

ב"ה Torah Tidbits

י"א מרחשון תשפ"ג 22ND NOV 1490 ISSUE

פרשת לך לך

PARSHAT LECH LECHA

לך-לך מארצך... אל-הארץ אשר אראך

בראשית יב: א



Probing the Prophets
Rabbi Nachman Winkler
Faculty, OU Israel Center
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Afflictions Affect
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Faculty, OU Israel Center
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YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT LECH LECHA
CANDLES 4:12PM • HAVDALA 5:24PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:04PM



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Kiddush Levana

7 Days After Molad 9 Marcheshvan/ Wed. Nov. 2

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until 15 Marcheshvan /Nov. 9, until 2:50 am



This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

Photo By: Zev Rothkoff

I live in Efrat, my parents brought me on Aliyah as a child.

The pictures represent the view that Avraham saw when separating from Lot

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



CANDLES	LECH LECHA	HAVDALA	VAYERA	
			Candles	Havdala
4:12	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:24	4:07	5:20
4:30	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	5:27	4:25	5:23
4:30	Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:25	4:05	5:21
4:27	Gush Etzion	5:25	4:22	5:21
4:28	Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	5:25	4:22	5:21
4:27	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	5:25	4:22	5:21
4:27	Netanya	5:25	4:22	5:21
4:29	Be'er Sheva	5:27	4:24	5:22
4:28	Rehovot	5:26	4:23	5:22
4:12	Petach Tikva	5:25	4:07	5:21
4:27	Ginot Shomron	5:24	4:22	5:20
4:16	Haifa / Zichron	5:24	4:11	5:20
4:26	Gush Shiloh	5:24	4:21	5:19
4:28	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	5:26	4:23	5:21
4:27	Giv'at Ze'ev	5:25	4:22	5:20
4:28	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:25	4:23	5:21
4:30	Ashkelon	5:27	4:25	5:23
4:28	Yad Binyamin	5:26	4:23	5:22
4:29	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	5:22	4:14	5:17
4:24	Golan	5:22	4:19	5:17
Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 6:04PM • next week - 5:59pm				

Times According to MyZmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities,
40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)

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Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat
Nov. 2-12 / 8 - 18 Marcheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:04 - 5:12**
Sunrise **5:56 - 6:04**
Sof Zman Kriat Shema **8:39 - 8:43**
Magen Avraham **8:02 - 8:06**
Sof Zman Tefila **9:33 - 9:36**

(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)

Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:22-11:23**
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **11:52 - 11:53**
Plag Mincha **3:40 - 3:35**
Sunset (Including Elevation) **4:53 - 4:46**

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



The OU has 3,500 employees globally. The OU in Israel has approximately one tenth of the total number of employees (350). With such a large staff working in so many different cities, countries, and even continents the range of our initiatives, programs, participants, and reach is truly remarkable. Very few people know everything that the OU is doing, which provides the staff, OU-certified Kosher companies, and OU constituents with many opportunities to learn about and be amazed with our work – whether it be collaboration between OU Israel Youth Centers and NCSY Summer teens, JLIC on college campuses, OU Advocacy in Washington, Yachad family shabbaton, and so much more.

In Israel alone, we run 20 OU Israel Youth Centers from Kiryat Shmona in the North to Dimona in the South, 5 NCSY Israel Chapters, tens of Semichat Chaver Program (SCP) Chaburas and countless other programs aimed at strengthening people's spirituality.

For over a decade, OU Israel has organized a Staff Shabbat for OU Israel employees living all across the country. This Shabbat takes place either Shabbat Beresheit or Noach and is a great way to jump into the year with renewed energy and purpose. I always find it inspiring to see on the one hand, the diversity of the staff and on the other hand the cohesiveness

of the staff. We have English-speakers and Hebrew-speakers, native Israelis and Olim from multiple countries, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, Madrichim who are students and Bnot Sherut (National Service) and veteran employees who have been at the organization for decades.

It is incredible to see how this Shabbat is able to bridge gaps and connect people from different parts of our organization. Gathering people together for a full Shabbat provides many opportunities for getting to know colleagues one may have never met before and deepening connections with others. Davening, listening to Rav Shmuel Eliyahu Shlita, singing zemirot, asking questions, and even watching their children play together creates a special atmosphere and energy that lasts throughout the year.

We have employees who made Aliyah and are not yet fluent in Hebrew, but they are able to experience Shabbat and understand the energy the same way our staff from Akko, Tiveria, Sderot, Rechovot, etc.



is able to experience the Staff Shabbat.

This ability to connect is similar to the way that Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel can connect to each other. Often I am asked by friends and community leaders in North America to partner their school or their shul with an Israeli school or shul. For example, we have run partner Bar/Bat Mitzvah programs with schools and families from North America connecting them to Israeli Bar/Bat Mitzvah children in our OU Israel Youth Centers. Time and again we see that these programs succeed despite the language barrier.

This year, we were privileged to see this strong connection when we welcomed Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph (OU EVP & COO), Rachel Sims, Esq. (General Counsel), Lenny Bessler (Chief Human Resource Officer), and Yoni Cohen (Chief Of Staff) to our Shabbat Noach Staff Shabbat. I thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to fly halfway around the world for Shabbat, but that is the strength of this Shabbat. Its transformative nature allowed them to spend time with our staff and wowed them. As Rabbi Dr. Joseph said, "This Shabbat changed my life." By Havdalah they had a much deeper understanding of the staff and programs the OU runs in Israel, and the OU Israel staff felt more connected to OU management in New York.

One of the reasons I started this column over two years ago was to help you, our Torah Tidbits readers, better understand the incredible work the OU staff does here in Israel so that you can take advantage of the programs we offer and connect people you know to the resources we provide. We have an incredibly dedicated

staff who work tirelessly around the clock helping Klal Yisrael here in Israel - from daily English shiurim and programming at the OU Israel Center, to NCSY Israel programming aimed to inspire teens to feel passionate about living in Israel, to Zula counselors who are literally taking teens off the streets and saving their lives, and so much more. I encourage you to learn more about our programs. Just like this Shabbat helped connect our staff and their families to one another, I hope our readership takes opportunities to join our programs, connect to our staff, and to each other.



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU Executive Vice President

Loyalty is a core Jewish value and one of the primary elements of our legacy from Avraham, as evidenced from this week's parsha.

Avraham's nephew, Lot, chose to follow Avraham on his journey to the unknown, to Canaan. Evidently, Lot was initially taken with Avraham's vision and values (see Rashi Bereishit 13:14). After their time in Egypt, perhaps influenced by its corrosive moral environment or by his newfound prosperity, Lot seems to have changed for the worse, ultimately leaving Avraham to take up residence in the immoral and prosperous Sodom.

When the friction and arguments grew between the employees of Lot and Avraham to the point that it became apparent that they needed to separate, Avraham spoke with Lot (Bereishit 13:8-9): 'Avram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herdsmen and yours, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if you go to the left, I will go to the right, and if you go to the right, I will go to the left."'

Read simply, Avraham is giving Lot first choice of location, saying that he will go to whichever location Lot does not choose. Rashi (13:9), however, reads it differently: "Wherever you settle down I will not go far from you, and I will stand by you as a shield and as a helper. Ultimately, indeed,

he (Lot) was really in need of him, as it is said, (Genesis 14:14) "And Avram heard that his brother was taken captive etc."'

Avraham was making a commitment of loyalty. Yes, they could not live together. Their conflicting values were a recipe for day-to-day conflict, and there was no way that Avraham could alter his values to comport with the path Lot had chosen. Yet, even as Lot was rejecting Avraham's value system, Avraham expressed his continued and unconditional commitment to him and his well-being. "We may not be able to live under the same roof, but I will be there for you whenever you need me."

It was not long at all before Avraham was given the opportunity to demonstrate that commitment. When Sodom was attacked and Lot was taken captive, Avraham – against all odds – set out to rescue him. And it was upon returning from that battle where he had stood up in loyal commitment to Lot, where brotherhood stood as an unfailing value over other principles, that the nations acknowledged Avraham's moral superiority (see Rashi to 14:17).

We must always affirm to each other in word and deed: "We are with you. You will not need to travel this road alone." Despite any differences we may have, caring for one another's needs is core to our mission and identity as Klal Yisrael. ■



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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 with Shechem as their first stop. G-d appears to Avraham and promises him the Land. He builds an altar. A famine forces the family to seek relief in Egypt.

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 this trend: he 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 to 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 laden with wealth. The Ramban points out the foreshadowing of the Exodus from Egypt – just as here Avraham journeys to Egypt because

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be in loving memory of and לע"נ

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of famine, Paro suffers a plague, Jews leave with great wealth, so too this story repeats with the entire Jewish nation in the exodus from Egypt.

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



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

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. And Lot's judgment is suspect.

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. 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

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usurped by hearing the Command.



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

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

2 of the 3 promises he received, those of fame and of fortune have been achieved. The remaining 2 – of children and of inheriting this land are tougher. And lest we think that G-d promised a deserted land to Avraham, this pitched battle of 9 kings belies that. Not only has Avraham been promised that his children will inherit the Land while he has no children, he has been told he will inherit a hotly contested Land. While man could, on his own, achieve fortune and fame, a childless elderly couple cannot achieve children and the Land

without Divine intervention.



5th Aliya (14:21-15:6). The King of Sodom offers Avraham the spoils; Avraham demurs. G-d promises Avraham that he need not fear, for He will be his shield (magen). Avraham protests – I have no children. G-d promises that his children will inherit his promises. He shows him the stars and promises that his children will be like 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 he afraid of? Rashi comments that Avraham is worried that he has been showered with so much from G-d already that perhaps he does not deserve to have the remaining promises granted. The remaining 2 promises are big ones; children and the Land of Israel. Perhaps I no longer deserve those. Some promises are conditional – you deserve it, you will get it. Perhaps he has used up all his merit and deserves no more. G-d tells him to not fear for his merit is great.



6th Aliya (15:7-17:6). After promising Avraham that he will have children, G-d again promises to him that He will give him the Land of Israel. Avraham queries as to how

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this TT be לזכר and in loving memory of

Fred and Doris (Lieder) Goldsmith

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(ח' חשוון, תשנ"ז)

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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 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

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Torah will end with that one not yet fulfilled. Man lives patiently with promises yet fulfilled.



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

Avraham is reluctant to give up on Yishmael as the heir to the Jewish people. Perhaps this is Avraham's persistent kindness – he sees good, even greatness in Yishmael. But that type of greatness is not sufficient: greatness comes in different shapes and sizes. Yishmael is great in his way: Yitzchak will be great in a different way. There is greatness amongst the nations of the world: but Jewish greatness is different.



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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 C'naan that he pursued and defeated four mighty kings. "The islands saw and feared: the ends if the earth quaked."

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

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

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

"And he proclaimed in the name of G-d" (12:8)

(ויקרא בשם ה')

The Talmud (Sotah 10) quotes Resh Lakish who commented on this Pasuk, -Do not read the word as "he proclaimed" but rather "that he caused to proclaim."

אל תקרי "ויקרא" אלא "ויקריא"

This pasuk is teaching us that Avraham had the ability and charisma to cause others to proclaim and utter the name of G-d. The Talmud explains that upon receiving Avraham's home hospitality, a guest would offer to bless Avraham himself. It was at this moment; Avraham would direct the guest to bless the one and only G-d who was truly responsible for his food and drink and not Avraham.

Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch (1808-1888, Frankfurt) writes how this stands out in contrast to the generation of the Tower of Babel who lived by a principle "Let us make for OURSELVES a name, *נעשה לנו שם*" Shabbat Shalom

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
1686 words - ranks 18th
6336 letters - ranks 19th

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IN THE PARSHA

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The Book of the Upright

Regular readers of this column are familiar with my dear grandfathers, both of whom passed away more than fifty years ago, may their memories be a blessing. Although they were quite different from each other, they both taught me lessons that have lasted throughout the years.

Reb Chaim Yitzchak, my father's father, taught me about the great figures of Jewish history. He encouraged me to read their biographies and even supplied me with specific books. That way, he introduced me to a wide range of historical personalities, ranging from rabbinic sages such as Rashi and Maharshal, and especially to the Maharsham, Rabbi of Berzhan, under whom he studied before leaving Poland for America in the early twentieth century. He had no problem with my reading biographies of distinctly secular individuals such as Franz Kafka and Dr. Janusz Korczak.

I vividly recall the day he gifted me with a three-volume set entitled *Makor Baruch*. This was the first time that he presented me with a book written in Hebrew. Up until that time, he understood my Hebrew reading skills were limited, and he found English language books for me to peruse.

Although I was initially intimidated

by three thick volumes of Hebrew text, I quickly came to realize that the author, Rabbi Baruch Epstein, had written a masterwork with which I was familiar, *Torah Temimah*, and had a very clear and simple Hebrew style. Rabbi Epstein was a nephew of the great Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the dean of the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin in late nineteenth-century Lithuania. Rabbi Epstein devoted several sections of his three-volume work to his famous uncle. This was my introduction to this unique rabbinic scholar and prolific writer, and Rabbi Berlin, known as Netziv, has remained one of my favorite heroes to this day.

I am occasionally asked to identify a passage from Netziv's vast oeuvre which typifies his religious ideology. I have no difficulty in doing so. Netziv wrote a comprehensive commentary on the entire Pentateuch or *Chumash*. There, we find his brilliant and particularly relevant introduction to the book of *Bereshit*, Genesis, which

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we are now reading in the synagogue every Shabbat. That introduction is the gem which displays his central teaching.

The Bible, in at least two places, refers to a mysterious work known as *Sefer HaYashar*, the “Book of the Upright.” The Talmud, *Avodah Zara* 25a, suggests that this work is the Book of Genesis, *Bereshit*. There Rabbi Yochanan explains that *Bereshit* be known as the “Book of the Upright” because its major characters, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, were upright individuals par excellence.

Netziv accepts this explanation but wonders why the term “upright,” *yashar*, is used rather than terms such as *tzaddik*, righteous, or *chassid*, pious. Netziv explains that there were periods in Jewish history where there were individuals who were righteous and pious, but not quite upright. They were not upright in their relationships with others, often to the extent that they were guilty of *sinat chinam*, of vain hatred of their fellows. He goes so far as to say that by not being upright, they were even capable of murder.

He writes: “The Holy One, Blessed Is He is *yashar*, upright. He cannot tolerate those who are merely “righteous” in their religious practices but cannot get along with others, and commit deeds done for the “sake of heaven” which lead to the ruin of creation and the destruction of society.” The Patriarchs, particularly Abraham, were *yesharim*, upright souls, who

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“conducted themselves well even with decadent pagans, and lived with them with love and concern for their well-being.”

As we read the weekly Torah portions at this time of year, we can study just how resoundingly Netziv’s words ring true.

One wonders about the origins of upright behavior. How did Abraham, for example, learn to be *yashar*? How can we, his descendants, instill *yashrut*, uprightness, in ourselves and in our children?

I propose that the answer lies in a verse in the Book of Ecclesiastes, *Kohelet*. The verse appears at the very end of chapter 7. It reads, “The Almighty made men *yashar*, upright, but they sought out many schemes.”

The Book of *Kohelet* is often read as a pessimistic work. But this verse implies an alternative to pessimism. Humans are not stained by original sin. They are not

evil from birth and therefore incorrigible. Quite the contrary. We are all created *yashar*. The word “*yashar*” literally means “straight.” We are all born straight, insists *Kohelet*. But somehow, we seek out crooked schemes which distort our straightness.

I cannot conclude this column without quoting from the wise Rabbi Shimon Schwab, of blessed memory. He diagnosed our Jewish society as placing our emphasis on *kashrut* but neglecting *yashrut*. We tend to be careful about kosher but need to do better with *yosher*.

Perhaps reflecting upon the narrative of the current weekly portions, the words of Netziv, and the verse in *Kohelet* will inspire us to be straight, upright, and *yashar*. We will thus conform to the Almighty’s intentions when He created us, and the world will be a better place. ■



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Dedicated by
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Journey of the Generations

Mark Twain said it most pithily:

When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.

Whether Freud was right or wrong about the Oedipus complex, there is surely this much truth to it: that the power and pain of adolescence is that we seek to define ourselves as different, individuated, *someone other than* our parents.

When we were young they were the sustaining presence in our lives, our security, our stability, the source that grounds us in this world. The first and deepest terror we have as very young children is separation anxiety: the absence of parents, especially

of the mother. Young children will play happily so long as their mother or caregiver is within sight. Absent that, and there is panic. We are too young to venture into the world on our own. It is precisely the stable, predictable presence of parents in our early years that gives us a basic sense of trust in life.

But then comes the time, as we approach adulthood, when we have to learn to make our own way in the world. Those are the years of searching and in some cases, rebellion. They are what make adolescence so fraught. The Hebrew word for youth – the root is *N-A-R* – has these connotations of ‘awakening’ and ‘shaking.’ We begin to define ourselves by reference to our friends, our peer-group, rather than our family. Often there is tension between the generations.

The literary theorist Harold Bloom wrote two fascinating books, *The Anxiety of Influence* and *Maps of Misreading*,¹ in which, in Freudian style, he argued that strong poets make space for themselves by deliberately misinterpreting or misunderstanding their

1 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

predecessors. Otherwise – if you were really in awe of the great poets that came before you – you would be stymied by a sense that everything that could be said has been said, and better than you could possibly do. Creating the space we need to be ourselves often involves an adversarial relationship to those who came before us, and that includes our parents.

One of the great discoveries that tends to come with age is that, having spent what seems like a lifetime of running away from our parents, we have become very much like them – and the further away we ran, the closer we became. Hence the truth in Mark Twain's insight. It needs time and distance to see their wisdom, to see how much we owe our parents, and to acknowledge how much of them lives on in us.

The way the Torah does this in relation to Abraham (or Abram as he was then called) is remarkable in its subtlety. *Lech Lecha*, and indeed Jewish history, begins with the words, "God said to Abraham, 'Go from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house to a land I will show you'" (Gen. 12:1). This is the boldest beginning of any account of a life in the Hebrew Bible. It seems to come from nowhere. The Torah gives us no portrait of Abraham's childhood, his youth, his relationship with the other members of his family, how he came to marry Sarah, or the qualities of character that made God single him out to become the initiator of what ultimately turned out to be the greatest revolution in the religious history of humankind, what is called nowadays Abrahamic monotheism.

It was this biblical silence that led to the midrashic tradition almost all of us learned



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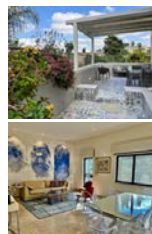
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as children, that Abraham broke the idols in his father's house. This is Abraham the Revolutionary, the iconoclast, the man of new beginnings who overturned everything his father stood for. This is, if you like, Freud's Abraham.

Perhaps it is only as we grow older that we are able to go back and read the story again, and realise the significance of the passage at the end of the *previous* parsha. It says this:

Terach took his son Abram, his grandson Lot, son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there. (Gen. 11:31)

It turns out, in other words, that Abraham left his father's house *long* after he had left his land and his birthplace. His birthplace was in Ur, in what is today southern Iraq, but he only separated from his father in Harran, in what is now northern Syria. Terach, Abraham's father, accompanied him for the first half of his journey. *He went with his son*, at least part of the way.

What actually happened? There are two possibilities. The first is that Abraham received his call in Ur. His father Terach then agreed to go with him, intending to accompany him to the land of Canaan, though he did not complete the journey, perhaps because of his advanced age. The second is that the call came to Abraham in Harran, in which case *his father had already begun the journey on his own initiative* by leaving Ur. Either way, the break between Abraham and his father was far less dramatic than we first thought.

I have argued elsewhere² that biblical narrative is far more subtle than we usually take it to be. It is deliberately written to be understood at different levels at different stages in our moral growth. There is a surface narrative. But there is also, often, a deeper story that we only come to notice and understand when we have reached a certain level of maturity (I call this the concealed counter-narrative). Genesis 11-12 is a classic example.

Abraham continued a journey
his father had begun, thereby
helping Isaac and Jacob, his
son and grandson, to chart
their own ways of serving
God

When we are young we hear the enchanting – indeed empowering – story of Abraham breaking his father's idols, with its message that a child can sometimes be right and a parent wrong, especially when it comes to spirituality and faith. Only much later in life do we hear the far deeper truth – hidden in the guise of a simple genealogy at the end of the previous parsha – that Abraham was actually completing a journey his father began.

There is a line in the book of Joshua (24:2) – we read it as part of the Haggadah on Seder night – that says, “In the past

2 Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Schocken Books, 2017).



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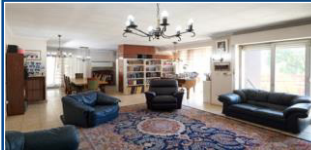
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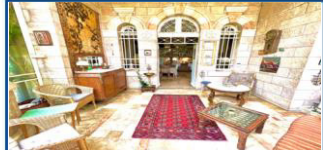
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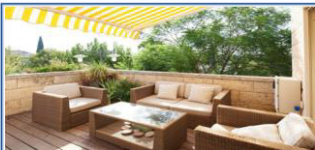
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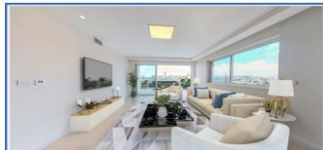
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your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River, including Terach the father of Abraham and Nahor. They worshiped other gods.” So there was idolatry in Abraham’s family background. But Genesis 11 says that it was Terach who took Abraham from Ur - not Abraham who took Terach - to go to the land of Canaan. There was no immediate and radical break between father and son.

Indeed it is hard to imagine how it could have been otherwise. Abram – Abraham’s original name – means “mighty father”. Abraham himself was chosen “so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19) – that is, he was chosen to be a model parent. How could a child who rejected the way of his father become a father of children who would not reject his way in turn?³ It makes more sense to say that Terach already had doubts about idolatry and it was he who inspired Abraham to go further, spiritually and physically. Abraham continued a journey his father had begun, thereby helping Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson, to chart their own ways of serving God – the same God but encountered in different ways.

Which brings us back to Mark Twain. Often we begin by thinking how different we are from our parents. It takes time for us to appreciate how much they helped us become the people we are. Even when we

3 Rashi (on Gen. 11:31) says it was to conceal the break between son and father that the Torah records the death of Terach before God’s call to Abraham. However, see Ramban *ad loc.*

thought we were running away, we were in fact continuing their journey. Much of what we are is because of what they were.

Around the Shabbat Table:

How are you similar to your parents, and how are you different?

Are you continuing the journey your parents began?

If Terach worshipped idols, why do you think it is important for Rabbi Sacks to suggest that Avraham was still influenced by him and continued his journey? ■

These weekly teachings from Rabbi Sacks zt”l are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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This week's haftarah is taken from the fortieth perek of Sefer Yishayahu, a perek familiar to most of us, the chapter that begins with Hashem's cry to His prophets "Nachamu, Nachamu Ami", to comfort His grieving nation. That cry, which opens the series of haftarot of consolation, is also the chapter that opens prophecies of redemption in Sefer Yishayahu.

As we bask in the light of the recently observed chagim - as we still sense the sanctity of the Yamim Nora'im and feel the joy of Succot, it is more than curious as to why the last few haftarot are taken from the geula section of the navi Yish'ayahu, and why the themes are so similar to (and, indeed, are sometimes the very same as) those haftarot that are read following Tish'a B'av. After all, the Parasha of Breishit deals with Hashem's Creation of the universe, the ParashaN'ach deals with the rebuilding of the world through the righteous Noah and our parasha tells us the story of the progenitor of our nation, the saintly Avraham? What need did Chazal have to establish these readings and share words of comfort for these specific

Torah portions?

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein opines that each parasha leaves us with worry for the future: Parashat Breishit closes with G-d's decision to destroy Man, due to the widespread corruption He sees; Parashat N'ach tells the story of the rebellious generation of Migdal Bavel, while Parashat Lech L'cha leaves us with the barren Sarah, still praying for a child. The first two Torah portions depict individuals and societies that failed to meet the challenges set for them by G-d, while the third one ends with only a beginning to the solution.

Rav Lichtenstein writes that it is almost a depressing experience to study these chapters and, therefore, we need encouragement and support, feeling, as we might, unworthy and incapable of ever approaching G-d. These haftarot, therefore, attempt to give a positive "spin" to the events in order to console and reassure future generations. The first selection depicts the redemption, giving hope for the future, while the second selection (for Parashat N'ach) comforts the people, describing the "mei Noa'ch," the waters of the flood, as the trigger for G-d's brit never again to destroy as He had then.

Today's haftarah is taken from the 40th

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chapter of the prophet and is the continuation of the prophecy of “Nachamu.” But whereas the beginning of the chapter portrays G-d’s omniscience and power, His greatness and domination, this second part speaks of His closeness to Man and the ability of Man to reach Him and bond with the divine-precisely as Avraham Avinu had. Indeed, as the haftarah points out, it is Hashem Himself who will give strength to the weary and courage to the fearful. It is He who will help us draw closer to Him and meet the challenges He places before us.

The story of Avraham and Sarah marks the beginning of a nation who would spread Hashem’s light to all.

It is the message of the navi that reassures us and teaches that, with G-d’s help, we can carry out G-d’s divine mission for us. ■








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Avraham's Challenges

This week we will take issue with something that does not appear in the parsha, which in fact one would have thought should have been recorded in the Torah.

The mishna in Avot (5:3) states that Avraham passed all ten *nisyonot* (challenges) posed to him by Hashem. Although it is not clear exactly what each of these challenges are, virtually all *mefarshim* agree that the imperative of *Lech Lecha* – to leave his father's home and his birthplace to transfer to a yet unknown destination, is one of the ten.

At the end of last week's parsha when we are told that Avraham left Ur Kasdim, Rashi informs us that the location received its name because that is where Avraham was saved from a fiery furnace (Ur- means fire and Kasdim was the name of the city). The midrash describes that after Avraham destroyed his father's idols, he was brought before Nimrod who demanded that Avraham denounce monotheism or be sentenced to death. When Avraham

refused, he was thrown into a fiery furnace. Miraculously Avraham was saved. Being willing to be killed for his allegiance to God is a far greater *nisayon* than leaving his hometown. Why then is this event not recorded in the Torah?

The Igra Dekala (Bnei Yissachar) explains that if the *Ur Kasdim* event was highlighted in the Torah, one may conclude that Avraham dedicated his life to spreading monotheism because he was saved in this miraculous event. It would dilute the fact that Avraham's love was independent of that act – אהבה שאינה תלויה בדבר – Avraham believed in God not out of gratitude for being saved, but for the mere fact that he was born!

Rav Simcha Zissel Broide, the Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron Yeshiva (cited by Rabbi Frand) offers an insightful explanation. There are two types of *nisyonot* that we face. There are "glamorous" *nisyonot* – moments that define who we are – and there are "little" seemingly less significant *nisyonot* that we experience on a day-to-day basis.

When one faces a large challenge that may involve significant self-sacrifice, one often musters up enough courage and determination to withstand the challenge. So many Jews were willing to be burned at the stake due to their religious commitment. Yet, the challenges one faces on a daily basis are often harder to endure.

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Ur Kasdim was a defining moment for Avraham. Is he to sacrifice himself in the name of God, or submit to Nimrod's request to defile the name of the Almighty. People often rise above their expected ability when confronted by such defining moments.

Several years ago a bus driver identified a terrorist boarding a bus and was able to keep him from entering the bus and killing many innocent passengers. The bus driver was not a strong fellow, but due to the imminent danger, he rose to the occasion. Afterwards, he expressed that if one were to have asked if he would perform such a heroic act, he would have definitely said no. However, in the spur of the moment, something came over him that enabled him to act as his did.

This is the test of the *Ur Kasdim* variety. When we face a challenge and our adrenalin, or some other inner strength enables us to supersede our fear or selfishness and act like true heroes. Yet, these moments are fleeting. They do not accurately depict a person.

The true test of one's character is the way in which they face daily challenges. Does one go to minyan on a stormy day? Does one study with his child after a busy day at the office? Does one give charity when under financial stress? No one considers making the right decision in these situations to be the essence of heroism, yet they are defining moments.

After Yitzhak descends from the *Akeda*, *Chazal* tell us he went to study at the Yeshiva of *Shem and Ever*. What more did he have to learn after experiencing this momentous challenge? The Shemen

HaTov explains that Yitzhak was willing to **die** *Al Kiddush Hashem*, now he had to learn how to **live** a life that would exemplify a *kiddush Hashem*. Yitzhak had to strengthen his ability to withstand the ordinary challenges that he will experience on a daily basis. That requires additional training.

The *Lech Lecha nisayon* is dealing with the less glamorous daily challenges. The issues we face with our family members, neighbors, work colleagues and with our finances, day in and day out. The Torah did not explicitly record the *Ur Kasdim* episode, although it was spectacular, because what truly defines a person is the way in which one deals with the everyday moments. May we gain the strength to shine when confronted with these mundane challenges. ■



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Afflictions Affect

There are many aspects of the relationship between Sarah Imeinu and Hagar that demand exploration and explanation. Yet, two particular words are notably curious, “vate’aneha Sarai – and Sarai afflicted her (Hagar).” (*Bereisheet* 16;6) After Sarah gives her maidservant Hagar to Avram, Hagar immediately conceives and begins to treat Sarah with disdain. Can we accept this “afflicting” as Sarah Imeinu’s reaction to Hagar’s disrespect? How are we to understand Sarah Imeinu here, this great woman, mother of our nation, as causing distress to another person?

Ramban indeed notes that this was a failing on Sarah Imeinu’s part, and the Jewish people are suffering from her behavior to this day. Throughout the generations, Hagar’s descendants, the Arab nation,

have been afflicting us. According to the Ramban, this is a measure for measure response to what Sara Imenu did. Because the Avot and Imahot were so great, their actions have ramifications for all time, for good, and otherwise.

It may even have been greater than giving Hagar to Avram to begin with

Rav Eliyahu Ki Tov, in *Sefer Haparshiyot* has a more positive perspective. He explains that great people are tested in areas that run counter to their defining middot. If a person whose middah is chessed, can never act in a harsh way when the circumstances demand that he does, then he cannot really be considered a person of chessed. He is rather led by soft or weak emotions. It is only when one can use his middot appropriately, that we know

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he is consciously in control of this middah. Thus, we see Avraham Avinu continually being tested to act with harshness, sometimes even cruelty, to truly ascertain the strength of his *middat hachessed*. Likewise, the unusual situation between Sarah and Hagar was a test for Sarah Imeinu. Was she able to act against her nature to prove her ability to act appropriately under any circumstance? In this regard, Sarah Imeinu passed her test and it is considered a great merit to her. It may even have been greater than giving Hagar to Avram to begin with. We see from here that there are times when it is appropriate to act with strength and it takes wisdom and consultation to know what is called for when.

Rav Sher, in *Leket Sichot Mussar* takes a completely different, and rather creative approach. Sarah Imeinu oversaw teaching Torah to the women of her community. Hagar's role was similar to that of Eliezer in the Beit Midrash of Avraham Avinu. They were responsible for facilitating and explaining the teachings. When Hagar married Avraham Avinu, she felt that she could be promoted to the role of teacher, not simply a coordinator and assistant. Sarah Imeinu understood that Hagar was not capable of the more advanced position and demoted Hagar to her previous role. For Hagar, this was the greatest affliction possible, she had a deep desire to educate and develop. Indeed, we see that Hagar merited to see many angels when she fled. She had a deep spiritual side to her, but unfortunately, she allowed her haughtiness to be her undoing. The lesson is clear; genuine service of Hashem comes with humility and self-effacement. ■



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L'chaim!

Rav Yitzchak Zilber, zt'l, legendary champion of Russian Jewry, was a humble *talmid chacham* and teacher whose incredible self sacrifice and dedication inspired and strengthened generations of Jews. Having been imprisoned in gulags of the former Soviet Union, he escaped to Tashkent and later arrived in Eretz Yisrael, where he continued his efforts in teaching Torah around the clock. Thousands of Russian *olim* to the Holy Land sought his counsel and Torah instruction.

In the early 1970's, most Jews from the USSR arrived without a *bris milah*. While the country scrambled to accommodate the waves of Aliyah, neither the Ministry of Absorption nor the Chief Rabbinate were prepared for the challenge of providing to the masses an opportunity to do this mitzvah. The bureaucratic mechanics created a waiting period of weeks. As it is extremely important not to delay the essential mitzvah of *milah*, Rav Zilber worked feverishly to help the *olim* accomplish it as soon as possible. In Yerushalayim, he reconnected with Dr. Yaakov Tzatzkis, a urologist who had performed clandestine circumcisions in Moscow. Together, they made countless *brisim* in their own homes, and across Eretz Yisrael, for Russian Jews of all ages.

Dr. Tzatzkis recalled:

After a *bris*, it's customary to drink *l'chaim*. We would bring a bottle of wine, maybe a little vodka to help ease the pain and some cookies or cake. Sometimes the *baalei simcha* themselves would bring something.

One cold and rainy day we had the unexpected opportunity to perform a *bris* at Bikur Cholim hospital in Yerushalayim. Rav Yitzchak suddenly came running to meet me at the hospital, and arrived with a bottle of wine and some cookies. I saw that he wasn't wearing a coat.

The next day, again, I met him outside without a coat. "Rav Yitzchak, this is not like winter in Moscow, but it is raining and cold! Why aren't you wearing a coat?" He mumbled something unintelligible. When I pressed him further, Rav Yitzchak relented: "OK, so I pawned it..."

I looked at him inquisitively.

"When you called me to join you for the *bris* yesterday," he explained, "I ran out of the house right away. My wife didn't have any warning to prepare something for the *simcha*. I didn't have any money in my pockets. What was I supposed to do? We needed some *mezonos* and wine to celebrate the *bris*. So I walked into the store on Rechov Strauss down the block from the hospital, gave them my coat, and they gave me what I needed. How could a Yid enter the covenant of Avraham Avinu without a *l'chaim* to celebrate?"

וְיִהְיֶה אִבְרָם בְּרֵחֲשָׁנִים שָׁנָה וְחָשַׁע שָׁנִים וַיָּרָא ה' אֶל-
אִבְרָם

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי-ל' ש-נִי הִתְהַלַּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תָמִים:

When Avram was ninety-nine years old, Hashem appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am *E-l Sha-dai*. Walk in My ways and be *tamim*, wholehearted.

וְאָתְנָה בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאָרְצָה אוֹתְךָ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד.

I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous (you will multiply you very greatly).

זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זֶרַעְךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ
הַמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל-זָכָר:

This is My covenant, which you shall observe between Me and between you and between your offspring after you, that every male among you be circumcised.

(17:1-2, 10)

This was the first time in history that the *Ribbono Shel Olam* invited us all into an exclusive, sacred covenant and partnership. *Milah* thus connects us to everyone who came before us, as well as everyone who will come after us. It opens for us a blessing for national growth, development and expansion מְאֹד מְאֹד.

The practice of *milah* is rooted in the recognition that Hashem created the world in an 'imperfect' state, and that Hashem's *mitzvos* are obligations and opportunities to work toward improving Creation and perfecting the world. The *mitzvah* of *milah* has and will always remain a defining symbol and sign of our commitment to *Yiddishkeit* and to Hashem.

During the Second Temple period, Greco-Roman culture centered around

continued on page 38

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10:20AM

Mishnah with Rambam's
commentary **Rabbi Dr.
Aaron Adler**

11:30 AM

Shivat Tzion in Tanach:
Daniel, Ezra, Nechemia
**Rabbi Yitzchak
Breitowitz**

2:00 PM

Men's Talmud-Mesechta
– Bava Basra **Rabbi Jeff
Bienenfeld**

7:30 PM

Hashkafa & Gemara in
Depth (The Bais) with
Rabbi Azarya Berzon

8:30 PM

Gemara B'Iyun (The Bais)
with **Rabbi Azarya
Berzon**

MON, NOV 7

9:15 AM

Divre Hayamim
Rebbetzin Pearl Borow
(L'Ayla)

10:30 AM NEW!

The Thought of Rav Kook on
Eretz Yisrael: A study of the
sefer Eretz Chefetz
**Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider**

11:45 AM

Halacha and Agada in
Contemporary Society
**Rabbi Shmuel
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TUE, NOV 8

9:15 AM

Rebbetzin Smiles
Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)

9:30AM

Minchat Chinuch-Meaning in
Mitzvot
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

12:15 PM

Jewish National Revival:
The Infant State Matures?
Dr. Deborah Polster

2:00 PM

Men's Talmud-Mesechta –
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Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

8:00PM

Sefer Shmuel **Rabbi
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WED, NOV 9

9:00 AM

Medina and Halacha
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10:15 AM

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa
**Rabbi Anthony
Manning**
(Resumes Nov 23)
Rabbi Avi Herzog
Subbing instead of
Rabbi Manning

11:30 AM

Great Jewish Thinkers
Rabbi Alan Kimche

12:30 PM- Trailblazing
the Text of Tanach-
Lunch and Learn
Rabbi Neil Winkler

8:30 PM

Halachic Controversies
Rabbi Aschi Dick
(The Bais)

THURS, NOV 10

9:00 AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:15 am

Parshat HaShavua
**Rabbi Baruch
Taub**

11:30 AM

Unlocking the
Messages
of Chazal
**Rabbi Shai
Finkelstein**

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Mesechta – Bava Basra
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Halacha, 7:00PM Wed

Rebbetzin Shatz

(L'Ayla)-Insights of
Chazal- Tues, 5:00PM

Rabbi Goldwicht

Parshat HaShavua
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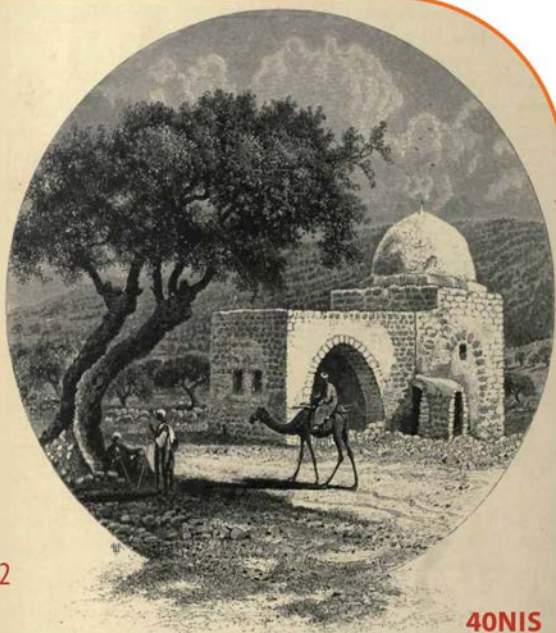
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continued from page 31

adulation of the 'perfect' human body, and specifically the male physique. Meanwhile, generations of Jews faced *gezeiros*, severe decrees banning *milah*, and doing the mitzvah required great self-sacrifice. *Midrash Tanchumah*, (Tazria 5) relates a debate between the great sage and martyr, the *heilgeh* Rebbe Akiva, and the evil Roman governor of Judea, Turnus Rufus:

The wicked Turnus Rufus challenged Rebbe Akiva: "Which is better and more beautiful, the works of the Almighty, or those of flesh and blood? Rebbe Akiva replied, "The works of flesh and blood are more beautiful."

Turnus Rufus then asked, "Why are Jews circumcised?" Rebbe Akiva replied, "I knew you would ask this and that is why I pre-empted you and answered that the works of man are superior."

Rebbe Akiva then brought sheaves of grain and loaves of bread. "These sheaves are the works of the Hakadosh Baruch Hu, while these loaves are the works of flesh and blood.

"Are not the loaves superior?"

The Midrash concludes with a lesson that the commandments that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gives us are *לְצַרֵּךְ אוֹתָם בָּהֶם*, to purify and further refine us.

.....

An interpretation of God's name *Sha-dai* is *She'amar l'olamo dai*, "The One who said to His world, 'Enough.'" This refers to Hashem halting the expansion and development of the world before it would become complete or 'perfect'. In doing so, Hashem left space for us to apply our creative efforts to improve His world. By holding back from completing Creation, Hashem enables us to

participate in a continuous expansion that is qualitative as well as quantitative.

All of Creation had been 'yearning' to be more, to be greater, to be fulfilled and self-actualized. Had *Sha-dai* not told Creation to stop, there would have been no sheaves of wheat for Rebbe Akiva to bring before Turnus Rufus — for they would have already evolved on their own into baked loaves of bread.

It is the name *Sha-dai* — this attribute which leaves the male body 'incomplete' — which obliges us to bring a Jewish child into the covenant. This is what allows us to participate in 'completing the creation' of the child's body.

.....

אִם-לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֶת אֲרֻבוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִירֵקְתִּי לָכֶם
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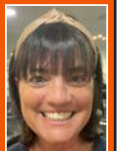
"I will surely open the floodgates of the sky for you and pour down blessings on you until there will not be sufficient room for them!" (*Malachi*, 3:10)

Gemara (*Taanis*, 22b) explains this verse: "Hashem will bless us *ad bli dai*, with an excess of blessings, beyond that which we require, with an abundance so great that עד די שיבול שפותחם מלומר די "our lips will be worn out (*yivlu*) from saying *Dai*, 'It is enough!'"

From bread to *Bris Milah*, may we live with the awareness and appreciation that everything is *בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם*, "between us and Hashem"; may we celebrate our role and privilege as co-creators, with overflowing blessings. *L'chaim!* ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

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

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

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

So according to *Rashi*, when *Hashem* promises *Avram* that his name will become great, it is an allusion to the fact that *Hashem* will add an additional letter to

Avram's name and he will be known from then on as *Avraham*, and that the numerical value of his new name corresponds the parts of the human body. How are we to understand this interpretation offered by *Rashi*? What is the significance of *Avraham's*, new, "great name" corresponding to the parts of the human body?

In a fascinating teaching, the ***Avodat Elazar, the Kozshnitzer Rebbe zy'a***, explains that when we first are introduced to *Avram*, his name connotes that he is the *Av Ram*- he is the "father" if you will, of teaching the world about *Romemut Hashem* - that there is one G-d who exists above and beyond this world. However, as he enters into *Eretz Yisrael*, his understanding of our relationship to *Hashem* evolves to become more complete as reflected in the promise *V'Agadla Shemecha* your name will become great.

His new name *Avraham* which corresponds to all the various parts which come together to form a complete human



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being, represents the transformation to a more complete spiritual clarity, no longer teaching the world solely about *Romemut Hashem*- but also teaching the world about *Gadlut Hashem*- the greatness of G-d.




The name *Avram* marks the beginning of his spiritual journey

The Rebbe explains further, that the term *Gadlut*- greatness can only be measured when an item is placed near something that is smaller or less than the item that is *gadol*. So too, *Avraham's* new name represents a spiritual evolution in *Avraham's* own understanding of his relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, which he begins to share with the entire world. The name *Avram* marks the beginning of his spiritual journey, teaching others about the one G-d who exists beyond our world. However, the more sophisticated understanding, represented by his new name *Avraham*, represents a transition where he begins to teach the world that *Hashem* is paradoxically also *gadol* - *Hashem* is great and imminently present in our lives, even as His presence remains beyond our physical capacity to see or grasp.

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



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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

The First World War

Avraham's long-awaited debut is finally here. Summoned by Hashem, Avraham had journeyed to Israel, and had disengaged from his family, his homeland, and his past. Having arrived in northern Israel he begins his lifelong undertaking to educate about a "one G-d" and to deliver prosperity to a struggling world.

A bloody 25-year war erupts, ultimately drawing him onto the battlefield. Avraham successfully halts the hostilities, preventing further casualties and restoring international harmony.

This intrepid act of heroism characterizes Avraham's divine calling. Avraham had revolutionized humanity's vision of G-d. The ancients had imagined their gods as angry or as vindictive, grotesque figures who took sadistic delight in toying with their human playthings. Avraham was the first to speak of a compassionate and kind Creator who took a loving interest in human welfare. Religion, Avraham argued, would enhance the human condition, rather than

defeat it. In his first public function Avraham ends a bloody war, demonstrating that religion is synchronous with human prosperity

In addition to preventing further casualties, Avraham also rescued his captured nephew Lot. Sefer Bereishit is primarily a tale about families and relationships. Most of the sefer portrays the family life of the people who first discovered Hashem. Family life in Bereishit provides a template for our relationship with Hashem. Hashem is our father, and he cares for us in the very same manner that we care for our own children. Our covenant with Hashem is founded upon the same principles of commitment and mutual obligation which frame our own marriages.

Family relationships are predicated upon trust, devotion and loyalty. You never walk out on family. Yet, Avraham *did* walk out on his family. His sudden and abrupt departure from Ur Casdim could be misunderstood as abandonment of his family. How could this man "hypocritically" preach about a new religion modeled after family life, when he deserted his own father? How could this man lecture about religion and family when he had discarded his own family in Iraq?

By endangering himself and rescuing Lot, Avraham proved that his departure from Ur Casdim wasn't abandonment, but emigration to a better place. Once he arrived



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in Israel and was no longer threatened by the ideological pressures of Ur Casdim, he demonstrated his loyalty and commitment to family by saving Lot.

So, the narrative about the 25-years war is vital to showcase Avraham's role as international peacemaker and to highlight his devotion to family. Evidently, though, there are additional layers to this story. The Torah's description of these wars is far too detailed for a brief "expose" upon family devotion and international peacekeeping. The Torah meticulously lists the protagonists and antagonists, the battlefields, and the chronology. Had the function of this story been merely to highlight Avraham's intercession, the extensive details of the war would be unnecessary. Obviously, there is much more to this war account than merely Avraham's heroic intervention.

Four Empires

Chazal associate the four kings of this powerful military axis with the four legendary empires of Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The Roman empire, of course, isn't limited to the geographical empire of Rome, but refers to all of Western civilization which was heavily influenced by Roman culture and science. Each of these four empires rose to prominence, dominated world affairs, and influenced human culture.

The four ancient kings of parshat Lech lecha foreshadow the four central empires which drove human history. The wars of Lech Lecha are also symbolic, representing the arc of political history which will be driven by four dominant empires. Why does redemptive history begin with a synopsis of future political history?

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Politics, Persecution and Redemption

The account of this world war provides us with our first encounter with kings and monarchs. Before this war, humanity lived in loosely structured political settings. They lived nomadic and indistinct lives, rarely establishing durable political systems. Though the “Tower of Babel” society constructed a soaring tower, they didn’t construct an organized system of governance. They trusted human cooperation to spur progress and prosperity. When their cooperative spirit failed, their society disbanded, and the population scattered across the globe. There was no political framework in place to maintain social cohesion.

These shapeless and lawless societies also created a moral vacuum. Without established socio-political hierarchies, ethical value systems did not take root. The generation of the flood pitted “all against all” in a violent competition for resources- both material and human. No political order, no social stability, and no accepted set of values and cultural norms.

That all changed as kings arose who formed stable societies and sustainable nations. The anarchy and mayhem of the generation of the flood was replaced by order and hierarchy. The political

condition of humanity was stabilized by these supreme monarchs who imposed order and authority.

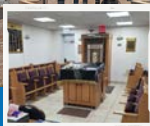
Tragically, humanity paid a steep price for this political organization and the stability it provided. By empowering supreme rulers with unlimited authority humanity began to face persecution and exploitation by these mighty leaders. These four monarchs amassed too much power and began to persecute weaker monarchs. Amrafel, in particular, abused his power by tyrannizing the residents of Ur Casdim, including Avraham. Anyone who disagreed with his religious ideology was promptly cast into a fiery furnace. Additionally, Chazal claim that Amrafel was the very same Nimrod whose cruel treatment incited this worldwide rebellion spearheaded by five weaker monarchs. The newly minted monarchs did provide durable political structures but, just the same, they wreaked havoc upon human liberty.

At that stage Hashem will be universally acknowledged as the supreme authority

At the dawn of time, just as Avraham began to author redemptive history, humanity began experimenting with political systems. Tragically, humanity discovered how difficult it is to calibrate between law and order and human freedom and justice. This experiment erupted into violent wars which highlighted the fragility of this balance and humanity’s frustration at not crafting a better system.

The political experimentation, launched

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thousands of years ago, has continued throughout the millennia. We have tested various forms of government from monarchies to oligarchies, from theocracies to democracies, from socialism to communism. Each model offers a different formula for preserving law while still protecting human freedom.

As history nears its terminus these experiments and these efforts have become more urgent and sometimes more violent. Just as the first experiment erupted in violence, it is highly likely that the final experiments will be occasioned by Messianic violence. Though Messianic violence isn't guaranteed, several of our Messianic prophecies depict global warfare.

Humanity's final vain efforts to craft a perfect model of government will fail. At that stage, humanity will admit that only

Hashem can supply the perfect form of government. At that stage Hashem will be universally acknowledged as the supreme authority and He will delegate that authority to the Moshiah-King who will benevolently rule humanity under divine guidance.

At that stage political history will have run its full course. It began with vicious wars incited by humans who power-grabbed too much authority and history will conclude with latter-day leaders who also concentrate too much authority. The final wars will wash away human tyrants, emptying the stage for the King of Kings. He who empowers kings and monarchs. He who is powerful but also compassionate. Everywhere that His strength is mentioned so is his humility.

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BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center
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Actions, It Appears, Speak Louder Than Words

The world is full of unsung heroes whose lives come and go without our knowledge. But there are others, renowned and famous, whose lives have impacted humanity and changed the world. Avraham Avinu belongs to the latter category.

In our Parsha, we learn that Hashem selected Avraham as the father of mankind to pioneer a philosophy and belief system centered around the concept of One God – the Master of the universe and Architect of history.

Avraham would also introduce humanity to a new form and art of morality based on righteousness and justice (*Tzedek Umishpat*). In essence, Avraham was a man with a mission whose life and teachings would transform a society that had totally degenerated since Adam's appearance in Gan Eden.

We would thus expect that the introduction to Avraham in the biblical narrative would have been dressed with literary fanfare. Indeed, Avraham's CV would be replete with life experience, academic acumen, and pious virtues that would have spilled over numerous pages!

But no! *"And Terach was seventy years old when he begat Avram, Nachor, and Haran... and Avram and Nachor took wives"* (Bereishit 12:26,29). That's it!

So why was a seemingly anonymous Avram chosen for this momentous task? Why did it fall on Avraham that *"in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed"*?

True, there was little choice; apparently, no one else matched up to Avraham. But why does the Torah not introduce Avram's credentials as, for instance, concerning Noah (righteous in his generation) or Moshe, along with his attribute of compassion and leadership potential?

Why does the narrative not allude to the many midrashic accounts of Avraham's courageous struggles to recognize God, his fight against idolatry, and his suffering under Nimrod's thumb? Why are there no introductory references to Avraham's undying faith in Hashem and his observance of the Mitzvot that our sages recount?

Nechama Leibowitz suggests that what the Torah *does* tell us (eventually) about Avraham is the series of trials he faced – because the individual who overcomes enormous challenges in the service of Hashem (and in dealing with his fellow man) proves his worth. For *"the potter does not test cracked jars, but only those that will not break even if struck many times"* (Bereishit Rabbah 32).

And, in that case, what about us? How will we stand up to the potter's test?

Shabbat Shalom. ■ Menachem Persoff

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Mother's Name for Prayers for Ill Convert

Question: I asked a friend who needs *tefillot* for her health what her name is for such purposes, and she answered, Shira bat Avraham Avinu. I knew she was a convert but wondered if this is the correct formula, as usually we use the mother's name.

Answer: We have not found a halachic discussion of this interesting point. We will start by understanding the practice of using the mother's name for *tefillot*. There are possible allusions to this in *Chazal*. In Shabbat (66b), Abaye quotes his adoptive mother as saying, according to Rashi's explanation, that incantations should use the person's mother's name.

The *gemara* in Berachot (55b), describing steps to take when one is in a certain precarious situation, cites a declaration, including "I, *ploni* son of *plonit* (according to some texts of the *gemara*)."

Some explain (see opinions in Yabia Omer II, Orach Chayim 11) that we are more likely to know for sure who one's mother is than who his father is (apparently, we do not want to take chances). The Sifra (Emor 1:5) uses this distinction to explain

why the Torah mentions both parents when allowing a *kohen* to take part in their burial. The Ben Yehoyada (Berachot 55b) considers that "concern" a disgrace to one's father and gives several areas, spiritual and physical, in which a mother's impact on her child is greater than a father's, as well as the contention that a mother is likely to have fewer spiritual liabilities. The Panim Yafot (Bamidbar 12) sees Moshe's mention of a baby coming out of his mother's womb in his prayer for Miriam as inspiration for using a mother's name in prayers.

Yabia Omer (ibid.) posits that all of the above can only create a preference for our formula, but that it does not make a true difference. He points to the *gemara's* (Berachot 34a) derivation from Moshe's prayer for Miriam that one does not have to mention the relevant person's name at all. While the Magen Avraham (see Mishna Berura 119:2) limits this to cases when the prayer is in the subject's presence, we still see that an exact name formula is not crucial for efficacy. Therefore, if one does not know the mother's name or there is another reason not to use it, the father's name is fine.

Regarding many *halachot* and as part of the philosophy of conversion, the convert is no longer linked to his biological parents (see Yevamot 97b). Therefore, we would not use your friend's biological mother for this identification. Perhaps you were thinking of using Sarah Imeinu, as indeed she was

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



also a leader in the field of conversion, at least regarding women (see Bereishit Rabba 39:14) as well as a matriarch for all Jews, which might be important regarding one without a halachically recognized mother.

However, Avraham and Sarah are probably not of the same ilk in our context. There is a *machloket* whether converts can make the declaration of *bikkurim*, which includes the phrase “the land that you gave to our fathers.” In explaining the opinion that he can (which we accept – Rambam, Bikkurim 4:3), the Yerushalmi (Bikkurim 1:4) cites Hashem’s proclamation to Avraham: “... for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations,” which is brought as the source for calling a convert “ben Avraham (Avinu)” (Mishna Berura 139:11). While Sarah was an important spiritual mentor in her time and is a matriarch of Bnei Yisrael, we do not have sources of this magnitude regarding being a mother figure for faith seekers from all nations.

Therefore, it would seem that your friend told you her name correctly. As far as whether to add in the word *Avinu* (to distinguish from the many Avrahams who live in our times), when the name’s use is of halachic significance (e.g., a *get*), Avraham Avinu is used (Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer 129:20). Regarding *aliyot*, where the name is less crucial, many use just Avraham to not embarrass the convert or put his status in

the spotlight (see possible hint in Rama, OC 139:3). We have seen above that exactness in the name is not very important for prayers (Hashem knows who is intended), and the convert can do it however she wants. ■

Having a dispute?



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Editor, Torah Tidbits

A Holy Bond

בהיותכם מתי ממפר, כמעט, וגרים בה. קשר הקדש של ישראל עם ארצו הקדושה אינו דומה לקשר טבעי, שכל עם ולשון מתקשר על ידו אל ארצו... מה שאין כן הקשר האלקי ממקור הקדש, שנתקשרה כנסת ישראל בקדושת ארץ חמדה, שהתחיל החותם הקדוש הזה להיות מבליט בהיותכם מתי מספר... (ארץ חפץ א:ה)

"When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it" (Divrei Hayamim 16:19)

The holy bond of the people of Israel with their holy Land is not comparable to the typical bond which every other nation develops with their attachment to their respective lands...

This [bond found among the other nations] is not comparable to the Godly bond, rooted in holiness, that fuses together Knesset Yisrael to the holiness of its beloved Land.... (Eretz Chefetz 1:5)

In the above passage Rav Kook expounds

on the singular bond established the moment Avraham set foot in the Land of Israel. Jews who seek to emulate the ways of Avraham express their love of the Land.

Rav Kook penned a bold letter in which he extended an invitation to Jewish communities worldwide to return back home to the Land of Israel. Rav Kook sets forth a number of arguments in regard to the urgent need for Jews to be more thoughtful of this mitzvah. Rav Kook speaks of the dangers looming for Jews residing in the exile but as powerfully he speaks of the illuminations and beauty found in our Homeland. Concerning the latter Rav Kook waxes poetic: "Come and feel how [our nation] invigorates its spirit by remembering its strength and majesty, by remembering its grandeur and glory at every turn. Come and delight in memories better than good wine, that exalt the soul and increase wisdom, memories of kings and princes, memories heroes and

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prophets, memories of glory and strength, greatness and majesty. Come to the Land of Israel - here you will behold a vision of all of this.." (‘Rav A.Y. Kook Selected Letters,’ Tzvi Feldman, pp. 239-240).

When Rav Kook speaks of ‘kings’ and ‘heroes,’ ‘prophets and majesty,’ he undoubtedly had in mind, among others Avraham Avinu, who was the first Jew, with his wife, to set foot in the Land. To reside in the land today, Rav Kook states, means that one encounters glory at virtually “every turn.” One who visits the burial place of Avraham in Chevron; one prays at the foot of the very mountain that Avraham placed Yitzchak on an altar as an offering to the Almighty, returns to the most celebrated moments in our history. These remarkable encounters, which are available to a Jew in the Land, on any given day, “exalt the soul and increase wisdom.”

The Talner Rebbe, HaRav Yitzchak Asher Twersky zt”l, delivered the following powerful dvar Torah on Shabbos at *Shalosh Se’udos* in the Talner Beis Medrash in Brookline, Massachusetts.

He proposed that there is a distinct obligation to emulate our forefather Avraham. The prophet Yeshayahu exhorts the people of Israel: “Look to Avraham your forefather...(Yeshayahu 51:2). The Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim* (1:16) elaborates: “Look to Avraham your forefather”...follow his ways, have faith in his teachings, and conduct yourself in accordance with his character traits...”

In this context, The Talner Rebbe cited another dramatic passage from the Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuva* 10:2): “Whoever serves God out of love, occupies himself



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with [the study of] Torah and [the fulfillment of] mitzvot, and walks in the paths of wisdom impelled by no external motive - prompted by neither fear of calamity nor desire to obtain benefit; rather, he does what is truly right because it is truly right... This standard is indeed a very high one; not every sage attains this. It was the standard of *Avraham Avinu*, whom God called His lover because he served only out of love..." ('Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart,' Shapiro, pp. 43-44)

Avraham's life embodied an all-encompassing love of the Almighty. He conducted himself with complete loyalty in his journey to the Land..

The Ramban famously asserted that every occurrence experienced by Avraham and the other forefathers foreshadows what will occur in the future: "I will tell you a principle, which you should keep in mind throughout all the coming passages regarding the lives of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. It is a major principle, which the Sages mentioned succinctly when they said, "Everything that occurred to the Patriarchs is a sign (or *portent*) for their descendants." (Commentary of *Ramban, Bereshit* 12:6)

The illustrious Rav Chaim of Volozhin highlighted the idea that we are to emulate Avraham, although he asserted a more mystically inclined notion. Generations later we have the strength to follow Avraham's ways because it became embedded

in the Jew's 'spiritual-DNA': "A person's sudden awakening to go to the Holy Land stems from the test of Lech Lecha..." (*Ruach Chaim, Avot* 5:3)

The above idea is beautifully echoed in a teaching the famed Chassidic Master, the Rebbe of Kotzk, who taught, "Not only did Avraham hear the call from heaven to set out for the Holy Land, but in every generation we are summoned to hear these words and allow them to pierce our hearts." ■

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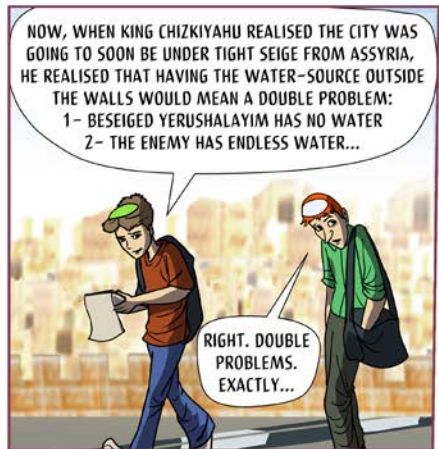
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Avraham, The Chosen One

When reading this week's parsha an obvious question arises. Why was Avraham chosen to be the leader of our people and to forever be remembered as "Avraham Avinu"?

I think the fact that our parsha comes right after parashat Noach helps us understand the answer to this question. If you think about it, it seems it would make more sense if the beginning of the Jewish people was from the time of Noach. He was the one Hashem chose to keep alive while wiping out the rest of the world for their sins. Wouldn't he be the appropriate choice?

If we look to the beginning of the previous parsha, we see that the Torah says Noach was considered a Tzadik in **his generation**. Rashi explains that some of the mefarshim understand this to mean that Noach was a Tzadik relatively to the people around him, but had he been in Avraham's generation that might not have been the case. I'm not sure whether Noach would have not been considered a Tzadik, but I do think we can pinpoint a clear distinction between Noach and Avraham to explain this Rashi and learn a great life lesson.

In our parsha, when Avraham and Sara are leaving to Eretz Kena'an, they take with them "את הנפש אשר עשו בחרך". Rashi say's this is referring to the people that they converted to Judaism since the Torah relates that to the word, עשו, as in 'they made them'. Avraham and Sara understood the importance and believed in helping those around them. They had an understanding of גמילות חסדים and אהבת חינוך. Though Noach was a great tzadik and followed all of Hashem's commandments, he was unable to help others do the same and thus could not save them. Avraham was, and he made it a top priority.

We can learn from this not only the importance of doing *avodat Hashem*, but also in helping our friends, family , and community do the same.



Noa Anders
10th grade, Modiin

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

The parsha starts with וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ. It is Hashem telling Avram to go from his land, the house of his father, where he has all his possessions, money, and everything that is known and familiar to him and to go to the land that He will show him.

Hashem then tells Avram וַאֲשַׁךְ לִנְיָ גְדֹל וַאֲבָרַכְךָ וַאֲגִדְלָה שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְּרַכָּה: וַאֲבָרַכָּה מִבְּרַכְיֶיךָ וּמִקְּ-

Avram gets to His Land he will be blessed and his nation will be great and He will curse those who curse you.

From this we learn a very important lesson. In life we have to go through challenges and hardships but in the end the reward is greater than the challenge. Avram had to leave his land at the age of 75, his wife taken from him by Pharaoh, and he didn't have יצחק until the old age of 100, along with many other challenges. But, eventually עם ישראל has the Land of Israel.

A lot of people who make aliya have to give up their friends, family and everything that is familiar to them to make the huge sacrifice to live in ארץ הקודש just like Avraham had to. "ארץ-ישראל נקנית בייסורים"

Nowadays, we are going through the hard time of גלות but we know that soon משיח will come and all the challenges will be worth it.

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having
the opportunity of having Tziporah in
his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
happiness, to overcome her challenges. May
Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
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