

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1633

ב"ה

NOV. 1ST 2025 • י' מרחשון תשפ"ו

פרשת לך לך
PARSHAT LECH LECHA



United
We Stand

ישראל



Lech Lecha: A Lichtigeh Velt
Rabbi Judah Mischel
Page 32



**Lech Lecha: Be Brave
and Go Forth**
Shoshana Judelman Page 66



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

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT LECH LECHA ZMANIM
CANDLES 4:14 PM • HAVDALA 5:27 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:06 PM



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To read **Rabbi Winkler's** article for this week see: TorahTidbits.com > **Individual Articles**



COVER IMAGE from Mike Basilyan

We made Aliyah in August of 2020 at the peak of COVID. I live in Jerusalem with my wife Chava and three kids.

Our flag over Masada, above the Dead Sea, is a reminder that Jewish sovereignty once lost on this mountain was reclaimed — not as myth, but as reality. To me it speaks to the defiance of survival turned into endurance, and endurance into nationhood.



We continue to pray for the return of all the kedoshim from Gaza.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS



7 Days After Molad: 8 Marcheshvan/ Wed. night Oct. 29
Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Marcheshvan/ Wed. night Nov. 5



We begin reciting the prayer for rain in the Amida:
"tein tal u'matar l'vracha" on 7 Marcheshvan (Tuesday night Oct. 28)

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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Oct. 29 - Nov. 8 / 7 - 17 Marcheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:01-5:09
Sunrise	5:53-6:01
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:37-8:42
Magen Avraham	8:01-8:04
Sof Zman Tefila	9:32-9:35
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:22
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	11:52
Plag Mincha	3:43-3:36
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:56-4:48



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	Lech Lecha		Vayeira	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:14	5:27	4:09	5:22
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:33	5:30	4:27	5:25
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:33	5:28	4:28	5:23
Gush Etzion	4:30	5:28	4:25	5:23
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:31	5:28	4:25	5:23
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:31	5:28	4:25	5:23
Netanya	4:31	5:28	4:25	5:23
Be'er Sheva	4:32	5:30	4:27	5:25
Rehovot	4:31	5:29	4:26	5:24
Petach Tikva	4:14	5:28	4:09	5:23
Ginot Shomron	4:30	5:27	4:24	5:22
Haifa / Zichron	4:19	5:27	4:14	5:22
Gush Shiloh	4:29	5:27	4:23	5:22
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:31	5:29	4:26	5:24
Givat Ze'ev	4:34	5:27	4:28	5:22
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:31	5:28	4:25	5:23
Ashkelon	4:33	5:30	4:27	5:25
Yad Binyamin	4:31	5:29	4:26	5:24
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:21	5:25	4:15	5:20
Golan	4:27	5:25	4:21	5:20
Nahariya/Maalot	4:28	5:27	4:22	5:21
Afula	4:28	5:26	4:23	5:21

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Lech Lecha - 6:06PM • Vayeira - 6:01PM

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

Daf Yomi: Zevachim 48



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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It might be because my full name is Avraham Yitzchak, but the *parshiyot* of Avraham and Yitzchak's life, which we read in *Lech Lecha*, *Vayeira*, *Chayei Sarah*, and *Toldot*, hold particular meaning for me. I see in them such important *middot* that I try to emulate in my own life and family.

Avraham Avinu, for example, stood out for his *hachnasat orchim* (which my wife and I try to do a lot). He also stood out for his ability and passion for telling the world how amazing *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is (which I consider a goal for myself as well).

Yitzchak is someone who we can clearly see had a special love towards the Land of Israel, in that he is the only one of the forefathers who never left Israel. He was also known for his *tefillah*, which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* accepted, asking for children when Rivka was barren.

There is another reason I connect so powerfully to Avraham Avinu. Avraham is the paradigm of *aliyah*, something which so many of those reading this message have done themselves. He showed us the way by following Hashem's voice and leaving his house and land to come to the Land of Israel. He made *aliyah* at a time when there was no OU in Israel to help

him with creating a community. There was no Torah Tidbits in *shul* to read, there was no NCSY there for his future children. There was no JLIC for when he wanted to go to university, or OU Israel Torah Initiatives of *shiurim* for him to go to. There was no Women's Division for Sarah to join. There was no Camp Dror for him to be able to send Yitzchak to in the summer. There was no Nefesh B'Nefesh to help him with the process of *aliyah*. And there are countless other organizations that exist in Israel today that he did not have when he made *aliyah*.

Instead, Avraham Avinu was an *Ivri*. He believed in and listened to Hashem when no one else did, and he went when no one else would. That belief, that ability to pick up and leave and come to Israel, is something that so many of us have walked in his footsteps. We are living in a world where peer pressure and society dictate the way we behave and the choices that we make in our lives. Avraham Avinu lived in a generation where nobody could even comprehend the concept of believing in G-d, yet that did not stop him from doing what he felt that the *Ribono shel Olam* wanted from him. It is so difficult to leave what we know and the comforts of the country of our birth, our father's house. And more than that, Avraham did not know where he was going to end up, "*el ha'aretz asher areka*." Many of us came to Israel without the ability to know exactly where we would establish ourselves. The Torah doesn't tell us the challenges of where we go, but only the challenges of how to leave. Leaving is such a major challenge of its own. Yet those who make *aliyah* have a dream, and know where



The OU Israel family sends heartfelt
condolences to Rabbi Ari Kahn
on the passing of his mother

Rivka Riva (Rose) Kahn a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants them to be.

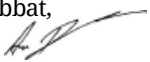
The fact that we're seeing thousands of Jews do this every single year is absolutely remarkable. I was lucky. My parents made the decision for me and my family, when I was nine years old. I didn't have to be forced to do it as an adult with a family, a job, with ties to a community. For that, I thank and will continue thanking my parents forever and ever, because they really gave me such a tremendous gift of doing that and allowing me to be here without those hardships

As an adult, I can understand what my parents must have gone through, to leave their siblings, to leave their parents, to leave their friends, to leave their jobs, to leave their communities, in order to move to Israel. Before *Nefesh B'Nefesh* and before everything else, even before ever stepping foot in the Land of Israel themselves. My father told us when we made *aliyah* that we weren't going to Israel to see if it's a beautiful place. Instead, we trust God that it is a beautiful place, but we're going there because *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* said that that's where the Jewish people should be.

So, here I really want to thank my parents once again for bringing me and my siblings to Israel. And I hope the *beracha* they have received is being able to see their children live and thrive here, to see their grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow and build homes, and that we all connect so powerfully to the Land.

Let's continue walking in the footsteps of Avraham Avinu. Even when things are not easy, and there are so many challenges, we are doing what's right. May we be, *b'ezrat Hashem*, role models for many others.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"L

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Rabbi Moshe Hauer's zt"l divrei Torah were enthusiastically read each week by tens of thousands of readers of Torah Tidbits. His sudden death this past *Shemini Atzeret* came as a shock to our community and to the Jewish world at large. In the coming weeks and months we will honor Rabbi Hauer's memory by publishing some of his most compelling and thought-provoking divrei Torah. May the study of his exquisite words of Torah be a source of *chizuk* and bring blessing to his memory.

Alone but Not Lonely

Written in the aftermath of October 7th, this piece, like so many others by Rabbi Hauer zt"l, provides hope and direction in a time of despair.

Jews should be feeling quite lonely these days. Antisemitism, an increasingly visible and unsettling feature of American Jewish life since the Tree of Life attack exactly five years ago, has spiked since the brutal Hamas massacre of October 7th. On the Israeli side, we

have shifted from focusing on what seemed to be the growing circle of peace and friendship surrounding the Jewish state to consider instead its enemies poised to attack from all fronts. We fume at the callous and vicious hostility of the United Nations and watch with astonishment as the progressive champions of human rights leading, teaching, and studying in our universities salute and excuse monstrous butchers. And we celebrate any expression of support from American and other political leaders even as we anxiously parse their every phrase to identify possible cracks in that support.

We should feel desperately lonely, but we are not. A Jew is always alone but never lonely. Earlier this week, on a visit to Israel, I began to understand why.

In the wake of the recent horrors, I had the privilege to meet a wide variety of Israelis who had experienced or observed unspeakable tragedy and were bearing it with dignity and grace. It is always both humbling and inspiring to see from up close the kind of *emunah*, deep-rooted faith, that seems to grow bountifully in Israel and is rarely seen elsewhere. It is there in the eyes of people who project a crystal-clear sense of purpose and the faith-based conviction that they are part of the great march forward of

In loving memory of
our daughter and sister

Judy Yellin a"h

יהודית מאשה בת אליעזר ע"ה
on her 31st Yahrtzeit - ט' מרחשון

May the Torah learned
from this issue be in her merit

The Yellin and Weingarten families

the magnificent story of the Jewish people. It derives both from the mystical feeling of G-d's guiding hand and from the mindset of the faithful who choose their path in life consistent with G-d and his Torah.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me." "Were my father and mother to abandon me, G-d would take me in." King David was surrounded by frightening enemies and forsaken by erstwhile friends. It did not matter. His faith in God ensured that he was never alone. His Emunah was neither a slogan nor an abstraction. And it is similarly tangible to these understated Jews who viewed their life-changing experiences as a journey G-d was leading them on and they were choosing to take. Instead of feeling lost and abandoned, they have a clear sense of connection and direction.

These humbling Jews are not alone because G-d is with them. But they are also not alone because people are with them.

So much has been said – and enough can never be said – about the incredible outpouring of kindness and caring that is sweeping through the land. We may be attacked by our enemies and abandoned by friends, but the Jewish family is hanging together across oceans and communities. Those who have suffered loss are being embraced by Klal Yisrael.

But the real healing of that loneliness is experienced by giving. A friend told me how his daughter went to a neighborhood market on Erev Shabbat and encountered a woman collecting foodstuffs for the neighborhood poor. She had never seen her doing this before, and it seemed especially odd as people were raising funds and goods for the current causes of the displaced, the bereaved, and the soldiers. She later learned that this woman's son had been taken captive by Hamas. She was in so much

pain that her pain was all she could focus on, leaving her completely wrapped up in herself and very lonely so she chose to go out to the corner market to do something for others who needed it. She was not alone because she cared, she gave, she saw others, and she made them less lonely.

The original Jew, Avraham, was known as an *Ivri*, completely isolated, "the entire world on one side and he on the other." This was not just an individual characteristic of Avraham; it originated what would become the collective fate of his descendants, "the nation that dwells alone." It began the moment G-d chose Avraham, when he instructed him to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father's house, to disconnect from every part of his human support system and follow G-d into the unknown.

Avraham was alone. But was he lonely? How could he be lonely when the Creator Himself would accompany him and show him his path-way forward?! One who walks with G-d is never lonely. And he could not be lonely because everywhere he went, he noticed others and addressed their needs.

We are a nation that dwells alone but does not feel alone. Carried by *emunah* and committed to *chesed*, we will live and move on with G-d before us and with our hearts and hands extended to each other. ■

לעלוי נשמת

Howard Israel z"l
חיים ישראל פינחס
בן משה אהרון א"ה
on his 13th yahrtzeit
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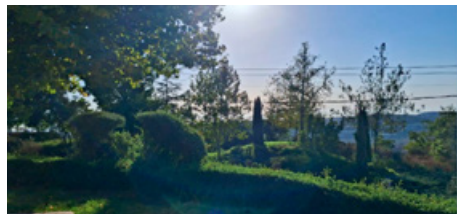


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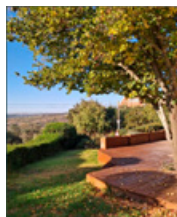
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PARSHAT LECH LECHA

The parsha introduces the Jewish people. Avraham journeys to the Land of Israel. He 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 again promised the Land, though told his descendants will spend 400 years in slavery. Sarah has no child, Hagar bears Yishmael, Avraham is promised that Sarah will bear a child. He is given the mitzvah of mila, circumcision, as a sign of the covenant.



1ST ALIYA (12:1-13)

Avram (while we refer to him as Avraham his name begins as Avram and is only changed later) is told to journey to the Land he will be shown. There he will achieve fame, fortune and family. The family journeys, arriving at 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.

Our parsha introduces promises. Avraham is given three personal promises and upon entry into the Land, one national one. He is told he will have fame, fortune and family. And his people will inherit the Land. The story of the Torah from here until its very end is the story of these promises.

G-d makes promises to man. Unsolicited, perhaps undeserved. Though we will come to know Avraham as a great man, the Torah is mum on any background to receiving these promises. For it is a story of G-d's desire for a people – it is His reach to us. Unsolicited. Although the Midrash describes Avraham's discovery of G-d, the Torah itself is not interested in that. It is interested in describing the unsolicited desire of G-d for a people; His reach to man, not man's reach to Him.



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

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

Avraham's 3 promises, fame, fortune and family, will be fulfilled one by one. First fortune. With Avraham's return to the Land from Egypt laden with wealth, the promise of fortune has come to be.

Note the parallel in this story to that of the Exodus from Egypt. Avraham journeys to Egypt because of famine, Paro suffers a plague, Avraham leaves with great wealth. So too is the story of the Jewish people's

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journey to Egypt: flee to Egypt in a famine, suffer plagues and leave with great wealth.

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



3RD ALIYA (13:5-18)

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

Avraham and Lot have flocks, a nomadic occupation. Shepherdng is not the stuff of nation building. Shepherds preserve wealth. While agriculture provides, grows, builds, is self-sustaining. It is stable, concrete and the stuff of nations. So, while wealthy, the wealth is nomadic. However, the promise to Avraham of fortune has been granted.

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

The Torah communicates this message by emphasizing the word “seeing” or “looking”. The appearance of beauty without consideration of principles has been a bit of a problem in the Torah so far. Eve *looked* at the fruit and it was beautiful. Before the flood, the men *looked* at the women and chose

wives. Avraham is afraid, and justifiably, that people will *look* at Sarah and want her for themselves. And here, Lot *looks* at the Jordan Valley and it looks like the lushness of Egypt.

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



4TH ALIYA (14:1-20)

4 Kings make war with 5 Kings.

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

The promise of fame has been achieved. After the heroic rescue of Lot, Avraham finds himself in the company of Kings. And of note is the religious language of Malchizedek, blessing Avraham with G-d's name. Avraham has become famous but he has used his fame to communicate his faith. People speak G-d talk around Avraham.

2 of the 3 promises Avraham received, those of fame and of fortune have been

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תהי נפשה צרורה בצרור החיים

achieved. The remaining 2 – of children and of inheriting this Land are tougher.

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



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

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

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

G-d says to Avraham, "do not fear". Who said Avraham is afraid? What is he afraid of? Rashi comments that Avraham is worried that he has been showered with so much from G-d already that perhaps he does not deserve to have the remaining promises granted. The remaining 2 promises are big ones; children and the Land of Israel. Perhaps I no longer deserve those.

Some promises are conditional – you deserve it, you will get it. Perhaps he has used up all his merit and deserves no more. G-d tells him to not fear for his merit is great.



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

After promising Avraham that

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

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

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

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

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

The Torah is contrasting a nation, Yishmael,

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

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



7TH ALIYA (17:7-27)

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

Avraham is reluctant to give up on Yishmael as the heir to the Jewish people. Perhaps this is Avraham's persistent kindness – he sees good, even greatness in Yishmael.

But that type of greatness is not sufficient: greatness comes in different shapes and sizes. Yishmael is great in his way, the ways of this world. Yitzchak will be great in a different way, in the world of the spirit, of the Divine, of ethics. There is greatness amongst the nations of the world: but Jewish greatness is different. ■



STATS

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

Written on 208 lines, ranks 23.

7 Parshiyot; 3 open, 4 closed.

126 pesukim - ranks 13th.

1686 words - ranks 18th.

6336 letters - ranks 19th.



MITZVOT

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

A SHORT VORT

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

שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה...לְךָ אֶתִּנְנָה וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ (יג'יד, טו)

"Lift up your eyes and look...to you will I give it and to all your descendants" (13:14-15)

What is the significance of G-d announcing here that He was transferring possession of the Land of Israel to Avram, when Avraham still had to purchase the Cave of Machpelah with his own money?

The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simcha from Dvinsk 1843-1926) answers that although the current evidence suggested otherwise, this statement by G-d internalized into Avram that G-d's Divine presence dwelt here in the Land. That is why G-d's instruction to Avram in the Pasuk was to "Lift up your eyes." - to look beyond the current situation of the Land and to perceive the holiness of the Land. By transcending your vision and insight to a holier level of how G-d performs, you will then realize that the Land of Israel is sanctified and transferred over to Avram and his children, despite what is seemingly evident now. This declaration of G-d creates the link between the Israelites and the Land of Israel eternally.

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לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייז"ל ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטר ע"ה

Our Children Walk on Ahead

The call to Abraham, with which Lech Lecha begins, seems to come from nowhere:

"Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father's house, and go to a land which I will show you."

Nothing has prepared us for this radical departure. We have not had a description of Abraham as we had in the case of Noah ("Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God"). Nor have we been given a series of glimpses into his childhood, as in the case of Moses. It is as if Abraham's call is a sudden break with all that went before. There seems to be no prelude, no context, no background.

Added to this is a curious verse in the last speech delivered by Moses' successor Joshua:

And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the river (Euphrates), Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nachor; and they served other gods. (Joshua 24:2)

The implication seems to be that Abraham's father was an idolater. Hence the famous mid-rashic tradition that as a child, Abraham broke his father's idols. When Terah asked him who had done the damage, he replied, "The largest of the idols took a stick and broke the rest".

"Why are you deceiving me?" Terah asked, "Do idols have understanding?"

"Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying," replied the child. (Bereishit Rabbah 38:8)

In this reading, Abraham was an iconoclast, a breaker of images, one who rebelled against his father's faith.

Maimonides, the philosopher, put it somewhat differently. Originally, human beings believed in one God. Later, they began to offer sacrifices to the sun, the planets and stars, and other forces of nature, as creations or servants of the one God. Later still, they worshipped them as entities – gods – in their own right. It

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from this Torah Tidbits
and the zemirot sung this Shabbat
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took Abraham, using logic alone, to realise the incoherence of polytheism:

After he was weaned, while still an infant, his mind began to reflect. Day and night, he thought and wondered, how is it possible that this celestial sphere should be continuously guiding the world, without something to guide it and cause it to revolve? For it cannot move of its own accord. He had no teacher or mentor, because he was immersed in Ur of the Chaldees among foolish idolaters. His father and mother and the entire population worshipped idols, and he worshipped with them. He continued to speculate and reflect until he achieved the way of truth, understanding what was right through his own efforts. It was then that he knew that there is one God who guides the heavenly bodies, who created everything, and besides whom there is no other god. (Laws of Idolatry 1:2)

What is common to Maimonides and the Midrash is discontinuity. Abraham represents a radical break with all that went before.

Remarkably however, the previous chapter gives us a quite different perspective:

These are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot . . . Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran. (Gen 11:31)

The implication seems to be that far from breaking with his father, Abraham was continuing a journey Terah had already begun.

How are we to reconcile these two passages? The simplest way, taken by most commentators, is that they are not in chronological sequence.



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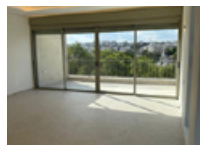
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The call to Abraham (in Gen. 12) happened first. Abraham heard the Divine summons, and communicated it to his father. The family set out together, but Terah stopped halfway, in Haran. The passage recording Terah's death is placed before Abraham's call, though it happened later, to guard Abraham from the accusation that he failed to honour his father by leaving him in his old age (Rashi, Midrash).

Yet there is another obvious possibility. Abraham's spiritual insight did not come from nowhere. Terah had already made the first tentative move toward monotheism. Children complete what their parents begin.

Significantly, both the Bible and rabbinic tradition understood divine parenthood in this way. They contrasted the description of Noah ("Noah walked with God") and that of Abraham ("The God before whom I have walked", Gen. 24:40). God Himself says to Abraham "Walk ahead of Me and be perfect" (Gen. 17:1). God signals the way, then challenges His children to walk on ahead.

In one of the most famous of all Talmudic passages, the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Metzia 59b) describes how the Sages outvoted Rabbi Eliezer despite the fact that his view was supported by a Heavenly Voice. It continues by describing an encounter between Rabbi Natan and the Prophet Elijah. Rabbi Natan asks the Prophet: What was God's reaction to that moment, when the law was decided by

majority vote rather than following that Heavenly Voice? Elijah replies, "He smiled and said, 'My children have defeated Me! My children have defeated Me!'"

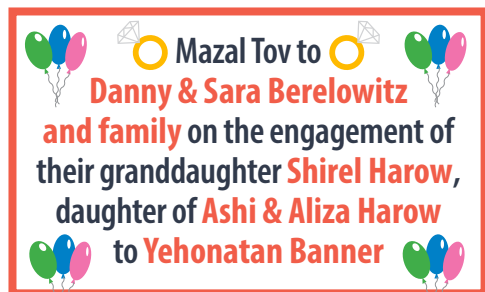
To be a parent in Judaism is to make space within which a child can grow. Astonishingly, this applies even when the parent is God (*Avinu*, "our Father") Himself. In the words of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik:

"The Creator of the world diminished the image and stature of creation in order to leave something for man, the work of His hands, to do, in order to adorn man with the crown of creator and maker." (Halachic Man, p. 107)

This idea finds expression in *halachah*, Jewish law. Despite the emphasis in the Torah on honouring and revering parents, Maimonides rules:

Although children are commanded to go to great lengths [in honouring parents], a father is forbidden to impose too heavy a yoke on them, or to be too exacting with them in matters relating to his honour, lest he cause them to stumble. He should forgive them and close his eyes, for a father has the right to forgo the honour due to him. (Hilchot Mamrim 6:8)

The story of Abraham can be read in two ways, depending on how we reconcile the end of chapter 11 with the beginning of chapter 12. One reading emphasises discontinuity. Abraham broke with all that went before. The others continuity. Terah, his father, had already begun to wrestle with idolatry. He had set out on the long walk to the land which would eventually become holy, but stopped halfway. Abraham



completed the journey his father began.

Perhaps childhood itself has the same ambiguity. There are times, especially in adolescence, when we tell ourselves that we are breaking with our parents, charting a path that is completely new. Only in retrospect, many years later, do we realise how much we owe our parents – how, even at those moments when we felt most strongly that we were setting out on a journey uniquely our own, we were, in fact, living out the ideals and aspirations that we learned from them. And it began with God Himself, who left - and continues to leave - space for us, His children, to walk on ahead. ■

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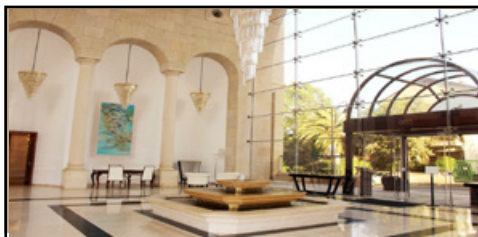
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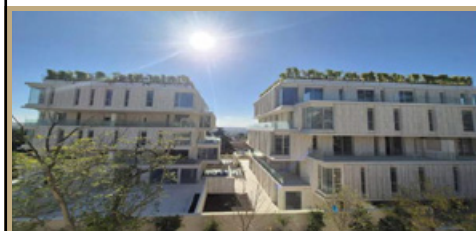
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“Lech Lecha” – Becoming Your True Self

The parsha begins with Hashem commanding Avraham – *Lech Lecha* – to go. Some have interpreted the phrase to refer to the fact that the journey was for Avraham’s own good and benefit (*Rashi*). He was to go **for** himself.

Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin (LaTorah V’La-Moadim) suggests that the imperative has a far deeper meaning. Hashem is commanding Avraham – *Lech Lecha* – go to the depths of your soul. That statement is not a command to go **for** yourself but rather a directive to **go** to yourself. Hashem’s call to Avraham was not simply geographical. It was existential: discover your own essence, your own *neshama*.

Hashem never demands of a person to achieve beyond his or her capacity:

“כָּל אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכַחַךְ עֲשֵׂה”

“Whatever your hand finds to do — do with all your might.” (Kohelet 9:10).

The *pasuk* does not mean that one should feel free to do as they please. That would invite a world of *hefkerut*. Rather the intention is that one should utilize the strengths and talents

with which one was gifted to maximize their potential.

This echoes the famous teaching of R’ Zusha of Anipoli. “In the next world, they will not ask me, ‘Why weren’t you like the Baal Shem Tov?’ or ‘Why weren’t you like the Maggid of Mezritch?’ But they will ask me: ‘Zusha, why were you not Zusha?’” Did you do everything possible to be the best person you could be based on the capabilities and limitations granted to you.

The message is clear: our task in life is not to imitate others, but to actualize our own deepest potential. As Hazal tell us: “*Maase Avot Siman L’banim*” – we are to emulate the characteristics exemplified by our Avot and their encounters are an example for future generations. That is the first command to the first Jew — *Lech Lecha*. May we be able to dig deep inside ourselves, recognize our talents and utilize them to maximize our potential in the manner in which we serve Hashem and the way in which we impact those around us. ■

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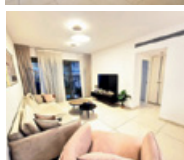
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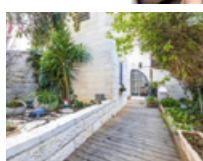
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Parashat Lech Lecha is filled with many of Hashem's promises to Avraham Avinu and his future descendants. "*Vayoztai oto hachutzah vayomer habet na hashamayimah u'sfor hako-chavim im tuchal le'spor otam vayomer lo ko yihiyeh zar'acha* — And He took him outside, and [Hashem] said, "Gaze, now, toward the Heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And [Hashem] said to him, "So shall your offspring be!" (*Bereisheet 15:5-6*) With the most beautiful imagery, Hashem promises Avraham Avinu that his children will be numerous as the stars in heaven. Just as one can't count the stars, the Jewish people will be too many to count. What is the significance of comparing the Jewish people to the stars?

Rabbeinu B'chaye explains that there are

many different kinds of stars, each one is a different size and possesses a unique power. Likewise, within the Jewish people there is great diversity, and various levels of service of Hashem. Judaism does not have a "one size fits all" approach.

Rav Simcha Wasserman *zt"l* explains that although the Jewish people can be viewed as one unit serving Hashem, and there is an aspect of community in our *avodat Hashem*, each person is beloved to Hashem for his individual service and is not eclipsed by the whole. Just as each star has a name, each Jew is special to Hashem and is treated as "an only child." When we contemplate this message, we can each feel our personal importance and realize how unique and intimate our relationship with Hashem is.

We find a fascinating insight into this extraordinary illustration offered by Rav Leib Bakst *zt"l*. The Midrash teaches us that the stars were created as a consolation, to appease the moon who's light was diminished. Thus, the stars are particularly beloved by Hashem, as they were created to uplift and relieve the distress of another entity. Hashem's comparison of Avraham Avinu's descendants to the stars not only equates their quantity, but it also expresses the reason for Hashem's intense love of His people. That is, Hashem created the Jewish people to bring goodness, kindness and light to the world.

Rav Chaim Volozhin *zt"l* would frequently remind his son that a Jew's purpose in this world is to help another. Rav Avraham Schorr teaches that this is one of the reasons that a

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person's heart is situated on the left side of his body, although classically it is the right side that symbolizes strength. When facing one another each person's left side mirrors his friend's right side. One's heart was created to feel another's pain and joy and to fill another's need. The mandate of each Jew is to look around and see whom we can help, who's day we can brighten with a smile or a compliment. We can wish each other "good morning" or "have a good day" with the intention of sharing a heartfelt brachah. These are all ways we can become the 'stars' that Hashem envisioned in His promise to Avraham Avinu. ■

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Lech Lecha: A Lichtigeh Velt

An anecdote: Professor Eli Weisel, zy'a, was once 'speaking in learning' with one of his teachers, the brilliant Professor, Rabbi Saul Lieberman, discussing who they considered to be the most tragic figure in the Torah. Weisel suggested it was *Adam HaRishon*, who was the 'only man', the lonely man who experienced the pain of the first failure, tasted the bitterness of the first exile and shouldered the guilt of the *Cheit* for eternity. Lieberman disagreed: "I think it is God Himself, who looks toward the world that He created and says, 'I have given you such a beautiful world; what have you done with it? What are you doing with it?'"

And another: When Reb Shlomo Freifeld zt'l would hear of people getting caught up in pettiness he would often remark, "*Aza a lichtigeh velt...*" It's such a glorious world! Why do they seek to make it small and narrow?"

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אֱנִי ה' אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

"And He said to him: 'I am Hashem who took you out of Ur Kasdim...'" (*Bereishis*, 15:7).

Rabbi Yitzchak said: This can be compared to a man who was traveling from place to place and saw a *birah dolekes* (a palace that was 'lit up', or 'burning'). He said: 'Could it be that this palace has no owner?' The owner of the palace looked out at him and said: 'I am the master of the palace.' So too, since Avraham Avinu said: 'Could it be that this world has no master?' Hashem looked out at him and said: 'I am the Master of the world.' (*Bereishis Rabbah*, 39:1)

The midrash is often understood as the moment Avraham 'discovers' Hashem; he looks curiously at the world, reflects deeply, and realizes that there must be a *Borei Olam*, a Creator and Sustainer behind it all. Furthermore, Avraham Avinu's encounter seems to be an insight about the state of the world and of our own state as well. Most commentaries understand and translate *dolekes* as 'ablaze'. The *birah dolekes* is a 'burning tower'; the world is on fire, in a desperate state of destruction and chaos. Avraham asked: 'Still, how can such a world even exist without someone in charge?' The Ribbono Shel Olam looked out of a window (so to speak), smiled at Avraham and calmly answered: "I am the Master." This affirms that despite the dire suffering, violence and disorder of this world, it — and we — are not alone. The Divine Presence, the Source of Peace, is right here, unharmed, even amid fearful flames.

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The phrase *birah dolekes* can also mean an illuminated palace. This is a metaphor for a beautiful, orderly, sacred world, lit up with candles, that clearly points to its Designer. In this version of the story, Avraham sees the world as filled with bright harmony and balance, and due to this he realizes that there is obviously a Creator and Owner of such a magnificent construct.

These two interpretations are two paths, perspectives and possibilities. We can find God at the root of everything when we see our surroundings as burning with existential and philosophical crises, pettiness, narrowness and neglect. We can also find God when we see our surroundings as glowing with sacred, serene light, such as after the candles of Shabbos have been lit and a delightful peace envelops and suffuses our hearts and the world.

At the *birah dolekes*, Avraham Avinu encounters this dialectic, experiencing the deep paradoxes of this world. There is suffering and there is great beauty; there is awful cruelty and also awesome kindness. He refused to look away from these incongruities. He demands an answer, and Hashem reveals Himself: 'I am the Master of paradoxes!'

Avraham Avinu's courage is not only in discovering Hashem in a world aflame, but in teaching us how to respond to the flames around us. 'My children, if you see a world filled with brokenness, ablaze with painful, unanswerable questions — do not look away. You will find our Omnipresent Master, who has taken us out and redeemed us from Ur Kasdim.'

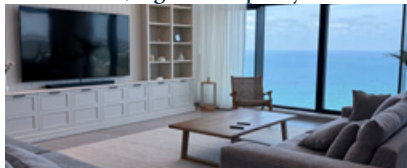
Ur can be interpreted to mean 'Fiery Furnace' (*Targum Yonasan*). It is in fact, according to the Midrash, the city where Nimrod threw Avraham into a fiery furnace, and where our forefather sat, unharmed, in a state of calm self-mastery and uncompromising *emunah* in the Divine Presence (Rashi, 11:28).

When our *emunah* grows to the point that we can see the spark of the Ribbono shel Olam within the flames of this world, we can, like Avraham Avinu, begin to empower the world itself to cry out: "There is a Master of this palace!" Our own 'discovery' of the Owner of this world becomes a charge to appreciate, amplify and ennoble the beauty and light that surrounds us. We live life to the fullest, to experience the *lichtigkeit* in all that Hashem has created.

May our children inherit a *lichtigeh velt*, a sublime palace of harmony, beauty, peace and redemption, with the continuing unfolding of *geulah* and the undeniable revelation of Hashem's Presence. May we continue to experience the triumphant return of Klal Yisrael to *Eretz HaKodesh* — as Hashem promised to Avraham, "I am Hashem who took you out of Ur Kasdim... to give you this Land, to take possession of it," Amen. ■

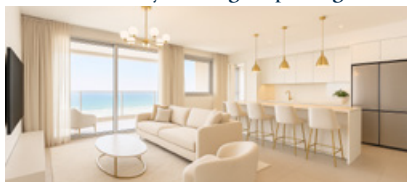
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TRIALS IN THE PROMISED LAND

When Avraham arrives, he discovers that the Promised Land is anything but a fairy-tale paradise. A severe famine grips the Land, forcing him to flee to Egypt in search of sustenance. The Land of Hashem, assumed to be a fertile wellspring of blessing for all nations, seems barren and unyielding. Avraham must leave

the sacred soil of Israel to sustain his family in a foreign empire.

Beyond the famine, Avraham faces a more personal and painful crisis. He had envisioned a radiant future—countless children who would help him spread his revolutionary vision of faith. Yet upon entering the Land, he is quickly drawn into conflict with his nephew Lot. The rift ends with Lot's departure, severing Avraham's only remaining familial bond. Childless and alone, he watches his future and his legacy drift into uncertainty.

Avraham entered the Land of Hashem with soaring hope, but his early experiences shattered any illusion of ease. He faced famine, family strife, and haunting uncertainty about his future. The promised Land, though sacred, would demand struggle before it would yield blessing.

Amid all these trials, Avraham confronts a more subtle challenge, one no less bewildering. A regional war erupts between four kings and five, and for twenty-five years the Land of Israel is convulsed by widespread conflict. The turmoil touches him directly when his nephew Lot is taken captive, compelling him to rally his followers. He wages battle to rescue his wayward relative.

LOYALTY AND PEACEMAKING

On the surface, this episode reveals the depth of Avraham's character. Lot had left abruptly, unwilling to resolve their dispute, and had chosen to dwell among the sinful cities of Sedom and Amorah. Yet Avraham bears no resentment, no thirst for vindication. When his nephew is in danger, he responds not



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with judgment but with devotion. Avraham's willingness to endanger himself for a wayward relative testifies to his loyalty and compassion.

Additionally, this story marks the beginning of Avraham's influence upon his surroundings. By entering the war and triumphing over the powerful alliance of the four kings, he brings an end to the prolonged conflict that had ravaged the region. For a quarter century, the Land of Israel had been drenched in blood and torn by violence. Avraham's victory restores peace and stability to a land weary of war. In doing so, he takes the first step in fulfilling his divine mission—to become a source of blessing for humanity.

MAPPING THE CONFLICT

Yet the story of this world war cannot be about loyalty or peacemaking alone. The Torah includes far too many details for that to be its sole purpose. It lists the names of the four kings and the five kings twice, carefully noting the empires each ruled. The Torah also identifies several battlefields, such as the Valley of Siddim, and mentions the mud pits that trapped the fleeing armies of Sodom.

Beyond the central conflict, the Torah recounts secondary campaigns waged by Kedarlaomer and his allies: their defeat of the Refa'im in Ashterot Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Eimim in Shaveh Kiryatayim, and the Chori in the hills of Seir, bordering the wilderness of Paran. The narrative even describes how they ravaged the fields of Amalek and struck the Emori in Chatatzon Tamar.

Why does the Torah linger on these battles and far-flung campaigns—wars that barely touch Avraham and his family? Why detail every battlefield, every defeated people, every peripheral conflict? By naming the warring powers twice, describing the geography, and chronicling each battle, the Torah conveys a deeper message.

PROPHECY, POLITICS, AND WAR

The Land of Israel—the Land of Hashem—is the Land of divine prophecy. It is a supernatural Land, promised to Avraham through the eternal word of Hashem. Such a sacred Land naturally comes with trials and challenges. Even Avraham Avinu cannot claim it easily; he must endure famine and domestic tension before establishing his place within it.

Yet Avraham assumes that life in the Land, though difficult, will remain untouched by the shifting forces of politics and history. After all, this is the Land promised directly by Hashem—a land beyond time, beyond geography. Beyond the reach of human struggle, it remains sacred.

But the Land he discovers is far from untouched. Powerful empires clash over the soil Hashem promised him. Great kings wage war and impose their will upon this sacred ground. The destiny of the Land seems shaped not by divine promise but by the ruthless currents of geopolitics. While these wars rage and the lands change hands, Avraham himself remains a guest, dwelling among his three allies—Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre—without ownership or control.

Amid these turbulent political crosswinds, it was natural to wonder how divine prophecy could possibly unfold. Could this truly be the Land of Hashem, molded by destiny and divine intent? The fate of Israel appeared to hinge upon the designs of powerful human forces rather than the subtle guidance of divine will.

THE ENCOUNTER AT SHALEM

Furthermore, the encounter with Malki Tzedek—a priest-king—could have deepened

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Avraham's confusion. He journeyed to a sacred city—destined to become Yerushalayim—where a community devoted to moral refinement had already taken root in a place called Shalem, a name that evokes wholeness and perfection.

It is one thing to face pagan idolaters and barbaric tribes, whose eventual replacement by a moral, monotheistic nation seems assured. It is quite another to encounter a righteous man already exerting spiritual leadership in the very Land Avraham was meant to transform.

Now the Land he had been promised appeared dominated by immense forces beyond his control. Mighty kings ruled the territories, and centers of religion had long been established. The sacred promise seemed enmeshed in human politics—could it ever be fulfilled?

Surviving famine or navigating domestic strife is one kind of test; sustaining faith in a prophetic vision amid vast political powers and the relentless march of history is quite another. Avraham's struggle was not merely physical or familial—it was spiritual: to hold fast to divine promise amid the clamor of human chaos.

To ease these doubts, Hashem, in the Brit Bein HaBetarim, reassured Avraham that this Land—though enmeshed in the struggles of men—would one day belong to his children. To underscore this, Hashem enumerates the ten peoples inhabiting the Land and details

the territories Avraham's descendants would one day inherit. Earlier promises spoke of “this Land” in general terms; now He specifies the current occupants, emphasizing that even amid entrenched human forces, the divine promise would endure. Avraham learned that the workings of human politics can conceal the guiding hand of Hashem. He was shown to look beyond immediate conflicts and perceive Hashem's sovereign authorship at work.

WOVEN THROUGH HISTORY

Like Avraham's journey, the story of our return to Israel has been shaped by powerful political forces. Our settlement and the founding of the State faced relentless opposition. Even when support was offered, it often seemed dictated more by history and geopolitics than by divine providence.

British support for the state of Israel in the post-WWI world, for instance, was shaped by competing interests with France, which held mandates over Syria and Lebanon. By backing a Jewish homeland, Britain could create a friendly population in Palestine and counterbalance French influence.

Similarly, American support for Israel at the end of the 20th century reflected Cold War calculations. As the USSR increasingly aligned with our Arab adversaries, the United States saw strong support for the nascent Jewish state as a way to counter growing Soviet influence in the Middle East.

In this way, the formation of the State of Israel, while miraculous, was deeply entangled with political and strategic currents.

More recently, we have witnessed the return



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of our hostages in efforts to end the current war in Gaza. This ceasefire arrangement emerged from a convergence of interests among several power brokers in the Middle East. Turkey sought access to American arms sales; Saudi Arabia pursued security guarantees; and Egypt aimed to secure continued financial assistance from the United States.

As in the days of Avraham, our challenge is to perceive the hand of Hashem behind the screen of politics. The return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel is not merely a historical event—it is the unfolding of redemption.

Hashem guides this process subtly, through the mechanisms of history and the intricate calculus of world affairs. What appears to be the product of political negotiation or strategic alignment is, in truth, the hidden choreography of divine providence. Behind headlines and beneath diplomacy, Hashem continues to steer

our destiny toward redemption. Behind every clash and calculation, beneath every layer of politics and power, the divine plan unfolds with silent certainty. ■



OU Press is honored to partner with Rabbi Moshe Taragin on his new volume in Hebrew regarding the recent war ('Emunah B'toch Hahastara). This remarkable book is also available in English, **"Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below"**

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SUNDAY, NOV. 9, 7:30 PM

Bet Knesset HaNasi, 24 Ussishkin Street, Rechavia



♦ Remarks & Personal Reflections **Rabbi Sam Shor**



♦ Shiur: "Reciting Tal Umatar for Travelers Between Israel and the Diaspora - From 7 Cheshvan to Dec. 4" **Rabbi Aschi Dick**

Refreshments will be served

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THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING

**SUNDAY
NOV 2**

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)

Rabbi Tzvi Maurer

7 Hartum Street, 2nd Floor

(Resumes Nov. 16)



*The schedule is subject to change

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**MONDAY
NOV 3**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men) - Semichat

Chaver Program Rav Elyada

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OU Israel | Women's Division
2 Radak St., Rechavia

6:00-10:00PM

ATID Midrasha

(women in their 20's)

7:00-9:00PM

Dorot Choir Session with

Hadassah Jacob

8:00-9:30PM

NextGen Shabbat Project

Event

**TUESDAY
NOV 4**

OU Israel is supported by the Jewish
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COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

Pshat in the Parsha
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters and
Introductions
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unpacking the Messages
of Chazal
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries
Parsha Shiur
Mrs. Shira Smiles

10:15AM

Living with
Emunah
Mrs. Raquel
Kirszenbaum



MODIIN-THE BAIS

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

10:00AM -2:00PM

Weekly Kollel Boker-Instructors include
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Rabbi Ian Shaffer
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Rabbi Avi Herzog

1:00PM- NEW!!!

Modiin Lunch and Learn with **Rabbi Aschi Dick** - Masamerica Offices,
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This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY
NOV 5**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Understanding the Akeidah
Rabbi Joel Kenigsberg
(Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler will
resume Nov. 12)

10:20 AM

Contemporary Issues in Halacha
and Hashkafa
Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A study of Rav Kook's sefer
'Midot HaRaya'
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:30PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Development
Dr. Deborah Polster

**THURSDAY
NOV 6**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

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

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua **Rabbi Baruch
Taub**

11:20AM

Trailblazing the Text of TaNach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 PM

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies. (the Bais)
Rabbi Aschi Dick @ Bet Knesset
Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St.

8:30 PM

The Bais- Men's Chabura
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Hashiveinu
Rabbi Noam Kenigsberg
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- ♦ 1st class: Sun. Nov. 16

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- ♦ Tues. 8:30 - 10:30 pm
- ♦ Rabbi Elie Levi
- ♦ 1st class: Tues. Nov. 18

MODI'IN

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- ♦ 1st class: Tues. Nov. 11

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RABBI GOLDSCHIEDER'S WED. SHIUR

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לעילוי מרים בת אברהם ע"ה ושם טוב בן שלמה ז"ל

RABBI TAUB'S WEEKLY THUR.

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Broken Swords and Unbroken Faith

YESHAYAHU 40:27-41:16

Our haftarah describes a moment of global unease. The nations look out at the world and sense that something is shifting — that Hashem is emerging in history in a way that threatens their control. In response, they rally together: אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ יַעֲזֹרוּ וְלֹא־חָזְקוּ יָאִמְרוּ חֲזָק; וַיִּחְזַק חָרָשׁ אֶת־צֶרֶף, *Each man helps his fellow, saying to his fellow, "Take courage"...The craftsman strengthens the smith.* The Malbim explains that this is not a scene of idol-making, but of frantic weapon-making. When the nations feel Hashem's presence drawing nearer, they rush to prepare for battle. They craft swords and spears with such urgency that even broken weapons patched together with nails are considered "good enough." Their confidence is shaky, yet their fear pushes them into action.

Here the Malbim offers a powerful insight: when light rises, resistance rises with it. The

noise of the nations, their hurried alliances and makeshift weapons, do not signal Hashem's absence — they signal His approach. The very existence of opposition becomes proof that history is bending toward redemption. The uproar is the shadow cast by advancing light.

This perspective reshapes how we view the uncertainties of today. When hostility toward Israel intensifies, when pressure mounts from every direction, when we feel surrounded by those who would undermine Jewish destiny, it is tempting to think that darkness is gaining strength. The Malbim teaches us to see the opposite: the pushback itself is a sign that God's hand is moving events forward.

Our response, then, is not fear, but resolve. The nations reinforce broken swords with nails; we reinforce unwavering faith by strengthening one another. Their battle is fought out of desperation; ours is grounded in purpose and promise. Hashem declares, "I am the first, and I am the last" — the One who began this story and the One who will bring it to its fulfillment.

May we find courage in moments that feel unstable, confidence in moments that feel uncertain, and the wisdom to recognize that the clamor around us is not the collapse of hope, but its confirmation. Even as the world arms itself with fear, we anchor ourselves in the certainty that Hashem is guiding history toward its ultimate redemption. ■



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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Parshat Lech Lecha begins with the instruction to Avram to leave behind all that is familiar to him and go to the Land that Hashem will show him. The expression *Lech Lecha- You shall go, you-* seems at first glance to be redundant.

Rashi, in a well known comment explains this seeming redundancy- *lech lecha- you shall go for yourself- lehanatcha u'letovatcha* -for your own satisfaction and good. It is there that you will become a great nation, here you will not merit to have children, and only there will your true nature become revealed in the world.

In explaining Rashi's words, the **Tiferet Shlomo, the Rebbe of Radomsk zy'a** posits: Seemingly Avraham already had wealth and material success, so what exactly is Rashi pointing out for us? What does it mean that he must leave behind all that is familiar to him in order to go to the Land, which will ultimately be for his own benefit and good?

The Rebbe explains that even beyond having his own biological children which he will merit only upon entering *Eretz Yisrael*, Avraham Avinu's nature and essence is to do *chesed*, to

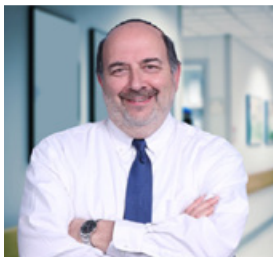
show compassion and consideration for others. In his own birthplace, surrounded by the culture of *avoda zara*, his ability to spread his legacy of kindness and love, would be limited by the push back of the idolatrous ways of those around him. However, upon entering the Land of Israel, his legacy of kindness, and ability to connect with and transform others would begin to blossom and spread.

Similarly, the **Lubavitcher Rebbe zy'a, lecha** means "to yourself." Avraham was setting out on a path of self-discovery. The purpose of his journey to *Eretz Yisrael*, was intended to enable him to understand his own identity and express his positive qualities in his surrounding environment.

Our *Chazal* taught us, "*Maaseh Avot, Siman L'Banim- the deeds of our forefathers are a sign for their children.*" Avraham was a singular individual, who sought to share the belief in Hashem with the entire world.

Similarly, each one of us plays our own individual role in improving the world. **The Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh zy'a** taught that Hashem loves every Jew with the love parents lavish on an only child born to them in their old age. Just as He nurtured Avraham on a journey to his true self, so, too, with loving patience, Hashem enables each of us to travel our own unique journey to achieve our divinely ordained life's mission and trajectory. May each of us merit to appreciate the opportunities that our individual journeys present to achieve, and to play our individual part in bringing harmony and spiritual clarity to the entire world. ■

Arthur Samuels, DPM



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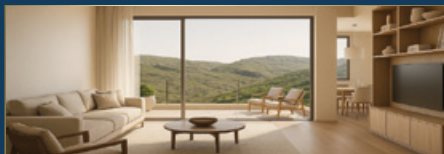
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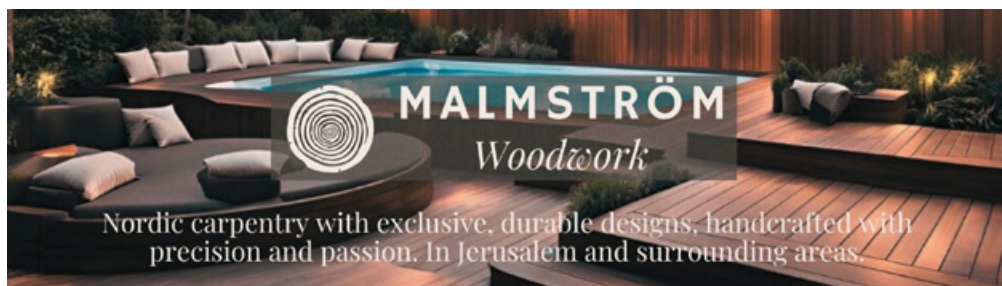
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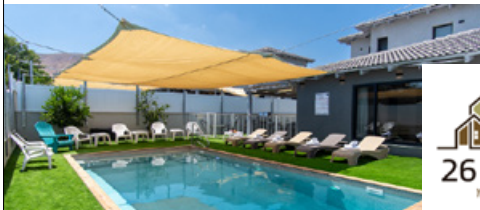
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Ahavat Yisrael: Heartfelt Love For Your Fellow Jew

(Midot Hara'aya, Ahava # 9)

LOVING YOUR FELLOW JEW

A well-known story is told about the founder of the Mussar Movement, Rav Yisrael Salanter when he was invited to be a guest at his disciple's table for the Friday night *seudah*. The student promised his master that everything will be carried out with the greatest level of exactitude to fulfill all the halachic requirements. Rav Yisrael made one strange condition with his dear disciple. He asked to lead the procedures of the meal. He agreed and Rav Yisrael joined his family for Shabbat *seudah*.

However, something seemed somewhat strange from the very outset. Rav Yisrael requested to immediately make Kiddush and skip over all of the Shabbat liturgy that preceded it. They then washed their hands and immediately ate. Rav Yisrael appeared to eat relatively quickly and immediately requested the second course and then dessert. Understandably, the student was surprised - is this the way the Shabbat meal is supposed to be?

Rav Yisrael then asked to have the housekeeper come to the table. He asked forgiveness for causing any inconvenience by rushing the meal. She responded by thanking the Rabbi and said that she wished it could be like that every Shabbat. She explained that she was a widow and desperately needed a livelihood,

and therefore needed to work over Shabbat. "On most Friday nights," she said, "I come home to my children and it is so late that they have already gone to bed and we are unable to be together on the night of Shabbat. But tonight, finishing early, I will be able to eat with my children."

When the housekeeper left Rav Yisrael turned to his student and said, "Now you understand why I hurried the meal. The greatest beautification of a mitzvah is when a person beautifies the mitzvot *bein adam le'chavero*. How careful must an individual be not to burden his friend." ("From the Desk of Mordechai Malka," Office of Rabbinate of Elad, Parshat Vayeira)

A FOCUS OF THE MUSSAR MOVEMENT

When Rav Kook eulogized Rav Yisrael Salanter, he made mention that one of the unique contributions that Rav Yisrael made in his teachings was reminding the Jewish world that acts of kindness and sensitivity to others require as much attention, and perhaps more, than one's exactness in mitzvot *bein adam le'Makom* (between man and God). (Mussar Avicha, translation Rabbi Joshua Gerstein, p. 207).

Rav Kook followed in Rav Yisrael Salanter's footsteps, placing enormous emphasis on the area of *bein adam le'chavero* (between a person

and his friend). Even when interacting with a fellow Jew who may be corrupt and sinful, Rav Kook advises that one perceive the potential and see the sanctity embedded within each person:

“It is proper to hate a corrupt person only for his defects, but insofar as he is endowed with a divine image, it is in order to love him. We must realize that the precious dimension of his worth is a more authentic expression of his nature than the lower characteristic that developed in him through circumstance. It is for this reason that the Talmud (*Pesachim* 49b) limits the permission to attack an *am ha-haretz* [a coarse person] to his back, like a fish, but not toward his “front.” (*Midot HaRa’aya* Ahava #9).

Rav Kook argued that the goodness in a person is the true reflection of their essence. A pure soul is embedded in every Jew that needs only to be revealed and refined. In this vein, he quoted a cryptic statement about the correct way to criticize a coarse individual - like cutting open a fish. The back of a person is symbolic of an exterior shell and the front symbolizes the *panim* (face) or *pe’nim* (insides). Attempting to extricate a person’s unseemly traits and actions has its place, but only when one is cognizant of the shining “face” and inner soul which is found in every Jew.

The above talmudic teaching comes to life in a beautiful episode involving one of Rav Kook’s foremost disciples, Rav Aryeh Levin. Rav Aryeh was famously known as the *tzadik* of Yerushalyim. He lived in the quaint area of Nachlaot, right behind the busy market of *Machane Yehudah*. There was a young man who grew up in the neighborhood whom Rav Aryeh knew well, but he felt that the young man was avoiding him, and he didn’t know why.

One day, they bumped into each other in the narrow alleys of Nachlaot, and Rav Aryeh confronted him and said, “I can’t help but feel

that you are avoiding me, tell me how you are?”

The young man sheepishly replied that it was true, he was avoiding the great Rabbi as he had grown up observant but had now chosen to walk away from observant life altogether. He said, “Rebbe, I was so embarrassed to meet you since I have taken off my kippah and am no longer observant.”

Rav Aryeh took the young man’s hand into his own and said, “My dear Moshe. Don’t worry. You know that I am a very short man. I can only see what is in your heart, I cannot see what is on your head.”

Reb Aryeh was teaching that we love others more when we choose to see their Godly soul and highlight their virtues over their faults.

BRURIAH’S LESSON TO RAV MEIR

A well-known talmudic passage tells the story of the revered sage Rabbi Meir who had violent neighbors who caused him tremendous anguish. He was at his wits end from the torment, so he prayed to God that they should die. (*Berachot* 10a)

His wife, Bruriah, a learned woman quoted numerous times in the Talmud, overheard his prayers and interjected. “Is the basis of your prayers the verse in Psalms where King David says, ‘Sinners will be destroyed from the earth and the wicked will be no more’?” (*Psalms* 104:35) she asked him. She suggested that the verse does not need to be read to say *sinner*s will be destroyed, but the *sins*. Rather than praying for the people who sinned to be destroyed, pray to God that their *wickedness* should disappear.

Rabbi Meir heard his wife’s wise words and took heed, praying that the neighbors’ evil ways should stop. God heard his prayers, and his formerly violent neighbors repented.

Rav Kook’s teaching above (*Midot Hara’aya* #9) echoes this lesson of Bruriah. The

distinction between Rabbi Meir's original prayer and his subsequent one is profound. It separates the person, who is -in essence - good, from the temporary evil that he or she may be engaging in at the moment.

Rav Kook's world-view was influenced by the thought of Chabad and the Baal HaTanya. It is not difficult to trace this idea back to a passage in the Tanya (Chapter 32) which teaches that one is required to love sinners, even while hating the evil that is in them: "And both the love and the hatred are truthful emotions in this case, [since] the hatred is on account of the evil within them, while the love is on account of the good hidden within them, which is the Divine spark within them that animates their Divine soul. For this spark of Godliness is present even in the most wicked of one's fellow Jews; it is merely hidden" (*Tanya* Chapter 32)

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

How does one sensitize themselves to be compassionate and loving of others? Rav Kook suggested that we learn a lesson from the Sages who modeled how to argue in a way in which one side does not attack the other. The Talmud employs a unique term to describe the Sages debating in the study hall: *ba'alei trisin*, which literally translates as "masters of shields." Rav Kook explained that the Sages were careful to shield or to defend their position without diminishing the other side. Our tradition which teaches that there are seventy facets to the Torah (*Bamidbar Rabbah*, 13:16) emphasizes that there must be an openness to appreciating the worthiness of every side of the argument. (Ain Aya, Berachot Vol. 1, p. 111)

A LESSON FROM HIS REBBE

As a young man Rav Kook studied at the

Volozhin Yeshiva. He was a devoted and dear student of the Netziv, Rav Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin. In the context of learning to appreciate the opinions of others, the Netziv, in his classic work on the Torah, *Ha'amek Davar*, offers a brilliant comment in regard to the episode of Sarah urging Avraham to expel Yishmael from the home. Avraham is troubled by this and God



The Netziv of Volozhin

speaks to Avraham saying that he abides by the decision of his wife. The verse says *She'ma be'kola*, listen to her voice (Bereshit 21:12). The Netziv, commenting on that verse, points out that it does not say in the verse *le'kola*, to her voice, but rather, *be'kola*, **into** her voice. The Netziv explains that God did not merely desire Avraham to surrender to her

position. Rather, God was asking Avraham to delve deeper into her perspective on the matter, endeavor to appreciate her side of the argument, and only then concede to her position. (*Haamek Davar*, Bereshit 21:12)

The Netziv is emphasizing the importance of elucidating an opposing position, especially when their stance is for the sake of the good. It is of utmost importance that a relationship of deep respect is maintained even in the midst of a disagreement. ■



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

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Kohen Who Has Trouble Standing

Question: I, an elderly *kohen* with weak legs and poor balance, walk with a cane. I walk up to *duchen* with a cane, stand near a wall, and lean during *Birkat Kohanim* (=BK). Is that valid? Can you suggest a good plan of action?

Answer: Asking your question takes bravery, as we understand that the prospect of not being able to *duchen* would be a great disappointment.

We will start with the strict requirements. *BK* must be done standing (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 128:14). The *gemara* (Sota 38a) learns this from the Torah's connecting of the *kohen's beracha* to his service in the *Mikdash*, which must be done standing. Because standing

is a full requirement, if one leans on something during *BK*, it is invalid (Mishna Berura 128:51). However, one may lean a little, as long as removing the thing he is leaning on would not make him fall (see Zevachim 24a; Mishna Berura 94:22). It is also absolutely required for *kohanim* to lift their hands in the subscribed manner for *BK* (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*; Sota 38a). This makes balance more difficult. You thus must figure out if you can use the wall for balance/security and "pass this test."

Realize that there are legitimate corners to cut to help you qualify. The Mishna Berura (128:52) accepts the Ktav Sofer's (OC 13) idea that the *kohen* needs to lift his hands only when he pronounces each individual word; he can rest in between. The same thing should be true regarding standing – one may lean as he likes in between pronouncing the words (Even Yisrael VII:10; Dirshu 128:70).

Let us rule out another question. A *kohen* may not *duchen* with blemishes on visible parts of the body because they distract the congregation's attention (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.* 30). Arguably, people could view your cane as distracting. However, this is not a problem. First, this is a questionable assumption. Second, if people are used to a distraction, e.g., the situation has existed for 30 days, it is no longer distracting (*ibid.*). Furthermore, since the cane is not in your hand during *BK*, it is not a halachic issue.

We did not find discussion on the presumably most physically difficult part of the process – turning around during the *beracha*, which *kohanim* do with the hands already

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up. We will share two good solutions for this challenge, after discussing the practice of turning around. The most important parts of *davening* are done facing the *aron kodesh*, and it is improper, without a good reason, to stand with one's back to it. However, Halacha made *BK*, at which the *kohanim* address the congregation, an exception (see Sota 40a). However, the *kohanim* turn to the congregation only when they need to, right before *BK*. The matter of timing of turning around and raising the hands is not intrinsic to *BK*, unlike the above matters. In fact, there is a *machloket* whether to turn around before the *beracha* (... *asher kid'shanu ... levarech* ...) or after it, and the present *minhag* is to turn in the middle of the *beracha* (see Aruch Hashulchan, OC 128:20). There is also a *machloket* whether to lift the hands before or after the *beracha* (see opinions in Va'ani Avarchem 19:2).

Given the fact that these questions of timing are just a matter of *minhag*, in your situation you can do what is physically best for you (you do not need to worry that other *kohanim* will resent your acting differently). Specifically,

you can turn with everyone else, but holding your cane, and not raise your hands until you finish turning around and making the *beracha*. You can also turn, with the cane and at more leisure, before the *beracha*, and then put down the cane and raise your hands sometime before the *BK* itself.

In summary, you can appraise whether you can stand well enough at the critical times and figure out how to use legitimate corner cutters. You must make sure you are not endangering yourself concerning a dangerous fall. The wall may be a good solution, but something like a heavy *shtender* **in front of you** may be more effective and safer. Do not be embarrassed to ask for help to set things up best. Your lifetime of past and future *berachot* gives you rights! ■

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This changed radically in the middle and latter half of the 20th century, and was due to a number of individuals who established yeshivot and religious schools. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein had a huge influence over Torah learning and religious life that is still felt today. But before Reb Moshe, Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin was the outstanding voice and authority of Orthodox Judaism.

Reb Moshe and Rabbi Henkin had great mutual respect, despite their disagreeing on a number of crucial halachic points. The former did not accept any marriage as valid except for Orthodox ones, the latter felt that Reform marriages had a halachic significance and if the couple were to separate they would need a form of Get, a religious divorce.

Rabbi Henkin permitted the construction of

an Eruv in Manhattan, whereas Rabbi Feinstein opposed this. Rabbi Henkin did not permit making kiddush before blowing the Shofar, but Reb Moshe was more lenient.

Between these two Torah giants, and several others, Torah was established in America, until the point that Rabbi Sacks writes, in one of his earlier books, that his pilgrimage as a student to discover Torah took him to America. There he met with Rabbi Soloveitchik and the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rabbi Sacks notes that were he to take the same journey today he would have come to Israel which has clearly become the center of the Torah world.

Rabbi Henkin's most famous grandson was Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin who came on Aliyah together with his wife, Chana. They chose to settle in Beit Shean where Rabbi Henkin was the rabbi of the entire region.

Rabbi Henkin published several volumes of his responsa, aptly named Bnei Banim, grandchildren, in deference to his illustrious grandfather. A few years after the tragic murder of their son and daughter in law by terrorists, Rabbi Henkin died at a relatively young age.

Recently, Rabbanit Chana Henkin, the founder and visionary for Nishmat college for women's study, has been translating Bnei Banim to English. I was honored to have been sent one of the teshuvot and would like to discuss it in the next few weeks. ■

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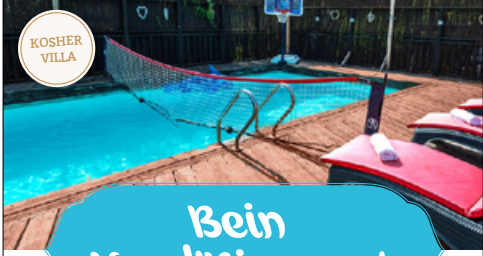
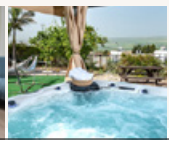
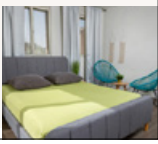
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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

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Lech Lecha: Be Brave and Go Forth

For a while now, my heart has opened every time I read these words at the end of the Amidah:

יְהוָה לְרִצּוֹן אֲמַרְיָי וְהִגִּיּוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ ה' צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

May the words of my mouth and the wondering of my heart be according to Your Will and facing You, Hashem. You are my Strength and my Redeemer.

It is a meditation, a tefillah, that helps me redirect my questioning heart and wandering mind. Like a “re-center” button on Waze. I say this passuk, and I feel myself realigning with the goal of striving for closeness to my Creator.

Avraham Avinu paved this path of *hish-tokekus*, of yearning for Hashem, for us. He lived his whole life with this intention. And through him we are enabled to live this way as well.

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The lives of the Avot and Imahot are doorways for us. Through learning about their journeys and challenges, we can tap into the koach they passed down to us and actualize our own personal growth.

The Chiddushei HaRim tells us that for a long time Hashem was actually saying “Lech Lecha” to everyone. But only Avraham Avinu, who worked on himself continuously, refining his life and opening his heart, was eventually able to receive the message, thereby stepping up to become the paradigm of what it means to live a meaningful life.

And Hashem gave Avraham a hefty challenge. But it’s what enabled his greatness to truly be realized.

לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלֶדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה:

Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.

Physically, Avraham had to leave the place where he grew up and the way he was used to doing things. But Chassidus teaches that “Lech lecha,” means go for yourself. To yourself. On a spiritual and psychological level this journey would be one of even deeper personal growth and refinement.

And it’s meant for all of us.

The Noam Elimelech tells us that lech lecha is a call to come out of our comfort zones. To continuously examine our habits and leave behind those that are unhealthy or no longer serving our mission. And to recognize that while it is in our nature to put up defense mechanisms that get in the way of relationship, we can also

find the koach to heal them.

Lech lecha means making a full mental shift. Living with our hearts facing Hashem and continuously redirecting as new challenges arise. And they do.

In the Avraham story, Hashem doesn't reveal the destination. Instead He puts Avraham Avinu in a situation that demands moving forward with constant faith and trust. And Avraham agrees. Through being in a continuous place of "not knowing," Avraham Avinu passed on to us the power to keep our own hearts open to possibility. We too can live in emunah.

In truth, that is our everyday reality anyway. None of us knows what tomorrow will bring. Thinking about that could frighten us. Except it is in our spiritual DNA, passed down from Avraham Avinu himself, to have the strength to keep moving forward in the "not knowing."

And it is the greatest journey in the world. The journey of our lives.

Hashem told Avraham. And He is telling each one of us:

אֵלֹהִים

I will show you.

I will be with you, and I will hold you on this journey each and every day. Just turn your heart to Me and keep going forth- to become yourself. ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.

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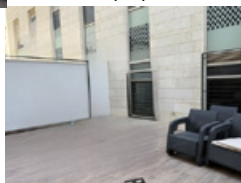
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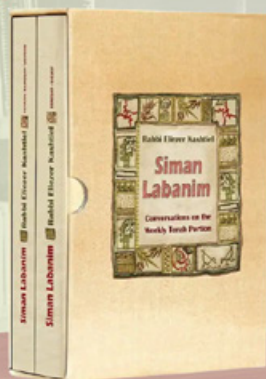
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MRS. LEAH FEINBERG

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Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

בס"ד

Faithfulness in the Face of Adversity

Although we conclude our study of Megillat Esther and continue with Sefer Daniel, the latter actually preceded the former in chronological sequence. Daniel was exiled along with the Judean elite under King Yehoyakim, prior to the destruction of the First Temple, while the story of Esther takes place at the dawn of the Second Temple Era, some seventy years after the destruction. Could Daniel have lived to witness the miracle of Purim?

Hazal certainly think so. According to the gemara, we find hints of Daniel's presence in two different incidents in the Megillah. In the first chapter of Megillat Esther, when Achashverosh assembles his seven advisors to determine Vashti's fate, the seventh among them is Memuchan, who advised that Vashti be eliminated and a decree issued throughout the empire that wives must obey their husbands. The Targum Sheini interpolates that Memuchan was Daniel, to whom it had been revealed by Heaven that Vashti was to be put to death. The Targum goes on to explain that Daniel had been given an aristocratic Persian woman as a wife (whom he had presumably converted), and she refused to converse with him in Hebrew. We will see throughout Sefer Daniel how firmly committed he remained under all circumstances

to maintaining his identity. His wife's refusal to make Hebrew the language spoken in his home was undoubtedly a constant source of grief to him, and Daniel seized the opportunity to rectify the situation while fulfilling the prophecy that had been revealed to him.

The gemara (Megillah 15a) places Daniel in a later episode. When in response to Haman's evil decree Mordechai appeared at the palace gate dressed in sackcloth and ashes, Esther sent her servant Hatach (התך) to Mordechai demanding to know what had prompted his behavior. Rav identifies Hatach as Daniel, who had been cut down (חתכוהו) by Achashverosh from the position of greatness he had held under previous emperors. Shmuel concurs with Rav's identification, but offers a conflicting reason: Daniel was called Hatach because all matters of the kingdom were decided (נחתין) by him. This approach is echoed in the Targum to the Megillah, in which the verse is translated as: "And Esther summoned Daniel, called Hatach for all royal decrees were articulated by him, and sent him to Mordechai."

After Hatach faithfully relayed the initial messages back and forth between Esther and Mordechai, the language of the text changes abruptly, and Hatach seems to disappear. "And *they* told Mordechai" of Esther's reluctance to appear before the king without having been summoned. The Targum interpolates that Haman noticed Hatach/Daniel coming and going before Esther; he became enraged by his easy access to the queen and slew him. The angels Michael and Gavriel were then summoned and completed the mission. The gemara offers

a different explanation, suggesting that Daniel refused to relay Esther's hesitation to Mordechai so as not to be the bearer of bad tidings.

The medieval Spanish commentator Avraham Ibn Ezra posits that this identification is implausible. In his opinion, Daniel would have been at least fifteen years old when exiled to Bavel, since he is described as having knowledge of all disciplines. By Ibn Ezra's calculation, Daniel would have been around 120 years old at the time of the Purim story, making his presence a highly unlikely scenario. Rather, Ibn Ezra suggests that Hazal intended to draw a comparison between Hatach and Daniel, implying that Hatach was as faithful as Daniel, who was incomparably righteous in his generation.

Hazal offer one more suggestion as to Daniel's concealed identity in a later generation. In the first chapter of Sefer Ezra, King Cyrus entrusted the plundered treasures of the First Temple to Sheshbazzar (ששכבצר), a prince of Yehudah who was returning to Eretz Yisrael to rebuild the Temple. Rashi, citing a midrashic teaching, explains that Sheshbazzar was in fact Daniel, called by this name to indicate that he had survived six challenges (שש צרות). This would place Daniel in Eretz Yisrael during the period between Sefer Daniel and Megillat Esther, and would require that we assume he later returned to Persia to be of service to the Jewish community in exile when the building of the Temple was blocked by Achashverosh, as Ralbag suggests is true of Mordechai, who is also listed among the returnees to Israel. It should be noted that as observed by Ibn Ezra, Daniel would have been of advanced age in this era and it is significant that the midrash identifies him as still serving in a leadership capacity, respected both by the secular political powers and the Jewish community.

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characteristic of Daniel is his absolute loyalty to the Jewish faith, determined to act as Hashem expects of him without regard for personal consequences. It is perhaps most striking that in the role of Hatach, he navigates between Mordechai and Esther and their conflicting approaches as to how to handle Haman's decree, with Mordechai advocating for absolute reliance on Hashem's power to intercede miraculously and Esther preferring patience and diplomacy. Having braved the lion's den rather than cease praying to Hashem, his refusal to relay Esther's hesitation may have stemmed from his own feeling that such an approach was inadmissible. Ultimately, Daniel, Esther and Mordechai all serve as outstanding exemplars of commitment to Torah and to the Jewish nation in the face of the challenges of exile. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, currently in its third cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.



Seeing Beyond the Picture: Representing True Beauty in Shidduchim When a Camera Can't Capture a Neshama

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Hadas asks: I have a friend who is truly one of the best people in the world, kind, good-hearted, and genuine. But she's not very photogenic, and even when she agrees to take pictures, they don't do her justice. I feel like this makes it harder for me to find matches for her, because her inner beauty and warmth don't shine through in photos. How can I best support her?

Aleeza answers: You're right, pictures carry a lot of weight in the dating world, sometimes more than they should. But we both know that photos never tell the whole story. A camera can't capture a neshama. And sometimes the most radiant people in real life simply don't translate well in a photo. While true beauty is not skin deep, if you can't

get a yes and get her on a date she doesn't have a shot at a real connection. The Torah teaches us that "Sheker ha'chein v'hevel hayofi, grace is false and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who has awe of Hashem, she shall be praised." Of course attraction matters, and especially before two people meet it seems to matter most.

So how do you help your friend? First, a great photographer with a keen eye can take better than average photos. Sometimes a different angle makes all the difference. For example, I've learned my right side is the photogenic side and the left...well I avoid that whenever possible. Taking a photo when she's relaxed and simply happy is great but hard to capture. So maybe bring a friend to make her laugh or smile genuinely. And take a photo in one of her favorite places. That will make all the difference. True smiles happen when people are in their happy place.

Sometimes even a short video clip, where her warmth and voice come through, conveys more than a still image.

You can also advocate for her by sharing a few words alongside her picture: "Her photo doesn't capture how warm and funny she is," or "You'll see her real sparkle when you meet her." That little framing helps people look past the photo and be curious. And finally, keep reminding yourself and her

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that Hashem is the true Shadchan. The right person for her will not pass her by because of one less-than-perfect picture. The person meant for her will be drawn to her whole self, including her image. Just because others can't see past the photo doesn't mean her bashert will overlook her.

May Hashem bless you with the wisdom to represent her in the most authentic way.

Aleeza ■

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THE VAST LAND THAT CANNOT HOLD US BOTH

Just as quickly as Lot is introduced, Lot exits when Avraham asks him to leave after a strife between their herdsmen. Looking at the story, there seems to be a fixation on the land and its size. The story opens with “the land could not sustain them,” implying the land was small. This is further reinforced when the text points out that “the Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling in the land,” suggesting that the herdsmen’s strife was either connected to these nations or at least occurred in close enough proximity for them to hear about it. Again, the land is portrayed as small and heavily settled.

However, when Avraham tells Lot to leave, he says, “Is not the whole land before you?” — implying that the land was indeed large! The story concludes with Avraham dwelling in the land of Canaan while Lot settles in the “cities of the plain” near Sodom. Once again, the land appears vast, with enough space for two distinct regions.

The text uses the land to highlight a deeper issue in Avraham and Lot’s relationship. Lot begins as a dependent of Avraham — not just ideologically, but materially; Avraham provides him with a home and wealth. As Lot amasses his own wealth, he becomes independent of Avraham. It is this change in the relationship dynamic that causes the rift. It is irrelevant what

the herdsmen were actually arguing about; the main issue is that Lot now had his own herdsmen who no longer relied on Avraham.

The “land” at the beginning of the story is small and congested, symbolizing a relationship that has become stale and strained. Avraham is still the leader and provider, but Lot no longer sees himself as under his authority.

The failure to recognize the change in their dynamic made them both feel boxed into a land that “could not hold them both.” However, once Avraham realizes they need to relate differently, suddenly the land becomes vast and open. A new future opens before Avraham — one in which both can coexist, each in his own space.

Many times in life (and especially as teens), we see ourselves and our friends change we feel that relationships have become stale or toxic, but often it’s because we fail to acknowledge that we — or the other person — have changed. What we learn from Avraham and Lot is not to let ourselves be boxed in by “who we once were” or “who they used to be.” Instead, we should recognize that sometimes relationships need to evolve so both sides can grow — while still maintaining a connection with one another.



RIVKA TREISTER
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THE STRENGTH TO STEP FORWARD

In Parshat Lech Lecha, Hashem commands Avram to leave everything behind — his land, his birthplace, and his father’s house — and “go to the land that I will show you.” The pasuk says: לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וְיִמְּוֶלְדְּתָךְ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ

אל-הארץ אשר ארץך

At first glance, this seems like an act of blind trust. No path, no plan, no explanation — just “לך-לך”. But Rashi explains that this journey wasn’t only physical; it was for Avram’s benefit — for his personal growth. Sometimes the hardest steps in life are the ones that take us out of our comfort zones, but they’re usually the most important.

As teens, we face so many pivotal moments — social pressure, figuring out who we are, where we stand religiously, and what kind of people we want to be. The world today pushes us to fit in, but “לך-לך” reminds us that becoming who we truly are sometimes means walking a different path.

Avram becomes Avraham, the father of a nation, because he had the courage to go — even without knowing what lay ahead or where he was going. This teaches us that we don’t always need to have all the answers; if we’re moving toward growth and toward Hashem, that’s the direction that counts.

So the message of *Lech Lecha* for our generation is: Don’t be afraid to take that step. Your path might not look like everyone else’s — and that’s exactly the point. ■



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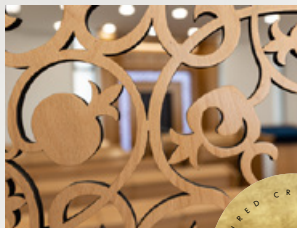
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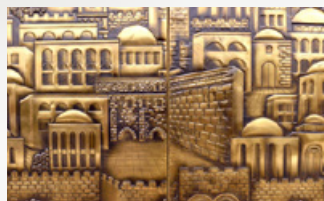
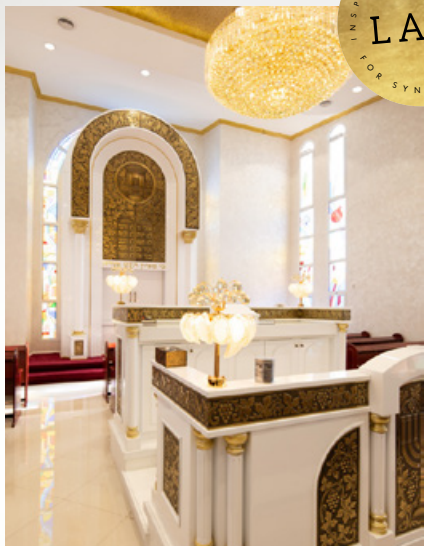


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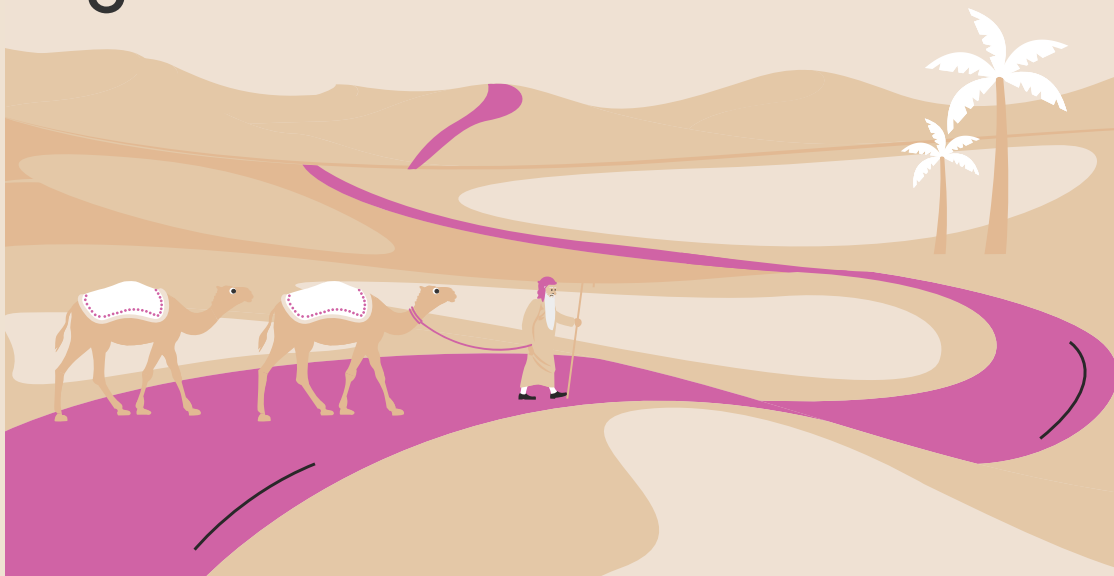
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