like the dust of the ground - stepped on, trodden upon... Or we can be as lofty, wonderous, grand as the stars of the heavens. The terms reflect the ups & downs of Jewish History.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 37 p'sukim - 15:7-17:6

This portion begins with "the Covenant between the Pieces". (Part of this experience is actual, part is prophetic vision.) G-d tells Avra(ha)m that his descendants will be oppressed in a foreign land and will subsequently leave there with great wealth. The promise of the Land to Avra(ha)m is reiterated once more.

Both Rashi and Onkeles understand the terms M'SHULASH and M'SHULESHET to mean that Avraham took three each - calves, goats, and sheep for the BRIT BEIN HA-B'TARIM. Tos'fot and others define the term as "prime, of the best quality". They hold that there was only one each of the animals. Others say the animals were to be third-born or three years old or part of triplets.

The Living Torah by R' Aryeh Kaplan z"l

[S> 16:1 (16)] Sarai, being barren, gives her hand-maiden Hagar to Avra(ha)m (after 10 years in K'na'an) to bear him a child. When Hagar becomes preg-

nant, she taunts her mistress. Hagar then flees from Sarai's retaliation. An angel finds her, promises that her child, too, will sire a countless multitude, that her son to be born shall be called Yishmael, and that she is now to return to Sarai.

Yishmael is born when Avra(ha)m is 86 years of age.

[S> 17:1 (14)] When Avra(ha)m is 99...

G-d appears to him and asks him to "be complete". G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham, symbolizing his role as father and spiritual guide to great nations. Once again Avraham is promised "countless" progeny.

SDT: Notice the jump from 86 years old to 99 years old. What happened during the 'missing' 13 years? The answer is, nothing that we need to know about; no lessons for us to learn. The Torah is not a complete journal or history book. The Torah tells us what G-d wants to tell us because of the mitzvot and moral lessons we can (and should) learn.

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 21 p'sukim - 17:7-27

G-d promises that a special relationship will always exist between Himself and Avraham's descendants, and repeats the promise of the Land. G-d reveals the form that the "Covenant" is to take - the circumcision of all males [2, A215 17:10].

MITZVAnotes

This mitzva is the first "non-natural" commandment. Until this point, the 7 categories of Noahide mitzvot are all logical, rational, reasonable, common-sense laws. This 8th mitzva, for the 8th day, represents the challenge to the Jew to rise above nature and complete his spiritual form just as he is being commanded to complete his physical form.

The mitzva is ideally performed on the 8th day, counting the day on which the baby was born - even if he was born right before sunset. Mila may not take place at night. Only an 8th day Mila (as opposed to a Brit that was postponed because of health reasons, for example) can be done on Shabbat. A baby delivered by C-section on Shabbat, will have his Brit on the following day, Sunday (the baby's 9th day). In other words - due to a technicality based on the analysis of the text in Tazri'a, only an 8th day Brit of a natural birth can take place on Shabbat.

The mitzva of Mila is "repeated" in Parshat Tazri'a. Its specific wording there, teaches us some details.

With the two texts dealing with BRIT, it is noteworthy that most mitzva-counters count MILA from LECH L'CHA rather than TAZRI'A. Lech L'cha's context is the story of Avraham Avinu. In Tazri'a we have a straightforward command - Speak to the people of

Israel... on the 8th day, you SHALL circumcise...

Most significant in the matter of Brit Mila is this: The physical removal of the foreskin is only part of the mitzva of Mila. This can be seen by looking at the brachot that are said for the Brit. The first bracha is AL HAMILA. This bracha is immediately followed by a second Birkat HaMitzva (very unusual to say two mitzva-brachot for the performance of one mitzva), "to enter him into the covenant of Avraham". This is not just a HINENI MUCHAN UMZUMAN type of introduction to a mitzva, not a peripheral concept, but an integral part of the mitzva. The challenge of raising the child to be a good Jew and a good person is an obligation of the parents which is part of MILA (we can say) and THE part of the mitzva that takes much more time and energy than "the cut". The context of Lech L'cha says it all. Its choice as the "official source" of Mila helps us understand this important mitzva.

Note too that when a Mohel does the Mila at the behest of the father, the Mohel says the Mila bracha, but the father nonetheless retains the second bracha (and Shehecheyanu). Parents can use an agent to perform the MILA part of BRIT MILA, but the BRIT part remains theirs.

- Note that the gimatriya of the word B'RIT is 612. Add the one mitzva of MILA for a total of 613. We can say that the

mitzva of circumcision combines the single mitzva of MILA with a commitment to educate and bring the child up to know, love, and observe all the other 612 mitzvot, for a grand total that represents the complete Torah. This echoes the idea that G-d asked Avraham to become complete before Him, and that Mila is the sign of that completeness.

[S> 17:15 (13)] G-d then changes Sarai's name to Sarah. Name changes represent changes in character, role, and destiny. G-d promises that Sarah will bear the true heir of Avraham. Avraham laughs with joy upon hearing that he will be a father at 100, and Sarah a mother at 90. He thought that Yishmael was the son that G-d had repeatedly promised him, but G-d assures him that it will be Yitzchak who will fill that role.

Yishmael will also be blessed and give rise to great nations, but the Covenant will be passed down through Yitzchak. Avraham circumcises himself (at age 99), Yishmael (at age 13), and other male members of his household, in fulfillment of G-d's command.

Haftara 21 p'sukim Yeshayahu - 40:27-41:16

This passage is the national counterpart of some of the personal experiences of Avraham. Just as G-d made promises to Avraham Avinu, so He makes promises to the Children of

Israel. Just as Avraham tenaciously clings to faith in G-d, so too do his descendants. Endurance, confidence, victory, self-perfection - these qualities are shared by THE ancestor and his descendants, us.

We can see in the sedra-haftara pair, Maasei Avot Siman LaBanim, the deeds of the ancestors set the patterns for the their descendants.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Lech L'cha

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 - NIST'RA DARKI MEI-HASHEM. 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 haftara are the closing part of the well-known NACHAMU, NACHAMU AMI prophecy - the nevu'a 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 haftara, 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.

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 bond... and,

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. It is not 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 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 ZERA AVRAHAM OHAVI, "the descendants

of Avraham, who loved Me". The navi hoped to explain Hashem Himself will help us draw closer to Him and meet the challenges He places before us.

G-d wants to be seen as more than a King to Israel... He wants them to realize that He is also their Father! ✨



The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

Lech L'cha



○ EL AL plane for LECH L'CHA ○ Arrow from the birthday stuff into Eretz Yisrael is also Lech L'cha... from your birthplace ○ Arrows from Eretz Yisrael

to the south-west and back again is the round trip to & from Egypt ○ Compass on the map of Israel is for G-d's instructions to Avraham to walk the Land, its length and breadth, and in all directions ○ This Superman is played by Christopher Reeve, for the RIV between the shepherds of Avraham and of Lot ○ Arrow branching in opposite directions was Avraham's offered choice to Lot when they separated from each other ○ Avraham's oath before the king of S'dom, that he would not even take a thread or a shoelace (considered a remez to the threads of Tzitzit and the straps of T'filin) ○ Telescope and stars for G-d's taking Avraham outside to see the stars and to promise that his descendants will be as countless as the stars ○ Father with his baby son is for Brit Mila ○ Tent that Avraham pitched a few times in the sedra (2 of the 4 doors are visible) ○ Brit Bein HaB'tarim, with each split animal ○ The bird above the "split" animals was not cut ○ And a flaming torch went between the pieces ○ Liver, as in KAVEID (in Hebrew), a word meaning "heavy" and applied in Lech L'cha to the famine as well as to Avraham's wealth when he left Egypt ○ glue, hammer, nails are from the haftara ○ Hagar the Horrible, for HAGAR ○ Alarm clock with the time 3:18, for Avraham's rising early in the morning, and for the number of people Avraham took with him to fight to save Lot. Or just Eliezer, gimatriya 318 ○ Seder plate reminds us of the prophecy of going down to Egypt and eventually coming up from there ○ ESHKOL (cluster of

grapes), A NEIR (a candle), and a MEM-RAY are for Avraham's three allies ○ Winston Churchill who was a famous BRIT, goes with the picture below it of the musical notes. Those notes are E and the A above it, also known as MI and LA. Putting it all together to get BRIT MILA ○ four doors with an arrow pointing to the 4th door is for DOR R'VI'I, the fourth generation that is mentioned in the Covenant between the Pieces, the generation that will return to the land, following the exile in Egypt ○ they can also represent the four doors to Avraham's tent ○ The chessboard is obvious - battle between the four kings and the five ○ And there are also four human kings vs 5 animal kings - see if someone at your Shabbat table can name the kings ○ Mickey, Snoopy, and Woodstock walking in the rain, for V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA ○ There is a tree - but what kind of tree? ○ five words below the airplane ○ numbers below Superman ○ pairs of letters in the lower-right, two sets of numbers, two other pictograms - the challenges for you and your family and/or guests

לע"נ

הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה
ז"ל

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

On being a Jewish Parent

Lech L'cha

The most influential man who ever lived does not appear on any list I have seen of the hundred most influential men who ever lived. He ruled no empire, commanded no army, engaged in no spectacular acts of heroism on the battlefield, performed no miracles, proclaimed no prophecy, led no vast throng of followers, and had no disciples other than his own child. Yet today more than half of the billions of people alive on the face of the planet identify themselves as his heirs.

His name, of course, is Avraham, held as the founder of faith by the three great monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He fits no conventional stereotype. He is not described as unique in his generation, as in the case of No'ach. The Torah tells us no tales of his childhood, as it does in the case of Moshe. We know next to nothing about his early life. When God calls on him, as He does at

the beginning of this week's parsha, to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father's house, we have no idea why he was singled out.

Yet never was a promise more richly fulfilled than the words of God to him when He changed his name from Avram to Avraham:

"For I have made you father of many nations" (B'reishit 17:5).

There are today 56 Islamic nations, more than 80 Christian ones, and the Jewish state. Truly Avraham became the father of these many nations. But who and what was Avraham? Why was he chosen for this exemplary role?

There are three famous portraits of Avraham. The first is the Midrash we learned as children. Avraham, left alone with his father's idols, breaks them with a hammer, which he leaves in the hand of the biggest of the idols. His father Terach comes in, sees the devastation, asks who has caused it, and the young Avraham replies, "Can you not see? The hammer is in the hands of the largest idol. It must have been him." Terach replies, "But an idol is mere of wood and stone." Avraham replies, "Then, father, how can you worship them?"

This is Avraham the iconoclast, the breaker of images, the man who while

still young rebelled against the pagan, polytheistic world of demi-gods and demons, superstition and magic.

The second is more haunting and is enigmatic. Avraham, says the Midrash, is like a man travelling on a journey when he sees a palace in flames.

He wondered, "Is it possible that the palace lacks an owner?" The owner of the palace looked out and said, "I am the owner of the palace." So Avraham our father said, "Is it possible that the world lacks a ruler?" God looked out and said to him, "I am the Ruler, the Sovereign of the universe" (Midrash B'reishit Rabba 38:13).

This is an extraordinary passage. Avraham sees the order of nature, the elegant design of the universe. It's like a palace. It must have been made by someone, for someone. But the palace is on fire. How can this be? Surely the owner should be putting out the flames. You don't leave a palace empty and unguarded. Yet the owner of the palace calls out to him, as God called to Avraham, asking him to help fight the fire.

God needs us to fight the destructive instinct in the human heart. This is Avraham, the fighter against injustice, the man who sees the beauty of the natural universe being

disfigured by the sufferings inflicted by man on man.

Finally comes a third image, this time by Rambam:

After he was weaned, while still an infant, Avraham's mind began to reflect. Day and night, he thought and wondered, "How is it possible that this celestial sphere should continuously be guiding the world and have no one to guide it and cause it to turn, for it cannot be that it turns itself?" He had no teacher, no one to instruct him in anything. He was surrounded, in Ur of the Chaldees, by foolish idolaters. His father and mother and the entire population worshipped idols, and he worshipped with them. But his mind was constantly active and reflective, until he had attained the way of truth, found the correct line of thought, and knew that there is one God, He that guides the celestial spheres and created everything, and that among all that exists, there is no God beside Him (Rambam, Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:3)

This is Avraham the philosopher, anticipating Aristotle, using metaphysical argument to prove the existence of God.

Three images of Avraham; three versions, perhaps, of what it is to be a Jew. The first sees Jews as

iconoclasts, challenging the idols of the age. Even secular Jews who had cut themselves adrift from Judaism were among the most revolutionary modern thinkers, most famously Spinoza, Marx, and Freud. Thorstein Veblen said in an essay on "the intellectual pre-eminence of Jews", that the Jew becomes "a disturber of the intellectual peace... a wanderer in the intellectuals' no-man's-land, seeking another place to rest, farther along the road, somewhere over the horizon."

The second sees Jewish identity in terms of TZEDEK UMISHPAT, a commitment to the just society. Albert Einstein spoke of the "almost fanatical love of justice" as one of "the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my stars that I belong to it."

The third reminds us that the Greek thinkers Theophrastus and Clearchus, disciples of Aristotle, speak of the Jews as a nation of philosophers.

So these views are all true and profound. They share only one shortcoming. There is no direct evidence for them whatsoever in the Torah. Yehoshua (in 24:2) speaks of Avraham's father Terach as an idolater, but this is not mentioned in B'reishit.

The story of the palace in flames is

perhaps based on Avraham's challenge to God about the proposed destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain: "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" As for Avraham-as-Aristotle, that is based on an ancient tradition that the Greek philosophers (especially Pythagoras) derived their wisdom from the Jews, but this too is nowhere hinted in the Torah.

What then does the Torah say about Avraham? The answer is unexpected and very moving. Abraham was chosen simply to be a father. The AV in Avram/Avraham means FATHER. In the only verse in which the Torah explains the choice of Avraham, it says:

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him" (B'reishit 18:19).

The great scenes in Avraham's life - waiting for a child, the birth of Yishmael, the tension between Sarah and Hagar, the birth of Yitzchak, and the Binding - are all about his role as a father (next week I will write about the troubling episode of the binding).

Judaism, more than any other faith, sees parenthood as the highest

challenge of all. On the first day of Rosh HaShana - the anniversary of Creation - we read of two mothers, Sarah and Chana, and the births of their sons, as if to say: Every life is a universe. Therefore if you wish to understand the creation of the universe, think about the birth of a child.

Avraham, the hero of faith, is simply a father. Stephen Hawking famously wrote at the end of A Brief History of Time that if we had a Unified Field Theory, a scientific "theory of everything", we would "know the mind of God". We believe otherwise. To know the mind of God we do not need theoretical physics. We simply need to know what it is to be a parent. The miracle of childbirth is as close as we come to understanding the-love-that-brings-new-life-into-the-world that is God's creativity.

There is a fascinating passage in Yossi Klein HaLevi's book on Christians and Muslims in the land of Israel, At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden. Visiting a convent, he is told by a nun, Maria Teresa:

"I watch the families who visit here on weekends. How the parents behave toward their children, speaking to them with patience and encouraging them to ask intelligent questions. It's an example to the

whole world. The strength of this people is the love of parents for their children. Not just the mothers but also the fathers. A Jewish child has two mothers."

Judaism takes what is natural and sanctifies it; what is physical and invests it with spirituality; what is elsewhere considered normal and sees it as a miracle. What Darwin saw as the urge to reproduce, what Richard Dawkins calls "the selfish gene", is for Judaism high religious art, full of drama and beauty. Avraham the father, and Sarah the mother, are our enduring role models of parenthood as God's gift and our highest vocation.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) What do you see as the most challenging, and the most rewarding, aspects of parenting?**
- (2) Which of Avraham's three identities do you identify with, and why?**
- (3) How do you think the act of naming, like in the transformation of Avram to Avraham and Sarai to Sarah, shapes or redefines an individual's destiny or purpose in life?**

יהי זכרו ברוך

PTDT

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

OUR HISHTADLUS

We are in the midst of a terrible and frightening war against a very evil and sick enemy.

Questions of why we were surprised by Hamas's initial attack are not for now.

Questions as to how and why this is happening to the "good guys", HaShem's Chosen People, are not for now, either.

We pray that G-d will be our main partner in this war, and we must do whatever we need to do to win this war.

That means HISHTADLUS, our efforts to do the best we can to win this war.

First, the IDF - the large-scale call up of hundreds of thousands of chayalim to join our standing army in this fight.

What about the rest of us?

Do our share towards the war effort. This includes volunteering for the myriad projects that have sprung up - food packages for soldiers and evacuees, toys and supplies for kids, bullet-proof vests, Tzitzit for our chayalim, and so on. This includes

financial support for the above and/or actual participation in preparation and delivery of the various items - and a lot more.

And then there are increasing Torah Study, saying of T'hilim, doing acts of chessed and kindness - becoming better people and better Jews - as individuals and as Klal Yisrael.

And fervent prayer to G-d for the safety and success of our chayalim and of the hostages. Prayers for R'FU'AH SH'LEIMA for the many, many injured. Prayers to G-d that He should comfort the many bereaved families.

On that note - and this is really the main point of this PTDT...

T'hilim is important. So are the MI SHEBEIRACHs and whatever other t'filot that have been composed for the current situation.

But there is one step more - our individual, personal prayers to HKBH.

The AMIDA which contains 19 brachot during the week and seven brachot on Shabbat, has attached to it ELOKAI, N'TZOR L'SHONI... At the end of this attachment to the Amida, right before saying YIHYU L'RATZON (which is followed by taking three steps back) - at that point at the end of the Amida - talk to G-d. In any language, with your own words, and

ask Him, beg Him, to help bring the war to a successful conclusion, SOON, and without more casualties on our side. Regardless of what we have asked in the more formal T'filot and in the recited T'hilim, talk to Him from your heart, one-on-One.

We are often so overwhelmed by the Siddur and the T'hilim book that we forget that prayer can and should be personalized. The one does not negate the other.

The suggestion here is not to talk to G-d instead of, but in addition to whatever else we say.

While you are at it, let's also ask HaShem to hear and answer our T'filot favorably, the way they should have been said and felt - not necessarily the way they were said.

T'hilim 121, 130 and other appropriate chapters are powerful. How much more so, when we add an informal, personal prayer - and to repeat, in any language and any wording of your choice.

May HaShem answer all our t'filot favorably - the formal and the informal, the communal and the personal - and may He, with His infinite RACHAMIM, be generous with His response, well beyond our collective T'filot and Bakashot.

Walk through the Parsha
with **Rabbi David Walk** 

O SAY CAN YOU SEE?

Lech L'cha

It's marvelous every year to get back to Lech L'cha. I'm always a bit uncomfortable with B'reishit until Avraham Avinu arrives on the scene. I feel little connection to Adam, No'ach or Metushelach. But starting this week we return to the stories of our ancestors, to whom we feel a strong emotional and spiritual tie. Many of us living in Medinat Yisrael identify with Avraham's progress through Eretz Yisrael. There are Gentiles in the land, but Avraham heeds God's instruction to 'rise and proceed through the Land'. Our connection to Avraham goes hand in hand with our connection to the Land.

The first verse of our parsha still inspires those carrying Avraham's DNA and ideals: The Eternal said to Avram, 'Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you' (12:1). Our sainted grandfather is told to emerge from the stifling atmosphere of his home and homeland and step into the limelight on the stage of

human greatness. Human history has never been the same. But this could only happen in Eretz Yisrael.

How do we know that? God doesn't tell Avram where to go. The Netivot Shalom explains: In CHUTZ L'ARETZ (Diaspora) there is only 'speaking'. Avraham couldn't reach the level of 'seeing' until he got to Eretz Yisrael... Furthermore only in Eretz Yisrael would he be shown the trait of 'individual supervision', where his eyes would clearly see God's Divine control. Only in Israel can we 'see' God's control over every aspect of life... Furthermore, Avraham could only reach his full potential and complete greatness in Eretz Yisrael.

God couldn't tell Avram where to go, because the ability to 'see' was only granted by the unique nature of Eretz Yisrael. He could only comprehend the assignment in AVIRA D'AR'A, the atmosphere of the Land.

Avram only attains his full power in the Land. It was only when he perceived the full awareness of sanctity that God appeared to him at SHECHEM (verse 7). Then he travels deeper into the Land attaining greater spiritual insight. Until he arrives between BEIT EL and AI (perhaps at Givat Asaf, where my daughter and her family live), there he was inspired to build an altar and

offer a sacrifice (verse 8). Then the verse describes the progress by stating, 'Then Avram traveled, going and progressing towards the south' (verse 9). This isn't a travelog; this is a spiritual journey and pursuit.

Before we return to Avraham's spiritual awakening, let's ask the critical question: What was the source of Eretz Yisrael's KEDUSHA (holiness, spiritual greatness)? Most rabbinic sources claim that the KEDUSHA is based upon metaphysical factors, as in a special connection to heaven or its centrality in the Creation stories as in Creation began there or Gan Eden was located there. But that's not the position of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l.

The Rav wrote: With all my respect for the Rishonim, I must disagree with such an opinion. I do not believe that it is halakhically cogent. Kedusha, under a halakhic aspect, is man-made; more accurately, it is a historical category. A soil is sanctified by historical deeds performed by a sacred people, never by any primordial superiority. The halakhic term K'DUSHAT HA-ARETZ, the sanctity of the Land, denotes the consequence of a human act, either conquest (heroic deeds) or the mere presence of the people in that land (intimacy of man and nature).

Kedusha is identical with man's association with Mother Earth. Nothing should be attributed a priori to dead matter. (Emergence of Ethical Man, p. 150)

Traditional sources tend to align with the Rav. Take, for example, this Mishna in tractate Keilim: There are ten degrees of holiness. The land of Israel is holier than any other land. Wherein lies its holiness? In that, from it are brought the Omer [barley offering brought on the second day of Pesach], the first fruits, and the two loaves [offered on Shavuot], which may not be brought from any other land (1:6).

The Kedusha stems from special Mitzvot performed by Jews in Eretz Yisrael. Absent these human acts, it seems that the Kedusha would not exist.

So, what happened to Avraham as he progressed through the Land according to this approach? He didn't sense primordial events; he sensed an ineffable connection. His spiritual awakening in Eretz Yisrael, which precipitated the Covenant Between the Parts and the miraculous birth of Yitzchak, came from something deep inside him. He sensed that he and the Land were inextricably bound up with each other.

On a more superficial level, many of us experience a similar phenomenon when we meet certain individuals or visit a certain place. We just feel a connection. That's what happened to Avraham. If this was based on prior Kedusha, he would have gone straight to Yerushalayim where many Midrashim claim this a priori Kedusha was most concentrated. Instead, the uniquely intense Kedusha of Yerushalayim will only come later based on the AKEIDA taking place there.


This is why when Avraham returns to Eretz Yisrael after his sojourn in Egypt he: went by stages from the Negev to Beit El, to the place between Beit El and Ai where his tent had formerly been, where he had first built the altar; and there Avram called on the name of the Eternal (B'reishit 13:3,4).

Avraham returned to the then holiest place in Eretz Yisrael at that time: The place where he had first worshiped and built an altar to God in the Land.

Why is this important? Because we Jews have a double connection to the Land. The Land became holy because of the spiritual acts of our ancestors AND our own Mitzvot performed in the Land. We keep SHMITA, take TRUMOT and MA'ASROT, and walk in

the footsteps of our beloved ancestors. The connection of the Jews to the Land where our ancestors performed Mitzvot unique to Eretz Yisrael gets ever more profound every step we take and every Mitzva we make here in the Holy Land.

And that's the point: This spiritual symbiosis is unique to Eretz Yisrael and AM YISRAEL. Yes, other nations feel connected to the 'land where our fathers died' and so on, but the Jews' connection to Eretz Yisrael is unique because we believe that as a result of our Mitzvot performed here, we continually forge an ever-increasing bond. Whether or not the Cosmos was created here or not isn't really important, but our existential connection is vital to us and the Land.

As the Slonimer Rebbe concluded: That's why the Talmud says that anyone who dwells outside Eretz Yisrael it is as if they have no God (Ketubot 110b). Only in Israel can we 'see' God's control over Creation and feel alive. 

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • www.ravkooktorah.com



Father of Many Nations

Notarikon in the Torah

Abbreviations and acronyms are common in rabbinic writings, but they are rare in the text of the Torah itself. Nonetheless, the Sages observed that a few acronyms – NOTARIKON in Aramaic – may be found in the Torah. The first and clearest example is the new name that God gave to Avraham:

“No longer shall you be called AVRAM. Your name will be AVRAHAM for I have made you the father of many nations.” (B'reishit 17:5)

God changed Abram's name to Abraham, explaining that this new name indicates his new identity and mission. The name Avraham is short for av hamon goyim, “the father of many nations.”

The Talmud (Shabbat 105a), however, was not satisfied with this interpretation of the name. While the Torah explains AVRAHAM to be a syllabic abbreviation of the words AV HAMON, the Sages converted it into

a full-blown acronym. They wrote that each of the six Hebrew letters of AV HAMON indicates a different aspect of Avraham's standing and influence in the world.

ALEF – I have made you a father (AV) to the nations;

BET – I have made you chosen (BACHIR) among the nations;

HEI – I have made you beloved (CHAVIV*) among the nations;

MEM – I have you a king (MELECH) for the nations;

VAV – I have made you exemplary (VATIK) among the nations;

NUN – I have made you faithful (NE'EMAN) among the nations.

Of all the names in the Torah, why is Avraham's name an abbreviation? Why did the Sages further expand this abbreviation, letter by letter?

Abraham's Dual Influence

It would be a mistake to consider a NOTARIKON as merely a homiletic or mnemonic device. Rather, it reveals deeper levels of meaning in the text. In addition to a literal understanding of the words, there is a wealth of profound ideas contained within the written text. This is similar to the workings of an acronym, where from each letter we extrapolate an entire

word.

Of particular interest is the example that the Sages chose for a notarikon in the Torah – the name AVRAHAM. Why is this significant?

Avraham's life-mission was to found the Jewish people. All three patriarchs, the Sages taught, are called "Israel" (B'reishit Rabba 63:3). This is because their primary goal was to establish the people of Israel, a unique people who would serve as a "kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation" (Sh'mot 19:6).

But Avraham also had a powerful impact on all nations. His teachings of monotheism transformed a world of paganism and idolatry.

The Sages analyzed Avraham's influence, noting that it incorporated six qualities – corresponding to the six letters of AV HAMON. Thus, like a notarikon, Avraham's influence was on two levels. His explicit life-goal was to found the Jewish people. But Avraham had an additional level of influence, as he disseminated his ideals of monotheism and morality among all peoples.

Six Aspects of Universal Influence

By examining each letter of the phrase AV HAMON, we uncover a

different aspect of Avraham's influence. He was an AV – a spiritual father and mentor to many nations, the source for true knowledge of God throughout the world.

His teachings were BACHUR – select and distinct from the jumble of confused beliefs and superstitions held by the pagan nations. His faith in one God was pure, free of erroneous influences. Furthermore, his Torah enjoyed a charismatic attraction. Recognizing its inner truth and beauty, many were drawn to it and inspired by it. It was beloved and CHAVIV.

Due to his sterling character traits and beliefs, Avraham was highly respected. He was regarded as a MELECH, a king. The people looked upon him as a “prince of God” (B'reishit 23:6). Like a king in battle, he led the fight for truth in a world shrouded in darkness and ignorance, victorious by virtue of the truth of his vision.

Furthermore, Avraham's Torah was not just some theoretical philosophy. He was VATIK among the nations – respected for his personal integrity and piety. Avraham sought to refine deeds and character traits through the holiness of his beliefs, and promoted a life of morality and justice.

The final quality of Avraham's influence was NE'EMAN – as a man of steadfast faith. As the Torah testifies, “He believed in God, and God counted it as righteousness” (B'reishit 15:6).

Avraham and his radical ideas kindled a nascent spark of faith among the nations. This flame of faith continues to illuminate the paths of many nations – a flame that will be elevated in the future into a pure and refined faith in God.

Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 264

* You might have noticed that the HEI in AV HAMON stands for the word CHAVIV. Strange, but the Maharsha on the gemara says that it is not uncommon for a HEI-CHET interchange in this kind of situation. Seems that it is based on the similarity of the form of the two letters.

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno

by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Rising to the Challenge

Avraham had lost all hope of ever having a child with his wife Sara. He had seen his future in the stars; and there he saw that he would never

have children.

But when Avraham was ninety-nine years old, God told Avraham to go outside his tent. “Please look at the sky and count the stars... That is how numerous your descendants will be!” (B'reishit 15:5).

According to the rabbis, God was telling Avraham, “Forget your astrological speculations! The star that indicates to you that you will have no children – from that very star, I will show you that you will have children!”

The Foolish Messenger

Solomon was a wealthy man living in a small village. He owned many fine pieces of gold and silver, as well as rare jewels. Since he could not properly protect his valuable treasures in his own home, Solomon deposited his prized possessions with a friend from a nearby town. His friend leased a safe deposit box in the local bank.

However, even best-laid plans can go awry. There was a robbery in the town. Masked bandits robbed the bank and took off with Solomon's treasures. The friend immediately sent word to inform Solomon of the robbery.

As soon as he heard the news, Solomon went into action. He organized his men to patrol all the

roads leading away from the town, in the hope that he might catch the thieves and recover his possessions.

When the messenger saw Solomon rushing to send off his men, he remarked, “If you ask me, you're wasting your time. The money and jewels are gone. Why spend even more money trying to recover what is lost?”

Solomon stared at the messenger. “Tell me, why did you come to me now?”

“What do you mean, ‘why did I come’? Your friend sent me here, to inform you about the robbery!”

“Listen to your own words!” reasoned Solomon. “Why did my friend send you to tell me about the matter right away? He must have felt that it is still possible, with immediate action, to retrieve the money. So the very reason you were sent here contradicts your own ill-advised counsel!”

The Prophet and the King

We find a similar situation occurred in the time of King Chizkiya. God commanded Yishayahu to speak with the king and warn him, “Give orders to your household [i.e., put your affairs in order], for you are going to die and you will not live” (Melachim Bet 20:1).

The Sages taught (B'rachot 10) that Chizkiya was judged for not fulfilling the mitzva of P'RU URVU (procreation). Why had the righteous king avoided having children? Because it was foretold that his son would be wicked.

"If that is the case", Chizkiya responded to the prophet, "then let me marry your daughter. Perhaps our combined merits will suffice so that my children will be moral and upright."

But Yishayahu refused. "No, the decree has already been set."

"Son of Amotz!" replied the angry king. "Stop prophesying and leave! I have a tradition: Even if a sharp sword is pressed against one's neck, do not despair of pleading for God's mercy."

Acting on the Message

The Rabbis meant to teach us an important lesson. If God sends a prophet to tell us about some future event, it is so that we will find a way to avoid this situation. We should seek to uncover the underlying cause and correct it.

God sent the prophet Yishayahu to Chizkiya to warn him that he would be punished for not fulfilling the mitzva of procreation. When the

prophet insisted that "the decree was already set", Chizkiya correctly responded: "Son of Amotz! Stop prophesying and leave!" Why do you think God sent you to me, if the matter was already decided? Clearly God wants me to rectify this fault and have children!

This is also the lesson of Avraham and his astrological predictions. Without a prophet to inform Avraham, God used the stars to indicate to Avraham that he would have no children. Avraham was supposed to learn from this that he needed to pray for children. As the Sages taught, "Why were the matriarchs barren? Because the Holy One desires the prayers of the righteous."

Avraham, however, thought that the signs of the stars were a Divine decree that could not be rescinded. Therefore, God told him, "Forget your astrological speculations!" Like the messenger in the parable, Avraham misunderstood the point of the message. It was not so that he should give up, but on the contrary – so that he should take action and pray for a child!

"The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show

how badly we want something.”
(Randy Pausch)

Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 29-31

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

Can Man Bless G-d?

“And Malchitzedek blessed Avram, and said, ‘Blessed be Avram to the Most High G-d... and blessed be the Most High G-d’” (B'reishit 14:19,20). Malchitzedek first blesses Avram, and then blesses G-d. Shouldn't the order have been reversed? First he should have blessed G-d and then he should have blessed Avram.

To answer this question, Rav Soloveitchik asks another question. “How can a human being who is made of flesh and blood dare approach the Master and Creator of the Universe and bless Him?” Rav Soloveitchik in Derashot HaRav answers that man must provide help and assistance, as it were, to the Master of the Universe.

The Rav continues that man must “help” G-d to reveal His Presence in the world. G-d told Avram that his assignment is to make G-d's presence known to the world. Avraham and his children must remove the clouds that obscure G-d from human perception.

Thus, before Malchitzedek blessed G-d, he first wanted to bless Avraham and his descendants to be successful in

spiritually conquering the world. Therefore, through Avraham's own success, G-d Himself would also be blessed.

Perhaps this is what Rashi means in his translation of D'varim 32:18 which says “You, Israel, have weakened the Rock that gave birth to you!” Rashi elaborates by making the following, incredible statement. “When G-d comes to bestow goodness on us, and we anger Him through our sins, then we ‘weaken’ G-d's power to do good to us.”

Rashi makes another amazing comment, this time on D'varim 33:5 - “G-d is King in Yeshurun (Israel), when all the tribes of Israel are united.” Rashi comments “When is G-d King over Israel? When the Jewish People are gathered together and united, but G-d is NOT King when the Jewish People are divisive and there is MACHLOKET between us.”

Thus, the way we can bless G-d is by doing His will through Torah and Mitzvot and by being united and loving one another. **ESP**

CHIZUK & IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

*by **Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness**
Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh*

Lech L'cha 2017

As we start reading through this week's parsha we join Avraham Avinu as he receives the commandment of LECH L'CHA MEI-ARTZ'CHA. Naturally, we tend to assume that upon receiving this directive, Avraham immediately set off on his way towards Eretz Yisrael. The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 62), however, teaches us that things were not nearly as simple as that. Avraham was very hesitant, greatly troubled by one of the more vexing problems facing potential olim till today: How could he leave his family, and more specifically his elderly father, behind? Avraham was torn between the necessity of following the Divine command LECH L'CHA on the one hand, and his ethical impulse of KIBUD AV VA'EIM on the other.

If his move were to be perceived by his surroundings as an attempt to shirk his moral responsibilities towards his aged father would this not cause a great Chilul Hashem?

[Although the last pasuk in Parshat No'ach speaks of Terach's death (11:32), seemingly suggesting that this predated the events described at the beginning of Lech L'cha, the Midrash teaches us otherwise. The Midrash - echoed by Rashi there - states that Terach actually lived for a full sixty years after Avraham's departure. (Terach was a hundred forty-five years old when Avraham left his side, and he died at the age of two hundred five).]

Many families contemplating Aliyah today, are faced with a conundrum similar to that which Avraham struggled with: How can they abandon their elderly parents (or grandparents) in their time of need? Were they to suddenly hear that their loved one fell ill how would they be able to tend to their needs whilst living in Eretz Yisrael? While we do not know for sure if Terach had fallen ill, we can assume that Avraham faced a similar quandary.

For other potential Olim, who may be leaving behind healthy middle-aged parents, the hardest thought may be having to deprive their children of the benefits of having regular direct contact with grandparents who can teach, support and shower their grandchildren with love and affection.

Surely, the ideal situation would be one wherein whole families make Aliyah together. Not just one individual nuclear family, but an entire extended family including parents and grandparents, so they can all rally together to help and support one another. Alas, in most cases this is not a realistic option.

Avraham had his dilemma solved for him. The Midrash (B'reishit Rabba 39:7) quotes Hashem telling Avraham the following: "LECH L'CHA - for I absolve you from keeping the mitzva of Kibud Av V'Eim." As we peruse the relevant halachic sources, we find that to a certain degree, a similar message holds true for all those who wish to follow the cry of Lech L'cha throughout the generations.

Thus the Mabit speaks to the question of one who vowed to go to Israel but his parents now forbid him to do act upon his promise. The Mabit writes that such a child will receive no punishment for not observing Kibud Av V'Eim. Similarly, Rav Ovadia Yosef stated that the importance of the mitzva of living in the Holy Land outweighs the mitzva of Kibud Av.

Whether the question was posed by a son living in the Holy Land dealing with a parents' demand that they return to the Diaspora, or a parent

forbidding a child from making Aliyah, the answer given by the Poskim, as if in unison, is that children need not follow parental restrictions regarding Aliyah.

Just as a parents' directive not to observe Shabbat is not to be heeded, so too in regards to aliya. If you have decided that the time has come to make Aliyah, do your best to convince your parents and siblings and bring them along, but if they decline the offer, you should come anyway!

I would like to conclude with an insight Chana Weisberg shares from her own personal experience: "Sometimes when we do things that seem to go against what our parents want, in fact we are fulfilling their deepest wishes. For example, I had thought that making aliya would disappoint my parents, but in fact, my mother told me (after I'd moved to Israel) that making aliya had been her dream for many years, before she'd gotten married. Sort of like Terach who was headed for the same place as Avraham (the Land of Canaan) but only Avraham reached their common destination" (from Chana's JewishMom website). 🏠👉



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Tzitzit Attached by a Minor

Question: When I was a katan,¹ I made tzitzit for myself. Someone told me that they are no longer valid, now that I am fully obligated in mitzvot. Is that so? If it is, is it sufficient to rectify the situation by untying and retying one knot as a gadol²?

Answer: The gemara³ cites Rav's statement that a non-Jew may not make tzitzit for a Jew. His source is the pasuk⁴ that instructs us to make tzitzit, which addresses "the Sons of Israel", excluding non-Jews. Tosafot⁵ comments that this implies that women would be able to make kosher tzitzit, as only non-Jews are

excluded, and this is indeed how the Shulchan Aruch⁶ rules.

On the other hand, another gemara⁷ derives from the p'sukim "You shall fasten... You shall write..."⁸ that only those who must wear tefillin can write tefillin, mezuzot, and Sifrei Torah, which excludes non-Jews, women, and children. Tosafot⁹ cites Rabbeinu Tam's view that this is part of a general rule that only those who are obligated in a mitzva can create the halachic object needed for the mitzva.¹⁰ Therefore, Rabbeinu Tam maintains, tzitzit tied on to a garment by a woman are invalid. Tosafot disputes this view based on the aforementioned gemara and another gemara that validates a sukka made by a non-Jew, concluding that the halacha regarding tefillin, mezuzot, and Sifrei Torah is unique because it results from a special derivation. The Rama,¹¹ however, cites the strict opinion and recommends being careful L'CHATCHILA not to have a woman make tzitzit as well.

¹. Under *bar mitzva*.

². Above *bar mitzva*.

³. *Menachot* 42a.

⁴. *Bamidbar* 15:38.

⁵. *Ad loc.*

⁶. *Orach Chayim* 14:1.

⁷. *Gittin* 45b.

⁸. *Devarim* 11:18-20.

⁹. *Ad loc.*

¹⁰. Women are exempt from wearing *tzitzit* because it is a time-dependent *mitzva* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 17:2).

¹¹. *Orach Chayim* 14:1.

The Magen Avraham¹² suggests another reason why women should not make tzitzit – the term “the Sons of Israel” often excludes not only non-Jews, but also the “Daughters of Israel”.

The Pri Megadim¹³ claims that the reason to exclude women from attaching tzitzit (if indeed they are excluded) is relevant to the status of minor males. If the reason that women may not tie tzitzit is that they are not obligated in the mitzva, the limitation applies to minor males as well, as they too are not obligated in tzitzit on the level of Torah law. In contrast, the limitation on “the Daughters of Israel” would not apply to minor males, as the mitzva of tzitzit was addressed to them as well, even if they are presently too young to be fully responsible for any mitzvot.

In any case, the Magen Avraham equates women and children in this matter, making the status of your tzitzit questionable. The Mishna Berura¹⁴ says that it is proper to deter a katan from making tzitzit that are

meant for a gadol (apparently only for Ashkenazim, as Sephardim follow the Shulchan Aruch’s view that women – and thus minors – may tie tzitzit). However, the Mishna Berura also writes¹⁵ that once a katan made tzitzit for his own garment, when he becomes a gadol, the question of whether he may continue to use them is a question of B’DI’EVED, and he may therefore use them as is.

In this regard, however, a katan may lack one halachic requirement for making tzitzit that a woman possesses – the ability and reliability to do things properly without supervision. It is possible to check to see if the physical action that the katan executed was done properly. However, what about the required kavana¹⁶ to create valid tzitzit? The gemara¹⁷ writes that the threads of the tzitzit must be spun lishmah (for the purpose of the mitzva). Although the Rambam¹⁸ says lishmah is not a requirement for attaching them to the garment, the Rosh maintains that the attaching must also be done lishmah, and we try to follow the latter position.¹⁹ Therefore, even

¹². 14:2.

¹³. *Eshel Avraham* 14:3.

¹⁴. 14:4.

¹⁵. *Bi’ur Halacha* ad loc.

¹⁶. Intention.

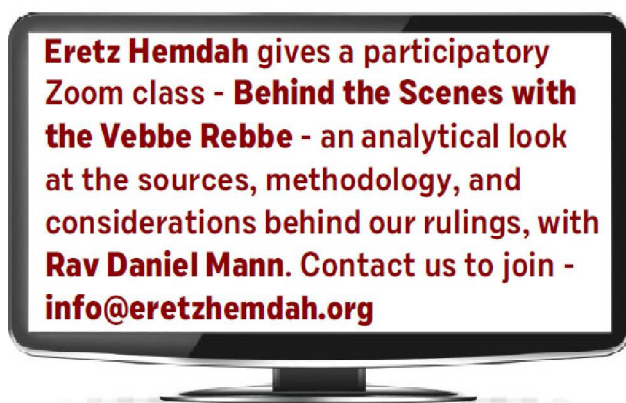
¹⁷. *Sukka* 9a.

¹⁸. *Tzitzit* 1:12.

¹⁹. *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 14:2.

regarding a b'di'eved situation, we can trust the katan to have attached the tzitzit with the proper kavana only if an adult was instructing him to do it lishma.²⁰

In your case, however, the situation is significantly better. You do not have to convince someone else that you had proper intention. Rather, if you are confident that you had in mind that you were attaching and tying the strings to be used for the mitzva of tzitzit (which is highly likely), you can continue to use them.²¹ If you are not confident that you had the right intention or if you want to follow stricter opinions than those that we presented,²² you should undo the tzitzit fully so that the whole tzitzit will be formed properly.²³



From the Pen of Rabbi Nachman HaKohen Kahana

Lech L'cha

Why Jewish Soldiers Die in Battle

War time is the wrong time for the people of Medinat Yisrael to point an accusing finger at whoever they believe was negligent in responding to the signs that Hamas was about to perpetrate the unspeakable atrocities. There is plenty of time for that after the cannons become silent.

Indeed, there are irresponsible reporters and news analysts who have already placed the blame for our state of unpreparedness on the night of Shmini Atzeret on the shoulders of the head of military intelligence; while others blame the general of Israel's southern command, and still others on the head of the Prime Minister.

Wise people don't go down that path of social suicide, because the only issue at stake now is the swift and complete destruction of the Nazi Hamas in Gaza and Hisbolah in Lebanon.

However, I suggest - without possibly knowing for sure -that the despicable actions of a groups of Torah deniers, and in particular one woman who

²⁰. See *Mishna Berura* 14:4 and *Bi'ur Halacha* ad loc; see *Gittin* 23a.

²¹. *Bi'ur Halacha* op. cit.; *Tzitzit* (Cohen) 14:8.

²². See *Tzitzit* op. cit.

²³. See also Q & A F-3.

provoked the quality of severe justice to appear before HaShem with the criminal sheet.

I will explain:

Jewish soldiers defending Eretz Yisrael fall at the hands of today's Amalek. That should not happen. A Jewish warrior who goes out to fight for God's Chosen people is supposed to return home to continue his life, and not to be killed on the battlefield!

Indeed, the count on Memorial Day of 2023 was 24,213 soldiers of Tzahal who are at rest in military cemeteries scattered throughout the land; and the question remains, what went wrong when not one of them deserved to die?

It is not only me who is asking this question before HaShem. The first to do so was Yehoshua bin Nun.

The Book of Yehoshua relates that after the miraculous victory at the city of Yericho, the next Canaanite place to be taken, as the Jews moved westward, was the small town of Ai. Yehoshua's generals suggested that instead of sending the entire Jewish army, it would be more than enough to send just 3000 troops. Our 3000 men were defeated, with the dire result that one Jewish warrior named Yair Ben Menashe was killed. He was equal in Torah knowledge to half the Sanhedrin of 71 judges!

Yehoshua was devastated! How could it happen that a Jewish soldier was killed while taking part in the major mitzva of

liberating Eretz Yisrael? Jewish soldiers don't die in battle!

Yehoshua 7:6-11

Then Yehoshua tore his clothes and fell face down to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and they sprinkled dust on their heads.

And Yehoshua said, "Alas, HaShem, why did You bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites - to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!

Pardon your servant, Lord. What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies?

The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this, and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will You do for Your own great name?"

HaShem said to Yehoshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?

Israel has sinned. They have violated My covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.

HaShem informed Yehoshua that "Israel had sinned", the implication being that the community of Israel itself had caused the catastrophe of losing the battle, and a Jewish soldier being killed.

Yehoshua investigated the matter and discovered that one man, Achan ben Karmi, had stolen some items from the Yericho booty that was sanctified for the Mishkan.

Achan was put to death by HaShem's command, despite the fact that the punishment for intentional embezzling of a sanctified item is malkot (39 whip lashes), not death.

HaShem's declaration to Yehoshua that "Israel had sinned was in fact the sin of only one man - Achan Ben Karmi of the tribe of Yehuda, who caused the defeat of the Jews and the death of the righteous Yair of the tribe of Menashe.

The Almighty's accounting principle that an "innocent" man could pay the ultimate price for another's sin is beyond human comprehension. But the principle is in effect: Jewish soldiers die in battle when other Jews sin and cause the Midat HaDin (the Quality of Harsh Justice) to prevail.

The severity of Achan's act and death penalty can be readily understood.

The Jewish nation's 40-year sojourn in the hostile desert was no secret. The Midrash relates that there was commercial and theological contact between the Jews and other nations, so Am Yisrael's end goal of entering the Holy Land was no secret.

But the Canaanite nations in Eretz Yisrael were not overly worried, because

between them and the Jews stood two buffer states ruled by invincible kings, Og King of Bashan and Sichon King of the Emorites.

On their way to crossing the Jordan River, Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish army totally annihilated these two buffer states. At this point, a gentile in the Holy Land with any thoughts of self-preservation probably left the land or prepared to do so knowing that no one could stand before the "steam roller" of God's Chosen People.

Yehoshua at the head of the army destroyed Yericho. By then, it is probable that the majority of the gentile population had already left Eretz Yisrael. Then came the disaster at Ai caused by the sin of Achan. A Jewish soldier was killed and our army was routed. The remaining gentiles concluded that it was possible to defeat the Jews in battle. So why leave? And so, they unpacked and remained.

Indeed Yehoshua conquered the land in seven years of battles, however, the gentiles who remained, influenced many of the Jewish nation to adopt their idolatrous ways, which eventually led to the destruction of the First Beit HaMikdash.

The result of Achan's heinous sin and the resulting military defeat empowered the gentiles to deny HaShem's gift of the Holy Land to the Jewish people, and they remained in Eretz Yisrael. HaShem commanded that Achan be put to death, not because he embezzled from the

sanctified objects, but because of the dire repercussions of his act: the goyim remaining here and influencing the Jews to practice idolatry.

We all sin! Indeed, there is no escaping the tyranny of the yetzer hara (evil inclination), as stated by Shlomo HaMelech (Kohelet 7), "There is not a tzadik in the world who does good and never sins".

There are sins which go no further than staining an individual's neshama, however there are sins which carry with them historical implications.

There was a group of Israelis whose conduct raises doubts as to their authentic Jewish genealogy of being born to a Jewish mother, and especially one woman whose dire sin was equal in its national and religious consequences to that of Achan Ben Karmi, with similar tragic results.

It occurred on the night of Kol Nidrei and Yom Kippur day in Tel Aviv, this year. This anti-Torah group interfered with noise and other related nuisances with hundreds, if not thousands, who came together to pray. But the peak of insanity was one woman whose name I don't know who will have to stand before the heavenly court and explain why so many Jews have been murdered. She entered a minyan wearing only a bathing suit and stood by the chazan until he stopped the prayers.

When I heard of this on the news, and that she and her friends were not arrested and charged with degrading

Judaism, I knew that it would not pass without a divine reaction. We will feel a big sheimis (slap) very soon, and indeed, it came on Shemini Atzeret.

She and her liberal progressive friends who seek to eradicate all semblance of Judaism from the land crossed the border into insane evilness. They evoked the heavenly gezeira (decree) that our nation is in need of an electric shock to return us to our Jewish roots.

It was not the generals nor the politicians, nor the troops in the area who were derelict in their responsibilities. It was a decree from the shamayim that we, as the nation chosen by Hashem, has to do t'shuva, so the leaders were "put to sleep" temporarily.

After three thousand years of bonding and acquaintanceship, it is high time that we realize that HaShem is serious. He restrains Himself from punishing us for our sins, but there comes a time and limits of conduct where restraint turns to action.

The hate of Judaism demonstrated on Yom Kippur by certain Jews was the TNT that took down the defense wall in Gaza. It remains for us to analyze, draw conclusions and return to who we really are.

I wonder. Why have we not seen pictures of burnt batei kneset (shuls) and desecrated Torah scrolls? Think about it - there is a reason!



YOU CAN'T STAY PUT!

In Parashat Lech L'cha, Avraham is told to leave his homeland and go off to a vague destination which will only be revealed later (B'reishit 12:1).

A question: why can't Avraham stay home in familiar surroundings? Why does he have to embark on an expedition?

The only way Avraham will find spiritual satisfaction is by embarking on a journey. Pursuing a dream does not go with staying put. An old familiar locale lacks excitement and challenge. A new land, on the other hand, will get him out of a rut and suggest a new challenge, a new opportunity.

The Midrash B'reishit Rabba says in the name of Rabbi Levi, When Avraham looked around him at his neighbours in his long-established place of residence, he sadly said, "All I see here is eating and drinking and materialism!"

When he reached the destination to which God had led him, he was excited and inspired and said, "This is the place for me!" The land he now settled in was Eretz Yisra'el.

LOT AS A PILLAR

Avraham was a good uncle to Lot but must have felt it very badly when his nephew went to live in Sodom and turned into a low character so deeply enmired in criminality and sinfulness.

The fact that Lot "sat in the gate of Sodom" tells us more than merely where Lot was living. In Biblical culture (e.g. Mishlei 31), sitting in the gate of a place meant being an eminent citizen who was trusted to judge what was going on. In Lot's case he not only judged the local way of life; he approved of it.

The bad reputation which Sodom bears throughout history was not only supported but encouraged by Lot. If Mrs. Lot turned into a pillar of salt, Lot himself turned into a pillar of corruption and crime. **OZ**

HAAMEK DAVAR

- Dr Jacob Solomon

Lech L'cha

"Go for yourself, from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you" (12:1).

He answered his Call to accept G-d's direction. In so doing, he broke himself off from his roots, culture,

and affluence to follow the lifestyle of a nomadic head of tribe, with constant worries of where the next ration of water was coming from. Even though it was a complete break from his wealthy, settled, and successful way of urbanized lifetime in the heart of the Mesopotamian civilization, one of the most advanced in its time.

But despite G-d's promise to Avraham that He 'would make him into a great nation' (12:2), the way to a suitable heir to his newfound way of life as a servant of G-d was a long one. In realizing that his wife Sara was getting no younger, Avraham made the decision that he would try for a child with her maid, Hagar. But:

When Hagar knew she had become pregnant (from Avraham), she treated Sarai (Sara), her mistress, with contempt. Sarai said to Avram: *'... it was I who put my servant in your arms, but now that she is pregnant, she treats me with contempt. Let G-d judge who's wrong: you or I'.*

Avram replied:

'She is your servant, treat her you see fit. Sarai treated Hagar harshly; she then ran away from her' (16:4-6).

This situation does not seem to have brought the best out of Avraham, or Sara. Instead of being grateful for an

heir and a biological child - from whatever source (after all, Sara made the suggestion and Avraham accepted), the situation degenerated into a quarrel involving Hagar, Sara, and Avraham. This is how the Ramban sees it, in writing:

'Our mother (Sara) transgressed by this affliction (of Hagar), and so did Avraham, by permitting her to do so. So G-d heard (Hagar's) affliction and gave him a son who would... afflict the descendants of Avraham and Sara with all kinds of afflictions' (Ramban to 16:6).

Yet nowhere in the text is blame attached to Avraham, Sara, or Hagar. No angel of G-d appears to Sara rebuking her for persecuting Hagar, or to Avraham for not restraining Sara.

In explanation, there is a difference between a sin and a mistake. For G-d told Avraham: 'I will give the Land to your children.' Many years passed and that child did not materialize. Sara had the dilemma: should I intervene by telling Avraham to take another woman to produce an heir to his traditions. Or should I continue to wait, wait, and wait... Avraham had a similar dilemma: should I accept Sara's proposal and take another woman, or should I continue to wait, wait, and wait, hoping that G-d will


carry out His promise in due course.

The Ramban does not suggest that any of the parties acted in any way other than in good faith. They nevertheless might well have erred in not correctly assessing the consequences of the success. For the parties involved had human feelings, which made themselves felt after Hagar became pregnant with a biological heir for Avraham. The purpose was achieved. The parties acted with the highest of motives. But the conditions for jealousy and bad feeling were thus put into place, because that was, and is, human nature. And people have to live with the consequences of their mistakes, even to later generations.

And this could be one of the lessons on Avraham's (and indeed the Jewish nation's) learning curves. Faith includes the notion that promises are not always realized immediately - indeed they may well come to pass much later than expected.

After putting this together, I came across a different approach developed by R. Zvi Kushlevsky, which frames the whole story within the idea that the future of a child much depends on his upbringing and the input and influence of the parents. Though Hagar was the biological mother of the child, Avraham's whole

purpose of connecting with Hagar was in order to produce an heir that would carry on his work after his death. Hagar the handmaiden would give birth to the child, but it would be Sara that would use her influence in bringing him up.

That would only work if the child would see that Sara was the elevated and respected mistress of the household. But if Hagar would treat her with contempt, Sara would probably have no influence at all. That was the threat that Sara sensed, and for that reason she treated Hagar harshly. And Avraham wisely let events take their course rather than interfering, telling Sara to "treat her as you see fit", possibly (my suggestion) suspecting that children are children and may well follow their own paths despite parental influence, as would his grandson Eisav... 



In our Parsha, Avraham is referred to as an IVRI (B'reishit 14:13) which, as Rashi explains, refers to one who came from the "other side of the river", presumably the Euphrates.

According to Yitzchak Meitliss, the assumption is that Avraham belonged to a group of people that emerged from Mesopotamia and settled as nomadic shepherds in "Eretz Ivrim" (40:15; cf. Ramban), especially around the area of Chevron. The Ivrim, it appears, did not worship idols, at least as revealed by the notable absence of such artifacts in their burial fields.

Following the S'forno, Avraham was a descendant of Eiver (of Yeshivat Sheim VaEiver fame), one of the few who recognized the One G-d. While Rambam describes how Avraham discovered Hashem as a young boy and destroyed his father's idols (Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1), according to Rav Steinsaltz, Avraham more likely rediscovered Hashem and earned his heavenly reward by virtue of the fact that wherever he went he called upon the name of G-d.

Meitliss suggests that there is a similarity between the term IVRI and the Egyptian word OFRO that appears in ancient manuscripts and that refers to a resident population that broke the social order in Egyptian eyes. Yes, it sounds familiar...

The term IVRI, however, implies something much deeper. IVRI is the one who undergoes a life trans-

formation by exchanging one way of life (the "other side") for another, not only by calling upon G-d but also by living according to Hashem's moral code and conveying it to mankind.

MP

The Daily Portion **- Sivan Rahav Meir**

Turning Numbers **into Names**

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

A friend who does not live in Israel explained why, in her opinion, many world leaders are giving full support to us this time around. The governments in Washington, Paris, Rome, and London finally understand that if Sderot was attacked, their cities could be attacked, too.

"Indeed, in the Torah portion of B'reishit," my friend wrote, we read: 'And God said let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness... So God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him.'

"And in the Torah portion of No'ach, which we read this past Shabbat, it says: 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He made man.'

This is not complicated, but rather simple. There are those who kidnap, torture, and murder, and there are those who would never commit such acts. There are those whose vile deeds desecrate the image of God and those whose lives are a testimony to God's presence in this world. It's a matter of light versus darkness and good against evil.

And then I received the following message that encapsulates the enemy's ambition versus our own.

"I am a psychologist who accompanies Zaka -- a search and rescue organization whose mission includes honoring victims of catastrophic death by collecting their remains and ensuring they have a proper burial. I recently sat with a young man who, for the last two weeks, has been busy identifying our dead. He has witnessed unspeakable horrors and has been working around the clock. Once in a while, lying on the ground in his sleeping bag, he dozes off for a few hours. I asked him: What keeps you going?

And with tears in his eyes, he answered: ' Hamas wanted to turn names into numbers; I am trying to turn numbers into names.'"

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Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

Lech L'cha

Within some forty verses of our introduction to Avraham, we are told of his involvement in a major war. The narrative is an omen of things to come, of that which will happen to Israel. MAASEI AVOT SIMAN L'BANIM. But there are other striking features to note, features which can relate more to approach and conduct than to a prophetic vision of future events.

As Avraham prepares to go forth to battle, the text tells us VAYAREK ET CHANICHOV - "And he led forth his trained men" (14:14). The peculiar word VAYAREK is explained in the Talmud (Nedarim 32) as SHEHORKAN BATORAH- being taught to them Torah.

This explanation itself requires an explanation. Is this a time for intricate study of the Torah? Is this the way to prepare for battle and to confront Pekuach Nefesh?

Rabbi J. Rabinowitz explained that Israel approaches war differently than other people. In the Book of Yehoshua (8:9) it records how that

leader prepared for the decisive battle at the city of Ai. The text notes VAYALEN YEHOSHUA BALAILA - interpreted by the Talmud (Megila 3a) he immersed himself in the depth of halacha. A major battle, which could determine the fate of Israel and Israel's leader does not spend the night planning strategy, rather he immerses himself in the study of Torah? What message are Avraham and Yehoshua transmitting? Perhaps, we are being taught that there are two ways for us non-prophetic mortals to bridge the gap between the finite and the Infinite. The first and best known, is prayer. When we are in need, we turn to G-d with prayer, and we direct our minds, hearts and lips heavenward. Prayer elevates man and places him before the Divine.

The other way to bridge the gap is through Torah. This does not elevate man with the grace of the Infinite One. Rather, the Infinite joins the finite as by Mt. Sinai where G-d comes down and joins His people in receiving the Torah. Once again, the gap is bridged.

LO B'CHAYIL V'LO B'KO'ACH KI IM B'RUCHI - We have two complimentary ways of reaching and uniting with the RU'ACH which is so essential to our survival, that Rua'ch

which takes the place of Chayil and Ko'ach.

When confronted by mighty armies, let us prepare like Avraham and Yehoshua. Let us prepare by attempting to bridge the gap, by alerting our Father, by seeking the Ru'ach which battles for us. Both prayer and Torah study will do. Of course, after the finite and Infinite are joined, after the Ru'ach and Israel are one, then, battle plans are made, strategies evolve, and the battle is joined. Avraham and Yehoshua both employed tactics to defeat their enemies, as the texts clearly indicate. But the most important strategy, the most vital preparation is the Divine approval and blessing. 🏰

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

Words of CHIZUK

It is a bitter and tragic irony that the monstrous evil called Hamas finds its place in Parshat No'ach, which we just read. When the Torah identifies the reason for the great Flood, the verse states: "Now the earth was corrupt, and the earth became full of HAMAS... And Gd said to No'ach, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth has become full of

HAMAS because of them, and behold I am destroying them from the earth.'" (6:11, 13)

Can we draw some conclusions from this obvious word similarity to our current crisis? Let us begin by asking a series of questions.

Rashi (ad loc) defines HAMAS as robbery and the Talmud (Sanhedrin 108a) states that it was this sin that sealed the fate of the Generation of the Flood. While GEZEL (robbery) is a serious offense, it certainly appears a bit much to attribute the destruction of all the world's inhabitants to this crime. How then might this be understood?

And another question: the Talmud (Sanhedrin 57a) claims that the corruption of the earth was its sexual immorality and idolatry, and makes no mention of robbery. Even the Midrash (B'reishit Rabba 31:6) expands the crimes of HAMAS to include murder as well. Which, then, was the primary transgression? Needless to say, many of the commentaries ask these very questions and offer important answers and insights.

Let us suggest another approach beginning with Rav Soloveitchik's definition of HAMAS: "CHAMAS is the universal act of interfering with

someone else's rights and prerogatives, usurping something that is not one's own, the act of overreaching oneself..." (The Emergence of Ethical Man, p. 33) Fine, but why, though, would anyone behave in such a brazen fashion? Robbery, after all, is not thievery. This GEZEL delinquency is committed when someone shamelessly confronts another directly and forcibly seizes something from that person. The crime is committed for two reasons: one, the criminal is driven by a pleasure-lust that demands satisfaction no matter the cost, and two, because the perpetrator is simply more powerful and can physically overwhelm his victim.

Once a person's possessions and privacy rights are breached, once respect for human dignity is trashed, and gone is the reverence for man created in the image of Gd, once ethics is polluted by a "might makes right" immorality, it is just a matter of time before robbery metastasizes to include kidnapping, rape and murder. In fact, the Ohr HaChayim asserts just that, that eventually all forms of oppression, brutality and tyranny are denominated as HAMAS!

With this observation, the above questions are resolved. Indeed, what begins with CHAMAS, never stops with GEZEL. When the Talmud claims

that the verdict to destroy the world was because of CHAMAS as robbery, it was to issue a dire warning to civilization, alerting the world how quickly mankind can descend into depravity and inhumanity when hedonistic materialism joins with an overreaching power-lust to terrorize its denizens and ultimately bring about its own destruction. No wonder, the Ba'al HaTurim argues that the numerical equivalent of CHAMAS (108) is GEIHINOM - Hell!

Now, it should rather be painfully obvious why and how the HAMAS criminality of our Parsha defines precisely the sheer sadistic savagery of the HAMAS nation at our borders. And while it may be questionable whether the generation of the Flood deliberately cloaked their corruption and wickedness with some radical ideology, there is no doubt whatsoever that Hamas hijacked godliness, besmirching its sanctity and coopted it for coldblooded domination. In its religious fanaticism, Hamas distorted sacred theology and turned it into satanic forces of evil, making it a demonic reality far more ruthless than the Hamas iniquities of the DOR HAMABUL.

While it is always wise to be cautious about framing our current war with Hamas in apocalyptic overtones, it

may not be that much of a reach to contend that civilization may be at a crucial inflection point in the battle between good and evil. The identity of the two sides in this ominous confrontation could not be clearer. And, let it be said, without equivocation, that in this conflict, there are only two sides! Hamas and its sympathizers have elected to choose evil and the glorification of death, and Israel and her allies find themselves in a struggle to preserve life and vindicate all that is good and decent in humanity.

Here's how a seasoned rabbi-journalist put it: "As has happened so often in history, the Jewish People are at the center, the forefront of this battle for humanity. If we are left to fight alone, we will, with Gd's help, prevail, but other countries will not be so fortunate. We now have the golden opportunity to take the fight to them, these haters of peace and equality, and purge them from our midst... Every nation must reclaim the virtues of tolerance, equality, and justice that are being threatened by the growing extremist hordes. This will not be a short nor simple fight, but it may be the last chance the free world has to avoid a descent into the dark world of Islamic totalitarianism."

Of course, only time will tell whether

this understanding will play out accordingly. But, in any event, the battle must be fought, our hostages brought home and, with HaShem's help, we will be victorious and eradicate the evil that is Hamas. May we all - through our prayers and Torah study, through our acts of chesed and warm camaraderie - be worthy of such a triumph! 🙌

Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

T'HILIM

It's not only at times like these when we're all saying T'hilim for the sake of Am Yisrael and for the protection of our soldiers and for the speedy release of all the hostages in good health, that this thought comes to me. I have always wondered about the efficacy of these prayers. Personal prayers that are accompanied by tears and crying feel more personal and I can more readily understand why Gd would accept my pleas and requests. But I wonder when I say T'hilim for the sick or for some other misfortune, how it really helps, especially if I don't truly understand all the words. Unfortunately, we probably all have all had the experience that, despite our amassing multitudes of T'hilim, the result is not what we prayed for. The

words of T'hilim are holy, without a doubt. We know they were written with Ru'ach haKodesh by Dovid HaMelech - someone whose life had more suffering than one could bear. There is no questioning that. What happens to all those T'hilim that don't produce our desired outcome? Our Rabbis tell us that if these words didn't bring about what we prayed for, they were used to help someone else. Again, how does that work?

The established prayers that we say, the blessings, Sh'moneh Esrei, etc. were composed by the Men of the Great Assembly, great men, some of whom were prophets, with the help of Ru'ach haKodesh. The coinage of the words is "untouchable" - we are directed by halacha that we are not allowed to change them or alter them in any way to fit our personal preference. A woman who, although new to mitzva observance, was very careful about the laws of family purity and dutifully went to mikva, related to me how she would say the blessings there in an amended fashion. Instead of saying BARUCH ATA... MELECH HA'OLAM..., she said B'RUCHA AT... MALKAT HA'OLAM... She feminized the blessing because she didn't like treating Gd as a male (even though in the process, she was attributing a real gender to a gender-less Being). It was difficult for me, as

her Rebbetzin to tactfully tell her that these weren't "kosher" blessings. Why not? What is it about the exact formulation of the words set by the Rabbis millennia ago that makes them unchangeable? The answer to that would then address the same question I have about T'hilim. How do these particular words in this particular order produce desired results, whether for us or for others? Is it some sort of magic?

Yes and no. It is magic in that it works but it is natural and "scientific" as well. The magic is that this exact combination of words somehow brings about a positive effect somewhere in the world. It is the combination of these exact letters that leads to results. The "scientific" way is simple chemistry. For example, if I, as a scientist, can posit and believe and prove that when two atoms of hydrogen "bump into each other" in some way with one atom of oxygen, the result is a molecule of water; if otherwise invisible elements, all of a sudden, create a physical, visible product; if I can see and accept that the "random" combination of atoms produce various elements that were, heretofore, non-existent, then I should be able to believe this about the specific combinations of letters

and words that Chazal (and Dovid HaMelech) composed for us. Yes - these exact combinations of letters and words produce an effect in both Upper and Lower Worlds that we are unaware of. And so, if the words we say don't produce the result that we want, they are not going to waste. The results produced in the upper spheres impact the world down here.

That's how I can help myself understand the power of T'hilim and prayer - for my benefit or for the benefit of others. But it will always be for some benefit.

Insights into Halacha

- Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

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Birkat Kohanim and You

The Power of the Blessing

BIRKAT KOHANIM. Words alone can not possibly do justice to this incredible blessing, especially for those privileged to have been a part of the semi-annual Birkat Kohanim at the Kotel on Chol HaMoed Sukkot and Pesach, featuring hundreds of Blessers (Kohanim) and tens of thousands of Blessees. This powerful ritual of the Kohanim blessing Klal Yisrael with this exceptional

threefold bracha which includes physical blessing and protection that we receive in the merit of our forefathers, spiritual enlightenment through the medium of Torah, and the quintessence of freedom, peace and perfection is considered so great, it is as if Hashem Himself is giving this blessing. In fact, according to the Gemara (Chulin 49a): KOHANIM M'VORCHIN L'YISRAEL V'HAKADOSH BARUCH HU MASKIM L'YADAM.

Unsuccessful in Chu"l

In Chutz La'aretz, although many Sefardic congregations do indeed Duchen every day, on the other hand, among Ashkenazic Kehilot, this unique service is relegated to Musaf on Yom Tov as per the Rema's ruling (Orach Chaim 128, 44).

The Rema himself gives one reason for this, that only on Yom Tov are people in the proper state of mind: filled with Simchat Yom Tov and unencumbered by the many trials and tribulations of eking out parnasa. Many commentators offer additional reasons as well.

It is well known that many Gedolim including the Vilna Gaon, the Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Rav Chaim Volozhiner, the Netziv, and Rav Nosson Adler tried unsuccessfully to reinstate the minhag to perform Birkas Kohanim in Ashkenazic Kehilot on a daily basis. The Aruch HaShulchan states that it is as if a Heavenly voice proclaimed not to do Birkat Kohanim on a daily basis outside

of Eretz Yisrael and considers it a Decree from Above. In fact, the Beis Efraim vigorously defends the common practice in Chutz La'aretz not to duchen daily, and maintains that it is an ancient custom as well, dating back to the Maharam miRottenberg, and is a minhag kavu'a that can not be changed. He cites many proofs to this and questions the validity of duchening daily, even in Eretz Yisrael. He adds an interesting note from Rav Yaakov Sasportas, that one of the minhagim that the followers of the false messiah Shabtai Zvi practiced was to duchen daily. Come what may, not duchening in Chutz La'aretz on a daily basis has since become standard Ashkenazic practice.

On the other hand, in most parts of Eretz Yisrael, and especially in Yerushalayim, we (Ashkenazim included!) are fortunate to be able to receive this unique bracha every day, and on Shabbat and Yom Tov (and on fast days!) even more than once.

Common Concerns

Halacha dictates what one is supposed to do when hearing and accepting this bracha from the Kohanim: to stand quietly with eyes facing downward and concentrating on receiving this Divine gift.

Yet, a question arises: What should one do if he is still in the middle of his silent Amida when the Chazan reaches Birkat Kohanim during Chazarat HaShatz? Is it proper to continue davening while the

Kohanim are blessing the congregation? Or is it preferable to stop and listen to receive the blessing, thereby receiving the blessing, but possibly making an interruption in his own personal prayer?

The halacha mandates (see Tur and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 104:7) that one should not interrupt his Amida, except for D'VARIM SHEBIK'DUSHA (exceedingly holy prayers) such as Kedusha and AMEN Y'HEI SH'EI RABBA. In these instances, one is required to stop his own tefila, concentrate, and listen to the congregational prayer. Does Birkat Kohanim fit this criterion, or is one's own personal tefila considered more important for our intents and purpose?

Whose Mitzvah Is It?

Birkat Kohanim is a Biblical Mitzva, as the pasuk states (Bamidbar 6:22-27, Naso) - KO T'VORCHU ET BNEI YISRAEL - "So shall the Kohanim bless Bnei Yisrael." Obviously, this mitzva is incumbent upon the Kohanim. In fact, if a Kohen refuses to duchen, he transgresses three mitzvot!

Yet, the Sefer Charedim writes that this mitzva is also incumbent upon the rest of Klal Yisrael, that they must listen to Birkat Kohanim. In fact, this opinion is cited as uncontested by many authorities, including the Hafla'ah, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the Beis Yaakov, and the Mishna Berura. Accordingly, it would seem that one must stop his own Shmoneh Esrei and listen to Birkat Kohanim.

However, in the words of the Chatam Sofer (Shu"t Orach Chaim 167), "most Halachic authorities follow the opinion of the Ritva (Sukka 35b s.v. MAI LAV), that this mitzva is exclusively the Kohen's domain". This understanding is followed by many decisors, as well, including the Noda B'Yehuda, the Mahar"i Assad, and the Aruch HaShulchan; the Sefer HaChinuch implies this way as well. The Maharsham adds that even according to this opinion, nevertheless, it is still a mitzva to help the Kohanim fulfill their duty (M'SAYEI'A L'MITZVATAM). All these authorities still maintain that it is proper and required to be blessed by the Kohanim, just not actually part of their Biblical commandment.

Contemporary Kohanic Custom

This understanding, coupled with the fact that Birkat Kohanim is not mentioned authoritatively as one of the tefilot that one is required to stop one's own tefila for, is why several contemporary poskim, including Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt"l, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, Rav Ovadia Yosef zt"l, the Rivevos Efrayim zt"l, and Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlit"a, rule that one is not required to stop his own tefila to listen to Birkat Kohanim. Still, they maintain that one is allowed to do so and it would not be considered a hefsek tefila.

On the other hand, many other contemporary decisors, including the Chazon Ish zt"l, Rav Moshe Feinstein

zt"l, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, Rav Shmuel HaLevi Vosner zt"l and Rav Binyamin Zilber zt"l, aver that one should indeed stop his own davening to listen to Birkat Kohanim. They maintain that since many authorities count the congregation as part of the Biblical mitzva, and even those who do not agree still hold that it is required and proper to be blessed by the Kohanim; as such, its status is also considered DAVAR SHEBIK'DUSHA. This is in fact how several Halacha sefarim on tefila conclude.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l takes this approach a step further, writing that in his opinion, Birkat Kohanim is considered superior to Kedusha, as during Kedusha we are talking to and praising the King (G-d); conversely, in Birkat Kohanim, the King is "talking" to us.

Birchat Kohanim was alluded to by Hashem all the way back in the time of Avraham Avinu and is the conduit to receive countless Divine blessings. Especially during these trying times, when we face danger and uncertainty on a constant basis, it behooves us all to try and take advantage of this incredible opportunity, every chance we get!

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomot / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu

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Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere."

LECH L'CHA *See the whole GMS file for other GMs for Lech L'cha*

GM Avraham Avinu (still as Avram) has arrived in the future Eretz Yisrael, and HaShem makes several promises to him about the Land. One such promise is in B'reishit 13:17 -

קוֹם הִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ לְאַרְכָּהּ וּלְרֵחְבָּהּ כִּי לְךָ אֶתְנֶנָּה:

"Rise, walk the land, through its length and breadth, for I will give it [all] to you."

However, we do not keep the Land without a commitment to Torah and Mitzvot. Here is a GM (1992) of the above pasuk - Sh'mot 21:1

וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁטִים לְפָנֶיךָ:

"These are the laws that you must set before them [the Israelites]."

The fact is, that HaShem allows us to stay in the Land with the hopeful expectations of our changing for the better. But without Torah and Mitzvot, we aren't doing our share to deserve the fulfillment of the promises.

RED ALERT!

Lech L'cha

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- Our Patriarch Avraham was destined for greatness from a very early age. In the Midrash the Rabbis try to figure out at what point in Avraham's life he was aware of the Almighty, Creator of the Universe. Whether it was very early, or as an adult, he still stands alone in the world at that time. He was required to live a nomadic life, a life that would take him from Ur Kasdim (possibly Iraq) to Charan (possibly on the Syrian-Turkish border), a distance of over 600 miles, and then to travel south from there to Canaan, a distance of about 450 miles. This trip took him through different lands with

different cultures, customs, language, climate, and character traits of people. The majority of his life he was totally distant from the original family which settled in the Charan area. A lot of this trip took him through hostile populations. The nomadic life was seemingly to separate him from existing peoples who rejected him as an outcast and a strong-willed personality.

Just being told by Hashem to leave his family and home was in and of itself a mandate that would form a style of life. He was not permitted to settle in any one region for any length of time.

When he reached Canaan he was still living a nomadic life. The Midrash describes this lifestyle to be divinely mandated to spread the beautiful perfume in the region.

What good is perfume if it cannot be spread so that people can enjoy the aroma? This was a test for Avraham, one that was needed to display what he was and what he developed, and his ideas to the outside world. Avraham's nomadic life did attract spiritual followers who were certainly enamored by Avraham and Sarah's open hospitality and elevated way of life. What happened to these people is not known. It could be that their attraction to Avraham was based

more on his personality and the home that Avraham and Sarah conducted rather than the spiritual teachings of both of them.

- In this story of Avraham, Hashem is the one who commanded him to make “aliyah”, to leave his father and the family back in Charan and to live in the spiritually elevated area of Canaan, the Promised Land. The divine mandate to make aliyah is discussed in the Midrash at the end of Parshat No'ach, where it states that Terach had died. If Terach was actually still alive then the question was raised about a son defying the parents' wishes to make aliyah. This is something raised in the Midrash which we see in America to be a topical issue.

The other form of aliyah that the Rabbis offer as a model is the mandate that Avimelech later gives to Yitzchak to kick him out of the Plishtim lands and live elsewhere in Canaan. This raises two models of the modern day aliyah experience. One is when the host country in exile is no longer a welcoming site for Jewish living. Discrimination in a hostile environment is the Avimelech motivation for Jews of that country to make aliyah.

The Avraham model of aliyah is more

like a Nefesh B'Nefesh type of message that we see in North America. This has enveloped thousands of Jewish people in North America who have heard their own form of Lech L'cha, deciding to make aliyah because of the spirit of a divine message of Avraham, and not because they are running from a hostile environment.

- The BRIT BEIN HABETARIM, the Covenant Between the Pieces, was the second covenant that Hashem made with mankind, according to the writings of Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman. The first was the covenant after the Flood in which Hashem promised not to wipe out humanity again through flood. The second covenant on the other hand was to establish the Chosen People on earth through Avraham's descendants. The people would be purified first by the terrible oppressive slavery in the “iron furnace” of Egypt. Then they would exit Egypt with much wealth and return to the Promised Land. Hashem was telling Avraham at this time not only that he would inherit the land, but also about the nature of that inheritance, that the land had tremendous quality, spiritually and materialistically. Avraham displayed tremendous faith in Hashem and consequently Hashem rewards him

for that Emunah, that faith. That would enable the descendants of Avraham to eternally live as spiritual guides for the rest of mankind throughout history. We are supposed to become the kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation. This was what Hashem meant when He told Avraham “your reward will be very great” (15:1).

- When Hashem tells Avraham to circumcise himself and his son Yishmael and the other males of his household, Avraham consults with his three comrades and dear friends, Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre. According to the Midrash the three friends were approached separately and each had different opinions that they offered to Avraham. Aner told him that it was a bad idea because Avraham would end up incapacitating himself. The relatives and the kings that Avraham had slain would come and kill him. Eshkol told Avraham that he was an old man, the surgery would cause much blood loss, and he would end up dying. Mamre was the only one who gave positive advice, stating that God already saved him from a fiery furnace and had created many miracles to protect him, He would protect Avraham in this situation too (Tanchuma).

The real question I ask: Why does

Avraham consult with these people? Did he consult with them following the other tests that God had given Avraham? From what we know of Avraham the entire Midrashic line of thought here is challenging and perplexing. Avraham listened and obeyed every command that he heard from Hashem. Was there any question in doing it? Maybe Avraham was not consulting them; maybe he just wanted to know what these friends would think of his doing something that in their minds made no sense whatsoever.

Perhaps Avraham was not asking his comrades for advice what to do, but rather to hear them so that he would feel that they would not be rejecting him when Avraham would perform the divine commandment. The Midrash in turn would symbolize the non-Jewish reaction to the commandments that the Jewish people have embraced.

I do think that when the founders of Christianity wanted to appeal to the pagan world with their new religion, repealing the mitzva of circumcision was a pivotal decision made by those original Christians in order to make their new religion palatable to the pagan world.

Questions by RED

From the Text

1. How old was Avraham when he left Charan? (12:4)
2. Where did Avraham go during the famine in Canaan? (12:10)
3. When they separated, to where did Lot go? (13:12)
4. What did Hashem tell Avraham during the Brit Bein HaBetarim, the Covenant Between the Pieces?
5. How old were Avraham and Yishmael when they were circumcised? (17:21,22)

From Rashi

6. What was the argument about between Lot's shepherds and Avraham's shepherds? (13:7)
7. Who was the refugee from the War Between the Four and Five Kings who told Avraham that his nephew Lot was captured? (14:13)
8. Who was Malki-Tzedek who blessed Avraham? (14:18)
9. Both Avraham and Sarah laughed independently when told that they were going to have a baby. Why was Hashem angered when Sarah laughed? (17:17)
10. What does Rashi add when the Torah states that Avraham circumcised all the family males in the "middle of the day"? (17:23)

From the Rabbis

11. Why did Avraham undertake the

responsibility of raising Lot? (Chizkuni)

12. How does the Ramban view Avraham referring to Sarah as his sister, in Egypt?

13. Later Avraham refused to accept gifts from the king of Sodom. Why did he accept Pharaoh's gifts in Egypt? (Abravanel)

From the Midrash

14. What do the four letters of Yitzchak's name represent?

From the Haftara (Yeshayahu)

115. Why was this Haftarah chosen for Lech Lecha?

Relationships

16.

- a) Terach - Yishmael
- b) Nachor - Lot
- c) Terach - Nachor
- d) Sarah - Amalek
- e) Zilpah - Shuni

ANSWERS

1. 75 years old
2. To Egypt
3. To Sodom
4. That his offspring will be slaves in a foreign country and then exit there amidst great wealth.
5. Avraham was 99; Yishmael was 13.
6. Lot's shepherds allowed their animals

to eat off land that belonged to others. Avraham's shepherds insisted that that was theft. (The Land did not belong to Avraham, yet.)

7. Og

8. Shem

9. Avraham laughed out of joy; Sarah laughed out of skepticism.

10. He circumcised in defiance of all the surrounding people who could not stop him even if they wanted to.

11. Because Lot's father, Haran, who was Avraham's brother, died in the flames of Ur Kasdim, following Avraham's lead.

12. Ramban viewed it as a "great sin".

13. By refusing Pharaoh's gifts, he would have aroused Pharaoh's suspicions about Sarah.

14. YUD - the ten tests that Hashem subjected Avraham to.

TZADI - for 90, the age that Sarah was when she gave birth.

CHET - for 8. Yitzchak was circumcised at the age of 8 days.

KUF - for 100, Avraham's age when Yitzchak was born.

15. Solely for the reason that the Haftorah mentions Avraham who loves Hashem.

16. Relationships

a) Grandfather - grandson

b) Uncle - nephew

c) Father - son and son - father
Nachor was the name of Terach's father and son.

d) Great-great-grandmother - great-great-grandson

e) Grandmother - grandson
Shuni was Gad's son