ב"ה

Torah TidbiTs

ISSUE 1681

OCTOBER 24TH 2026
י"ג מרחשון תשפ"ז

LECH LECHA - לך לך



Echoes of Rashi
Rabbi Moshe Taragin
Page 48

Our Personal Lech Lecha
Jen Airley
Page 66

ויעבר אברם בארץ בראשית י"ב:ו'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT LECH LECHA ZMANIM
CANDLES **5:22 PM** • HAVDALA **6:35 PM** • RABBEINU TAM **7:14 PM**

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Table of Contents

04 Dear Torah Tidbits Family
Rabbi Avi Berman

10 Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

16 The Heroism of Ordinary Life
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, zt"l

24 How is Brit Truly Defined?
Rabbi Shalom Rosner

30 Righteousness Revealed
Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

34 L'chaim!
Rabbi Judah Mischel

38 Simchat Shmuel
Rabbi Sam Shor

40 Schedule
OU Israel

48 Echoes of Rashi
Rabbi Moshe Taragin

52 What Does Help Look Like?
Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

54 Serving God Out of Love: Rav Kook on the Soul's Natural Longing for God (Avot 1:3)
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

60 Choosing Holiness
Mrs. Leah Feinberg

62 Haran: Unlocking the Secret DNA of Jewish History
Rabbi Elyada Goldwicht

64 Go Forth
Mrs. Michal Horowitz

66 Our Personal Lech Lecha
Jen Airley

68 Finding our "Why"
Rabbi & Rebbetzin Perlow

72 SHAGRIRIM BALEV
The Missing Ingredient: Connection
Aleeza Ben Shalom

74 The Y-Files Comic
Netanel Epstein

76 NCSY
Torah4Teens by Teens
Yafit Atlas // Avigayil Cohen

To read this weeks Divrei Torah by Rabbi Nachman Winkler, Rabbi Daniel Mann, Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb and Rabbi Chanoch Yeres please visit: TorahTidibits.org > Individual Articles

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: Sun Oct 25

This week Motzei Shabbat, Oct. 24th we move the clocks back 1 hour.



COVER PAGE Photographed by **Elliott Cahan**

My wife and I along with our three children made aliyah from Baltimore in 2004. There were a lot of factors that impacted our aliyah. There was 9/11 as well as a tremendous amount of crime where we lived. We were also blessed to have a Kollel Mitzion. We had a weekly shiur learning Eim Habanim Smeacha by Rav Teichtal. At some point, Rav Teichtel notes that a Jew says the words "V'Techazenu Eineinu L'shuvecha L'tzion" three times a day, which is a yearning to return to Zion, but yet, the Jew doesn't take action. This field is one of those magical places that you would never know about if you were just visiting Israel. We found out about this field on a local Facebook page about off the beaten path places to visit. It was after Pesach and I went with some friends who were visiting from Baltimore. What struck me is that you can simply be driving on a road and everything looks "normal" and then, around the corner is this field of red anemones as far as the eye can see. We were very lucky because just hours later the field was plowed over. Get out. Look around. You never know what you might see.

CANDLE LIGHTING
AND HAVDALA TIMES



	LECH LECHA		VAYEIRA	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	5:22	6:35	4:15	5:28
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:41	6:37	4:34	5:31
Beit Shemesh/RBS	5:41	6:36	4:34	5:29
Gush Etzion	5:38	6:35	4:32	5:29
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	5:39	6:36	4:32	5:29
Modiin/Chashmonaim	5:39	6:35	4:32	5:29
Netanya	5:39	6:36	4:32	5:29
Be'er Sheva	5:40	6:37	4:33	5:30
Rehovot	5:39	6:36	4:32	5:30
Petach Tikva	5:22	6:36	4:15	5:29
Ginot Shomron	5:38	6:35	4:31	5:28
Haifa / Zichron	5:28	6:35	4:21	5:28
Gush Shiloh	5:37	6:34	4:30	5:28
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	5:39	6:36	4:32	5:30
Givat Zeev	5:42	6:35	4:35	5:28
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:39	6:35	4:32	5:29
Ashkelon	5:41	6:37	4:34	5:31
Yad Binyamin	5:39	6:36	4:33	5:30
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	5:29	6:33	4:22	5:26
Golan	5:35	6:32	4:28	5:29
Nahariya/Maalot	5:36	6:34	4:19	5:28
Afula	5:37	6:34	4:30	5:27

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Lech Lecha - 7:14 PM • Vayeira - 6:07 PM

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

Daf Yomi: Bechoros 36

OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM
Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
October 21-31 | 10-20 Marcheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:55-5:02
Sunrise	6:46-5:54
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:35-8:38
Magen Avraham	8:58-8:01
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	10:31-9:33
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:23-11:22
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:53-11:52
Plag Mincha	4:50-3:42
Sunset (Including Elevation)	6:04-4:54

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel | aberman@ouisrael.org

In the month of Elul, 1995, when I was attending Yeshivat Shilo, I came home for Shabbat to my parents' house in Har Nof. That *Motzei Shabbat*, there was a *shiur* in preparation for Rosh Hashanah given by Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky, a former NCSY regional director. The *shiur* was about the importance of *kavanah* (concentration and intention) in *davening*, and not only was the *shiur* interesting, it was also very funny, in Rabbi Orlofsky's unique style. But one moment in particular from that evening has stayed with me ever since.

Rabbi Orlofsky spoke about how so many times we are *davening* while our minds are elsewhere, running on autopilot. Suddenly, we realize halfway through a prayer that we weren't paying any attention to what we were saying. I recognized that moment very well, as I'm sure many of you do as well. So what should we do when we have that realization? He advised that we should stop, stand still for a second, and try to have *kavanah* in at least the one *beracha* we are about to say.

In loving memory of
our father, grandfather
and great-grandfather

Rabbi Samuel Adelman z"l
of Denver Colorado
on his 60th yahrzeit
Tuesday, October 27th, ט"ז מרחשון

Founder and Chairman
of the Youth Torah Pilgrimage
in 1953 - the beginning of NCSY

At the time in *yeshiva*, I had decided to focus on working on my *kavanah* in *tefillah*. I studied the sources regarding the importance of *kavanah* in *davening*, and I discovered that the first *beracha* of Shemoneh Esrei, *Magen Avraham*, is the *beracha* in which *kavanah* matters most. In fact, the *halacha* is that ideally, someone who did not have *kavanah* in that first *beracha* should actually go back and say it again. (However, we generally hold that nowadays, a person should not repeat Shemoneh Esrei, because unfortunately, chances are that the person will not have *kavanah* the second time either.) I was determined to make sure that I would devote time to that first *beracha* every time I *davened*, because I realized that there is a special reason for it.

When reading this week's *parsha*, we see the tremendous challenges Avraham Avinu faced because of his *emunah* (faith and trust) in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, in a generation where nobody else had this *emunah*. Avraham Avinu was an *ivri*, standing on his own against the entire world. With his *emunah* in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he listened to the command and literally picked up his life and moved to an unknown land, just because *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* told him to do so.

I am sure that many people reading Torah Tidbits right now are thinking of the day they picked up and left the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, France, and the many other countries our readers come from. You, dear reader, understand

the challenge that Avraham undertook better than many others, because you lived through a similar kind of experience.

My parents making *aliyah* with us in 1985 was in some ways much harder than it is today. Back then, there were not nearly as many flights going back and forth between New York and Israel, they were expensive, and not nearly as comfortable as they are today. Once you were in Israel, it was hard to stay connected. There was no WhatsApp, no FaceTime, and no Zoom. Back then it was aerograms. Back then it was seven shekels a minute on a Bezeq line, if you even had a Bezeq line.

A lot has changed, but that doesn't mean that making *aliyah* isn't a challenge today. No matter what, it will always be hard to say goodbye to loved ones and to your community, to look for a new job, and to learn a new language and a new culture. That is one of the reasons that we at OU Israel, together with other organizations, are doing our utmost to make sure that the absorption process in Israel is as easy and as comfortable as possible, on a spiritual level, an educational level, and a community level. I want to take this opportunity to praise Esti Moskowitz, OU Israel's Director of Anglo Engagement and Programming in Israel, who oversees the programs we run for English speakers across the country. Hearing feedback from so many people who tell me that their *aliyah* process has become so much more enjoyable, and that their settling in Israel has been so much more successful because of OU Israel's programs, is truly an incredible feeling.

But when I think of Avraham Avinu, I think of the *mesirut nefesh* he had, the love he had for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and the



passion he had for doing what nobody else in the world was doing: believing in God and listening to God, together with Sarah. He stood strong in every single *nisayon* he was given, from leaving Charan and going to the land of Canaan, to standing up against the entire world, and ultimately, as we will see in next week's *parsha*, to being willing to sacrifice his son Yitzchak, his only son from Sarah, because *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* told him to do so. That just goes to show what a giant Avraham Avinu was.

Therefore, when we think about the *beracha* of *Magen Avraham*, we should remember that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave us a forefather who literally showed us what it means, as they say in Hebrew, to go *ba'esh u'vamayim*, through fire and water, with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. And if we emulate him, we will go far. Avraham Avinu always trusted *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was always there protecting him. *Hachnasat orchim* (having guests in our homes), doing *brit milah*, making *aliyah*, fighting enemies, these are things that we continue to do today that are walking in the footsteps of Avraham Avinu.

So it makes so much sense that this *beracha* in particular requires *kavanah*, because it is so much the essence of who

we are. And just as *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was a *magen*, a shield, for Avraham Avinu then, *b'ezrat Hashem*, if we have the right *kavanah*, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will continue protecting *Klal Yisrael* today.

Recently, I got a call from a friend. He told me, "Avi, miracles are happening every day that don't make the news. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is clearly protecting our soldiers and our civilians. Just look at what happened on that FlyDubai flight a few weeks ago! He is giving us endless *siyata d'shmaya* - He really is *Magen Avraham*." He told me that a number of months ago, he took it upon himself to make sure to have *kavanah* in the first *beracha* of Shemoneh Esrei every single time he *davens*, in the *zechut* of *Klal Yisrael* wherever they are, asking that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* watch over them, and especially over our security forces and soldiers.

I told him that I think it is a beautiful idea. I know many people say *Tehillim*, many people are doing *chesed*, and much more, for the merit of the success and safety of our soldiers. What about *Magen Avraham*? We know that halachically, this *beracha* is so important that we are all supposed to have *kavanah* in it anyway, so maybe this is something more of us should try. Some people might take it upon themselves for a day, some for a week, a month, or a year, to make sure to have *kavanah* in the first *beracha* of Shemoneh Esrei, *Magen Avraham*.

Before making a decision about whether to accept this, as you sit and read this week's *parsha*, think about the tremendous love that Avraham Avinu had for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Then think about the tremendous love that our dear soldiers have for the people of Israel, the Land of Israel, and the heritage of the Jewish people. They act with *mesirut nefesh* and love for *Klal Yisrael*, risking their lives at all times. Let us each take upon ourselves, for as long as we possibly can, to have *kavanah* in the first *beracha* of Shemoneh Esrei, *Magen Avraham*. I think the perfect time to do so is as we finish reading this week's *parsha* in *shul*. If you are reading this afterwards, you can accept it upon yourself then.

May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* continue protecting *Klal Yisrael*. May we continue listening to all the commands of *Lech Lecha*, and we should merit to see Har HaMoriah rebuilt, with the Beit HaMikdash standing on it as it is supposed to. Hopefully, this Chanukah we will be celebrating not only the miracles that happened then in the Beit HaMikdash, but the miracles happening in our own day in the Beit HaMikdash. And *b'ezrat Hashem*, this coming Pesach we should see all of *Klal Yisrael* coming to the Beit HaMikdash to bring the *Korban Pesach*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

May the Torah learned from this Torah Tidbits and the zemirot sung this Shabbat be in loving memory of

Dr. Abba E. Borowich z"l
אבא מנחם בן
שמואל צבי ויפה זעלדע ז"ל
on his 2nd yahrzeit - י"ג מר-חשוון

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& Yaari, Galitzer,
and Milstein families

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ALIYA BY ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
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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.

G-d makes promises to man. This is a radical notion. That G-d would have demands of man makes sense. But that He would make promises to man? That is radical.

We know nothing of Avraham who gets these unsolicited promises. Though we will come to know Avraham as a great man, the Torah is mum on any background to receiving these promises.

But that is the point. For it is a story of G-d's desire for a people – it is His reach to us. His reach to man, not man's reach to Him.

Our parsha will be the story of the 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.

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. Avraham journeys to Egypt in a famine, returning to the Land of Israel laden with wealth. The promise of fortune has come to be.

Avraham builds an altar. He will build 4 altars, calling in the name of G-d.

3RD ALIYA (13:5-18)

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

The promise that G-d made to Avraham

when He told him to journey to the Land was "I will Bless you", meaning, you will have success financially. Wow, that happened fast. And no small fortune; Avraham and Lot have vast flocks.

But besides the promises of fame, fortune and family, the promise of the Land of Israel is the big one.

This promise is repeated to Avraham 5 times in the parsha, each time adding something.

The first promise was when he entered the Land and was simple. "This Land is given to your descendants." This time both those pieces are expanded. This whole Land, as far as you can see, north, south, east, west. And your descendants? As numerous as dust of the earth. Lots of land. And lots of family.



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.

This story of the war of the Kings concludes with the promise of fame achieved. After the heroic rescue of Lot, Avraham finds himself in the company of Kings. Avraham has become famous. That is promise number 2.

And of note is the religious language of Malchizedek, blessing Avraham with G-d's name. Avraham 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 achieved. The remaining 2 – of children and of inheriting this Land are tougher.

And while this story of the war concludes with fame achieved, it also must give Avraham some concern. G-d did not promise a deserted land to Avraham; this pitched battle of 9 kings belies that. He has been promised that 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 like those. Avraham believes Him.

The promise that his children will inherit the Land is expanded again.

In the first of his challenges to G-d, Avraham wonders: how can You Promise the Land to my children when I don't have any? A good point.

G-d reiterates. Don't think that I was waxing eloquent in promising the Land to your children and that I didn't mean your children literally. Avraham, maybe you think I meant your spiritual heirs. You know, not real blood children, but your followers. No. I mean your children, your flesh and blood children. And they will be as the stars.



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.

While Avraham has been assured that his flesh and blood children will inherit the Land, that the promise is to be taken literally, the Brit bein habetarim, this description goes the other way. 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. And then come to the Land.

This information will hang like a cloud over the rest of Breishit. Is 400 years literal or figurative? You know, a long time. Avraham, you will not see your family taking this Land. It will take exile and return. How long? Who?

Juxtaposed to this deep sleep revelation that My promise that your children will inherit the Land does not mean your children, but rather your distant descendants comes the story of the birth of Yishmael from Hagar.

While we are on the subject of promises now being a little less literal, a little vague, maybe my child is referring to Yishmael. Perhaps he will be my heir.

And maybe this story of Hagar's banishment and return is that very story of exile of my people that I was told in that foggy vision.

Hagar and Yishmael are sent away. Afflicted. Then returns. Is that what the dream meant?

A promise is made to Hagar and Yishmael. Yishmael will be an international force to reckon with. 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.

But that is not the legacy of Avraham. Avraham will be a great nation by virtue of the 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

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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.

The heir? It is not to be Yishmael. It is to be Sarah's son, Yitzchak.

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. ■

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The Heroism of Ordinary Life

The Lord said to Abram: 'Go – from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house - to the land that I will show you.' (Gen. 12:1)

These words are among the most consequential in the history of humankind. In that very moment a new faith was born, one that has lasted for two-thirds of the course of civilization and remains young and vigorous today. Not only did Abraham give rise to what today we call Judaism. He was also the inspiration of two other religions - Christianity and Islam - both of which trace their descent, biological or spiritual, to him, and which now number among their adherents more than half the six billion people on the face of the earth.[1]

There was no one like Abraham, yet the Torah is exceptionally understated in its account of him. As children we learned that he was the first iconoclast, the person who, while still young, broke the idols in his father's house. But this is a Midrash, a tradition, inferred from hints in the biblical text rather than from explicit statements. In the pure text of the Torah, we are told nothing of his childhood, youth, his early days with Sarah, or any other time before the moment when God spoke these fateful words to him.

From what we do know, Abraham does not fit any conventional image of the religious hero. He is not, like Noah, the sole survivor of a world hastening to its destruction. He is not, like Moses, a lawgiver and liberator. He is not like the later prophets, people who spent their life confronting kings, wrestling with their contemporaries and "speaking truth to power."

To be sure, he is a man of exemplary virtue. He welcomes strangers and gives them food. He fights a battle on behalf of the cities of the plain in order to rescue his nephew Lot. He prays for them in one of the greatest dialogues in religious literature. He patiently waits for a child and then, when the command comes, is willing to offer him as a sacrifice, only to discover that the God of truth does not want us to sacrifice our children but to cherish them. But if we were asked to characterise him with adjectives, the words that spring to mind – gentle, kind, gracious – are not those usually associated with the

1. These figures were accurate at the time of writing in August 2008, although today they would need adjusting when quoted, to account for the expanded world population.

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founder of a new faith. They are the kind of attributes to which any of us could aspire. None of us can be an Abraham, but all of us can take him as a role-model. Perhaps that is the deepest lesson of all.

In *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Lionel Trilling made the following comment:

Not all cultures develop the idea of the heroic. I once had occasion to observe in connection with Wordsworth that in the rabbinical literature there is no touch of the heroic idea. The rabbis, in speaking of virtue, never mention the virtue of courage, which Aristotle regarded as basic to the heroic character. The indifference of the rabbis to the idea of courage is the more remarkable in that they knew that many of their number would die for their faith. What is especially to our point is that, as ethical beings, the rabbis never see themselves – it is as if the commandment which forbade the making of images extended to their way of conceiving the personal moral existence as well.

Trilling is not quite accurate. The rabbis did speak of courage, *gevurah*. But he is right to say that Judaism did not have heroes in the way the Greeks and other cultures did. A hero is one convinced of his own importance. He or she is conscious of playing a part on the world stage under the admiring gaze of their contemporaries. The rabbis, said Trilling, "would have been quite ready to understand the definition of the hero as an actor and to say that, as such, he was undeserving of the attention of serious men." Abraham is the paradigm of an unheroic hero, one who (in Maimonides' lovely phrase) "does what is right because it is right"[2] and not for the sake of popular-

2. *Hilchot Teshuvah*, Chapter 10, Law 2.



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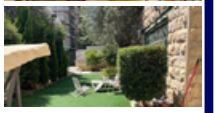
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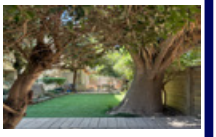


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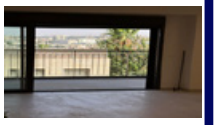
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ity or fame. If we were to define Judaism in Abrahamic terms it would be the heroism of ordinary life, being willing to live by one's convictions though all the world thinks otherwise, being true to the call of eternity, not the noise of now. Which brings us to the key phrase, the first words of God to the bearer of a new covenant: *Lech Lecha*. Is there, already in these two words, a hint of what was to come?

Rashi, following an ancient exegetical tradition, translates the phrase as "journey for yourself" (Rashi, Gen. 12:1). He suggests that these words really meant, "Travel for your own benefit and good. There I will make you into a great nation; here you will not have the merit of having children." Sometimes we have to give up our past in order to acquire a future. God was already teaching Abraham that what seems like a sacrifice is, in the long run, not so. Abraham was about to say goodbye to the things that mean most to us – our land, our birthplace and our parents' homes, the places where we belong. It was a journey from the familiar to the unfamiliar, a leap into the unknown. To be able to make that leap involves trust – in Abraham's case, trust not in visible power but in the voice of the invisible God. At the end of it, however, Abraham would discover that he had achieved something he could not have done otherwise. He would give birth to a new nation whose greatness consisted precisely in the ability to live by that voice and create something new in the history of humankind. *Lech Lecha* therefore means more than "Go". It means, "Go for yourself."

Another midrashic interpretation takes the phrase to mean "Go with yourself" – meaning, by travelling from place to place you will extend your influence not over one land but many:

When the Holy One said to Abraham, "Leave your land, your birthplace and your father's house . . ." what did Abraham resemble? A jar of scent with a tight-fitting lid put away in a corner so that its fragrance could not go forth. As soon as it was moved from that place and opened, its fragrance began to spread. So the Holy One said to Abraham, "Abraham, many good deeds are in you. Travel about from place to place, so that the greatness of your name will go forth in My world." *(Bereishit Rabbah 39:2.)*

Abraham was commanded to leave his place in order to testify to the existence of a God not bounded by place – Creator and Sovereign of the entire universe. Abraham and Sarah were to be like perfume, leaving a trace of their presence wherever they went. Implicit in this Midrash is the idea that the fate of the first Jews already prefigured that of their descendants. They were scattered throughout the world in order to spread knowledge of God throughout the world. Unusually, exile is seen here not as punishment but as a necessary corollary of a faith that sees God everywhere. '*Lech lecha*' means "Go with yourself" – your beliefs, your way of life, your faith.

A third interpretation, this time more mystical, takes the phrase to mean, "Go to yourself." The Jewish journey, said R. David of Lelov, is a journey to the root of the soul. Only in the holy land, said R. Ephraim Landschutz, can a Jew find the source of his or her being. R. Zushya of Hanipol said, "When I get to heaven, they will not ask me, Zushya, why were you not Moses? They will ask me, Zushya, why were you not Zushya?" Abraham was being asked to leave behind all the things that make us someone else – for it is

only by taking a long and lonely journey that we discover who we truly are. "Go to yourself."

There is, however, a fourth interpretation: "Go by yourself." Only a person willing to stand alone, singular and unique can worship the God who is alone, singular and unique. Only one able to leave behind the natural sources of identity can encounter God who stands above and beyond nature. A journey into the unknown is one of the greatest possible expressions of freedom. God wanted Abraham and his children to be a living example of what it is to serve the God of freedom, in freedom, for the sake of freedom. What does this mean?

Alasdair Macintyre once pointed out that there are two kinds of atheist: one who does not believe in God, and one for whom atheism itself is a kind of religion. Of the latter, some of the greatest examples were (lapsed, converted, or non-believing) Jews – most famously, Spinoza, Marx, and Freud. Instead of merely denying the truths of Judaism, they set out to provide systematic alternatives.

Fundamental to the Torah are two freedoms: the freedom of God and the freedom of human beings. God is not, in Judaism, an impersonal force. He acts (in creation, revelation, and redemption) on the basis not of necessity but of choice. In choosing to make humanity in His own image He endowed us, too, with choice. There is no such thing as fate or predestination. "I call heaven and earth to witness," said Moses, "that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life."

It was this that Spinoza, Marx, and Freud set out to challenge. Each sought to show that we are not free. Man is a predictable animal. Our nature and character are subject to quasi-scientific laws. There is a science of human behaviour as there is a science of atoms. History, personal or collective, is a form of inevitability. We are what we are because we could not be otherwise. Against this, Judaism is a living protest. Abraham and his children were summoned to a life of radical freedom – and it is this that is at the heart of God's threefold call.

Marx said that man is a product of social forces, themselves shaped by the interests of the ruling class, the owners of property of which the most significant is land. Therefore God said to Abraham, Leave your land.

Spinoza said that humans are made by innate instincts and biological drives (nowadays this is called genetic determinism) given by birth. Therefore God said to Abraham: Leave the circumstances of your birth.

Freud said that we are the way we are because of the traumas of childhood, the influence of our early years, our relationships and rivalries with our parents, especially our father. Therefore, God said to Abraham: Leave your father's house.

Lech Lecha means: Leave behind you all that makes human beings predictable, unfree, able to blame others and evade responsibility. Abraham's children were summoned to be the people that defied the laws of nature because they refused to define themselves as the products of nature (Nietzsche understood this aspect of Judaism particularly well). That is not to say that economic or biological or

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psychological forces have no part to play in human behaviour. They do. But with sufficient imagination, determination, discipline and courage we can rise above them. Abraham did. So, at most times, did his children.

Those who live within the laws of history are subject to the laws of history. Whatever is natural, said Maimonides, is subject to disintegration and decay. That is what has happened to virtually every civilization that has appeared on the world's stage. Abraham, however, was to become the father of an *am olam*, an eternal people that would neither disintegrate nor decay. Therefore, it had to be a people willing to stand outside the laws of nature. What for other nations are natural – land, home, family – in Judaism are subjects of religious command. They must be striven for. They involve a journey. They are not given at the outset, nor can they be taken for granted. Abraham was to leave behind the things that make most people and peoples what they are, and lay the foundations for a land, a Jewish home, and a family structure responsive not to economic forces, biological drives, and psychological conflicts but to the word and will of God. *Lech Lecha* in this sense means being prepared to take an often-lonely journey: "Go by yourself."

To be Jewish, to be a child of Abraham, is to have the courage to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, whatever the idols and whichever the age. In an era of polytheism, that meant seeing the universe as the product of a single creative will – and therefore not meaningless but coherent, meaningful.

In an era of slavery, it meant refusing to accept the status quo in the name of God, instead challenging it in the name of God. When power was worshipped, it meant constructing a society that cared for the powerless: the widow, orphan, and stranger. During centuries in which the mass of humankind was sunk in ignorance, it meant honouring education as the key to human dignity and creating schools to provide universal literacy. When war was the test of humanity, it meant striving for peace. In ages of radical individualism like today, it means knowing that we are not what we own but what we share; not what we buy but what we give; that there is something higher than appetite and desire – namely the call that comes to us, as it came to Abraham, from outside ourselves, summoning us to make a contribution to the world.

The (non-Jewish) journalist Andrew Marr once wrote that Jews "really have been different; they have enriched the world and challenged it."[3] It is that courage to travel alone if necessary, to be different, to swim against the tide, to speak in an age of relativism of the absolutes of human dignity under the sovereignty of God, that was born in the words *Lech Lecha*. To be a Jew is to be willing to hear the still, small voice of eternity urging us to travel, move, go on ahead, continuing Abraham's journey toward that unknown destination at the far horizon of hope. First we hear of how he began his journey. Then we step forward to find our own destiny. ■

3. Andrew Marr, *The Observer*, 14 May 2000.

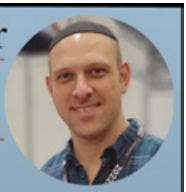
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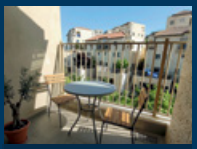


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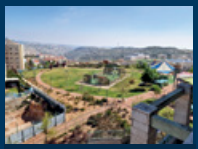
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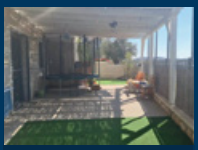
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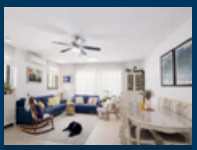
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How is Brit Truly Defined?

Rabbi Norman Lamm[1] delivered a remarkable drasha on Shabbat Lech Lecha in October 1960, and over sixty-five years later, his message remains remarkably relevant.

Rabbi Lamm begins with a striking observation: our parsha contains two britot, two covenants between Hashem and Avraham. The first is Brit Bein HaBetarim, the Covenant Between the Pieces. The second is Brit Milah, the covenant of circumcision. Why does the Torah describe both of these experiences as a brit? Rabbi Lamm suggests that the answer takes us to the very heart of what it means to be Jewish.

WHAT IS A BRIT?

The word brit implies a relationship between God and man. It is a relationship of mutuality, dialogue, and connection. If God is merely an abstract idea or philosophical principle, it is almost meaningless to speak about a brit. A covenant requires a relationship with a living being. Rabbi Lamm points out that the very idea of religion implies a bond or a connection that brings two parties together. The essence of Judaism, therefore, is not simply believing certain things about God. It is entering into a relationship with Him. But what kind of relationship is it?

Rabbi Lamm offers three possibilities.

1. BRIT IS NOT BARTER

The first possibility is barter. This is a religious quid pro quo: "I will do something for You, God, if You do something for me." "I'll give charity; You take care of my investment portfolio." "I'll fast on Yom Kippur; You give me good health." "I'll say Yizkor; You take care of my family." That is not a covenant. It is a transaction. The problem with this approach is that it turns Judaism into a form of spiritual commerce. We perform mitzvot because we expect something in return. This is a distortion of the very concept of brit.

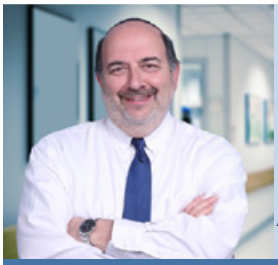
2. BRIT IS NOT MERELY A CONTRACT

The second possibility is more sophisticated. Perhaps brit means an ongoing contract. I don't serve Hashem only when I need something. I understand that there is an ongoing relationship. I follow the Torah, and Hashem rewards me. I violate the Torah, and I am punished. Certainly, Judaism believes in skhar va'onesh, reward and punishment.

Reward and punishment are part of Judaism, but they are not the essence of Judaism. Hazal make this point in Pirkei Avot: אַל תְּהִי

1. Rabbi Norman Lamm, Drashot L'Dorot

Arthur Samuels, DPM

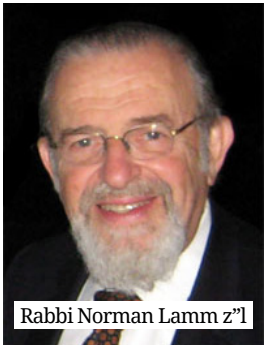


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כַּעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְּשִׁין אֶת הָרַב עַל מְנָת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס - Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive a reward. [2] The contract model is certainly better than barter, but it is still not the highest conception of our relationship with Hashem.

3. BRIT MEANS COVENANT

The highest conception is covenant. A covenant is fundamentally different from a transaction or a contract. A transaction says: I give something to you, and you give something to me. A contract says: We have obligations to one another. A covenant says: We belong to one another. That is a radically different relationship. Rabbi Lamm turns to the two britot in our parsha to explain exactly what this means.


Rabbi Norman Lamm z"l

BRIT BEIN HABETARIM: WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER

At the Brit Bein HaBetarim, Avraham takes animals and divides them into two. Why? As Rabbi Yosef Albo, in the *Sefer HaIkkarim*, explains, the symbolism of this brit is profound. A living organism is a unified whole. When it is divided into two, each half can no longer exist independently. The two halves therefore symbolize the two parties to a covenant: they have become bound together in an inseparable relationship. That is the first dimension of brit: Closeness. God and Israel are not two unrelated entities. We are bound to Hashem, and Hashem has chosen to enter into a relationship with us.

Hashem does not need us in any physical sense. Yet, He has chosen to make humanity part of the purpose of creation. He has chosen to relate to us, command us, communicate with us, and give us a role in bringing His presence into the world. That is what makes the relationship so extraordinary. Hashem is not merely above us. He is, so to speak, with us. The Torah therefore speaks of Elokeinu - "our God." Rabbi Lamm notes that the possessive language itself expresses intimacy. This is not merely *God*. It is our God. He is the God of Avraham. He is the God who enters into a brit. That means that Judaism is not merely about knowing that God exists. It is about knowing that God is here.

BRIT MILAH: THE RELATIONSHIP IS FOREVER

There is another dimension of brit. The Brit Milah teaches us that the relationship is not only intimate; it is permanent. The Torah calls circumcision: **אוֹת בְּרִית** - "A sign of the covenant."[3]

The sign is placed permanently upon the body. It cannot simply be removed when it becomes inconvenient. It is indelible and irrevocable. That is precisely the message of Brit Milah: Our relationship with Hashem is not temporary. We do not enter the covenant when we happen to feel inspired and leave it when we no longer feel inspired. We do not get to say, "This part of Judaism speaks to me, but that part doesn't." We do not renegotiate the

2. Pirke Avot 1:3

3. Bereshit 17:11



covenant every generation. That is the power of the covenant: it connects us not only to Hashem, but to generations before us and generations after us.

A THIRD DIMENSION: THE BRIT WITH ONE ANOTHER

Rabbi Lamm introduces a third dimension of brit that is perhaps the most important one for us today. The covenant does not bind us only to Hashem. It also binds us to one another. Hashem tells Avraham: - וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל. And I will make you into a great nation.[4] We are not merely individuals who happen to share a religion. We are a people. If I am part of the brit, then another Jew is not simply another person. We are members of the same covenant. That means that the brit creates three relationships:

- A relationship with Hashem.
- A relationship with our heritage.
- A relationship with one another.

Perhaps this is the deeper message of the two britot in Lech Lecha. **Brit Bein HaBetarim** teaches us that the relationship is one of closeness. **Brit Milah** teaches us that the relationship is permanent. The broader covenant of Avraham teaches us that we are bound together as a people.

WE ARE PEOPLE OF THE BRIT

There is something very powerful about the fact that a brit is not a feeling. Feelings come and go. There are days when we feel inspired, and days when we don't. There are moments when our emunah feels strong, and moments when we struggle. But a brit is deeper than a feeling.

A brit says: Even when I don't feel it, I belong. That may be one of the greatest gifts Judaism gives us. We are not asked to reinvent our Judaism every morning. We wake up already part of a story. We are connected to Avraham and Sarah, to Yitzchak and Rivkah, to Yaakov and Rachel and Leah. We are connected to generations who carried the Torah through prosperity and persecution, through joy and tragedy. Now the covenant is in our hands. The question is not simply whether we believe in the brit. The question is: What are we going to do with it? Will we pass it on? Will we make our children feel that Judaism is not merely an obligation but a privilege? Will we make them feel that being Jewish means belonging to something eternal? Will we treat other Jews as members of our own family? Most importantly, will our lives communicate that Hashem is not an abstract idea somewhere in heaven, but our God -Elokeinu -whose presence accompanies us here and now?

That is the challenge of the brit. It is not a bargain. It is not merely a contract. It is belonging. Perhaps that is the most beautiful way to understand what it means to be a Jew: I am not simply someone who believes in God. I am someone who is in a brit with God. A brit means that I am never truly alone. I belong to Hashem. I belong to my people. I belong to a past that I did not create, and I carry a responsibility for a future that I will not live to see. That is what it means to be a ben brit - a child of the covenant. It is a responsibility, but it is also an extraordinary privilege. ■



4. Bereshit 12:2



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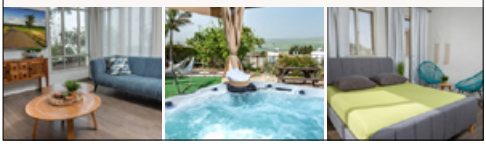
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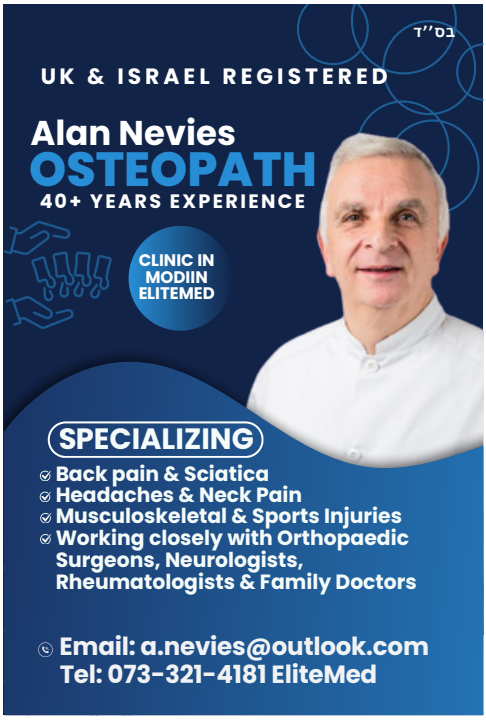


REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES
Faculty, OU Israel Center

Righteousness Revealed

In a stunning vision, Hashem shows Avraham Avinu the expanse of stars in the heavens and tells him that his descendants will be as vast and as bright. The Torah then relates, *"Ve'he'emin ba'Hashem vayachsheveha lo tzedakah*— And [Avraham] believed in Hashem, and He accounted it to him as righteousness." *(Bereisheet* 15:6*)* Rashi understands that Hashem considered Avraham's emunah that He would fulfill His promise without asking for a sign to be a special merit and as righteousness. Ramban questions this interpretation. Isn't it obvious that one who speaks with Hashem, one who is ready to sacrifice his only son, will believe in Hashem and His prophecy?! What then is the novelty that Rashi is referring to, that was to Avraham Avinu's credit that he believed?

Rav Pincus *zt"l* offers a beautiful approach. In the blessings of the *Haftorah* every Shabbat we say, *"ki beshem kadshecha nishbata lo shelo yichbeh neiro le'olam va'ed*—for by Your Holy Name You swore to him that his candle [heir] will not be extinguished forever and





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ever…" This is the promise of Jewish eternality. Likewise, included in the promise, *"Koh yehiyeh zar'acha*—so will be your children" *(Bereisheet* 15:5*)* is the guarantee that the Jewish people will survive throughout the exiles and merit the coming of Mashiach. Avraham Avinu understood that ultimately, we all have free choice, and justly may not deserve the fulfillment of these promises. Yet, despite this, Avraham Avinu believed. His emunah was believing something beyond the realm of the natural or rational course and this was regarded by Hashem as an act of extraordinary righteousness.

It is interesting to note, that although the *Chasid Ya'avetz* also understands this verse to be a promise that the Jews will be a nation of eternal believers, he maintains that Avraham Avinu attributed this great assurance as a "tzedakah," an act of righteousness from Hashem.

An additional approach to understanding Rashi is found in the writings of Rav Elya Lopian *zt"l*. Avraham Avinu endured a tremendous amount of confrontation, contention and hostility in his campaign to introduce monotheism to the world. He battled Nimrod on more than one occasion and put his life in danger numerous times. Our verse teaches us that Hashem credited Avraham Avinu every time he exhibited aspects of emunah with the same reward as when he first demonstrated his *mesirut nefesh* for his belief. Although Avraham Avinu's emunah became stronger and stronger until he reached a level of prophecy, his reward never diminished. Hashem does not diminish one's reward even when something becomes his natural attitude, rather, he is continuously rewarded based on his initial struggle to integrate his beliefs and connection. This is indeed a great righteousness from Hashem. ■



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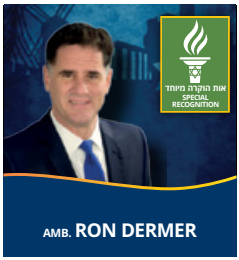
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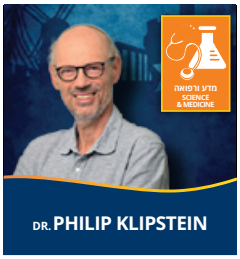
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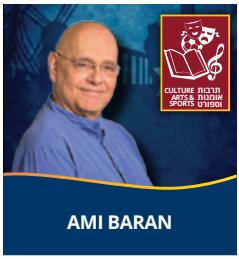
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L'chaim!

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

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

Dr. Tzatzkis recalled:

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

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

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

I looked at him inquisitively.

"When you called me to join you for the bris yesterday," he explained, "I ran out of the house right away. My wife didn't have any warning to prepare something for the *simcha*. I didn't have any money in my pockets. What was I supposed to do? We needed some *mezonos* and wine to celebrate the *bris*. So I walked into the store on Rechov Strauss down the block from the hospital, gave them my

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coat, and they gave me what I needed. How could a Yid enter the covenant of Avraham Avinu without a *l'chaim* to celebrate?

וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן־תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנִים וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־אֵ-ל שַׁ-דַּי הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֶהְיֵה תָמִים

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

וְאֶתְּנָה בְרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וְאַרְבֶּה אוֹתְךָ בִּמְאֹד מְאֹד...

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

זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ הִמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר

This is My covenant, which you shall observe between Me and between you and between your offspring after you, that every male among you be circumcised. (17:1-2, 10)

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Are not the loaves superior?"

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

An interpretation of God's name *Sha-dai* is *She'amar l'olamo dai*, "The One who said to His world, 'Enough.'" This refers to Hashem



halting the expansion and development of the world before it would become complete or 'perfect'. In doing so, Hashem left space for us to apply our creative efforts to improve His world. By holding back from completing Creation, Hashem enables us to participate in a continuous expansion that is qualitative as well as quantitative.

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

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

אִם־לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֵת אֲרֻבּוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וַהֲרִיקֹתִי לָכֶם בְּרָכָה עַד־בְּלִי־דָי

"I will surely open the floodgates of the sky for you and pour down blessings on you until there will not be sufficient room for them!" (*Malachi,* 3:10)

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

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

Excerpt from newly released **Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah**, (Mosaica Press). ■

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

RABBI SAM SHOR
Director, Torah Initiatives, OU Israel

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

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

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

According to *Rashi*, when *Hashem* promises *Avram* that his name will become great, it is an allusion to the fact that *Hashem* will add an additional letter to *Avram's* name and he will be known from then on as *Avraham*, and that the numerical value of his new name corresponds the parts of the human body. How are we to understand this interpretation offered by *Rashi?* What is the significance of *Avraham's* new,"great name" corresponding to the parts of the human body?

In a fascinating teaching, the ***Avodat Elazar, the Kozshnitzer Rebbe zy'a***, explains that when we first are introduced to *Avram*, his name connotes that he is the *Av Ram*- he is the "father," if you will, of teaching the world about *Romemut Hashem* - that there is one G-d who exists above and beyond this world. However, as he enters into *Eretz Yisrael*, his understanding of our relationship to *Hashem* evolves to become more complete as reflected in the promise *V'Agadla Shemecha* your name will become great. His new name *Avraham* which corresponds in *gematria*, to all the various parts which come together to form a complete human being, represents the transformation to a more complete spiritual clarity. *Avraham* ceases to teach the world solely about *Romemut Hashem*- but also begins to teach the world about *Gadlut Hashem*- the greatness of G-d.

The Rebbe explains further that the term *Gadlut*- greatness can only be measured when an item is placed near something that is smaller or less than the item that is *gadol*. So too, *Avraham's* new name represents a spiritual evolution in *Avraham's* own understanding of his relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, which he begins to share with the entire world.

The name *Avram* marks the beginning of his spiritual journey, teaching others about

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the one G-d who exists beyond our world, however the more sophisticated understanding, represented by his new name *Avraham*, represents a transition where he begins to teach the world that *Hashem* is paradoxically also *gadol* - *Hashem is* great and imminently present in our lives, even as His presence remains beyond our physical capacity to see or grasp.

Similarly, ***Rebbe Meir HaLevi* of Apta *zy'a*, the *Ohr LaShamayim***, sees the transformation from **אברם – אב רם** to **אברהם - אב המון גוים** as a movement from the lofty and transcendent to the practical, to experiencing holiness and awareness of *Hashem* in this world. The added **ה׳** enables Avraham to bring spiritual holiness into human life and share it with others. Perhaps this is the meaning of **"ואגדלה שמך"**: true greatness is not simply rising higher, but bringing what is highest, bringing the Heavenly, into this world.

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





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MONDAY, OCT 26

10:00 am - 2:00 pm	Weekly Kollel Boker*	Instructors include: **Rabbi David Fine, Rabbi Ian Shaffer, Rabbi Aschi Dick, & Rabbi Avi Herzog**	**The Bais Men's Programs in Modiin** Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel, Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

***Please note this event has been moved from Tuesday to Monday due to Election Day**

1:00 pm Shiur followed by Mincha at **1:45 pm**	Modiin Lunch and Learn*	**Rabbi Aschi Dick**	Masamerica Offices, 28 Dam HaMacabbiim St, 3rd Floor

***Please note this event has been moved from Tuesday to Monday due to Election Day**

7:00 pm	**Women's Division** Dorot Choir	**Hadassah Jacob**	1 Diskin St., Rechavia
8:30 pm	Semichat Chaver Program	**Rav Elyada Goldwicht**	Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St. (The Bais)

TUESDAY, OCT 27

ELECTION DAY

NO IN-PERSON SHIURIM

Please check the Community Beit Midrash WhatsApp Group for a link that will be sent out to hear a **virtual shiur "Beyond the Ballot: The Torah's Vision of Public Responsibility" by Rabbi Jeremy Perlow at 9:30 a.m.** Alternatively, to join the shiur enter the following URL: **https://meet.google.com/cqm-odob-die**



WEDNESDAY, OCT 28

9:15 am	Rav Soloveitchik on the Parsha	**Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia
10:20 am	Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa	**Rabbi Anthony Manning**	
11:25 am	Building Character and Midot: Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot	**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**	
12:30 pm	The Turbulent Nineteenth Century of European Jewish History	**Dr. Deborah Polster**	

THURSDAY, OCT 29

9:15 am	Parshat HaShavua	**Rabbi Ari Kahn**	**Community Beit Midrash Program** Bet Knesset Shai Agnon, 11 Leib Yaffe St., Arnona
10:30 am	Parshat Hashavua	**Rabbi Baruch Taub**	
11:25 am	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.

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8:00 PM

OU Office
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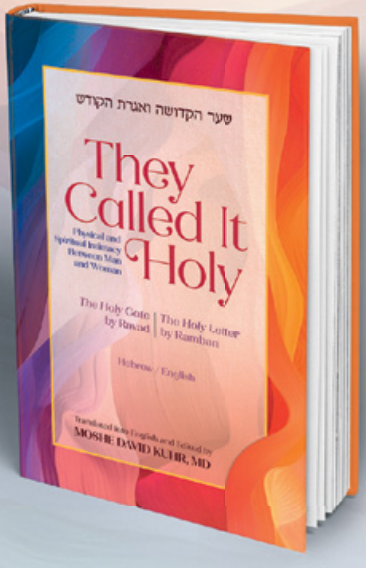
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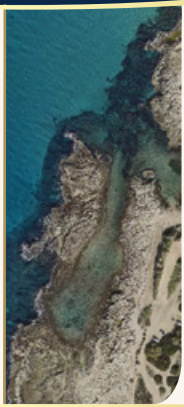
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A VALLEY OF CONSENSUS

וַיֵּצֵא מֶלֶךְ סְדֹם לִקְרָאתוֹ אַחֲרֵי שׁוּבוֹ מֵהַכּוֹת אֶת כְּדָרְלָעֹמֶר וְאֶת הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ אֶל עֵמֶק שָׁוֵה הוּא עֵמֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ: (י"ד:י"ז)

When he returned from defeating Kedarla'omer and the kings with him, the king of Sedom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King.

רש"י: "עֵמֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ" - בֵּית רֵיסָא דְמַלְכָּא בֵּית רִיס א' שֶׁהוּא שְׁלשִׁים קָנִים, שֶׁהָיָה מְיֻחָד לַמֶּלֶךְ לְצַחֵק שָׁם. וּמִדְרַשׁ אַגָּדָה עֵמֶק, שֶׁהֶשְׁוּוּ שָׁם כָּל הָאֻמּוֹת וְהִמְלִיכוּ אֶת אַבְרָהָם עֲלֵיהֶם לִנְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים וּלְקָצִין:

*"Valley of the King." – [Onkelos translates it as] the king's racecourse: a hippodrome that was thirty "*kona*" (measuring rods) and was set apart for the king's sport. The Midrashic explanation is that it was the valley where all the nations unanimously agreed* (הושוו) *in appointing Avraham as prince and leader over them.*

The victors of the war between the four kings and the five kings all gather in a valley called Emek Shaveh, the Valley of Equality. Rashi explains that after the war, all the kings gathered together there. The Midrash adds that they built a large platform where they essentially crowned Avram. Rashi himself doesn't describe the ceremony, but the idea is clear: this is a moment of public recognition. Avram had saved everyone. He had ended a brutal war that had raged for fourteen years. So, this becomes an Avram celebration.

They want to reward him. Melech Sedom offers him spoils, but Avram refuses. Beyond money, they all pay homage. They acknowledge him. This is the first time Avram becomes internationally renowned through peace, by ending violence and stabilizing a fractured region. This is the first concrete realization of "ve'heyei berachah" – "and you shall be a blessing" (12:2). Even before he is given the name Av Hamon Goyim – the Father of a Multitude of Nations – Avram is already functioning as a unifying moral figure on the world stage.

That's why everyone gathers in Emek Shaveh. It's the valley where there is consensus, where equals come together, where Avram is accepted and embraced. And it's hard not to hear something very contemporary in this. We hope that recognition of our right to the land of Israel grows through peace, reconciliation, and what Israel contributes to humanity. That is the vision of Emek Shaveh.

AVRAHAM GOES VERTICAL

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ: (ט"ו:ה)

[Then in the vision, God] took him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them" – continuing, "So shall your offspring be."

רש"י: "וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה" - לְפִי פְּשׁוּטוֹ הוֹצִיאוֹ

מֵאָהֳלוֹ לַחוּץ לִרְאוֹת הַכּוֹכָבִים, וּלְפִי מִדְרָשׁוֹ אָמַר לוֹ צֵא מֵאִצְטַגְנִינוּתְךָ שֶׁלְּךָ שֶׁרָאִיתָ בַּמַּזָּלוֹת שֶׁאֵינְךָ עָתִיד לְהַעֲמִיד בֵּן, אַבְרָם אֵין לוֹ בֵּן, אֲבָל אַבְרָהָם יֵשׁ לוֹ בֵּן, שָׂרַי לֹא תֵלֵד, אֲבָל שָׂרָה תֵּלֵד; אֲנִי קוֹרֵא לָכֶם שֵׁם אַחֵר וְיִשְׁתַּנֶּה הַמַּזָּל. דָּ"אַ הוֹצִיאוֹ מֵחֲלָלוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם וְהִגְבִּיהוֹ לְמַעְלָה מִן הַכּוֹכָבִים, וְזֶהוּ לְשׁוֹן הַבָּטָה מִלְמַעְלָה לְמַטָּה:

"[God] took him outside." – Its real meaning is: He brought him outside his tent so that he could look at the stars. Its Midrashic explanation is: Go forth from (give up) your astrological speculations – that you have seen by the planets that you will not raise a son. Avram will have no son but Avraham will have a son; Sarai will not bear a child but Sarah will bear. I will give you other names, and your destiny will be changed.

Another explanation: He brought him forth from the terrestrial sphere, elevating him above the stars, and this is why He uses the term הבט "look," when He said "look at the heavens" – for this word signifies looking from above downward.

The Torah tells us that Hashem speaks to Avram, but before that it says, "Vayotzei oso ha-chutzah." For the first stage of this nevuah, Hashem takes Avram outside and tells him to look at the stars. On the simplest level, this is clear. The stars become a metaphor for the Jewish people. This is the first appearance of what will become a recurring image in Sefer Bereishis. There are three major metaphors used for Am Yisrael: stars, sand, and dust.

Each carries a different meaning. The distinction between sand and dust belongs more naturally to Parshas Vayeira, but here the focus is on stars.

But Rashi offers additional readings. If the point is simply to look at the stars, Hashem could have spoken to Avram indoors and gestured upward. Why does the Torah stress vayotzei oso ha-chutzah – that Hashem took him outside? Rashi's second explanation shifts the meaning of chutzah. Rashi reads chutzah differently: Avram is being taken beyond the power of the stars. Avram had begun to doubt whether he would have children because, like others of his time, he consulted the zodiac. Among the Rishonim, there is a well-known debate about astrology: whether it is part of a natural order or is an empty superstition. For much of the ancient world, astrology carried real authority. Avram looked at the stars and saw that according to the laws of nature, he was not destined to have children. Hashem was telling him one thing, while the accepted system for predicting the future was telling him something else.

Hashem tells him: you are different. You are not governed by those systems. "Ein mazal l'Yisrael." This phrase means that Jewish destiny is not fully bound by the natural frameworks that govern other nations. The ordinary forces of fate and historical probability may apply elsewhere, but not here. Avram is being taught that his relationship with Hashem places him beyond those constraints.

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Hashem is laying the groundwork for Jewish history. A people who survives exile, destruction, dispersion, and return cannot be explained by ordinary political or cultural laws. Eighty years after the Holocaust, after losing a third of our people and much of our material world, we rebuilt a country. That recovery defies normal historical logic. The Jewish story has always been asymmetrical. We do not move according to the usual rules.

Rashi's third explanation of vayetzei oso ha-chutzah takes the phrase quite literally. Rashi's third explanation goes further. Hashem lifts Avram above the stars themselves. Avram is taken beyond the natural world and looks down from above. He is elevated and shown the world from a higher vantage point.

That reading is supported by the language of the pasuk. Hashem tells Avram, "Habet na hashamaymah." The verb habet usually means "to look down." It implies a position above the object being observed. If Hashem is instructing Avram to look with the language of habet, the language suggests that Avram is positioned above the stars and looking downward. Avram is being given, at least for a moment, a bird's-eye view of the world – kevayachol, a God's-eye view.

Why does that matter? This moment carries a larger message. Jewish destiny includes responsibility for the broader world. When you are responsible for something, responsibility requires seeing the larger picture. The world becomes, in some measure, a pikadon entrusted to Avram.

Kevayachol, just as Hakadosh Baruch Hu looks upon the world He created and takes responsibility for it, Avram is being trained to see the world as something placed, in part, in his care. The stars therefore represent more than numbers or transcendence. They also point toward responsibility for the world below.

What makes this especially striking is that earlier generations who studied this Rashi could not visualize the globe. They had never seen the earth from above. But we can. We have images of the planet, of continents and oceans, of a fragile, interconnected world. We understand planetary responsibility in ways they could not. This allows us, in a small way, to imagine what Avram was shown – to picture him standing above the world, looking down at it, and understanding that part of his mission is to care for the world.

Seen this way, Rashi's explanations steadily widen Avram's perspective. He begins by looking at the stars, moves beyond their influence, and eventually sees the world from above. His chosenness carries responsibility for the world beneath him.



THE ALARM CLOCK OF HISTORY

וְגַם אֶת הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָּן אָנֹכִי וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן יֵצְאוּ בִּרְכֻשׁ גָּדוֹל: (ט"ו:י"ד)

and also the nation they shall serve i will judge, and in the end, they shall go free with great wealth.

רש"י: "וְגַם אֶת הַגּוֹי" - וְגַם לְרַבּוֹת ד' מַלְכֻיּוֹת, שֶׁאַף הֵן כָּלִים עַל שֶׁשִּׁעְבְּדוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

"and also the nation." – the word "and

also" includes the four monarchies (of the book of daniel) who also will perish because they enslaved israel.

One of the most climactic moments in Lech Lecha is the Bris Bein HaBesarim, in which HaKadosh Baruch Hu reveals to Avraham the burden and destiny of being Jewish. You will be chosen. And because you are chosen, you will be hated. You will be a stranger in a foreign land. You will suffer in Mitzrayim for four hundred years. But one day, I will redeem you, and I will return you to Eretz Yisrael. This is the historical covenant, the covenant of destiny.

When Hashem describes the redemption from Mitzrayim, He says, "V'gam es hagoy asher ya'avodu dan anochi" – the nation that enslaves you, I will also judge. But the pasuk begins with the word "v'gam." Grammatically, it should have said simply es hagoy asher ya'avodu. Why v'gam? Rashi explains: l'rabos daled malchuyos.

Rashi expands the pasuk beyond Egypt. Mitzrayim becomes the template for later Jewish history.

That distinction matters. The bris milah is the personal covenant; you mark your body, your identity, your private commitment. The Bris Bein HaBesarim, however, is the covenant of history. It defines the Jewish mission, and it also explains why that mission provokes hostility. Whenever people don't like the message, they attack the messenger. We are the alarm clock of history. No one likes to be woken up, so they smash the clock. Mitzrayim is the first instance, but v'gam tells us this pattern will repeat itself again and again.

That's why the redemption from Egypt is called leil shimurim: a night that is guarded or reserved. What happened in Egypt will happen again, both the suffering and the redemption. Our experience of foreign rule extended far beyond the four hundred years of Egypt. The bris therefore describes Egypt itself while also anticipating later Jewish history. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Echoes of Rashi** is available at: taraginbooks.com.







HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

REBBETZIN DR. ADINA SHMIDMAN
Director, OU Women's Initiative

What Does Help Look Like?

YESHAYAHU 40:27 - 41:16

When someone we care about is struggling, how do we know what will help—a word of encouragement, practical assistance, or simply our presence?

In this week's Haftorah, Hashem reassures the Jewish people: אַל תִּירָא כִּי עִמְּךָ אָנִי, *Do not fear, for I am with you.* He then offers three expressions of support: אַמַּצְתִּיךָ אַף עֲזַרְתִּיךָ אַף תְּמַכְתִּיךָ בִּימִין צִדְקִי, *I strengthen you, I help you, and I uphold you with My righteous right hand* (Yeshayahu 41:10).

The Malbim explains that each expression adds a dimension. "אמצתיך" means giving us the strength to stand on our own against an enemy. "עזרתיך" adds active assistance. "תמכתיך" describes support that keeps us from falling. His image is striking: a devoted friend holding someone upright with one hand while fighting that person's enemy with the other. Metzudas David explains "אמצתיך" as "בדברים טובים ונחומים" - strengthening through good and comforting words.

Together, these explanations can guide the way we can be there for others.

Sometimes a person needs help recognizing the strength already there. A new responsibility or a disappointment can bring self-doubt. A sincere expression of confidence, or a reminder of a challenge already overcome, can restore the courage to move forward.

Sometimes encouragement needs to become action. A person may know what needs to be done but feels overwhelmed by the burden. Bringing a meal, making a call, or taking care of one responsibility can make the next step possible.

And sometimes a person needs to be upheld. The difficulty cannot be resolved quickly, and there may be no clear next step. We can keep calling, listening, and showing up. Our steady presence can help someone remain standing.

These needs can change, even within the same experience. Someone who welcomed advice yesterday may need quiet companionship today. Giving chizuk begins with listening: What does this person need from me now?

Perhaps that is why Hashem begins with "כי עמך אני" - "I am with you." Before promising strength, assistance, and support, He assures us of His presence.

We cannot always remove another person's difficulty. But we can offer words that restore courage, hands that ease a burden, and a steady presence that helps a person remain standing. ■

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHEIDER
PIRKEI AVOT SERIES
Editor, Torah Tidbits

Serving God Out of Love: Rav Kook on the Soul's Natural Longing for God (Avot 1:3)

"Antignos of Socho received [the tradition] from Shimon Hatzadik. He used to say: Do not be like servants who serve the master in order to receive reward. Rather, be like servants who serve the master but not in order to receive reward…" (Pirkei Avot 1:3)

RAMBAM'S INTERPRETATION OF THE MISHNAH

Many commentators understand this mishnah as addressing those rare individuals who serve God on the highest spiritual plane: out of pure love and the profound joy of knowing that they are fulfilling His will. This is the service of the *chassid*, the pious individual who aspires to go beyond the letter of the law. Such a person is not motivated by the prospect of reward. The knowledge that he has pleased God is reward enough.



The Rambam, in his commentary on this mishnah, offers a similar explanation:

"Antignos taught that we should serve Hashem like servants who do not seek favors and benefits in return… His intention is that we serve Hashem out of pure love (*ovdim me'ahavah*), without expecting to receive benefits" (Rambam's Commentary to Avot 1:3).

But how can a person attain such a lofty level of devotion, in which the prospect of reward becomes inconsequential?

THE PARABLE OF THE MAN WHO SAVES A CITY

Rav Kook addresses this question by inviting us to imagine a heroic citizen who learns that an invading army or a sudden catastrophe threatens to destroy his entire city. Driven by love for his home and its inhabitants, he steps forward, risks his life, and succeeds in saving them all.

Overwhelmed with gratitude, the citizens gather to praise their rescuer and offer him rewards for his extraordinary courage.

Rav Kook then poses a penetrating question: What is the hero thinking as he receives their praise and gifts?

The true hero is hardly preoccupied with the recognition he might receive. His heart

is overflowing with joy because the city and its inhabitants have been saved. His deepest fulfillment lies not in the reward but in the good he has accomplished and the lives he has preserved.

The same is true of someone who serves God with sincerity and wholehearted devotion. The reward pales in comparison with the profound satisfaction of doing what is truly good and knowing that one's actions have fulfilled a higher purpose. The good itself is the source of fulfillment.

This is the spiritual ideal expressed in Antignos's teaching: to serve God not for what we might receive, but because we love Him and delight in doing His will (*Mussar Avicha*, ch. 2, sec. 4).


Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt"l

PASSIONATE LOVE

The Rambam describes this ideal of divine service in *Hilchot Teshuvah* (10:2–3), where he portrays the love a Jew should cultivate for the Almighty as an intense, passionate attachment. To convey its depth, he compares it to the consuming love of a person who is so captivated by another that his thoughts continually return to the beloved.

The biblical book that most vividly expresses this kind of love, the Rambam explains, is *Shir HaShirim*, which portrays the passionate relationship between lovers. He also points to Abraham as an outstanding example of someone who discovered God and devoted himself to making that relationship known to others.

In more recent generations, one of the most remarkable Torah leaders to embody this passionate love of God was Rav Kook. His life and teachings offer a vivid illustration of what it means to serve God not for reward, but out of an overwhelming love that gives meaning to everything else.

UNQUENCHABLE LOVE

Love of the Creator was one of Rav Kook's defining spiritual qualities and a foundational theme of his thought. The words of the *Shema*, commanding us to love God with all our heart, soul, and might, were not merely an ideal he taught; they were a reality he sought to embody in his life.

His close disciple, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, recounted a remarkable incident from the summer of 1921, when Rav Kook was on vacation. Rav Charlop came to visit him, and the two spent much of the night discussing Torah.

The following morning, Rav Charlop noticed something unusual. Rav Kook departed from his customary practice of avoiding other activities before prayer and approached the owner of the hostel. He began discussing practical methods for growing plants and fruit trees in the surrounding area. The conversation continued until Rav Kook was finally able to turn to his morning prayers.

Surprised by this departure from his usual routine, Rav Charlop asked him for an explanation.

"On this particular morning," Rav Kook



replied, “a fierce thirst for God was stirring in my heart, to the extent that I feared my soul would depart from my body during prayer. I had to reduce the intensity of these sacred emotions by speaking and thinking about practical matters before entering prayer.” (*Who Was Rav Kook*, Rabbi Dov Kidron, 2024, p. 52)

The account offers a striking glimpse into Rav Kook’s inner world. His challenge was not to awaken a desire for God, but to contain a longing so intense that he feared it might overwhelm him.

For Rav Kook, this love was not an abstract philosophical concept. It was a living force that shaped his daily experience.

HOW RAV KOOK’S PRAYER INSPIRED HIS DISCIPLES

Rav Kook’s passionate love of God was evident not only in his personal life but also in the profound effect he had on those who encountered him. Two particularly revealing accounts concern Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop and Rabbi David Cohen, known as the Nazir, both of whom became among his most devoted disciples.

During the First World War, the Nazir traveled to meet Rav Kook. Already a distinguished Torah scholar with extensive philosophical knowledge, he was searching for a teacher who could guide him in his intellectual and spiritual development. He discussed various philosophical questions with Rav Kook, yet left their conversation feeling that he had not quite found what he was seeking. That night, he retired with the sense that his “life was hanging in the balance,” as he later described it.

Early the next morning, the Nazir awoke to the sound of Rav Kook chanting the biblical passages concerning the Binding of Isaac (*Akeidat Yitzchak*), recited as part of the preparatory order of sacrifices before Shacharit. The experience transformed him. Hearing Rav Kook’s prayer, he recognized the spiritual master he had been searching for and resolved to become his disciple.

That decision would shape the Nazir’s life and work. He devoted himself to editing Rav Kook’s writings, including *Orot HaKodesh*, and postponed his own literary ambitions. His planned work, *Kol HaNevu’ah*, remained unfinished.

Rav Charlop’s experience was strikingly similar. He first encountered Rav Kook in Jaffa on Shavuot and spent the night listening to his Torah discussions and lectures. Yet what captivated him most was hearing Rav Kook recite *Akdamut* during the Shacharit service.

In both cases, it was not merely Rav Kook’s intellectual brilliance or the content of his teachings that won over these exceptional young scholars. It was the palpable intensity of his prayer - the sense that his relationship with God was immediate, profound, and alive.

Their experiences suggest that prayer can communicate something that intellectual discussion alone cannot: the reality of a love that animates the whole person.

THE SOUL’S NATURAL LONGING FOR GOD

If love of God is so central to spiritual life, how does this love emerge? And what role does prayer play in expressing it?

For Rav Kook, the longing for God is not simply an emotion that a person must manufacture at a designated time. It is rooted in the soul itself. Prayer gives expression to a yearning that is already present, even when it remains hidden beneath the concerns of everyday life.

Rav Kook develops this idea through his interpretation of Isaac’s prayer in the field:

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב

"Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening" (Genesis 24:63).

The meaning of the Hebrew word *lasuach* is debated among biblical commentators. Rashbam understands it as referring to vegetation, connecting the word to the idea of plants or shrubs. According to this interpretation, Isaac went out to attend to his fields and orchards.

Rashi, by contrast, connects *lasuach* with *sichah*, meaning speech or conversation. On this reading, Isaac went out to meditate or converse in prayer, establishing the precedent for the afternoon prayer, Minchah.

Why does the Torah use this unusual word rather than a more familiar term for prayer? And is there particular significance to the fact that Isaac went out into the field toward evening?

THE SOUL'S INNER PRAYER

Rav Kook often reexamines familiar concepts to reveal their deeper spiritual dimensions. His understanding of prayer is a striking example:

"The soul is always praying. It constantly seeks to fly away to its Beloved."

Prayer, in this sense, is not limited to the formal words recited at prescribed times. It is the soul's continual yearning for its source, an inward movement toward God that persists even when a person is occupied with ordinary affairs.

The prayers we recite are the outward expression of this deeper, ongoing movement. To pray meaningfully is therefore to become aware of the soul's underlying longing and give voice to it.

The word *lasuach* offers an additional insight. If the word evokes both prayer and vegetation, the Torah may be suggesting a connection between spiritual life and the natural growth of plants. Just as a tree sends out branches and blossoms in accordance with its nature, the soul naturally reaches toward God. Prayer nourishes this inner life, allowing the soul's spiritual capacities to grow and flourish.

This perspective also sheds light on the timing of Isaac's prayer. The late afternoon, as the working day draws to a close, can provide an opportunity to step back from practical concerns and turn inward. As the demands of the day recede, a person can become more attentive to the soul's deeper aspirations.

Isaac's prayer thus becomes an illustration of a broader principle: spiritual longing is not an artificial addition to life, but a natural movement of the soul that can emerge with particular clarity when we make room for it. (*Gold from the Land of Israel*, pp. 56–57; adapted from *Ein Ayah*, vol. I, p. 109.)

THE NATURAL LOVE OF A CHILD

If the soul's longing for God is natural, we might expect to find traces of it even in the youngest children, before they have acquired extensive knowledge or developed sophisticated theological ideas. Rav Kook explores this possibility through a discussion in the Talmud.

The Talmud (Berachot 48a) teaches that a child who knows to Whom a blessing is being recited may be included in a *zimmun*, the communal invitation to recite Birkat HaMazon. This raises an interesting question: How can a minor, who is not yet obligated in the relevant commandments, participate in fulfilling this communal religious obligation?

Rav Kook offers a penetrating explanation. Understanding God is not a matter of intellectual knowledge alone. Each person's conception of the Divine is shaped by his or her intellectual capacity, education, and depth of

learning. Yet beneath these differences lies a more fundamental awareness: a natural belief in God that can be present even in a young child.

From this perspective, a child who knows to Whom a blessing is addressed possesses an essential foundation of religious awareness. Although the child may lack the knowledge and sophistication of an adult scholar, the underlying recognition of God connects them both. The child's inclusion in a *zimmun* can thus be understood as reflecting this shared foundation of faith.

Rav Kook's interpretation highlights an important distinction: intellectual understanding of God develops over time, but the soul's basic orientation toward the Divine need not depend entirely on intellectual maturity. (*Ein Ayah*, Berachot, ch. 7, sec. 26.)

A CHASSIDIC TEACHING: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM A CHILD

A similar idea appears in a teaching attributed to the Maggid of Mezeritch, the celebrated disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. He taught that there are three qualities we should learn from a child.

First, a child is rarely content to remain idle. We, too, should fill our lives with purposeful activity.

Second, a child can be happy without any particular reason. Adults, who often make their happiness dependent on external circumstances, can learn from this simple capacity for contentment.

Third, a baby cries persistently until the mother responds. From this, we can learn about the instinctive persistence with which a person turns to God in prayer, continuing to call out until the prayer is answered.

These three qualities - activity, contentment, and persistent yearning - offer different lessons. The third, in particular, returns us to Rav Kook's understanding of prayer. A child instinctively recognizes dependence on someone beyond itself, turning toward a source of protection and care. In a similar way, prayer emerges from the recognition that we are not entirely self-sufficient and that our deepest needs lead us beyond ourselves.

The child's cry is not the product of philosophical reflection. It is an immediate expression of need and relationship. In this respect, it offers a powerful image of the soul's natural turn toward God. ■



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בס"ד

Choosing Holiness

"It is permissible to for Jews to live anywhere in the world, with the exception of the land of Egypt." So states the Rambam (Hilchot Melachim 5:7), citing three biblical verses that prohibit the return of Jews to Egypt. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sukkah 5:1) records that there were three instances in which Jews did return to Egypt, with tragic consequences: Once in the days of Sancheriv, the Assyrian king who destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel - this group was condemned by the Navi Yeshayahu; once in the time of Yochanan ben Kareach, as described by Yirmiyahu, who condemned this group as well; and a third group during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, with tragic consequences graphically described by the gemara.

What is the reason behind this prohibition? In the halacha following the one above, the Rambam writes: "For their deeds are more depraved than all other lands." The verse brought by Maimonides to substantiate this contention is somewhat difficult, for it seems to equate the corrupt behavior of the Egyptians to that of the nations of Cana'an: "Like the deeds of the land of Egypt where you resided you shall not do, and like the deeds of the land of Cana'an to which I am bringing you you shall not do..." (Vayikra 18:3). Historically, one could argue as well that many other countries in which Jews have resided throughout the centuries of exile impacted negatively upon our spiritual identity.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l (Likkutei Sichot 19: Ki Tetzei 2) raises another question regarding the Rambam's statement. Regarding the law prohibiting marriage to an Egyptian, the Rambam himself decreed that the prohibition is no longer in effect, since when Sancheriv conquered Egypt, he uprooted the indigenous population and replaced it with people from other nations he had conquered, as was his policy across the Assyrian empire. In consequence, we can no longer consider the people living in Egypt today to be those prohibited by the Torah to enter the congregation of Hashem; therefore, teaches the Rebbe, if the Rambam maintained it was still in effect, the prohibition to return to Mitzrayim must be connected to the land itself rather than to its inhabitants. Furthermore, in Hilchot Melachim, the Rambam went on to say that if the land of Egypt were to be conquered



by a Jewish king with the authority of a Bet Din, then it would be permissible to settle there. The Rebbe explains that such a conquest would bring about a change in the essence of the land, which would change its halachic status.

What essential characteristic of the land would be changed by its conquest by a Jewish king? Rav Chaim Vital taught in the name of the Arizal that wherever a Jew lives, his mission is to reveal the sparks of holiness that are hidden in that place. When the Jews left Mitzrayim at the time of the exodus, the pasuk states: "וַיְנַצְּלוּ אֶת מִצְרָיִם" *They emptied Mitzrayim*. On the surface, the verse is teaching that the Jewish people left Mitzrayim with great wealth, as promised in Brit bein HaBetarim. On a deeper level, explained the Arizal, when the Jewish people left Mitzrayim they emptied it of all the sparks of holiness that had been trapped there, leaving it spiritually empty. That is why it's prohibited for Jews to settle there, until the time when holiness may be restored by the establishment of a Jewish kingdom.

The determination of the remnant of the Jews who had survived the Churban and the massacre in Mitzpa to flee to Mitzrayim, despite Yirmiyahu's prophecy that they should remain in Eretz Yisrael and begin to rebuild the land, was rooted in their lack of interest in living a life of holiness. Life in Israel can be challenging. It is a life grounded in Emunah and Bitachon. Hashem's Presence is manifest in every grain of sand, in every raindrop or lack thereof. It takes commitment and determination to live here, and is a great privilege and responsibility. The followers of Yochanan ben Kare'ach rejected that option, preferring to return to a place devoid of sanctity, and their spiritual degradation led to their physical end. Today, as we return in greater and greater numbers to Eretz Yisrael, may we do so with consciousness of the holiness of this place in which we are privileged to live as we await the ultimate redemption and rebuilding, במהרה בימינו, אמן. ■

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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**, which just began it's fourth 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.



RABBI ELYADA GOLDWICHT

Founder, Semichas Chaver Program
Rav Kehillat Lev Ra'anana

Haran: Unlocking the Secret DNA of Jewish History

We often read the genealogy lists at the end of Parshat Noach, *le'havdil,* like the unskippable ads before a YouTube video, eagerly waiting for the main story of Avraham in Parshat Lech Lecha. But every word of Torah is more precious than diamonds.

Look closely at Avraham's brother, Haran. Trace his lineage and you will discover an astounding fact: Haran is the father of Sarah, the grandfather of Rivkah (via Milkah and Betuel), and the great-grandfather of Rachel and Leah (via Lavan)! Furthermore, through his son Lot, Haran is the direct ancestor of Ruth, King David, and Mashiach!


Major Aryeh Ziering Hy"d

This leads to an undeniable question: What extraordinary merit enabled this seemingly minor figure to become the sole biological ancestor of all our Matriarchs and the Davidic Dynasty?

THE CHOICE AT *UR KASDIM*

The answer emerges when we combine Rashi with the *Midrash Agada*. Prior to Avraham's rescue, Haran was known as a priest of fire-worship. When Nimrod threw Avraham into the fiery furnace and Avraham walked out unharmed, Nimrod turned to Haran and asked, "Whose side are you on?"

Haran faced a profound dilemma. He knew that if he sided with idol worshipers, his life would be spared, but the pagans would then attribute Avraham's miraculous rescue to the supposed powers of his brother Haran, the priest of the fire-god. At the same time, Haran had come to recognize the truth of monotheism. He understood that if he openly declared his faith in Hashem and entered the furnace, Hashem would not perform a second miracle on his behalf. Saving Haran, the fire-priest, would only reinforce the people's false belief that both he and Avraham had been saved through Haran's mystical power over fire, thereby undermining the entire miracle of *Ur Kasdim*.

Knowing with absolute certainty that he would die, Haran jumped into the flames anyway. Haran became the very first person in human history to consciously give up his life for Hashem, the pioneer of *mesirat nefesh*. When Avraham entered the furnace, there was still the possibility that he would be saved. When Haran entered,

he knew he would not.

THE LEGACY IN OUR DNA

Haran's ultimate sacrifice embedded the spiritual DNA of *mesirat nefesh* into his descendants. Sarah saw her father give up his life for Hashem, and demands the spiritual purity of her home, insisting that Yishmael be sent away. Rivkah realizes that Yaakov must receive the *brachos* and is willing to risk everything to make it happen. Rochel steals her father's *avodah zarah* and begs Hashem for children so that she can pass these values on to the next generation. Leah, who was destined for Eisav, marries Yaakov and is willing to remain the "hated wife" rather than build a home with Eisav. And generations later, Ruth declares her absolute devotion to a life of Torah and the Jewish people: *"Where you die, I will die."*

Today in Israel, we walk among living angels who carry that very same legacy. A year ago on Sukkos, while eating at a restaurant in Jerusalem, I noticed that our waiter was wearing a necklace with a lion on it. When I inquired about it, he explained that he had served in *Oketz* and that the necklace was in memory of his fallen commander, Aryeh Ziering Hy"d.

Our entire table stopped, and together we sang *Shir HaMa'alot* in Aryeh's memory. As we sang, tears began streaming down the waiter's face. In that moment, I realized once again that our nation is filled with seemingly ordinary people carrying extraordinary, ancient souls, the same spirit of *mesirat nefesh* that has defined our people for generations.

LIVING *AL KIDDUSH HASHEM*

For those of us not on the front lines, our daily calling is to **live** *al Kiddush Hashem*. It means winning the daily battles: *davening* with genuine focus, learning Torah, keeping the *mitzvos*, putting our phones away during family time, *benching* from a *bentcher*, or reaching out to check on a friend in need.

Haran taught us that some things are worth dying for. Let us honor that eternal flame by showing the world how magnificent it is to **live** for Hashem every single day! ■

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MRS. MICHAL HOROWITZ

Torah Educator
Presenter for OU Women's Initiative

This week's dvar Torah is sponsored by the Glowinsky family in loving memory of **Avraham Chaim ben Avraham z'l**, on the occasion of the yarzheit 28 Tishrei

Go Forth

Ten generations after Noach, the Torah introduces us to Avram - who becomes Avraham Avinu, the father and founder of Am Yisrael.

Parshas Lech Lecha begins with the Torah narrative shifting from the story of humanity to the story of one man and his wife: Avraham and Sarah. Hashem calls out to Avraham when he is seventy-five years old, with the words that launch the story of the *Umah Yisraelis* (the Jewish nation).

The parsha opens with the first (in the Torah text) of Avraham's ten tests (Avos 5:3): וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֶךְ לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ - *And Hashem said to Avram: Go for yourself, from your land, and from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you* (Bereishis 12:1).

Read at the level of *pshat*, this verse seems to be a Divine travel order.

Yet, upon closer consideration, the lashon of the Torah begs to be explained.

Firstly: **לֶךְ לְךָ**. Why the double lashon (language), when "lech" alone means "go", and surely would have sufficed?

Secondly: **אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ** - "*to the land that I will show you.*" Why doesn't Hashem explicitly tell Avraham the name of the place where he is to journey to?

Rashi explains לך לך as "*for your benefit and for your good*." The command here is understood as Avraham's gain, not a loss. As Rashi says: "*And there I will make you into a great nation, but here, you will not merit to have children. Moreover, I will make your character known in the world*" (Rashi to Bereishis 12:1).

It is also compelling to note that Hashem commanded three levels of departure: *from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house*. Leaving a country is hard. Leaving the place you were born is even more challenging. Leaving your father's house - one's deepest roots - is the greatest test of all.

Yet Rashi highlights for us something remarkable about the Divine blessings that follow.

Travel, notes Rashi, diminishes three things: children, money, and fame (Rashi to Bereishis 12:2). Therefore, Hashem answers with three blessings to make up for what would normally be diminished: "*I will make you into a great nation*" - *children*; "*and I will bless you*" - *with wealth*; "*and I will make your name great*" - renown.

Hence, the three levels of departure - three levels of difficulty, are repaid with three levels of reward. What the journey costs, the promise repays.

As for the ambiguity of the destination: "*to the land that I will show you,*" Rashi

explains: "*He did not reveal the land to him immediately, in order to make it dear in his eyes and to give him reward for every command*" (Rashi to 12:1).

The Torah, and Chazal's understanding, are teaching us that every step of a difficult journey - especially when the end result is unseen and unknown - earns its own reward. Avraham had to walk with trust in Hashem - and himself - before he could walk with clarity.

Later in the parsha we see another aspect of this leaving. Only when Avraham finally separates from his nephew Lot does the word of Hashem return to him, as Rashi explains: "*As long as the wicked man was with him, the Divine speech withdrew from him*" (Rashi to 13:14). The journey for himself meant complete departure from the past - including the influence of Lot, which stood between him and closeness to G-d.

These lessons from the beginning of Avraham's journey teach us something fundamental about how Hashem leads us through our lives, and how we choose to take those journeys.

In our own lives, we are so often (proverbially) asked "to go" - to journey forth - into uncharted, and unknown waters. We may find ourselves in a new stage of life, facing a difficult decision, the reality of our children growing up and leaving home, or a situation, or change, that we did not choose. During these times, we think it would be helpful, and comforting, to know the destination when the journey begins.

However, the Torah here teaches us that Avraham was not given the end result either. He was given a Divine command, as well as a promise, but at this point, nothing more than that.

This holds a tremendous life lesson for us, as well as our children and students. As Avraham faced tests, so do we. Yet, as the man of faith, Avraham forged ahead, because he understood he was not told only to give things up from his past. He was promised by G-d what the giving up would build in the future.

Perhaps we, too, should view our journeys in the same way: not as what we will lose from this journey, but as what we stand to gain.

Through what the journey will teach us about ourselves and our strengths, through the closeness to Hashem we strive to attain, and through the meaningful relationships we will build along the way.

Avraham went forth not knowing where he would go, and became the father of a nation that walks in his ways.

May we have the courage to go forth when life calls upon us to do so. May we trust that Hashem always guides us on the proper path that is uniquely tailored for each one of us. And in this way, may we merit to become, like Avraham Avinu, a blessing to all around us.

■ **בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום**

Michal Horowitz is a Torah educator who lectures nationally throughout the United States, as well as internationally. Thousands of her shiur recordings are available online. She is a regular presenter for the OU Women's Initiative and the author of Abled: Living With a Disability, a Torah View (Mosaica Press). Michal lives in Woodmere, NY, with her family.

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JEN AIRLEY
Inspirational Speaker
Mother of Sgt. Binyamin Hy"d

Our Personal Lech Lecha

Nothing in life happens in a vacuum. The journeys we begin, the choices we make, and even the challenges we never imagined facing are often connected in ways we can only begin to understand much later.

When Avraham Avinu is commanded to offer his beloved son Yitzchak as a korban later in Parshat Vayera, the Torah introduces the command with two familiar words: לֶךְ לְךָ — "Lech Lecha" (Bereishit 22:2). These words take us back to the beginning of Avraham's journey of discovery, when Hashem first commanded him in our Parsha: "Lech Lecha from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house, to the land that I will show you" (Bereishit 12:1).


Binyamin Airley Hy"d

The journey that began with לֶךְ לְךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ — "Go to the land that I will show you" — continues with לֶךְ לְךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּה, the journey to Har HaMoriah for the Akeidah.

These are not two unrelated journeys. The first takes Avraham toward the land in which he, his family, and his descendants will take root. The second tests the very foundation of that future through his willingness to surrender the son who embodies its promise. The Lech Lecha that brought Avraham to Eretz Yisrael was only the beginning of a journey whose depths he could not yet have imagined.

Avraham follows Hashem, trusting completely in Divine guidance. Where will I settle? How long will the journey take? What awaits me when I arrive? He asks not a single question. Not even "Why?" He moves forward with complete submission and unwavering faith.

Years later, he faces an unimaginable command: to offer Yitzchak as a korban. The angel ultimately stops him, and a ram is offered in his son's place. Yet Avraham's willingness to place everything in Hashem's hands becomes an eternal part of our people's spiritual inheritance.

Acts of faith, commitment, sacrifice, and belonging are not abstract ideas to be studied in the parsha and left on the page. They are as relevant today as they were then. The Torah is alive, and its lessons speak to us now.

After I addressed the southern community of Nir Am at a ceremony on October 7, one of the participants asked whether our family had ever considered moving back to America after Binyamin was killed.

My son Yehudah, who was sitting beside me during the talk, immediately interjected: "Absolutely not!"

His response needed no deliberation. I went on to explain that our family had always felt

deeply connected to this land — to its extraordinary beauty, its history, its people, and its struggles. And since Binyamin was killed, that connection has become even deeper and more profound. We are now intertwined with the very fabric of this land in a way we could never have anticipated.

We came to Israel because we believed this was where our family belonged. We chose to build our lives here, raise our children here, and share in the joys and challenges of a nation returning to its homeland. We could not have known what that choice would eventually demand of us.

Our original Lech Lecha brought us here. But the journey did not end when we unpacked our suitcases, established our home, or built our lives in this land. In many ways, it was only the beginning. Now, twenty years later, we are still evolving: privately, personally and growing more connected with Israel's land and society- organically and intentionally.

There is a profound connection between Avraham's journey, which began with Lech Lecha, and the מ"ב מסעות — the 42 journeys of Bnei Yisrael from Egypt, through the wilderness, and finally to the plains of Moav, opposite Yericho. This connection is framed by the principle מעשה אבות סימן לבנים — "The deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children."

Avraham's journey and Bnei Yisrael's 42 journeys, as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks teaches, remind us that faith is not a static state but a continual process of movement and growth. Even after arriving in Eretz Yisrael, Avraham continues to travel — to Shechem, Beit El, Chevron, and even Egypt. His life is not defined by settling permanently in one place, but by a spiritual journey that continues to unfold.

The Degel Machaneh Ephraim, quoting his grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, teaches that every person experiences 42 journeys from the day of birth until the day they leave this world.

Avraham's personal journey thus becomes a spiritual blueprint for the national journey his descendants would undertake centuries later — a journey that continues for our people to this very day.

Perhaps this is one of the deeper messages of the repeated לֶךְ לְךָ in Avraham's life. A calling is not fulfilled through a single act of obedience, nor is our relationship with Hashem defined by one moment of faith. It is the journey itself that matters. We are "בדרך". It is not simply about reaching the ultimate destination, but about who we become along the way.

The journey unfolds in stages, and each stage asks something different of us. Sometimes, only in retrospect, do we recognize how the steps we took years earlier prepared us for the place where we stand today.

Avraham was told to go to a land Hashem would show him. He could not see the full future that awaited him. Neither can we. We move forward with faith, carrying both what we have lost and what we have been entrusted to continue building.

Lech Lecha was never simply about reaching a destination. It was about becoming part of a covenant, a people, and a journey larger than oneself.

With all its blessings and beauties.

With all its uncertainties and unknowns.

With Trust and Faith.

And so, our journey continues. ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit Beitbinyamin.org.



TORAH & PSYCHOLOGY

RABBI JEREMY PERLOW
Deputy Director of Torah Initiatives OU Israel
& DR. DEVORA PERLOW, PsyD

Finding our "Why"

The 2026 World Happiness Report ranked Israel eighth out of 147 countries, for the second year in a row. The ranking draws on 2023 to 2025, years that include October 7th and the war that followed.[1] Unquestionably, the Jewish people have been through a lot the last several years and are certainly not free of challenges. Yet life satisfaction remains among the highest in the world. What helps people carry a heavy reality, yet simultaneously feel so happy?

A DESTINATION WITHHELD

Hashem tells Avraham:

לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ

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

Hashem does not state the final destination. Many commentators have grappled with this question: Why withhold the destination? If a commander orders a soldier on a mission, or an employer relocates an employee, the first piece of information provided is the final address. Why leave Avraham in suspense?

Rashi (Bereishit 12:2), citing the Midrash, explains:

לֹא גִלָּה לוֹ מִיָּד, כְּדֵי לְחַבְּבָהּ בְּעֵינָיו, וְלָתֵת לוֹ שָׂכָר עַל כָּל דִּבּוּר וְדִבּוּר

"He did not reveal it to him immediately, in order to endear it in his eyes, and to give him reward for each and every statement"

Rashi highlights this same pattern of communication later on at the Akeidah:

קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק... עַל אַחַד הֶהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ

"Take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak... on one of the mountains that I will tell you of" (Bereishit 22:2).

In both journeys, the mission is revealed piece by piece. Rashi is teaching us that Hashem's goal wasn't only to bring Avraham to a particular place, but to make him *love* it before he arrived.[2]

1. To access the full report: https://files.worldhappiness.report/WHR26.pdf

2. Yet another illustration of this idea can be found regarding the site of the Beit Hamikdash which is not revealed to B'nei Yisrael at any point in the Torah, rather the location is referred to as "המקום אשר יבחר ה" "The place Hashem will choose" (see for example Devarim 12:5). Arguably, here too Hashem intended to engender within us a greater longing for a close relationship with Him.
Additionally, the Chizkuni (2:18) notes that Hashem intentionally withheld the creation of Chava until after Adam completed naming all the animals. It was at this moment that Adam personally felt the acute loneliness of his solitary state. Thus, when she was finally brought to him she was beloved in his eyes.
It appears that Hashem forced Adam to search, pine, and experience the emptiness of having no counterpart, so that the moment Chava was finally brought to him, he would be overcome with joy. We this from his first comment when he meets her: "זֹאת הַפַּעַם עֶצֶם מֵעֲצָמַי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי!" "This time! Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!" (Bereshit 2:23).

HOW DOES SUSPENSE BUILD LOVE?

The Gur Aryeh (Bereishit 12:2) explains the nuanced mechanism behind building this love. When a goal is withheld or revealed slowly, the mind naturally yearns for it. Every step taken without seeing the destination deepens our emotional investment.

The Radak (Bereishit 12:1) adds yet another dimension. Had Hashem simply shown Avraham an appealing description of a fertile land, following instructions would have been easy. By sending him into the unknown, Hashem magnified Avraham's devotion, because the commitment was to Hashem and not to a guaranteed outcome.

This uncertainty wasn't a flaw in the instructions. It *was* the instrument. Avraham's longing, and his commitment to a mission he couldn't fully see, were being built with every step.

WHY LOVE FIRST?

So why was it necessary for the love to develop so early in this process even before Avraham arrived? Hashem knew what awaited him. The Gemara teaches:

שְׁלֹשׁ מַתָּנוֹת טוֹבוֹת נָתַן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְכֻלָּן לֹא נִתָּנוּ אֶלָּא עַל יְדֵי יִסּוּרִין: תּוֹרָה, וְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְהָעוֹלָם הַבָּא

"Three precious gifts did the Holy One Blessed be He give to Israel, and none were given except through hardships: Torah, the Land of Israel, and the World to Come" (Berachos 5a).

Avraham's welcome to the land was a famine that forced him out (Bereishit 12:10). His life there would hold conflict and trials, and his descendants would face exile, war, and far greater challenges. Had Eretz Yisrael been just a destination on a map, the first famine might have broken him. But the land was beloved before it was difficult. Hashem didn't remove the hardship. He made sure Avraham met it already carrying a reason and it was this reason that provided him with the best possible tool in enabling him to rise to the challenge at hand.[3]

THE PSYCHOLOGY: MEANING CHANGES THE TASK

This is the central insight of Dr. Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. Frankl, an insightful psychiatrist who survived the Holocaust, built his work on his own experiences as a trained psychiatrist and then as a survivor of Auschwitz. A core observation he noted was that people are driven most by a search for meaning, not comfort. He developed logotherapy with this central theory in mind, that meaning in life and working towards our personal values is what fosters purpose and well-being in individuals. He quotes Nietzsche: "He who has a 'why' to live for, can bear almost any 'how'".

With this principle, note what Frankl is *not* saying. He isn't saying the "how" gets easier if we have a clear "why." He's saying the same difficulty feels different depending on whether we can name what it is for. He is highlighting that even when an experience feels tremendously overwhelming, we can transcend it when we have a clear purpose and vision.

See the full Rashi to Bereshit 12:2 for one additional example of this phenomena regarding Hashem's second set of instructions to Yonah (following Yonah's previously failed mission).

3. See אמרי ברוך, פרשת לך לך, מאמר א where Rabbi Baruch Simon develops this idea and adds that it is for this reason that the Torah, which is also acquired via יסורין, requires חביבות יתירה as well.

Think of a diaper change at 3:00 AM. In isolation, it's tedious, thankless work. Yet parents do it night after night without despair due to this exact principle. When this experience is connected to a child they love, and they're able to make that clear in their mind, the whole experience shifts. It's not about the specific physical task, but rather how it connects back to our values, what's important to us, that "why."

This is exactly Rashi's sequence. Avraham got the "why" before the "how," and Rashi's phrase "each and every statement" tells us that the "how" came one step at a time. Avraham never needed the whole map, only the next step and the reason for taking it.

NAME THE "WHY" BEFORE YOU NEED IT

Most of us only reach for our "why" in the middle of the difficulty, when we're depleted and it's hardest to find. Avraham's journey shows us a more effective practice:

1. **Build it in advance.** Identify one recurring difficulty, such as night wake-ups, a draining commute, keeping up a learning seder, or the pressures of life in Israel. Ask: *what do I love that this serves?* Spend time with that answer when you're not under strain.
2. **Name it at the moment of the task.** As you begin, say it in one sentence: "I'm doing this because _____." This reconnects the task to the story it belongs to. Focusing our attention on the purpose and meaning behind us recenters us with purposeful intention.

This doesn't make the task painless. Avraham still faced a famine. But a hardship we can name a purpose for no longer defines the whole experience.

HOLDING TIGHT TO OUR "WHY"

Perhaps the Happiness Report is pointing to this very idea. Whether born in Eretz Yisrael or having found the courage to pack up their belongings and return to their homeland, those who live here in Eretz Yisrael have found their "why": a connection to the land, the people, and a purpose larger than themselves. That purpose provides the strength and resilience to carry a heavy reality with a smile.

May we be zoche to find our "why" and continue to hold tight to it, carrying it with us every step of our journey. ■

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לעילוי נשמת **מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל**

The Missing Ingredient: Connection

Julie asks:

I'm so frustrated. I've been an ambassador for a while, I keep setting up this great guy and the dates keep failing. I finally asked the last 3 people what it was and to be specific. The women said, "I feel like this is an interview, there's just no connection." And they have all give him a second date. He just can't get beyond that. How can I help him?

Aleeza answers:

I recently dealt with a similar issue. A wonderful man kept getting the same feedback: pleasant date, good conversation, no connection. He was confused. "I'm asking questions. I'm listening. What am I missing?"

He was learning about her life without letting her feel him in the conversation.

"Where did you grow up?"

"What do you do?"

"How many siblings do you have?"

All reasonable questions. But if every answer leads straight to another question, she starts feeling like she's filling out a form.

While changing the questions he asks is one way to help him improve another way is to help him slow down and stay with an answer.

If she says, "I'm close with my sister," he can ask with curiosity, "What makes you two so close?"

Now she might share that her sister supported her through a difficult year. There's your opening. Stay there.

"That sounds like it meant a lot to you. What did she do that helped?"

Notice: we're following something she offered. We're giving her room to tell us who she is.

And he needs to show up while she's speaking. Put the phone away. Turn toward her. Nod when something resonates. Lean in naturally. Let his face respond. If she's sharing something funny, smile! If she's sharing something meaningful, give it a moment before speaking.

Silence can give someone space to finish a thought.

Then help him add himself to the conversation.

"My brother and I have that kind of relationship. He can usually tell something's wrong before I say anything."

Now she has something to respond to.

The rhythm I'd teach him is simple: ask, listen, respond, share. Let the conversation move between them.

He can also name what he appreciates, specifically and honestly.

"I like how much thought you put into showing up for your friends."

That tells her he's noticing her character.

It also lets her experience his warmth.

Before his next date, practice together for ten minutes. Tell him a small story and notice what happens. Does he follow your answer? Does he acknowledge what you said? Does he share anything personal? Give him one adjustment at a time so he can actually use it.

His next goal: leave knowing something that matters to her, and let her discover something that matters to him.

He doesn't need to manufacture chemistry or force vulnerability. He needs to become more present, curious, and willing to be known.

May Hashem help him bring his heart into the conversation, and meet someone who wants to bring hers, too. That's where connection has room to grow.

Blessings,

Aleeza ■

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WELL, IT'S RATHER EASIER SAID THAN DONE!
WELL, DUH, ISN'T EVERYTHING?!
WELL, NO, NOT EVERYTHING! VISITING THE WELSH TOWN OF LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWLLLLANTYSILIOGOGOGOCH ISN'T!
OK, DUDE, WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
ER... THE 15TH FLOOR, I BELIEVE...
RIIIIGHT... SO... EXPLAIN THE LOGIC TO ME AGAIN...?
I MAY AS WELL PRESS "RECORD"...
WELL, WHEN G-D GIVES AVRAHAM THE PROMISE OF THE LAND, HE FIRST TELLS AVRAHAM TO "RAISE YOUR EYES AND SEE..."
THE MESHECH CHOCHMA EXPLAINS THAT...
ARRGH, GET OFF ME, YOU FOUL PIGEON! NO, I DON'T HAVE "TUPPENCE A BAG"...
AHEM... SORRY...
ISRAEL IS THE LAND OF G-D! AGAIN, LOOKING AT IT ON "GROUND-LEVEL" QUITE OFTEN ALL YOU'LL SEE IS A MESS OF TURMOIL, RIOTS, AND, ADMITTEDLY, SOME RATHER GOOD FALAFEL...
BUT THINKING THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO THIS LAND IS A VERY LIMITED OUTLOOK! IT'S A TRAVESTY! IT'S BURYING YOUR HEAD IN THE GROUND!
WE MUST RAISE OUR EYES TO LOOK AT REALITY HERE FROM A GODLY PERSPECTIVE!
...TO SEE G-D'S HAND IN EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON HERE, TO SEE HIM GIVING US THIS LAND, BIT BY BIT, AS HE PROMISED US! SEE?
GREAT, DUDE... AND YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT YOU REALLY THOUGHT THAT A "HIGHER VANTAGE POINT" ACTUALLY MEANS CLIMBING 15 FLOORS UP?
IT NEVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT YOU COULD "RAISE YOUR EYES" TO A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE FROM WAY DOWN HERE?
ER... HA HA... THERE MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OR TWO ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS TO CLIMBING UP HERE THAT I CHOOSE NOT TO DISCLOSE AT THIS...
BENTZI! ARE YOU TRYING TO BREAK INTO THE MANAGEMENT KITCHENETTE AGAIN?!
ME?! ER... THE VERY THOUGHT! I WAS JUST... ER... THE MESHECH CHOCHMA DOES, IN FACT, SAYS THAT...
AAARGH!!
OH YEAH, NOW I GET WHAT YOU MEANT! LOOKING AT THINGS FROM STREET-LEVEL REALLY IS BURYING YOUR HEAD IN THE GROUND...
TALK ABOUT MAKING AN IMPACT...



YAFIT ATLAS

BEIT SHEMESH DIRECTOR

REVEALED BEAUTY

As Avraham and Sarah embark on their journey to a new land, one filled with uncertainty, they are immediately confronted with famine. Their next step is clear: they must descend to Egypt in search of food. As they journey together toward Egypt, we encounter one of my favourite moments between Avraham and Sarah-a moment that is so easy to miss if we do not stop to pay attention. Along the way, they stop for a drink of water, and Avraham says to Sarah, "הִנֵּה-נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אִשָּׁה יְפַת-מַרְאֶה אָתְּ" ("Behold, now I know what a beautiful woman you are").

At first glance, you do not need to be a marriage expert to recognise that this is not exactly the most romantic comment. Now you know? After all these years? Why is Avraham suddenly so struck by Sarah's beauty? The question becomes even more intriguing when we consider the many sources that describe the extraordinary extent of Sarah's beauty. Surely, her physical beauty would have been the first thing Avraham noticed about her!

Of course, Avraham had always known that Sarah was beautiful. Her beauty was undeniable. But perhaps the key to understanding this moment lies in the way Avraham saw the world. Avraham lived with an awareness of the spiritual reality beneath the physical one. When he looked at Sarah, he saw far more than her outward appearance; he saw her soul. Her physical beauty was another expression of the spiritual beauty that radiated from within her.

As they approached Egypt, a land associated with immorality, something changed. Avraham suddenly became aware of Sarah's physical beauty, too. It is almost as if he was seeing another dimension of her for the first time: "I always knew you were beautiful on the inside, but now I am struck by just how beautiful you are on the outside, too."

Now we have come to the point of why I love this mini-story within the larger story. As we live our lives trying to emulate our forefathers and foremothers, we can see how much love they expressed. This gives us a roadmap not only for navigating our own relationships, but also for understanding the important place that love has in our everyday lives.

Shabbat Shalom



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TRUE EMUNAH

In Parshat Lech Lecha, Hashem tells Avraham, לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך - leave your country, your birthplace, and your father's home.

Why does Hashem repeat these different descriptions? Wouldn't it have been enough to simply tell Avraham to leave his country?

The Ramban explains that these words teach us about the difficulty of Avraham's

nisayon. Hashem lists the places Avraham must leave, from the easiest to the hardest. Leaving his country was difficult; leaving the place where he grew up was even harder; and leaving his father's home, where his family lived, was the hardest of all. By listing each one separately, the Torah emphasises just how great Avraham's challenge was.

The Radak adds another idea to this nisayon. Hashem does not tell Avraham where he is going. Avraham must leave everything familiar behind without knowing his destination. This shows us how strong his emunah was and how completely he trusted Hashem.

Later, the Torah says, ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן. Rashi explains that Avraham converted the men to Judaism, while Sarah converted the women. They brought people closer to Hashem and taught them about emunah.

According to the simple meaning (פשט), אשר עשו בחרן refers to the people and wealth that Avraham and Sarah acquired in Charan, showing that they became wealthy and had servants who travelled with them.

Avraham teaches us that true emunah means trusting Hashem, even when we cannot see where the journey will lead. ■







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