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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON LECH LICHA - 5773

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Orthodox Union www.ou.org
Making Space
Lord Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

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

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

Nothing has prepared us for this radical departure. We have not had a description of Abraham as we had in the case of Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with G-d." Nor

have we been given a series of glimpses into his childhood, as in the case of Moses. It is as if Abraham's call is a sudden break with all that went before. There seems to be no prelude, no context, no background.

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

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

The implication seems to be that Abraham's father was an idolater. Hence the famous midrashic tradition that as a child, Abraham broke his father's idols. When Terach asked him who had done the damage, he replied, "The largest of the idols took a stick and broke the rest". "Why are you deceiving me?" Terach asked, "Do idols have understanding?" "Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying", replied the child. On this reading, Abraham was an iconoclast, a breaker of images, one who rebelled against his father's faith (Bereishith Rabbah 38: 8).

Maimonides, the philosopher, put it somewhat differently. Originally, human beings believed in one G-d. Later, they began to offer sacrifices to the sun, the planets and stars, and other forces of nature, as creations or servants of the one G-d. Later still, they worshipped them as entities – gods – in their own right. It took Abraham, using logic alone, to realize the incoherence of polytheism:

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

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

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

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

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

How are we to reconcile these two passages? The simplest way, taken by most commentators, is that they are not in chronological sequence. The call to Abraham (in Gen. 12) happened first. Abraham heard the Divine summons, and communicated it to his father. The family set out together, but Terach stopped halfway, in Haran. The passage recording Terach's death is placed before Abraham's call, though it happened later, to guard Abraham from the accusation that he failed to honour his father by leaving him in his old age (Rashi, Midrash).

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

Significantly, both the Bible and rabbinic tradition understood divine parenthood in this way. They contrasted the description of Noah ("Noah walked with G-d") and that of Abraham ("The G-d before whom I have walked", 24: 40). G-d himself says to Abraham "Walk ahead of Me and

be perfect” (17: 1). G-d signals the way, then challenges His children to walk on ahead.

In one of the most famous of all Talmudic passages, the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Metzia 59b) describes how the sages outvoted Rabbi Eliezer despite the fact that his view was supported by a heavenly voice. It continues by describing an encounter between Rabbi Natan and the prophet Elijah. Rabbi Natan asks the prophet: What was G-d’s reaction to that moment, when the law was decided by majority vote rather than heavenly voice? Elijah replies, “He smiled and said, ‘My children have defeated me! My children have defeated me!’”

To be a parent in Judaism is to make space within which a child can grow. Astonishingly, this applies even when the parent is G-d (avinu, “our Father”) himself. In the words of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, “The Creator of the world diminished the image and stature of creation in order to leave something for man, the work of His hands, to do, in order to adorn man with the crown of creator and maker” (Halakhic Man, p 107).

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

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

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

Perhaps childhood itself has the same ambiguity. There are times, especially in adolescence, when we tell ourselves that we are breaking with our parents, charting a path that is completely new. Only in retrospect, many years later, do we realize how much we owe our parents – how, even at those moments when we felt most strongly that we were setting out on a journey uniquely our own, we were, in fact, living out the ideals and aspirations that we learned from them.

And it began with G-d himself, who left, and continues to leave, space for us, His children, to walk on ahead.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chiefrabbi.org.

the unknown, however, “it is self-understood” that God then informs him that his ultimate objective is to be Canaan. B Other commentaries, such as the Sforno, claim that the land of Canaan was the natural choice for Avraham to make, on his own, in response to God’s instructions. Canaan was “well known to them (the people of Avraham’s time) as a land prepared for contemplation and the worship of God.” The Sforno goes on to say, however, that although Avraham left for Canaan on his own, he did not stop traveling until God appeared to him in the city of Elon Moreh (also identified as Shechem). That appearance fulfilled God’s promise: “The land that I will show you.” C The most intriguing of all possibilities, however, is actually suggested by the Torah text itself. At the end of Parshat Noach, Avraham’s father, Terach, embarks upon a mysterious journey with his entire family. Without indicating why, the Torah simply states, “And they [Terach’s family, including Avraham and his family] left from Ur Casdim to travel to the land of Canaan.” This journey was aborted, however, short of its destination, as the Torah indicates: “And they came to Charan and they settled there.... And Terach died in Charan.” What was the catalyst for Terach’s journey towards Canaan and what was the purpose of the expedition? Why did it end in Charan? The answers are shrouded in the mists of history. The Torah gives no indication as to why Terach begins this journey. Nor does the text tell us why the journey ended prematurely. Perhaps the very fact of Terach’s travels is proof of the Sforno’s suggestion that the land of Canaan was well known for its holiness. Perhaps, as well, the Torah is suggesting that Terach, a man identified within Midrashic literature as a purveyor of idolatry, might have been searching for a greater truth. Could it be that Avraham’s father was not irredeemable, but actually showed a spark of the spirit that would eventually burn full force in his son’s heart? We will never know for sure. What we do know is that Avraham’s journey emerges from the text as a continuation of his father’s original quest. The difference between father and son, from this perspective, lies in their ability and in their willingness to stay the course, to complete the journey. Terach may well have begun with high hopes, but his journey is tragically and prematurely aborted; he is sidetracked by whatever attracts him in Charan. There Terach remains, only to disappear into the mists of history. Avraham picks up where Terach leaves off, completes his father’s journey and changes history forever. D The Torah’s message is clear. Success in life depends not only on originality and inventiveness but also upon the often overlooked qualities of persistence and constancy. What separates Avraham from Terach, on one level, is that Avraham finishes the journey while Terach does not. How many individuals across the face of history have made a real difference simply because they have been willing and able to finish the task?

Points to Ponder The Torah chooses to teach us the important lesson of “staying the course” within the context of Avraham’s journey to the land of Israel. This confluence of themes is hardly coincidental; the message created could not be more pertinent to our times. Today’s diaspora Jewish community exists at a time when return to the land of Israel is possible. And yet, for a variety of reasons, some more compelling than others, our personal journeys to our homeland have been voluntary aborted. Like Terach we have decided to remain in Charan at a time when other choices exist. At the very least, our decisions should create a fundamental tension that courses through our lives. There should be an ever-present dissonance created by the fact that we have decided to remain on the periphery of our nation’s history, while others, in its center, fight our battles for us. Living with dissonance is not easy, and that might explain why one can currently observe, even within the affiliated Jewish community, a growing apathy to the miracle that is the State of Israel. We care about Israelis; we are concerned for their safety; but in our eyes the State of Israel has, to a great extent, lost its luster. Israel’s existence no longer moves us as it once did. This growing apathy is reflected in the ambivalence of the

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Parshat Lech Lecha - Finished and Unfinished Journeys

Excerpted from Rabbi Shmuel Goldin's 'Unlocking The Torah

Text: An In-Depth Journey Into The Weekly Parsha- Bereishit

<http://www.ou.org/oupress/item/65036>

Questions

God did not specify the destination of Avraham’s journey. The text, however, indicates that Avraham left his home “to go to the land of Canaan.” How did Avraham know where to go?

Approaches A Some authorities, including the Ohr Hachaim, suggest that the question is simply not pertinent. From the outset, God increases Avraham’s challenge by deliberately omitting the journey’s intended destination. Once the patriarch responds and begins to travel to

“Yeshiva world” towards the state, in the declining spirit of the organized Religious Zionist community in America, and in our growing tendency to make our support of the State of Israel conditional upon its adherence to our political positions. Perhaps we feel that if we can dismiss the importance of the State of Israel, we can’t be so wrong for living in the diaspora. If Israel isn’t a miracle, then we are not blind for ignoring her. Time is precious, and we cannot afford the luxury of avoidance. Tension can be productive if it moves us towards positive action. Perhaps some of us will find the dissonance of diaspora existence today so great that we will resolve it the only real way possible – by making Aliyah; or, at least, by encouraging our children to do so. Short of this dramatic step, however, other opportunities exist as we strive to play a role, however small, in the central Jewish drama of our time. Political action, missions to Israel, making certain that the State of Israel remains a featured element of day school curricula and other steps must be taken to ensure that we do not sink into the elusive comfort that can be gained through avoidance. We must remember and our children must learn that we live in a time when the dreams of thousands of years are being realized. Not all of us have the strength or the ability to be an Avraham, but, at least, we must avoid being a Terach. We cannot afford to be comfortable in the diaspora. By recognizing that the journey is not yet over and that we are not yet home, we will play a role in ensuring that our people finish the journey.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein
UNDERRATING TEMPTATION

If there is one lesson that is obvious in studying these few parshiyot that constitute the beginning of our yearly Torah reading it is that temptation and human evil instincts are not easily overcome. They should certainly not be ignored. From the story of Adam and Chava in the Garden of Eden through the stories of Cain and Abel, Noach and his grandson, Canaan, the building of the Tower of Bavel, the twenty-four year war of the five kings against the four kings and the behavior of Lot in choosing residence in Sodom over the company of Avraham it seems clear that the evil instinct is usually triumphant in human affairs.

It is clear to parents and teachers how difficult it is to raise moral and gracious children and students. This is not a new problem particular to our times - and iPhones. It has always been difficult to do so. King Solomon taught us that “there is nothing new under the sun.” The Torah itself testifies to the fact that “the nature of human beings is evil from the inception of youth.”

So the problems that affect the world constantly are personal and not institutional. The problems that arise regarding religious observances and children at risk, etc. are personal and individual – and relate to those children who are tempted obviously by the glitter of the sin that rules the outside world. Though schools and teachers, yeshivot and mentors are far from perfect – they also are only human beings. Changing curriculum, institutions and even personnel is not a guaranteed panacea. The old saw is “How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? The answer is: One, but the bulb has to want to be changed!” So, too, is it with humans. Eventually everything is individual and personal. When Reform became a force in Jewish society in the early nineteenth century Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant countered with the establishment

of the Mussar movement dedicated to improving the ethical and moral behavior of Jews. He pithily remarked, “Reform came to change Judaism. Mussar came to change Jews.”

The failure of Reform lies in the fact that it does not change Jews. It does not prevent their assimilation and alienation. It seeks to change the institutions – the official rabbinate, the rabbinic courts, etc. – but it does not make personal demands. The religion has to cater to the individual whether the person is intermarried, completely non-observant, uncommitted to Judaism, given to following one’s own perceived physical desires and blissfully ignorant of the basic tenets and story of Judaism. With Reform, no demands are made upon the person – only on the institutions and the faith itself.

In the Orthodox world, Mussar also failed as a mass movement. Today, externals count for everything while the inner soul is left abandoned in so many instances. But God is not interested, so to speak, in externals. “Humans see superficially with their eyes but the Lord sees the inner heart.” There are no easy answers to our ills. New methods of teaching and instruction are valid and necessary but it is the student that has to want to be educated.

The black frock and the white shirt cannot correct a perverse heart. And therefore none of the innovations of our time have met with general success. We are always fiddling with government, schools, institutions, etc. when the real challenge is personal to each individual. Since the time of the Enlightenment, Western civilization, or at least its academics, has believed history to be a lineal advancement of civilization. The world is getting better always, war will be banished and universal brotherhood and cooperation is just around the corner. The problem is that over the past bloody and oppressive number of centuries that corner has never been turned.

Technology and medicine have certainly advanced in a linear fashion but not human behavior. Because of the gains in technology, wars today are infinitely more destructive and murderous than ever before. Terrorism is more lethal. Crime has not diminished; instead it has become more armed and violent.

Judaism views history as being cyclical. To quote King Solomon again, “What has been will be what will yet be.” This is because the battle between good and evil is ultimately personal and individual. An astute American politician once observed: “All politics is local.” Well, all morality, goodness and compassion, honesty and true faith are purely personal.

So, we cannot underestimate the forces of evil that are within us and that surround us. They are to be combatted and defeated. But that can only occur if the individual realizes this struggle (called life) is present and is prepared to win that struggle. This will not be accomplished by changing the rules or hoping for panaceas from governments and institutions but by constantly improving one’s self.

Shabat shalom

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
LECH LECHA

Rashi comments that the Lord assured Avraham that leaving his home and family in Aram and heading to a then unknown destination would somehow be to his benefit and ultimate good. Even though this may appear strange to the casual observer – leaving the known and secure and heading out to wander to an unknown destination – the ways of the Lord are inscrutable and often counter-intuitive to human logic.

The purpose of Avraham's wandering journey is to reach the Land of Israel and to claim it for his descendants. For only in the Land of Israel will Avraham find personal fulfillment and realize his true spiritual, moral and holy potential. But while in Aram and Charan, Avraham and Sarah did good work, spreading the idea of monotheism and teaching the basic system of morality that is the core of the Torah's value system. Many people were influenced by them and became followers of monotheism and began to worship only the one true God.

So, why not leave Avraham and Sarah in Aram to continue their good work? Why send them off to the Land of Israel, then inhabited by the fierce and pagan Canaanite nation, to a very uncertain and perilous situation? And in the Land of Israel, the wicked, powerful and influential cities of Sodom are present. Seemingly Avraham and Sarah can accomplish much more by remaining in Aram than by travelling to the Land of Israel. And because of this type of human thinking, Avraham has to rely on the Lord's counter-intuitive logic, so to speak, and unhesitatingly embark on this dangerous journey that will eventually change all of human history.

What is clear from all of this is that the fulfillment of Jewish destiny and influence, of the holy self-actualization of the Jewish people can only be achieved in the Land of Israel. The obstacles that the Land of Israel itself raises to this self-actualization are many and profound. Nevertheless, the actions of our forbearers remain as the guideposts for all future Jewish generations.

If we look around at the Jewish world today the only significant demographic growth of Jews the world over is in the Land of Israel. The millennia-long exile and the Diaspora generally is shutting down, whether from external pressures or inner weakness. Only in the Land of Israel will the Jewish people find their soul and destiny.

And, just as in the time of Avraham and Sarah, the Land of Israel is plagued with dangers, problems and fraught with apparent peril. There is still a touch of Sodom present there and the heirs of the Canaanites are in the land. Yet just as the Lord told Avraham many thousands of years ago, only there will you become great and blessed – blessed for yourself and for all of humankind.

The opportunity to live a truly Jewish life and to help build a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is pretty much reserved to those who today live in the Land of Israel. The future of the Jewish people lies today in Chevron and not in Charan.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
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Subject Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Lech Lecha
For the week ending 27 October 2012 / 10 Heshvan 5773
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

Life In The Fast Lane

"Go for yourself..." (12:1)

Very soon, only the speed of light will limit our ability to communicate a thought, a picture, a sound or a sentence from one side of the world to the other — and beyond.

The meaning of the word "distance" has changed forever.

Just as the electron has shrunk our world, so too there has been a quiet and maybe even more fundamental revolution in the way we look at traveling. We see nothing special in the fact that several hundred people can file into a large metal room and find themselves on the other side of the world in a matter of hours.

A little more than a hundred years ago, to circumnavigate the globe would have required months of arduous, dangerous and expensive effort — almost beyond our imagining. Nowadays, the major drawback in circling the earth in a plane is an aching back from sitting in a reclining chair that doesn't quite live up to its name.

We have breached the last frontier. Distance has become no more than a function of time spent in a chair.

The electron and the 747 have had their impact on our culture in other ways. Our cultural mindset mandates that speed is of the essence. "How fast can I get there?" vies in importance with "Where am I going?"

Immediacy has become an independent yardstick of worth. How fast is your car? Your computer?

Our age has sought to devour distance and time, rendering everything in a constant and immediate present. Now this. Now this. Now this. (Interestingly, the languages of the age — film, television and computer graphics — are languages which have trouble expressing the past and the future. They only have a present tense. Everything happens in a continuous present.)

All of which makes our spiritual development more and more challenging.

Spirituality is a path. And like a path you have to walk down it one step at a time. Your fingers cannot do the walking on the spiritual path. You cannot download it from the Internet.

Everything in the physical world is a paradigm, an incarnation, of a higher spiritual idea. Travel is the physical equivalent of the spiritual road. The quest for spirituality demands that we travel — but this journey is not a physical journey.

Many make the mistake of thinking that hitchhiking around the world and experiencing different cultures will automatically make them more spiritual. The truth is that wherever you go — there you are. When your travel is only physical you just wrap up your troubles in your old kit bag and take them with you.

Spiritual growth requires the soul to journey. Our soul must notch up the miles, not our feet. The spiritual road requires us to forsake the comfortable, the familiar ever-repeating landmarks of our personalities, and set out with an open mind and a humble soul. We must divest ourselves of the fawning icons of our own egos which we define and confine us — and journey.

Life's essential journey is that of the soul discovering its true identity. We learn this from the first two words in this week's Torah portion. "LechLecha." "Go to yourself."

Without vowels, these two words are written identically. When G-d took Avraham out of Ur Kasdim and sent him to the Land of Israel, He used those two identical words — LechLecha — "Go to yourself."

Avraham experienced ten tests in his spiritual journey. Each was exquisitely designed to elevate him to his ultimate spiritual potential. When G-d gives us a test, whether it's the death of a loved one or a financial reversal or an illness, it's always to help us grow. By conquering the obstacles that lie in our spiritual path — be it lack of trust in G-d or selfishness or apathy — we grow in stature. We connect with the fundamental purpose of the journey — to journey away from our negative traits and reach and realize our true selves.

We "go to ourselves."

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Explaining the Customs of Bris Milah **By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

The mitzvah of Bris Milah has been enhanced by many beautiful customs. We will explain the background of these minhagim in the course of a guide to the honors bestowed during a bris and the steps of a bris procedure.

THE DIFFERENT HONORS AT THE BRIS

Each of the "kibbudim" at a bris performs a different mitzvah. The sandek is the greatest honor at a bris, since the milah is performed upon his lap. The Zohar (Parshas Lech Lecha 95a) teaches that bringing one's son to a Bris Milah is equivalent to building the mizbayach (the altar) in the Beis HaMikdash and offering all the korbanos of the whole world! Since milah is compared to a korban, the sandek himself is like a mizbayach. In addition, since holding the baby assists the mohel perform the bris, the sandek also partly fulfills the mitzvah of performing the bris.

The kvatter and kvatterin perform the mitzvah of transporting the baby to the bris. Frequently, this honor is given to a couple who do not as yet have children. It is hoped that as a reward for performing the mitzvah of bring a child to the bris, they will soon merit bringing their own child to a bris.

The other honors at a bris include: placing the baby on Eliyahu's chair, reciting the berachos after the bris, naming the baby (in some places the last two honors are combined), and holding the baby during the berachos and the naming.

“KVATTER!”

When the mohel calls out this word, he calls the assembled to attention. The “kvatterin” carries the baby from the women's area and hands him to her husband, the kvatter, in the men's section. The kvatter, in turn, brings the baby to the mohel. Some have the custom of sharing the mitzvah of bringing the baby to the bris among several people, an honor called “cheika.” Those who follow this practice should make sure that each honoree brings the baby closer to where the bris will take place. (I have seen brisim where the people honored with cheika carried the baby in the opposite direction from where the bris was to be held. These individuals did not realize that they were doing the opposite of what they were supposed to be doing and thus not performing a mitzvah.)

Two chairs of honor are set up, one for Eliyahu (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 265:11) and one for the sandek who will hold the baby during the bris.

WHY IS THERE A CHAIR FOR ELIYAHU?

According to the Midrash, Eliyahu Hanavi attends every bris. Before Eliyahu rose to heaven and assumed the role of an angel, he was the prophet responsible for admonishing the wicked monarchs Achav and Izevel. Eliyahu was a zealot for Hashem's honor (Melachim 1:19:10, 14) and accused Bnei Yisrael of abrogating Bris Milah. As a response, Hashem decreed that Eliyahu would be present at every bris to see that the Jews indeed fulfill bris milah. Chazal therefore instituted the custom that there should be a seat of honor for Eliyahu at every bris (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 29; Zohar 93a). Eliyahu thus came to be called the “Angel of the Covenant,” since he attends and attests to every bris. Therefore, the chair that the baby is placed upon before the bris is referred to as Kisay shel Eliyahu.

THE SANDEK

The poskim discuss whether it is better to give the mitzvah of sandek to a great tzadik or to a family member (see Shu't Chacham Tzvi #70). Incidentally, some poskim contend that the father of the baby should be sandek, since he thereby assists in the bris which is his mitzvah to perform (Shu't Divrei Malkiel 4:86). However, the prevailing custom is to give the honor either to a grandparent or other honored family member or to a tzadik or talmid chacham.

Very special rewards and blessings are associated with being sandek. For this reason, the Rama cites a custom not to honor the same person with being sandek twice (Yoreh Deah 265:11; compare Gr'a and Shu't Noda Bi'yehudah, Yoreh Deah 86; see also Shu't Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #159).

There is a custom, seven hundred years old, that the sandek immerses himself in a mikveh before the bris. Since the sandek is compared to the mizbayach, he must make every attempt to make himself pure and holy (Maharil).

BERACHOS AT A BRIS

Several berachos are recited both before and after the bris. Immediately before performing the bris, the mohel recites the beracha “asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al hamilah” (that He commanded us to observe the mitzvah of Bris Milah), and the father immediately recites “asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu lehachniso bivriso shel Avraham Avinu” (that He commanded us to bring the child into the Covenant of Avraham). If the father is himself the mohel, he recites both berachos and then performs the bris. Among Sefardim, the father also recites the beracha shehechyanu (Yoreh Deah 265:7). In Eretz Yisrael, shehechyanu is recited at a bris even by Ashkenazim. In Chutz La'Aretz, most Ashkenazim do not recite shehechyanu at a bris.

WHY ARE TWO BERACHOS RECITED ON THE MITZVAH OF MILAH?

It is indeed unusual to recite two different berachos before fulfilling a mitzvah, each beginning with the words “asher kideshanu bemitzvosav.” Why do we recite two such berachos?

According to one opinion, the beracha of lehachniso is recited on the mitzvah of training the child in mitzvos (chinuch), rather than being exclusively about milah (Abudraham). It is recited at the bris since this is the first mitzvah that the father performs in raising his child as a Torah Jew.

An alternative approach is that this beracha is an appreciation for bringing the child into the kedusha of Klal Yisrael (Aruch HaShulchan 265:5-8). According to this approach, the beracha of lehachniso is a beracha of thanks and praise rather than being a beracha on the performance of a specific mitzvah (Tosafos Pesachim 7a).

WHY IS IT THAT SOME COMMUNITIES RECITE SHEHECHIYANU AT A BRIS AND OTHERS DO NOT?

This machlokes is hundreds of years old. Usually, we recite a shehechyanu on a mitzvah that is observed on special occasions, such as Yom Tov, Pidyon HaBen, Shofar, and Lulav. Thus, it would seem that one should recite shehechyanu at a Bris Milah. Nonetheless, the old minhag in Ashkenaz was to omit shehechyanu at a Bris Milah (Tosafos, Sukkah 46a; Rama 265:7). What was the reason for this minhag? (The custom among Sefardim was, and is, to recite shehechyanu at a bris.)

The poskim offer several reasons why there is no shehechyanu. Some suggest that shehechyanu is recited only on a mitzvah that is dependent on a date, such as a Yom Tov, or a very specific time, such as Pidyon HaBen, which is always performed on the thirtieth day after birth (Ran, Sukkah Chapter 4). Although Bris Milah can only be performed beginning the eighth day, since there are occasions when one cannot perform the bris on the eighth day (such as when the baby is ill or when it is uncertain which day the baby was born), there was no establishment of shehechyanu.

An alternative approach is that Chazal did not institute reciting shehechyanu at a bris because it is not a totally joyous time, since the baby suffers pain. However, other poskim disagree with this reason, pointing out that one recites shehechyanu when hearing news that includes both good and bad tidings (see Berachos 46b, 59b). Thus, suffering does not preclude reciting the beracha of shehechyanu (Hagahos Maimoniyos, Hilchos Milah 3:4, who also cites two other reasons for the Ashkenazic custom).

The Gr'a, himself an Ashkenazi, disagreed with the accepted practice and ruled that one should recite shehechyanu at a bris (Yoreh Deah 265:36). Since disciples of the Gr'a established the contemporary Ashkenazic community in Eretz Yisrael, they followed his practice to recite shehechyanu at a bris. As a result, the custom in Eretz Yisrael developed that everyone recites shehechyanu at a bris. The prevalent Ashkenazic practice in Chutz La'Aretz follows the opinion of Tosafos and Rama not to recite shehechyanu.

WHAT BERACHOS ARE RECITED AFTER THE BRIS?

After the bris is performed, two more berachos are recited over a cup of wine: first, a borei pri hagafen and then a lengthy, special beracha that begins with the words “Asher Kideish Yedid Mibeten” (Shabbos 137b). (Sefardim have the custom to recite an additional beracha, “Borei Atzei Besamim” on a hadas, after the beracha on the wine; see Shulchan Aruch 265:1.) This beracha translates, “Praised are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who sanctified Yitzchok Avinu from birth, placed a permanent mark on his body, and sealed the holy covenant upon his descendants. As a reward for fulfilling Bris Milah, Hashem the living G-d, command that Avraham's descendants be saved from the punishment of Gehenom (Shabbos 137b with Rashi; Shach, Yoreh Deah 265:5).” An alternative interpretation of the beginning of the beracha is that it refers to the three forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov (Tosafos, Shabbos 137b).

WHY WAS THIS BERACHA INSTITUTED?

It is unusual to have an additional beracha recited AFTER a mitzvah is performed. Some Rishonim explain that milah warrants an extra beracha since it was commanded to the Avos before the Torah was given (Tosafos Rid, Shabbos 137b). This theme is reflected in the structure of the beracha, since it refers to the Avos Avraham and Yitzchok (and also Yaakov according to the second explanation above).

The wording of the beracha is unusual, since it instructs Hashem to command that Avraham's descendants be saved from the punishment of Gehenom. What is meant by this unusual beracha?

This beracha can be explained by the following Agada. The Gemara teaches that Avraham Avinu rescues all of his descendants from Gehenom, no matter how many sins they performed during their time on Earth, provided they observed Bris Milah and did not intermarry (Eruvin 19a). Thus, the observance of just this one mitzvah may be enough to guarantee that a Jew not end up in Gehenom. We ask Hashem to command that all Jews be protected in this way (Shach 265:5). An alternative approach to explain this beracha is that the Hebrew word “tzavei” should instead be pronounced “tzivah,” He commanded. In this interpretation of the beracha we are not asking Hashem to command -- we are mentioning that in this merit he did command (Shaylas Yaavetz #146).

THE NAMING OF THE BABY

After the beracha “Asher kideish,” the baby is named in a special text that quotes the Prophet Yechezkel (16:6), “vo'e'vor alayich vo'er'eich misbosese

bedamayich va'omar loch 'bedomayich chayi' va'omar loch 'bedomayich chayi,'" "And I passed over you and I saw you wallowing in your blood. And I say to you, 'By your blood, live!' And I say to you, 'By your blood, live!'" Reading this pasuk presents us with the question: Why is the clause "And I say to you, 'By your blood, live!'" repeated?

The Targum explains this pasuk to be quoting Hashem: "When you, the Jews, were deeply enslaved in Mitzrayim, I remembered the covenant made with the Forefathers. I saw your suffering and told you that I will have mercy on you because of the blood of Bris Milah and will redeem you because of the blood of Korban Pesach." Thus, according to Targum, the two statements "By your blood, live!" refer to the blood of two different mitzvos, Bris Milah and Korban Pesach. (Because of the latter reason, this pasuk is also quoted in the Pesach Hagadah.) A similar interpretation of this pasuk appears in a Midrash: "When the Jews exited Mitzrayim, they had Bris Milah performed. They took the blood of the milah and mixed it with the blood of Korban Pesach and placed it on the lintels of their doors. For this reason, the pasuk repeats, "By your blood, live!" one reference to blood of milah, and the other to blood of Korban Pesach (Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, Chapter 29).

WHEN SHOULD ONE DRINK FROM THE CUP?

The custom is that one places a bit of the wine in the baby's mouth when reciting the words, "bedamayich chayi." However, when does the person reciting the berachos drink the wine?

According to some opinions, one should drink the wine immediately after completing the beracha of "Asher Kideish," in order to avoid an interruption (a hefsek) between the beracha of "HaGafen" and drinking the wine (Tur, Yoreh Deah 265). Although the beracha of "Asher Kideish" intervenes between HaGafen and drinking, this is not considered a hefsek, just as reciting the berachos of kiddush or havdala between "HaGafen" and drinking the wine are not interruptions. However, naming the baby constitutes an interruption, since it is not a beracha. Others contend that naming the baby is not considered an interruption between the beracha and the drinking of the wine, since it is part of the procedure (Itur). To avoid this shaylah, the most common practice in Chutz La'Aretz is to honor one person with reciting the berachos and someone else with naming the baby. This way, the honoree who recited the berachos can lick the wine off his fingers in a discreet way, thus avoiding the hefsek. In Eretz Yisrael, the prevalent custom is to honor one person with both kibbudim; some follow the Tur's approach, that he drinks from the cup before he names the baby, whereas others follow the Itur's approach, that he does not drink the wine until the baby is named.

WHO DRINKS THE WINE ON A FAST DAY?

Since one may not drink the cup of wine, can one recite a beracha on the wine if it will not be drunk? Indeed, many poskim rule that making Borei Pri HaGafen on the wine constitutes a beracha levatalah, a beracha recited in vain (Itur; Shu't Ran #52; Mordechai, end of Yoma). Others contend that reciting Borei Pri HaGafen without drinking the wine is not a beracha levatalah, since the beracha is part of the procedure (Rabbeinu Tam). There are numerous opinions among early Rishonim as to the correct procedure to observe.

Some contend that one should not make the beracha of HaGafen at all on a fast day (Itur; Shu't Rashba 7:536). (There are poskim who distinguish between Yom Kippur, when the mother may not drink the wine, and other fast days, where the mother might be available to drink the wine.) In their opinion, when no adult will drink the wine, Borei Pri HaGafen should not be recited. (This follows the first opinion quoted above.)

Others go one step further, contending that one cannot even recite the beracha of Asher Kideish. In their opinion, since the wine cannot be drunk, it is not permitted even to pour a cup of wine for a mitzvah without drinking it subsequently (Mordechai, end of Yoma, quoting Rabbeinu Yaakov ben Shimshon). Furthermore, they contend that Asher Kideish may not be recited in the absence of the wine.

This last point is disputed by a prominent Rishon, Rav Yitzchok ibn Giat, who contends that one recites the beracha Asher Kideish without any wine (quoted by Abudraham and Beis Yosef 265). In his opinion, it is only preferential, but not essential, to recite Asher Kideish over a cup of wine.

Others rule that one recites a beracha on the cup of wine on a fast day, and drinks the wine after the fast is over (Rav Tzemach Gaon, quoted by Itur). This opinion contends that when reciting "Borei Pri haGafen" on a mitzvah, it is not necessary to drink the cup of wine to avoid a beracha levatalah. The reason we drink the cup of wine is that it is not a kavod for a "kos shel beracha" to be left un-drunk. However, this requirement is fulfilled when the cup of wine is drunk in the evening after the

bris.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE FORESKIN AFTER THE BRIS?

The foreskin is placed in some sand or earth to remind us that the Jews in the desert buried the foreskins from the milah in the earth (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 265:10 from Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, Chapter 29). It also reminds us that the Jews will be as plentiful as the dust of the earth (Bereishis 28:14).

TWINS

If there are two milos (plural of milah) to be performed on the same day, such as when there are twins, should one repeat all the berachos when performing the second bris, or should one perform the bris on the second child without repeating the berachos? There is a dispute among poskim which to do: some poskim rule that when performing two mitzvos that cannot be performed simultaneously, one should recite two separate berachos (Itur). Others contend that one should recite separate berachos because of "ayin hora" that could result (Rama, Perisha, and Beis Shemuel, Even HaEzer 62:3). Although Shulchan Aruch rules that one should recite only one set of berachos (Yoreh Deah 265:5), the widespread practice is to make separate berachos for each bris, and to interrupt between the two brisos by going outside, in order to require a new beracha (Shu't Darchei Noam, Yoreh Deah #27, cited by Rabbi Akiva Eiger and Pischei Teshuvah to Yoreh Deah). (It should be noted that the Mishnah Berurah [8:34 and 639:48] rules that changing one's location after performing a mitzvah does not require a new beracha.)

BRIS MILAH AND ATONEMENT

The Midrash tells us that Avraham Avinu's bris took place on Yom Kippur on the place where the Mizbayach of the Beis HaMikdash was later built. Thus, the atonement both of Yom Kippur and of korbanos is combined in the observance of Bris Milah. In the words of the Midrash, "Every year, HaKodosh Boruch Hu sees the blood of the Bris of Avraham Avinu and He atones for all our sins." Thus, Bris Milah guarantees the future redemption of the Jewish people, and the kaparah (atonement) from all sins (Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, Chapter 29)

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas LECH LECHA

Go from your land and your birth place... And I will make of you a great nation. (12:1)

The Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16b teaches that four things can nullify the unfavorable decree against an individual: Charity; prayer with tzeakah, crying out; changing one's name; change of action, or changing his way of life. The Talmud cites a fifth possible way to overturn an evil decree: a change of place. They support this idea with the pasuk: "Go from your land," which is followed up, "I will make of you a great nation." This indicates that, in his new location, Avraham Avinu would finally be blessed with a son, the precursor of a great nation. Rashi quotes the Midrash which interprets the pasuk differently: "Go out from your astrology, ie, abandon your astrological calculations." Apparently, Avraham had seen by way of the zodiacal signs that he was not destined to have a son. Hashem said that it was true with regard to Avram, but Avraham (his new name) shall have a son.

The first family of Judaism, Avraham and Sarah, were not destined to have children. Their mazel was against them. Hence, Hashem had to change "them," so that they would not be affected by the predetermined zodiacal signs. Mazel plays a critical role. For some it is beneficial, and for others it means that they will be challenged throughout life. In his commentary to Parshas Noach, the Maggid, zl, of Dubno offers a mashal, parable, which gives us insight into the value of mazel. Indeed, he demonstrates how individuals, whom Hashem has endowed with tremendous opportunity for spiritual success, have used their gift wrongly, basically misapplying and undermining their mazel.

He relates the "story" of the man who met a great tzaddik, righteous person, who was well-known for the efficacy of his blessings. Whomever he blessed saw the fruits of the tzaddik's blessings. The man asked the tzaddik to "please bless me." The tzaddik responded, "It should be the will of G-d that the first enterprise in which you get involved should be blessed with success." When the man heard this he was overjoyed. He could not contain himself. Regrettably, he had no money to

invest in a business deal. Therefore, he figured that he would go home and spend the day counting his savings. This meant breaking open his "piggy bank," filled with nothing but pennies, and counting each one separately. He began counting: one, two, three, etc. During his accounting endeavor, his wife came home. After seeing what he was doing, she expressed that she thought that he had lost his mind. She asked him politely to stop his preposterous counting. He ignored her. "But it is only pennies!" she screamed. He ignored her. "Are you out of your mind?" she demanded. He ignored her. This went on for some time, until they got into an all-out brawl. In fact, it was the biggest fight they had ever had. She berated him, and he countered with his own critique of her. The tzaddik was proven right. He had blessed him with success in his very first enterprise. He had one doozy of a fight with his wife.

The Maggid explains the lesson to be derived from here. Noah had just been saved from certain death. The world had been wiped out. Noah was spared. Hashem saved Noah so that he should plant the seeds of the future. He would be the progenitor of mankind, the father of the new world. He was blessed. It would make sense that the first thing to which Noah would commit himself that day would succeed beyond anyone's imagination. So what did Noah do? He planted a vine tree, which immediately produced luscious grapes from which Noah made the most incredible wine. Noah imbibed and got carried away. The rest is history. Noah was granted an unusual gift from Heaven, and he used it unwisely. Some individuals are born with silver spoons of blessing in their mouths. Their mazel is off the charts. They have the ability to achieve the greatest and most exalted heights in spirituality and scholarship. Some take advantage of this exceptional gift; others just allow it to slip through their hands. When someone sees that he is blessed, he should put it to good utility, or he might end up living a life filled with regret.

In his *Ka'ayal Taarog*, Horav Reuven Abitbul, Shlita, quotes the teaching of the Zohar HaChadash that in the eleventh century, sixth millennium, an unusual surplus of wisdom will descend on the world. If Klal Yisrael will be worthy, they will use this blessing and apply it to Torah study. If they will be negligent, it will evade them and become the possession of the umos ha'olam, nations of the world. We have seen this presage achieve fruition in our generation. On the one hand, Torah study is at a new high. Never have there been as many yeshivos, so much learning, so many seforim published. It is amazing. Yet, we have been witness to a scientific and technological boom that is unprecedented in the annals of history. Let us take this to heart: all of this science; the technology; the growth of a system of communications and space exploration that is absolutely mind-boggling. All of this is important, but it could have been Torah! Every new smart phone, tablet, satellite, could be a yeshivah, a Bais Yaakov, a kollel. The blessing is there. It is up to us to make use of it.

Rav Abitbul quotes Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, who explains this with a mashal, parable. Our generation has merited an incredible spiritual flow of *siyata diShmaya*, Divine assistance. What are we doing about it? It is very much like the fellow who prepared a wedding for his son, inviting three-hundred guests. The day of the wedding, the city was hit with a major snow storm. Highways were shut down, schools were closed, the subways were off schedule, people were literally stranded. A wedding is still a wedding, and the festivities must go on. Those who were relatives of the chassan or kallah, or the close friends of either families braved the elements to attend the wedding. Indeed, one hundred guests did come. Upon factoring in the inclement weather and miserable driving conditions, this was regarded to be a considerable crowd.

The caterer could not take into account the weather. Three hundred portions had been prepared at the beginning of the week. What was he to do with the extra portions? Serve them! Thus, after each guest finished his portion, a waiter appeared with another portion. By the time he had completed the second portion, the guest could hardly think of food. Yet, the caterer sent out more food. The alternative was the garbage. The guests were visibly impressed. After all, who had ever heard of being served so much food at a wedding? Little did they realize that they were served three portions because two thirds of the guests had not been able to attend. This is a parable. The lesson is obvious. At the beginning of each year, the Almighty allocates a certain amount of *siyata diShmaya* for those who study Torah in the coming year. If the *siyata diShmaya* which is set aside for one million students of Torah is redeemed by only half a million students, however, then they will be the lucky recipients of a double portion of Heavenly assistance. The assistance is there for those who are willing to come and get it. Otherwise, those wise students who make the effort will be blessed with a greater portion.

Go from your land and your birthplace and from your father's home. (12:1)

Hashem's command to Avraham Avinu, instructing him to leave his present surroundings is "stretched" out a bit. The Torah emphasizes the various phases of his departure: his land, his birthplace, his father's home. The Mizrahi suggests that

the purpose in this emphasis was that the Patriarch would digest all that he was abandoning. It was not just his land; it was also his birthplace, and his father's home. Uhr Casdim meant a lot to Avraham. To leave was to forsake a major part of his past. He had a history in Uhr Casdim. The purpose of this detail was to increase the Patriarch's reward. He was not merely giving up his condo in Uhr Casdim; he was relinquishing a part of yesteryear. Obviously, with increased yearning comes greater reward.

We find Rashi expounding a similar interpretation when he addresses Hashem's command to Avraham concerning the Akeidah, Binding of Yitzchak Avinu. Hashem instructed Avraham to sacrifice: "Your son, your only one, whom you love - Yitzchak" (Bereishis 22:2). The Almighty could have simply said Yitzchak, without the buildup. Rashi explains that Hashem was underscoring Avraham's loss, thus adding to his reward. It was not merely his son; it was his only, beloved, Yitzchak, thereby making the Patriarch's sacrifice and devotion that much greater. There is - or should be - a glaring difference between Avraham's love for Yitzchak and his relationship to his home. Uhr Casdim may have played a significant role in Avraham's life, but his love for it was nothing like his feelings towards Yitzchak. Furthermore, Uhr Casdim was not Yerushalayim. It was a spiritually bankrupt city, under the rule of a morally depraved demagogue, Nimrod. It was a community where paganism was rampant and licentiousness a way of life. Avraham must surely have been averse to living in such a community. Indeed, this was the place where he was thrown into a fiery cauldron! What affection could he possibly hold for such a repugnant community?

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, explains that a tzaddik is not a machine, a marionette that turns off to evil and thrives only on virtue. A tzaddik is cognitive of his environment and has feelings of emotion, just as everyone else does. He has desires, natural inclinations and feelings. He has not just overcome his natural tendencies and reprogrammed himself to care only for Torah and mitzvos. On the contrary, he is just like the rest of us, but he has learned to control his urges, to curb his emotions, to channel them in positive directions. Uhr Casdim may have been a perverted community, but it was Avraham's birthplace, his father's home. He had feelings for the place, an innate sense of love for the country in which he had spent most of his life. Yet, his love for Hashem was greater. Thus, when he was commanded to leave, he did so with a co-existent love in his heart for the past and an excitement concerning the future.

When Avraham held the knife over his son, Yitzchak, he did not for one moment ignore the fact that this was his beloved son. He was no robot, blindly following Hashem's command without feeling towards his son. The Yalkut Shimoni points out that burning hot tears flowed from Avraham's eyes as he prepared to slaughter Yitzchak. Is this the reaction of a machine? Did he pretend that he was not holding a sharp knife poised over his son's throat? Avraham did not suppress his love for Yitzchak. He allowed his tears to flow freely, expressing his love for his only son. It was just that his love for-- and obedience to-- the Almighty took precedence. Hashem does not want us to be robots, zombies, dehumanized dimwits. There is regrettably a religion of terrorists bent on destroying our People which preaches such automated, mindless devotion. The Almighty has endowed man's heart with an aggregate of emotions. We are warm, sensitive human beings, who love our parents, our spouses and our children. Our homes mean something to us. Natural affections are a part of our lives. We are normal people - and proud of it. The emotions Hashem bequeathed us should be nurtured and cultivated, because the greater the ability to love others within our family circle, the greater ability we possess to love Hashem. If we begin to desensitize ourselves, we become cold, dehumanized machines who have no emotion, no feelings, with no way of expressing our love to Hashem. The Almighty does not want a nation of mindless, cretinous imbeciles, who are unaware of their surroundings and inattentive to the feelings of others. He wants normal people, with normal emotions and caring hearts. Then He wants them to take it "all" and focus it on serving Him. This is what Avraham Avinu taught us. Take everything with which Hashem has endowed you and apply it to your service of the Almighty.

Go you from your land. (12:1)

Two Avos, Patriarchs, left their homeland - Avraham Avinu and Yaakov Avinu. The Torah uses "different" vernacular in describing their respective departures. Avraham is to lech lecha, leave, go, while concerning Yaakov, the Torah writes, va'yeitzei, "And he (Yaakov) went out." Rashi comments that when a tzaddik, righteous person, leaves a place, it makes an impression. He impacts the city's beauty, glory and luster. Why does the Torah choose to make Yaakov's departure impactful, while Avraham's departure seems more like an escape, as if no one really cared?

The Chasam Sofer, zl, distinguishes between the communities that hosted Avraham and Yaakov. The third Patriarch left a city that had come under the influence of his father, Yitzchak Avinu, and his grandfather, Avraham. Torah, yiraas Shomayim,

fear of Heaven, ethics and morality were the hallmarks of this community. The citizens were refined and upstanding individuals who appreciated and venerated the individual who had raised the standard of their community. Thus, when Yaakov departed, a void was felt in the community. One of its tzaddikim had moved on; his presence would no longer be felt within the community.

Avraham, on the other hand, lived in a city where idol worship was the norm and moral depravity was the accepted way of life. Nimrod, with his heretical beliefs, held sway over the minds and hearts of its inhabitants. Avraham was neither revered, nor liked. He was an outcast, a persona non grata, whose monotheistic teachings were reviled. Therefore, his leaving made no impact on the community. Indeed, the people were happy to be rid of him.

This explanation seems enigmatic. One would think that in a city filled with tzaddikim, the departure of one tzaddik would not leave much of an impression. On the other hand, in a city where ethics and morality are at a premium, every tzaddik would be venerated and elevated. Yet, we see the opposite. Why?

The answer is "appreciation": If a tzaddik is to leave an impression on a community, he must be appreciated. People must acknowledge his value and contribution to their community, to their personal and communal lives. Otherwise, he is not appreciated. He is just another citizen. Impact comes with appreciation, and appreciation only comes with acknowledgment. One must open his eyes to observe how the tzaddik's presence has changed his life. Otherwise, the tzaddik may as well live elsewhere.

So Avram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between me and you... please separate from me." (12:8,9)

Chazal teach us that masei Avos siman labanim, "The actions of the Fathers are a sign for the sons." The Torah is teaching us that the varied approaches to life's challenges encountered by the Patriarchs serve as a portent and guide for their descendants to follow and emulate. They are teaching us the correct path to take upon confronting similar situations. Clearly, as in all "maps," it takes the educated and discerning eye of a teacher to explain the meaning of various actions, the underlying reason for taking such action, and the lessons to be derived. This brings us to Avraham Avinu's separation from Lot. Let us ignore the fact that Lot was family, a close student, and Avraham was the only mentor that he had. It is surprising that Avraham, whose entire life was comprised of reaching out to the unaffiliated, would separate from Lot. Avraham personified the middah, attribute, of chesed, kindness. Is there a greater and more significant kindness than bringing someone under the kanfei ha'Shechinah, wings of the Divine Presence?

Furthermore, Hashem apparently agreed with Avraham's actions, since He did not appear to Avraham as long as Lot was with him.

Horav Arye Leib Bakst, zl, derives from here that reaching out to a fellow Jew has its limits. While it is wonderful chesed, and truly the most remarkable favor one can do for his fellow Jew, there comes a time when the answer must be "no." I cannot risk my own ruchniyos, spirituality, in order to provide chesed for another Jew. One must have priorities in his life, and his own spirituality must be one of those priorities. Our Patriarch was prepared to go to great lengths on behalf of his nephew. He risked his life to save Lot during the War of the Kings. He did not shirk from any chesed that was asked of him. When their relationship endangered his spirituality, however, Avraham backed off.

While the answer is obvious, it still does not explain why Avraham would be spiritually diminished by Lot. Our Patriarch was not your average tzaddik. He towered above everyone. How could Lot have an effect on him? I think the answer lies in the words - al na tehi merivah beini u'beinach. "Please let there be no strife between me and you." Avraham could deal with every spiritual challenge Lot could throw at him, except for one: machlokes, dispute/argument/controversy. The poison of a machlokes has a malignant effect on all of the participants. Since one cannot have an argument unless two people are involved, Avraham would reluctantly be implicated. He recognized that if their relationship were to continue, it would end in dispute. Understanding that machlokes must be circumvented at all costs, Avraham was determined to distance himself from Lot.

Having said this, we return to the main thrust of this lesson. Avraham Avinu teaches us that one may exert all efforts, expend all costs, give all of himself in his quest to perform chesed. This is true only with regard to gashmiyus, material/physical chesed. Time, energy, and expense are all commendable when one is carrying out acts of kindness that do not infringe on his spirituality. Once his spiritual dimension is impacted; if his spiritual growth becomes impeded, he must immediately desist. There comes a time when one must declare: hipared na meialai, "Please separate from me." Kiruv-- outreach, to the unaffiliated, the alienated, and the assimilated-- is the most noble form of chesed one can perform for a fellow Jew. It avails him the opportunity to save a life. A life devoid of spirituality, a life without G-d, is not a life. It is an existence. The kiruv fellow literally performs spiritual resuscitation when he reaches out, but - and there truly is a "but" - there are

times and circumstances when the risks outweigh the benefits. When the kiruv fellow himself is spiritually frail, when the conditions under which he must work, and the environment in which he finds himself, are actually too much for him to overcome, he must relinquish his role, discontinue his relationship. One may not destroy himself to help others. It must be hipared na meialai.

Avraham, the pillar of chesed, taught us the meaning of chesed and when it is applicable and when it is dangerous. We cannot run on emotion, allowing our sentiment and sensitiveness to prevail over reason and logic. A physician does not treat family, because he must remain objective. A kiruv fellow must determine the rationality of his endeavor based upon common sense and dialectic. If he might personally sustain a spiritual blow, he must follow the lesson set forth by the Patriarch: Hipared na meialai.

Fear not Avram, I am a shield for you; your reward is very great. (15:1)

Hashem promises those who fulfill His mitzvos that they will be rewarded commensurate with their good deeds. We understand, of course, the rule of schar b'hai alma leka, "reward does not apply to This World." The ultimate reward that one will receive will materialize in the World of Truth, Olam Habbah. The Ben Ish Chai questions this rule. We are all aware of the Torah's injunction that a Jewish worker be paid on the day that he completes his work. B'yomo titein scharo, if one is hired for day work, he must be reimbursed for his work at the end of the day - not the next day - but that day. One's wages may not be delayed - not even overnight. Why then does Hashem not reimburse us immediately for our mitzvah observance?

The Ben Ish Chai explains that the answer is concealed within a halachah in Choshen Mishpat. One who hires workers through an agent does not have to pay them at the end of the day. The mitzvah of b'yomo titein s'charo is in effect only if the worker is hired by the owner. A shliach, agent, does not carry such weight. Therefore, since Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah through the agency of Moshe Rabbeinu, the prohibition against delaying a Jewish worker's payment does not apply. An added caveat involves the first two mitzvos of the Aseres HaDibros, Ten Commandments, which Klal Yisrael heard directly from Hashem. Concerning these two mitzvos, the s'char, reward, is immediate. These mitzvos are: Anochi - referring to emunah, belief/faith in the Almighty; and Lo yiheyeh lecha, idolatry. Thus, one who believes in Hashem and shuns any form of foreign belief is worthy of receiving his reward in Olam Hazeih, This World. This, claims the Ben Ish Chai, is alluded to by the pasuk, Al tirah Avram, "Do not fear, Avram." Hashem assured Avraham that he need not worry concerning his descendant's reward, because Anochi magen lach, "The Anochi" will serve as a shield to protect you. This refers to the Anochi of Anochi Hashem, the mitzvah of emunah. A Jew who is faithful, who believes in Hashem with all his heart, will merit great reward - in This World. Sponsored l'ilui nishmas R' Eliezer ben R' Yitzchak Chaim z"l Keller nifter 12 Cheshvan 5766 Izsak Keller By Perl & Harry Brown & Family Marcia & Hymie Keller & Family

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Lech Lecha

Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz, a"h

"The Active Leader"

If you are reading this column regularly, you may remember that Miriam was the shy participant in the class that I have been describing. You will surely remember that this was a class in which I used the book of Genesis as a springboard for discussions about leadership. I had been asked to assist the members of the class to develop leadership skills for use in their respective Jewish synagogue communities. Miriam began to speak even before I had formally called the class to order. "I would like this class to be a kind of laboratory in which we can try out new leadership skills and not just learn about leadership theoretically. I know that I come across as shy and sometimes withdrawn and I want to correct that, so here goes!"

She certainly grabbed the class's attention. Even Myron, who had been sitting with an expressionless face for the first two class sessions, and whose name did not appear in our discussion of their respective parshiyot, opened his eyes wide in surprise and adopted a posture which demonstrated his anticipation of what Miriam would say.

"I am so impressed by the contrast between the leadership styles of Abraham, the protagonist of this week's Torah portion, Parshat Lech Lecha, and Noah, after whom last week's Torah portion was named."

Alex, who had a way of using his tall stature to project his skepticism, questioned Miriam. "Abraham and Noah were clearly different types of people, but what makes you think that they were so different in their leadership styles?"

Miriam gulped. She definitely wanted to attempt to overcome her shyness by opening the class with her statement, but she apparently did not anticipate a confrontation with another class member, and particularly not from Alex, who towered over the others, in both his physical size and his debating skills. But she held her ground. "I read the entire parsha, as had been assigned by the Rabbi. But I also consulted some of the basic commentaries. They all emphasize that Noah was indeed a righteous person, but he was also a very private person, very much like me. But a leader cannot contain his personal piety. He must influence the people around him, and Noah failed to do so. Abraham, however, was very different. Outreach to others was his specialty."

Myron didn't even have to raise his hand to enter the fray. His heretofore expressionless face now projected an enthusiasm and eagerness which demanded that I recognize him. He had this to say: "Zalman and I have been meeting between class sessions, and he has been teaching me some of the subtleties of the Hebrew text. Zalman, do you mind if I share one of your insights with the group?" Zalman waved his hand in a manner signaling his permission for Myron to continue, but cautioned, "Go ahead, but if you mess up, I'll barge right in and correct you!"

Myron accepted the challenge. He pointed out that at the very beginning of Parshat Noah, last week's parsha, we read: "Noah was a righteous man... Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). On the other hand, toward the very end of this week's parsha, we read: "The Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him... 'Walk in My ways and be whole' (Genesis 17:1).

"When Zalman and I compared these two statements, he shared with me a startling insight. Noah is spoken of in the past tense; not only in the phrase I just quoted, but elsewhere as well: 'Noah was righteous,' 'you alone have I found righteous before Me.'

"But God speaks to Abraham in the future tense: 'Walk before me,' 'go forth from your native land,' 'I will make of you a great nation.' It is as if Noah's work was over and done with, whereas Abraham had his task still before him.

"That seems to me to reflect a difference in leadership styles which goes beyond Miriam's important distinction between Noah's solitude and Abraham's involvement with others. Noah saw his job as completed, a matter of the past. Abraham persisted with a vision of the future and was prepared to rise to challenges that lay ahead."

Zalman looked at Myron approvingly. "You not only understood my careful reading of the text, but you explained it exactly right. I would only add that the great 19th century commentator known as Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin) points to Abraham's reaction to being addressed in the future tense. 'Abram threw himself on his face' (Genesis 17:3). Why? Because, suggests the Netziv, 'he was astounded and confused to hear that the Almighty expected still more of him, indicating that he had not yet fulfilled his obligations and was still falling short of his mission.'" The reader will surely remember Othniel, the origins of whose name I have still not disclosed. He saw himself as Zalman's rival for the title of most erudite class participant. Not to be outdone, he asked the class to simply observe the startling difference reflected by the very names by which these two adjacent Torah portions are known. Noah is related to the Hebrew word *menucha*, which means "rest." Lech lecha means "go." Noah was passive, and Abraham active, always doing, ever accomplishing. His leadership style is the very antithesis of "rest".

Once again, the class was doing all of my work for me. Three important components of effective leadership surfaced in the course of our conversation: an orientation toward the future rather than the past; transcending the narrow confines of one's own self; and an active stance towards life. All characteristics of the good leader, and all based, one way or another, upon this week's Torah portion.

I felt compelled to conclude the class discussion by quoting Maimonides about the nature of Abraham's spiritual leadership. In his major compendium of Jewish law, *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides offers a fascinating account of the history of idolatry and its replacement by monotheism. After detailing the nature and extent of the idolatrous society which Abraham initially encountered, Maimonides describes the method Abraham used to drastically change that society: "He would journey from place to place, and gathered around him the people of every city." Abraham did not simply mimic the folkways of his ancestors. He questioned them, rebelled against them, and struck out, alone, on his own new path. He was not satisfied with his initial accomplishments but courageously spread the word of God to more and more people. He was not satisfied, as Noah was, to stay in one place, as a "man of

the earth." Rather, he adopted the lifestyle of a shepherd, ever on the move. But, rather than just tend to sheep and goats, he guided flocks of human beings, and led them in his own dynamic but compassionate fashion.

I thought that my remarks were an adequate ending to the evening's discussion. But I was trumped by the ever-practical Priscilla! "I can't wait to delve into next week's Torah portion. My intuition tells me that we are going to study about the ways in which Abraham would apply his leadership skills to practical situations." It was left for me to utter the session's last words: "Priscilla, you won't be disappointed!"

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Lech Lecha

Avram Lifted Up His Hand...So That You Not Say 'I Made Avram Wealthy'

Parshas Lech Lecha contains an account of what truly may be called the "First World War." During this battle, Lot, the nephew of Avram, was captured and was subsequently rescued by Avram. The King of Sodom went out to greet Avram. As a gesture of gratitude for bringing about his rescue, the king told him "please leave me the people and take all the booty for yourself." Avram takes an oath ("I lift up my hand to Hashem, the G-d on High, who created Heaven and Earth") that he would not take even as much as a thread or a shoelace from the spoils of war so that the King of Sodom will not ever be able to say 'I made Avram wealthy'. The Ramban interprets the "lifting of the hand to Hashem the G-d on High..." as more than just an oath (which is Rashi's interpretation). The Ramban explains that Avram was sanctifying any property that he might take to be "Hekdesh" (donated to G-d).

The Medrash writes that in the merit of Avram's not taking anything from the spoils of war, G-d granted his children the mitzvah of Tzitzis [corresponding to the string he did not take] and granted them the mitzvah of Yevamah [involving the taking off the shoe, corresponding to the lace of the shoe which Avraham did not take]. A second suggestion in the Medrash is that the Mishkan and the "Chut haSikra" surrounding the Mizbayach were given to Avram's descendants as rewards for this statement of his.

What was so significant about Avram's refusal to take part of the bounty that merited all these various rewards?

The Meshech Chochmah writes that Avram underwent a tremendous test here. He was waging war against the most powerful nations in the world. These were the nations that were just victorious in the epic battle of the "First World War." He was taking on the most powerful nations in the world with a very small force of soldiers (and according to the Medrash, virtually single handedly). When emerging victorious from such a war, the natural reaction is to feel pretty good about oneself. It is all so tempting and easy to fall into the trap of saying "My might and the power of my hand has accomplished for me this great victory." (We are stronger, we are mightier, we are smarter, we have better tactics, etc.) It is almost impossible not to fall into that trap. If you examine the great battles of world history, that is the typical reaction when an army is victorious.

This unfortunately happened in Eretz Yisrael after the Six Day War. Everyone was amazed at the military prowess of the Israeli army and the Israeli air force. The mentality quickly took hold that "My might and the power of my hand accomplished for me this great victory." [Devorim 8:17]

Avram needed to do something dramatic to ensure that he would not fall into this trap. The Meshech Chochmah interprets the trust of Avram's statement to mean "It is not my booty because it was not my war and it

was not my victory! G-d won the war, so – as the Ramban interprets – it is He who should get the spoils."

As an addendum to the Me shech Chochmah, I saw I beautiful thought in the name of the Gerer Rebbe – the Beis Yisrael. The simple reading of the pasuk is that Avram refuses to take the thread or the shoelace so that "You – King of Sodom – will not be able to say 'I made Avram rich'." The Beis Yisrael interprets differently. Avram lifted up his fingers and speaking to his own hand said: "You will not say 'I made Avram rich!'" He was not trying to negate a future claim by the King of Sodom, he was trying to negate the tempting claim of "My strength and the power of my hand, made for me this great wealth."

Whenever we are successful in life, it is so easy to fall into this trap. We need to lift up our hands and addressing the accomplishments of those very hands, say: "Don't get carried away and think that it was I who 'made Avram wealthy'."

The Connection Between Hagar's Pregnancy And That Of Shimshon's Mother

When Sarai saw that she and Avram were not able to have children together, she gave her handmaiden to Avram as a concubine so that he might have a child through her. The Torah tells us that when Hagar became pregnant, she treated Sarai with less respect. Sarai then caused her suffering until she fled from her. The Torah narrates that an Angel found Hagar in the wilderness and announced to her: "Heenach harah v'yaladet ben..." [Bereshis 16:11].

The simple interpretation of these words is that the Angel told Hagar that the pregnancy she was already aware of (as the Torah told us earlier) would result in the birth of a son and she should call that son Yishmael to commemorate the fact that G-d listened to her. Rashi, however, interprets the words "Heenach harah" to be a future prophecy. He explains that Hagar miscarried from her first pregnancy, but the Angel told her that she should return and she would become pregnant again. Rashi cites the parallel expression used by the Angel, who spoke to the wife of Manoach (mother of Shimshon), where it clearly refers to a future pregnancy.

However, there is a difference between the pasuk in Shoftim and the pasuk in Lech Lecha. The pasuk in Shoftim really has no other possible interpretation because the Angel had just told her "You are sterile and have not given birth." However, the pasuk in Lech Lecha could certainly and perhaps more plausibly tolerate the interpretation "You are already pregnant." What forces Rashi to link the two pasukim?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky gives a very insightful interpretation. Rav Yaakov says that when the Gentiles devised the idea of an "Immaculate Conception," they based it on the pasukim in Shoftim. The Angel first told Manoach's wife "You are sterile". Then he told her "You are pregnant and will have a son." How did this happen? Five minutes ago she was told she could not have a baby. Now suddenly she is told that she is pregnant and will have a baby. What happened? It must be, said the Gentiles that this sudden pregnancy came about as a result of "Immaculate Conception". They argue that the wife of Manoach became pregnant from the Angel. That is why Shimshon had to be holy from the womb.

This is why Rashi emphasizes here that when an Angel tells a woman "Hinach Harah," it must mean that you will become pregnant in the future. The verb is only expressed in the present tense because when an angel says something Zit is "as good as done already." This interpretation therefore rejects the claim of the Notzrim that there is Biblical precedent for the concept of "Immaculate Conception".

With this approach, Rav Yaakov explains a very interesting passage in a Gemara in Bava Basra [91b]. The Gemara there asks the name of Shimshon's mother. (The Navi only refers to her as Manoach's wife). The Gemara answers that her name was Falfonis and also adds that the name of Shimshon's sister was Nachshan. The Gemara then asks, "What

difference does it make?" and answers "It is a retort to the heretics." Rav Yaakov interprets that when the Notzrim will say that Shimshon was conceived via Immaculate Conception, we will now be able to respond that he had a sister whose name was Nachshan. We will sarcastically ask them: "Was she also conceived through Immaculate Conception?" We emphasize to them that Shimshon was conceived through normal male-female conception, as was his sister. This is the only way it has ever been done and let no one tell you otherwise!

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
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Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Lech Lecha: The Dream and the Brit Ceremony

"This is My covenant (brit) between Me and between you and your descendants that you must keep: you must circumcise every male." (Gen. 17:10)
R. Simcha Raz recounted the following anecdote in his biography of Rabbi Aryeh Levine (1885-1969), the well-known tzaddik of Jerusalem, who was a devoted friend and disciple of Rav Kook:

In 1936, a year after Rav Kook had departed this world, my uncle had a dream. In the dream, he saw Rav Kook dressed in his finest holiday clothes, walking-stick in hand, ready to leave his house.

"I am in a hurry to attend a brit milah (circumcision ceremony)," Rav Kook explained. "It is scheduled for ten o'clock, and there is not much time." When my uncle woke up in the morning, he asked his wife to call the late chief rabbi's family. Was there really a brit milah scheduled for that day?

Rav Kook's widow answered the call.

"No, there is no brit in our family," she replied. "But there is a brit in the family of a very good friend of ours, a friend who is dearer to us than our own relatives. A grandson was born to Reb Aryeh Levine, and the brit is to take place at ten this morning. We are rushing now to get there."

To my uncle, there was no doubt that the spirit of the chief rabbi would be present at this joyous event. So he hurried off to attend the brit. Reb Aryeh Levine, the proud grandfather, was of course in attendance.

The high point of the ceremony occurred when the baby's name was announced. The child was named 'Abraham Isaac' - the first child in Israel to be named after the late chief rabbi.

(Adapted from "A Tzaddik in Our Time" by R. Simcha Raz, p. 343)

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Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Davening Issues

Question: What should one do if, mistakenly, he recited v'sein tal umatar livrachah after Succos but before the evening of December fifth?

Discussion: Although in Eretz Yisroel they have been reciting v'sein tal umatar livrachah since the evening of the seventh of Cheshvan, outside of Eretz Yisroel we do not ask for rain until the Maariv prayer of the fifth of December. This is because Eretz Yisrael, which is more elevated than other lands and does not have enough natural bodies of water to irrigate the land, requires much more rain than other countries.¹ If, however, one mistakenly recited v'sein tal umatar outside of Eretz Yisroel after Succos but before the evening of the fifth of December, he need not repeat his Shemoneh Esrei.² It is true that had he made this very mistake during the summer months and recited v'sein tal umatar—he would be required to repeat Shemoneh Esrei, but making that mistake anytime after Succos up until the fifth of December does not necessitate a repetition of Shemoneh Esrei. This is because we consider it premature to pray for rain before December fifth, but still, the period between Succos and December fifth is considered part of the “rainy season,” unlike the summer months, when rain is not welcome at all.

Question: Why do some people say morid ha-gashem 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., eretz, kesef, eved, etc.), the first segol is changed to a kamatz when the word appears at the end of a Biblical phrase or sentence.

The correct pronunciation of the word ha-geshem or ha-gashem, 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-gashem 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-gashem instead⁴—and some poskim maintain that ha-gashem is the correct pronunciation⁵—most poskim⁶ hold that the correct way to pronounce the word is ha-geshem, and this is how most contemporary siddurim print that word.

Question: What should one do if he wishes to daven on behalf of a sick person, but he does not know the name of the sick person's mother?⁷

Discussion: The father's name should be used instead.⁸ If the father's name is also unknown to him, then the family surname should be mentioned.⁹

A mother davening on behalf of her child should not mention her own name. Instead, she should say only “my son/daughter” followed by the child's name.¹⁰

Question: Does one fulfill his obligation of reciting Kerias Shema if he fails to pronounce each word correctly according to the rules of dikduk (Hebrew grammar)?

Discussion: Chazal attach great significance to pronouncing the words of Kerias Shema correctly, going as far as to say that “one who is particular about reading Shema correctly will be rewarded with a ‘cooled down’ Geheinom.”¹¹ Still, Shulchan Aruch rules that b'diavad one fulfills his obligation of Shema even if he was not particular to pronounce each word correctly (e.g., he did not correctly accent each syllable), as long as he clearly articulated every single word and every single letter.

In particular, Chazal were concerned about words whose last letter is the same as the first letter of the next word. In the words bechall levavecha, for example, the letter lamed is both at the end of bechall and

at the beginning of levavecha. Both lameds need to be clearly and distinctly pronounced, necessitating a slight pause between the two words; otherwise, the two words will sound like one long word—bechallevecha. The same holds true for al levavchem, va'avadetem meheirah, and many others.¹²

It is interesting, though, that while Chazal specifically single out bechall levavecha as one of the word combinations where a pause is necessary, this particular pause must be extremely brief; otherwise, one runs afoul of a different grammatical rule: These two words are connected with a makaf, a hyphen, which means that they are supposed to be read together with no pause between them. Is this not a contradiction? On the one hand, a pause is necessary to separate the two lameds, while on the other hand, the two words are supposed to be read together.¹³

The solution is not to pause fully and leave a space between these two words (like we would between similar combinations, e.g., va'avadetem meheirah), but rather to leave a hair's-breadth between them—enunciating both lameds clearly and accenting the second word, levavecha.¹⁴ One would be well advised to practice reading these words in advance, so that when he recites Kerias Shema the correct pronunciation will come easily.¹⁵

¹ See Taanis 10a, Sefurno, Devarim 11:11 and Magen Avraham 117:1.

² This issue is widely debated among the poskim: some require repeating the Shemoneh Esrei while most do not. Although Mishnah Berurah 117:13 and Beur Halachah, s.v. hatzrichim, recommends that one repeat the Shemoneh Esrei as a tefillas nedavah (a conditional, voluntary prayer), this recommendation should be followed only by those who are sure that they can concentrate properly for another Shemoneh Esrei. Since most people cannot, it is better for them to rely on the majority of poskim who do not require the repetition of Shemoneh Esrei at all in this case.

³ Most often the end of a phrase is indicated by an esnachta or a zakef katan.

⁴ See Minhag Yisrael Torah 114:1, which explains that the original change was implemented by the maskilim.

⁵ Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:40-15; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Peninei Tefillah, pg. 145).

⁶ Levushei Mordechai 4:213; Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, pg. 213); Rav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes l'Yaakov al ha-Torah, Bereishis 3:19); Rav Y.Y. Weiss (quoted in Ishei Yisrael 23:25); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 1:8-14); Az Nidberu 12:28; Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:81.

⁷ There are several early sources that imply that the mother's name should be used when praying on behalf of an ill person; see Rashi, Shabbos 66b, s.v. bishma and Maharshal, ibid. See also Da'as Torah, O.C. 119:1, who quotes a Zohar in Parashas Shemo^{146s} that the father's name is not used since we are not always positive about the true identity of the father. Other reasons mentioned for this custom: 1) Based on the verse in Tehillim where King Dovid prays for himself by saying: Ani avdecha ben amasecha (Teshuvos Zekan Aharon 1:11); 2) In order not to embarrass a person who has a non-Jewish father (Teshuvos Gevul Yehudah, O.C. 2)

⁸ See Aruch ha-Shulchan, O.C. 119:1, who says that even when the mother's name is known, the father's name may be used. See also Nitzotzei Aish, pg. 861, quoting Rav C. Kanievsky.

⁹ Orchos Rabbeinu 1:218, quoting Chazon Ish.

¹⁰ Rav C. Kanievsky (Ishei Yisrael 23, note 189).

¹¹ See explanation of this concept in Mishnah Berurah 62:2.

¹² O.C. 61:20.

¹³ In addition, if these two words are read separately without the makaf, then the proper vocalization is bechol with a cholom, and not bechall with a kamatz.

¹⁴ Mishnah Berurah 61:33.

¹⁵ A good start is to read and listen to Kuntress Shema B'ni, a guide to grammatically correct pronunciation of Kerias Shema, with an audio companion to the text (Rabbi S. Hershkowitz, Toronto, 2001).

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