

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON LECH LICHA - 5763

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Parshas Lech Lecha 5762 [from last year]
Based on Drasha given by
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Vayotzeh Osoh Hachutza Vayomer Habet Na Hashamayma Usefor Es Hakochovim ... He took [Avram] outside and said, Look at the sky and count the stars...

Rashi comments Tzeh Meitztaginos Shelchah, Avram Eino Molid, Avrohom Molid. Go forth from your star ordained destiny; Avram will not give birth, but Avraham will give birth.

There is an obvious difficulty. Avram did give birth. He had Yishmael 13 years before his name was changed to Avraham!

I heard an answer from Rav Moshe Shapiro at length, and I recently saw the basic idea given tersely in two lines by the old Gerer Rebbe, the Imrei Emes, in a gloss to the Pardes Yosef.

The Gemara in Shabbos 53 states that there was a story with a man whose wife died and left a baby boy to nurse, but the man had no money for a nursemaid. A miracle occurred and the man grew breasts like a woman and nursed his son. Said Rav Yosef: Look how great this man is that such a miracle occurred to him. Abaye said to him: Just the opposite - how inferior is this person that the order of the world changed for him (Kama "Garuah" Adam Zeh "Shenishtanu Lo Sidrei Bereishis").

The words of Abaye are difficult to understand. Our history begins with miracles, especially Yetzias Mitzrayim, which we commemorate every day. How can that be Garuah (inferior)?

The world has a natural order; the laws of physics, of chemistry, of history, of human behavior. We are used to thinking that a Nes is a rupture of those laws; a rip in the Seder of the world.

The Maharal explains that this is not always true. The miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim, for example, were not simply ruptures in the natural order of the world. These had a strict order and logic. Furthermore, Chazal say that the names of the 10 plagues were engraved on Moshe's staff, which existed from the six days of creation. So the miracles were part of a Seder - an order - that was built into the world - not the order of nature and history as we know it, but rather to a higher Seder, a higher order - - the Seder of Geulah, part of the process of Geulah which unfolds through history and culminates in Achris Hayamim (the end of days).

There are two Sidrei Bereishis (orders of creation), there is the Seder of nature that is basically cyclical - winter and summer, day and night; and there is the Seder of Geulah, the process of Geulah that begins with Avraham Avinu and culminates in Yemos Hamashiach and Achris Hayamim. This process is hidden from the eye, and is made manifest only on special occasions - which we call a Nes - and which means, literally, an elevation, because it is an event in which the hidden process of Geulah breaks through the surface of events.

The Shem Mishmuel adds that this is why on the first night of Pesach, when we commemorate the Nisim of Yetzias Mitzrayim, we call that commemoration a Seder; to emphasize that the events we are

celebrating were not simply disruptions of Seder Bereishis, but rather belonged to a higher Seder.

However, the Nes of the man who nursed his child was not of that kind. It was simply a rupturing of the laws of nature for the benefit of one individual. And that, said Abaye, is Meguneh (inferior) - it's simply bizarre. Sidrei Bereishis were not meant to be ruptured; and a thing outside of nature introduces chaos into the world. Kama Garuah Adam Zeh Shanishtanu Lo Seder Bereishis.

Avram saw in the stars that he could not have children. In the natural order of things, in the course of nature, he was sterile. Of course, Hakadosh Baruch Hu could make a miracle for his benefit; indeed he did - Avram had Yishmael. But that miracle was simply a thing outside of nature; and the product of that miracle was something outside of the natural Sidrei Bereishis, a force of chaos.

That child, as the angel told Hagar, would be a Pereh Adam, something wild and uncontrollable.

Such a child could not possibly be the agent of Geulah in the world.

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him: Avram does not give birth, but Avraham gives birth. In the natural order of things Avram is sterile, and he cannot have a child without rupturing the Sidrei Bereishis, without creating a Pereh Adam. But there is a higher Seder, a Seder of Geulah, which begins with Avraham; with the assumption of the name of Avraham he becomes the father of Klal Yisrael, and steps into a different order of things altogether. He becomes part of the process of Geulah, which continues through Yitzchok and Yitzchok's progeny.

There is a famous vort from the Chofetz Chaim - which states that Perah is not an adjective describing Yishmael, but it is a noun. This is not just a vort. It is true pshat. Because Avram in the normal order of nature does not give birth, Yishmael's creation was a rupture of nature, a thing outside of Seder Bereishis, something wild and chaotic. And so Yishmael is a force of chaos in the world.

It remains for us to be the agents of Geulah, and to connect ourselves as much as we can to the process of Geulah - by being involved, as far as we are able, with Torah and Gemilas Chasadim - as Chazal teach - Mah Yaaseh Adam Viyinatzel Mischevlei Mashiach - Yaasok Bitorah Ubegmilas Chasadim.

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

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Lech Lecha - Location Is Everything!

Hashem [G-d] told Avram to go to the Land of Canaan. Avram traveled to the Land of Canaan, and pitched his tent. The Torah narrates: "From there he relocated to the east of Beth-el and pitched his tent, with Beth-el on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to Hashem and invoked Hashem by Name" [Bereshis 12:8].

Is it not strange that the Torah uses so many words just to tell us where Avram pitched his tent? We know the general vicinity. Does it really matter for all eternity if it was west of Beth-el or east of Beth-el? At any rate, we do not have the exact geometric coordinates of where the tent was pitched. The Torah is always so 'stingy' in the use of words - why is the Torah suddenly so verbose?

Anyone who has dealt in real estate knows that the three cardinal principles of real estate acquisition are: Location, Location, Location. If one is going to open a new business, he must very carefully research the location that he is choosing. Is there traffic? Is it open? Is it accessible? Is there parking? Location is everything.

The Chofetz Chaim explained the verse as follows: Avram was concerned about this concept. Avram was also going into 'business'. He was in the business of drawing people close to Hashem ('kiruv'). Therefore, he needed to be very particular about where he pitched his tent. He could not afford to just pitch his tent on a side street, where someone would straggle by once every three days. That would not be good for Avram's business.

Avram carefully chose the main crossroads between the two major cities of the area - Beth El and Ai, so that everyone traveling anywhere in the area would pass by his tent. He specifically built his altar in that location.

The question that we must ask ourselves is as follows: how much time and effort and thought do we invest in planning where to place our business so that our business will be successful, and how much time and effort and thought do we invest in placing ourselves in a situation where our spirituality will be successful? This is the difference between Avram and us. The location of Avram's tent was crucial because his spirituality was his 'business'.

Shlomo [Solomon] wrote in Mishlei "If you will pursue it (fear of Hashem) like you pursue money, then you will find fear of Hashem." [Mishlei 2:4-5]. We call consultants and we spend sleepless nights and we spend fortunes to ensure that our businesses are successful. We must apply the same effort to success in areas of spirituality.

At a Siyum (a festive meal made when one completes learning a portion of Torah) we say, "We toil and they toil. We toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward. We run and they run. They run to a pit of destruction and we run to the life of the World to Come."

I once heard an insight from Rabbi Nachman Kowalsky, of Blessed Memory: who cares what 'they' do? What difference does it make that they toil or that they run? Why is that included in the recitation at the Siyum? After all it is 'our' siyum!

The answer is that if we want to know how to be successful in our learning endeavors we must look at how 'they' toil in 'their endeavors' and how 'they' run towards their aspirations in life.

It always amazes me that when seats go on sale for a World Series, people camp out in line for a night or two beforehand to make sure that they can purchase "good tickets". (For 'Rock Concerts' the advance wait in line can be 4 or 5 nights!)

Imagine the best Torah teacher in the world -- whoever that might be -- would be coming to town and tickets would go on sale for that lecture. How many people would camp out a whole night to guarantee that they would receive good tickets to the shiur [Torah class]?

"If like money you will pursue it..." If one runs after spirituality like he runs after money or like he runs after sports or after all of life's trivialities, then he will find fear of Hashem.

This is why the Torah went to such great lengths to describe the process by which Avraham pitched his tent. Location mattered to him, because location would determine the success of his spiritual endeavor.

Our Thirst Should Not Be So Easily Quenched

"And there was a famine in the Land and Avram descended to Egypt because the famine was severe in the Land" [Bereshis 12:10]. Our Sages tell us that there were ten global famines in the history of mankind. The first was in the time of Adam. Pirkei D'Rebi Eliezer records a second famine in the days of Lemech. The famine that occurred in the beginning of Lech Lecha was already the third famine in the history of the world. The tenth and final famine will be that described by the Prophets in the days preceding the coming of the Messiah. "Behold days are coming, Hashem says, and I will send a famine to the land. But it will not be a famine of bread nor a thirst for water but for hearing the words of Hashem". [Amos 8:11]

We are probably experiencing this famine in our time. People are thirsty to hear the word of Hashem.

Pirkei D'Rebi Eliezer notes that this will be the worst of all the famines. The Ponevicer Rav once asked: why is this considered such a terrible situation? Why does Pirkei D'Rebi Eliezer consider this to be the worst of all the ten famines? The Ponevicer Rav answered that when people are experiencing a famine and they are given a scrap of bread, it becomes a holiday for them. When people are dying of thirst and they receive a canteen of water, they become totally satisfied. "Wonderful! This is all that we need!" That is our problem in the famine of hearing the words of Hashem. As famished as we are, we are satisfied with too little! We are satisfied with scraps. We are happy with an occasional shiur here, and an occasional peek into a sefer [Jewish book] there. We quickly feel as if we have learned enough, we are no longer thirsty for the word of Hashem!

This is not good enough. As beautiful as things are today -- with Daf Yomi [a program for studying the entire Talmud, one folio per day] and

Dial-A-Daf [to hear a Rabbi teach the day's folio by phone] and Torah more accessible than ever before, it appears to us to be so much and so plentiful, because we are famished. It seems so great as a result of the famine. But we cannot be satisfied. Torah is too vast and the day is too long to be satisfied with mere "scraps". We have been starving for so long that we have forgotten what it is like to be full. Even a little crumb does the trick. That should not be enough. There should always be room for more.

We Begin Avraham's Prayer By Calling Hashem 'Master' Before the Bris bein ha'Besarim [Covenant Between the Pieces], Avram referred to Hashem by the term spelled out "Alef Daled Nun Yud" (from the root word "Adon", meaning master). The Talmud [Berachos 7b] states that this was the first time in the history of the world that any human being referred to Hashem by the title of 'Master'. There was a Maggid [itinerant preacher] who wrote a commentary on the prayer book and brought it to the Vilna Gaon for his approval (haskama). In his commentary, the author advanced the theory that the reason the Siddur begins with the prayer Adon Olam (Master of the World...) is because the morning prayer (Shacharis) was the prayer originated by Avraham, and the Talmud states that Avraham was the first person to use the term Adon-ai in referring to Hashem. The Gaon commented that the whole commentary on the Siddur was worthy of being published just for the sake of this one insight.

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 346, Trading Terrorists for Hostages. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.
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RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

No Pain, No Gain

Parshas Lech Lecha presents us with the unfolding of Jewish history. Avraham is the first Jew, not the first monotheist. The greatness of Avraham as told to us in Bereishis (18:19) is his capacity to transmit his values and beliefs to subsequent generations, something that his great predecessors including Chanoch, Noach, Shem, and Ever were not able to do.

The Mishna in Avos (5:4) teaches that, "Asarah nisyonos nisnasa avraham avinu veamad bekulam, lehodiya kamah chibaso shel avraham avinu." Our forefather Avraham was tested with ten trials and he withstood them all, to show the degree of our forefather Avraham's love for G-d. Although there are different ways to reckon the exact nature of the ten tests, according to the Bartenura, seven of these tests are found in Parshas Lech Lecha.

What is the purpose of a test? It is clearly for man, as Hashem knows if man will pass the test or not. The Ohr HaChaim in his commentary on Bereishis (3:4,5) asks why Hashem tested the first couple with the snake? The Ohr HaChaim posits the thesis that ultimately it is in man's best interest to be challenged, and pass the test. Moreover, the reward received is commensurate with the energies expended in passing the test, as we are taught in Avos (5:23) "Lefum tzaara agra" - commensurate with the pain/difficulty and struggle is the gain and personal reward. The very term "nisayon" (test or trial) comes from "ness" (banner). Each triumph over a test elevates the individual. Without the test there is no personal advancement or growth. Avraham was not born "Avraham Avinu" - our father, rather he developed and matured his relationship with Hashem by successfully overcoming his natural instincts and living a life dedicated to higher ideals. The Torah teaches us in Bereishis (15:5) that Hashem took Avraham outside to count the stars and say to him "koh yeihi zaracha" - Thus shall be your seed. In addition to the literal

interpretation that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars, Rashi cites the medrash which teaches that Hashem removed Avraham from the natural circumstances of this world and informed him that Avram would not have a son but Avraham would; Hashem would change his name and his destiny. Rashi (17:1) explains the significance of adding the letter hey to Avram's name as signifying Avraham's ability to control and master morally five organs (eyes, ears, and procreation). Avram grows into Avraham. Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldwicht zt"l, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Kerem B'yavne, explains that the pasuk "koh yehiye zaracha" – "Thus shall be your seed" – can be interpreted as saying that so to will your children possess the ability to rise above their challenges and pass their tests. This may be seen from the Medrash Braishis Rabbah (87:8) that attributes Yosef's ability to "flee and run outside" (Braishis 39:15) and pass his test to the merit of his great-grandfather Avraham, regarding whom we are told similarly, "vayotse oso ha'chutsa" – "Hashem brought him outside".

The Gemara Sanhedrin (107a) teaches in the name of R. Yehuda in the name of Rav, "a person should never bring himself to a test", i.e., should not intentionally place himself into a situation in which he will be tested to sin, for King David brought himself to a test and stumbled and succumbed to temptation. David asked Hashem why could he not be included in the opening blessing of the Shemoneh Esray, and amend the blessing to read, "G-d of Avraham, G-d of Issac, G-d of Jacob, and G-d of David". Hashem answered that the three patriarchs were tested by Him and withstood the tests, whereas David had not been tested. David then asked to be tested. Hashem agreed and even told him that the test would be in the area of physical temptation. Though forewarned, that night David sinned with Bat-Sheva.

It is true that every morning we pray "do not bring us into the power of error, nor into the power of transgression and sin, nor into the power of challenge", as we are fearful that we will not pass the test. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l in his Sichos Mussar (5733:6) explains that when Hashem tests an individual, He provides them as well with the ability to withstand the test. Hashem only tests those that can pass. However, when one brings a test upon himself, he is not necessarily awarded the divine assistance needed to pass the test.

We conclude the Hallel with "o'dcha ki anisani" – "I thank you Hashem for answering me". The Malbim understands this to mean, I thank you for the challenges and difficulties you have placed before me, cognizant, as the Ohr Hachayim teaches, that "the greater the physical and spiritual effort to overcome potential impediments to our faith, the greater the reward stored up in Heaven for such acts of faith".

From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY [rmk@torah.org] Sent: October 16, 2002 To: Drasha Subject: Drasha -- Parshas Lech Lecha - Wake Up Call

Drasha -- Parshas Lech Lecha -- Wake Up Call by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Hashem has different ways in which He reveals Himself to mortal men. The Torah tells us that Moshe was special. Moshe's revelation was termed face-to-face. Others, however saw Hashem in a vision. This week the Torah tells us of Avram's vision. It is more than a vision. In fact, it is very animated. "And the word of Hashem came to Avram in a vision, "Fear not, Avram and He took Avram outside and said, 'Count the stars, if you are able to count them... This shall be your offspring'" (Genesis 15:1-5). Avram goes outside and tries to count the stars. Then he goes back inside, and the Torah tells us that Avram has another vision. This one, however, takes on another type of medium. "the sun set and a deep sleep fell upon Avram and behold a dark fear descended upon him" (Genesis 15:12).

It is interesting to note the contrast between the two visions. The first seems dynamic and upbeat. The second begins with a sense of doom. Commentaries explain that the first vision engendered the good news about the growth and future prosperity of Avram's descendants. The second vision predicted the doom and exile of the Jewish people in Egypt. That is why Avram trembled. But it seems Avram trembled as "a dark fear descended upon him," even before hearing the news about

the Egyptian bondage. In fact, the fear set in as soon as the deep slumber fell upon him. Could the sleep alone have precipitated the premonition of fear? Perhaps the deep slumber set off some impending feeling of despair that caused the great fear. How?

Rabbi Shimshon Zelig Fortman was the Rav of Congregation Kneseth Israel in Far Rockaway during the 1940s. During that period, the naysayers had all but discounted any chance of a rebirth of Orthodox Jewry. They had hardly a voice in Washington, they were disorganized and fragmented, and the destruction of European Jewry was almost the last nail in the alleged coffin of traditional Torah Yiddishkeit. Rabbi Fortman had a young son-in-law, Moshe, who had studied in Yeshiva Ner Israel in Baltimore. He would tell his father-in-law how he saw a future for Orthodox Jewry that was filled with honor and power. Their representatives would have direct access to Congress, the Senate, and even the President of the United States. They would influence legislation with their values and fill stadiums and coliseums with Torah assemblies and prayer gatherings! Rabbi Fortman was very concerned about his young son-in-law's ivory-towered dreams. He felt that he the dreams distracted him and he would never accomplish anything. Rabbi Yosef Kahanamen, the Ponovezer Rav had recently come to America to raise funds for his Yeshiva in Israel and was staying by Rabbi Fortman in Far Rockaway. Surely, Rabbi Fortman thought, Rabbi Kahanamen would terminate Moshe's fantasies and teach him about the realities of accomplishment.

Moshe and Rabbi Kahanamen met for nearly an hour. The Rav listened intently and then told young Moshe, "Dream my son. Continue to dream. In fact you can continue to dream as long as you live. But remember one thing. Never fall asleep."

Young Moshe was eventually known to hundreds of thousands of Jews world-over as the man who may have been one of the most influential personalities in the emergence of Torah Jewry today Rabbi Moshe Sherer, the President of Agudath Israel of America until his passing this past year.

Perhaps, homiletically, Avram began to tremble the moment that sleep set in. He understood that great visions of grandeur might occur in a dream. But nothing good could appear if he fell asleep! Because if the visionary falls asleep then all the dreams are lost in slumber! Good Shabbos Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (c) 1997 Drasha, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Torah.org. Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Project of the Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation. Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore, <http://www.yoss.org/>. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 203 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: listmaster@shemayisrael.com Sent: October 17, 2002 To: peninim@shemayisrael.com
PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS LECH LECHA

The woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. (12:15) Pharaoh's palace has been recorded in Jewish history as a place of infamy. Sarah Imeinu was taken there. Years later, her great-grandson, Yosef Hatzaddik, was taken there. Moshe Rabbeinu was raised there. This home was a source of much weeping by Jewish leaders. For a kadosh v'tahor, holy and pure individual to be brought into the home of a heathen, a home which was a center of idol worship and immorality, was a tragedy. How do Chazal perceive this experience? Do they view it as negatively as we do? To respond to this question, let us go back in time to another great Jewish leader, Mordechai HaYehudi, to examine how he reacted to a similar situation. We know that after Haman's diabolical plan to destroy the Jews was thwarted, and he was unmasked, Achashveirosh gave Haman's mansion to Mordechai, who proceeded to move in. It later became a bais hamedrash.

Now, imagine, if you will, the government decides to give away the home of the country's greatest villain, a person whose cruelty is matched only by his evil: Would we expect a gadol hador, Torah giant and preeminent spiritual leader, to accept the offer and move in? The average person would probably spit or throw stones at the house when he walks by, and we

expect a gadol to move in? This was a home that was the source of terror and murder against the Jews. How could a tzaddik live there? Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, asks this question, and consequently, derives from here that apparently the Torah's perspective is different than ours. The Torah teaches us that specifically such a home, which was the source of so much anguish for the Jewish People, should be the place where a tzaddik should now live. The tears that it catalyzed, the pain that it caused, the persecution that it instigated, eventually brought Klal Yisrael closer to Avinu she'ba'Shomayim, our Father in Heaven. It brought home the realization that we have no one to rely on but Hashem. He is our only Savior.

Indeed, Chazal teach us that, Gedolah hasoras tabaas, "Greater is the removal of the ring" -- a reference to the moment Achashveirosh removed his ring and gave it to Haman, signifying his agreement to kill out all the Jews -- "than the admonition of forty-eight prophets," who reproached the Jewish People in an attempt to bring them back to teshuvah, repentance. Yes, Haman's house was a house of evil, but it catalyzed much good. It brought about the return of the Jewish People to Hashem. Pharaoh's palace was the cause for shedding many a tear, but it also was the house that brought Klal Yisrael to look up to Hashem and the consequent Exodus. The Torah looks at the end, the positive results. Perhaps, we should take our cue from the Torah and view life from a different perspective.

And when Avram heard that his kinsman (his brother, Lot) was taken captive, he armed his disciples who had been born in his house. (14:14) Empathy for another person is a character trait we should learn from Avraham Avinu. As soon as he heard that his nephew, Lot, was taken captive, he immediately assembled a small army and risked his life to save him. From a cursory perspective, it seems like the right thing to do. My nephew is in trouble - I go out to save him. Is that what we do? How often do we find a way to rationalize away our responsibility to our fellow man? Avraham had every reason to turn his back on Lot. It is not as if Lot did not ask for this by moving away from Avraham and seeking the lush, fertile land of Sodom. Lot was greedy; he received what he deserved.

Yet, Avraham did not act this way. He sought every reason to justify Lot's move and to risk his own life to rescue him from captivity. All too often the response to the suffering of another is apathy. Whatever happened to the "Jew" in us, as descendants of Avraham Avinu, who could not tolerate an injustice, even if the person on the receiving end probably "asked" for it? As Jews we are all part of one unit - one people - one nation. When another Jew in any part of the world suffers, we should feel it. Life goes on. We hear constantly of Jews suffering throughout the world. Whether it is illness or persecution, they are suffering. We respond with some Tehillim, which we at first recite with feeling. After awhile, however, the emotion dissipates, and the feeling becomes less intense. The Nazis that exterminated six million Kedoshim, martyrs, in the most inhuman manner were, for the most part, considered normal people. They did not look like beasts. For all intents and purposes, they did not act like beasts. They believed that Jews were a subculture and, therefore, a threat to the human race. They were indifferent to the persecution of innocent people, because they did not consider them people. They rationalized away their indifference. Thus, they were able to continue their dirty work without a heavy heart. It begins with rationalization, progresses onto indifference, and ends with downright cruelty. I recently read some poignant, but compelling, remarks made by a German Protestant minister, who, after himself being released from a Nazi concentration camp, said the following: "In Germany: they first came for the Jews, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the gypsies, and I did not speak up, because I was not a gypsy.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Catholic. Then they came for me. And by that time, there was no one left to speak up."

Avraham Avinu taught the world, imbuing his descendants that the empathy we have for another person defines our humanness. Lot was Avraham's nephew. Yet, the Torah calls him his brother. When another Jew is in need, we do not dismiss our responsibility. He is our brother, and for a brother there is no rationalization - we just do it.

In an incredible mussar shmues, ethical discourse, delivered to an audience of elderly rabbis, Horav Yitzchak Aizik Sher, zl, reiterated the theme of kavod ha'briyos, heightened sensitivity to human beings and the

importance of empathy. On a visit to America shortly before Rosh Hashanah of 1939, he addressed the august assemblage. He began by posing a question: "What are you worried about? Yom Ha'Din, the Day of Judgement? You observe Shabbos and Kashrus; your integrity is impeccable; you do not speak lashon hora, slander, of anyone. So what is it that worries you?"

After a lengthy discourse, Rav Sher arrived at his response, "My friends, you are all fine, upstanding Jews, and you do not sin. Yet, you pick up the New York Times in the morning, read that a man was killed, and you continue to drink your coffee. How can you drink coffee when you read that a woman just became a widow and children lost a father? You should faint in anguish, but you do not. Why? Because you do not care how death affects other people. As long as it is not you or yours, you simply continue with your coffee. Yes. You have something to fear on the Yom Hadin, for the Ribono Shel Olam is stricter with the righteous than with ordinary people. On the Day of Judgment, you all have to be careful."

Rav Sher's message is timeless. Are we any different today? We read the paper; we listen to the news; the korbanos in Eretz Yisrael increase steadily, and to us it is a mere statistic. True, we recite Tehillim, but has our lifestyle been altered in any way? Do we continue with our cup of coffee, rationalizing our lack of empathy with our brethren throughout the world - and at home? When I recently asked this question of an individual, his response was, "Things are so bad, I can no longer read the paper with my breakfast; it is so depressing." This person simply has no clue. Are we any different?

Her mistress was lowered in her esteem. (16:4) Hagar's lack of emunah, belief, in Divine Providence, coupled with her insensitivity to others, resulted in her brazenness. She arrogantly called attention to the fact that she was able to conceive and bear Avraham's child, while Sarah, her mistress, despite having been with Avraham for so many years, still had no success in bearing a child. Obviously, from her perspective, she was more righteous than Sarah. Her first reaction was to claim superiority. Never did she allow herself to entertain the notion that there was a reason for Sarah's barrenness. It certainly could not have been Sarah's lack of virtue.

A similar episode occurred concerning Chana, the mother of Shmuel HaNavi. The Navi relates how she came to pray for a son. Eili, the Kohen Gadol, observed the peculiar manner in which she was praying, and he suspected her of imbibing a bit too much wine. He then proceeded to criticize her for her inappropriate demeanor. Her response was that she was bitter and was praying for a son. Immediately, Eili blessed her and wished her well. The rest is history. Horav Asher Kalman Baron, zl, Rosh Yeshivah in pre-World War II Ponevez, asks a penetrating question. Let us imagine that we witnessed this episode. Chana was praying strangely, acting like she was drunk, while her prayer was actually perfect, to the point that it pierced the Heavens and catalyzed Hashem's favorable response. She, nonetheless, at first glance gave the impression of being drunk. Eli, with all of his Ruach HaKodesh, Divine Inspiration, was taken aback by her prayer. He immediately rebuked her behavior and told her to leave. After she explained herself to Eli, should Chana have renounced him as Kohen Gadol? What kind of Kohen Gadol was he if his Ruach HaKodesh did not give him a "clearer picture" of Chana's prayer? At best, his reaction was certainly unbecoming a man of his stature. Yet, Chana overlooked his error in judgment and accepted his blessing with utmost faith.

Rav Baron derives a very important principle from here. Even though at times we might have a question about a gadol's, Torah leader's, behavior, it does not in any way give us license to renounce him. He does not lose his credibility as the result of a single lapse. Regrettably, this is the case in the eyes of so many simple people. As soon as the gadol acts in a peculiar manner or issues a statement that might be a bit out of character, they immediately pounce on him and make disparaging comments.

Such behavior is to be expected of a Hagar - not a ben Torah! As soon as Hagar saw that she had conceived while her mistress, Sarah, had not yet been blessed, she immediately felt that Sarah's credibility had been impugned. Horav Nossan Wachtfogel, zl, supplements this, noting how people often prejudge an individual's character and religious persuasion by his external appearance and behavior. Rarely do they delve into the individual's atzmus, original and independent character. What they see is what they accept as belief. Let us ask ourselves, how many shidduchim, marriage negotiations, have been ruined because of what one saw and did not like? We have to see beyond what "appears", to observe what "is", before determining the nature of a person.

At the age of eight days every male among you must be circumcised. (17:12) The mitzvah of Bris Milah is a critical mitzvah which inducts the

young boy into the Jewish People. Throughout the millennia our people have been willing to sacrifice their lives, so that this mitzvah may be fulfilled properly. Many stories have been recorded detailing the selfless devotion our People have demonstrated to this mitzvah. I recently read a story that poignantly portrays the lengths to which one Jewish mother actualized her perception of the mitzvah of Bris Milah.

It occurred in Soviet Russia at a time when the Communists were in power. Their disdain for any religion was overshadowed by their revulsion of Judaism. They made every attempt to extinguish whatever observance they could. Bris Milah was at the top of their list of mitzvos which they sought to abolish. Fearing for their lives, people adhered to the terrible decree. As usual, however, a few dedicated Jews were moser nefesh, risked their lives, to circumcise their sons clandestinely. The story is about a Jewish mother who, afraid for her life, refrained from circumcising her son. One day, she heard that another woman had a Bris performed for her son. She decided at that point that she, too, would have her son circumcised. The Bris was performed, and they brought the infant back to the mother. Suddenly, she fainted. After a few minutes, they were able to revive her. The people who had assembled to share in this august experience looked at her incredulously and asked, "Why did you faint now? The Bris is over. If you were going to faint due to anxiety, you should have done so before the Bris." Her response should cause each of us to tremble. She said, "When my son was born, I wanted to hug and kiss him, but I could not. Every time I was about to kiss him, I held myself back, reasoning, 'How can I kiss my baby if I have not yet given my baby a Bris, thereby demonstrating my appreciation to Hashem for giving me this beautiful gift?' It was only after the child was circumcised that I allowed myself to kiss him. The experience was too much to handle, and I fainted."

Can we begin to grasp the depth of this woman's resolution and strength of character? She waited for this child and carried him in her womb for nine months. After she delivered a healthy baby, she did not kiss him until she had shown her appreciation to her Benefactor. This is the type of Jew that lives on, the Jew whom the Russians could not break: the Torah Jew.

Hebrew Academy of Cleveland Rabbi L. Scheinbaum
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PARSHAT LECH L'CHA
[BY RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG]

How many times must G-d repeat the SAME promise to Avraham Avinu? In Parshat Lech L'cha alone, G-d tells Avraham FOUR times that his offspring ("zera") will become a nation in a special land ("aretz")! Would not have one divine promise been sufficient? In the following shiur, we attempt to explain the reason for each of these promises and their relation to the events that transpire in the interim.

INTRODUCTION To clarify our opening question, we begin our shiur with a table that charts the progression of events in Parshat Lech L'cha. To do so, we divide Parshat Lech L'cha into its seven 'parshiot' and identify the primary topic of each. Psukim within these parshiot that include a "hitgalut" [revelation] to Avraham (about his future) are noted by a [*] symbol.

PARSHIA TOPIC

=====

12:1-9 Avraham's "aliyah" to Eretz Canaan [*12:1-3,7]
12:10-13:18 Lot leaving Avraham [*13:14-17]
14:1-24 Avraham's victory in the war between the kings
15:1-20 Brit Bein ha'Btarim [*15:13-19]

16:1-16 The birth of Yishmael

17:1-14 Brit Milah [*17:7-8]

17:15-27 The promise of the birth of Yitzchak [*17:19]

As you review the conclusions of this chart, note how almost each 'parshia' contains a "hitgalut" wherein G-d repeats His promise of "zera" & "aretz" to Avraham Avinu. In our shiur, we attempt to show how each "hitgalut" remains unique and relates to the events that precede it.

THE FIRST HITGALUT - BECOMING GOD'S NATION The opening "hitgalut" is the simplest to understand. As we explained in our first shiur on Parshat Lech L'cha, in this first encounter, G-d must explain to Avraham Avinu towards what purpose he has been chosen: "I will make you a GREAT NATION... and through you all the Nations of the world will be blessed..." (see 12:1-3)

In light of His disappointment with the progression of society up until this time, G-d initiates a special relationship with Avraham Avinu in order to 'plant the seeds' of a 'model' nation that will direct mankind toward a more theocentric existence. This backdrop explains G-d's next "hitgalut" to Avraham (in that very same 'parshia') upon his arrival in that land: "To your ZERA [offspring] I shall give this ARETZ [land]" (12:7)

To become that nation, Avraham's family will need to multiply - hence the blessing of "ZERA"; and a certain territory is necessary wherein his offspring can establish this nation - hence the promise of "ARETZ". [As the Parsha continues, note how these key words - "zera" & "aretz" - will be mentioned in almost every other "hitgalut" as well!]

Theoretically speaking, these two promises could have been enough. After all, once Avraham had arrived in the land, he simply needs to give birth to many children, settle the land, and establish this special nation. And if Chumash was a 'fairy tale', that would have been a most likely scenario. However, in Chumash, the "bechira" - to become G-d's special - will not unfold as a singular event, but rather as a long and complicated process. To appreciate that process, we must now consider the thematic significance of each additional "hitgalut" to Avraham Avinu.

THE FIRST SPLIT The next 'parshia' (12:9-13:18) describes Avraham's journey to Egypt and upon his return - the quarrel with Lot. Let's examine the next "hitgalut" which takes place immediately after Lot left Avraham: "And G-d spoke to Avram after Lot had left him: Lift up your eyes from this place and see... for this entire ARETZ that you see I am giving to you and your ZERA forever..." (see 13:14-18)

This promise, although a bit more 'poetic' than the first, appears to be more or less a repeat of G-d's original promise of "zera v'aretz". To understand its purpose, we must consider the contents of the 'parshia' that it concludes. Even though most 'parshiot' carries one primary topic, note how this "parshia" contains two different stories: 1) Avraham's journey to Egypt and subsequent return (12:10- 13:4) 2) The quarrel between Lot and Avraham (13:5-18)

At the most basic level, the thematic connection between these two stories is rather obvious. The primary topic is Lot leaving Avraham. However, his departure (in 13:10-12) was the result of the quarrel (in 13:7-9) that began because of an overabundance of wealth (see 13:5-6) - which they accumulated during their journey to Egypt (see 12:16,20) in the aftermath of the incident involving Sarah and Pharaoh (see 12:1-15).

One could suggest that G-d's promise comes to 'cheer up' Avraham Avinu after this tragic separation from his nephew Lot, whom he treated as his own son. Let's explain why. Recall that Avraham has no children and his nephew Lot has no father. Therefore, Avraham 'adopted' Lot, treating him like his own son. In fact, from the moment we meet Avraham in Parshat Noach, Lot faithfully follows Avraham everywhere. [See 11:27-31, 12:4-5, and 13:1-2,5!]

Hence, Avraham may have thought that through Lot, G-d's promise of "zera" would be fulfilled! [See Radak 13:14!] And even if G-d would one-day bless him with his own son, Avraham could still include Lot as an integral member of his 'chosen' family. Therefore, Lot's decision to leave could be considered a personal tragedy for Avraham.

Nonetheless, one could suggest a deeper connection between these two stories in this 'parshia', relating to a more fundamental theme of Sefer Breishit. **LEAVING AVRAHAM OR LEAVING GOD?** In Sefer Breishit, Lot is the first example of a family member who is 'rejected' from Avraham's 'chosen' family. The stories of others (such as Esav) will follow. As this "dechiya" [rejection] process will become a regular phenomena within the "bechira" process, we should expect that the Torah's description of these events will at least allude to WHY Lot is rejected.

Even though both Avraham and Lot travel together to and from Egypt, the impact of that visit on each us profoundly different. Avraham, as reflected in the incident with Pharaoh and Sarah) saw corruption in Egypt.

His return to Eretz Canaan is inspired with the resolve to preach against such corrupt behavior - to teach morality. Therefore, Avraham returns immediately to Bet-el, and once again calls out in G-d's Name. [See Ramban 12:8 and Ramban Hilchot Avodah Zara 1:2-3!]

In contrast, Lot was impressed by the 'good life' in Egypt; not only by its wealth, but also by its climate - and especially its mighty river. Let's explain how we reach this conclusion.

In an attempt to stop the quarrel between their herdsmen, Avraham had suggested a 'split', i.e. one of them would travel to the right, the other to the left (see 13:7-9). Even though the words 'right' and 'left' are often understood as 'east' and 'west', Targum Unkelos explains that Avraham offered Lot to go either NORTH (left) or SOUTH (right, "ymin" as in Yemen). Considering that they were standing in Bet-el (see 12:4), Avraham offered Lot to choose between the hills of YEHUDA or SHOMRON, i.e. not a complete separation - only a far enough distance to avoid quarrels. Lot did not accept Avraham's offer. Instead, Lot opted to leave the mountain range of Eretz Canaan altogether, preferring the Jordan Valley "And Lot lifted his eyes and saw the entire JORDAN valley, for it had plenty of water... like the LAND OF EGYPT..." (see 13:10).

Lot's logic was quite reasonable. The Jordan Valley had a river, and hence a constant supply of water - in contrast to the mountain range whose water supply was dependent on the rainfall. However, Lot's choice carried spiritual ramifications as well. As Parshat Ekev explains: "For the land which you are coming to inherit [i.e. Eretz Canaan] is NOT like Eretz Mitzraim [which has the Nile River as a constant water supply]..., instead it is a land of hills and valleys - which needs RAIN for water. [Therefore] it is a land which G-d looks after..." (Devarim 11:10-12). Symbolically, Lot's choice reflects his preference for a different life-style. Avraham accepts the challenge of Eretz Canaan - a life dependent on MATAR (rain) and hence - dependent on G-d (see Devarim 11:13-16!). Lot prefers the 'easy-life' in Sdom. This understanding is reflected in the Midrash: "va'yisa Lot m'KEDEM" - Midrash Agada - "hi'si'ah atzmo m'KADMONO shel olam - Lot lifted himself AWAY from G-d, saying, I can no longer remain with Avraham - nor with his G-d." (quoted by Rashi on 13:11) [Sdom is really to the east, therefore the pasuk should say "l'kedem" and not "m'kedem". The Midrash picks up on this to show its deeper meaning. See also the use of "m'kedem" to show a direction away from G-d, as in 3:24 (leaving Gan Eden), 4:16 and 11:2.] Lot's total divorce from Avraham is indeed tragic for he has lost not only a 'son' but also a disciple. Therefore, G-d must now not only console Avraham, but also reassure him that despite Lot's departure (13:14/ "acharei hi'pared Lot") His promise of "zera v'aretz" remains. Indeed, Avraham will yet have a child - a son who will follow in his footsteps as well.

THE FIRST COVENANT The next time G-d speaks to Avraham is in chapter 15 - better known as "brit bein ha'btarim". There again, G-d promises "zera v'aretz" (see 15:18), however in this promise, for the first time, we find the framework of a "brit" - a covenant. To appreciate the significance of this covenant and its 'dialogue', we must take note of the events that precede it in chapter 14. The battle of the four kings against the five kings in chapter 14 constitutes Avraham's first military victory in Land. Yet, it is this military victory that leads us directly into the topic of "brit bein ha'btarim". Note how chapter 15 opens as a direct continuation of that victory: "achar ha'dvarim ha'eyleh - After THESE events, G-d spoke to Avram in a vision saying: Do not fearful... I will shield you, your reward is very great..." (see 15:1-2)

Now there are numerous opinions among the commentators explaining why Avraham was fearful (which are not mutually exclusive). However, there is one point that Avraham raises over and over again in his ensuing conversation that definitely relates to his military conquest, as well as his lack of a son: "...Since you have given me no offspring - v'hinei ben beiti YORASH oti - behold my house servant [i.e. Eliezer] he will be my heir..." (see 15:3)

Avraham realizes that without a son, everything that he has acquired will be taken over by his servant Eliezer. But let's attempt to explain why specifically now he is so upset. In light of G-d's original promise of "zera v'aretz", Avraham's military victory at this time could almost as a divine 'tease'. Avraham realizes that to become the nation that G-d has promised he must eventually secure military conquest of the land. [Had he had children of his own, he may even have opted to 'hold on' to at least some of the land that he had captured.] However, because he has not children, this military victory only heightened his awareness that G-d's promises remained unfulfilled. For a very good reason, Avraham is now worried that maybe he is no longer worthy of G-d's original promise. (see Rashi 15:1)

To support this interpretation, let's note the Torah's use of the verb "yorash" [which is usually understood simply as to 'inherit'] in the above pasuk, and in the psukim that follow: "And G-d answered: That one [Eliezer] will not YO'RASH you, rather your very own son (yet to be born) - he will YO'RASH you... & then He said to him: I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur Kasdim to give you this land l'RISHTAH... Then Avraham asked - b'mah ay'dah ki i'RASHENAH..." (15:4-8)

There is no doubt that "yerusha" is a key word in this conversation, but what does it mean? Throughout Chumash, "YERUSHA" usually implies military conquest, i.e. to secure sovereignty over land. For example, in Parshat Masei G-d commands for Bnei Yisrael to conquer the land is worded as follows: "v'HORSHEM et ha'ARETZ... - You shall conquer the land and live in it, for I have given you the land - L'RESHET otah.. (see Bamidbar 33:50-53, see also Breishit 22:17!)

This background can help us understand the ensuing conversation. First of all, G-d calms Avraham, promising him once again that the time will come and indeed he will have "zera" - as numerous as the stars in the heavens (see 15:5) - that they will one day YO'RESH (conquer) the land. Avraham is assured (see 15:6 "v'he'emin b'Hashem"), however he remains inquisitive - as he immediately asks G-d "b'mah aydah ki i'RASHENAH!" (see 15:8) What is the meaning of this question? It would not make sense that Avraham is asking for divine proof of G-d's promise of "zera"? First of all, the previous pasuk just stated that Avraham believed in G-d's promise (see 15:6). Furthermore, G-d does not answer this question with a proof! So what is Avraham's question? To answer this, we must 'cheat' a little by looking at G-d's answer. Recall once again Avraham's question is: "b'mah aydah ki i'RASHENAH" in response to G-d's promise that He has taken him out of Ur Kasdim in order that he YORASH the land (see 15:7-8). Note carefully how G-d answer to this question begins in 15:13 with the words "y'DOAH TAYDAH..." (in response to "b'MAH AYDAH...")! [In 15:9-12 G-d simply commands Avraham Avinu to prepare a small ceremony in preparation for the covenant that will be defined in 15:18.] Review G-d's answer in 15:13-16, noting how it describes WHEN the YERUSHA will ultimately take place. To Avraham's total surprise, it won't take place in his own lifetime, or in his son's lifetime. Instead, before his offspring will attain YERUSHA of the land, they must first undergo the process of becoming a nation in 'a foreign land', where they will undergo slavery and bondage. Afterward, G-d will save them with great miracles and give the great wealth. Only after some four hundred years will they attain this YERUSHA. [This 'news' comes as such a 'shock' to Avraham Avinu that G-d had to first put Avraham 'to sleep' - see 15:12!]

Basically, G-d informs Avraham that he is only on a 'pilot trip' to Israel. It may be symbolic that he himself just conquered the land, and that he himself had already made G-d's Name known by calling out in His Name. However, the ultimate fulfillment of G-d's original "hitgalut" will only take place some 'four generations' later. Hence, Avraham's question of "b'mah aydah ki i'RASHENAH" is a request to know WHEN (and possibly HOW) this YERUSHA will ultimately take place. [Recall that the Hebrew word KI often means 'when'.] To prove that this is G-d's answer to Avraham's question, we simply need to read the famous psukim in Parshat Va'eyra (see Shmot 6:2-8), when G-d informs Moshe that the time has come to fulfill this covenant: "And I have heard the cries of bondage of Bnei Yisrael... and I have remembered my COVENANT [i.e. "brit bein ha'btarim"], therefore, tell Bnei Yisrael I am G-d, and I will take you out of your suffering in Egypt... [the 'four cups' psukim] and I will bring you to the land THAT I lifted up My hand to give to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and I will then give it to you as a MORASHA [= "yerusha"]!" (see Shmot 6:5-8) Only after the Exodus, will G-d give the land to Bnei Yisrael as a MORASHA, as He promised to Avraham Avinu at brit bein ha'btarim. The implications of this promise are so far reaching that they require an official covenant between G-d and Avraham, as described in final psukim of this 'parshia', i.e. in 15:18-20.

This explains not only the thematic connection between chapters 14 and 15, but also the necessity of an additional promise of "zera v'aretz" in the form of a covenant. Brit bein ha'btarim includes not only the promise of becoming a nation, but also explains the long historical process of how Avraham's offspring will one day become that nation.

LAND - FOR A PURPOSE This order of events that unfolds in Brit bein ha'btarim, explaining HOW Bnei Yisrael will become a nation, is quite significant for it highlights the special nature of our relationship with the land. The histories of all other nations of the world begin in a very different manner. Usually a nation begins when a group of people living in a common land sharing common resources and needs join together for the

sake of common interest and form a nation. In other words, FIRST we have people living on a common land, and then those people become a nation. In contrast, Am Yisrael becomes a nation in a very different manner. We don't begin with a common land, rather we begin with a common goal (or destiny), i.e. to become G-d's model nation. In fact, the Torah emphasizes that we will become a nation in "land that is not ours" [see 15:13].

Technically speaking, our initial bonding is caused by a common plight and suffering in a FOREIGN land. Only AFTER we become a nation, and only after we receive the Torah at Har Sinai (the laws that teach us how we are to achieve our goal), only then do we conquer the Land that G-d has designated for us. In other words, we are not a nation because we have a common land, rather we are a nation because we share a common goal and destiny. To enable Am Yisrael to fulfill that goal, G-d promises a Avraham Avinu's offspring special land.

THE BIRTH OF YISHMAEL The next 'parshia' in Parshat Lech L'cha describes the events that lead to the birth of Yishmael (see 16:1-16). G-d promises that he too will become a mighty nation, but a rather wild one (see 16:12). For some divine reason, G-d's intention is that Avraham's only chosen will be born to Sarah, but only after her lifelong struggle with barrenness. However, before Avram and Sarai can give birth to this special child, G-d must change their names to AvraHam and SarAH and enter into yet another covenant - better known as "brit milah".

BRIT MILAH The next 'parshia', describing the covenant of BRIT MILAH (see 17:1-11), contains the fourth and final promise of "zera v'aretz" in Parshat Lech L'cha. As this brit includes the very FIRST MITZVA that Avraham must keep and pass on to his children, its details are very important. In fact they are so important that their thematic significance has already been discussed in three earlier shiurim.

1) The significance of "brit milah" on the 'eighth day' was discussed at length in our shiur for Shmini Atzeret (sent out a few weeks ago/ see TSC archive for Parshat Tazria). 2) The thematic connection between "brit milah" and "brit bein ha'b'tarim" was discussed in our shiur for Chag ha'MATZOT and on Parshat Bo and on MAGID. 3) The meaning the borders of the Land of Israel as detailed in "brit milah" (and "brit bein ha'b'tarim") was discussed in our shiur on Parshat Masei (see archive).

Therefore, we will not discuss "brit milah" in detail in this week's shiur. Instead, we will make note how this "brit" serves as the introduction to the birth of Yitzchak, and the prerequisite for his conception. The following (and final) 'parshia' (17:15-27) details how Avraham fulfills this commandment. Yet, at the same time, G-d informs him that the "bechira" process will continue ONLY thru Yitzchak, who will soon be born (see 17:15-21); and NOT with Yishmael, even though he also fulfilled the mitzva of "brit milah" (see 17:20-24). [Be sure to note the textual parallel between 17:7-8,19 and G-d's covenant with Noach in 6:18 and 9:8-17; "v'akmal".]

We have shown how G-d's original choice of Avraham Avinu was not in REWARD for his merits, but rather IN ORDER that he fulfill G-d's mission - to become His nation. As this mission is eternal, so too is G-d's choice of the Jewish Nation. As we concluded in our first shiur on Parshat Lech L'cha, we find once again a Biblical theme that stresses our need to focus more so on our RESPONSIBILITY to act as G-d's special nation, and less so on those PRIVILEGES that it includes.

shabbat shalom, Menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN A. Note Yeshayahu 42:5-6 and its context. Relate this pasuk to our shiurim thus far on Sefer Breishit. [Note that this is the opening pasuk of the Haftara for Parshat Breishit (& not by chance!).] Compare with Devarim 4:5-8. Explain what Yeshayahu refers to when he mentions "brit am" and "or goyim".

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MAKING TEA ON SHABBAT BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

Introduction Rabbis have debated the proper way to make tea on Shabbat for more than two hundred years. This debate illuminates many of the issues regarding the biblically prohibited acts of Bishul and provides a magnificent opportunity to gain an appreciation of these laws.

Iru'i Kli Rishon and Kli Sheni The Shaar Hatziyon (318:55) notes that Rav Yaakov Ettlinger (Teshuvot Binyan Tzion 17) and other authorities rule that placing a tea bag into water constitutes Bishul. The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 328:28) confirms this point quite emphatically. Thus, Iru'i Kli

Rishon (pouring hot water from the tea kettle into a glass containing a tea bag) is forbidden since Halacha accepts the opinion that Iru'i Kli Rishon cooks the outer layer of food (Mishna Berura 318:35).

Rav Yosef Adler cites Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik who reported that his illustrious grandfather Rav Chaim Soloveitchik made tea on Shabbat using a Kli Sheni. This involves pouring hot water from a kettle into a glass and then placing the tea bag into the glass. This ruling is based on the Mishna that appears on Shabbat 42, which teaches that one may place spices into a Kli Sheni containing hot water. Rav Chaim believed that tea qualifies as a spice, and thus the rule articulated by the Mishna applies to tea.

The Mishna Berura (318:39) and Aruch Hashulchan (318:28) vigorously reject this approach. In order to comprehend their strict approach we must further explore the issue of Kli Sheni.

Kli Sheni - Theory and Practice Tosafot (Shabbat 40b s.v. U'shma) poses a fundamental question: Why should there be a difference between a Kli Rishon and a Kli Sheni? The sole criterion of whether Bishul occurs should be if the water is Yad Soledet Bo! Tosafot answers that Bishul does not occur in a Kli Sheni despite the water being Yad Soledet Bo. This is because the walls of the Kli Sheni cool down the water. Tosafot explains that water that is in the process of being cooled cannot cook.

The Acharonim debate whether the rule that cooking does not occur in a Kli Sheni applies even in a situation where Tosafot's explanation is not relevant. Tosafot's explanation seems to apply only to liquids held in a Kli Sheni but not to solids (Davar Gush) contained by a Kli Sheni. The walls of the container have the effect of cooling down only liquid contents. Thus, the Maharshal (Yam Shel Shlomo Chullin 8:71) rules that solids can be cooked even in a Kli Sheni. The Rama (Yoreh Deah 94:7 and 105:3), however, does not distinguish between liquids and solids.

Later authorities had trouble resolving this dispute. The Shach (Yoreh Deah 105:8) writes, "I am unable to decide which opinion is the correct one." Accordingly, it is not surprising to find that the Mishna Berura (318:45,65, and 118) and Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 94:32 and 105:20) rule that one should be concerned with the stringent view of the Maharshal. Therefore, one should not pour oil or garlic on a hot potato even if it is in a Kli Sheni. However, one may pour ketchup on a hot potato since the ketchup was already cooked during its processing and the rule of Ein Bishul Achar Bishul applies (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 1:58).

Kalei Habishul Although the aforementioned Mishna permits placing spices in a Kli Sheni containing hot water, the Mishna that appears on Shabbat 145b indicates that one may not place uncooked salted fish in a Kli Sheni filled with hot water. Similarly, one opinion recorded on Shabbat 42b asserts that salt is unlike spices and cooks even in a Kli Sheni. This opinion believes that since salt is easily cooked (Kalei Habishul), it can be cooked even in a Kli Sheni. The Sefer Yereim (102) believes that since we are not sure which items are similar to salt and can be cooked in a Kli Sheni, we must be concerned that virtually any item may fall into the category of Kalei Habishul. Thus, he urges that virtually no food be placed in a Kli Sheni containing hot water. The Tur (O.C. 318), however, challenges the Yereim's expansion of the concern for Kalei Habishul beyond the cases specifically mentioned by the Mishna and Gemara. Moreover, the concern expressed by the Yereim is not even alluded to by any of the great Rishonim such as the Rif, the Rambam, and the Rosh. The Rama (318:5) cites the opinions of both the Yereim and the Tur. He notes, however, that common practice is not to place Challah even in a Kli Sheni due to concern that Challah is classified as Kalei Habishul.

Parentetically, we should explain that although the Challah was baked, people were concerned for the opinion of the Yereim that although we believe Ein Bishul Achar Bishul, cooking may occur after baking. The Mishna Berura (318:42), citing the Magen Avraham, writes that the stringent practice applies to all items in accordance with the view of the Sefer Yereim. Thus, we must be concerned that almost all food items are Kalei Habishul. The Chazon Ish (O.C. 52:19), however, questions the expansion of the concern of Kalei Habishul beyond bread, which is specifically mentioned by the Rama. He suggests that perhaps bread is more easily cooked than other items since it was already baked. The Chazon Ish, nonetheless, honors the common practice to follow the stringent views of the Magen Avraham and Mishna Berura.

Is Tea Classified as Kalei Habishul? The Yereim's concern applies only to items that the Mishna or Gemara does not specifically mention. The Mishna, however, specifically states that spices cannot be cooked in a Kli Sheni. Accordingly, why do the Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan reject Rav Chaim's ruling that tea is a spice and we are permitted to prepare it in a Kli Sheni? Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in Shmeirat

Shabbat Kehilchata 1: note 152) explains that the spices in the Mishna were large and unprocessed. Today, commercially available spices are ground very finely and present a concern for Kalei Habishul. Thus, one might argue that since tea leaves are incomparable to the Mishna's unprocessed spices, they should be classified as Kalei Habishul. Indeed, the Aruch Hashulchan notes that it is observable that tea cooks in a Kli Sheni.

The Kli Shelishi Option - Rav Moshe Feinstein vs. Aruch Hashulchan The Aruch Hashulchan forbids making tea even in a Kli Shelishi. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.C. 4:74:Bishul:18) adopts the approach of a compromise between the Aruch Hashulchan and Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. Rav Moshe writes that he is uncertain whether tea leaves are classified as spices. He therefore rules that one should not make tea in a Kli Sheni, but rather in a Kli Shelishi. This involves first pouring the water from the tea kettle into one glass and then pouring the water into a second glass. Subsequently, one places the tea bag into the second glass. Rav Moshe writes that the same rule applies to making coffee or cocoa on Shabbat.

In order to understand the dispute between Rav Moshe and the Aruch Hashulchan, we must focus on the concept of a Kli Shelishi. The category of a Kli Shelishi is not explicitly addressed in the Gemara or the major Rishonim such as the Rif, the Rambam, and the Rosh. The aforementioned Sefer Yereim, however, specifically mentions the concern that Kalei Habishul can cook in a Kli Shelishi. On the other hand, the Pri Megadim (Eishel Avraham 318:35) rules that even Kalei Habishul cannot be cooked in a Kli Shelishi. The basis for the lenient view is that the Gemara and Rama mention concern for Kalei Habishul only in relation to a Kli Sheni. The fact that the Rama, unlike the Yereim, makes no mention of a Kli Shelishi seems to indicate that the tradition is to not be concerned with Bishul in a Kli Shelishi. On the other hand, the Chazon Ish (O.C. 52:19) argues that there was no mention of a Kli Shelishi since conceptually it is identical to a Kli Sheni.

Tea Essence - Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan The option recommended by the Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan to prepare tea essence before Shabbat involves cooking tea bags before Shabbat, thereby making a tea concentrate. On Shabbat, one may pour the tea concentrate into a Kli Sheni containing hot water. We are concerned for the Rishonim who argue that Ein Bishul Achar Bishul does not apply to liquids only if the heating of the liquid occurs in a Kli Rishon. This is because a Sfeik Sfeika, two lenient considerations, exists regarding reheating a liquid in a Kli Sheni. First, perhaps Ein Bishul Achar Bishul even applies to a liquid, and second, perhaps the tea concentrate does not cook in a Kli Sheni.

Conclusion We see that there is considerable basis for the three primary methods of making tea on Shabbat: Kli Sheni, Kli Shelishi, and tea essence. The good news is that we may drink tea no matter which of these three methods is used in its preparation since each opinion has a serious Halachic basis (see Mishna Berura 318:2 citing the Pri Megadim).

From: Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Lech Lecha

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Highlights of the weekly Torah portion

Parshat Lech Lecha For the week ending 19 October 2002 / 13 Heshvan

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Life in the Fast Lane

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

Very soon, only the speed of light will limit our ability to communicate a thought, a picture, a sound or a sentence from one side of the world to the other, and beyond. The meaning of the word distance has changed forever.

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

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

quite live up to its name. We have breached the last frontier. Distance has become no more than a function of time spent in a chair.

The electron and the 747 have had their impact on our culture in other ways. Our cultural mindset mandates that speed is of the essence. How fast can I get there? vies in importance with Where am I going? Immediacy has become an independent yardstick of worth. How fast is your car? Your computer?

Our age has sought to devour distance and time, rendering everything in a constant and immediate present. Now this. Now this. Now this.

(Interestingly the languages of the age - film and television, computer graphics - are languages which have trouble expressing the past and the future. They only have a present tense. Everything happens in a continuous present.)

All of this makes our spiritual development more and more challenging. Spirituality is a path. And like a path you have to walk down it one step at a time. Your fingers cannot do the walking on the spiritual path. You cannot download it from the Internet.

Everything in the physical world is a paradigm, an incarnation, of a higher spiritual idea. Travel is the physical equivalent of the spiritual road. The quest for spirituality demands that we travel, but this journey is not a physical journey. Many make the mistake of thinking that hitchhiking around the world and experiencing different cultures will automatically make them more spiritual. The truth is that wherever you go, there you are. When your travel is only physical you just wrap up your troubles in your old kit bag and take them with you.

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

Life's essential journey is that of the soul discovering its true identity. We learn this from the first two words in this week's Torah portion. "Lech lecha." "Go to yourself." Without vowels, these two words are written identically. When G-d took Avraham out of Ur Kasdim and sent him to the Land of Israel, He used those two identical words: "Lech lecha", "Go to yourself."

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

We "go to ourselves."

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (C) 2002

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il

Sent: October 17, 2002 To: Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il

Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Lekh Lekha

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Lekh Lekha (Genesis 12:1-17:27) By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Efrat, Israel - Many individuals maintain that if they would only experience a miracle, they would certainly believe in G-d. But, they wistfully conclude as an explanation for their agnosticism, they have been anxiously awaiting that mystical, magical miraculous moment and it has not yet transpired. Nevertheless the daily Amidah prayer which was composed by the Men of the Great Assembly more than 2,000 years ago, includes the following statement of gratitude: We give thanks to You, who are the Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers forever, &. For your miracles which are with us every day and for your wondrous acts and for Your goodnesses which happen constantly, evening, morning and afternoon. Are miracles a rare phenomenon, or are miracles a constant companion? And if miracles are truly such a usual occurrence, then why are there so many agnostics? I believe the answer to this seeming paradox is elusively simple: an individual must be a believer in order for him/her to recognize the miracle. In the final analysis, a miracle similar to beauty is in the eyes of the

beholder. Hence, just as it may be said that for the believer there are no questions and for the heretic there are no answers, so may it be said that for the skeptic there are no miracles and for the religious personality every natural phenomenon is miracle. Indeed, one of the most meaningful blessings the observant Jew recites is the one that he invokes several times each day after washing his hands upon his having performed a natural function: The Source of blessings are You O G-d, Sovereign of the Universe, who has formed the human being with wisdom, having created him/her with apertures and openings that if one which should be open is closed or if one which should be closed is open it would be impossible to exist and stand before You. The source of all blessings are You, the healer of all flesh, who performs wondrous acts. Such is the religious response for an act of urination, which, for the observant Jews, is a veritable miracle!

The fundamental truth that miracle is in the eyes of the beholder can be extracted from what superficially appears to be a textual irregularity in this week's Torah portion. The Torah has informed us that there were four terrorist monarchs who had exercised a stranglehold of fear over the five other nations inhabiting the fertile crescent. And then the despotic marauders made the tragic mistake of forcing innocent residents of Sodom into captivity including Lot, Abraham's orphaned nephew and adopted son. The patriarch springs into military action and wins a decisive victory over the terrorist nations. And the King of Sodom came out to meet (Abraham) after he returned from routing Kedarleomer and the King who were with him. And the King of Sodom said to Abraham: Give me the captives (you freed), and the bounty of the wealth you may take for yourself. (Genesis 14: 17,21). And Abraham demurs from keeping anything, not even a thread or a shoelace, for he never wants it to be said that any human being made Abraham rich!

Now although the two verses I cited describing the encounter between Abraham and the King of Sodom seem to follow each other in logical sequence, anyone looking back to the Biblical text will find that there are three verses which interrupt the natural flow of the King of Sodom's meeting with Abraham and his offer to divide the spoils these verses which enter the scene apropos of nothing and in media res. Verse seventeen tells us And the King of Sodom came out to meet (Abraham) &

Then verse eighteen, instead of continuing to describe the encounter between these two leaders, introduces us to an entirely new personality whom we did not meet before and whom we will not meet subsequently.

And Malki Zedek the King of Salem took out bread and wine, and he is a Kohen-Priest to the Lord on High. And be blessed (Abraham), and he said, Blessed is the Lord on High who owns the heavens and the earth. And blessed is the Lord on High who has given over your enemies into your hands; and (Abraham) gave (Malki Zedek) tithes from everything (Genesis 14:18-20). And then the text concludes: And the King of Sodom said to Abram &

What is Malki Zedek doing in the midst of a meeting between Abraham and the King of Sodom? And who is Malki Zedek? Salem is Jerusalem, (lit. City of Peace), the name Malki Zedek literally meaning the King of Righteousness; Jerusalem is known by our prophets as the City of Righteousness (Isaiah 1:26), and Malki Zedek is identified by the Sages of the Midrash as Shem, the son of Noah. The Ramban suggests that Jerusalem, capital of Israel from time immemorial, was the one place in the world which never forgot the message of ethical monotheism, the lesson of an inviolate humanity created in the Divine image which G-d taught Adam and Eve, Cain and Seth.

One of my revered teachers, Rav Moshe Besdin, suggests that the Bible is here demonstrating how two different individuals can view the very same historical phenomenon and give it two totally different interpretations. Abraham has saved innocent captives, as well as the entire fertile crescent, from four terrorist, despotic nations. For the King of Sodom, it's the lack of military strategy and business goes on as usual: you take the booty, I'll take the freed captives. For Malki Zedek King of Salem it's a miraculous act of G-d, who is to be praised for effectuating this wondrous victory. Indeed, miracle is in the eyes of the beholder. Shabbat Shalom.

A Hassidic Post-Script

A bit later on in the text, after the Almighty promises Abraham progeny, He takes him outside, saying look please at the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them. So shall be your seed. (Genesis 15:5). Most commentaries maintain that this prophecy guarantees that Abraham's descendants will be as innumerable as the stars. But we all know that, at

least up to this point, we certainly can be counted; we are hardly as numerous as the other major religion. The Sefat Emet has another interpretation. Just as counting the stars is a mission impossible, so will the future history of Israel be a mission impossible. From every perspective of history, sociology and anthropology, we should have ceased to exist as a nation shortly after the destruction of the Holy Temple. Every subsequent moment of our very being as a people can only be explained as miracle to this very day!

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>
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MEANING IN MITZVOT by RABBI ASHER MEIR

Each week we discuss one familiar halakic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's commentary Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

FIRST BLESSING OF THE AMIDA

In the beginning of our parsha, HaShem blesses Avram: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will magnify your name; and be you a blessing" (Bereshit 12:2). Rashi explains that the three blessings refer to the three Avot: "I will make you into a great nation", as they say, 'G-d of Avraham'; 'and I will bless you', as they say 'G-d of Yitzchak'; 'and I will magnify your name', as they say 'G-d of Yaakov'. Could it be that they close with all of them? 'And be you a blessing' teaches that they close with you and not with them" (based on Pesachim 117b).

This Midrash comes to explain why only Avraham's name is mentioned in the close of the blessings of the Amida – the very first blessing which concludes "Shield of Avraham". We could imagine that the first blessing would close, "Shield of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov". Alternatively we might think that the second blessing would end describing HaShem's relationship to Yitzchak (for example, "Awe of Yitzchak") and the third His relationship with Yaakov (such as "G-d of Yaakov"), since the first three blessings correspond to the three Avot (as explained in the Beit Yosef OC 112).

What is the meaning of this special additional blessing given to Avraham, the privilege given to him but not to his son and grandson, that a blessing is specially called by his name?

The Prisha explains based on the commentary of Rav Elisha Mizrachi (Re'em) on this verse. The blessing given to Avram begins with the blessing that he will be made into a great nation. All of the following blessings are built on that blessing: "The Holy One, blessed be He, doesn't designate His name on a single person, but rather on an entire nation." In other words, the other two blessings are not merely additions to this blessing, but rather are built upon it. Once Avraham is blessed not merely as an individual righteous person, as Noach was, but rather as the founder of a people, then HaShem will bless and magnify the name of this nation through subsequent patriarchs.

If we were to make an equivalence in our prayers between Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, then it could seem as though each one deserves this special mention because of his own individual level of righteousness. By emphasizing the unique status of Avraham as founder of Am Yisrael, we show that Yitzchak and Yaakov did not merit their special status primarily as individuals, but rather as the continuation of the nation. This concept can help us explain another, similar Midrash which also relates to the expression "Magen Avraham". The Midrash states that Avram was concerned, "Perhaps someone else will come along who will be even more outstanding in mitzvot and good deeds, and his covenant will displace mine!" HaShem's blessing to Avram "I am a shield to you" reassures him that his covenant is specially shielded (Bereshit Rabba on 15:1).

The Sefat Emet asks in the name of the Chidushei HaRim, isn't it strange that it should have been a source of worry to him that a great tzaddik should arise in future generations? We can answer this question with the insight of the Re'em: Another person might arise who on an individual basis was on a higher level than himself. But it would be disastrous if that led to the displacing of Avram's covenant, because his covenant was unique in that it applied to an entire nation, for all time. It is a covenant which "you will keep, you and your descendants after you for all generations" (Bereshit 17:9).

Rabbi Meir has recently completed writing a monumental companion to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch which beautifully presents the meanings in our mitzvot and halacha. Rabbi Meir authors a popular weekly on-line Q&A column, "The Jewish Ethicist", which gives Jewish guidance on everyday ethical dilemmas in the workplace. The column is a joint project of the JCT Center for Business Ethics, Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev; and Aish HaTorah. You can see the Jewish Ethicist, and submit your own questions, at www.jewishethicist.com or at www.aish.com.

From: jgross [jgross@torah.org] To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Lech Lecha WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5763 By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav THE MELACHAH OF KNOTTING

The Sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud(1) do not clearly define the exact parameters of the melachah of knotting, the twenty-first of the thirty-nine forbidden forms of "work" on Shabbos. The description of the Biblically prohibited knot, keshet shel k'yama, a permanent knot, is vague enough to allow for much dispute and debate among the Rishonim as to its exact identity. The debate focuses chiefly on the type of permanency required - must the knot be permanent in its intended duration, in its craftsmanship and quality, or in both? This discussion ultimately leads into its natural extension - the definition of a Rabbinically prohibited knot. Several other issues are debated among the poskim, such as the amount of time the knot must remain knotted in order for it to be considered permanent; the halachic differences between a professional ("craftsman's") knot and an amateur one; the status of a bow, etc.

Although some of these issues are ruled on definitively, others are not. Consequently, there are various opinions as to the practical halachah. Sometimes, the poskim take into account special circumstances-acute physical discomfort, a pressing need to fulfill a mitzvah, etc. To better understand the practical applications of the halachos, we have listed some daily activities which involve this melachah:

SHOELACES: Shoelaces are usually tied with a "single knot" [technically, an "overhand" knot, the first stage of tying shoes] followed by a bow. It is permitted to tie a shoelace in this manner provided that the knot will be undone before 24 hours have elapsed(2). A tight double knot, however, as is often tied on children's shoes to prevent the shoe from slipping off, may not be made on Shabbos even if it will be undone on the same day(3). In a case of acute physical discomfort, there are opinions(4) which allow a double knot to be made on Shabbos, even if the knot will not be undone before 24 hours have elapsed(5).

PLASTIC BAGS: It is prohibited to twist the top of a bag, make a loop, pull the top through the loop and tighten it to form a knot. This type of knot is considered like a double knot which is prohibited. It is also forbidden to take the two top corners of a plastic bag, tie them and make a bow [as if tying a shoelace]. This type of knot is prohibited since foods and other items put into plastic bags usually remain in them for several days(6). There are, however, two permissible ways of knotting a plastic bag on Shabbos: 1) Making a single [overhand] knot only, by taking the two top corners of a plastic bag and tying them [like the first stage of tying a shoelace]. Since such a knot will unravel even without manipulation, it is not considered a knot at all. After the single knot has been tied, one may not take the corners of the bag and tuck them under the single knot, since that strengthens the knot(7) [just as a bow, which strengthens the knot, may not be made over a single knot if the knot will not be undone before 24 hours have elapsed]; 2) Making a slip knot [a loop which is not completely pulled through and does not form a knot] at the top of the bag. This is not considered a knot but a bow.

PLASTIC [or paper] TWIST TIES: Some poskim(8) rule that it is prohibited to twist [or untwist] a paper-covered or a plastic-covered wire twister around a bag and then twist together its two ends. This ruling is based on the view of the Rambam(9) that one who twists two threads together is producing a rope and transgressing the melachah of knotting. According to this view, twisting the two ends of a twist tie together is similar to twisting two threads to make a rope and may very well be prohibited. Although other poskim maintain that the two cases are not comparable and it is essentially permitted to twist these ties(10), it is still recommended by some that, if possible, it is better not to use twist ties on Shabbos(11).

LULAV: It is a mitzvah to tie the three minim - lulav, hadasim and aravos - together. This must be done on erev Sukkos, since it is forbidden to tie any

knot [double knot, overhand knot, single knot with a bow, or single knot with the ends tucked in] around a lulav on Shabbos or Yom Tov. The only solution for one who failed to prepare his lulav in advance is to wind a lulav leaf, etc., around the lulav, hadasim and aravos, make no knot whatsoever, but merely wind around and around so that the hadasim and aravos are "wrapped" around the lulav. The ends of the lulav leaf, etc., may be tucked in. Tucking in the ends is permitted in this case because no knot at all was made(12).

SEFER TORAH: Some poskim(13) rule that it is prohibited to make a single knot and a bow [or a single knot with the ends tucked in under the band] when putting away the Sefer Torah on Shabbos at the Minchah service. Since this knot will remain intact for over twenty-four hours, it should not be made on Shabbos. The custom in most places, however, is to be lenient, and many poskim accept the leniency(14). Another option is to wind the band around the Sefer Torah without making any knot at all, and then tuck the ends under the band, as explained earlier in the case of a lulav which is bound on Yom Tov. Those congregations that use a band with metal clasps or a special band called a wimple(15), avoid this potential problem altogether.

BELTS AND KERCHIEFS: These items may be tied with a knot and a bow, or a loose double knot, since these knots are not normally tightened, and even if they are tightened, they are usually loosened within 24 hours(16).

ADDITIONAL NOTES: 1. Tying a single knot at the end [or in the middle] of a string as is often done at the ends of tzitzis strings [to keep them from unraveling], is considered a prohibited [double] knot, since this type of knot is tight and permanent. 2. It is forbidden to make a knot on top of an existing knot(17), or a third knot on top of a double knot, since the third knot strengthens the entire knot(18). 3. A bandage may be tied around a wound - even with a tight double knot - as long as the intention is to remove it within seven days and there is no other way of securing it [e.g. through clips or bows]. This, according to many poskim, is a case of acute physical discomfort which may be alleviated by tying a knot(19). 4. When absolutely necessary, a non-Jew may be asked to tie a knot - even a tight double knot - provided that the knot is not intended to be "permanent" - to last indefinitely(20).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Shabbos 111b. 2 Mishnah Berurah 317:29. Therefore, when one removes his shoes, he must untie the laces, not merely slip the shoes off. 3 Mishnah Berurah 317:14. See Chazon Ish O.C. 52:17 who refers to this prohibition as a "chumrah b'almah" which has become the custom. 4 See Rama 317:1 who allows the untying of a double knot when in tza'ar. It remains unclear why Rama did not discuss tying under such circumstances. Some poskim suggest that there are not many cases where tza'ar can be alleviated by tying - see Menorah ha-Tehorah 317:8, while other poskim explicitly permit tying a double knot in case of tza'ar - see Aruch ha-Shulchan 317:10. 5 Rama's exact language is "tza'ar". We have chosen to translate that as "acute physical discomfort" based on Beirur ha-Gra's (see Damesek Eliezer) comparison of this tza'ar to the tza'ar caused by an insect bite, which is discussed in O.C. 316:9. Surely, tying children's shoes so that they do not slip off is not an example of such "tza'ar." 6 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 9:16; Rabbi P.E. Falk (Zachor v'Shamor, knotting, pg. 16). 7 Mishnah Berurah 651:11. 8 Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15, note 166 and in Tikunim u'Milumim; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 9:13; Rabbi P.E. Falk (Zachor v'Shamor, Knotting, pg. 16). See also Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 427. 9 Quoted in Mishnah Berurah 317:34. Other Rishonim, however, do not agree that this is prohibited - see Beirur Halachah 314:8. 10 Oral ruling heard in the name of Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Shabbos Home, pg. 223). See Igros Moshe O.C. 2:84 for a possible explanation. 11 Shevet HaLevi 8:55; Harav Y. Roth (Ohr ha-Shabbos vol. 10, pg. 20). 12 Rama O.C. 651:1 and Mishnah Berurah 11. 13 Minchas Shabbos 80:155. According to this view, it is also prohibited to knot a Sefer Torah band in this fashion on Thursday, since it has been untied on Shabbos morning. 14 Ketzos ha-Shulchan 123:9; Tzitz Eliezer 7:29; Harav S.Z. Auerbach quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15 note 178. 15 Used mainly in German congregations. According to Harav S. Schwab (quoted in Knots on Shabbos), this type of band was introduced in order to avoid the issue of knotting on Shabbos. 16 Sha'arei Teshuvah 317:1 according to the explanation of Kaf haChayim 317:23 and Shevet ha-Levi 8:60; See also Badei ha-Shulchan 123:4; Toras Shabbos 317:2 and Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15 note 167 quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach. 17 Maharsham 6:34. 18 Harav S.Z. Auerbach quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15:51. See, however, Tikunim u'Milumim where he modifies his decision and remains undecided. 19 See Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 15:52. 20 Mishnah Berurah 317:25. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 203 Baltimore, MD 21208