

# LECH LECHA

## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven Tradburks**  
Director of RCA  
Israel Region

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

**1st Aliya (12:1-13).** Avram (while we refer to him as Avraham his name begins as Avram and is only changed

later) is told to journey to the land he will be shown. There he will achieve family, fortune and fame. The family journeys to Shechem as their first stop. G-d appears to Avraham and promises him the land. He builds an altar. A famine forces the family to seek relief in Egypt.

Avraham is the first to be told to journey to a place, not away from a place. Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden, Cain sent away to wander the earth, Tower of Babel the people dispersed. Avraham reverses that and is not sent away from G-d but pulled near to Him.

The story of the Torah is the story of promises. Avraham is given 3 personal promises and one national one. He is told he will have family, have fortune and have fame. And his people will inherit the land. G-d makes promises to man. Unsolicited, perhaps undeserved. Though we come to know Avraham as a great man, the Torah is mum on any background to receiving these promises. For it is a story of G-d's desire for a people – it is His reach for us.

**2nd Aliya (12:14-13:4).** The family goes to Egypt fleeing famine. Paro sees Sarah and she is taken to his palace. Avraham is lavished with wealth because of her. Paro sends them away. The family returns to where they began, laden with wealth, to call in the name of G-d.

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



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out the foreshadowing of the Exodus from Egypt – journey to Egypt because of famine, Paro suffers a plague, Jews leave with great wealth.

What does it mean that Avraham called in the name of G-d? Ibn Ezra says either he prayed or he called to people to embrace G-d. Avraham engages the people of the land in knowledge of one G-d.

**3rd Aliya (13:5-18).** The herds of Avraham and Lot are so numerous that their shepherds quarrel. They need to separate. Avraham allows Lot to choose – you go left, I right. You go right, I left. Lot chooses the lush area he sees around Sodom and Gemora. Avraham is told by G-d to look over the land for he will have it all forever. And his children will be as numerous as the sand of the earth. He moves to Hevron and builds an altar.

The promise of fortune has been granted. But his only family, Lot, moves away. This is followed by a reiteration that Avraham's children will inherit the land – except, he has no children. He only has Lot.

Eyes have been a bit of a problem in the Torah so far. Eve looked at the fruit and it was beautiful. Before the flood, the men looked at the women and chose wives. Lot looks at the Jordan Valley and it looks like the lushness of Egypt. The looks deceive, for while beautiful, each of these failed to consider more than the looks. Looking will be replaced for the Jew by hearing, Shema, listening to the Divine Command. Seeing beauty will be usurped by hearing the Command.

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**4th Aliya (14:1-20).** Four Kings make war with 5 Kings. Lot is taken captive. Avraham rescues him, returning all the spoils and captives. The King of Sodom comes out to greet him, as does Malchizedek the King and Priest of Shalem. Malchizedek blesses Avraham to G-d and blesses G-d who protected you.

The promise of fame has been achieved. After the heroic rescue of Lot, Avraham finds the company of Kings. 2 of the 3 promises he received, those of fame and of fortune have been achieved. The remaining 2 – of children and of inheriting this land are tougher. Lest we think that G-d promised a deserted land to Avraham, this pitched battle of 9 kings belies that. Not only has Avraham been promised that his children will inherit the land while he has no children, he has been told he will inherit a hotly contested land.

**5th Aliya (14:21-15:6).** The King of Sodom offers Avraham the spoils; Avraham demurs. G-d promises Avraham that he need not fear, for He will be his shield (magen). Avraham protests – I have no children. G-d promises that his children will inherit his promises. He shows him the stars and promises that his children will be as those. Avraham believes Him.

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

As a conversation starter, G-d says to Avraham, "do not fear". Who said

Avraham is afraid? What is afraid of? Rashi comments that Avraham is worried that he has been showered with so much from G-d already that perhaps he does not deserve to have the remaining promises granted. The remaining 2 promises are big ones; children and the land of Israel. Perhaps I no longer deserve those. Some promises are conditional – you deserve it, you will get it. Perhaps he has used up all his merit and deserves no more. G-d tells him to not fear for his merit is great.

**6th Aliya (15:7-17:6).** After promising Avraham that he will have children, G-d again promises to him that He will give him the land of Israel. Avraham queries as to how he will know this for certain. In a dramatic ceremony of cut birds and a deep sleep, Avraham is told his children will be strangers and afflicted in a foreign land for 400 years. Avraham will die in peace. G-d makes a covenant to give the land to Avraham's offspring. Sarah has no child. She gives Hagar to Avraham and Hagar becomes pregnant. Sarah sends Hagar away. An angel tells her that her offspring will be many. Her

May the Torah learned from this issue of  
Torah Tidbits be in loving memory of

**Bernard Halpern ז"ל**

**ר' דב בן יונה ז"ל**

on his 24th Yahrzeit י"ח מרחשון

From his children, grandchildren and  
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child will be cantankerous but powerful. Avraham is 86 when Yishmael is born. At age 99 Avraham is told to walk before G-d. His name is changed to Avraham.

Avraham was given 3 personal promises and one national one. He was promised fame and fortune, which he received. He is assured he will have children, which he believes. But those are promises to him. He wonders now about the promise that his descendants will inherit the land of Israel – what if *they* don't deserve it? G-d puts him to sleep, a *tardema* – the same word used when Adam went to sleep and Eve was formed – a deep, historic, epic sleep. And G-d tells him that these promises will be kept.

The Torah continues the startling story of G-d's unconditional promises to man. Still no demands have been made of Avraham. But the Torah also teaches us a lesson about promises; patience. The promise that the Jewish people will have the land of Israel is going to take 400 years to happen. Avraham will not see that one fulfilled. Nor, in fact, will Moshe. The Torah will end with that one not yet fulfilled. Man lives patiently with promises yet to be fulfilled.

**7th Aliya (17:7-27).** Avraham is told to circumcise his family as a sign of the covenant between he and G-d. He is startled at the promise that Sarah will have a child at age 90, he 99. He suggests that Yishmael could be the next generation of the Jewish people. No, while Yishmael will be great, Yitzchak will be the next generation.



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Circumcision is the first demand of us in the covenant that He will be our G-d, we His people. ■

## STATS

3rd sedra of 54; 3rd of 12 in B'reishit Written on 208 lines, ranks 23 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

## MITZVOT

1 positive mitzvah: Brit Milah

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

## HAFTORAH

### YESHAYAHU 40:27- 41:16

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

Highlighting the theme of strength and

fortitude the prophet turns his attention to the idolatrous nations of the world and offers the following message. He emphasizes the greatness of Avraham after arriving in Canaan that he pursued and defeated four mighty kings. "The islands saw and feared: the ends of the earth quaked."

There is a message to be heeded by the people of the world when witnessing the power of Israel. Seeing the remarkable power of God and his people should inspire nations to abandon their sinful idolatrous ways.

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

Mazal Tov to  
*Arlene Saslow and family*  
on the marriage of her grandson



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