



יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לְפְצוּעֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה, וְלַנִּגְעָעִי מְעֵשֵׂי טְרוֹד וְאִנְטִישְׁמִיּוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם - עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel, may He end this war with success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever they are.



...לְךָ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתֶּךָ וּמִבֵּית אֲבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֵרָאָה:

HaShem said it to Avra(ha)m - and He still says it to every Jew

YERUSHALAYIM in/out times for LECH L'CHA

ח' מרחשון ה'תשפ"ה • November 8-9 '24

 **4:09 PM** PLAG **3:38 PM** •  **5:22 PM** R' Tam **5:56 PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

In Israel, V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA begins THU night, Nov 7th

see link on webpage for details

WHY THE DIFF?

How come Israel begins TAL UMATAR on the 7th of Marcheshvan and Chutz LaAretz in the beginning of December?

The Mishna in Taanit is clear:

On the third of Marcheshvan one starts to request rain by inserting the phrase: V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA... Rabban Gamliel says: One starts to request rain on the seventh of Marcheshvan, which is fifteen days after the festival of Sukkot. Rabban Gamliel explains that one waits these extra four days so that the last pilgrim of the Jewish people, who traveled to Jerusalem on foot for the Festival, can reach the Euphrates River without being inconvenienced by rain on his journey home.

The halacha is like Rabban Gamliel. And even though his reason is totally anachronistic, his ruling is maintained.

That was Taanit 1:3. Equally clear is the previous Mishna which states a general principle: One requests rain only immediately preceding the rainy season.

For Eretz Yisrael, this basically fits with right after Sukkot, with the extra days added, as in 1:3, above.

For Chutz LaAretz - based on Bavel and standardized for all of Chutz

KIDDUSH L'VANA

With the molad of Marcheshvan on Friday, November 1st, the first opportunity for Kiddush L'vana this month - according to Minhag Yerushalayim (after three full days following the molad) - will be Monday evening, November 4th.

For those who wait until seven days following the molad, the first opportunity would have been Friday night, but since we don't say KL on Leil Shabbat or Yom Tov (unless it is the last opportunity), it will be Motza'ei Shabbat Lech L'cha, November 9th.

And since Motza"Sh is the most popular time for Kiddush L'vana, many will say it on that same Motza'ei Shabbat.

V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA

In Israel, we begin asking HaShem for rain with saying V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA in the BAREICH ALEINU bracha of the weekday Amida, in Maariv of the eve of the 7th of Marcheshvan - this year that's Thursday night, November 7th.

See the link for TAL UMATAR for full details.

LaAretz, the starting time to ask for TAL UMATAR was set at 60 days after the beginning of Autumn. With the adjustment of the calendar when it went from Julian to Gregorian, the date for TAL UMATAR in Chutz LaAretz falls in the beginning of December. For this year, T&M begins with Maariv on Wednesday night, December 4th.

The irony of this situation is that the TAL UMATAR rule for all of Chutz LaAretz was fixed to follow what today is Iraq and parts of Syria and Iran.

In any event, the beginning of the rainy season in Israel is deemed to be soon after Sukkot. And that of all of Chutz LaAretz is fixed at 60 days into the Fall season.

This does not take into account differences in the rainy seasons of different countries, nor the fact that in some areas around the world, it basically rains throughout the year with no definable rainy season.

Nonetheless, Chutz LaAretz is standardized at December 5th or 6th.

See the link for TAL UMATAR for further details, including the separate issue of the Southern Hemisphere, where seasons are reversed.

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, birthplace, father's house." Ramban explains that each "point of departure" was progressively more difficult for Avraham. 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 mono- theism 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.)

TRIVIA: Scientist say that there are more stars in the known universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches of Earth. Just thought you might have wondered about that.

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. Ironic, 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.

More TRIVIA: The English version of SHALEIM 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, wondrous, 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 pregnant, 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 - 21 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 40:27-41:16

Malkeinu...Avinu

This week's selection from the 40th and 41st prakim of Sefer Yishayahu offers a primary message of encouragement and hope to a people who believe that Hashem has turned away from them, as the opening words reveal - 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 that that.

But all of this changes in this week's parasha. For the first time we find the creations connecting with the Creator. In parashat Lech L'cha both Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu succeed in creating an actual relationship with G-d. They are put to the "test" by G-d and they pass those tests. Hashem is not simply instructing Man or commanding Man. For the first time, He is reaching out to Man... and Man responds. There is a connection, there is a bond... and, therefore, there is now a relationship - one yearned for by humanity and one desired by the Divine. It is here that we learn of Hashem's promise to build a great nation from Avraham's descendants and where we read of G-d's two covenants with the "first Jew": BRIT BEIN HAB'TARIM and BRIT MILA.

Once we realize this "additional" uniqueness of these first Matriarch and Patriarch of our nation, we better

🕊️ 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

The Power of Example

LECH L'CHA

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

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

Then comes another pair of stories - the Flood and the building of Babel - this time about society as a whole. Each is about the tension between freedom and order. The Flood is about a world where freedom (violence, lawlessness, "everyone doing what was right in their own eyes") destroys order. Babel is about a world where order (the imperialist imposition of a single language on

conquered peoples) destroys freedom.

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

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

What is happening here? Does God lose interest in everyone else? That surely cannot be the case. At the end of B'reishit, Yosef says to his brothers:

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (B'reishit 50:20)

It may be that the phrase "many lives" means no more than the lives of his own family (so Targum Yonatan

understands it). But the plain sense of the phrase AM RAV, "a great people", suggests Egypt. Not until Sh'mot are the Israelites called AM, a people. Yosef is saying that God sent him not merely to save his family from famine, but also the Egyptian people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That, it seems, is what the Torah is doing when it shifts focus from humanity as a whole to Avraham in particular. The story of humanity from Adam to No'ach tells us that

people do not naturally live as God would wish them to live. They eat forbidden fruit and kill one another. So after the Flood, God becomes not only a Creator but also a Teacher. He instructs humanity, and does so in two ways: i.e. and e.g. He sets out general rules - the covenant with No'ach - and then He chooses an example, Avraham and his family. They are to become role-models, compelling examples, of what it means to live closely and faithfully in the presence of God, not for their sake alone but for the sake of humanity as a whole.

That is why five times in B'reishit the patriarchs are told:

"Through you all the families, or all the nations, of the earth will be blessed." (12:2, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14)

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

The same is true of Yosef, the only member of Avraham's family in

B'reishit whose life among the gentiles is described in detail. He is constantly reminding those with whom he interacts about God. When Potifar's wife tries to seduce him he says, "How could I do such a great wrong? It would be a sin before God!" (39:9).

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

"Interpretations belong to God." (40:8)

When he is brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, he says:

"God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." (41:16)

Pharaoh himself says of Yosef:

"Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" (41:38)

Jews are not called on to be Jews for the sake of Jews alone. They are called on to be a living, vivid, persuasive example of what it is to live by the will of God, so that others too come to recognise God and serve Him, each in their own way, within the parameters of the general principles of the covenant with No'ach. The laws of Noah are the "i.e.". The history of the Jews is the "e.g."

Jews are not called on to convert the world to Judaism. There are other ways of serving God. Malki-Tzedek,

Avraham's contemporary, is called, "a Priest of God Most High" (14:18).

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

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

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

It sometimes seems to me that we are in danger of forgetting this. To many Jews, we are merely one ethnic group among many, Israel is one nation-state among many, and God is something we talk about only among ourselves, if at all. There was recently a television documentary about one British Jewish community. A non-Jewish journalist, reviewing the programme, remarked on what seemed to her a strange fact that the Jews she encountered never seemed to talk about their relationship with God. Instead they talked about their relationship with other Jews. That too is a way of forgetting who we are and why.

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

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) Why do you think it is important for the Jewish people to be "ambassadors to the world"?
- (2) Why do you think it's important for other nations to have a relationship with God?
- (3) Who else in the Tanach plays a similar educational role that Avraham plays - for both the Jewish people and the other nations?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Parsha

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

Does God Care? Finding Purpose in Difficult Times

Haftarat Parshat Lech L'cha

Does God really care about us? How can it be that measly, miniscule humans like us possibly grab the attention of the Almighty, the Knower and Creator of all? Why would God be interested in whether my life is righteous or sinful? These are questions that many are struggling with today as Israel and the Jewish people are going through an extremely difficult time. Does God care about how we are dealing with our heavy and ongoing losses of family, friends and community members? About our being attacked on multiple fronts as our hostages remain in Gaza? About all the ordinary people doing extraordinary acts to keep going despite the trauma and challenges?

These questions and doubts are not new. In this week's Haftara, Yishayahu addresses this question as he hears his fellow Jews doubting (see Ibn Ezra's Yishayahu 40:27) that God even notices their actions. Yishayahu responds: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Eternal is God from of old, Creator of the earth from end to end, Who never

grows faint or weary..." (v.28).

Yishayahu's view is clearly that God is deeply invested in our lives and in our actions, eager to see our success. "I strengthen you and I help you, I uphold you with My victorious right hand" (41:10). God stands by us; God is committed to seeing us flourish, granting strength to the weary and inspiration to the unsettled.

However, the initial verses of the Haftara also push back against this view, that God does not care. Yet making the emphatic statement without really explaining why. Perhaps that is the point! God does care about our actions, but the reason may be beyond our comprehension. This conundrum is what the Haftara wishes to explore.

It must be that God participates in our personal and national development, taking pride in our advances forward and supporting us when the journey seems arduous. For it is God who, as an expression of partnership with humankind, bequeaths to us the responsibility of partnering with Him in bringing spirituality and morality into this world. It is God who becomes "greater" as the piece of God, the soul within us, shines ever more brightly as we engage in bringing light into the world.

The paradigm of this journey of growing with God, expanding and

enhancing the Godliness that is present in our world, is none other than 'the one who arose from the east' (41:2) - our patriarch Avraham. It is Avraham Avinu who walks before God (Cf. B'reishit 17:1), who is charged in this week's Torah portion to go off on a journey to a place unknown and to bring Godliness to new corners of the world. Avraham is described as the 'lover' of God (41:8), for it is Avraham who is in an ongoing relationship with God, challenges injustice and smashes the idols of the past to bring God further and deeper into the world. And it is the Avraham of this week's parsha whom we are called on to emulate, as emphasized in the Haftara: "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Avraham..."(ibid).

As individuals and as a nation, we are called to see the hand of God in our every action, and to feel that God relies on us to illuminate Divine perfection. Through acts of justice and righteousness, we embody this partnership and expand God's presence in this world each and every day – even in the face of great challenges and tragedy.



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

THE FULL BRIT

Recommended to read MITZVANotes in the Sh'VII portion of the Sedra Summary and then read this PTDT.

Mazal Tov, your cousin or your friend had a baby boy and you were informed about the BRIT, to take place right after Shacharit on Monday morning. (No significance to the choice of day of the week; just painting the scenario.)

Side point: The custom of not inviting people to a BRIT - just informing them about it, is thought to be because if one is invited, then he must attend. So as not to obligate a person to go, we just inform. Actually, the 'problem' is not inviting to the Brit, but rather to the seuda of the Brit. The custom doesn't change - we are supposed to inform, rather than invite.

Okay, so what's the BRIT? You know, the circumcision of the boy on the 8th day of his life.

Correct, but incomplete.

The circumcision itself is better called the MILA. True, the mitzva to circumcise is called BRIT, when HaShem says to Avraham, ZOT B'RITI

ASHER TISHM'RU - this is My Covenant that you shall keep...

And He calls circumcision OT B'RITI - the sign of My Covenant.

But there is more. A lot more.

Look at B'reishit 17, p'sukim 1-14, towards the end of Parshat Lech L'cha. The words B'RIT and B'RITI occur a total of ten times. That number is significant. It represents a certain completeness.

The first time the word occurs, we can say it is introducing the idea of the whole Covenant, the agreement between G-d and Avraham and his descendants.

Then we find the part of the Covenant that is between G-d and Avraham - the part in which G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham and tells him that he will become "the father of many nations". ANI HINEI V'RITI ITACH. ITACH, with you.

Then, what follows, is the next aspect of the Covenant, that HaShem will be our G-d AND that He will give Avraham and his offspring (through Yitzchak and Yaakov - but that's another topic), ERETZ YISRAEL.

With this part of the B'rit, the Torah repeatedly says, Between Me and you and your children... throughout the generations.

And then comes to circumcision part

of the Covenant, the B'RIT OLAM, the eternal Covenant.

So, you are going to a B'RIT? Know that it is so much more than a circumcision and the party that celebrates it. (Holy Bagel, anyone?)

All this is why LECH L'CHA is considered to be the source of the mitzva, rather than the pasuk in Parshat Tazri'a. Tazri'a addresses the MILA aspect of the mitzva; so does Lech L'cha, but it includes the WHOLE B'RIT.

Where do women fit into all this?

They give birth to the baby boy. They share their husband's obligations to raise their sons and daughters to be good people and good Jews. And because of the particular organ involved in BRIT MILA, they become (equal) partners in the BEINI UVEI-NECHA UVEIN ZARACHA ACHARECHA L'DOROTAM - between Me and you and your offspring through the generations.

Yes, there are details and technicalities of Brit Mila that apply to males only. But the concept of the WHOLE BRIT - HaShem's being our G-d, and His giving us Eretz Yisrael, and the total picture of raising a child (male and female) to a life of Torah and Mitzvot, definitely includes the partnership of Husband and Wife, Man and Woman.

The two p'sukim that follow the 14-pasuk portion we've been examining, clearly bring Sara Imeinu into the picture and show us the partnership that is to exist between Man and Woman. **PTDT**

Here's a word that is probably not used by many Hebrew speakers.



How do you say antenna in Hebrew? אַנְטֵנָה? Well, you can use that word, almost everyone does. But the real Hebrew word for antenna is

M'SHOSHA מְשׁוֹשָׁה

Not to be confused with M'SHUSHEH, which is a hexagon.

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



LECH L'CHA

KING of KINDNESS

You know that many people have their own comfort food. Well, I have my comfort Torah reading, and it's Lech L'cha, which we read this week. After all the wonderful but stressful holidays and the last two Torah readings about how humanity is just bad from morning to night, it's glorious to reconnect with our beloved Patriarch, Avraham.

Even though Avraham is mentioned in

last week's parsha, we really get to meet him this week when God tells him: Depart your land, your birthplace and your father's home (B'reishit 12:1).

There are many interpretations of this three part command, but this year I would like to quote the S'fat Emet, the second Rebbe of Gur: God's command to Avraham to leave his land, birthplace, and father's house symbolizes redirecting all desires to serve God with all one's heart, soul, and possessions. "From your land" corresponds to serving with all one's heart. "With all one's soul" relates to one's birthplace. "From your father's house" parallels serving with all one's possessions.

In other words, Avraham intuited from God's cryptic command the three principles that we declare in our recitation of the SH'MA every morning and night. This idea adds to the mystique around Avraham's profound intellect. Rambam describes his search: After this mighty man was weaned, he began to explore and think. Though he was a child, he began to think [incessantly] throughout the day and night, wondering: How is it possible for the sphere to continue to revolve without having anyone controlling it? ... He had no teacher, nor was there anyone to inform him. Rather, he was mired in Ur Kasdim among the foolish idolaters ... Ultimately, he appreciated

the way of truth and understood the path of righteousness through his accurate comprehension. He realized that there was one God who controlled the sphere, that He created everything, and that there is no other God among all the other entities. (Laws of Idolatry 1:2-3)

If that was the only thing that we knew about Avraham, I would still be in awe of his towering intellect. However, we soon discover that this is not even the central pillar of his personality. He was the ISH CHESED, person of kindness and empathy.

Our first glimpse into his love of others comes just a few verses later: Avram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. (verse 5).

This capacity to influence others into positive behavior is ultimately his greatest strength. Rebbe Nachman explains that this unique ability to attract and motivate other souls is truly the core of Avraham's personality. The Rebbe says that Avraham is the embodiment of the verse: the Torah of lovingkindness is on their tongue (Mishlei 31:26).

So, Avraham was able to introduce a radically new concept into the world of idolatry. However, even more

remarkable is that he could bring them under the Wings of Divine service. These former idolaters entered the Covenant with Avraham.

I concede that we are not Avraham. Our paltry skills pale in comparison with his amazing powers, but we do say that MA'ASEI AVOT SIMAN L'VANIM, the deeds of the Patriarchs are road markers for the offspring (us). Consequently, we must ask what imperative does this place upon us, Avraham's descendants?

Personally, I have no plans to set up a welcoming tent on Derech Chevron here in Yerushalayim. But we must learn to be hospitable and welcoming in the kindest, sweetest ways. But is there more?

I think so.


Rav Aharon Lichtenstein gave an address about 20 years ago about outreach, not to the world, but to our Jewish brethren. He first listed all of the dangers of close contact with non-observant Jews. It truly could dilute our spiritual efforts in Torah study and Tefilla. His core idea was stated this way: Three times a day we recite: To perfect the universe through the Almighty's sovereignty, and all flesh shall call out in Your name (in the Aleinu prayer; L'TAKEN OLAM B'MALCHUT SHA-DAI). The aspiration is both clear and enthralling. If we are charged with ennobling the universal human spirit,

how much more pressing should be our duty to Knesset Israel?!

How can God expect us to bring the non-Jew to Torah principles if we can't spread our ideas to other Jews?

He related that a former student contacted him to help him prepare for an interview for a rabbinic position. The young man wanted to know if he could approve of Holocaust commemorations together with other Jewish movements. Rav Aharon responded: Shocked, I responded that, as far as I knew, the Nazis had not differentiated. Could we? In my stupefaction, I realized that we had an educational charge to fulfill ... "And you shall love the Lord your God", make him beloved to all His creations, like your patriarch Avraham.

These days the sad commemorations are basically weekly, not annually. If we don't participate in, at least some of these events are really Torah Jews? Are we really the children of Avraham if we don't share the burden of mourning?

Our awful war is testing the fabric of our society to see if it can endure. But it also tests our individual capacity for empathy. May we, please God, be worthy heirs to Avraham and his beloved partner, Sara! 

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • www.ravkooktorah.com



Malki-Tzedek and Avraham

After Avraham defeated Chedar-la'omer and his allied kings, he was greeted by Malki-Tzedek, the priest-king of Jerusalem:

"Malki-Tzedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine. He was a priest to God, the Most High" (14:18)

Who was Malki-Tzedek? What is the significance of this encounter?

Sheim Loses the Priesthood

The Sages identified the priest-king of Salem as Sheim, the son of No'ach. With his ill-fated greeting of Avraham, however, Sheim forever lost the priesthood.

"The Holy One wanted the priesthood to originate from Sheim. But when Sheim blessed Avraham before he blessed God, the priesthood was transferred to Avraham. Avraham asked: "Is it proper to bless the servant before blessing his Master?" God immediately gave the priesthood to Avraham...

That is what is written, "He was a priest to God." He [Malki-Tzedek] was a priest, but his descendants were not" (Nedarim 32b).

This transfer of the priesthood has deep significance, as it contrasts the different approaches of these two great individuals, Sheim and Avraham.

Sheim was called Malki-Tzedek, literally, “the just king”. He stressed the trait of TZEDEK – justice and worthiness. Avraham, on the hand, excelled in chesed and kindness. He sought to reach out to others, to influence and help them even beyond what they deserved.

Sheim emphasized the attribute of God’s transcendence. He was “a priest to God, the Most High”. His God was exalted far beyond the realm of humanity. Finite and insignificant, we cannot begin to emulate God, and Godliness cannot directly influence us. For Sheim, in order to approach God it is necessary to choose a worthy intermediary. Therefore, the text emphasizes that only he was a priest. Only a holy individual of Sheim’s stature could serve as a bridge between God and His creatures. Since Sheim’s descendants did not attain the necessary spiritual level, they were unable to inherit Sheim’s priesthood.

The Inclusive Priesthood of Avraham

The Torah, on the other hand, views every individual as a being created in God’s image. We all are capable of connecting with our Creator. What then is the function of the kohen in

the Torah? The kohen is not an intermediary, but rather atones for and purifies the people, enabling them to approach God directly. This form of priesthood could only originate from Avraham, from his attribute of chesed and sincere desire to help others.

Avraham developed his special trait of chesed through the two mitzvot mentioned in the Torah portion: brit mila (circumcision), and settling the Land of Israel. Both commandments strengthened his connection with future generations. “This is My covenant that you must keep, between Me and you and your descendants” (B'reishit 17:10). These commands enabled Avraham to focus on his primary goal: concern for others and preparing the way for future generations.

In general, mitzvot serve to connect and unite. The word MITZVA comes from the root TZEVET meaning ‘together’ or ‘team’. The mitzvot focused Avraham’s spiritual labors toward the future community of his descendants, and through them, the entire world.

Avraham’s Altar

A careful reading of the text reveals a major shift that occurred in Avraham’s service of God. When Avraham first arrived in the Land of Israel, he built an altar and dedicated

it “to God Who appeared to him” (12:7). This dedication expressed Avraham’s gratitude for his own personal spiritual attainments. “To God who appeared to him” – just to Avraham, the holy prophet in his own private spiritual world.

After fulfilling God’s command and traveling through the Land, Avraham returned to the altar he had built. This time, however, Avraham “called out in God’s Name” (13:4). As Rambam explained, “The people would gather around him and question him about his words, and he would explain to each one according to his capabilities” (Laws of Idolatry 1:13).

Now, Avraham “called out in God’s Name”. He publicized the belief in one God. This reflects the essence of Avraham’s new mission: reaching out to others in God’s Name.

Sheim/Malki-Tzedek, on the other hand, remained on the level of tzedek, without a public calling. “He was a priest to God.” He was a priest, but not THE priest. Lacking the definitive article, the letter HEI, Sheim was only a priest for himself, without a connection to others. Instead, the letter HEI was added to Avraham’s name, indicating the universal nature of his mission. From Avram he became Avraham – AV HAMON GOYIM, the father of many nations – bringing the entire world closer to God.

“God has sworn and will not retract: you are a priest forever, due to the words of Malki-Tzedek” (T'hilim 110:4).

*Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah 8:
Lech L'cha 5690/1929*

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Great Treasure

LECH L'CHA

God informed Avraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land, but they would leave BIRCHUSH GADOL - "with a great treasure".

What was this great treasure?

It is usually thought to refer to the clothes and jewelry that the Israelites picked up from the Egyptians before leaving Egypt. The Sages, however, taught that this treasure was in fact something far greater: the Torah that God gave the Jewish people at Sinai.

But if the "great treasure" is the Torah, why did God command the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for clothing, gold, and silver?

The Maggid reconciled this difficulty with the following parable:

The Disappointed Worker

12-year-old Johnny found work doing odd jobs at a local store. The storekeeper promised to pay Johnny four silver dollars for each month that he worked at the store.

At the end of the month, the storekeeper realized that this monthly salary was insufficient. Johnny was a hard worker and had done an excellent job. Therefore he put the silver coins aside, and instead wrote out a check for twice the amount originally agreed upon.

The merchant proudly handed the check to Johnny. But to his surprise, instead of thanking him for his generosity, the boy unhappily stuffed the check in his pants pocket and bolted out the door with teary eyes.

The next day, the Johnny's father went to the store. "You have been most generous to my son, and I would like to thank you. But he is still young and doesn't understand the value of a check. All he knows is that he was supposed to receive a purse full of shiny silver coins, and instead he got a plain piece of paper. I would be most grateful if you could pay Johnny at least part of his wages in silver dollars."

The True Treasure

The great treasure that God promised

Avraham was in fact the Torah that the Jewish people would receive at Sinai. But this was a gift that the young and immature nation could not yet fully appreciate. In order that the people would not feel they had left Egypt empty-handed, God commanded them to request gold and silver and garments from the Egyptians. This way they would leave Egypt with a tangible gift that they could appreciate, like the boy's silver dollars.

Only after the people became wiser did they understand that the true "great treasure" that they received was not the coins and trinkets supplied by the Egyptians, but the gift of Torah -- a priceless, eternal treasure which has accompanied the Jewish people throughout the generations.

Adapted from The Maggid and his Parables, pp. 212-213

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

Who are the greatest "influencers" of all time?

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

We have begun to read the Torah portion of LECH L'CHA in the Book of B'reishit. Our patriarch Avraham and our matriarch Sara take their place on

the world stage, a post they haven't left till the present day. They are the ones who introduced the world to justice, kindness, faith, and Torah. We learn that they are also heading in a particular direction – the Land of Israel – and are given a promise from God. Yes, there will be many challenges along the way, but the promise is eternal. God's message is that they are standing on the right side of history and, in the end, they will be a blessing for the entire world.

The terms “influencers” and “followers” are very popular today. If you think about it, Avraham and Sarah have been the greatest influencers in the history of humanity – with billions of followers. It all began in their tiny tent, and spread outward though their personal charisma, their commitment to educating others, and by listening to the voice of God. Even today, we still refer to Avraham and Sarah as our “father” and “mother.”

This year it is perhaps more important than ever to remember the struggles they endured – famine, war, captivity, hostility, infertility – in order to cope with our current challenges. It's true that we can't click the “follow” button for Avraham and Sara, but we can still follow them and read about their lives. We can continue to draw strength from Avraham and Sara, as well as from the promise in this week's parasha:

“And all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.”

May we hear good news soon.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion

From the Writings of Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher z”l

No'ach vs Avraham - Why Avraham Wins

G-d tells Avraham, "Walk before Me and be complete" (B'reishit 17:1). Rashi says that Avraham's completeness, his capacity to be TAMIM, was obtained by his observance of the Mitzva of Brit Mila. As long as he had the ORLA (foreskin) he had a physical imperfection. With its removal, Avraham now became complete. The question is why Avraham needed the Mitzva of Mila to become a TAMIM (complete). No'ach was called a TAMIM without the Mitzva of Mila. What therefore distinguishes No'ach from Avraham? We find that No'ach's righteousness is the topic of a dispute in the Talmud. Was he a Tzadik only because he lived in a generation of wicked people? Had he lived during Avraham's time, he might not be viewed as being such a Tzadik compared to Avraham. The flipside is, if No'ach was able to maintain his virtue living among such evil people,

surely had he lived in Avraham's period he would have been even more outstanding Tzadik.

No'ach's righteousness is disputed, while Avraham's is not. Why not? What distinguishes Avraham's righteousness from that of No'ach? Secondly, if Avraham's virtue is superior to No'ach's, why was it necessary for him to have a Brit Mila in order to be a TAMIM while No'ach is considered a TAMIM even without Brit Mila?

The answer may lie in the origin of their righteousness. No'ach was a Tzadik, having been educated by his righteous grandfather Metushelach. We can call No'ach an FFB (Frum from Birth). On the other hand, Avraham was born into a family of idol worshipers. The Rambam says that Avraham himself worshiped idols because that's what Terach, his father, taught him to do. Avraham achieved the truth about the One Living G-d on his own. He worked at it. He questioned his father's paganism, and when he received no satisfactory answers, he saw the fallacy of idol worship. Avraham was the original Baal T'shuva. He was a self made Tzadik. He made it on his own, unlike No'ach who was born into the true faith and just coasted along. Thus, No'ach was considered a Tzadik Gamur (FFB) while Avraham was the quintessential Baal T'shuva (BT).

The Rambam in Hilchot T'shuva rules that a Baal T'shuva is superior and greater than a Tzadik Gamur. Therefore G-d chose Avraham to be the father of the Jewish People and not No'ach. It was essential that Avraham's form of commitment, the unrelenting search for the truth, become an inherent characteristic of the Jewish psyche. It was necessary that those Jews who were born into unobservant homes and were taught pagan values should inherit Avraham's virtues and convictions.

The Mitzva of Brit Mila signifies self-sacrifice. The shedding of our blood symbolizes our devotion and dedication to serve G-d. G-d gave this Mitzva to Avraham whose devotion to G-d was self taught. He would bequeath to his children this ideal that one can achieve spiritual closeness to G-d even though his parents did not possess this conviction.

This is the reason that we end the Birkat Avot in the Amida with only MAGEIN AVRAHAM (G-d is Avraham's shield). Why is Avraham more distinguished than the other Avot? The answer is because he stands as the one who recognized the One True G-d through his own contemplation and belief. Avraham exhibited true Mesirut Nefesh for his beliefs, a conviction that has been transmitted to his descendants. Avraham ranks

higher than the other Avot, because he was a BT whereas Yitzchak and Yaakov were FFBs. -ESP

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

The Land I Will Show You

The Torah reading opens (B'reishit 12:1) with God's call to Avraham to leave his home behind and "take yourself to the land I shall show you."

There is a metaphorical sense in which this call comes to every Jew. It says, "Give yourself a purpose; make your life into a task, and live in God's way."

What this means is to feel permeated and pulsated by God and Jewish identity.

It also says, "Make your life into a mission: spread the love and knowledge of God wherever you go."

What this means is to raise the quality of society and make the world more messianic.

It's not that everything in the less Godly parts of existence are evil and must be totally discarded, but they

must be refined and enlisted in the service of God.

One of the great Jewish thinkers said a person much utilise their legs to carry them to the doing of good deeds, use their hands to fashion a nicer world, train their heart to love and care for other people, and school their mind to think noble thoughts and keep away from crass vulgarity.

Who is the Greatest?

Great people abound in the Biblical stories that occupy the Jewish world at this time of year. Inevitably people compare them.

The process starts at the beginning of Parashat No'ach when we read that No'ach was "righteous in his generation", which leads Rashi to quote a rabbinic idea that though No'ach was great in his generation, in a better generation he would not be assessed so generously, and a comparison with Avraham would end in Avraham's favour.

Then comes the Zohar and complicates things by bringing Moshe into the equation and asking which of the three, No'ach, Avraham or Moshe, was the greatest.

They all have points in their favour. No'ach was great in terms of saving himself and his family from the Deluge. Avraham was the greatest

when it came to caring for and saving the souls of others. Moshe was the greatest when what was required was sharing the fate and fortunes of other people.

The rabbinic conclusion is that, all things considered, Moshe wins the contest.

But I have a niggling doubt that it's such an artificial question that there really can be no winner.

In a community I know, one rabbi was great as a pulpit orator, another was great in people skills, and a third was a remarkable teacher.

Who was the greatest overall? Answer: each in his own way, "in his own generation". You can never have a winner in an unreal contest like this.

Who was the greatest - No'ach, Avraham or Moshe? Answer: Each one of them. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

LECH L'CHA

G-d said to Avram: "Know for sure that your descendants will be foreigners in a land that is not theirs for 400 years. They will be enslaved and oppressed. But I will finally bring

judgment against the nation who enslaves them, and they will leave with great wealth... The fourth generation will return here (the Promised Land), since the Amorites' sin will not have run its course until then" (14:13-16).

Generations later, Avraham's descendants departed in a hurry en route for the Promised Land. They left in darkness, loaded with the spoils of Egyptians who had enslaved them. The Torah describes that night as being:

LEIL SHIMURIM: It is the night of anticipation - a night that G-d kept watch, as He brought them out of Egypt. It is the night that G-d will - SHIMURIM - keep watch for generations of all Israelites, in the future (Sh'mot 12:42).

LEIL SHIMURIM, literally a night of guarding, is understood variously by the commentators.

According to both Rashi and the Rashbam, the night of Yetzi'at Mitzrayim was the night that G-d guarded zealously in His Diary. It is the night that He selected as the moment that would end the 400 years mentioned in this parasha; of Am Yisrael's being outsiders and ultimately slaves in foreign lands (15:13-14). The Rashbam emphasizes that by then, the Amorites living in the Land will have had ample time and

opportunity to correct their evil ways, but after four generations (each 'generation' according to the Rashbam being 100 years, possibly the amount of time it takes for one generation to see the several generations that emerge during its lifetime) they will be past any hope of returning to any form of civilization that is compatible with the Sheva Mitzvot B'nei No'ach. This is where G-d "keeps in mind the sin of the fathers for their descendants, to the third and fourth generation" (Sh'mot 20:5), the fourth generation forfeiting their right to live in Eretz Yisrael for consistently having followed in the evil footsteps of their ancestors (c.f. Vayikra 18:27-28).

And in the future, every Pesach night would be LEIL SHIMURIM. As G-d protected the Israelites from the death of the firstborns He inflicted on the Egyptians that night, so He would continue to save Am Yisrael from harm. Every year, Seder night would be the night that G-d gives special protection to Israel.

The Ramchal (Otzrot Ramchal: Ramchal Al HaTorah, 53) explains LEIL SHIMURIM in somewhat more severe terms. In contrast to the Rashbam, but compatible with many other commentators, he takes the view that the period that Ya'akov Avinu and descendants suffered exile and servitude was much shorter than the 400 years that G-d confided to

Avraham Avinu. According to the Ramchal, G-d cut the timeline short. The Israelites had been suffering excessively at the hands of the Egyptians. G-d told Moshe: "I have been listening to the cries of the enslaved Israelites..." (Sh'mot 6:5). G-d emphasized with their pain and saw that they could take no more.

But only some of them were spiritually ready for the geula, the redemption. That period of exile was not long enough for all of Ya'akov's enslaved descendants to be in harmony with G-d's standards, or even to be on the path that they would be able to tune into G-d's standards when He would reveal Himself to them at Matan Torah. Including them in the redemption would consign the whole process of the geula to failure; they would undermine the process for Klal Yisrael. Therefore, it was LEIL SHIMURIM LASHEM - it was a night when G-d took care of those who were already LASHEM - for G-d. Not for those who were not: G-d used the diversions of the plagues to quietly end the lives of the Israelites who would be unworthy (c.f. Rashi to 13:18), who lacked the potential to be MEKABEL the Torah.

And, looking forward, the Torah informs us: "It is the night that G-d will - SHIMURIM - keep watch for generations of Israelites in the

future." The geula that will take place in the future will be for everyone, not only for the privileged elite. It will happen when it should happen, rather than its date being brought before all of Am Yisrael is ready. In contrast with the geula from Mitzrayim, the GEULA SHELEIMA in the future will happen when every Israelite will be able to live in harmony with the Shechina. Am Yisrael will spiritually be ready to be mekabel the Shechina of the geula to the degree that there will be no eradication of those who are spiritually unprepared to take part. The Ramchal stresses that for that reason the geula will not be for those Israelites who are "for G-d" but not for those who are not. The geula in future generations will be for all Israelites, as they will all be ready - or at least be sufficiently on the path to be able to participate in the GEULA SH'LEIMA.

And perhaps the challenge for our generation is ensure that our children get full access to a worthy Torah education in the hands of those who are in the best condition to deliver it, from their example as well as from their learning. 📖



Lech L'cha is always an inspiring Parsha, for after all, this is where the odyssey begins:

"They left to go to the land of Canaan - and they came to the land of Canaan."

Unlike so many who have good intentions, Avraham actually takes leave of his homeland with all his family, possessions, and "souls that he acquired in Charan", in order to seek out "the land which I shall show you".

When reaching Eretz Yisrael - Eretz Canaan - Avraham travels southwards and passes "the site of Shechem until the Terebinth of Moreh. "Surprisingly, the narrative adds that (at that time) the Canaanite was already in the land. It seems that from a legal perspective the Canaanites still had ownership of the territory but just the awareness of that tenuous situation should have been enough to deter Avraham.

The Canaanites were idol worshipers; they were the epitome of depravity. Why would Avraham wish to settle among them? And how could we understand that of all the places

where Hashem could have appeared to Avraham, HaKadosh Baruch Hu chooses Shechem, that bastion of evil?

For at this juncture, Hashem appears to Avraham to confirm that this is the land that he will give to his seed. Surely, Yerushalayim would have been a more suitable place to make such an assertion. Now the Oak of Mamre suddenly takes on a special meaning when it is realized that at that very place, the Canaanites worshiped those trees!

A closer look at the text, however, clarifies matters. The Torah narrative talks of the "place of Shechem," not of the city itself. That is to say that, in consonance with our commentators and findings reflected in ancient Egyptian texts, it appears that Shechem as a city did not actually exist in Avraham's time.

Shechem would be established later by Chamor who would name the place after his son. Thus, later, "Yaakov comes 'intact' at the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan" (B'reishit 33:18).

So what is the meaning of "the site of Shechem"? Shechem, it seems, embodies the entire spectrum of moral and ethical potential. **MP**

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

LECH L'CHA

In this week's parsha we begin with Avram's command to journey to the unnamed but promised land that one day would be called the land of Israel.

B'reishit 12:5 says: "And Avram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew and all their substance they had gathered in Charan and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan."

This epic journey seems to set Avram apart from all the others. Yet, in the text, an earlier travel seems very similar, not led by Avram but rather his father Terach. At the end of last week's parsha (11:31), it is Terach who took his son Avram and his grandson, Lot and Sarai and he departed Ur to go to the land of Canaan.

The two texts describing the journeys are very similar. Both father and son each set out to travel to the Promised land. Both had the same destination of the land of Canaan. Yet, with a closer look, we see a major difference between the two travels, between Terach's journey and that of Avram's. Terach started the trip but never made it there. Avram, on the other hand, succeeded to reach Canaan. Terach is seen as one who had a

tremendous goal, but he got stuck in Charan. The Rabbis discuss the meaning of the name of Charan as a location. They say it represents the "anger of G-d" - CHARON AF SHEL MAKOM. Charan was seen as the exact opposite, in idea, from the Holy Land of Israel. Charan was a bustling city that never slept, center of commerce of the region, a place of entertainment and a place where one's material dreams can turn into reality. Terach got sidetracked and was influenced to stay, never completing the original destination. Avram, at his first chance after Terach dies, sets out to Canaan and gets there. He didn't get tempted or sidetracked by any other city or place. Rather, Avram plowed on until he reached his intended destination. VAYAVO-U ARTZA K'NAAN - Avram reaching his destination turned the place into Eretz Yisrael, The Promised Land, a holy land for future generations.

Terach and Avram, both father and son had similar goals, similar ideas but Avram succeeded because of his perseverance, something which Terach lacked. The fact that it was presented as father and son who had these two unique, yet different journeys stress the message that if this can happen to two close family members, how much more so that it could happen to anyone. The legacy of Avram to his future descendants

that it is not enough just to know, or think you know your destination but rather it is dependent on one's perseverance to transform one's dream into a reality, to turn the Land of Canaan to the Holy Land - a land full of spirituality. May

G-d bless us to maintain our perseverance throughout this challenging time. 🙏

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

[LECH L'CHA 5784](#)

Of the many magnificent facets of Avraham's many-sided personality - and one which is rarely mentioned - was that of a military leader. As recorded in chapter 14, a war rages between the Four Kings against the Five, and when Avraham hears that his nephew Lot has been taken captive by the Four, he immediately springs into action. Without any directive from HaShem, "...he arms his retainers, born into his household, numbering 318, and went in pursuit as far as Dan." In Rav Soloveitchik's elaboration of Rashi's comments (13:11): "...the normal reaction on his [Avraham's] part would have been to say, 'It serves him right; I warned him not to cast his lot with the Sodomites.' Yet Avraham did not react this way. Lot is referred to as Avraham's brother. A Jew must feel a

duty to save his brother [no matter the circumstances]..." (Abraham's Journey, p. 130)

When we take a step back, it is clear that Avraham's unusual behavior was quite remarkable. Avraham, the quintessential ISH HACHESED, the epitome of kindness and compassion, chooses to become a warrior and defeats the more powerful Four Kings, killing many of their combatants and rescuing Lot. (Tanchuma 15) Other than the obvious ethical norm to come and rescue a family member at risk, how may we explain the urgency that impelled Avraham into battle, ignoring any danger that might befall him and his compatriots?

The Talmud declaims (Bava Batra 8a-b) that there is no greater mitzva than the redemption of hostages - PIDYON SH'VUYIM. To be held captive, say Chazal (ibid), is worse than all forms of death and physical suffering. The Maharsha (ibid) explains that because the captive is totally at the mercy of his captors, who may subject him to all forms of torture and brutality, his immediate rescue is all the more critically imperative and pressing. No wonder Rambam (Matnot Aniyim 8:10) is explicitly unequivocal and quite strident in emphasizing the importance of this mitzva:

"The redemption of captives receives priority over sustaining the poor and

providing them with clothing. [Indeed,] there is no greater mitzva than the redemption of captives. For a captive is among those who are hungry, thirsty, and unclothed and he is in mortal peril. If someone pays no attention to his redemption, he violates the prohibitions: "Do not harden your heart or close your hand" (D'varim 15:7), "Do not stand by when the blood of your neighbor is in danger" (Vayikra 19:16), and "He shall not oppress him with exhausting work in your presence" (25:53). And he has negated the observance of the positive commandments: "You shall certainly open up your hand to him" (D'varim 15:8), "And your brother shall live with you" (ibid. 19:18), "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18), "Save those who are taken for death" (Mishlei 24:11), and many other decrees of this nature. There is no mitzva as great as the redemption of captives."

Thus, Avraham needed no Divine consent to do all in his power to save the hostages, and incidentally, it was not just Lot whom he rescued as is evident by the demeaning demand of the king of Sodom, "Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself" (B'reishit 14:21) Nor did Avraham have any need to apologize for becoming a combatant and waging war to succeed in this life-saving mission.

But perhaps there is something profoundly deeper here that undergirds the ethos of PIDYON SH'VUYIM and explains its driving force no matter the obstacles. The Talmud (Yevamot 61a), in commenting on a verse in Yechezkel (34:31) where Jews are called ADAM, states: "You [Israel] are referred to as ADAM, but idolators are not referred to as ADAM." In April of 1911, in Kiev, a vicious blood libel falsely indicted Menachem Mendel Beilis of killing a Christian boy. At his trial in 1913, the Prosecution cited this rabbinic statement in an effort to demonstrate that Jews do not consider non-Jews as ADAM - and hence not human - thus maliciously suggesting that Beilis could easily justify murdering a Christian. To refute this malevolent charge, the Defense quoted the interpretation of the Lubliner Rav, Rav Meir Shapiro, in what has become the definitive understanding of this Chazal. In Hebrew grammar, practically all nouns have a singular and plural form. One of the most glaring exceptions to this rule is the noun, ADAM; it cannot be pluralized. As such, the Talmudic truism was to be understood thusly. The Jewish people are a singular entity, one body, one whole. The suffering of a Jew in one part of the globe is felt by Jews world-over. This profound sense of peoplehood is neither a reality nor an experience in

the non-Jewish world. Therefore, only the Jewish people can be denominated as ADAM, an indivisibility. Only we define ourselves as a people who feel mutually responsible for one another. The ethic of KOL YISRAEL AREIVIM ZEH BAZEH (Shavuot 39a) is verily etched into our very national DNA. In the Beilis case, Jews throughout the world rallied to his cause, railed against the sheer antisemitic injustice being perpetrated, and in the end, Menachem Mendel was found completely innocent and set free.

If then, we wish to search for the impelling moral energy behind the great mitzva of PIDYON SH'VUYIM, we have only to internalize the message of ADAM. It is this national factum that explains the solidarity of our people in times of crisis. It is this unitive peoplehood that has enabled us to survive the millennia until this day.

And... with Gd's help, it will be this worldwide coming together of all Jews - this camaraderie of chesed and empathy, caring and prayer - that will bring home the remaining hostages in Gaza, that will triumph over the satanic evil that is Hamas and Hezbollah, and bring us - and all the good people on the planet - to a better and more noble place! 🙌

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 הַתְּהַלֵּךְ בְּאֶרֶץ לְאָרְכָהּ וּלְרוֹבָהּ
כִּי לְךָ אֶתְנֶנָּה:

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

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 תִּשִּׂים
לפניהם:

"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.

GM Over the years of my searches for GMs, I have found a proportionally large number of matches with p'sukim in the Balak-Bil'am episode. The recurring theme has been various antidotes or vaccines that we, Am

Yisrael, have received to protect us from the Balak-Bil'am plot.

Here is another one. (Check the whole file for several others.)

Take a look at B'reishit 14:19, in Parshat Lech L'cha -

וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל
עֲלִיּוֹן קִנְיַת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

And he (Malki-Tzedek) blessed him, and he said, "Blessed be Avram to the Most High God, Who possesses heaven and earth."

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 2046. One of the p'sukim with the same gimatriya is Bamidbar 24:11, from Parshat Balak -

וַעֲתָה בְרוּז־לְךָ אֶל־מִקְוֶיךָ
אֲבִירְתִּי כִּבְדֹךָ אֲכַבְדְּךָ
וְהִנֵּנִי מִנְעִיךָ יְהוָה מִכְּבוֹד:

Now, hurry back to your place. I said I would honor you greatly, but G-d has deprived you of honor.

The pasuk points to the utter failure of the Balak & Bil'am plot to 'bless' the people of Israel. The match allows us to point to the blessing that Malki-Tzedek gave to Avra(ha)m as a protection for his descendants from the B&B plot.

RED ALERT!

LECH L'CHA

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

DIVREI TORAH

- At the end of Parshat No'ach, the Torah states that Terach took Avra(ha)m, Sarai, and Lot and left Ur Kasdim to go to Canaan and came to Charan and settled there. Why was Terach going to Canaan? This event definitely preceded Hashem telling Avraham to go to Canaan! Travel was treacherous and difficult. Terach was from Ur Kasdim, located south, near the mouth of the Euphrates, and to embark north-northwest to go to Canaan was a move to enhance the family's economy. To go via Charan, located northeast of Canaan, was a logical decision because it avoided traveling through the desert. Canaan seemed a logical choice for a final destination because it was situated along the crossroads between Africa and Asia Minor (the land route), a distinctive economic position which was attractive to all caravans which traveled those routes. The fact that Terach never made it to Canaan is not surprising since Charan was an established settlement, one in which Terach could find rest and contentment. This made Avra(ha)m's departure from Charan to Canaan under-

standable to Terach, for after all, Terach's plan was to go there also.

- Avra(ha)m went south to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan. He passed off his wife as his sister in order to save himself and to benefit financially. With God's help, his plan worked out, and Pharaoh gave him many gifts. Commentators wrote that Avra(ha)m needed these gifts, and he left Egypt a rich man. This contradicts a Rashi at the end of Chayei Sara, when the Torah says that prior to his death, Avra(ha)m gave gifts to the sons that Avra(ha)m had with his concubine(s). Rashi quotes our Rabbis who said that Avra(ha)m gave them the gifts that he had received from these rulers. Maybe he was in a serious financial situation, and he used some of Pharaoh's gifts to support himself and to help finance his religious pursuits, and still leave him with enough resources to give to his offspring. [Another idea, based on an idea that the Ramban would state repeatedly: the deeds of the Patriarchs point to the future events in the lives of their descendants. Avra(ha)m would go to Egypt in need of funds and would leave wealthy. His offspring would later descend to Egypt in need and leave wealthy.

- When informed that his nephew Lot was captured, Avra(ha)m was driven into action. He led a war with a few men and proved victorious over the

mightiest man in the world, Amrafel, a.k.a. Nimrod, who was the ultimate king in the world. This propelled Avra(ha)m to be the mightiest king in the world. Now together with Malki-Tzedek (Sheim) the glory of victory was proclaimed as God's. Avra(ha)m took nothing for himself. He gave a tenth of the spoils to Malki-Tzedek, and gave to the king of Sodom the people and their property. And Avra(ha)m got the publicity and the fame, but he gladly gave it all to Hashem. This is what Avra(ha)m really desired: a public platform to proclaim Hashem's existence. And he had a vast audience. All the nations of the region were assembled; they witnessed the war and heard the proclamation of God as "Maker of Heaven and Earth". Hashem is the masterful King, and Avra(ha)m was a prince to the Mighty One. But what good came out of it? The rest of the Sidra is all personal – depicting the personal relationship between Avra(ha)m and Hashem. No further mention was made of the victory and the proclamation of Hashem's masterful rule!

- All of a sudden Avra(ha)m questions Hashem about the land of Canaan, and how is it possible to wait for Hashem to fulfill His promise of conquering the land of Canaan if he does not have any children. The question is timely because Avra(ha)m had just been victorious in a major

war. He could have proclaimed himself as king of all of Canaan, and the Canaanites would not have protested! In response Hashem and Avra(ha)m formed a covenantal relationship. And this was a unique relationship. There is a big difference between a contract and a covenant. A contract between two parties can be broken. One side could buy out the other party, and the contract can be amicably ended. In a covenantal relationship, neither party can renege on the agreement. The relationship is binding forever! It cannot be ended. If the Jewish people no longer keep Torah and fail to live up to their end of their bargain, the punishment is Exile, but the Brit/Covenant continues. The return of the Exiled Jews will happen, but when is the only question. Maybe it has started to happen in our day! AMEIN.

- Sarai had an Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. Pharaoh had given his own daughter to Sarai as one of the gifts he gave Avra(ha)m and Sarai. Pharaoh had reasoned: "Better my daughter be a maidservant in this house than a mistress in another house" (Midrash B'reishit Rabba 45). [I assume Pharaoh had many daughters.] Avra(ha)m would later insist that his son Yitzchak not marry a Canaanite woman; he must marry from within the family. Why was it okay for Avra(ha)m to marry an Egyptian woman? The only possible answer is

that it was Sarai's suggestion; Sarai had prophecy. Hence her words were meaningful to her husband. Hagar was a proud Egyptian, and she would later arrange for her son to marry an Egyptian woman. The Talmud (Yevamot 64) derives a Halacha from this Biblical narrative. Avra(ha)m was married to Sarai and living childless in Eretz Yisrael for ten years before he took another wife. Our Sages: one who is married ten years without his wife bearing a child may not ignore the Mitzva of bearing children. He should either divorce her or take a second wife.

- When Hagar fled from Sarai, an angel approached her to tell her to return to Avra(ha)m and Sarai, and she will conceive and give birth to a son, Yishmael, "for Hashem has heard your prayer" (16:11). And furthermore the angel informs her that Yishmael would be "a wild-ass of a man" (16:12). Rashi defines this statement as being a hunter, but following that, Rashi adds that Yishmael will be a thief and a despised person. How odd that the angel would tell Hagar a negative statement about her son. This would best prepare her for the task of raising her son and educating him. What better chance would Yishmael have in the world than being raised in the house of Avraham. Yishmael even submits himself to being circumcised at the age of thirteen! After that, it is downhill for Yishmael. He and his

mother are eventually expelled from the house and survive in the desert (with the help of Hashem). Yishmael is blessed with ultimate success in life and becomes a patriarch in his own right, probably solely because he is Avraham's son and blessed by Hashem.

- The Sidra ends with the circumcision of Avraham and his household. Avraham willingly accepts Hashem's commandment, but he had to be horrified when he received the news. Avraham fell on his face when he heard the news of his ultimate family success. The Ozneyim LaTorah says that the act of circumcision would certainly destroy Abraham's life goal of bringing all the nations to believe in the Living God. Who was going to convert if a condition to convert is circumcision? His goal was now beyond reach. This is supported by the Midrash which has Avraham saying to Hashem: "Before I underwent circumcision, they would come and join me, but who will come now that I am circumcised?" (B'reishit Rabba 46). [Note: Maybe Hashem did not want so many converts to His religion. Hashem will be content with Avraham's descendants. The non-Jew can earn his place in the World to Come by observing the Seven Noahide Laws. He doesn't need to convert. This is possibly what the Mitzva of circumcision was to teach Avraham and us.]

Questions by RED for Parshat Lech L'cha

From the text

1. How old was Avraham when he left Charan to go to Canaan? (12:4)
2. Where did Avraham go when there was a famine in Canaan? (12:10)
3. When Avraham and Lot parted, where did Lot settle? (13:12)
4. What did Hashem tell Avraham at the Covenant Between the Pieces? (15:23...)
5. What country was Hagar from? (16:1)

From the Rashi

6. Avraham took with him to Canaan the “souls they made in Charan”. Who were these “souls”? (12:5)
7. What was wrong with Lot’s shepherds’ contention that Lot, as the sole heir of Avraham, now owned Canaan? (13:7)
8. Who was Malki-Tzedek? Where was he the king? What did he do with Avraham? (14:18)
9. What Halacha is derived from the fact that Sara brought Hagar into the family after 10 years of not getting pregnant? (16:3)
10. When told that Avraham and Sarah were to have a son, they both laughed. What was the difference between their laughter? (17:17)

From the Rabbis

11. Our Sages say that Avraham had to pass ten tests, trials. What was the purpose of these tests? (Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:24)
12. Avraham left Canaan because of a famine and went to Egypt. Who else would do the same thing? (Midrash)
13. Og was the refugee who informed Avraham that his nephew Lot was taken hostage. What reward did Og receive for his good deed? (Midrash)

Midrash

14. Was it a lie for Avraham to tell people that Sarah was his sister?

Haftara - Yishayahu

15. How does Yishayahu describe Avraham’s relationship with Hashem?

Relationships

- a) Avraham - Lot (2 answers)
- b) Na’ama (Noach’s wife) - Nimrod
- c) No'ach - Malki-Tzedek
- d) Yaakov – Orde
- e) Rivka - Betuel

ANSWERS

1. 75 years old.

2. To Egypt.

3. In Sodom.

4. The Land will be Avraham's. His descendants will be slaves for 400 years and then return to Canaan wealthy.

5. Egypt

6.

(a) People whom Avraham and Sarah converted to monotheism.

And (b) their servants and slaves.

7. As the verse ends: the Canaanites and Perizites were there. The Land was not yet Avraham's.

8. He was Sheim, No'ach's son; he was king of Yerushalayim; he offered Avraham and his warriors bread and wine.

9. After 10 years of no children, the husband should marry another woman.

10. Avraham's laughter was filled with joy and jubilation. Sara was skeptical.

11. The tests were to display to the world how a great man obeys Hashem.

12. Yaakov

13. An exceptionally long life.

14. No, because people would refer to any relative as his sister.

15. Avraham, who loved Hashem.

Relationships

a) Uncle & nephew
and brothers-in-law

b) Great-grandmother
& great-grandson

c) Father & son

d) Grandfather & grandson

e) Daughter & father