

B'S'D'
INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON LECH LICHA - 5761

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Parashah Talk

Parshas Lech Lecha

The outrage against me is due to you! (Genesis 16:5).

Rashi explains the nature of Sarah's complaint against Avraham: "When you prayed to G-d for a child . . . you prayed only for yourself (and you were granted Yishmael, through Hagar). You should have prayed for both of us, and my desire would have been fulfilled by Him as well!"

Why indeed did Avraham see fit to omit Sarah from his prayers to be blessed with a child?

The Rambam (Hil. Berachos 10:22) writes: "When a person is about to measure the volume of his harvest he may pray, 'May it be G-d's will to bestow a blessing upon the work of my hands!' But once the harvest has already been measured this would be a prayer uttered in vain. For anyone who prays for something that has already been determined (such as the amount of his crop, or the sex of an unborn baby) is uttering a prayer in vain."

The principle formulated by the Rambam may be summed up as follows: Any prayer in which one asks G-d for departure from the regular course of nature is a prayer in vain. Of course anything is possible for G-d, and He could change the size of a crop or the sex of a baby after it has already been established as fact. But to do so would require a miraculous intervention in the natural processes of the world, and it is improper to pray for such an occurrence.

The Talmud tells us, based on Bereishis 11:30, that not only was Sarah barren, but she did not have a womb in her body at all - which placed her conceiving and bearing of a child incontrovertibly within the realm of the miraculous. Avraham, on the other hand, although he was old and beyond the normal age of fathering children, was not absolutely barred by the laws of nature from having a child. For this reason it was still appropriate for him to pray that he should be blessed with a child, but to pray for Sarah, given her physical condition, would have constituted a "prayer in vain."

-- BRISKER RAV

Excerpt from Brisk on Chumash, by Rabbi Asher Bergman.

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Lech Lecha -

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

Sefer Bereshis: A "Sneak Preview" of History

One of the themes of Sefer [the book of] Bereshis is "ma'aseh avos siman l'banim" -- that the actions of the forefathers foreshadow similar events for their children. Sefer Bereshis is a virtual blueprint of what will happen to our nation during its history. The experiences of the Avos [Patriarchs] provide us with the strength to endure.

In Parshas Lech Lecha we learn of the famous battle between "The Four Kings and the Five Kings". I once heard the following insight from

Rav Nachman Bulman regarding the "prophecy to the children" implicit in this war. Rav Bulman said that if you ask people "When did the first World War begin?" they will answer reflexively "1914". However, Rav Bulman says, that is the wrong answer. The first World War occurred in this week's parsha.

What happened in this precedent-setting battle? How did the war between the four kings and the five kings eventually end? A hostage was taken (Avraham's nephew, Lot). Who then became involved in the middle of the first world war? Our patriarch, Abraham. This is the prophetic foreshadowing.

When major historical events occur and when nations are fighting against other nations, we must hold our breath. One thing is certain: Jews will become involved, one way or another.

A recent example occurred when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United States sent 250,000 troops to Kuwait. What did that have to do with the Jews? But all of a sudden, the Jews were pulled in the middle of it. "We (Iraq) will give up Kuwait, if the Jews give up the territories they captured."

I never understood when I learned in history classes about "The Big Lie". How can people be so stupid that they believe something that is patently false? The first time Saddam Hussein made this analogy, people dismissed it as ridiculous. There is obviously no comparison between Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and Israel's occupation of territories won defending herself in the Six Day War. But Saddam Hussein repeated the lie and repeated it and eventually people start saying, "Yes, he has a point there." That is an example of "The Big Lie".

Inevitably, when nations begin fighting and war spreads across the globe - watch out! Somehow, they will involve the Jews. This concept is foreshadowed right here in Parshas Lech Lecha: "It transpired in the days of Amrafel, King of Shinaar..." [Bereshis 14:1]

The Medrash states "If you see nations fighting with one another, wait (in anticipation)". Sometimes the connection will be immediately obvious, some times it will be understood in 5 weeks or 5 months or 5 years or 50 years. But the Medrash advises us - wait and see - inevitably it will concern the Jews.

Why Solicit Avraham For The Rescue of Lot?

After the capture of Lot, the pasuk [verse] says, "the survivor came and related this to Avram the Ivri [Hebrew]" [14:13]. Why does the Torah use the adjective "the Hebrew" to describe Avram, specifically at this time? The Torah speaks of Avram in many places without referring to him by this title.

I saw a terrific explanation from the Beis Av by Rav Elyakim Schlessinger. The Medrash says that Avram was called 'Ivri', because "the entire world was on one side (ever echad), and he was on the other side (evar hasheni)". The definition of a Jew is "everyone is on one side, and I am on the other side." The whole world was into paganism and Avram came along and said "No! G-d is One!"

Why did the "survivor" come to Avram to effect Lot's rescue? Avram and Lot had already parted ways, not under the best of circumstances. Why didn't the "survivor" seek help from Lot's friends and neighbors?

The survivor came to Avram, precisely because he is Avram, the Ivri. When in need of a person to go out and put his life in danger in order to save someone else, we need a person who is willing to diverge from "common practice" and follow the path that the Torah instructs. If the Torah commands "Do not stand idly by over the blood of your fellow man" then that is precisely what he will do. This is the only help that is truly reliable. Everyone else will have an excuse - except the Ivri!

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What's in a Name?

BY PAYSACH J. KROHN

I had already performed the bris on the eight-day-old infant; the prayers entering the child into the Covenant of Abraham had been recited and now the long-anticipated moment had arrived -- the name of the new infant was about to be announced. The assembled guests eagerly anticipated the exciting news. Traditionally, a baby boy's Hebrew name is not revealed to anyone before the bris other than those involved in choosing it. And likewise, a baby girl's Hebrew name is not revealed until she is named in synagogue during the reading of the Torah. Would the baby boy at this particular bris be named for a late uncle? For a beloved cousin who recently passed away? Or perhaps for a distinguished rabbi? Maybe he would be given a name his parents chose merely because they liked it.

Naming a child is one of the most important decisions new parents make. The Talmud (Berachos 7b) teaches that a Hebrew name has an influence on its bearer. Hence, it is extremely important to name your children after individuals with positive character traits who have led fortunate lives and have helped bring goodness to the world.

The legendary Kabbalist, the Arizal, writes that the nature and behavior of a person, whether good or bad, can be discovered by analyzing his or her name. A child named Yehudah could possibly be destined for leadership, for Yehudah, the fourth son of Jacob, symbolized monarchy and indeed, most Jewish kings descended from the tribe of Yehudah. It is said that parents are actually blessed with prophesy when naming their newborn babies so that they will choose names which aptly describe their children's personas and their destinies in life.

According to the Arizal, even the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in one's name can be indicative of an individual's character. For example, the numerical value, or gematria, of the name Elisheva is equivalent to the numerical value of the Hebrew words "yemei simcha", meaning days of happiness, perhaps portending a joyous life for a baby girl named Elisheva.

It is precisely because the fortunes and misfortunes of mankind are concealed in the secrets of the letters, vowels and meanings of Hebrew names that a seriously ill person is given an additional name like Chaim, meaning life, or Rafael, meaning G-d heals, in order to influence his destiny. We hope and pray that the new name will herald a new mazal, or fortune, for the stricken individual.

One of the founders of Chassidism in Galicia, Poland, Rabbi Elimelech of Lyzhansk, writes in his classic work on Torah, Noam Elimelech, (Bamidbar), that there is a profound connection between the soul of an infant and the soul of the person for whom he or she is named. When a child is named after the deceased, the latter's soul is elevated to a higher realm in Heaven and a spiritual affinity is created between the soul of the departed and the soul of the newborn child. That deep spiritual bond between these two souls can have a profound impact on the child.

The Hebrew word for soul -- neshama -- is spelled with the four Hebrew letters nun, shin, mem and hei. Remarkably, the Hebrew word for name, shem -- spelled shin, mem -- is contained within the word neshama, indicating yet again the strong connection between one's name and one's soul, or essence.

Back at the bris, the young father was now huddled next to his own father -- the baby's grandfather -- who was being honored with the

recitation of the naming prayer. Holding a goblet filled with wine, the grandfather intoned, "Our G-d and G-d of our forefathers, preserve this child for his father and mother, and may his name be called in Israel." The grandfather waited for his son to whisper the name in his ear so that he could proudly announce it.

"Yoel" whispered the father. The grandfather gasped as tears suddenly welled in his eyes. His voice choked as his lips quivered with emotion. His new grandson was being named for his own father -- the baby's great grandfather. Tears also welled in the eyes of all the guests who remembered Yoel Pfeiffer.

In the late 1930s, he was forced to escape from Germany the night after he got married. He made it to England but upon arrival there he was imprisoned as a suspected spy. He remained on British soil throughout the war until he was able at last to immigrate to Canada where he was reunited with his wife.

The late Yoel Pfeiffer began his life anew in Montreal. With almost nothing but perseverance, he built a family, a business and a legacy of charitable deeds. At the festive meal following the bris, the young father recalled the fondness he had for his grandfather and explained how he and his wife wished to honor him and how they hoped to confer his strength of character to their new son, Yoel Pfeiffer.

As a Mohel, one trained to perform Jewish ritual circumcision, I am often involved in helping families choose appropriate Hebrew names for their children. My advice is based on three principles: a) Use the exact Hebrew name of the person you wish to honor or choose a name that at least contains several of the same letters in this individual's Hebrew name; b) be sure your child's name contains only positive connotations, and c) select a name your child will be proud of. Remember, your child's name is his eternal identity.

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From: weekly@lists.virtualjerusalem.com ohr@virtual.co.il
* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Lech Lecha

AND WITH THIS WE'LL CLOSE...

"And you shall be a blessing." (12:2)

There's something that Abraham had in common with a lot of today's Jews. He didn't grow up frum (religious).

The attrition of the Jewish People didn't stop with Nazi Germany. After six million Jews had been murdered in Europe, an equal number of Jews have been lost to Judaism through assimilation. While some mixed relationships have led to the creation of genuine and enthusiastic Jewish spouses, the vast majority have produced children who are either not Jewish or not interested in being Jewish.

However, ever since the Six Day War, there's been a fascinating anti-historical trend. Since 1967 -- shortly, and un-coincidentally, after the Western Wall returned to Jewish hands -- thousands of Jews from non-religious backgrounds have become frum. And not just frum; today you can find ba'alei teshuva who have become the "professors" of Jewish learning. Their numbers are minuscule compared to the vast figures for intermarriage, but they are a significant and visible trend in today's community.

What does it mean when we see a large number of unaffiliated Jews embracing their Jewish spirituality and identifying as the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

In this week's Torah portion, Abraham leaves his land, his relatives and his father's house to travel to a spiritual land and be the founder of the Jewish People. Abraham didn't have the benefit of a great Torah sage for a father. His father was in a different line: He was an idol

manufacturer. Not a job for a Jewish boy. Even though Abraham's son, Isaac, had a grandfather who was an idol maker, he at least had the advantage of growing up in the home of a spiritual giant, his father Abraham. And Jacob, the "choicest" of the patriarchs, was completely removed from Abraham's roots; he inherited both his father's and his grandfather's spiritual achievements and their lifestyle.

In the first blessing of the Amidah, the standing prayer, we address the Creator through our family connections. We call on Him as "the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac and the G-d of Jacob." However, when we come to the end of that blessing we only address Him as "the G-d of Abraham." What happened to Isaac and Jacob?

The first blessing of the Amidah depicts a historical process. Eventually at the end of the road, when history draws to a close, G-d will be seen in the world as the G-d of Abraham. For it will be those Jews who have emulated Abraham and left their land, "their relatives and their father's house to travel to a spiritual land" who will be the ones to write the last chapter of Jewish history.

Sources: *Rashi *Rabbi Shimon Shkop as heard from Rabbi C. J. Senter
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* PARSHA Q&A * Parshat Lech Lecha

KASHA! (kasha means "question") How would you answer this question on the Parsha?

QUESTION: Avraham didn't accept any money from the king of Sodom, not wanting the king of Sodom to say "I made Avraham rich." Why then was he willing to take presents from Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim? ANSWER: If Avraham had refused the gifts offered for Sarah, he may have aroused Pharaoh's suspicion that he was indeed her husband, and spoiled the charade. * Abarbanel OR: Avraham suspected that the king of Sodom would publicize the fact that he enriched Avraham. Pharaoh, on the other hand, wouldn't brag about his gifts to Avraham. Since they were given under embarrassing circumstances, Pharaoh would avoid mentioning them in order to avoid drawing attention to the incident. * Heard from Rabbi Michael Bachar

I DID NOT KNOW THAT! "And you will call his name Yitzchak... (17:19)" Avraham's name was changed from Avram (Bereishet 17:5), and Yaakov's name was changed to Yisrael (Bereishet 32:29). Why was Yitzchak's name never changed? Because Avraham and Yaakov received their names from their parents, while Yitzchak received his name from Hashem. * Jerusalem Talmud - Berachot 1:6

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Ramban 12:6 A Sign for the Children 12:8 Proclaiming the Name of Hashem 12:10 The Sin of Avram 13:7 The Quarrel of the Shepherds 14:1 The Four Kings 15:12 The Dreadful Vision 16:12 Yishmael Sforno 12:17 Pharaoh's Plague 16:12 Yishmael 17:1 Attaining Perfection

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. What benefits did Hashem promise Avraham if he would leave his home? 12:1 - He would become a great nation, his excellence would become known to the world, and he would be blessed with wealth.

2. "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." What does this mean? 12:3 - A person will say to his child, "You should be like Avraham."

3. Who were the souls that Avraham and Sarah "made?" 12:5 -

People they converted to the worship of Hashem.

4. What were the Canaanites doing in the Land of Canaan when Avraham arrived? 12:6 - They were in the process of conquering the land from the descendants of Shem.

5. Why did Avraham build an altar at Ai? 12:8 - He foresaw the Jewish People's defeat there in the days of Yehoshua due to Achan's sin. He built an altar to pray for them.

6. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sarah was his sister? 12:13 - That the Egyptians would not kill him, and would give him presents.

7. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds? 13:7 - Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.

8. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that? 14:1 - Amrafel was Nimrod. He said (amar) to Avraham to fall (fel) into the fiery furnace.

9. Verse 14:7 states that the four kings "smote all the country of the Amalekites." How is this possible, since Amalek had not yet been born? 14:7 - The Torah uses the name that the place would bear in the future.

10. Why did the "palit" tell Avraham of Lot's capture? 14:13 - He wanted Avraham to die trying to save Lot so that he himself could marry Sarah.

11. Who accompanied Avraham in battle against the four kings? 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.

12. Why couldn't Avraham chase the four kings past Dan? 14:14 - He saw prophetically that his descendants would make a golden calf there, and as a result his strength failed.

13. Why did Avraham give "ma'aser" specifically to Malki-Tzedek? 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a kohen.

14. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from Sodom's king? 14:23 - Hashem had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want Sodom's King to say, "I made Avraham wealthy."

15. When did the decree of 400 years of exile begin? 15:13 - With the birth of Yitzchak.

16. What did Hashem indicate with His promise that Avraham would "come to his ancestors in peace?" 15:15 - That his father, Terach, would repent and become righteous.

17. How did Hashem fulfill His promise that Avraham would be buried in "a good old age?" 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son Yishmael repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson Esav became wicked.

18. Why did the Jewish People need to wait until the fourth generation until they returned to Eretz Canaan? 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.

19. Who was Hagar's father? 16:1 - Pharaoh.

20. Why did Avraham fall on his face when Hashem appeared to him? 17:3 - Because he was as yet uncircumcised.

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Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz
Lech Lecha

Sponsored by The Edeson and Stern families on the 56th anniversary of Jacob S. Edeson's bar mitzvah

Rabbi and Mrs. Sam Vogel on the yearzeits of their fathers Aharon Shimon ben Shemaryah a"h (Arthur Kalkstein) Aharon Yehuda ben Yisrael a"h (Leon Vogel)

Today's Learning: Yevamot 2:1-2 Orach Chaim 331:8-10 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nazir 25

R' Simcha Kook shlita (Chief Rabbi of Rechovot, Israel) observed:

According to the midrash, Shir Hashirim 8:8-10 describes the deliberations that took place when Avraham was thrown into a fiery furnace by King Nimrod because he (Avraham) would not renounce his belief in one G-d. "We have a little sister," says the verse; she is still young and inexperienced-- just as Avraham was thrown into the furnace before he had ever seen G-d perform any miracles for him. The verse continues, "What shall we do for our sister on the day she will be spoken for?" What will happen at the "moment of truth" when Nimrod throws Avraham into the fire?

Hashem answers (in the words of verse 9), "If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar." The midrash explains that G-d is laying down the conditions: if Avraham stands firm like a wall, and is willing to protect his belief in G-d with all that he has -- even his life -- then he will be enclosed with silver. This is a simile for Israel. (See Tehilim 68:14 - "You will be like a dove coated with silver.") If Avraham is willing to give his life, he will live. Moreover, he will be surrounded by, and perpetuated through, his descendants, the Children of Israel. But if Avraham reacts like a door (in Hebrew, "delet," from the root "dal," meaning "poor, dismal"), he will be enclosed only with boards, which can rot and be eaten away. Furthermore: the disadvantage of a door compared to a wall is that the latter is a permanent protection, allowing unwanted entrance to no one. A door, however, is the weakest part of a building's enclosure. It opens and closes, and it is unstable, and it therefore affords only temporary protection. If Avraham is not stable, then there is no hope for the future. For Avraham is the head of the believers -- not just the first, but the chief and the leader.

Avraham answers (in verse 10): "I am a wall!" -- Not only am I ready to give my life, but also my children, Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (who were thrown into a furnace by Nevuchadnezzar), Rabbi Chananiah ben Tradion and his colleagues who were killed by the Romans for the Sanctification of G-d's Name, and all those who gave their lives for the same purpose throughout the generations are ready. And for this, Avraham emerged unscathed from Nimrod's burning furnace - thanks to the call, "I am a wall; I stand firmly for the sake of belief in G-d!"

R' Kook concludes: Every one of us has a spark of Avraham within him, and we pray and strive that this spark should be seen. This is why we recite three times a day the blessing (in shemoneh esrei), "Magen Avraham" / "Shield of Avraham." We ask Hashem to "shield" the "Avraham-ism" of unyielding faith that lies within each and everyone of us. If we are a wall, we will be like silver, which does not rot, and is very long-standing and durable. But if not, we will be as vulnerable as wood. (From an address delivered October 24, 1999 / 14 Cheshvan 5760)

"[Avraham] trusted in Hashem, and He reckoned it to him as tzedakah." (15:6)

We are accustomed to using the word "tzedakah" to mean "charity." However, writes Rambam z"l ("Maimonides"; 1135-1204), we can learn from this verse what "tzedakah" in fact means.

Tzedakah means fulfilling the obligations which fall on a person because of his duty to practice good character traits. When one performs tzedakah -- for example, when one helps the downtrodden get up -- he fulfills an obligation to himself by doing what his own soul (or intellect) requires. This is different from "chessed" (usually translated "kindness"), on the one hand, and mishpat (sometimes translated "justice"), on the other. Chessed refers to giving a person more than he is entitled to while, mishpat refers to giving someone what he deserves (for example, paying a worker his wages and paying off one's debts).

When Avraham trusted in Hashem, as related in our verse, Hashem reckoned this to Avraham as tzedakah because Avraham was doing that which he was obligated to do - believing Hashem's promise. (Moreh

Nevochim III, ch. 53)

In other words, writes R' Yosef Kapach z"l (1918-2000; rabbi in Yemen and Israel), when you give a pauper a donation, you are not performing an act of kindness, but merely fulfilling the obligation which the Creator has placed upon you. We can thus understand statements of our Sages such as (Ketubot 68a), "One who turns his eye away from tzedakah is akin to an idol-worshiper."

The Sages taught us that just as a person's earnings are decreed on Rosh Hashanah, so his expenses are decreed on Rosh Hashanah. The gemara relates that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai dreamt that certain of his relatives would have an unusual expenditure of 700 coins during the coming year. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai tried to persuade his relatives to donate that amount to charity, but all they gave was 683 coins.

On Erev Yom Kippur, the gemara continues, a tax collector knocked on the relatives' door. "Don't worry," Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said. "All he will take is 17 coins [i.e., the 700 coins which Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai dreamt his relatives would have to expend minus the 683 coins they had given to charity]." And so it was.

Unfortunately, writes R' Kapach, we sometimes see charity collectors as nuisances or even thieves. If we give them even a small donation, we do so with annoyed expressions as if we have just done them the greatest favor. If we act in this way, we clearly have forgotten the above lessons as well as Rambam's assurance, "No person ever became poor from giving tzedakah, not did any person ever suffer as a result of giving." (Ma'amar "Musag Ha'tzedakah Be'Torat Yisrael" Collected Writings, Vol. I, p. 114)

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Parshat Lech Lecha

Eretz Yisrael -- In the Merit of Sacrifices

Rosh Hayeshiva RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG SHLITA

Eretz Yisrael takes a prominent role in this week's parsha:

To your offspring I will give this land. (Bereishit 12:7) Raise now your eyes and look ... For all the land that you see, to you will I give it, and to your descendants forever. (13:14-15) Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth! For to you will I give it. (13:17)

In addition, there are three other places in which G-d's makes a covenant with Avraham about "the Land."

The same parsha that deals with the covenant between G-d and Avraham and his descendants deals at great length also with Eretz Yisrael, because Eretz Yisrael is a most important component in the fulfillment of this covenant.

When Avraham asked, "Whereby shall I know that I am to inherit it?" (15:8), G-d answered him, "Take to me three heifers, three goats," etc. (15:9) Chazal explain that the point of the answer was to say that Eretz Yisrael is connected to Am Yisrael in the merit of sacrifices. The commentators ponder, why did Avraham ask regarding the promise of the Land and not regarding the promise of children? They answer that Avraham did not ask for a sign, but wondered, in what merit will the Land belong to Yisrael? To this came the answer, "In the merit of sacrifices." We will try to understand the connection between sacrifices and Eretz Yisrael.

In Pirkei Avot (5:9) it says, "Exile comes upon the world for idolatry, incest and murder."

Regarding idolatry it says, "[Lest] you turn astray and serve gods of others ... and you will be swiftly banished from the goodly Land that Hashem gives you." (Devarim 11:16-17) Regarding incest it says, "Let not the land disgorge you for having contaminated it." (Vayikra 18:28)

Regarding murder it says, "You shall not bring guilt upon the Land ... for he blood will bring guilt upon the Land." (Bamidbar 35:33)

The Maharal explains that Eretz Yisrael has three names, "Eretz Hashem" (the Land of Hashem), "Eretz Hakodesh" (the Holy Land), and "Eretz Hachaim" (the Land of Life), which correspond to these three sins. While worshipping other gods it is impossible to exist in the Land that is called by G-d's name, and therefore exile comes on account of idolatry. Incest is the antithesis to holiness, and therefore it is impossible to exist in the Holy Land with incest. Finally, Eretz Yisrael is the Land of Life, and therefore murderers, who shorten life, have no existence there.

In Chazal's words, Eretz Yisrael is called "the navel of the earth." This teaches that just as the fetus is connected to his mother and nourished through the navel, so to it is impossible to connect to G-d in our world other than through the navel, Eretz Yisrael, for this Land is called, "the Sanctuary of Hashem." (Ramban and others) This is the Land that Hashem seeks out, "The eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year until year's end." (Devarim 11:12), and it is "the Gate of Heaven."

Those who sin with the three sins mentioned above, work against the goal of bringing Israel close to G-d, a process in which the Land is an important component. Therefore they are exiled from the Land, since "Eretz Hashem," "Eretz Hakodesh," and "Eretz Hachaim" cannot stand sinners who are so antithetical to its nature.

Sacrifices are the expression of Yisrael's ability to draw close to G-d, as the Maharal writes, "Closeness and clinging to Him is the only true sacrifice." Because of this, in order to merit Eretz Yisrael, the place of closeness, there is a need for sacrifices. Only those who have this quality of drawing close through sacrifices will merit Eretz Yisrael, which is the place in which this closeness finds expression!

Shabbat Shalom

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Weekly-halacha for 5761 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Lech Lecha
BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

EMPLOYER - EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

QUESTION: An employer hires a worker on condition that he will not enter into competition with him at a later date. Years later, the employee wants to start a business on his own which may compete with his former employer. Does the halachah view this as "stealing" from his former employer? May Bais din protest his behavior?

DISCUSSION: The answer to the above question depends on the specific circumstances: If the employee was hired as an apprentice and the employer trained him, then the employee may not strike out on his own if he will be competing with his former employer. If, however, the employee was not trained by the employer but was hired as an experienced worker, then it is not considered "stealing" if he decides at a later date to open his own business(1).

The difference between the two cases cited above is as follows: When an employee is hired and paid for his services, the employer does not own his services forever. Once his employment is terminated, the former employer cannot control his opportunities indefinitely, or even for a specific period of time. Even if he made a pre-condition with him, it is not halachically binding(2) and bais din has no right to stop him from doing as he pleases(3). If, however, the employer trained him,

then he may demand payment from the employee for teaching him the trade. His "payment" could be in the form of a promise that he will not compete with him in the future. If the employee breaks his promise, then he is "stealing" a form of "payment" from his former employer. This may be stopped by a bais din.

QUESTION: May a worker offer his services to a prospective employer knowing full well that he will cause another Jew to lose his job by replacing him?

DISCUSSION: It is prohibited for one to offer his services to an employer if he will be taking away another person's job, even if his intention is to replace him only after the current contract has expired. Bais din has the right and duty to object to his behavior and to stop him from doing so. If he disregards the halachah and does so anyway, he may be referred to as a rasha publicly(4). Bais din, however, does not have the power to forcibly terminate the newcomer's employment once he has already obtained it

In certain well-defined cases, this restriction does not apply. Among them are the following:

If an employer asks him specifically to apply for the job(5); If it is known that the employer is dissatisfied with his present employee and is looking for an opportunity to replace him(6);

If the present employee was hired initially only for a limited period of time and was never really counting on long-term employment(7); If he does not approach an employer directly but merely advertises his availability, even though his advertisement may result in the present employee losing his job(8).

If, after spending time and effort looking for a job commensurate with his training and experience, he cannot find another job, then it is permitted for him to make himself available to an employer even though a current employee may lose his job(9). A ba'al nefesh, though, should refrain from doing so.

A slightly different set of rules will apply when the current employee is long-term, has established a business relationship with his employer and has a well-founded assumption and expectation that the job is his for as long as he is interested in keeping it. In that case, many poskim maintain that it is prohibited for a newcomer to directly approach an employer to hire him, even if the newcomer cannot find any other job.

But this holds true only if other potential employees will also refrain from offering their services to that particular employer. If, however, this particular job will attract other candidates, then there is no obligation for the observant job-seeker to place himself at a disadvantage and limit his chances, even though the present long-term employee will lose his job.

QUESTION: Is it permitted for an employer to lure another company's employee from his present job? DISCUSSION: It is prohibited for an employer to lure away an employee from his present job, even if he will not employ him until his current contract has expired - unless he feels that this particular employee is superior to any other available employee on the market.

In a case where an employer and employee have established a long-term business relationship, and the employer has a well-founded assumption and expectation that the employee will remain in his employ indefinitely, many poskim hold that it is prohibited for another employer to lure the employee away. However, this holds true only if other potential employers will not actively recruit this particular employee, as explained earlier.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Teshuvos Chasam Sofer C.M. 9. See Teshuvos Minchas Tzvi (Sechirus Poalim) 10. 2 There are, however, halachic means which an employer can ensure that his employer will not compete with him in the future. For the exact method, a rav should be consulted. 3 He will, though, have to deal with the fact that he is breaking his word to the employer. We are concerned here only with the employer's legal rights, not the employee's moral obligation. 4 C.M. 237:2 as explained in Shulchan Aruch Harav (Hasogas Gevul 12). 5 Teshuvos Alshich 67. 6 C.M. 237:2. 7 R' Akiva Eiger C.M. 237 quoting Teshuvos M'harshal 36. 8 Pischei Choshen, Sechirus, pg. 161. 9 Shulchan Aruch Harav, ibid.; Igros Moshe C.M. 1:60.

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From: Menachem Leibtag [SMTP: ml@tanach.org] Subject: LECH L'CHA - abstract & info
THE TANACH STUDY CENTER www.tanach.org In Memory of Rabbi

Abraham Leibtag

ABSTRACT FOR PARSHAT LECH L'CHA

The Tower of Babel, Avraham Avinu, and the Bet Hamikdash

The Torah tells us absolutely nothing about Avraham's past. Why not? The Midrashim are replete with beautiful stories reflecting the special qualities of this unique personality. The verses themselves, however, offer us not a clue as to why G-d suddenly designates him as the father of His special nation. The explanation of this enigma may lie in a transition that occurs in the Biblical narrative towards the end of Parshat Noach. Heretofore, Chumash tells us about the development of mankind as a whole. For example, in chapter ten the Torah tells us how the seventy nations evolved from the descendants of Noah's three sons. Suddenly, at the end of Parshat Noach (in chapter 11), the Torah becomes far more discriminatory, focusing specifically on the descendants of Shem and then on Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and his family. What triggered this shift, and wherein lies its significance? Presumably, the answer should be provided right at the point where this transition occurs: in Breishit chapter 11 - the Tower of Babel narrative. The people of the world gathered to build a city and a tower for the expressed purpose of "making for themselves a name" (11:4). Rather than promoting the awareness of G-d and devoting themselves to the glorification of His Name, the people did just the opposite: they sought to extol their own greatness.

G-d therefore interfered and disrupted the construction, and the ensuing dispersion ultimately led to the formation of multiple nations. However, it is precisely at this point in Chumash when its focus shifts to the story of G-d's choice of Avraham Avinu. In light of the events of Migdal Bavel, G-d designate a single nation - whose destiny will be to redirect mankind towards a theocentric, rather than anthropocentric, mentality. Towards this end G-d summoned a qualified, righteous personality, Avraham Avinu, and promises him a special nation that will inherit a special land for the purpose of representing Him to the rest of mankind. Avraham wastes no time getting to work. Although clearly this destiny requires first the formation of a nation living on its land, Avraham sowed the seeds of this destiny by "calling out in the Name of Hashem" - the antithesis of the Tower of Babel - in Bet-El (see 12:8, 13:4). As Ramban explains, Avraham would assemble audiences and teach monotheism. The ultimate contrast to the Tower, however, will not emerge until Bnei Yisrael will inherit their land and build the Bet Hamikdash, as alluded to in Sefer Devarim. In his farewell speech, Moshe refers to the Temple in numerous instances as "the place G-d will choose to have His NAME dwell therein" (see in particular Devarim 12). In direct contrast with the builders of the Tower, who gathered the entire world to a VALLEY (facing downward) to construct a city with a tower in its midst to exalt mankind - Bnei Yisrael will assemble all the nations to the Temple MOUNT (facing upward) to the city of Jerusalem with the Temple in its midst to exalt G-d. Yeshayahu (2:1-4) beautifully captures this ultimate purpose of the Bet Hamikdash: "In the days to come, the mountain of Bet Hashem will stand high above the mountains... and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy. Many peoples shall go and say: Come let us go up to the House of G-d, that He may instruct us in His ways and that we may walk in His paths - for TORAH shall come forth from out of Tzion, and the word of G-d from Yerushalayim..." This universal goal underlies G-d's designation of Avraham Avinu. The Torah tells us nothing of his superior qualities in order to focus instead upon Avraham's response to his mission. This may teach us, his progeny, how we must relate to the chosen destiny of Knesset Yisrael: not as a reward, rather as a challenge and mission.

Shiur by MENACHEM LEIBTAG, abstract by DAVID SILVERBERG
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kosher meat of a lamb requires atonement and forgiveness, how much more so one who intended to eat swine flesh and ended up doing so!"

Rabbi Yehuda goes one step further: Such a woman may not be liable for lashes by Torah law, because she was in fact not a nezirah, but she is liable for makkat mardut, the lashes given for violating rabbinic law, because of her intention to sin. How many lashes are given under this category?

Tosefot (Nazir 20b) cites the gemara (Mesechta Makkot 22a) that although the Torah legislated a maximum of 39 lashes for the violation of a Torah law, there is no such limit for makkat mardut, whose literal translation is "lashes for rebellion." A Jew who refuses to perform a positive mitzvah like eating matza or sitting in a succah is given lashes until his rebellion is subdued and he consents to perform the mitzvah.

But, points out Tosefot, this lack of a limit upon the number of lashes may apply only to situations in which those blows are used as a way of inducing him to perform a mitzvah against which he has shown rebellion. In the case of the nezirah with evil intentions, she is being punished for something she has already done. Since these lashes are punishment of the past rather than coercion for the future, concludes Tosefot, it may very well be that the number of these rabbinically mandated lashes should not be more than those mandated by the Torah for violation of Torah law.

* Nazir 23a

A "SIN" FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

A sin committed for the sake of Heaven is equal to a mitzvah performed with an ulterior motive. This equation is made by Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak on the basis of a passage (Shoftim 5:24) comparing Yael -- the woman who ended the Canaanite threat to Eretz Yisrael by slaying their general -- to the Matriarchs. Although she utilized forbidden relations to weaken him and accomplish her mission, this action performed for Heaven's sake to save her people is granted credit equal to that of the Matriarchs, whose mitzvah relationships with the Patriarchs had an element of an ulterior motive of personal pleasure.

Why did a married Jewess like Yael not allow herself to be slain rather than submit to the heathen Sisra, since adulterous relations require martyrdom? Tosefot here answers this question in the same manner that the gemara (Mesechta Sanhedrin 74b) explains why Esther did not sacrifice her life rather than submit to Achashverosh: Since the woman is the passive partner in such a forbidden relationship, martyrdom is not expected of her.

In Sanhedrin Tosefot takes a radically different approach. From the account of Yael's incident with Sisra in Sefer Shoftim, it appears that she was not at all coerced into relations as was Esther. Sisra was fleeing for his life after the destruction of his forces and hardly had time for such things. On the contrary, Tosefot adds, he only asked her to hide him from his pursuers, and it was she who took the initiative of seducing him in order to weaken him.

Tosefot does not say, however, why it was permissible for Yael to do what she did. The answer may be the same as the one given by Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (Responsa of Noda Biyehuda, Vol. II Yoreh Deah 161) for Esther taking the initiative in going to Achashverosh for relations upon Mordechai's command. Her justification was the rescue of the entire Jewish nation, and Yael's case can be seen as comparable.

* Nazir 23b

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The Weekly Daf #352 Nazir 20 - 26 Issue #352 Parshat Lech Lecha Week of 8 - 14 Cheshvan 5761 / 6 - 12 November 2000 By RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH, Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

INNOCENT ACTS AND GUILTY INTENTIONS

If a woman made a vow to be a nezirah and, unaware that her husband cancelled her vow, drank wine or came into contact with the dead, she is not punished by lashes for violating the Torah command prohibiting a nazir from indulging in these activities. Even though her intention was to violate Torah law, for she assumed she was a nezirah, the fact is that her husband's cancellation rendered her actions free of sin.

There is no doubt, however, that her intention to do wrong is sinful. This is why the Torah states (Bamidbar 30:13) "her husband cancelled them (her vows) and Hashem will forgive her," to teach us that she must atone for her actions in order to gain forgiveness. When Rabbi Akiva reached this passage, he wept as he exclaimed: "If someone who intended to eat swine flesh and ended up eating the