

BS"D

Hashem continue to assist us, and bring closer the geulah shelaimah, bi'mihayra bi'yameinu.



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ON **Lech Licha** - 5768

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From: Avi Lieberman <AteresHaShavua@aol.com>

Subject: ATERES HASHAVUA

Mesivta Ateres Yaakov 1170A William Street Hewlett NY, 11557
(516)-374-6465 AteresHaShavua@aol.com

EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss <Easykgh@aol.com>]

Weekly Insights from Moreinu HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

Soon after Avraham's miraculous victory over the four kings, Hashem appeared to Avraham to assure him that he would safeguard him in the future, as well. The Ramban explains that Avraham's concerns were twofold; that the four kings or their successors would attempt to rebuild their armies, and seek vengeance from Avraham, and that he would die childless, without leaving an heir. As such, Hashem appeared to Avraham to assure him that he would continue to merit Divine protection and assistance.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l uses this Ramban to explain an enigma with regard to the wording of the Shemonah Esrei that we say every day. In the first bracha, we praise Hashem as being a "Melech Ozer U'Moshia U'Magen" A King who assists, saves, and shields. The word "Ozer" means that Hashem assists a person in a time of need, the word "Moshia" praises the fact that Hashem saves us from our troubles, and the word "Magen" praises Hashem for protecting us from any difficulties. These words seem to be somewhat out of order. Seemingly, it would have made more sense that we first praise Hashem for protecting us from trouble, and then, should Hashem deem it necessary that we experience some misfortune, that Hashem assist and save us. Why do we reverse the seemingly logical order of events?

Rav Yaakov answers that the Shemonah Esrei was written based on the story of Avraham Avinu. In the case of Avraham Avinu, Avraham first merited Hashem's assistance in his miraculous defeat of the four powerful armies, and only then davened for continued protection from any future troubles. As such, we too first beg Hashem for assistance in times of need, and only then do we ask Hashem to save and shield us from any future hardships.

May we be zocheh to merit Hashem's protection for the entire Klal Yisroel, so that we need not endure any more hardships, and so that even if it is decreed that we must endure suffering, that

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Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman
Parshas Lech Lecha 5768

Read about Avraham's miraculous victory, how with a handful of men – 318 men – he overcame the armies of four kings, and saved Lot and his countrymen.

go even further – it wasn't 318 men – it was אליעזר whose name is גימטריא is 318 – just Lot and Avraham fought the battle – reminded of line in Henry V – would you and I alone could fight this battle royal.

Read how Avraham returns with the freed captives and property and is met by מלך סדום who says – תן לי הנפש והרכוש קח לך. To which he responds – נעל ואם אקח מכל אשר לך ולא תאמר אנכי אם – העשירתי את אברהם.

Rashi brings חז"ל – in merit of חוט merited ציצית, in merit of נעל merited מפרשים – and all the תפילין wonder what is the connection – why is this appropriate reward?

Actually Avraham's behavior is puzzling. Why shouldn't he take a reward from מלך סדום? After all wasn't it coming to him? He had put his life in jeopardy, gone to such great lengths, saved his kingdom – why this fastidiousness?

Especially puzzling – because earlier, when Avraham went to מצרים, he said to שרה: If I say you're my wife they'll kill me, and take you; I'll say you're my sister, I can play them off against each other – and that way – יתנו לי מתנות – למען ייטב לי בעבורך – So Avraham didn't seem to be so adamant against taking מתנות from פרעה – why does he set himself so against taking from מלך סדום?

Let's focus on another episode. Avraham returns to battle field, after defeating the חמרת בארות חמרי, full of slime pits. Says Rashi:

שהיה הטיט מוגבל שם, ונעשה נס למלך סדום שיצא משם, לפי שהיו באומות מקצתן שלא היו מאמינים שניצול אברהם מאור כשדים מכבשן האש, וכיון שיצא זה מן באברהם למפרע החמרת האמינו.

Obvious question: How does miracle happening to מלך סדום – idol worshipper – strengthen people's faith in אברהם and what he represents? It's like saying – a miracle should happen to the Pope so people will believe in Yiddishkeit. Wouldn't it have the opposite effect?

Answers רמב"ן – the נס happened when אברהם returned, as he passed by. So it was clear to an unbiased observer that it was בזכות אברהם, it was because מלך סדום was associated with אברהם, with אברהם's family, because he is in אברהם's orbit – that is why נס happened.

But – as often happens – people choose their own perspective. People see events through the prism of their own biases.

No doubt מלך סדום was saved because of אברהם, but he chose to see it differently –

ויצא מלך סדום לקראתו, אמר ר' אבה בר כהנא התחיל לקשקש לו בזבנו, אייל מה אתה ירדת לכבשן האש וניצלת אף אני ירדתי לחמור וניצלתי.

The tail began to wag the dog. I'm just as great as you – my god as your G-d.

And so when מלך סדום offered אברהם money אברהם understood that what was at stake was people's perception of the miraculous events that had just occurred.

If אברהם were to take the money, he would be seen as a client of מלך סדום, someone on מלך סדום's payroll. And that would affect the world's perspective of the events that had occurred – מלך סדום's rescue from the בארות חמרי – and the victory in general. If אברהם were to be seen as a dependent of מלך סדום – then everything that had

happened would be seen as due to מלך סדום and to the power of his עיני. Only by proudly refusing – could אברהם make it clear that he was no satellite of סדום, מלך סדום, that he was a force of his own, that he was in so sense a client of סדום מלך but, on the contrary, it was מלך סדום who was saved because he was lucky enough to be, for the moment, in the sphere of אברהם.

אברהם understood that what was at stake was חילול השם and קידוש השם. To take מלך סדום's money would nullify the tremendous קידוש השם that had occurred, and transform it into a חילול השם. And so he refused – סרוך נעל אם מחוט ועד – not a red cent.

And so אברהם merited that his children should be given the מצות of ציצית and תפילין. What is the connection?

אברהם the badges of a Jew. In the olden days there were no yarmulkes – knitted or black – nobody wore a black hat – they all wore the same kafiya, probably – but a Jew was instantly recognizable because of the ציצית on the corners of his clothes, and the תפילין on his head.

And that is a tremendous responsibility. Because being recognized as a Jew means that people judge אידישקייט by our behavior. We all know that. Dickens put it very well, in Our Mutual Friend: "For it is not... with the Jews as with other peoples. Men say, 'This is a bad Greek, but there are good Greeks. This is a bad Turk, but there are good Turks.' Not so with the Jews. Men find the bad among us easily enough – among what peoples are the bad not easily found? – but they take the worst of us as samples of the best; they take the lowest of us as presentations of the highest; and they say "All Jews are alike."

And so being given these מצות, which so readily identify us for who we are, imposes on us a tremendous responsibility, but they make each one of us a representative of the entire Jewish people, and of the רבשיע Himself. And so before we could be given such מצות the question had to be asked – could we live up to them? Did we deserve to be given such מצות that would immediately identify us as the רבשיע chosen people, instantly recognizable – to carry the responsibility of קידוש השם, even when it might require sacrifice, even when we might be tempted otherwise.

But the assurance that we could come from אברהם. Because he had demonstrated that capacity to forgo fantastic wealth – the booty of five kingdoms – so as not to cause a חילול השם, he inculcated that capacity in his children as well.

And therefore – בשכר שאמר מחוט ועד סרוך נעל – his children could be entrusted with the responsibility of חוט של ציצית ורצועה של תפילין.

We no longer wear תפילין the whole day long, nor do all of us wear our ציצית dangling outside of our pants. But we are still instantly recognizable as Jews. Even if we take off our yarmulkes – there's not a gentile who doesn't know instantly what we are.

Each of us represents אידישקייט to the outside world. That imposes tremendous responsibility. It's very natural, sometimes, to want to shirk that responsibility. It's a burden. And, unfortunately, we so often read in the newspapers about Jew who forgot that responsibility, and we cringe at the חילול השם that results.

It's important to remember the standard that אברהם אבינו set for us. However much we might be tempted, the temptation will never be as great as that offered אברהם – who was offered a king's ransom and who didn't have to do anything in return except smile for the camera together with מלך סדום. By refusing he set a standard for all time, and for all time bequeathed us the right and the privilege to wear our identity with pride, with dignity – and in such a way that נראו על עמי הארץ כי שם הי נקרא עליך ויראו ממך.

ravfrand@torah.org date Oct 19, 2007 12:39 AM subject Rabbi Frand on Parshas Lech Lecha mailed-by torah.org To sponsor an edition of the Rabbi Yissocher Frand e-mail list, go to <https://www.capalon.com/secure/torah/listDedicate.php?class1=35>. "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Lech Lecha These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 566, Learning Vs. Saving A Life. Good Shabbos!

Avraham Foreshadowed Self-Sacrifice To Make Aliyah

One of the major themes in Sefer Bereshis is the theme that events that happen to the Patriarchs foreshadow events that will happen to their children (ma'aseh avos siman l'banim). The Patriarchs were trailblazers of future history. The fact, for example, that Avram was successful in his journey to Egypt, was able to withstand the trials and tribulations of that experience, and left there with great riches enabled subsequent generations to similarly survive the Egyptian experience and remain steadfast.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner and others point out that the fact that Avram was willing to risk his life and jump into the pit of fire in Ur Kasdim and the fact that Yitzchak was willing to give up his life and be bound on the altar enabled Jews thousands of years later to have the courage and the spiritual fortitude to act with self-sacrifice (mesiras nefesh) and great heroism for the sake of Judaism. This too is part of ma'aseh avos siman l'banim.

Rav Elya Svei once remarked that the test of "leave your land and your birthplace and your father's house to go to the land I will show you" [Bereshis 12:1] foreshadowed the mesiras nefesh that later generations had to fulfill the mitzvah of dwelling in the Land of Israel (yishuv Eretz Yisrael).

Many people look at the prospect of giving up the comforts of America and going to live in Eretz Yisrael as an act of great self-sacrifice. But 140 years ago, when the disciples of the Vilna Gaon went to Eretz Yisrael, it involved far greater mesiras nefesh. It was literally going to a land that had no economy or means of earning a livelihood. It involved great financial and physical risk. And yet people went with great self-sacrifice. Until this very day, there is self-sacrifice involved in making 'aliyah' and people do it. From where do the Jewish people get this strength of determination? It was foreshadowed by the self-sacrifice involved in Avram's leaving his home and his birthplace to travel "to the land that Hashem showed him."

Lot Was Corrupted by Wealth

Towards the beginning of the parsha, the pasuk says: "So Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him; Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran." [Bereshis 12:4]. We tend to overlook this. We make a big deal about the sacrifice of Avram leaving his home and his birthplace. However, the fact that "Lot went with him" is forgotten in the shuffle.

Why did Lot go with Avram? He had no explicit or even implicit command to accompany his uncle. He went along because he wanted to be with Avram Avinu. He knew that Avram was his spiritual lifeline. Lot is also deserving of our admiration and accolades for the mesiras nefesh he demonstrated in following Avram on this spiritual mission.

However, what happens a mere chapter later? Like Avram, he prospered in the Land of Canaan. He made it big. He accumulated much sheep, cattle, and tents. At that point things started getting uncomfortable. Avram and Lot could not live together any longer. Battles broke out between their shepherds. Lot decided he must part company with Avram. Where of all places in the world does he decide to go? Sodom.

This same Lot who demonstrated such righteousness just one chapter earlier by following his uncle to an unknown destination now throws his lot in with the most decadent society in the world! What happened to Lot between Bereshis 12:4 and Bereshis 13:5?

Rav Elya Meir Block explains that what happened to Lot was very simple. He made money. Money is the great corrupter. Money does strange things

to people. Wealth is one of the great tests of mankind. The same person who was totally righteous becomes a different person after he earns a few dollars. The great Lot who left everything to follow Avram, is now willing to give up Avram for a few hundred head of cattle.

"So Too Shall Be Your Descendants"

In a dramatic and famous pasuk, the Almighty takes Avram outside his tent and tells him: "Look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be!'" [Bereshis 15:5].

The simple reading of this narration is that Avram asked the Almighty what would be with his future legacy (after all, he had no children and was already an old man). G-d told him not to worry. He took him outside and asked him to count the stars. Avram was unable to count them and G-d told him that his descendants would also be too numerous to count. Avram believed Hashem and Hashem viewed this as righteousness on the part of Avram. This is the simple interpretation of this narration.

There are a few problems with such an understanding. First of all, it was not necessary for Avram to go outside to know that it is impossible to count the stars. He knew that there were billions of stars even before he started counting. The whole episode seems like somewhat of a charade. Second, the equation between the number of stars and the number of descendants of Avram does not seem to be something that should be taken literally. There seems to be a discrepancy of several orders of magnitude between the celestial population of stars and the earthly population of Jews, even Jews of all generations put together.

Rav Mordechai Kamenetsky gives an interesting interpretation. The Almighty was not interested in having Avram count the stars. He was showing him something symbolic. He wanted him to just look up at the heavens. Looking up at the heavens is looking at one of the great mysteries of the world. To this very day the stars, the heavens, the galaxies, the Milky Way fascinate man. They are one great mystery. The greatest scientists of our own generation are still baffled about what goes on in the deep recesses of outer space. Scientists will be studying the stars from now until the end of time.

The Almighty takes Avram outside his tent and tells him "You don't understand, Avram, how your legacy will be preserved. After all, you have no children yet and you are an old man. I say that you will become a great nation, but you don't understand. Go outside and try to understand the stars. If stars are one of the mysteries of this world that defy explanation -- so too will your descendants defy explanation. Jews also are one of the great mysteries of the world.

Logically speaking, we should have been wiped off the face of the earth centuries ago. We are still around. This is a great mystery. Just like the stars and the heavens and the galaxies are a great mystery "so too shall be your descendants".

Mark Twain asked the question:

His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

The stars are a great mystery. "So, too, shall be your offspring."

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@torah.org This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Lech Lecha are provided below:

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Visit's Kiddush Hashem

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Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

A Return Visit's Kiddush Hashem

Visiting countries that treated our parents and grandparents with great inhumanity elicited passionate debate during the previous century. Many believed that a personal visit expressed a degree of comfort with one's host and that is offensive to those who suffered and to their surviving families. To be sure there were large numbers who were driven to visit, in order to keep atrocities part of human consciousness, or simply to satisfy an insatiable curiosity to see the context of one's roots and many a family story. Yet for so many the debate took the form of a personal dilemma having to choose between the acute pain of horrid memories and the honor that can be given to "kever avos"

Without at all intending to discuss the issue conclusively there is a passage in parshas Lech Lecho which adds to this conversation.

Avraham and Sarah return to Israel after their brief and frightening famine driven exile to Egypt, take the exact same route back and even stopping at the very same lodges. That is how the sages, quoted by Rashi, interpret the text (13:3), "And he went to his journeys from the south up to Beis El..." Rashi further quotes that Avraham was either modeling for us appropriate loyalty to places where one has been served well or appropriate concern to pay back loans, in this case loans that he had incurred as a poor and hungry nomad.

Some commentaries find that the idea of paying back one debts to be elemental and undeserving of any attention in the records of Avraham and Sarah. Indeed they would argue that stressing the simple repayment of loans, mandatory behavior which is expected of all, demeans the lessons that Avos have to teach us. As a result it has been suggested that Avraham had a "theological debt" to address (see Tuvcha Yabiyu). Surely, as Avraham uprooted himself yet another time at his G-d's seemingly meaningless bidding, his mission must have come under scrutiny by all that had contact with him. It stands to reason that Avraham and Sarah and ultimately Hashem Himself may have been the subject of many a cynical or skeptical wink and a nod

It follows that Avraham who would not miss an opportunity to bring respect to Hashem, returned to all those who questioned his beliefs on the way down. Avraham now a wealthy man could tell how he had been visibly protected by Hashem in Egypt and his faith had been rewarded.

This is not unlike the visit of the Ponevesher Rav to the Arch of Titus, simply to be able to create the vision of a vibrant Jew standing next to the silent stone record of what was once a great empire. In similar fashion we were all inspired many years ago by Anatole Sharansky, who came as a member of Knesset to stand in the cell in which he suffered solitary confinement for years.

This is the magnitude of the kiddush Hashem that Avraham wished to shape as he traveled back to Israel "to his journeys". Perhaps we too have been granted that opportunity or will be granted it, to be mekadash shem shamnayim with a return visit that will demonstrate Hashem's concern for His people and their mission.

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Halacha Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: In regard to Shabbos candle-lighting, whose customs should a woman follow — her husband's or her mother's?

Discussion: There is a general rule that once a woman gets married, she must follow her husband's customs — both leniencies and stringencies. Marriage signifies a wife's entrance into her husband's domain, and that entry obligates her to follow his customs.¹

It is possible, though, that there may be an exception to this rule in regard to Shabbos candle-lighting. Many women follow the example set by their mothers in matters of custom, such as the number of candles to light, the appropriate time to light candles on Yom Tov, etc. Often, their husbands do not object even though their own mothers followed a different custom. Is this contrary to the aforementioned rule?

It seems that there is a halachic source for women following their mother's custom. To prove this point, let us examine a well-known custom which is connected to the mitzvah of candle-lighting:

It is customary for many women to recite the blessing of shehecheyanu when they light candles for Yom Tov. Although this custom has no source or basis in Halachah — indeed, it may be halachically objectionable² — it has nevertheless become almost universally accepted.

Rav Yaakov Emden reports³ that he, personally, objects to this custom. Indeed, he rules that if a woman does not have the definite custom of reciting shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time, she should not do so. Nevertheless, he says, his wife — who saw this custom in her parents' home — does so, and he does not object. Since it is not halachically forbidden, he does not feel compelled to reject her minhag which she witnessed in her home.

Surely, Rav Yaakov Emden was aware that upon marriage, a woman ought to change her customs to follow her husband's. Still, he did not insist that his wife abandon her mother's custom and adopt his own. Perhaps Rav Yaakov Emden held that customs pertaining to candle-lighting are an exception to the general rule. Since, as mentioned above, our Sages made it the woman's responsibility to light candles, it becomes "her" mitzvah, to be followed according to her customs.⁴ Apparently, it is not incumbent upon the husband to insist that his wife alter the customs which she learned from her mother. Although she may do so if she likes, she is not required to do so.⁵

Question: May a woman daven Minchah after she has lit candles on Friday night?

Discussion: L'chatchilah, all poskim agree that she should daven Minchah before lighting candles. When a woman lights candles, she automatically accepts upon herself the restrictions and obligations of the Shabbos day. This precludes her davening the previous day's Minchah. If, however, a woman is running late and has not davened Minchah by candle-lighting time, the poskim differ as to what she should do. There are three views:

1. She should go ahead and light candles. She should then daven the Shemoneh Esrei of the Shabbos Ma'ariv twice to compensate for the lost Minchah.⁶ Even though women do not usually daven Ma'ariv, she may do so in this case in order to make up the lost Minchah.⁷

2. Before lighting, she should stipulate that she is not accepting the Shabbos until after she has davened Minchah.⁸ This should not be done on Yom Tov if she recited shehecheyanu at the candle-lighting.⁹

3. Some poskim rule that she may daven Minchah after lighting candles even if she did not stipulate that she was not accepting the Shabbos.¹⁰

Note that when men light candles, they do not automatically accept the Shabbos with their candle-lighting.¹¹ They may daven Minchah after lighting candles.

Question: Can one recite Kiddush before davening Ma'ariv?

Discussion: This question may arise during the summer months, when some people want to daven Ma'ariv after nightfall, yet they also want to eat earlier, before nightfall, with their family. A possible solution would be to accept the Shabbos at the earliest possible time [after pelag ha-Minchah¹²], eat the meal with the family, and then daven Ma'ariv with a later minyan. Is this permitted?

The Mishnah Berurah¹³ rules that there is no objection to reciting Kiddush before Ma'ariv, provided that the meal begins at least half an hour before nightfall. After that time, it is prohibited to begin a major meal before reciting Kerias Shema and davening Ma'ariv. According to the Arizal's Kabbalah, however, it is not proper to recite Kiddush before Ma'ariv. It is considered as if one is performing the mitzvah in the wrong sequence.¹⁴ Additionally, the Gaon of Vilna¹⁵ maintains that reciting Kiddush before Ma'ariv is improper not only for Kabbalistic reasons but on halachic grounds as well.

Question: When is the right time to inspect one's fingernails during Havdalah, before the blessing of Borei meorei ha-eish or after?

Discussion: There are two opinions on this matter. Mishnah Berurah¹⁶ rules that the inspection should be done first, before reciting the blessing. The reason is that this blessing is considered a birkas ha-shevach (a blessing of praise and gratitude), similar to the blessing over thunder and lightning. Obviously, one needs to first hear or see the phenomenon for which he is going to praise Hashem.

Other poskim¹⁷ rule that the blessing is recited first and the inspection follows because they consider this blessing to be a birkas ha-nehenin (a blessing recited over an item which gives pleasure, like food and drink). The rule governing birchos ha-nehenin is that the blessing is recited before the pleasure is derived from the item. Rav M. Feinstein¹⁸ rules according to the second view, and that this is the prevailing custom.

Question: Why do some people say morid ha-goshem with a kamatz under the gimmel, while others pronounce it with a segol under the gimmel — ha-geshem?

Discussion: The Hebrew word for rain is "geshem," with a segol under the gimmel (and under the shin). Like many other words of comparable structure — two syllables, both vocalized with a segol (e.g., erez, kesef, eved, etc.), the first segol is changed to a kamatz when the word appears at the end of a Biblical phrase¹⁹ or sentence.

The correct pronunciation of the word ha-geshem or ha-goshem, therefore, depends on its location within the second blessing of Shemoneh

Esreh. If the sentence — which begins with the words atah gibor — ends with the words mashiv ha-ruach u'morid ha-geshem, then ha-goshem is correct. If, however, the phrase is part of a longer sentence which ends with the words be'rachamim rabim, then the correct pronunciation is ha-geshem.

In all of the old siddurim which were published hundreds of years ago, the word is written as ha-geshem with a segol. While more recently many publishers changed the vocalization and printed ha-goshem instead 20 — and some poskim maintain that ha-goshem is the correct pronunciation²¹ — most poskim²² hold that the correct way to pronounce the word is ha-geshem, and this is how most contemporary siddurim print that word.

FOOTNOTES

1> Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:158; E.H. 1:59; Minchas Yitzchak 4:83; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 187).

2> See Halachah Discussion on Parashas Bamidbar.

3> Teshuvos Ya'avetz 107.

4> Similarly, see Igros Moshe, E.H. 2:12 who rules that a wife need not listen to a husband who holds that a wig is not enough of a hair-covering, since this is "her" mitzvah. See also Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:32-10; 4:100-4.

5> According to Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 188; Halichos Shlomo 1:1-7), a husband may allow his wife to keep her former customs in all cases. For instance, she does not have to change her nusach of davening after her marriage.

6> This appears to be the view of the Mishnah Berurah 263:43; see Chut Shani, Shabbos, vol. 4, pg. 70. 7> Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchaso 43:110). But she may only do so if she davens Minchah on a regular basis; Shulchan Shlomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 22.

8> Eishel Avraham 263:10; Kaf ha-Chayim 263:35; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfe on Tefillah, 2nd edition, pg. 201).

9> Tzitz Eliezer 10:19-5. This is because several poskim hold that one cannot recite shehecheyanu, which celebrates the arrival of the Yom Tov, and at the same time stipulate that he is not accepting Yom Tov's arrival.

10> Several poskim quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchaso 43, note 128.

11> Mishnah Berurah 263:42. It is still, however, preferable even for men to stipulate that they are not mekabel Shabbos when lighting candles.

12> Pelag ha-Minchah is one and a quarter halachic hours before sunset; see The Daily Halachah Discussion on 26 Nissan.

13> 271:11 quoting the Magen Avraham.

14> Kaf ha-Chayim 271:22; 272:3.

15> Ma'asei Rav 117. See Peulas Sachir, ibid.

16> 296:31. All the early sources discussing this halachah mention the inspection before the blessing. This was also the custom of the Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabbeinu 3:235).

17> Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 96:9; Siddur ha-Tanya; Siddur ha-Gra; Siddur Ya'avetz.

18> Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:9-9.

19> Most often the end of a phrase is indicated by an esnachta or a zakef katan.

20> See Minhag Yisrael Torah 114:1, which explains that the original change was implemented by the maskilim.

21> Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:40-15.

22> Levushei Mordechai 4:213; Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, pg. 213); Harav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes l'Yaakov al ha-Torah, Bereishis 3:19); Harav Y.Y. Weiss (quoted in Ishei Yisrael 23:25); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo 1:8-14); Az Nidberu 12:28; Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:81.

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Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Shemiras Shabbos for Doctors and Medical Students

The Vilna Gaon is quoted as having said that to the extent that one is lacking in his knowledge of science, to that extent his Torah learning will be deficient. It is for this reason that the Gaon wanted very much to go to Italy to study medicine. His father did not permit him to do so, because he felt that his son Eliyahu was so brilliant, that if he would attend medical

school, he would master the science of medicine much better than the other students, and then if someone would become sick, his son would be obligated to take time away from his learning to heal the sick person, since he would probably be better qualified than the other doctors.

A brilliant person is not obligated to go to medical school in order to learn medicine in order to save lives. Only one who already knows medicine is obligated to take time away from his learning to attend to issues of pikuach nefesh.

The medrash[1] derives from a posuk in Parshas Lech Lecha that one may violate the laws of Shabbos to save the life of a choleh sheyesh bo sakanah (an individual with a life threatening sickness). The Talmud clearly states that even when we are not sure whether there is a real danger to someone's life or whether the chilul Shabbos will save the life, we still declare that the chilul Shabbos is allowed. Rav Shimon Shkop, in his famous sefer Shaarei Yosher, points out from the Gemarah that even in a case of sfek sfeka we still allow chilul Shabbos.

However, all of these halachos only apply once someone is already a doctor. We would not, however, allow one to be mechalel Shabbos in order to attend medical school in order to save lives at some later time.

Even a doctor or a paramedic who is performing a great mitzvah when he violates Shabbos laws for the sake of pikuach nefesh must still observe the Shabbos laws for the rest of that very same day of Shabbos. He should not think that since this Shabbos has already been violated, there is no use in observing the remaining hours of Shabbos. Any additional act of chilul Shabbos not done for the sake of pikuach nefesh is an unqualified aveira of chilul Shabbos.

There is a terrible misconception that the laws of Shabbos do not apply to doctors. This is absolutely incorrect. No profession exempts anyone from any mitzvos. Medical students are certainly not exempt from Shabbos observance. And even after having completed his school years, the future doctor must take special care to make sure he has a Sabbath-observant residency. If this can not be arranged, the student must simply look for a different profession.

This misconception has led some otherwise Orthodox people to be mechalel Shabbos in situations where there is absolutely no heter. We have heard of medical students who feel uncomfortable reciting Kiddush on Shabbos because they had violated the sanctity of that Shabbos. Of course they should recite Kiddush. Their discomfort should motivate them to no longer be mechalel Shabbos.

Editor's note: Future divrei Torah will hopefully discuss in more detail the parameters of what is permissible for doctors to do on Shabbos. In the meantime, see Rav Schachter's shiur at <http://www.torahweb.org/torah/audio/dds.html>, where he discusses issues of refuah on Shabbos

[1] When Avraham Avinu was approaching Egypt he was concerned that because his wife Sarah was so good looking the Egyptians may kill him in order to take her away. In order to save his life he made up with Sarah that they would lie about their relationship and have the Egyptians believe that she was his sister, rather than his wife. Under normal circumstances it is highly improper to lie, but for the sake of pikuach nefesh we certainly permit it. From this posuk we derive that for the sake of pikuach nefesh one may violate almost all Torah laws.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

Lech Lecha 5768

“G-d said to Abram: ‘leave your land, your birthplace and your father's house and go to the land I will show you.’” These words are among the most consequential in the history of mankind. With them a new faith was born that has lasted for two thirds of the course of civilisation 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.

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 statement. 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 law-giver and liberator. He is not, like the later prophets, a man who spends his life confronting kings, wrestling with his 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 G-d 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 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 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 affairs 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, her 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 popularity 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 G-d to the bearer of a new covenant: *Lekh Lekha*. 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.”³ According to him what G-d meant was “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. G-d was already intimating to 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 – land, birthplace and parent's home, 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 G-d. 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 mankind. “Go for yourself.”

Another interpretation, more midrashic, 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.” Abraham was commanded to leave his place in order to testify to the existence of a G-d 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 G-d throughout the world. Unusually, exile is seen here not as punishment but as a necessary corollary of a faith that sees G-d everywhere. *Lekh lekha* 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 G-d who is alone, singular and unique. Only one able to leave behind the natural sources of identity can encounter G-d who stands above and beyond nature. A journey into the unknown is one of the greatest possible expressions of freedom. G-d wanted Abraham and his children to be a living example of what it is to serve the G-d 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 G-d, 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 G-d and the freedom of human beings. G-d is not, in Judaism, an impersonal force. He acts (in creation, revelation and redemption) not on the basis of necessity but of choice. In choosing to make mankind 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." 5

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 G-d'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 G-d said to Abraham, Leave your land.

Spinoza said that man is made by innate instincts and biological drives (nowadays this is called genetic determinism) given by birth. Therefore G-d 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 G-d said to Abraham, Leave your father's house.

Lekh Lekha 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 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 civilisation 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 have to 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 G-d.

Lekh Lekha in this sense means being prepared to take an often lonely journey: "Go by yourself." 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 G-d, but instead challenging it in the name of G-d. 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 mankind 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 manhood, 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.

Jews, wrote the non-Jewish journalist Andrew Marr, "really have been different; they have enriched the world and challenged it." 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 G-d, that was born in the words Lekh Lekha. 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.

from **Rabbi Berel Wein** <rbwein@torah.org> hide details Oct 17 (2 days ago) reply-to genesis@torah.org, rbwein@torah.org to rabbiwein@torah.org date Oct 17, 2007 11:05 PM subject Rabbi Wein - Parshas Lech Lecha mailed-by torah.org

Lech Lecha 5768

The Torah teaches us that our father Avraham was told to leave his home in Mesopotamia and to travel to an unknown land, which eventually turned out to be the Land of Israel. Midrash points out to us that the entire success of Avraham's mission in life – to spread the idea of monotheism and the universal G-d – was dependent on his living in the Land of Israel.

The question naturally arises why this should have been so. After all, he could have been successful in so doing had he remained in Mesopotamia, which then was the center of human civilization and culture while the Land of Israel was somewhat of a backward, out of the way place.

There are many possible answers to this question but the one that intrigues me most is as follows. Being successful in spiritual missions and growth always requires sacrifice and some physical discomfort. The prophet castigates those that are complacent and comfortable in Zion.

A person is born to toil and accomplish, to be busy and productive. Without undergoing the arduous and potentially dangerous journey to the Land of Israel, Avraham will never fulfill his spiritual destiny. Avraham is the symbol of challenges in life.

The ten tests that he undergoes shape him and mold him into the father of our people and the symbol of human civilization and monotheistic progress. Only by leaving his comfortable and familiar surroundings can he achieve greatness. It is therefore imperative for him to leave and to wander, to be a stranger and an alien in foreign society in order to grow into his great spiritual role of influence and leadership.

But why the Land of Israel as the desired destination for Avraham? Jewish history provides us with this insight. It is in the Land of Israel that a Jew can truly achieve spiritual elevation and development. The Land of Israel provides greater challenges to Jewish development than any other location on the face of this earth.

Throughout Jewish history, the Land of Israel has posed the greatest challenge to Jewish communal living. It is no surprise therefore that we who live in Israel find it to be a daily struggle in our lives. Nevertheless, it is the place for the greatest Jewish accomplishments and achievements. And therefore it is the destination for Avraham in his quest for spiritual growth and attainment.

He will find it to be a difficult place to live in. But as he struggles with his tests in life and rises to each challenge and occasion the Lord promises him that the Land of Israel will be his place on earth for all of his generations.

The challenge of living in the Land of Israel has never waned but God's promise to the Jewish people has always remained in force as well. It seems obvious that the ultimate fulfillment of Jewish life can only be realized in the Land of Israel. The problems faced there sometimes seem overwhelming. But the rabbis stated that according to the pain and difficulty so is the reward. As the children of Avraham and Sarah we are bidden to rise and overcome all of our tests and challenges as well.

Shabat shalom.

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Peninim on the Torah

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

- Parshas Lech Lecha mailed-by shemayisrael.com

PARSHAS LECH LECHA

Go forth from your land, your birthplace, and from your father's house. (12:1) Chazal tell us that Avraham Avinu was miraculously saved in Uhr Kasdim when the evil king Nimrod had him thrown into a fiery furnace. Our Patriarch emerged unscathed. Following this test of Avraham's devotion to the point of self-sacrifice, Hashem instructed him to leave his homeland, his birthplace, and his father's home. One would think that the usual method of testing, in which the testing ascends from the simple task to the more difficult, would be applied here. This does not seem to be the case concerning Avraham, who, after Hashem tested him with his life, then tested him in what appeared to be a milder test. Uhr Kasdim was a test on a grand scale, a test which Avraham passed with flying colors. His mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, surely engendered a sense of awe for the Almighty, inspiring the people of that generation to leave their idols to worship the one true G-d. To be commanded afterwards to leave his home seems anticlimactic. What purpose was served by such a test?

Horav Chaim Scheinberg, Shlita, explains that the essence of a test lies in its power to arouse in a man's dormant spirit his hidden potential for greatness and to actualize it. A test is not measured by the method in which it is presented, but rather by its potential to effect change in a person's nature. It certainly took great fortitude and tremendous resolve to choose death rather than idol worship. As supreme as the sacrifice of Uhr Kasdim was, it was an isolated event, rather than part of a process.

The Gaon zl, m'Vilna, is quoted in Even Shleimah, "The primary purpose of a person's life is always to intensify his efforts to change his character. And, if not, why live?" Apparently, change is much more important than we realize. Correcting our character flaws-- refining our character traits-- is a major aspect of our lives. We think that if we do not succeed in doing so, we can still live productive Jewish lives, observe mitzvos, carrying out acts of loving kindness, study Torah and everything else a Jew should do. The Gaon asserts that this is not true. Without growth, life is nothing for us! It is a waste! This idea is the central point of the Gaon's sefer: the entirety of avodas Hashem, serving G-d, is dependent on the rectification of middos, character traits. The changes that we make in our character are the decisive factors upon which our lives revolve. Simply, the success of our lives is measured by how much growth we can effect in ourselves. No changes - no life. It is that simple!

Change goes counter to our personalities. Indeed, the more we become accustomed to doing something, the easier it becomes, until it becomes second nature. When it becomes habit, it is much more difficult to override. In addition to the habits that we have acquired, our G-d-given character traits and disposition, combined with that which we have learned throughout our youth, have, over the years, become a part of our essential personality. Thus, it is clear that change, while it is necessary, remains extremely elusive.

Nonetheless, it can be done. Otherwise, Hashem would not demand it of us. A person can change his nature, providing that his efforts are continual, steady and intensive. We have an obligation to battle continually, with no

let-up and with all of our might. This is the meaning of the command of lech lecha.

Hashem first commanded Avraham to leave his country, then forsake his family, and, last, to leave his father's home. This was done by design, with Hashem's commands proceeding from the easier to the more difficult. Leaving a father's home is very difficult. This was Avraham's test - the test of change - the test of divorcing himself from the past and the familiar.

Uhr Kasdim was a unique test. It availed Avraham the "once in a life" opportunity of sacrificing his life to sanctify Hashem's Name. It is not granted to everyone. This is not, however, the only way to demonstrate our fealty to Hashem. There is also the daily test of kiddush ha'chaim, sanctifying life by living in accordance with His commands. Putting aside our desires and inclinations-- our personal concerns and vested interests-- for the sake of a life devoted to Hashem, is no less a sacrifice. Lech lecha represents the test of daily living, the unrelenting test of constant, continual and total commitment to Hashem. Some might argue that the test of self-sacrifice is the epitome of commitment. It is a one-time opportunity, which one either passes or fails. The test of life is constant. It is much greater in its potential for success, but also in the possibility of failure. Avraham was miraculously saved from the fiery furnace of Uhr Kasdim. Now came the test of change. He was now challenged to change and grow completely on his own, without the help of miracles.

Avraham's second test, the test of change, was a gradual test that increased with difficulty as he ascended from level to level. Each milestone of success developed his commitment, as it brought out deeper levels of service to Hashem. Through this test, our Patriarch grew in stature and became a tzaddik.

We, too, have latent potential for growth. With every day of life we face the opportunity for growth. The inevitable ordeals of life are tests of "change," tests that are also opportunity. With each test that we successfully master, we grow closer to Hashem and greater in personal spiritual stature. We must remember that when the nature of the test is the ability to change, being satisfied with partial success is tantamount to failure. Change is a complete process. To stop midway and rely on one's past laurels is stagnation, which is counter to change. It is the partner of habit, which produces the result of failure. We are not successful unless we continue to grow.

He proceeded on his journeys from the south to Bais-El. (13:8)

The implication derived from this pasuk is that these non-specific journeys were part of a larger known journey. Avraham Avinu stopped at the same places where he lodged on his original trip. Chazal comment that the Torah is teaching us proper etiquette. One should not change his usual lodging unless he has suffered abuse or humiliation there. Otherwise, he will give the impression that either he is a difficult person to please or that his lodgings had not been satisfactory. This will cause undue harm to the host's personal feelings and reputation. In an alternate exposition, Rashi explains that Avraham stopped at all of these places to pay off the credit that he received from the hosts on his original trip. Apparently, our Patriarch fell on hard times and had to rely on the good hearts of a number of benefactors to grant him a place to lodge. He had no money, and they were kind enough to trust him.

Let us picture in our mind the Avraham that set out on his journey. Nary a penny to his name, Avraham had to rely on finding a place to sleep and eat based on the favor of kind-hearted people. Certainly, his accommodations were not going to win any awards. A poor man that goes from place to place: If he is lucky to find an open door, a welcome bed, a hot meal, it will not be of the same quality and quantity as that of a wealthy person for whom money is no object. If he would find a bench in the back of the shul, a piece of hard bread, anything, he would consider himself fortunate.

On his return trip, Avraham Avinu was world famous, powerful and fabulously wealthy. He certainly could have purchased the entire hotel! Five-star ratings for his lodging needs, and restaurants that cater to the

world's effete rich, would be where he would now be expected to stay. Not Avraham. He understood the laws of proper etiquette. He was a mentch, a refined human being, the paradigm of ethical character. His sensitivity to the needs and sentiments of others was his hallmark. He stayed at the same places as he had previously. He ate the same meals with the same people. The fact that he now had money did not alter his obligation to be a mentch.

Chazal say, "Do not change your lodgings." Why? Life is part of a cycle. We have no idea what tomorrow will bring. It is possible that the one who is quite wealthy today will be seeking alms tomorrow. It happens all of the time. The one who is on top of the world, often rubbing his success in everyone's face, is suddenly on the receiving end of the line. He who made a big point about his "giving" must now "take" and be subject to the kindness of others.

Do not forget your roots, or the people that have enabled your success. This applies not only in the area of financial success; it applies equally in every area of successful endeavor, especially in the spiritual realm. How easily we forget our rebbeim who taught us with patience and put up with our tantrums, as well as some of the unreasonable demands of our parents. For those whose return to the faith was a long process, they, too, must acknowledge the many who opened their doors, welcomed them at their Shabbos tables, sat with them in the bais ha'medrash and were always there to answer questions, give support and encourage them further. Avraham Avinu taught us etiquette. This is certainly one of his many lessons that are worth emulating.

Then there came the fugitive and told to Avram, the Ivri. (14:13)

Chazal explain that Avraham Avinu was called Ivri, from the word eivar, the other side. This implies that Avraham stood on one side of the moral and spiritual divide, while the rest of the world was on the other. He was a man isolated from the world in his hashkafah, philosophic perspective, his spiritual demeanor and his moral rectitude. He was alone. He was the Ivri. Horav Eliezer M. Shach, zl, asks a very compelling question on this definition of our Patriarch's name and "position." Chazal also teach us that Avraham distinguished himself from Noach in that he did not need the support of Hashem to maintain his spiritual growth, while Noach could not do it alone. Noach needed Hashem's assistance to keep his head above water, to maintain his resolve in the daily challenges of dealing with a world filled with pagan heresy.

The commentators explain that Noach needed the support more than Avraham, because Noach was a tzaddik in his own little world. He did not interact with the members of his generation. Thus, he did not influence them in a positive way. Avraham, on the other hand, was an ish ha'chesed, a man who was the paradigm of loving kindness. He reached out to a world that was drowning in moral and spiritual degeneracy. His kindness was nispasheit; it expanded and spread forth, from him to a pagan world. The z'chus, merit, of reaching out sustained and supported Avraham. If this is the case, then how could Avraham be considered a man "alone" in the world? How does one inspire and infuse others with spiritual verities if he remains isolated?

Perhaps, Avraham inspired a world by example. A man who represents the truth must reflect the truth in his every activity. His character and personality - indeed, everything about him-- from his relationship with people, to his discourse with Hashem-- must reflect the paragon of integrity. People are impressed by the truth. Even if they do not come into direct contact with the individual who is the source of their inspiration, his principled character, his authenticity and ingenuous nature, stand out and inspire people. Avraham HaIvri was a man alone against the world, but he represented the truth. Everything about him bespoke the truth. Regardless of how far they are distanced from the path of truth, people know deep down within themselves what it is and where it is. This is how Avraham inspired a world - by being who he was.

Truthfulness is the primary ingredient of Torah. One who lacks integrity lacks in Torah. He will never succeed in imparting Torah to others, because he is missing the ingredient most necessary for its dissemination. It is the

power cell that drives the diffusion of Torah to the masses. The Talmud Bava Kama 38b relates that the Romans sent two soldiers to study Torah from the scholars of the Mishnah. After learning the entire Torah, they reported, "We have learned the entire Torah, and it is all correct except for your law that if the cow of a Jew gores the cow belonging to a gentile, he does not pay, but if the cow of a gentile gores the cow of a Jew, he must pay in full." The Yam Shel Shlomo asks why the sages revealed this incriminating piece of information. After all, they did not have to blatantly demonstrate the laws that favor Jew over gentile. He answers by explaining that the Torah cannot be diluted and changed to suit someone's fancy, even under the threat of death. Once it is altered, it is no longer Torah.

Many have wondered why Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, founder of Beth Medrash Govoha, had the z'chus, merit, to establish what was to become the largest Torah center in America. While many of Rav Aharon's incredible qualities come to mind, one factor remains indisputable: his total commitment to the emes, truth. Torah and emes are synonymous; they have a natural tendency to gravitate toward each other. There are many incidents in his life that reflect the Rosh Yeshivah's integrity, but his first speech at a fund-raising affair on behalf of the yeshivah, explaining the yeshiva's raison d'etre, underscores his unfeigned nature.

The Rosh Yeshivah transplanted the concept of limud Torah lishmah, studying Torah for its own sake, to these shores. The American Orthodox perception of Torah study was quite different. A yeshivah was a place that should produce learned lay people, educated pulpit rabbis, yeshivah and day school rebbeim, but they all had a "purpose." Torah learning for its own sake: that was a European ideal popularized by the saintly Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl. It was not for America. Nonetheless, Rav Aharon declared, "I do not want you to misunderstand me; I do not want to mislead you. There is a need for roshei yeshivah in this country and elsewhere, and Lakewood will produce them. There is a need for effective teachers and for the right kind of rabbis, and Lakewood will produce them. There is a need for baalei batim, lay people, who are talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, and Lakewood will send them forth. However, the raison d'etre of Lakewood is limud Torah lishmah. It is with this understanding and for this purpose that I am asking for your support."

This might have been a message that the guests neither expected nor appreciated. Nonetheless, if the Rosh Yeshivah were going to build a yeshivah that would serve the needs of Klal Yisrael, it had to be built upon the foundation of emes.

I share another incredible vignette, concerning Horav Yehudah Tzadakah, zl, who was mentor to a number of the most distinguished Sephardic scholars of our generation. He also taught baalei batim. Believing very strongly in educating laymen, he gave a daily shiur from four to five o'clock each morning. One day, the Rosh Yeshivah overslept and came to shul a few minutes before five o'clock. He immediately sat down, opened his sefer and was about to begin teaching. Suddenly, he closed it and instructed the men to study among themselves.

After davening, one of the men queried him, "Is not every moment of Torah learning precious?" Rav Yehudah hesitated a moment and replied, "I was afraid that the worshippers who were coming for the five o'clock Shacharis might think that I had been teaching since four o'clock in the morning. This would be a deception. I could not betray them. So I decided not to teach at all. Torah and emes are one."

Then there came the fugitive and told Avram. (14:13)

Sometimes it takes a powerful example to drive home an idea. Let me explain. Chazal relate the identity of this fugitive. It was none other than Og, king of Bashan, who had survived the flood. In the simple meaning of the pasuk, he is called the fugitive because he had just escaped the battlefield. Chazal add that Og's motives were less than honorable. In fact, they were iniquitous. He had hoped to incite Avraham Avinu to leave the safety of his home and enter into the fray of battle. Anticipating that the Patriarch would be killed and his widow would become available to him,

Og put on an air of righteousness, but it was all a sham. Hashem gave Og his due: the reward of longevity for informing Avraham; and death at the hands of the Jewish people in response to his serpentine motives.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, puts this incident into perspective. Imagine seeing a person walking down the street that leads to shul, bedecked in his Tallis and Tefillin and carrying his Korban Mincha Siddur. People in a group of Jews, noticing this sight, remark "There goes so and so. Do you know where he is going? He is on his way to murder someone or commit an act of adultery. This would clearly seem preposterous, given the image of the person wearing his religious garb and walking to shul. Yet, this is what occurred with Og. Here is a man, a survivor from the battlefield, who comes running, screaming, "Help! Help! They are going to kill your nephew, Lot. Come quickly before it is too late!" He appears honorable, but so does the man who is supposedly going to shul to pray, when, in fact, he is on his way to commit a heinous act of perversion.

Rav Sholom cites his rebbe, Rav Leib Chasman, zl, who would explain this anomaly with the following pasuk in Iyov (11:12), "Let one who is (like) a wild donkey be reborn as a man!" This means that one should grab the opportunity to repent while he can. The pasuk is teaching us that when man is born, he is potentially like a wild donkey. If left undisciplined and unrestrained, he will grow up a wild donkey. There is nothing to hold him back. The pera adam, wild man, can be stopped with the nishmas chaim, soul of life, with which Hashem has imbued him. If he studies Torah and works on himself, he can turn around his potentially base character. If he does not, he will simply continue into adulthood with this wild, intemperate nature.

Rav Leib would continue, "I ask you, do you think Og studied mussar, ethics and character refinement? Surely, not. Thus, when we see someone who is uncouth running down the street, regardless of how he presents himself to us, we can safely assume that he is about to do the worst. Nothing is beyond one who is a pera adam!"

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Marcia & Hymie Keller & Family Peninim mailing list
Peninim@shemayisrael.com
http://mailman.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com
