

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON LECH LICHA - 5758

B'S'D' perceived the unity of nature and, through this, the Unity of Hashem. That's the greatest of blessings.

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Torah Weekly - Lech Lecha 5758 <http://www.ohr.org.il> ... Insights

The Greatest Blessing "And Hashem said to Avram, 'Go for yourself from your land and from your birthplace and from the house of your father to the land which I will show you, and I will bless you and I will magnify your name, and you shall be a blessing.'" (12:1) When Hashem commanded Avram to leave home, He gave him many blessings. As Rashi explains: "And I will make of you a great nation" is a promise of children; "I will bless you" denotes material success; and "I will magnify your name" is the promise that Hashem would perfect Avram, making him free from blemish and defect. These blessings are so extensive that it's difficult to imagine how they could be added to. However, the greatest blessing is yet to come. As the verse above concludes: "And you shall be a blessing." The greatest blessing is to be a blessing to others. To help them. To care for them. To be there for others in their times of joy and sadness. The only way to achieve real happiness in life is to help others to be happy.

On Being Oneself "And Hashem said to Avram 'Go for yourself...'" (12:1) The great tzaddik, Reb Zushia of Annipoli once said: "When I get to the next world, the World of Truth, if they say to me: 'Zushia, why weren't you like the Ba'al Shem Tov?' that's not going to frighten me one bit. How can you compare me to the Ba'al Shem Tov? And if they say to me: 'Zushia, why weren't you like the Maggid of Mezrich?' that's not going to frighten me either. Look at me and look at the Maggid of Mezrich! What frightens me is when they say to me: 'Zushia! Why weren't you Zushia! The Zushia that you could have been, why weren't you even that?'" "Go for yourself" can also be translated as "Go to yourself..." The mystical sources explain this to mean: "Go to the root of your neshama (soul)." In the next world, there will be no claims against a person that he failed to live up to the potential of others. However, it is our duty to maximize our talents, to push out to the very limits of our abilities so that we bring the root of our souls to flower. It is only in this way that we will be, at least, our own "Zushias."

The Towering Inferno "Go for yourself" (12:1) There was a traveler who was journeying from place to place. He came upon a large mansion ablaze with light, sumptuously furnished. He said "Don't tell me that this mansion has no master!" No sooner had he spoken than the owner of the mansion peeked out and said to him: "I am the master of the mansion." Similarly, Avraham Avinu looked at the world and said "Don't tell me that this world -- so perfectly furnished -- has no master!" Then, the Holy One, Blessed be He, peeked out and said to him: "I am the Master of the world." Prophecy is given to those who exert themselves. If a person raises himself to the limits of his righteousness, if he uses his intellectual and critical faculties to their utmost, then Hashem will grant him understanding above the normal human level. Avraham saw the reality of Creation -- the mansion ablaze with light -- and used his own human resources to come to the inescapable truth of the existence of the Creator. At that point, Hashem reached out to Avraham and gave him prophecy.

Another idea. Avraham saw a mansion which was "ablaze (with light)." The expression for "ablaze" -- dolekes -- can also mean "burning." Why should seeing a burning mansion be compelling evidence of the Creator? When something is totally and utterly burned it returns to ash, to the level where everything is the same; it has been reduced to its elemental self. It has no form that sets it apart from any other thing in the Creation. Avraham Avinu saw the world, the mansion, as if it was all one element, one unity. He saw the disparate nature of this world, this "mansion," as "burned," reduced to an ineffable oneness, reflecting of its Creator. Avraham

Acting Like Stars "And (Hashem) took him outside and said to him 'Look up, please, at the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them;' and He said to him 'So, too, will be your descendants.'" (14:24) Two great rabbis of the previous generation, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky, were once seen standing beside the chauffeur-driven car which was to take them home, discussing which of them was going to get out of the car first. As Reb Moshe lived nearer, and would thus get out first, he got in the back and Reb Yaakov got in the front. The reason for their discussion was that if Reb Moshe had sat in the front, then when he exited the driver would look like a chauffeur, and they were concerned for the dignity of the driver. The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that the descendants of Avraham are like stars. >From our point of view the stars seem like insignificant specks of light, whereas in the heavens they are in reality entire universes. When you look at another person, realize that he is a star! (Not the Hollywood variety) A galactic mirror, reflecting the infinite light of the Creator. He may seem very small to you. He may not have achieved much. But his potential is vaster than the trackless emptiness of space. When you see people in this light, you will behave towards them with great respect, and when you show others respect, they gain respect for themselves. This in turn can give them the encouragement to fulfill their potential greatness and shine all the more brightly.

Sources: o The Greatest Blessing - Rabbi Meir Chadash o On Being Oneself - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin o The Towering Inferno - Midrash Rabba; Chazon Ish; Rabbi Moshe Shapiro as heard from Rabbi Nota Schiller o Acting Like Stars - Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; Mayana Shel Torah; Rabbi Nissan Wolpin o Dust and Jewels - Midrash Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer (C) 1997 Ohr Somayach International

mj-ravtorah@shamash.org Thursday, November 06, 1997 12:00 AM  
lechlecha.97 Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"L on Parshas Lech Lecha  
(Shiur date: 11/6/73)

The Rav noted that Parshas Lech Lecha and the story of Avraham is as current today as it was so many years ago. The struggles between the Jew and the Egyptians have continued throughout the ages. [Note that this shiur was given soon after the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The relationship between Israel and her neighbors still follows the script in the Parshios of Sefer Breishis and the similarity of events is quite amazing today in 5758, (1997).]

In Parshas Lech Lecha, Avraham is commanded that he must be different from the rest of the nations of the world. He begins the process of becoming a separate nation. Avraham, the first Jew, has an encounter with the Egyptians soon after he enters Eretz Yisrael. The irony of the situation is that it is Avraham who is blamed as the cause for the tension because he claimed that Sara was his sister and did not declare that she was his wife. After all, even had she been his sister, would that have given the Egyptians the right to take her?

Egypt constantly surfaces throughout Tanach as the antagonist of the Jewish Nation. Avraham was not the only one of our ancestors to have dealings with the Egyptians. Yosef was sold into slavery in Egypt, the Jewish Nation was enslaved there, there were constant incidents with Egypt during the time of the first and second Temples. In fact, the prophet Zechariah says that all the nations will gather against Jerusalem and Hashem will come to battle the nations of the world on behalf of His nation. [Hashem protected Avraham from the Egyptians and we see in modern times how Hashem has protected Eretz Yisrael from the Egyptians.] In the Messianic period Egypt will be singled out for punishment because it will not celebrate the festival of Succos.

Parshas Lech Lecha lays down the principle that the Jew must be separate and alone from all other nations of the world. Bilaam recognized this and said that the Jewish Nation dwells alone and does not count itself among the other nations of the world. This separation began with Avraham, culminating

with the Mitzvah of Bris Milah.

The Torah (Breishis 17:1) says that Hashem commands Avraham to walk before Him and to be complete so that Hashem shall grant his covenant between Avraham and his descendants. Rashi comments that Hashem tells Avraham that He is all-powerful and all-capable to administer to each and every creature, therefore you shall walk before Me and I will be a Gd and protector for you. According to this interpretation, what is the connection between the statement of Hashem and the Bris Milah?

The Midrash says that after he was commanded to perform the Bris Milah, Avraham said that this will cause a fundamental change in his relationship with the rest of the world. Until this point all people of the world sought out Avraham and he was able to influence them. Even though they knew that Avraham had a different philosophy than they had, they still felt they had enough in common with him and they sought him out. Avraham protested that with the inception of the Bris Milah they will no longer associate with him and he will be alone. The Torah says that he sat at the door of his tent at the height of the heat of the day, searching for guests, yet none passed by. The people did indeed boycott him. [Note, see Sifsey Chachamim (letter Shin) who interprets the Rashi in a similar way, that Avraham said that if he performs the Bris Milah, all of creation will turn away from him.] To this, Hashem answered that Avraham should not worry, Hashem will be with him and protect him.

Milah and Shabbos (and Yom Tov) are both classified as Osos (signs) from Hashem to Bnay Yisrael. The Rav pointed out that although they share the concept of sign, they symbolize different aspect of the relationship between Hashem and Bnay Yisrael. Shabbos symbolizes the unique Kedushas Yisrael, sanctity of the Jew. The Jew has to follow a path of Kedusha and be separate from the other nations of the world.

The essence of Mila, on the other hand, is that the Jew is inherently different from the other nations. He has a different, unique destiny. The non-Jew can understand that there is a concept of sanctity. He might grasp that there is a concept of performing Mitzvos. However he has a hard time grasping this unique separation between the destiny of the Jew and the rest of the world. He finds it especially difficult to grasp the connection between the Jew and Eretz Yisrael.

Avraham understood that with the Mitzvah of Mila, the Jew will now embark on a separate, unique life style and destiny from the rest of the world. After Mila there will no longer be 71 nations. Rather there will be 70 nations on 1 side and 1 nation on the other. The Jew will always be excluded from the "united nations", throughout the ages. Avraham was afraid to be alone and separate from the rest of the nations. Hashem promised him that he should perform the Mila as He will protect him and always be with him. Hashem promised that Ani Kel Shakay, He will be the Gd and protector of Avraham. His alliance with Avraham will be far superior to the alliance between Avraham and the other nations of the world. And it is through the merit of the Mila that Avraham and his descendants were granted Eretz Yisrael.

It is these 2 linked concepts, Mila and Eretz Yisrael, that define the Jew while causing him to remain an enigma to the rest of the world.

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[From last year but not in time to include in last yr's distribution:]  
"jr@sco.COM" "mj-ravtorah@shamash.org" 10/25/96 9:22pm  
Shiur HaRav Soloveichik on Parshas Lech Lecha

[The Rav began the shiur by saying that he heard from his father that without the methodology of studying Talmud that was introduced by his grandfather Reb Chaim, it would be impossible today to study Halacha with students who are trained scientifically. The method of Reb Chaim is a most modern method that involves classification, conceptualization and

definition, particularly to look for unity in Halacha. The problems need to be formulated and understood. The question and the answer are of secondary importance. This was also the method that Reb Akiva Eiger's children ascribed to him as well. The Rav noted that he was a forerunner of Reb Chaim. When it comes to the study of Tanach there was no Reb Chaim. We don't tend to look enough between the lines and get hold of the larger picture. The Ramban was unique in his ability to see and understand ideas in Chumash. His spiritual perceptions are exceptionally fine and sensitive to every word of chumash. The Ramban contributed greatly to the philosophy of religion because he was original in his thoughts and approach to religion.]

Vayomer Hashem el Avraham Lech Lecha Mayartzecha etc. According to the Ramban Sefer Breishis is called Sefer Hayetzira. It deals with creation of the world and each being and the life events of the patriarchs, continuing through the death of Joseph. It is not limited to the simple topics of reation of the world and man. What happened to them will be paradigmatic and symbolic of what will happen to their children through the ages. According to the Ramban we don't look at the events that occurred to the patriarchs from hindsight as being symbolic, rather they foretell the events that will happen to the Bnay Yisrael. There is pre-determination of what will happen to Bnay Yisrael. The Ramban lays down this concept saying that the reason that the description of the travels and well-digging etc. are described at great length because each event forecasts an event that will occur to Bnay Yisrael. The sensational thing in the Ramban is that we may derive from an event a similar event that that will transpire in the lives of the children. Any event that happened to the patriarchs and is recorded and translated will never be invalidated and will have to occur at some later point in the lives of Bnay Yisrael. For example, the destruction of the 2 Batei Mikdash are foretold by the 2 wells that Yitzchak dug and were filled in by Plishtim. The experiences of the patriarchs determined the future course of history.

Rashi and the Chachmei Sefard raised the problem that Artzecha Umimoladetecha Umibais Avicha means Ur Kasdim and not Charan (the Ramban disagrees). Abraham left Ur Kasdim long before he received the commandment of Lech Lecha. Rashi rearranges the order of the verse of Lech Lecha. Even though Avraham already left Ur Kasdim his native land and ancestral home established in Charan, he was told to go even further away from his fathers home that was newly established in Charan. According to Rashi, Terach left Ur Kasdim voluntarily. Avraham's further migration came later.

Ibn Ezra disagrees with Rashi and rearranges the verse (Ain Mukdam Umeuchar Batorah). According to him the command to leave Ur Kasdim was given to Avraham before he left Ur Kasdim. The opening verses of Lech Lecha should be conceptually inserted before the verse of Vayikach Terach Es Avraham at the end of Parshas Noach. The next Parsha would begin with Avraham leaving Charan and going to Canaan. The Ramban rejected this approach. He raised the question on the Ibn Ezra that the Torah describes Terach as the central figure in the migration from Ur Kasdim to Charan, not Avraham. Terach's decision to leave was spontaneous and apparently Avraham left with him out of obedience and not because of a divine commandment.

If we would accept the opinion of the Ibn Ezra we would find the answer to another puzzling question. Chazal stated that Terach repented and embraced the new faith of his son, a Gd that he could not see or touch. This is an interesting statement because the Navi Yehoshua describes Terach and his father Nachor as idolators. Rashi quotes this on the verse Vatah Tavo El Avosecha Bsayva Tova. Why would Hashem promise to unite him with father who is an idolator? From here we learn that Terach did Teshuva. When did Terach make this change in his life to embrace the Elokay Avraham?

We need to look at this conversion in the context of his relationship with his son Avraham. Terach was the one who sought to destroy his son physically after the episode of the destruction of the idols. Terach informed the king of Avraham's outrageous actions knowing full well that it would

lead to a death sentence for his son. In general, tension between father and son results in deep enmity usually on the part of the son towards the father. When the hatred is on the part of the father toward the son it is indicative of a mental aberration bordering on the psychopathic. It indicates a sick soul that delights in destructive behavior. Chazal wanted to emphasize that Terach was sick with hatred towards his son. He was willing to sacrifice his family and everything he stood for and sacrifice his son. When did Terach change his behavior?

It happened when Terach decided to abandon Ur Kasdim and move his family to Charan. It was a strange decision, one that is most perplexing to understand when looked at through the background of the Midrash. Terach is described as being one of the leading citizens of Ur Kasdim, some even state that he was related to the royal household. It was a difficult move for Terach to uproot himself from the advanced society that existed in Ur Kasdim and move to a primitive place like Charan. Ur Kasdim society was the most developed society in antiquity, industrially, scientifically. Its society was quite sophisticated and modern for its time. His migration was counter to normal human nature in migrating to a less sophisticated society. He was the father of the of the idolatrous society in Ur Kasdim. What caused him to abandon all this? The answer is Hirhur Teshuva. The thought that perhaps his son Avraham was correct and that his philosophy was wrong. The Baal Teshuva was responsible for the decision to leave Ur Kasdim and begin life anew in Charan.

Hashem waited for this moment to arrive for Terach to be willing to make this extreme sacrifice and undergo the tribulations that the immigrant must endure. When he made this decision, Hashem told Avraham to leave.

We don't know if Terach knew of Avraham's contacts with Hashem. The Rav noted that the Torah does not [usually] engage in physical descriptions of people. In Tanach we do find them (e.g. David). Typically these descriptions are not relevant to the unfolding events of the covenantal community and the realization of the great vision foreshadowed by the patriarchs. For example, by the Akeidah the Torah is interested only in the event. It does not mention whether Avraham knew the way to the mountain or if he inquired as to directions from anyone. There is only one subject matter: Avraham's compliance with the divine order to sacrifice Yitzchak. In the story of Jacob sending Joseph to search for his brothers, the Torah describes in detail the encounter and conversation between Joseph and a man, who Chazal say was the angel Gavriel. At first glance this narrative appears to be inconsistent with the usual style of the Torah. Why tell us all this? Because Joseph's mission was not planned by Jacob. Chazal say that at first glance Jacob should not have sent Joseph to look for his brothers. He knew very well the enmity of the brothers towards Joseph. Hashem forced him to send him, because the edict of Ger Yihye Zaracha needed to be fulfilled. We don't know if Terach knew of the secret that Hashem commanded Avraham to migrate to Canaan. We do know that when the message came through for Avraham to leave. Avraham found to his great surprise that his fathers bags had been long ago packed ready to leave on the great march to Canaan.

The Rav said that the objection of the Ramban to the opinion of the Ibn Ezra as to Terach being the central figure in the migration to Canaan is no longer critical. That Avraham complied with the word of Hashem is well known. One only needs to look at the Akeidah to see the depths of commitment of Avraham to Hashem. The greatest story in Parshas Noach is not the departure of Avraham from Ur Kasdim but is the Teshuva of Terach and his abandonment of all he knew and loved to follow the Gd of his son Avraham. The greatest story of the Baal Teshuva is contained in the verse of Vayikach Terach. The Torah tells us all this in a few words. But the verse is not so much concerned with the journey they took, but rather the dramatic change that occurred in Terach.

Avraham was not always successful in his attempts to convert his own family to his faith. He did not succeed with his brothers, nephews, he had limited success with his nephew Lot. The word Lecha means that Avraham and Sarah alone should go to Canaan, no other family members

should come along. Lot tagged along. Once Lot decided to remain at Avraham's side, Avraham had to teach him and train him, even though he did not want him to come along. In order to be a great teacher one must be able to reach his own family. Teaching begins at home. In order for Avraham to be considered the Av Hamon Goyim he had to be able to show success within his family. Terach was his success story. Avraham saw Terach was ready to leave so he did not say anything regarding his own desire to leave. He was respectful of his father and kept in the background to give the impression that it was Terach alone who initiated the decision to leave Ur Kasdim. He knew that Terach, the Baal Teshuva, had attained a very high level and did not want diminish the the great achievement and sacrifice that Terach decided to make.

There is a verse in Job, Mi Yiten Mitamay Tahor Halo Echad. Who can make the Tamay to yield Tahor. The Midrash says that this is Avraham from Terach. Avraham was a great prophet but he achieved his covenant with Hashem and prophecy after great searching. Moshe on the other hand was surprised with the gift of prophecy and imposed with it by Hashem. Avraham asked many questions and sought Hashem. As the Rambam describes, Avraham in his youth was immersed with the people of the generation yet he was constantly questioning their practices looking for the truth. He had the mind of a genius. He had vision and asked questions. There was depth to his intuition, there was breadth to his understanding. Otherwise Hashem would not have chosen him as the Av Hamon Goyim. Such traits are hereditary. Terach Passed these traits on to him. Terach wasted his talents for a long time. Avraham utilized his talents.

The Rav quoted the Rashi on El Haaretz Asher Arekah: Hashem did not reveal to him the identity of the land in order to increase his love for the land and to reward him for each statement. A similar approach is used when describing the commands of going to the Akeidah. Hashem did not give Avraham any directions to travel. How did he know where to go?

Avraham traveled from place top place, finally arriving in Canaan. When he arrived he did not know immediately that this will be his land. Only later did Hashem tell him that this will be his homeland. The Ramban, like Rashi, said that Avraham did not receive directions. But how did he know where to go? Should he go north, south, east or west? Similar to the Akeidah how did he know which mountain to travel to?

Avraham used the term Hisu Osi Elokim, when Hashem caused Avraham to be lost and bewildered, confused as to direction to go. The Ramban says that he wandered like a stray sheep not knowing how to return home. Hashem did not guide Avraham. He wanted to bewilder and mystify him, to move on till he found the land intuitively, till he magically felt the attraction of the land, the way birds are mechanically to migrate in fall and spring. We don't understand this pull, it is mechanical. Hashem wanted Avraham to develop the ability to distinguish between Kodosh and Chol, and to be guided on his own intuition into the land of Canaan.

The verse states that Hashem chose Avraham and took him out of Ur Kasdim and changed his name to Avraham. even though he wandered around as a lost sheep for a long time, He felt intuitively that his destination was Canaan. He toured Canaan and spent time there even before being told by Hashem that he had arrived in the right land and it would be given to his children as their homeland.

The Ramban adds that Avraham guessed where to go based on his intuition because he had no premises on which to base his directions. But Terach also left to go to Eretz Canaan, the Ramban mentions that Avraham had Daas Aviv. Terach also headed to Canaan. The Ramban points out that not only was Avraham blessed with uncanny intuition, but so was Terach.

He also felt a mysterious pull on those that were thirsting for the knowledge of Hashem. Why was Canaan intuitively selected by both Terach and Avraham? What attracted them to this land? Here is a central idea of Judaism. The idea of Kedusha pulled them both to Canaan. Major decisions in one life are sudden and intuitive. Secondary decisions are based on careful calculation. Avraham and Terach made a major intuitive decision.

People respond to a stimulus. The Dor Hamabul responded to the

challenge of beauty. Their philosophy was that one must succumb to the power of beauty and give in to the aesthetic challenge. They responded to the fair women who were the symbol of beauty. Modern man is still captive to the aesthetic experience, the exploitation of enjoyment in life, making use of all that is available. The serpent in the garden of Eden was the first one to describe this aesthetic pull when describing the Eitz Hadaas as Nechmad L'aynayim. The aesthetic experience is boundless: you want to grab as much as possible. It has no laws that restrict man. The ethical life involves restraints. I can not take what ever I wish whenever I want it. This is directly opposed to the aesthetic experience which says no limits. I resent authority and tradition. There is one moment only, the fleeting present. The Rav compared western society with the Dor Hamabul. Such aphillodophy results in the disintegration of society.

The Dor Haflaga thought that power was the great challenge to man, that he be able to set himself up as god. Technological achievement, according to the Dor Haflaga, was viewed as the end to be worshiped, it makes him proud to be a man. The ability to control their environment was the greatest goal. The Rav compared Communist society with the Dor Haflaga. Living for the present with no eye on the past and future causes breakdown of society. However, the Dor Haflaga was a highly organized society that prized technological achievement above all else. They would weep for a dropped brick that they spent years carrying, yet did not shed a tear for a baby that would fall from the tower. The technological achievement is more important than the human being, along the goal to attaining conquest and infinity. Man wants to be triumphant, he wants to be a hero. He hates to be defeated.

Avraham proclaimed a new idea to the world:Kedusha. The main goal is not to gain the maximum pleasure but to find Hashem and cling to him. To do this man does not need to always be successful. Man can afford to be defeated, as Avraham was throughout his years of wandering. As long as he is pulled in the right direction he achieves and in successful.

Kedusha is frightening to those who are afraid to fail and those who lack imagination. Those that have imagination and are bold are pulled to Kedusha instinctively, mechanically.

David describes his quest for Hashem as that of the gazelle searching for the brook. Why did he use the metaphor of the gazelle? It would have been obvious to simply describe it in terms of human attraction to Hashem? If one observes the nature of animals in their mechanical drive that pushes them to find water, they persevere until they find it and are able to drink. David wanted to describe man in the same way as needing that mechanical instinctive push to Hashem. If man tries to deny this urge he breaks down. This drive is to be found in every person no matter if he is an atheist or an agnostic. He still has this drive to Kedusha like the gazelle to water. Avraham and Terach were driven mechanically and were not satisfied until they found Hashem.

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daf-discuss@shemayisrael.com Berachos 28b: Birkas v'Lamalshinim Noah Zablotsky (ZAN99999@aol.com) asks: i found a very interesting girsa in a manuscript at the JTS here in NY on berachos 28b Rashi d'h beyavne tiknihu: "leachar zman meruba \*kurov letarbuso shel yesho hanotzri she'limdan lahafoch divrei elokim chaim\*" The manuscript # is RAB 846 Noah Zablotsky

The Kollel replies: Yasher Kochach! It indeed seems clear that this is the reason for the institution of v'Lamalshinim. Dikdukei Sofrim (#3) cites your Girsa in Rashi from many old printings of the Gemara and the Ein Yakov. In fact, all the old prints of the Gemara refer to Birkas ha'\*Minim\* as opposed to Birkas ha'\*Tzedukim\*. Minim is a term known to refer to the disciples of Yeshu (Ma'amin Yeshu Notzri=MIN). Be well, -Mordecai

daf-insights@shemayisrael.com] Insights to the Daf: Berachos 34-35 brought

to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Har Nof Rosh Kollel: Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld

Berachos 34b BOWING DURING "MODIM" QUESTION: The Gemara tells us that Rava bowed at the beginning and end of "Modim," and the Rabanan were surprised by his actions. Why does the Gemara consider Rava's actions to be so novel, and why were the Rabanan surprised? The Beraisa (34a) says explicitly that one must bow down at the beginning and end of Modim! ANSWERS: The TOSFOS HA'ROSH and RASHBA gives two answers. (a) First, they answer that the Beraisa on 34a did not have the text of "beginning and end," but only said that one should bow at "Modim." It was Rava's interpretation that one is to bow both at the beginning and end of "Modim." (b) The Tosfos ha'Rosh and Rashba give a second answer in the name of the RA'AVAD. The Ra'avad explains that Rava did not bow down at the beginning and end of "Modim" in his own Shemoneh Esreh, but at the beginning and end of "Modim d'Rabanan" that is recited during the Chazan's repetition of the Shemoneh Esreh. HALACHAH: (a) The BEIS YOSEF (OC 127) explains that the practice in his time was only to bow down at the beginning of "Modim d'Rabanan." This is also the VILNA GAON'S ruling. (b) However, he concludes, and repeats in the SHULCHAN ARUCH (OC 127:1) that it is better to be stringent and bow down, like the Ra'avad, at both the beginning and end of Modim d'Rabanan. (c) The Beis Yosef mentions that he saw written by a certain great Sage a compromise: one is to bow down once at the beginning of Modim d'Rabanan, and to remain bowed until the end. The REMA records this practice as the Halachah, and writes also that such was the practice in his area.

"KAVANAH" IN SHEMONEH ESREH QUESTION: The Gemara says that a person must have Kavanah when reciting Shemoneh Esreh at least for the first blessing, the blessing of Avos. This implies that if one does not have Kavanah during the rest of Shemoneh Esreh, he nevertheless fulfills his obligation. The RAMBAM (Hilchos Tefilah 10:1) cites this as the Halachah. Yet in another place (Hil. Tefilah 4:1), the Rambam seems to rule that if one does not have Kavanah during \*any\* of the blessings of Shemoneh Esreh, he does not fulfill his obligation! How are the two rulings of the Rambam to be reconciled? ANSWER: RAV CHAIM SOLOVECHIK explains that the Kavanah that the Rambam is discussing in 4:1 is a different type of Kavanah than that of our Gemara. The Rambam there is discussing the Kavanah that one is standing before G-d while he prays the Shemoneh Esreh, as the Rambam himself writes (Hilchos Tefilah 4:16). Our Gemara, on the other hand, is referring to a simpler Kavanah, that of understanding the \*meaning\* of what one is saying. Rav Chaim gives two reasons why not having Kavanah that one is standing before G-d at any point in Shemoneh Esreh will invalidate one's Shemoneh Esreh: (1) If he does not have Kavanah, his action of praying is considered to be no more than "Misasek" (his body does the action mindlessly), and he does not fulfill his obligation. (2) "Mitzvos Tzerichos Kavanah" -- one must have Kavanah that one is fulfilling a Mitzvah in order to actually fulfill that Mitzvah. If one does not have Kavanah that he is standing before G-d during Shemoneh Esreh, he is lacking this Kavanah. ...

daf-discuss@shemayisrael.com Berachos 35a Yedidya Israel <yedidya@macs.biu.ac.il> asked: Question: Shalom Rav. The Gemara concludes that blessing is a "sevara" that one is forbidden to enjoy this world without blessing, why then all blessings (besides Birkat Hamazon) are Derabanan (as proved from "Baal Kerit")? "Sevarot" have the severity of Deorayta as the Tora is not telling us what we can achieve by ourselves. Thanks in advance.Yedidya Israel,

The Kollel replies: Your question is excellent. The P'NEI YEHOShUA asks it and leaves it unresolved. The EINAYIM LA'MISHPAT answers that there are different types of Sevaros, some d'Rabanan and some d'Oraisa. RAV GUSTMAN zt'l explained that even though a Sevara has the severity of a d'Oraisa, nevertheless it is not able to obligate the observance of a new Mitzvah, but only to modify or clarify an already-existing Mitzvah.

Daf insights ... Berachos 38 1) HALACHAH: MASHED FRUITS AND

VEGETABLES The Gemara discusses what blessing is recited on "Terimah," or mashed dates. When the dates were mashed into a somewhat solid paste, the blessing is "Borei Pri ha'Etz," because they are essentially in the same form as they were before. Rashi (DH Terimah Mahu) explains that this pressed fruit is only crushed a little but not entirely pulverized. If they were entirely pulverized, the blessing is "sheha'Kol." The question of "Terimah" is a common, practical issue. What blessing does one recite on mashed potatoes, mashed avocado, apple sauce, etc.? From our Gemara, the Halachah is clear that mashed potatoes and mashed avocado retain their original blessings because their form has not been essentially changed. On the other hand, the blessing for apple sauce or any fruit placed into a blender or reconstituted such that the original fruit is no longer discernible will be "sheha'Kol." There are several exceptions to this rule: (a) If there are actual pieces of the original fruit remaining in the mashed product, one should recite "Borei Pri ha'Etz" on the pieces of fruit and exempt the rest with that blessing. (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l, points out that since there are opinions that maintain that the mashed product is "Borei Pri ha'Etz" even if it is completely pulverized (unlike the opinion of Rashi), one may rely on that opinion when there are actual pieces of fruit mixed in.) (b) If the fruit is \*usually eaten\* when it is completely crushed (i.e. in its changed form), then one recites the blessing that one would have made on the original fruit (Mishnah Berurah 202:44). For this reason, one recites "Borei Pri ha'Adamah" on popcorn (which is produced from a special species of "popping corn"). (c) If one eats a mashed fruit that is one of the seven species one recites "sheha'Kol" before eating it. However, if he ate enough to recite an after-blessing, then there is a doubt as to what blessing to recite after it. The Mishnah Berurah (202:42) writes that it is best to eat something for which one must definitely recite "Al ha'Peros," and eat something else for which one must definitely recite "Borei Nefashos," and recite both after-blessings in order to stay clear of the doubt.

... Berachos 40 1) HALACHAH: "BRING THE SALT" QUESTION: Rebbi Yochanan rules that one may interrupt between his blessing over the bread and eating the bread in order to say, "Bring the salt," since salt is necessary for the consumption of the bread so that it tastes good. Rava Bar Shmuel did not wait for salt before he ate his bread. He explained that since his bread was already tasty, it did not need salt. TOSFOS (DH Havei Melach) says that our breads, too, are already tasty and do not need salt. If so, does this mean that we may not interrupt between the blessing and eating the bread to say, "Bring the salt?" ANSWER: The MISHNAH BERURAH (OC 167:38) says in the name of the Acharonim that even though our breads are tasty and do not need salt, nevertheless, if one desires to eat his bread with salt (or another spice) it is considered necessary for the bread and he may interrupt to say, "Bring the salt." HALACHAH: Various reasons are given to use salt even today. (a) Tosfos adds that Rebbi Menachem was always careful to have salt upon his table, because the Midrash states that when the Jews sit silently at the table waiting for everyone to finish washing his hands, and they are idle from any Mitzvos, the Satan has a chance to incriminate them, and it is the "covenant of the salt" that protects them (see Vayikra 2:13). (b) The BEIS YOSEF adds in the name of the SHIBOLEI HA'LEKET that since our tables are likened to the altar in the Beis ha'Mikdash and our meals are like the sacrifices that we offered on the altar, we should have salt upon our tables just like every sacrifice was brought with salt. According to this, it would seem that there is no need to dip our bread into salt before eating it; it is sufficient to have the salt on the table. (c) However, the Mishnah Berurah (167:33) mentions that those learned in Kabalah have written that one should dip his piece of bread into salt three times.

dafyomi@jer1.co.il Insights into Daf Yomi from Ohr Somayach The Right Word What blessing does one make on bread? Surely everyone knows the answer to that question is "Hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz" (He Who has brought bread forth from the earth). But not all the Sages agreed on the first word of this phrase. One opinion is that "Motzi" should be said because it is past tense while "Hamotzi" is future tense. Since the bread you are about to

eat has already been brought forth from the earth the past tense is more appropriate. There is a consensus that "Motzi" is past tense and a difference of opinion as to whether "Hamotzi" is as well. It would therefore seem that the safe thing to do would be to say "Motzi," which is acceptable to all. Nevertheless, the ruling of the Gemara is that we say "Hamotzi," which is proper according to only one school of thought. The reason for this, explains Tosefos on the basis of the Jerusalem Talmud, is that the preceding word in this blessing is "Haolam." If we were to follow it with "Motzi" we would have a word ending with an "m" sound coming before one which begins with an "m" sound, and face the risk of running the two words together as a single word. But don't we face the same problem in regard to the two words "lechem" and "min"? True, adds Tosefos, but our Sages did not wish to tamper with the phrase "lechem min ha'aretz" which is taken from a passage in Tehillim (104:4). That passage, incidentally, contains ten words, notes Tosefos, and thus provides a hint to place the ten fingers of both our hands on the bread when we make our "Hamotzi" blessing on it. Berachos 38b Written and Compiled by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

<http://www.intournet.co.il/mtv/parsha.html> Michlelet Torah Viregesh PARSHAT LECH LICHA

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PARSHAT LECH LICHA I. HAVE NO FEAR! Preface: An "Orientation" To appreciate the following study it is helpful to begin with the linguistic background of the four cardinal directions in Biblical Hebrew. Logically, the easiest directions to follow are: before you, behind you, to your left, and to your right. The only question is: Which way do you face to begin? In essence, the Bible utilizes this logic, stipulating that the prime direction is East--a reasonable assumption given the prominence of the sun throughout the ancient Near East. East became KEDEM (before you) and the remaining three cardinal directions are relative to that starting point: AHOR--behind you (West), SEMOL--to your left (North), and YAMIN--to your right (South). When Avraham and Lot separate from one another "to the left and to the right" (Gen. 13:9), we have no need to speculate on where they stood and which way they were facing; they parted on a north-south axis. [NOTE: Compare the translation, here, of TARGUM ONKELOS.] And when Avraham chases after the four Mesopotamian kings who kidnapped Lot and the Torah says: "...and he pursued them to Hovah which is SEMOL to Damascus" (Gen. 14:15), we understand that Hovah was to its north.

QUESTION: Can you now see the pun intended in the subtitle: "Orientation"? ANSWER: The verb "orient" (defined as: "To locate or place in a particular relation to the points of the compass") derives from the noun "Orient" (East), just as the Biblical directions are relative to the East.

Part One: East is East...or is it? In Gen. 11:2 the Torah describes the builders of the "Tower of Babel" as having traveled "from KEDEM" to settle in a valley in the Land of Shin'ar. In Gen. 13:1, Lot is similarly described as traveling "from KEDEM" upon his separation from Avraham. The Midrash (BEREISHIT RABBAH) treats KEDEM in both cases as a metaphor: "They traveled from KEDEM:" Did they travel from the East [referring to HAR HA-KEDEM in 10:30] to go East? Rabbi Eliezer said in Rabbi Shimon's name: They betook themselves from the primordial One (KADMON) of the universe, saying: 'We desire neither Him nor His divinity'. 'Lot traveled from KEDEM:' he betook himself from the primordial One (KADMON) of the universe, saying: 'I desire neither Avraham nor his God'. Nehama explains: The similarity between the two Midrashim is emphatic. In both places the Sages treat the word KEDEM homiletically, seeing in it an allusion that the ones who traveled--the generation of dispersion in the first case and Lot in the second--had distanced themselves, "betaken" themselves from the

primordial One, i.e., the Creator. The [tower builders] could no longer bear His dominion so they rebelled against Him--His divinity and His sovereignty. The other, Lot, could no longer bear the lifestyle of Avraham who went about praying to God and building altars to His name.

QUESTION: Why does RASHI cite the Midrashic interpretation to Lot's travels but not to those of the generation of the dispersion? ANSWER: In keeping with the principle we first enunciated in Bereishit (and reviewed in Noah), RASHI utilizes Aggadah only to resolve a difficulty in the text which resists straightforward PESHAT interpretation. In the case of the tower builders, East is indeed the direction from which they traveled so there is no need to interpret KEDEM otherwise. In the case of Lot, however, I would have expected the Torah to say either that he traveled from Avraham or that he traveled from Beit-El, where we know they were then situated. The appearance here of KEDEM defies its literal interpretation as East.

Part Two: Who's Afraid of What? Each of our three patriarchs was addressed by the words: AL TIRA' (fear not): Avraham, in Gen. 15:1, Yitzhak, in 26:24, and Yaakov, in 46:3. QUESTION: Why is the address to Avraham problematic? ANSWER: He has just won a resounding victory over a vastly superior force, been blessed by a priestly king, spurned an offer of the wealth of Sodom, and thus would appear to have no fear to be allayed. Three answers are offered by the Aggadah (BEREISHIT RABBAH 44:5): Rabbi Levi offered two [interpretations] and the Sages--one. Rabbi Levi said: Avraham was afraid that amongst his victims there was even one righteous, god-fearing man...God assured him that was not the case. Rabbi Levi also said: Avraham feared that a descendant of one of the kings he killed would gather an army and come to take revenge on him...God said to him: "Do not fear, I will shield you." Just as a shield can withstand numerous swords, I can protect you from numerous attacks.

According to the Sages Avraham said: I was rescued from the blazing furnace, I was rescued from the attacking kings, perhaps I have exhausted my merit in this world and have none left for the world to come? God replied: "Do not fear, I will shield you." All that I did for you in this world is gratis; your true reward will be in the world to come...

QUESTION: Characterize each of these three opinions briefly. [Nehama was particularly fond of one or two word answers which tend to be pedagogically more revealing--and accurate--than more longwinded explanations.] ANSWER: Rabbi Levi I: Avraham experienced a pang of conscience. Rabbi Levi II: Avraham experienced a natural fear of revenge. The Sages: Avraham's fear (for his merit) was spiritual in nature.

Rashi comments (15:1): "After these events:" After the miracle of defeating the kings occurred to him, he expressed his concern saying: Perhaps I have been compensated for all my righteousness? "Do not fear, I shall shield you:" From punishment; you will not be punished for all those lives you took. Furthermore, regarding your concern over your reward, "Your reward is truly great." QUESTION: Which of the three opinions does RASHI follow? Nehama proposes the following chart [another useful pedagogical tool]: The Sages Rabbi Levi I R. Levi II Do not fear lest I killed righteous revenge used up merit shield you from punishment from enemies gratis great reward victims deserved death --- in world to come

ANSWER: RASHI appears to follow the opinion of the Sages in interpreting both "do not fear" and "great reward," with his interpretation of "shield you" inclining towards Rabbi Levi I.

QUESTION: Why did RASHI not follow the Sages' interpretation in its entirety, rather than mix in R. Levi I? Why did he ignore R. Levi II completely? ANSWER: RASHI apparently felt that the Sages' interpretation of "shield" stretches the sense of the text too far as it seems to be based more on the Aramaic usage of the word (MAGAN=gratis) than on its plain Hebrew meaning. Regarding R. Levi II, there appear to be two acceptable reasons for his rejection: One, it doesn't address the end of the verse; two, it belies the selfless initiative which Avraham took. As Nehama reminds us, he is a YEREI ELOKIM; he fears God, but no man.

II. THE TORAH IS NOT A NEWSPAPER On the verse "And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents" (Genesis 13:5), Rashi comments: "Who caused (Lot) to have this? His walking with

Abraham." QUESTION: What difficulty prompted Rashi to make this comment? ANSWER: The Torah already told us, four verses earlier, that "And Abram went up from Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the Negev" (Genesis 13:1). Therefore, we knew this information already -- that Lot was with Avraham -- before it is repeated in verse 5. Nehamaoften said that the Torah is not like a newspaper. A newspaper will say "Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister" even though we already know that he is the prime minister from that same newspaper report. However, a newspaper needs to "fill up space" in order to finish the column, so it ends precisely at the bottom of the page. However, the Torah is not like a newspaper. Every redundancy in the Torah is purposeful.

Thus, if the Torah, in repeating information that we already know, then it is trying to tell us something new. Here, the Torah is not trying to tell us again that Lot went with Avraham, which we already know. Rather, it is BECAUSE he went with Avraham that Lot became wealthy. (It is also possible that the WAY in which Lot is described in verse 1 indicates that Lot was subordinate to Avraham, as Lot is mentioned at the end of the verse, after all the information about Avraham is stated. Therefore, the repetition of Lot as subordinate in verse 5, is also redundant). This is similar to another verse in our Parsha, where Rashi indicates the same idea. It says "And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, WHO LIVED IN SEDOM, and his goods, and departed" (Genesis 14:2). We already know from the previous chapter that Lot lived in Sedom, as it says "Abram lived in the land of Canaan, and Lot lived in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sedom" (Genesis 13:12). Therefore, Rashi, in explaining this redundancy, once again feels it necessary to explain this unnecessary phrase, and comments on the verse (14:12): "What caused him (to be in such a dangerous situation)? His living in Sedom."

Finally, in Parshat Beraishit, which we read two weeks ago, a comment by Rashi is prompted by an "extra" phrase, this time by Adam, and not the Torah itself. In response to God's question about the sin, Adam responds "And the man said, the woman whom You gave (NATATA) to be with me, she gave me (NATNA) of the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). Since we already know that it was God who gave Eve to Adam, the phrase of "whom You gave (NATATA) to be with me" is redundant and unusual. Therefore, Rashi explains that the Torah is showing how ungrateful Adam was. Not only did he not appreciate that God had given him Eve, but he blamed God for his sin that came through Eve. It is also possible, in addition, that the double use of the verb "NATATA" in the same verse indicates that everyone "gave" to Adam, but he did not appreciate anything.

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ravfrand@torah.org Parshas Lech Lecha

Go Out and Count the Stars: Two Interpretations In this week's Parsha, Avraham questions G-d: "What can you give me, I am childless?" G-d answers by promising Avraham that he will have children. G-d directs Avraham outside and asks him to look up and count the stars, saying "Thus will be your descendants" [Bereshis 15:2-5]. I would like to share two insights on this verse, one from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and one from the Lubliner Rav, Rabbi Meir Shapiro.

Rav S. R. Hirsch: Look Beyond the Course of Nature Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch says there is significance in the fact that G-d told Avraham, the first Jew, to go out and look at the stars. If a person is accustomed only to looking at "our world", at earth, he gets into a mode of thinking that everything is "nature". The sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. There are laws of physics. Everything is a set pattern that is never broken. This natural order of things is perhaps appropriate for the nations of the world, but it is not appropriate for Klal Yisroel [The Jews]. "You, Avraham, have to go out and look at the stars." Amidst the vast constellations, one has a clearer view of the Hand of G-d. One becomes more aware that there is a concept of Hashgocha Protis -- that there is a G-d out there who directs and takes interest in a person's life. "Therefore, maybe Avraham, it appears to you that you are childless. Maybe by looking merely at this earth and this world, you get into the mind set that 'I am childless -- I never have had

children; I never will have children.' But look up into the Heaven, into the realm of the stars where that Hand of G-d is more apparent. That is your lot Avraham, and the lot of your children. Yours is not a destiny and a future of 'Nature' (teva), it is a 'super-natural' (L'ma-ala min haTeva) destiny and future." When one looks at history, where are the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Babylonians? Where are all these great powers that ruled the world? There is only one nation that is still around for the last 4,000 years. That is Klal Yisroel. This is 'above the course of nature'. This is what G-d wanted Avraham to see by looking at the stars.

To Dream the Impossible Dream, To Count the Impossible Count Rav Meir Shapiro asks, "What would be our reaction if someone told us to go out and count the stars?" Our reaction would be to simply ignore the request. We would say, "I know this is an impossible task. I know it is beyond the realm of possibility. Why even bother?" What did Avraham do? He went out and counted the stars! He attempted to do the impossible. G-d responded "This is the way your descendants will be" (Koh Yiheye zarecha). "This attribute that you are showing here now -- when it looks impossible, when it looks beyond the reach of human beings, nevertheless to try; nevertheless to give it one's best -- Koh Yiheyeh Zarecha. That is the characteristic of Klal Yisrael. That is what a Jew is going to be like. Even though the task seems Herculean, it seems almost impossible, we still must try." The least we can do is try. And when we try, we sometimes see that amazing things can happen. We think that we don't have such strengths and such abilities to withstand that which life deals us. We think it is beyond our capability. But we try and we are gifted and granted with 'kochos' - 'strengths' that we never dreamt we possessed. That is the Blessing of "Thus shall be your descendants." Klal Yisroel has the attribute of looking at something which seems impossible, but nevertheless trying, never giving up... and being rewarded with powers that they never thought they had.

A blind Jew once came in to Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer. The Jew put down, in front of Rav Isser Zalman, two volumes of 'chidushei Torah' - 'novel insights into Torah' that he had written before he became blind. The Jew told Rav Isser Zalman to look at a certain place in the book and said, "This piece was my last chiddush and then I went blind." Rav Isser Zalman asked the Jew what he meant by saying that it was his 'last chiddush'. The blind man explained that when he wrote that particular insight he was already an older man. He had worked for years on these volumes. When reached that piece he said to himself, "I've had enough. It is difficult to come up with new Torah insights. I am calling it quits. >From now on I will learn, but not with the same intensity and thoroughness -- I just don't have the strength anymore." The man told Rav Isser Zalman that immediately after that decision, he became blind. The man went to the doctors and specialists of the day, seeking a cure. They examined him and told him, "With the way your eyes are now, you should have been blind 10 years ago. We can't understand why you weren't blind, long ago." But we can. Because as long as that Jew felt compelled to write those 'chidushei Torah', that he dipped down to reach for strength that he never knew he possessed, he received super-natural strengths. He saw things with eyes that perhaps a normal human being could not see out of - because he tried, because he reached, because he sought the impossible. When he stopped and said 'enough', he lost those strengths.

It is that quality of 'Thus will be your children' that Avraham exhibited by trying to count the stars. That is the quality of Klal Yisroel.

The Haftorah for this week's Parsha is from Chapters 40-41 in Isaiah. Sometimes it is a challenge to find the connection between the Haftorah and the weekly Parsha. If one looks at this Haftorah, the only apparent connection to the Parsha (and sometimes connections are as tenuous as this one) is the verse "But you, Israel, My Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the offspring of ABRAHAM, My friend." [Yeshaya 41:8]. However, perhaps there is another connection between the Haftorah and the Parsha. The Prophet refers [40:31] to the 'kovei Hashem' -- those that place their trust in G-d -- and says about them 'yachlifu Koach' -- they will be endowed with new strengths. Because of their faith and efforts, those Trusters in G-d will get new strengths that they never thought they had. This perhaps is the

connection between the Haftorah and the Parsha. Klal Yisrael will follow the attribute of Avraham. They will attempt the impossible and will be blessed with the blessing of "v'kovai Hashem yaclifu Koach." (Those who trust in Hashem will be granted new strengths.)

Sources and Personalities Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch -- (1808-1888) Author of monumental commentary on Chumash first published in German in five volumes (1867-78) and translated into English (1952-1962); Frankfurt am Main. Rav Meir Shapiro -- (1887-1934) head of the Lubliner yeshivah and founder of the 7 year Daf Yomi curriculum; Lublin, Poland. Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer -- (1870-1953) Author of Even Ha'Azul; Disciple of Netziv, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, and the Chofetz Chaim; Father-in-law of Rav Aharon Kotler, founder of the Lakewood Yeshiva. Slutzk; Eretz Yisroel.

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Torah Insights for Shabbat Parshat Lech Lecha 5758 November 8, 1997

Minhagim, Jewish customs, have subtle meanings, and those meanings often contain nuances that ought not be overlooked. Two aspects of the blessings of the Haftorah reading, for example, have always struck me as unusual. The blessing before the Haftorah is sung in the minor key--a reflective, serious tone. Yet the blessings chanted after the Haftorah are sung in the major key--bright and joyful. Furthermore, four blessings are recited after the reading of the Haftorah. However, only one blessing is said beforehand. During the Torah reading, too, only one blessing is recited both before and after each section. Why are the blessings after the Haftorah sung in a bright and cheerful tone? And why do we conclude with three extra blessings?

The answer, I believe, stems from the prophecies recorded in the Haftoros. The Torah, by contrast, doesn't generally deal with prophecy. Aside from the predictions in Parshas Bechukosai and Parshas Ki Savo of our punishment and exile from the Land resulting from our lack of loyalty to the Torah, there is very little prediction of the future in the Torah. The Haftoros, however, are entirely different. Most are taken from the great books of the Prophets and relate to the future redemption of our people, our return to the Land, and our overt perception of the Divine in that time. They engage our emunah, our trust in Hashem. The Haftoros paint all sorts of pictures for the future of mankind in general and the Jewish people in particular. In order to express our confidence in these Divine promises, we sing the blessings in a confident and joyful tune. The blessings themselves speak of these promises. The first two blessings after the Haftorah praises

G-d as trustworthy. We believe in these prophecies, and through their reading and the blessings that follow we amplify that belief. We are confident that all of G-d's promises will be fulfilled. Our confidence in Divine predictions is what connects us to Avraham Avinu, who never saw the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to him that his descendents would inherit the Land of Canaan. Avraham was given other promises by Hashem that he did see--you will be famous, you will be wealthy, you will have children. But the one that was the essence of his relationship with Hashem--the promise of the Land--was never realized in his lifetime. In fact, Hashem told him this; he would not live to see it happen. This is one of the great images of Avraham--the one who trusted in the promises of Hashem, knowing that he would never see their fulfillment.

We, who have lived to see the fulfillment of many promises, have much more reason to sing the blessings of the Haftorah in a joyful manner, confident that many more promises will yet be fulfilled.

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks Rabbi Tradburks is the rabbi of Kehillat Shaarei Torah in Willowdale, Ontario.

weekly-halacha@torah.org] Parshas Lech Lecha-Food Preparation on Shabbos By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt "Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth" (13:17)

Avrohom received a limited inheritance since it is not mentioned that he kept the Shabbos, while Yaakov's inheritance is unlimited since he kept the Shabbos (Yalkut Shimon 71).

**FOOD PREPARATION ON SHABBOS** In several places in the Torah, Hashem commands the Jewish people to rest on the Shabbos day just as He himself "rested" after the Six Days of Creation. Obviously, the concepts of "working" and "resting" do not apply to Hashem, but the Torah uses these terms to establish the principle that Shabbos "Labor" does not depend on how physically strenuous an act is. A forbidden Shabbos Labor is not measured in terms of physical exertion, but rather in terms of productive accomplishment regardless of how much or how little "work" is entailed(1). Consequently, there are several Shabbos Labors which are forbidden even though they require virtually no physical exertion, like "choosing" or "carrying". Because such Labors involve no discernible "work", many people unknowingly commit severe Shabbos transgressions on a constant basis. Food preparation in particular is an area entailing such Labors where ignorance can result in serious Shabbos violations. Every single Shabbos observer - man and woman - must, therefore, learn and review constantly the correct procedures for preparing dishes that are commonly prepared on Shabbos(2). In this week's column, to be continued next week, we will describe the correct method for preparing selected foods that are commonly prepared on Shabbos.

**EGGS AND ONIONS:** Preparation of this dish involves many Shabbos Labors, among them: washing, shelling and peeling the eggs and the onions (choosing); mashing the eggs (grinding); dicing the onions (grinding); mixing the eggs and onions together (kneading); salting the onions(3); adding oil as a binding ingredient (kneading); removing egg shells from the mixture (choosing). In view of all these potential Shabbos violations, it is strongly recommended that the eggs and onions be prepared before Shabbos(4). When it is not possible or practical to do so, however, this is the permissible way to prepare it on Shabbos: Both the eggs(5) and onions should be shelled and peeled immediately before the meal(6). This means that if the meal(7) is to start at 12:00 o'clock, for example, and it takes about 10 minutes to prepare the dish, then the eggs and onions should be peeled at about ten minutes to twelve(8). Even if the housewife would like to prepare her meal before going to shul or taking a walk, it is forbidden to do so(9). The eggs and onions may be shelled and peeled by hand or with the aid of a knife only(10). A peeler may not be used(11). The eggs may be mashed with a fork(12) or sliced with an egg slicer(13). A grinder [or a masher(14)] may not be used(15). [If the eggs were shelled before Shabbos, they need not be mashed immediately before the meal(16).] Preferably, the onions should not be cut up into very small pieces (diced)(17). But if it is difficult [or less tasty] to eat bigger pieces of onion, or if the food is being prepared for a child, it is permitted to dice the onions into small pieces provided that they are diced immediately before the meal(18). [Another option is to cut the onions into little pieces with a spoon or with the handle of a knife or fork(19), but this is not practical.] The eggs and onions may be mixed together(20). The eggs and onions together may be salted, especially if the mixture is going to contain oil or mayonnaise(21). But the onions alone should not be left salted [or immersed in vinegar(22)] for any length of time(23). The proper method for the next step in making eggs and onions - adding oil to the mixture - was hotly debated among the poskim of the past generations, since adding oil may be a violation of "kneading", a forbidden Shabbos Labor. Apparently, it was a widely-held custom to add oil to the mixture in the normal manner, and many leading poskim approved of it(24). Indeed, several contemporary authorities agree that the custom is firmly grounded in Halachah and may be followed(25). The oil should be added immediately before the meal, and in small quantities only. Nonetheless, the poskim are of the opinion that it is halachically preferable to add and mix the oil in a way that is altogether different from the usual way that a housewife would: a) The oil must be poured into the bowl first, and then the eggs and onions may be added(26); b) The mixture may not be stirred vigorously; it may only be mixed - in order of halachic preference - in one of the following ways: With one's finger(27); by shaking the bowl(28); with a knife, fork or spoon but only in a criss-cross pattern(29) (up and down and left to right), not around and around in the normal mixing motion(30); with a utensil not normally used for mixing(31); with the handle of a knife or a spoon(32). When mayonnaise is being used instead of oil, the same procedure outlined in # 7 -8 is followed, except that there is no need to reverse the order and place the mayonnaise in the bowl before the eggs and the onions [as is required when using oil](33). Pieces of cooked potato may be added and mixed into the egg-onion mixture(34). If, after the mixture is prepared, an egg shell is found in it, the shell may not be removed. The proper procedure is to leave the egg shell in the mixture and remove the food from the bowl. Some poskim are more lenient and permit removing the shell provided that some of the mixture is removed with it(35). Other poskim strictly prohibit removing the shell in this manner(36) and it is proper to be stringent(37). When the mixture is ready, it is proper to leave it as is and not smooth it down, shape it(38), etc. It is permitted, however, to use a scoop for serving individual portions(39).

**FOOTNOTES:** 1 Ohr ha-Chayim, Yisro 20:11. 2 See Chofetz Chayim's preface to Mishnah Berurah Hilchos Shabbos. 3 It may be prohibited because salting is part of the pickling process, which resembles cooking (Rambam), or because salting can alter the texture of the food and is similar to me'abed, tanning hide, since that too is a accomplished by using chemicals to alter the texture of the hide (Rashi). 4 Indeed, in the home of the Chazon Ish and Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky, this food was always prepared before Shabbos, so as to not get involved in potential Shabbos Labors (Ayil Meshulash, pg. 157; Orchos Rabbeinu). 5 Eggs in a pot of water are not considered to be mixed with the water. It is permitted to discard the water from the pot and leave the eggs - Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, quoted in The Laws of Borer, pg. 30. 6 Rama O.C. 321:19. 7 Zemiros which are sung prior to the meal are considered as part of the meal (Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, quoted in The Laws of Borer, pg. 25 and Harav N. Karelitz, quoted in Ayil Meshulash, pg. 117). 8 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-13; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv and Harav N. Karelitz (quoted in Ayil Meshulash, pg. 118). There is a minority view which holds that it is permitted to begin the preparation one-half hour before the meal even if the actual preparation does not take that long (Harav S. Wosner, mi-Beis Levi 6, Borer 2). 9 Mishnah Berurah 321:45. 10 Beur Halachah 321:19; Igros Moshe O.C. 1:124. 11 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in The Laws of Borer, pg. 32); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 3:31; Machazeh Eliyahu 51 quoting the Eglei Tal. 12 Mishnah Berurah 321:31 and 36 - since it is only prohibited to grind foods that that grow from the ground. Mashing eggs is permitted even according to the Chazon

Ish (O.C. 57) who generally rules that grinding applies even to items that do not grow from the ground. See Otzros ha-Shabbos, pg. 344 for a detailed explanation. 13 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-4; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 6:3); Harav S. Wosner (Otzros ha-Shabbos, pg. 157). 14 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Me'or ha-Shabbos 1:457). 15 O.C. 321:10 - since that is considered a week-day activity. 16 Mishnah Berurah 321:31. 17 Mishnah Berurah 321:45. According to the Chazon Ish (O.C. 57) this is strictly forbidden, while Igros Moshe (O.C. 4:74-2) rules that when the need arises, even a ba'al nefesh does need not be stringent. 18 Mishnah Berurah and Igros Moshe, ibid.; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah and Tikunim U'milum 6:6) 19 O.C. 321:7 and Mishnah Berurah 25. 20 Since no liquid is being added, there is no problem of kneading. 21 Mishnah Berurah 321:14 - since the oil [or the bit of vinegar which is poured over the salt and washes it away] weakens the potency of the salt. Even if no oil or mayonnaise will be mixed in, it is still permitted, since the egg is permitted to be salted (Mishnah Berurah 321:18 and 21) and the onions are also permitted to be salted once they are mixed with the eggs. 22 See Mishnah Berurah 321:15 concerning cucumbers in vinegar. 23 O.C. 321:3 and Mishnah Berurah 13, 14, 15. 24 Several poskim of previous generations attest to the prevalence of this practice - see Reb S. Kluger (ha-Elef Lecha Shelomo 139), Eglei Tal (Tochen 123:7); Tehilah le-Dovid 321:22,25; Aishel Avraham Tanina 321; Minchas Shabbos 80:38. 25 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 8, note 81); Tzitz Eliezer 11:36; Be'er Moshe 6:46. 26 Since normally the eggs and onions are put in first and then the oil is poured on them. 27 Rama 321:16. Wearing a glove is prohibited - Chazon Ish 58:8. 28 Mishnah Berurah 321:63. 29 In between each change of direction the utensil should be lifted out of the mixture - Chazon Ish 58:6; Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-5. 30 O.C. 324:3. 31 Minchas Yitzchak 1:74. 32 These last two options are halachically the least desirable since they are not mentioned by any early authority and some contemporary poskim specifically disallow it in a thick mixture such as eggs and onions. See, however, Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-6 who seems to allow it in all cases. See also Tzitz Eliezer 11:36 who quotes a similar ruling. 33 Since no binding takes place until the actual stirring and mixing begins. 34 Since kneading is only with small particles, not large pieces. 35 Based on Mishnah Berurah 319:61 concerning a fly that fell into a drink. See also Mishnah Berurah 504:20 concerning matzah crumbs. 36 Chazon Ish 54:3. 37 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 5, note 21) since an egg shell in a salad is considered more "mixed in" than a fly in a drink, and possibly all poskim would prohibit this. 38 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 80:25. See also Chayei Adam 39:1-10. Other poskim, however, are not concerned with this, see Da'as Torah 31:19 and Cheishev ha-Aifod 2:77. 39 Since the purpose is to aid in the serving process, not to shape the food - see Be'er Moshe 6:43 and 8:134.

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yhe-sichot@jer1.co.il Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva summarized by students PARASHAT LEKH LEKHA SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

"Ve-he'emin Ba-Shem, Va-yachsheveha Lo Tzedaka" Summarized by Betzalel Posy

After God promised Avraham offspring, the Torah records both Avraham's and God's reactions: "He put his trust in the Lord, va-yachsheveha lo tzedaka" (Bereishit 15:6). It is not clear how the latter phrase should be understood, nor is it clear who is the subject - did God or Avraham consider something to be "tzedaka" (charity)? The Ramban has two explanations of the second phrase, both with the same basic point. He says that Avraham initially feared that despite all of God's promises of physical and spiritual success, his own personal sins, or his descendants' collective misdeeds, might cause these promises to become null and void. But Avraham understood this promise of God as unconditional, based on charity: no matter what they may do, Avraham's offspring will remain the chosen people of Hashem, those designed to inherit His land and His tradition. Thus, it is Avraham who regards the promise as charitable. In the second explanation, the Ramban goes even farther. It is Hashem Himself who sees the changed nature of the promise and makes it a tzedaka.

The Ramban's basic distinction, between a Godly promise dependent on conditional factors, and one that will come true no matter what, is found in the gemara in Rosh Hashana, which distinguishes between a promise which is accompanied by an oath and one that is not. While the Ramban is consistent in abiding by the distinction, he refuses in Shemot to apply it to the particular situation that he does in Bereishit. When explaining the apparent contradiction between the promise to Avraham that his descendants would be redeemed after 400 years, whereas the pasuk states that Benei Yisrael left after 430 years, the Ramban writes the following: The appropriate explanation is as follows: The four hundred years began on that day, and the thirty years were added to them specifically because of their sin. For if a person is condemned for his sin to exile and tragedy for a certain amount of years, and he nonetheless continues to sin, additional years will be added on sevenfold, for the first punishment is no promise that he may not receive further for more sins he may do. On Avraham Avinu, the decree fell that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land for four hundred years, and they would not return until the fourth generation, and the only promise he was given was that they would leave with great wealth.

Up to this point, the Ramban can be reconciled with his statements in Bereishit: he is only narrowing the scope of the promise. But he continues: For even this promise is conditional, and even if it were not, there is no promise that is not possible that sin can destroy ... and even after thirty years they might not have gone out, had they not cried out to Hashem...

Here, the Ramban clearly states that even the promise that Avraham was given was dependent on the way his descendants fulfilled their responsibilities.

From this Ramban, we learn a fundamental lesson in our perspective on history and our role in it: no matter what may be a "Divine master plan," the actions of Klal Yisrael can and do affect events and trends. This is true in every age, but it is all the more true in today's society,

where the difference between hastened redemption (be-itah) and redemption in its assigned time (achishena) hangs in the balance.

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ACTS OF LOVING-KINDNESS by Ruchoma Shain Reprinted with permission from "Shining Lights" by Ruchoma Shain Published by Feldheim Publishers, Israel. 1997

ONE HOT SUMMER DAY, a young couple and their four-year-old-daughter, Tzippie, were on their way to the mountains for a few weeks' vacation. Suddenly, a huge truck in the oncoming lane collided headlong into the family's small car. The couple was injured seriously, and little Tzippie sustained many fractures. They were immediately taken to the nearest hospital where Tzippie was brought to the children's ward, and her parents were taken to the intensive care unit. As can well be imagined, Tzippie was not only in great pain, but she was also very frightened because her parents were not nearby to give her comfort.

Martha, the nurse who was assigned to Tzippie, was a single, older woman. She understood Tzippie's fear and insecurity, and became very devoted to her. When Martha finished her shift, instead of going home, she would volunteer to stay with Tzippie at night. Of course, Tzippie grew very fond of her and depended on her for her every need. Martha brought her cookies, picture books, and toys; she sang songs to her, and told her countless stories.

When Tzippie was able to be moved, Martha put her in a wheel chair and took her to visit her parents every day. Miraculously they had survived and were also recovering slowly. After many months of hospitalization, the family was finally discharged. Before they left the hospital, the parents blessed Martha for her devoted and loving care, and invited her to visit them. Tzippie would not let go of Martha, and insisted that she come to live with them. Martha also did not want to be parted from her little Tzippie, but her life was in the children's ward of the hospital, and she could not think of leaving. There was a tearful parting as the loving nurse and Tzippie said good-bye to each other. For a few months the family kept up a close relationship with Martha, through phone calls only, as they lived quite a distance from her, but when they moved to Israel, they lost contact with each other.

Over thirty years passed. Martha, who was in her seventies, became seriously ill with pneumonia one winter and was hospitalized in the geriatric ward of a hospital near her home. There was a certain nurse on duty who noticed that Martha had very few visitors. She tried her best to give the elderly lady special care and saw that she was a sensitive, clever person.

One night when the nurse was sitting near her elderly patient, and they were chatting quietly, she confided in her as to what prompted her to become a nurse. When she was four years old, she explained, and her parents had been injured in an automobile accident, there had been a wonderful nurse who had brought her back to health with her loving, caring devotion. As she grew older, she determined that one day she, too, would become a nurse and help others--from the young to the old--just as that nurse had done for her. She had been living in Israel, she said, where she had gone to nursing school and had become a registered nurse.

After she graduated, she had met a young man from America, and when they married, they moved to the States. A few months ago they had moved to this city, where her husband had been offered a very good job, and she was happy to get a position as a nurse in this hospital. As the nurse's story unfolded, tears flowed from the elderly patient's eyes, as she realized that this must surely be her little Tzippie, whom she had cared for after the accident.

When the nurse had finished her story, Martha said softly, "Tzippie, we are together again, but this time you are nursing me!" Tzippie's eyes opened wide as she stared at Martha, suddenly recognizing her. "Is it really you?!" she cried out. "How many times I have thought about you and prayed that some day we would meet again!"

When Martha recovered from her illness, Tzippie--this time--did not beg her to come home with her and live with her family. Instead, she just packed up Martha's belongings and took her home with her, where she lives to this day. Tzippie's husband and children have welcomed her like a most special grandmother.

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The Chassidic Dimension Adaptation of Likutei Sichos by Rabbi Sholom Ber Wineberg  
Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion Lech Lecha

The Covenant of Avraham

The Torah portion of Lech Lecha relates how G-d commanded Avraham to circumcise himself and the members of his household. By doing so, Avraham became the first and primary individual to adopt the sign of the holy covenant that exists between G-d and every Jew. This connection between circumcision and Avraham is so strong that the blessings for circumcision include the phrase: "to enter him into the covenant of Avraham, our father," i.e., the circumcision currently taking place is directly related to our patriarch Avraham. Since Avraham is our father, he makes it possible for all of us, his children, to inherit the privilege of entering into an eternal covenant with G-d. This kind of inheritance is not at all dependent on any preparations or qualifications on the part of the inheritor -- a one-day old infant can inherit everything. Moreover, such inheritance does not even entail a change of ownership; the inheritor merely takes the place of the legator. So, the covenant made by each and every Jew is the actual covenant of Avraham, since the ability of all Jews to enter into it comes as an inheritance from their father Avraham. The following, however, must be understood: In explaining the commandment of circumcision, the Rambam states: "We do not engage in circumcision because our father Avraham, of blessed memory, circumcised himself and his household, but rather because G-d commanded us through our teacher Moshe to circumcise ourselves." But why then does the blessing read "into the covenant of Avraham, our father," stressing the connection with Avraham? Would it not be better to say, "into a covenant with G-d," thereby emphasizing that the person being circumcised is entering into a Divine covenant, as commanded by the Almighty?

There is something about circumcision that is unlike any other commandment. While all commandments bring about a unification with G-d, the result of this unification is not usually visible within the body of the one performing the deed; while the hand that distributes charity becomes more spiritually refined through the act, the change is not apparent. Circumcision is unique in that the change brought about by the performance of the commandment becomes a part of the person himself. In effect, circumcision causes the entire person, even his lowest parts, to be eternally bound to G-d. Thus, a Jewish child is circumcised at an age when there can be no intellectual desire to fulfill commandments. For an act to affect every fiber of a person's being, even his lowermost level, it is best to perform it when one is only eight days old. The reason why the text of the blessing reads "to enter him into the covenant of Avraham, our father," can be understood accordingly: It is logical to assume that the performance of circumcision was more difficult for Avraham than for later generations; since he was the first to do so, he had to blaze the trail, as it were. But in truth, every Jew who performs circumcision performs it in the same manner as Avraham. The reason for this is that, were circumcision performed as the result of a logical imperative, then the logic behind it would become more readily discernible with the passage of time. As stated above, however, circumcision is not performed because it is logical to do so; this is why it is performed on a child when he is only eight days old. Therefore, every Jew's performance of circumcision is entirely similar to Avraham's -- he is verily performing it as a "first," entering into it in exactly the same manner as did our father Avraham. Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. X, pp. 44-47