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A "GOOD NAME" FOR KIRUV

Rav Pam on the Parashah

by Rabbi Sholom Smith

ואעשך לגוי גדול ואברכך ואגדלה שמך והיה ברכה

I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing (Bereishis 2:2).

Rashi notes that when Hashem commanded Avraham to leave his country, his birthplace, and his father's house, He gave him three blessings to counteract three detrimental effects of long-distance travel: The diminishment of the possibility of having children, the loss of wealth, and the loss of fame. Hashem blessed him that he would become the father of a great nation, would be blessed with enormous wealth and would gain world-wide renown.

The first two berachos are easy to understand. Avraham longed for a son who would continue his life's work of publicizing the existence of a Creator, and who would in turn produce a great nation of believers in Hashem.

Avraham needed wealth as the means of continuing his remarkable chesed activities his hachnasas orchim and tzedakah. All these things required large sums of money to uphold and expand. But why did Avraham need to have a great name? Can it be that Avraham was hungry for publicity and renown, things that seem to be the very antithesis of all that he stood for?

It must be that until the time when Avraham left his birthplace, his name commanded little respect in the eyes of the populace. If anything, he was considered a radical and revolutionary who wished to overthrow the system of pagan belief that most people held. He had destroyed the idols of his father and had defied the mighty King Nimrod (see Rashi 11:28) who had thrown him alive into the fiery furnace of Ur Kasdim. He was Avram the Ivri

(14:13); the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 42:8) says that he was called this because the whole world was on one side, while Avraham alone was on the other side. He refused to practice idolatry like everyone else, instead espousing belief in one G-d. Thus, his name was certainly not mentioned with honor or reverence.

However, now that he was moving to a new land and was beginning a new phase of his life, he needed the blessing of a good name to attract followers and bring them under the wings of the Shechinah. No more do we find Avraham destroying idols or boldly defying people like Nimrod. Now, as the Torah recounts in the following parshiyos, Avraham became a N'si Elokim, prince of G-d (23:6) in the eyes of the neighboring people and was treated with great respect and reverence by many of them.

The Chofetz Chaim comments on a Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (4:17) that teaches that the crown of a good name surpasses even the crowns of Torah, Kehunah, and malchus. The crown of a good name was Avraham's most effective tool in his efforts to bring people to a recognition of their Creator. With Avraham's exceptional trait of chesed, his goodness of heart, and his concern for his fellow human beings, coupled with his warm, pleasant, caring personality, he was able to attract many thousands of people to a belief in One G-d.

In our time the same holds true. In order to be effective in kiruv rechokim (outreach efforts), one must have exemplary middos and true ahavas Yisrael. These traits serve as a magnet to attract people to Yiddishkeit, because the seekers see in him what Torah observance makes a person into, and they wish to be close to him and to emulate his lifestyle. This is the value of a "good name" with which Hashem blessed Avraham and which is a necessity in our times to bring fellow Jews back to their roots.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> Thu, Oct 30, 2025 at 8:09 AM

To: ravfrand@torah.org Rav Frand By Rabbi Yissocher Frand
Parshas Lech Lecha

Avram Was the First to Call the Almighty "Adon Olam"

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1354 – Should I Stay in the US to Take Care of My Parents or Make Aliya to Eretz Yisroel? Good Shabbos!

The Gemara says (Brachos 7b) that from the time the world was created, no one used the term "adon" (master) until Avram came along and called the Almighty "Adon," as it is written "And he said, 'Ado-shem' how will I know that I will inherit it?" (Bereshis 15:8). The Maggid of Vilna wrote a Chumash commentary called Ishei Yisrael. The Maggid of Vilna raised the question, why do the morning prayers begin with the recital of "Adon Olam" (Master of the World)? (Many of us only begin the morning prayers with Adon Olam on Rosh Hoshana and Yom Kippur; however, in virtually all siddurim, Adon Olam is printed right at the beginning of every day's morning prayers.)

The Maggid of Vilna answered his question by citing a Gemara in Maseches Tamid (30a): The morning Tamid offering was slaughtered as early as possible. The Gemara says that when the approximate time for slaughtering the Korban Tamid arrived, the person in charge sent a designated individual to check on the status of the sky. When the time arrived, the designated person proclaimed "Bar-ka-ee" (indicating that the time had arrived). At that point, the person in charge asked: "Has the eastern sky lit up all the way to Chevron?" (which is southwest of Yerushalayim, so the sun usually rises later there). If the answer was in the affirmative, the shechting (ritual slaughter) of the Tamid would proceed. Now, if the sun had already risen in Yerushalayim, why was it important that the sky also be illuminated all the way to Chevron? The answer is that as we start the avodas hayom (daily service) in the Beis Hamikdash, we want to invoke the zechus avos (patriarchal merit) of those who are buried in Chevron.

The Maggid of Vilna says that it is for a similar reason that we begin Shacharis with the words "Adon Olam," because it was Avraham who first

called the Ribono shel Olam by the name Adon. Therefore, to invoke his memory, we begin our prayers by invoking the title “Adon Olam”. The ‘Pere Adam’ Is a Worse Adversary than the Four Animals Mentioned in Doniel One of the recurring themes of Sefer Bereshis is that the actions of the Avos foreshadow the actions of their offspring (Ma’aseh avos siman l’banim). This is almost a scary idea. In effect, Sefer Bereshis is the blueprint for what is going to happen to the Jewish people throughout the millennia. The incidents we read about that we may think are insignificant or esoteric make a profound difference on all of Jewish history. Parshas Lech Lecha is a prime example of the import and the impact that Sefer Bereshis has on Klal Yisrael.

Rabbeinu Bechaye (1255-1340) was a “Rishon” (an early commentator). In Bereshis 21:14, he states that there is no nation in the world who hates the Children of Israel more than the descendants of Yishmael. Much of the tzores that we suffer today are the result of things that happened in Parshas Lech Lecha. For example, in perek 16 pasuk 5-6, Avram took Hagar as a concubine, she became pregnant, and then became disrespectful towards Sora. Avram, therefore, gave Hagar back to Sora and allowed her to do whatever she wished with the concubine. The pasuk says that Sora oppressed her and Hagar fled from her presence.

The Ramban writes that (on a level that is probably imperceivable to us) our matriarch committed some level of aveira (sin) by this oppression of Hagar. Avram was also guilty for allowing it to happen. Hashem therefore heard the cry of Hagar and gave her a son who became a “pereh adam” (wild man), who would torture the children of Avram and Sora with all types of torture. The suffering that occurred, and continues to occur, at the hands of the Bnei Yishmael began in Parshas Lech Lecha when Sora sent away Hagar, her husband’s concubine. According to the Ramban, the punishment for this aveira was the suffering Hagar’s son caused throughout the generations to the offspring of Avraham and Sora.

This is an example of “Ma’aseh avos siman l’banim.” What Avraham and Sora did has an effect to this very day. A second example of this phenomenon appears in perek 17 pasuk 18. The Ribono shel Olam comes to Avraham Avinu and tells him that he would have a son from Sora. Avraham’s almost immediate response was “Lu Yishmael yichyeh l’fanecha.” Rashi interprets: Halevai that Yishmael should live. In other words, Avraham gave a Bracha to Yishmael that he should live. Those words infused Yishmael with the ‘kochos’ that he has to this very day. Now clearly, Avraham did not mean that Yishmael’s descendants should torment Yitzchak and his descendants until the end of time, but those words, spoken innocently, foreshadowed and to some extent determined the situation we are in today.

Rav Elya Svei, zt”l, quotes *Rav Mendel Kaplan, zt”l*, who used to often quote a Zohar (Chelek 2 32:1), which explicitly supports this idea that our suffering at the hands of Yishmael is a direct result of Avraham’s prayer “Lu Yishmael yichyeh l’fanecha.”

There is a third incident in Parshas Lech Lecha that has profound influence until this very day. The Ribono shel Olam gave Avraham the mitzvah of milah. Avraham circumcised himself at the age of 99 and he circumcised his son Yishmael when the latter was 13 years old. The Zohar states “Woe to the world that Yishmael was born and that he had bris milah.” This, says the Zohar, is what gives him a “yad” (hand; handle) in Eretz Yisrael. As a result of the combination of these three incidents: Sora sending out Hagar, Avram saying “Lu Yishmael yich-yeh l’fanecha,” and Avram circumcising Yishmael, we are suffering at the hands of the Bnei Yishmael.

But perhaps the scariest of all is what Rav Chaim Vital (1542-1620) writes. Rav Chaim Vital was the premier disciple of the Ari z”l. Rav Chaim Vital writes that because Yishmael was the son of Avraham Avinu and he had been circumcised, he is called a ‘pere adam’. This is contrasted with our other exiles (as enumerated in the book of Doniel) where the nations who ruled over us are all compared to animals. In addition to the Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman exiles alluded to in the book of Doniel by their animal representations, there is a fifth exile, the exile of Yishmael, which is the exile we are currently experiencing. The reason why it is the

worst of the exiles is because the world power behind this exile is not compared to an animal, it is compared to a person (‘pere adam’). That makes it much worse!

Rav Chaim Vital continues by interpreting a pasuk in Tehillim – Chapter 124:2 – “If not for the fact that Hashem was with us, b’kum aleinu adam (when an adam rose against us).” Who is this adam? This refers to Yishmael, the ‘pere adam.’ Dovid Hamelech, in much of the Shir HaMa’alos, is referring to the time of the future redemption.

When Dovid says, “If not for the fact that Hashem is with us when an adam rises against us, they would swallow us alive...” this refers to Yishmael, the ‘pere adam’, whose evil intentions and actions we know so well. When we look around the world and look at what has been happening in Eretz Yisrael for the last 75+ years, when we look around the world in general and look at what has been happening with Jihad and Islamic fundamentalism, the great powers of the world are thinking “We will have this peace plan or that peace plan...” However, they are spinning their wheels in vain. What is transpiring is not just the typical disputes between countries, which can be solved with peace proposals. This is an epic battle – a battle until the end. This is a battle that won’t be won until the coming of Moshiach.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
 Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion 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. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

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subject: **Rabbi Yakov Haber - The Gifts of Eretz Yisrael and Torah: the Mila Connection**

Rabbi Yakov Haber

The Gifts of Eretz Yisrael and Torah: the Mila Connection

I Two covenants are forged between the Creator of everything and our holy grandfather, Avraham Avinu, in our parasha. In the first, the b’ris bein habesarim, Hashem promises the land of Israel to Avraham and his descendants; in the second, the b’ris of mila, the gift of Eretz Yisrael is repeated implying that it is dependent on fulfillment of this commandment. Why does the gift of Eretz Yisrael only come through the mitzvah of mila? Furthermore, the Gemara (Shabbos 130a), commenting on the verse in Tehillim, “שש אנכי על אמרתך כמוצא שלל רב” – I rejoice over your word like one who finds great spoils” (Tehillim 119:162), interprets that this is referring to the mitzvah of mila. Since the Jewish people have accepted it with great joy (ששון), it is still celebrated with great joy. What is the basis of the specific association of joy and the mitzvah of mila?

The Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria 5) records the following conversation between R. Akiva and the Roman governor, Turnusrufus (somewhat paraphrased):

Turnusrufus asked R. Akiva, “Whose handiwork is more beautiful, G-d’s or man’s?” He responded: “Man’s are more beautiful!” ... Turnusrufus asked, “Why are you circumcised?” He replied: “I knew you would ask that, and that is why I preempted [you] and said to you that the handiwork of man is more beautiful than that of G-d.” R. Akiva brought ears [of grain] and cakes. He said to him: “These are the handiwork of G-d, and these are the handiwork of man... Are these [the cakes] not more beautiful than the ears?!” Said Turnusrufus to him, “If he wanted circumcision, why doesn’t the baby exit already circumcised from the womb?!” Said R. Akiva to him, “Why does the baby exit with the umbilical cord still connected to its belly, and the mother needs to sever it! That which you asked why isn’t [the baby] already circumcised, it is because G-d gave the mitzvot to Israel to purify them...”

What fundamental theological principles are at the root of this debate between the saintly sage, R. Akiva, and the wicked Turnusrufus? Rav C. Y. Goldwicht zt"l, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, under whom I was privileged to study, elucidates these mysteries as follows:[1] One receiving a free gift never truly owns it in the fullest sense of the term, since his debt of gratitude constantly impinges upon a sense of true ownership. By contrast, one who purchases something, even if – through the beneficence of the seller – pays only a discounted price does acquire a sense of total ownership and the item is truly “theirs.” Similarly, there are two kinds of Divine bestowals: one which is just a gift without any “purchase price” and one which is more similar to a sale whereby the recipient, in order to receive the Divine blessing, “pays” for it through his actions. Only the latter will securely remain in the domain of the recipient eternally, and only with regard to the latter will the recipient be granted a true sense of ownership.[2]

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 1:1, also see Berachos 5a) teaches: ... this refers to Hakadosh Baruch Hu who loves Israel, as it is written, “I loved you, says Hashem” (Malachi 1:2). [As a result,] He increases their suffering (perhaps: He raises them with suffering). You find that HKB”H gave to Israel three good gifts, and He gave all of them only through suffering: Torah, the Land of Israel and the World to Come. How is causing suffering an expression of Divine love? Why do these magnificent gifts have to come through suffering? Based on the fundamental concept Rav Goldwicht presented above, he explains that Hashem wishes to transform these gifts into a “purchase” so that they become our eternal heritage, not subject to constant Divine scrutiny whether we are worthy of the gift. The suffering mentioned in this context does not refer to punishment for sins but to soul-wrenching struggles and mesirus nefesh, a demonstration of singular, wholehearted devotion to the study of Torah, to commitment to the land of Israel and to Divine service in general, thus earning our Olam Haba. This form of suffering serves as the “purchase price” through which these gifts truly become ours.

Based on this, Rav Goldwicht addresses the above sources concerning the covenant of mila. Hashem created an imperfect world as proven by R. Akiva to the Roman governor. His goal in doing so was to allow man to partner with Him in the “acquisition” of Divine blessing. Before the soul descends into the world, the Divine radiance it enjoys is incomplete pleasure, referred to by Ramchal as “nahama d’chisufa - the bread of embarrassment.” Circumcision represents the revelation of the inner sanctity endowed to man by his Creator enabling him, through wholehearted, selfless devotion to His Creator’s will (yissurin) to be worthy of Divine bounty. Only through this effort, does he earn his eternal reward and succeeds in transforming the “bread of embarrassment” into a complete expression of Divine pleasure in the World to Come. R. Akiva demonstrated that even the physical world reflects this truth, namely, that only through hard work is man able to transform the initial Divine gifts into items of greater beauty. Our bodies are created in an imperfect state as evidenced by the need to cut the umbilical cord. On a spiritual plane, the mitzvah of mila represents the need, through hard work, to fully acquire the Divine blessings granted to us.

This is also why the mitzvah of mila specifically is associated with joy since absolute joy only comes with something that is truly acquired through considerable effort. “גִּיעַ כִּפּוּךְ כִּי תֹאכַל, אֲשֶׁרִיךְ וְטוֹב לְךָ” – [when] the toil of your hands you partake of, happy are you, and it is good for you!” (Tehillim 128:2).

II Our era has seen the Divine blessing of the return of millions of Jews to the holy land of Israel. The Divine promise to Avraham Avinu is, with Hashem’s kindness, once again on the road to total fulfillment. The Gaza strip, wholly part of the land of Israel (see Rashi to Bereishis 26:2), has always been a seemingly unconquerable section of the Holy Land. Although often settled, including in our recent era, by Jewish communities, currently it is solely inhabited by the descendants of Yishmael. We hope and pray that these last two years of battle, punctuated by the tremendous mesirus nefesh exhibited by tens of thousands of Jewish soldiers – regular troops and reservists – who have left their families for months on end to fight against a

ruthless, cruel enemy in this area of Eretz Yisrael, over a thousand of whom have given their lives and tens of thousands of whom have lost limbs and are otherwise suffering, should serve as a tremendous merit for the Jewish people to even more greatly acquire one of the three gifts given through suffering and allow us to return and settle this part of the Holy Land as well in the near future.

This Thursday, hundreds of thousands of Jews will gather in Jerusalem in a demonstration of prayer and solidarity with the supreme value of Torah study and loyalty to Torah values. To be sure, the context in which this is being done – the imprisonment of Yeshiva students labeled as “draft-dodgers” by the Israeli military – is fraught with controversy revolving around the proper balance between devotion to Torah study and army service as well as, more fundamentally, how religious segments of Jewry should relate to the currently secular State of Israel.[3] Many, even in the religious world, will not be attending, disturbed by the perception of “shirking of responsibility” they perceive in certain segments of Jewry. Rabbi David Fendel shlit”a, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Hesder Sderot, the students of which certainly were at the center of the war in Gaza, will be attending. He beautifully explained his decision by stressing the merit of the prayer by so many Jews, the centrality of Torah study which is not fully recognized by so many segments in Israeli society, and the need to find a solution for a proper framework of army service for those not involved in full-time Torah study. Only further strife and division will be caused by continuing arrests of Yeshiva students.

I humbly add to Rav Fendel’s words my fervent wish that regardless of one’s stance on this prayer rally, that it be used as an opportunity to deeply reflect on two out of the three of the tremendous Divine gifts granted to us by our loving Father in Heaven, Torah and Eretz Yisrael, and to recall Rav Goldwicht’s elucidation why both are only acquired through yissurin, wholehearted devotion, without self-centeredness, with a sense of ultimate mission and connection to Klal Yisrael. May we merit to fully devote ourselves to these two central gifts and see the day when the various segments of Jewry will live together in harmony united by the dual values of our holy Torah and the Holy Land, the blossoming of both of which we have merited to see before our very eyes.

[1] Asufas Ma’arachos, Lech Lecha, “Sasson Hamila”, p. 177 ff. Any errors in conveying the concepts presented by Mori v’Rabi are my own. [2] See the above essay where Rav Golwicht applies this to the study of Torah quoting the midrash concerning Shlomo Hamelech: “אמר רב אחא: תורה שלמדתי ב’אף’,” (Kohes Rabba 2:9). [3] See the eye-opening article, Obfuscation, by Mori v’Rabi, Rav Mordechai Willig shlit”a.

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from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <iraz@klalgovoah.org> date: Oct 30, 2025, 7:02 PM
subject: Tidbits • Parashas Lech Lecha 5786 in memory of **Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt”l**

Parashas Lech Lecha • October 31-Nov 1, 2025 • 10 Cheshvan 5786
Reminders

This Motzaei Shabbos, November 2nd, the USA will move the clock back one hour, shifting from Daylight Savings Time to Standard Time. In Eretz Yisrael, Daylight savings time ended this past Motzei Shabbos Parashas Noach, Sunday morning, October 26th at 2am. The final day of BeHaB is this Monday, November 3rd.

The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is Tuesday night, November 4th. Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Zevachim 48 • Yerushalmi: Yoma 9 • Mishnah Yomis: Chulin 3:5-6 • Oraysa (coming week): Chagiga 18b-20b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 10:4-12 Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn’t speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Summary

LECH LECHA: Hashem commands Avram to migrate from his homeland, with the destination unclear • Avram, Sarai, and Lot travel to Canaan • Hashem promises the Land to Avram’s children • A famine forces Avram to

go to Egypt • Sarai is taken, Pharaoh and his household are stricken • Sarai's identity is revealed, Avram is showered with riches and banished • Friction between the shepherds of Avram and Lot cause them to separate • Lot settles in Sedom • Avram is commanded to traverse the Promised Land • In battles between the four kings and five kings, Lot is captured by the four kings • Avram defeats the four kings, rescues Lot • Malki Tzedek blesses Avram and Hashem • Avram refuses to take from the spoils • Hashem promises Avram children • The Bris Bein Habesarim • After not bearing Avram a child, Sarai gives Hagar to Avram as a wife; Hagar bears Yishmael • Avram is renamed Avraham • Commandment of Milah • Sarai is renamed Sarah; Hashem promises Sarah a son to be called Yitzchak • Hashem will make a covenant only with Yitzchak • Avraham, Yishmael and all of Avraham's household are circumcised.

Haftarah: Avraham Avinu recognized the Creator and spread the message of faith and belief in Him. In this week's haftarah, Yeshaya Hanavi (Yeshaya 40:27 - 41:16) relays this message of emunah and bitachon with words intended to inspire the nation to persevere in exile.

Taryag Parashas Lech Lecha: 126 Pesukim • 1 Obligation 1) Bris Milah, to circumcise a son on the eighth day of life, and a slave (eved k'naani) on the day of birth or acquisition. The Bris Milah is a physical reminder of the lofty status of a Jew.

For the Shabbos Table

"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם לְךָ-לְךָ" Hashem told Avram go for yourself"

רש"י - לך לך. לְךָ-לְךָ. For your benefit and for your good

Rashi explains that Hashem commanded Avram to leave his homeland - as it would ultimately be good and beneficial. Rav Yitzchak Feigelstock zt"l asks, as Hashem sought to test Avram with this directive, why did he advise him of the outcome? Wouldn't it have been a bigger challenge had he not known this?

The Gemara (Kesubos 33b) tells us that although Chanania, Mishael and Azaria chose to be thrown into fire instead of succumbing to the sin of idol worship, if they had been tortured extensively they would have succumbed. Rav Feigelstock explains that Chazal teach us that every nisayon is carefully measured to the point that man may pass the nisayon. For this reason, Chanania, Mishael and Azaria were not presented with such a challenge. Although life throws a person challenges, these are to serve not as an obstacle, but rather to be an attainable means of growth. Hashem was advising Avram that although his nisayon was challenging, it was tailored to be achievable. Ultimately all nisyonos lead a person to his greater good and benefit.

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from: The **Rabbi Sacks Legacy** <info@rabbisacks.org>

date: Oct 30, 2025, 11:23 AM

subject: Our Children Walk on Ahead (Lech Lecha)

written by Rabbi Sacks in 2012

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

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

Nothing has prepared us for this radical departure. We have not had a description of Abraham as we had in the case of Noah ("Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God"). Nor have we been given a series of glimpses into his childhood, as in the case of Moses. It is as if Abraham's call is a sudden break with all that went before. There seems to be no prelude, no context, no background.

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

And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the river (Euphrates), Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nachor; and they served other gods.

Joshua 24:2

The implication seems to be that Abraham's father was an idolater. Hence the famous midrashic tradition that as a child, Abraham broke his father's idols. When Terah asked him who had done the damage, he replied, "The largest of the idols took a stick and broke the rest".

"Why are you deceiving me?" Terah asked, "Do idols have understanding?"

"Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying," replied the child.

Bereishit Rabbah 38:8

On this reading, Abraham was an iconoclast, a breaker of images, one who rebelled against his father's faith.

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

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

Maimonides, Laws of Idolatry 1:2

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

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

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

Gen 11:27-32

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

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

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

Significantly, both the Bible and rabbinic tradition understood divine parenthood in this way. They contrasted the description of Noah ("Noah walked with God") and that of Abraham ("The God before whom I have walked", Gen. 24:40). God Himself says to Abraham "Walk ahead of Me and be perfect" (Gen. 17:1). God signals the way, then challenges His children to walk on ahead.

In one of the most famous of all Talmudic passages, the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Metzia 59b) describes how the Sages outvoted Rabbi Eliezer despite the fact that his view was supported by a Heavenly Voice. It continues by describing an encounter between Rabbi Natan and the Prophet Elijah. Rabbi Natan asks the Prophet: What was God's reaction to that moment, when the law was decided by majority vote rather than following that Heavenly

Voice? Elijah replies, “He smiled and said, ‘My children have defeated Me! My children have defeated Me!’”

To be a parent in Judaism is to make space within which a child can grow. Astonishingly, this applies even when the parent is God (Avinu, “our Father”) Himself. In the words of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik:

“The Creator of the world diminished the image and stature of creation in order to leave something for man, the work of His hands, to do, in order to adorn man with the crown of creator and maker.”

Halachic Man, p. 107

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

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

Hilchot Mamrim 6:8

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

Perhaps childhood itself has the same ambiguity. There are times, especially in adolescence, when we tell ourselves that we are breaking with our parents, charting a path that is completely new. Only in retrospect, many years later, do we realise how much we owe our parents – how, even at those moments when we felt most strongly that we were setting out on a journey uniquely our own, we were, in fact, living out the ideals and aspirations that we learned from them. And it began with God Himself, who left - and continues to leave - space for us, His children, to walk on ahead.

from: RIETS Kollel Elyon from RIETS Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon Substack <riets@substack.com>

subject: **Starstruck: What Abraham Saw**

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

RIETS Kollel Elyon

Oct 29

Abraham’s request was simple and profound: he wanted a true heir, not only a faithful student. God’s response comes with the words that launched, appropriately, countless inspiring speeches: “go outside, look up to the heavens—and count the stars... koh yihyeh zarekha, so shall be your descendants” (Gen. 15:5).

At first glance, the promise seems purely quantitative: you will be many. That is indeed how Rav Saadiah Gaon understands the point; It is the pure uncountability of the stars that is the message.

But many commentaries insist that the verse is not a census; it’s a charge. Quantity is not the dominant quality of “the smallest of the nations (Deut. 7:7)”. Rather, the stars carry a more profound message. Or, again appropriately, messages:

Diversity. Rabbenu Bachya hears in the heavens not only number but nuance: stars differ, and so will Abraham’s descendants. The nation that emerges will not be a single note, but a symphony: different temperaments, talents, and tasks—each luminously Jewish, each refracting a different facet of the same divine light. Perhaps this is why the extremely loyal Eliezer, admirable as he was, could never be the answer; cloning righteousness is not the same as bequeathing a people. The future is built on variety.

Nitzchiyut—Endurance. R. Schwab reads the sky as a timeline. Stars look near but live far; what we see tonight began long ago and continues long after. So, too, the Jewish People: visible in one generation, rooted in many, and pointed toward an as-yet-unseen horizon. The promise is not only that we will be, but that we will endure. Am Yisrael chai is not just a slogan; God’s message here to Abraham is astronomy translated into history.

Holy audacity. R. Meir Shapiro paints a different picture. God says, “Count,” and Abraham begins: one, two, three. God interrupts: “You cannot.” What lesson hides in that brief exchange? Begin anyway. Do not let “impossible” mean “do not start.” Your descendants, says God, will be the kind who count what cannot be counted, who undertake projects larger than themselves, who refuse to be intimidated by the scale of sacred work. It is difficult not to hear the founder of Daf Yomi in this idea: the daily page is precisely such a star-count—daunting, endless, luminous—and it changed the world because someone started with “one,” when so many others sought the project could not succeed.

Transcendence. R. Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht (Asufat Ma’arakhot, VaYera) emphasized another shade: stars are beyond our grasp; they invite us to look up. So, too, the descendants of Abraham: not earthbound, not confined by the gravity of the present moment. The word “koh”—“so shall be your descendants”—whispers toward the Akeidah: “v’ani v’hanar nelcha ad koh.” (Tanchuma, VaYera 23) The family of Abraham reaches toward “koh,” a life measured by a horizon above the horizon.

A new way of seeing. When Abraham is told to go outside, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch hears the Talmud’s statement (Shabbat 156a, cited in Rashi here): “Tzei mei’itzagninutecha—leave your astrology.” Abraham is told to step outside—not only outside his tent, but outside the frame of causality that governed Chaldea’s sky-gazers. Ein mazal l’Yisrael: not “no nature,” but no tyranny of nature. Jews are tasked with living in a world that has weather—and then carrying an umbrella and a covenant. We look up and see order; we look higher and see Providence. The stars are not our jailers; they are reminders that creation itself is already pointing beyond itself.

The next verse seals the moment: “Vehe’emin b’Hashem—Abraham trusted in Hashem—vayachshevehah lo tzedakah.” Rashi reads the credit to Abraham; Nachmanides, strikingly, reads it as credit to God—an act of grace beyond nature. Rav Hirsch notes that tzedakah hovers between tzedek (justice/fitness) and chesed (generosity/excess), and the ambiguity is the point: emunah is both fitting and beyond measure. It is right—and it is a gift.

R. Shmuel Birnbaum sharpens the language: the Torah does not say “vayed,” that Abraham knew; it says “vehe’emin,” that he believed. Knowledge is information; emunah is transformation. One can hold information at arm’s length; emunah is a choice of the heart.

There is a deeper paradox latent here. We prize effort—lefum tza’ara agra, reward corresponds to struggle. Yet, we also aspire to virtue-as-nature: the Maimonides (in Shemoneh Perakim) urges us to shape ourselves so that at least the mitzvot sichliot, the rationally accessible commandments, become our second nature. R. Yaakov Emden wonders: if struggle pays more, why aspire for effortlessness? The answer, presumably, is that “more points” is not our telos; tzelem Elokim perfected is. Our goal is not to remain forever at war with ourselves, but to be remade by Torah until goodness is as reflexive as breathing.

Read our verse again in that light. Abraham’s emunah may already be who he is; the test is no longer a mountain to scale but a stride along a well-walked path. Does that diminish its value? Vayachshevehah lo tzedakah—God, in kindness, counts it as if it were hard, even when love has made it easy. Divine accounting encourages growth: when you become the kind of person for whom the good is natural, God still calls it heroic.

This harmonizes with a different axis of our service. The Ohr Sameach (Hil. Talmud Torah) and the Eglei Tal teach that delight in learning is not an ulterior motive; it is the essence of lishmah. We are not meant to grimace our way to holiness. The ideal is that Torah becomes makom shelibi chafetz—the place our heart longs for—and mitzvot become our joy. And then sechar mitzvah mitzvah is not a prize but a pathway: each mitzvah refines us into someone readier, roomier, more capacious for the next.

Here again the stars are the perfect parable. They are distant and unattainable, and yet even were one to reach one of them, to be within its grasp, the next star would remain just as distant. And yet, they are glimpsed from Earth.

“Count the stars” is a life directive. It trains the eye to see possibility where math sees limits; it trains the heart to love what is right until right is what we love. It invites a people to be variegated like starlight, enduring across centuries, unafraid of scale, drawn upward, and unbound by deterministic ceilings. The Jewish future is not merely numerous; it is luminous. There is still one more mystery in these verses. It is not only counting the stars that was a daunting task; it was seeing them in the first place. A close attention to the text reveals that this exchange between God and Abraham happened during the daytime (see 15:12). How, then, did the process even begin?

The vision of Abraham, as God knew, was capable not only of assessing what is too vast to be counted; it was empowered to perceive that which others never notice to begin with, would never think to pay attention to, both in Heaven and on Earth. Koh yihyeh zar’ekha. May we be worthy descendants of Abraham—diverse and united, audacious and anchored, timeless and transcendent.

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from: OU Kosher <noreply@ounetwork.org>

date: Oct 30, 2025, 8:03 AM

subject: **Halacha Yomis – Kiddush**

QUESTION: Is Kiddush on Friday night a mitzvah de’oraisa (a mitzvah from the Torah)?

ANSWER: The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 29:1,6) writes that there is a mitzvah from the Torah to sanctify Shabbos with words of praise and sanctification (zechiras shevach vekiddush), as stated in the pasuk, “Zachor es yom haShabbos le’kaddesho” (Shemos 20:8 – “Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it”). Chazal instituted that these words be recited over a cup of wine.

R. Akiva Eiger (OC 271:1) writes that the implication of some poskim is that reciting Kiddush over a cup of wine (or a loaf of bread) is a Torah obligation (See also Rashi Nazir 4a.) However, most poskim assume that one fulfills the Torah obligation of Kiddush with the beracha “mekadeish haShabbos” in Maariv. R. Akiva Eiger writes that even by saying “good Shabbos” one fulfills the Torah obligation of remembering Shabbos. However, the Beur Halacha (271:2) argues: According to the Rambam’s definition, the mitzvah of kiddush requires words of praise and sanctification, not merely mentioning Shabbos. If one already davened Maariv (and according to Rebbe Akiva Eiger, if one said “good Shabbos”), reciting Kiddush on Friday night is a mitzvah de’Rabbanan. Nevertheless, the Beur Halacha (271:13, s.v. shel revi’is) writes that one should use a large revi’is of wine for Kiddush Friday night since this mitzvah is rooted in the Torah.

QUESTION: **How much Kiddush** wine is one required to drink?

ANSWER: The Shulchan Aruch (OC 271:13) writes that the amount of kiddush wine that must be drunk is “melo lugmav” (a cheek full) of wine which, for an average sized person, is the majority of a revi’is. If a large revi’is is about 5 oz., then melo lugmav for an average person will be about 2.5 oz. Mishnah Berurah (271:68) writes that if someone’s cheek is very large, he will have to drink more, but the maximum one is ever required to drink is a revi’is. Mishnah Berurah also writes that even if the cup is very large and holds much more than a revi’is, one is only obligated to drink a melo lugmav, even though it is not the majority of the cup. There is no obligation for any of the other participants to drink the wine, even though they were included in this kiddush. However, it is considered proper for everyone present to take a sip of wine to demonstrate the preciousness of this mitzvah.

Ideally, the one who recites kiddush should drink the melo lugmav himself. However, if he cannot, one of the participants who listened to kiddush can do so. Bedi’eved, if everyone drank a sip of wine and cumulatively a melo lugmav of wine was drunk, it is acceptable. Lechatchila, the wine should be drunk within a timespan of “k’dei shtiyas revi’is” (a few seconds).

Bedi’eved, if all the participants together drank the melo lugmav of wine within a timespan of “k’dei achilas pras” (3-4 minutes), it is acceptable.

QUESTION: I often see people make Kiddush on Shabbos day over a **small shot glass of schnapps**. Isn’t this a problem since they are using less than a revi’is (approximately 3.3 oz. – minimum amount for Kiddush)?

ANSWER: The Taz (OC 210:1) writes that if one drinks an entire shot glass of schnapps in one sip, they are required to recite a bracha acharona (Borei Nefashos). Although on other beverages one only recites a bracha acharona if one drinks a full revi’is, Taz maintains that a shot glass of schnapps is equivalent to a revi’is of other drinks. This is because schnapps is strong and most people are unable to drink more than this amount in one sip. The Machatzis HaShekel (272:6) points out that following the logic of the Taz, one should be permitted to recite Kiddush on Shabbos day over a shot glass of schnapps.

However, most poskim disagree with the Taz. The Magen Avrohom (190:4), Chayei Adam (6:18), Mishnah Berurah (190:14), and Aruch Hashulchan (483:3) all require a revi’is of schnapps for Kiddush. If one cannot by themselves drink a m’lo lugmav (most of a revi’is, the mandatory minimum) of schnapps, they may share with others.

Piskei Teshuvos (289, note 88) lists many Chasidische Rebbes (including the Chozeh from Lublin and the Yid HaKadosh) who held that the halacha follows the Taz. They insisted on making Kiddush on Shabbos morning over a shot glass of schnapps to emphasize this point.

QUESTION: May one use **grape juice** for kiddush?

ANSWER: Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 272:2) writes that one may squeeze a cluster of grapes (before Shabbos) and recite Kiddush on the juice. From here we see that freshly squeezed grape juice is acceptable. However, grape juice will ferment very quickly unless it is cooked. For this reason, with the exception of special runs of frozen grape juice, all grape juice is cooked, even those labeled non-mevushal. The term non-mevushal in this context means that it was not cooked to the high temperature needed to allow a nochri to handle it, but it was pasteurized to the point that the yeast and bacteria were destroyed. Shulchan Aruch (OC 272:8) cites two opinions as to whether one may recite Kiddush on cooked wine. The main opinion is that it is permitted, however there is a minority opinion of the Rambam that does not allow. The Rema writes that the custom is to be lenient. Even still, some individuals are careful to only use non-mevushal wine for Kiddush, as per the ruling of the Rambam. Rabbi Genack said that this was the practice of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt”l. He would only recite Kiddush on non-mevushal wine, however for other kossos shel beracha, such as the other 3 cups of wine at the seder, he would use grape juice.

Some poskim (e.g., Minchas Shlomo I:4) write that reconstituted grape juice, which is made from grape juice concentrate (about 20%) and is mostly water (80%), may not be used for Kiddush. Rav Belsky zt”l held that even reconstituted grape juice may be used, since it has the same taste as regular grape juice. All OU grape juice with the words “Kosher for Kiddush” printed on the bottle contains at least 51% single strength grape juice. In this case, everyone would agree that its beracha is borei pri hagafen and that it is fit for Kiddush.

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from: **Michal Horowitz** <michalchorowitz@gmail.com>

date: Oct 30, 2025, 8:08 AM

subject: Lech Lecha 5786: Like Perfume

In Parshas Lech Lecha, the life and times of Avraham Avinu are narrated in great and rich detail. The parsha begins with Hashem’s command to Avraham to leave his past and journey to “the land that I will show you” (Bereishis 12:1). At the age of seventy-five, he begins his journey, along with Sarah, and Lot, his nephew. They encounter famine in the Promised Land and descend to Egypt to save themselves, whereupon Sarah is described to the Egyptian officials as his “sister,” and is promptly taken to

the Pharaoh's palace. After she is released through Divine intervention, Avraham and Lot part ways (Chapters 12-13). We then learn of the first "World War" between the Four Kings and the Five Kings. Lot is taken captive and Avraham goes to battle to rescue his nephew (Ch.14). In the Covenant Between the Pieces, Hashem informs Avraham of four hundred years of exile, and then redemption, and Divine Judgement of the nation that will enslave the children of Avraham (Ch.15). After ten years of living in the land without children, Avraham marries Hagar - as per Sarah's advice - and she conceives. She belittles Sarah, who becomes angry at Avraham, and Hagar runs away. Meeting numerous angels at a well of water, she is promised a child who will become a 'wild ass of a man, whose hand will be in all, and the hand of all against him' (may Hashem protect and save us) (Ch.16). And in the final perek of the parsha, when Avraham is ninety-nine years old, Hashem appears to him and commands him to do bris milah. Hashem promises him a child with Sarah, who will be called Yitzchak, and Avram and Sarai now become Avraham and Sarah (Ch.17). There is so much to learn from the ways of Avraham, who birthed our nation on the powerful foundations of emunah (faith) and chessed (loving-kindness). He never wavered in either realm, always maintaining his belief in the goodness of Hashem, come what may, and his kindness to - and hope for - mankind. And it is these two pillars - faith in G-d and in doing for fellow man - which have become the bedrocks of our nation, Am Yisrael, throughout our long history, and continue today. The first Divine command to Avraham are words that echo throughout the generations, and that shaped our nation: "Lech Lecha," journey to yourself, or journey for yourself (12:1). In his opening words on the parsha, Rashi explains that Lech Lecha means: לֵךְ-לְךָ אֶתְּךָ וְלִטְוַתְּךָ, that the journey from your land (Haran - Bereishis 11:31), from your place of birth (Ur Kasdim), and from your father's (Terach) home (of idol worship), will be "for your benefit and for your good." In the new land, Hashem promised to make him into a great nation, to bless him and to make his name great (12:2). Additionally, there are many Midrashic interpretations into the two words that launched a nation. And each interpretation sheds further light into the personality of Avraham, the tafkid of his and Sarah, and the nation that they founded. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z'l teaches that, "לֵךְ-לְךָ - Go - In Hebrew the suggestive phrase is Lekh lekha - literally, 'Go for yourself,' or possibly 'Go to yourself.' A more midrashic interpretation takes the phrase to mean 'Go with yourself' - meaning, by traveling from place to place you will extend your influence not over one land but many." Rabbi Sacks quotes the following Medrash: "When the Holy One said to Avraham, 'Go - from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house' what did Avraham resemble? A jar of scent with a tight-fitting lid put away in a corner so that its fragrance could not go forth. As soon as it was moved from that place and opened, its fragrance began to spread. So the Holy One said to Avraham, 'Avraham, many good deeds are in you. Travel about from place to place, so that the greatness of your name will go forth in My word' (Bereshit Rabba 39:2). "Avraham is commanded to leave his place in order to testify to the existence of a G-d not bounded by place - Creator and sovereign of the entire universe. Avraham and Sara are to be like perfume, leaving a trace of their presence wherever they go. Implicit in this midrash is the idea that the fate of the first Jews already prefigured that of their descendants, who would be scattered throughout the world in order to spread knowledge of G-d throughout the world. Unusually, exile is seen here not as a punishment but as a necessary corollary of a faith that sees G-d everywhere. Lekh lekha means 'Go with yourself' - your beliefs, your way of life, your faith" (The Koren Shalem Humash with Rashi and Onkelos, and Commentary of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt'l, 2025, p.78). This beautiful Medrash, along with the insight of Rabbi Sacks, is not only a narrative of the life, and works, of Avraham, but should be the beacon of light that guides us all. Every Jew has a responsibility to himself, to Am

Yisrael, Toras Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, to go "with himself," and to carry his beliefs and way of life along with him always, wherever he may be. Just like perfume leaves a sweet scent in its wake and touches its surroundings, so too, we must ensure that the perfume of Torah, and its beautiful way of life, leaves its mark upon those around us. This medrash, and Rabbi Sacks' profound words, evoke the life and works of Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt'l. Like perfume, as he went from place to place - from his Shul in Baltimore to his position as EVP of the OU, traveling weekly from his home to the OU offices in NY, from America to Israel, from offices of politicians to meeting with dignitaries, from seeking the advice and counsel of gedolim, to being the one giving advice and counsel, Rabbi Hauer's life mission was to ensure that he would spread the knowledge of G-d - and His Torah of pleasantness - throughout the world. In connecting positively with everyone he met, in his sage counsel and measured words, with his Torah brilliance understood through the lens of modern times in which we live, yet never wavering from the emes of the mesorah he received from his rabbeim and parents (may his mother, shetichyeh, live and be well), Rabbi Hauer's life was like an open bottle of beautiful perfume that moved from place to place, so that the greatness of his name - always dedicated to the greatness of His Name - became known around the world. The number of lives that Rabbi Hauer impacted is immeasurable, and we are all indebted to him for his accomplishments at the OU and his work with the klal and the prat, the nigleh and the nistar. I received the following email from a woman in Baltimore. I share it with you with gracious permission from the sender, who - when I asked permission to share - replied with: "I would be honored, for anything to honor Rabbi Hauer's memory is fine with me." "Rabbi Hauer was my Rav when I moved to Baltimore a few months before he became EVP of the OU. Someone told me at that time - almost six years ago - it's k'dai to move to Baltimore to have Rabbi Hauer as your Rav. How true that was. I have heard many ba'alei tefila in my eight decades of life. His davening was exceptional and helped me make the connection to HKB"H that is possible through tefila. He davened many times since he [continued to] live here [after his appointment to the OU]. When I heard his voice starting the tefilla, my heart would skip a beat... He davened many tefilos this past Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; he sounded so strong. I can't believe that I will not ever hear his davening, his sermons or his "good Shabbos" again. We lost an adam gadol. Hashem nosien v'Hashem lokach. In his extremely busy schedule, he would come to see me on Purim and give me shalach manot. He knew I was alone and wanted to make me feel special, and he did... He was there for the klal and the prat. I still cannot stop the tears. Yehi Zichro Baruch." As children of Avraham Avinu, we are responsible to continue his mission, וְיִקְרָא שֵׁם בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, and he called there in the Name of Hashem the G-d of the world (Bereishis 21:33). Wherever life may take us, and wherever we may find ourselves, we are the seed that Hashem promised Avraham would become a "goy gadol," a great nation. In a world utterly devoid of the beautiful scents of "perfume", we must strive to emulate - each of us on our own level - the great life of Rabbi Hauer zt'l, and bring the ne'imus of Torah to our fellow Jews, to our beloved Land, and to our world. The path blazed by Avraham was heard by Rabbi Hauer every day of his life: דְּרָכֶיהָ דְּרָכֵי נֶעֱם וְכָל-נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם - her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace (Mishlei 3:17). We must each ask ourselves: do we hear this call every day of our lives? May our ears be attentive, may our eyes be perceptive, may our hearts be open and may our souls long, to continue the great mission began by Avraham and bequeathed to us, his children - the great nation of Am Yisrael. May the memory of Rabbi Hauer zt'l be for an everlasting blessing, and may his great life inspire us all. As he lived, so must we strive to do the same. הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים, בָּאִים ה' אֱלֹקִים, וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעַב, בְּאַרְצִי: לֹא רָעַב לְלֶחֶם, וְלֹא צָמָא לְמִים כִּי אִם לְשִׁמְעָא דְּבִרְיָ ה - Behold, days are coming, says Hashem Elokim, and I will

send famine into the land, not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but to hear the word of Hashem (Amos 8:11).

בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום,

from: Ohr Torah Stone <ohrtorah@ohrtorahstone.ccsend.com>

date: Oct 30, 2025, 10:48 AM

subject: OTS for YOU: Lech Lecha

Haftarat Parshat Lech Lecha: Three Engines of Destiny

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander - President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

The connection between this week's haftara and the parsha is not immediately obvious. The haftara, from the Book of Yeshayahu and focused on a prophecy of love and encouragement, it does contain one passing mention of the patriarch Avraham – the parsha's protagonist. Yet the more striking parallel to the parsha's account of the founding of the Jewish people appears not in that verse, but in the cryptic passage that immediately precedes it, at the beginning of chapter 41 (vv. 1–4):

Hush before Me, coastlands and nations; renew your strength, and then come forward, speak, draw close; let us come into judgment. Who roused the one from the east and called victory to his feet? Who herded nations before him, laid their kings low, and made his swords numerous as dust, his bowshots like chaff in the wind? He pursued them and came through in peace on paths that his feet never walked. Who was it who acted and did this, who called forth generations long before? I, the Lord, am the first, and I shall be, I, with the last who will be.

The reference to this mysterious savior “from the east” has fired the imaginations of commentators throughout the ages. Who this figure might be has been intensely debated, and these different suggestions together reveal a valuable lesson: Multiple forces in history can converge to create the necessary conditions for redemption. It is a process that continues to play out before our eyes today, even during the difficult years since the attacks of Oct. 7 and the multifront threats faced by Israel and the Jewish people, not only from neighboring countries, but from antisemitism globally. The prophet Yeshayahu describes an unnamed individual called from the east by God to achieve victory over numerous nations and bring an era of peace and prosperity to Israel. But is this an event that has already happened? Or one that is yet to come? The original Hebrew text leaves this question open.

Commentators have offered three possible figures for this mighty easterner, each representing a different paradigm of redemption. According to Rashi (ad loc., following Bereshit Rabba 43:3), the prophet is referring to Avraham Avinu. Rashi explains that the Jewish people's oldest patriarch was called out of the east by God to journey to the land of Canaan in the paramount act of faith. Avraham marked military victories over ancient Levantine kings (see Genesis 14), but more importantly, he became a spiritual champion for everyone around him, serving as a model of justice and righteousness that inspired an entire civilization and reintroduced God into the world. As the first Jew, Avraham exemplified an authentic version of chosenness, highlighting the responsibilities, rather than the privileges, of being selected by God.

Ibn Ezra, in contrast, suggests that the savior celebrated in our haftara is in actuality King Cyrus of Persia. This great non-Jewish emperor is celebrated in the Scriptures as a deliverer who conquered and punished the Babylonian tyrants responsible for the first destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the Temple. The text portrays Cyrus, whose empire extended over much of the Near East, as graciously inviting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their shattered homeland. In performing these acts of kindness – knowingly or not – Cyrus was advancing God's plan for the Jewish people's sacred destiny.

A third possibility, found in the Midrash (Shir Hashirim Zuta 2:9), envisions the mysterious figure as the Messiah. Emerging from the east like the rising sun, the Messianic King will usher in a new dawn for the Jewish people and the world. According to this interpretation, Justice will prevail, and the

Jewish people will finally know true peace, spreading the light of God and the Torah to the farthest reaches of the world.

History shows the necessity and utility of all three of these prototypes in furthering the process of redemption. The Jewish people, embodying Avraham's model of moral and spiritual leadership, must choose every day to uphold justice and responsibility. Leaders of other nations around the world, symbolized by Cyrus, can similarly facilitate or hamper God's vision for the world by supporting or opposing the people of Israel in their sacred work. Lastly, the divine hand of God in history, personified by the Mashiach, guides the world, sometimes mysteriously and convolutedly, toward its ultimate purpose.

In our times, we have seen all three paradigms converging marvelously and miraculously in the great and terrible multi-front war that still continues today, even though some relief has been achieved by the recent return of the remaining living hostages from Gaza. We have seen the Jewish people choose, time and again, the path of justice and morality in war, standing as a beacon of what humanity can be and become even in the most difficult of circumstances. These choices are only the latest in a longstanding tradition of moral, intellectual, and scientific leadership that the Jewish people have shown in the world at large, always in the interest of furthering peace and prosperity.

At the same time, certain world leaders have stepped forward, standing up in the face of overwhelming global hate and antisemitism in support of the State of Israel. To be such a leader in today's world is still to move against the tide, but that makes such individuals' decisions all the more impressive and noteworthy. They are modern Cyruses, choosing to be instruments of God in the world and history, and they will be viewed as such by future generations.

And finally, we have seen the hand of God revealed in the innumerable miracles, occurrences, happenstances, and coincidences that have saved so many lives over the past two years and which have made the Jewish future seem more assured now than at any other time in recent history.

Three thousand years have passed since Avraham first embarked on the Jewish mission. And at every moment since that time, the forces of history – natural and human, seen and unseen – have never ceased to advance that mission toward the state of redemption that we all await. Let us pray that the process of salvation that we have begun to witness comes swiftly to its conclusion, and that we will all merit to witness the fulfillment of God's words of comfort that we hear in the Haftara this week: “I strengthen you and help you, uphold you with My right hand of righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

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My Sister Or My Wife? What Couples Are Searching For Today

"Tell Them You Are My Sister:" The Timeless Lessons of the Abraham-Sarah Story

Rabbi YY Jacobson

Dedicated by Josef Aronov Itskovich in memory of his beloved grandfather, Yosef ben Leib, a man remembered for his warmth and kindness to all.

A Chassid related the following story:

The loyalty of Russian soldiers to the Czar was legendary. I once saw a Russian soldier being whipped. His crime? While standing watch on a Russian winter night, his feet had frozen to his boots.

"Had you remembered the oath you took to serve the Czar," his commander berated him, "the memory would have kept you warm."

"For 25 years," concluded the Chassid, "this incident inspired my service of G-d[1]."

A Self-Absorbed Husband?

This week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, relates how a famine breaks out in the Land of Canaan, and Abraham and his wife Sarah head down south to Egypt. As they approach Egypt, Abraham voices his fears to his wife that the Egyptians, notorious for their immorality, might kill him so that they may lay their hands on the most beautiful Sarah.

"Please say that you are my sister," Abraham pleads with his wife, "so that they will give me gifts for your sake and my life will be spared[2]."

This is a difficult story to digest. Abraham, the founder of Judaism, considered one of the most spiritual humans of all time, the person who gave the world the gift of Monotheism and taught humanity the value of kindness, seems to be all-consumed by the fear for his life, and totally unconcerned with the fate of his wife.

What is even more disturbing is Abraham's interest that "they give me gifts for your sake," while his wife would be enduring abuse and humiliation. No less absurd is the fact that the Torah finds it necessary to begin the biography of the father of the Jewish people with this episode, as though signifying that it contained the fundamentals of Jewish faith and practice...

Two approaches can be found among the commentators. The Ramban (Nachmanides, circa 1194-1270) writes that Abraham performed indeed "a great sin, inadvertently." The Zohar explains (Tazria 52a), that Abraham, who knew Sarah's superior spiritual quality, was certain that no harm would befall her. He was only fearful about his own fate.

Yet, as in every story of the Torah, this narrative contains a profound psychological and spiritual message, articulated by the Chassidic masters.[3].
A Tale of Two Loves

What is the difference between the sibling relationship and the spouse relationship? A spouse you choose; siblings you don't choose. Your connection with your brothers and sisters is natural and innate.

The bond between siblings is constant and immutable. Whether you love your brothers or not, he will always remain your brother; you are eternally connected by genes, culture, and soul connection.

Conversely, the bond with a spouse is subject to change and fluctuation; today you are married, but in ten years from now you may sadly be divorced. Yet paradoxically, the love of a sibling – even at its best -- is calm and placid; the love of a spouse, on the other hand, is capable of becoming fiery and passionate. Because the love of a sibling is inborn and natural, it can never fully die, but we also don't get too excited about it. It is part of who we are.

The love of a spouse is something created anew as a result of two separate individuals coming together at a later stage in life. The distinctiveness, rather than the sameness, of the two individuals linked in marriage is what gives the relationship its intensity and drama, feelings that cannot be found even between close siblings. Yet this same quality is also the reason some marriages are short-lived. Passion can flourish, but passion can fade away.

And when the marriage does fail, you fall back on the innate bond that exists among family members, who are, hopefully, always there for you.

Tough Times

The story of Abraham and Sarah is also allegorical.

When one is situated in the Holy Land, a term symbolizing a psychological state of serenity and spirituality, he is her husband and she is his wife. They care for each other and look out for each other in a way that only a husband and wife can. Those are the days when you wake up in the morning and say, "Thank you G-d for giving me such a special person in my life."

But then a famine may erupt, starving your heart and dulling your senses, you end up in "Egypt," which in Hebrew means "constraints" and "limitations." You lose your passion for your spouse, barriers between you are constructed, and your love becomes a challenge.

At these moments, one must remember that his wife is, in essence, also a sister and that her husband is also a brother. Even if you don't feel the connection, you remain connected innately; even if you don't experience the romance consciously, you remain linked essentially. Because the shared bond between a wife and her husband is not only the result of a created union at a later point in their lives, rather the spouse relationship is innate and intrinsic, in the words of the Zohar, "two halves of the same soul"[4]."

A marriage, in the Jewish perspective, is not only a union of two distinct people; it is a reunion of two souls that were one and then, before birth, separated. In marriage, they are reunited.

The relationship between spouses goes beyond feelings. We crave to always be husbands and wives, but sometimes -- for our marriages to survive and thrive -- we must become brothers and sisters. Whether you feel it or not, your wife is one with you, always[5]. Do not allow the loyalty and trust to wane on both sides. Even if there are arguments, difficulties, and hardships, maintain loyalty to each other, like healthy and functional siblings.

Abraham and Sarah taught us that when the relationship becomes challenging, you cease to be husband and wife; now you become brother and sister. You fall back on the innate, intrinsic oneness that binds you in an eternal link.

This, in fact, brings an awesome benefit to a husband. When you are there for your wife, even when you're not in the mood for it, an extraordinary energy of love is later returned to you. That's why Abraham told Sarah that by saying that she was his sister, he would not only survive but would also receive special gifts. Marriages Today

We have been in "Egyptian" exile for a long time. The above-mentioned secret has saved many of us and our marriages during challenging times.

But now, as we prepare to return to our eternal homeland, we are empowered and summoned to cultivate a new posture, one of redemptive consciousness. When the brother and sister can openly embrace each other as husband and wife. Perhaps it is what is happening now for many couples. Yes, we have mastered the art of intrinsic oneness. But we want something more. We want the openhearted bliss that comes from two people experiencing full trust and safety with each other.

That requires the work of exposing our vulnerabilities, pain, and fears, so we can also discover the internal yearning for authentic connection and attachment with our soulmate.

G-d My Sister, G-d My Wife

"A sound! My beloved knocks! Open your heart to Me, My sister, My wife, My dove, My twin (5)." In these stirring words, King Solomon describes the Jew both as G-d's spouse and as G-d's sibling.

There are times when the Jew is situated in the holy-land, inspired and motivated to live a spiritual and G-dly life. Like in a good marriage, the Jew is excited about G-d, yearning to be close to Him and fulfilled by having a relationship with Him. But then come the days when you enter into a psychological "Egypt," where your inner spirituality is numbed, as you are overtaken by self-centered lusts, beastly cravings, negative impulses, and enslaving addictions. Your marriage with G-d seems all but dead.

The key to survival at those moments is to remember that G-d is not only a spouse but also a sibling. We are sacred and G-dly not just because we feel it and we love it, but because a person is inherently a sacred creature, and G-dliness is intrinsic to the human being's very composition. Whether I'm in the mood for it or not, when I behave in a moral and spiritual way, I am being loyal to my true self.

You are holy not because you feel holy, but because you are essentially holy – this is one of the most fundamental ideas of Judaism, expressed in the first narrative about the first Jew.

When the Russian winter threatens to freeze our souls, it's time to recall the warmth provided by G-d as a member of the family. It's time to remember the intrinsic bond that exists between you and your sibling that will never fail. And just with our earthly marriages, we are ready to leave Egypt, and restore the "husband-wife" connection, in which our relationship with Hashem fills our nervous system with bliss and inner wholeness and serenity.[6].

[1] Once Upon A Chassid, p. 217.

[2] Genesis 12:10-13.

[3] Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 20 Lech Lecha. Based on the idea of the Baal Shem Tov (Baal Shem Tov Al Hatorah Lech Lecha), that as a result of descending to Egypt Abraham's relationship with Sarah was compromised, for then he began seeing her beauty as autonomous of the Divine beauty, it is possible to suggest that the explanation in the essay is relevant on some level to the literal story as well.

[4] Vayikra p. 7b.

[5] Song of Songs 5:2.

[6] This essay is based on the writings of the Chabad Chassidic Masters (Or Hatorah Emor, pp. 149-151; Safer Hammamarim 5627, pp. 248-251; Likkutei Sichos vol. 20 Lech, and Tanya chapters 18 and 25).

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Something Powerful is Happening in Israel

by **Jonathan Rosenblum**

Mishpacha Magazine

The most remarkable expression of newfound religious identity comes from the hostages

There is a certain secret to the Jewish People that our enemies have yet to discover, despite over 3,000 years of experience: The more we are beaten, the stronger we become. Already in Egypt the rule was established: "As much as they would afflict it [i.e., the bnei Yisrael] so it would increase and so it would burst

forth..." (Shemos 1:12). When they attack, they drive us into the embrace of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the source of our endurance and our strength. There is a hisorerus (spiritual arousal) taking place today in Israel, not through the efforts of any kiruv organization — though, of course, those organizations are rising to the occasion — but as a spontaneous surge from the Jews of Israel. I watched an interview in which a well-known public personality, who lives in one of the affluent northern suburbs of Tel Aviv, related how her 15-year-old daughter told her late one night that she was going to Selichos. She joined her daughter and found a room bursting at the seams with teenagers. When the Selichos were over, they went to a shiur given by a charismatic young rebbetzin. Again, the hall was overflowing. The mother told the interviewer that there is a great thirst for connection to Hashem among young people. But unlike previous teshuvah waves, today those taking on Shabbos observance, kashrus, etc., mostly continue to define themselves as chiloni (secular) — only now as chilonim who keep Shabbos. There is an entire movement known as "tzitzis without a kippah," that is probably rooted in the tens of thousands of soldiers who put on tzitzis before going into combat. (Even more remarkably, approximately ten thousand soldiers have taken on the mitzvah of tefillin, with tefillin purchased for them by donors from abroad.)

Approximately 15 years ago, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ztz"l told Mrs. Tzili Schneider, the founder of Keshet Yehudi, that her task is not to produce baalei teshuvah, but only to strive that Jews should keep the Shulchan Aruch. He meant that the goal of kiruv is not that the chozrim b'teshuvah should move to Bnei Brak and don black hats. Presciently, Rav Elyashiv was speaking about the present moment.

Mrs. Leah Hecht, the educational director of Keshet Yehudi, shared a story with me of how fast things are moving. She has a friend who is the principal of a Torani school in Rechovot. Recently, an 11-year-old girl in the city told her parents, both secular professionals, that she wanted to go to a religious school. They acquiesced and enrolled her in the school.

On Shabbos Shuvah, Keshet Yehudi hosted a shabbaton in Jerusalem for around 200 people who were learning with chavrusas, but were not yet shomer Shabbos. The only thing they had to commit to was keeping that Shabbos k'hilchaso. Rebbetzin Schneider told Mrs. Hecht to invite this family, even though they did not formally meet the criteria for participation. (The mother did ask for a chavrusa in the course of the Shabbos.)

The next thing Mrs. Hecht heard was that the mother and her two daughters had gone out and purchased modest clothing for Yom Kippur. That led to an invitation to join the second Keshet Yehudi Simchat Torah for Nova survivors, even though, again, the family did not fit into that category.

The currency for bidding on aliyos at these gatherings is mitzvah commitments. Watching from the women's section, the mother and her daughters looked for their husband/father, who had been the least enthusiastic member of the family at the previous shabbaton. They were thrilled to see him holding a sefer Torah, which he had bid upon with a commitment to keep Shabbos.

In addition to the anecdotal evidence, there is quantitative support of this hisorerus as well. Keshet Yehudi, for instance, has added 3,000 pairs of chavrusas over the past two years, and is only one of a number of organizations, including Ayelet HaShachar, involved in creating these partnerships. Keshet Yehudi works with over 30 pre-army-induction academies (mechinot), in which each student has a chavrusa over the course of the year prior to induction and spends at least one Shabbos in a chareidi neighborhood with their chavrusa's family. In the last two years, the number of graduates continuing with their chavrusas even after induction or otherwise involved in mitzvah observance has jumped greatly.

In May, Shuvu, a network of schools combining a religious education with top-level secular studies, conducted a survey of traditional and secular Jewish parents. The results indicated that 70 percent of parents felt a need to strengthen their children's Jewish identity subsequent to the Simchas Torah massacre, with more than a quarter expressing support for an education of equal parts secular and religious studies. The former figure represented a 20 percent jump from a similar survey conducted in 2017.

THE MOST REMARKABLE expression of newfound religious identity comes from the hostages. They had no access to outside sources of information, and their growth wasn't spurred by any external inspiration, though it's fascinating how many of the captives who held fiercely to their Jewish identity and practice in captivity had parents who were on a parallel religious journey.

For the last year, the Israeli public has been bombarded with stories of the sacrifices made by hostages to preserve their Jewish identity. And the impact has been enormous. A guest on Yinon Magal's popular The Patriots show recently described the hottest trend among Israeli youth as becoming shomer Shabbat and attributed that to the stories of the returning hostages: "I'm talking about tens of thousands of teens. What happened is that an entire generation of Israelis has grown up ignorant — the education system failed to provide them with any knowledge of Judaism. And then the October 7 massacre happened. And they saw all the hostages returning and speaking about Hashem. It's affecting everyone!"

Agam Berger, about whom we have written at length, refused to work on Shabbos or eat nonkosher food in captivity, and she inspired three other IDF observers taken captive along with her, to fast on Yom Kippur and not eat chometz on Pesach. At the same time, her parents created a shul in their building in Holon. Her mother, Merav, traveled the country urging Israeli Jews to respond to hostages seized for being Jewish by becoming more Jewish — learning with a study partner, keeping Shabbos, and observing the laws of family purity. Omer Shem-Tov, released at the same time, made Kiddush each Shabbos in captivity with a few drops of grape juice from a small bottle he was given, and would not turn on his flashlight on Shabbos, even when confined in a pitch-black tunnel. He related upon his return how each night he would converse with Hashem, including asking Hashem, kiveyachol, how His day had been. (Avraham Fried has a song where he describes the Baal Shem Tov having similar conversations with Hashem.) Instead of focusing only on his requests from Hashem, Omer took the time to thank Hashem repeatedly for all that he had, even in confinement.

Back in Israel, Omer's mother Shelly was the prime mover from the side of the hostage families in bringing about the multiple Keshet Yehudi shabbatons for the hostage families. She herself took on full Shabbos observance following the first of those shabbatons.

A new spate of stories has now appeared with the release of the last 20 living hostages. Matan Angrest, who received particularly brutal treatment as he was an active soldier at the time of his capture, asked his captors for a siddur, which was eventually provided. A fellow hostage had a full Chumash, and together they recited each parshah together at least 20 times. "Emanah provides a lot of chizuk, (strength)," he explained simply.

Interestingly, his mother has become close friends with Rebbetzin Tzili Schneider since the first Keshet Yehudi shabbaton for hostage families. They speak daily and even traveled together to America to meet with important politicians in New York and Washington D.C. in an attempt secure a hostage release.

Bar Kuperstein, another recently returned captive, learned in the Shuvu elementary school in Rishon LeZion, but was not able to continue on to a Shuvu high school, where traditionally the most dramatic religious development takes place, as his father suffered a crippling injury and Bar was forced to go to work to help support the family.

His mother, Julia, became fully observant 14 years ago, during the period Bar was learning in Shuvu. She was shocked when he requested tzitzis upon his return. "He had emanah and was traditional, but not like this," Julia told Army Radio. But when he saw his Arab captors praying and fasting, Bar decided that he, too, wanted to be close to the Borei Olam. He began reciting Shema repeatedly, davened, and recited a chapter of Tehillim he knew by heart every day. A fellow captive, who was released earlier, related that Bar would awaken his fellow captives between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Yom Kippur to recite Selichos.

Rom Braslavski's captors pressured him to convert to Islam with offers of more food and soap to clean himself. But that only strengthened him. "They tortured me only because I'm a Jew, and that gave me strength. A Jew needs to know he's in a lofty place, that he is different. We need to strengthen our Jewish identity so that Am Yisrael will remain strong and united." Upon his return, he kept repeating, "I'm a Jew, a strong Jew."

While still in captivity, Segev Kalfon fasted on Yom Kippur. Upon being forced by his captors to watch his friend Ohad Ben Ami's release, the experience gave rise to a dream that when he was released, he would stand on stage surrounded by Hamas terrorists and shout, "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad." (Ultimately, Hamas returned the last 20 hostages without these discharge ceremonies.)

Asked by Shai Graucher what message he would like to convey, Segev replied, "Emanah is the basis. Emanah, emanah, emanah — strengthen your emanah.

And Am Yisrael should unite — that's the most important thing." Rather than stressing the bitterness of what he endured, he summarized his experience, "In the darkest place, I succeeded in seeing the light."

Eitan Horn was taken captive along with his brother, who was released earlier. This past Yom Kippur he fasted for the first time. He thought it would lead to his release, and less than two weeks later, it did.

Perhaps as amazing as the efforts of the hostages to build a relationship with Hashem and hold on to their Jewish identity in the most extreme circumstances has been the development of the survivors of the Nova Festival. Two years ago, they were at a rave festival on Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, with a large idol on the premises.

Yet of the survivors who have been participating in Kesher Yehudi events over the past year and a half, 60 have become fully shomer Shabbos, and many others have committed to different aspects of Shabbos observance or learning with chavrusas. Thirty-seven survivors participate in a weekly hilchos Shabbos shiur with Rabbi Yaron Ashkenazi, the chief rabbi of Hadera.

This past Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, for the second year in a row, 150 Nova survivors gathered under the auspices of Kesher Yehudi to dance with sifrei Torah. On Motzaei Yom Tov, they celebrated a hachnassas sefer Torah, with a sefer Torah contributed by Ralph and Leah Shoshana Rieder of Monsey, in honor of their efforts.

When the sefer Torah was initially commissioned, it was meant to be dedicated to the speedy return of the hostages still in captivity and to the memory of friends murdered at the Nova Festival. But by the time of its final letters were written, all the living hostages had returned to their families.

May we continue to witness Hashem's light shine upon His People.

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date: Oct 30, 2025, 8:22 AM

subject: **Rav Kook** on Lech Lecha: Father of Many Nations

Notarikon in the Torah

Abbreviations and acronyms are familiar features of rabbinic literature, but they are rare in the Torah itself. Even so, the Sages observed that a few examples of notarikon (Aramaic for 'acronym') are embedded within the Biblical text.

The first and clearest instance appears in the new name that God bestows upon Abram:

"No longer shall you be called Abram. Your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of many nations." (Gen. 17:5)

With this change, God endowed Abram with a new identity and mission. The name Avraham is short for av hamon goyim, "the father of many nations."

Yet the Talmud (Shabbat 105a) was not satisfied with this simple explanation. While the Torah presents Avraham as a syllabic abbreviation of av hamon, the Sages expanded it into a full notarikon. Each of the six Hebrew letters of av hamon (אב המון) reveals a different facet of Abraham's spiritual stature and influence in the world:

Aleph for Av: you are a father to the nations.

Bet for Bachur: you are chosen among the nations.

Hei for Haviv: you are beloved among the nations.

Mem for Melech: you are a king over the nations.

Vav for Vatik: you are exemplary among the nations.

Nun for Ne'eman: you are faithful among the nations.

Of all the names in the Torah, why should Abraham's be an abbreviation? And why did the Sages choose to expand this abbreviation letter by letter?

Abraham's Dual Influence

It would be a mistake to regard a notarikon as merely a homiletic or mnemonic device. It is, rather, a window into levels of meaning in the text. In addition to a literal understanding of the words, there is a wealth of profound ideas contained within the written text. This is similar to the workings of an acronym, where from each letter we extrapolate an entire word.

What is striking is that the Sages chose the name Abraham for such an interpretation. Why this name, of all others?

Abraham's life-mission was to found the Jewish people. All three patriarchs, the Sages taught, are called "Israel" (Breishit Rabbah 63:3). This is because their primary goal was to establish a nation that would be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Yet Abraham's influence did not end there. He had a powerful impact on all nations, introducing a world steeped in idolatry to the idea of One God.

The Sages analyzed Abraham's influence, noting that it incorporated six qualities, corresponding to the six letters of av hamon.

Thus, like a notarikon, Abraham's influence was on two planes. His explicit life-goal was to establish a holy nation. But Abraham had an additional level of influence, as he disseminated the ideals of monotheism and morality among all peoples.

Six Dimensions of Abraham's Influence

Each letter of the phrase av hamon reveals a different facet of Abraham's influence on humanity.

He was an Av, a spiritual father and mentor to many people. Abraham was a source and model for true knowledge of God in the world.

His teachings were Bachur — chosen and pure, far removed from the jumble of pagan superstitions and myths. And because truth has a beauty of its own, his faith was Haviv — beloved. Its inner radiance drew hearts toward it; people felt its authenticity and were inspired by its moral grace.

Because of his stature and integrity, Abraham was revered as a Melech, a king. "A prince of God are you among us," his neighbors told him (Gen. 23:6). Like a king on the battlefield, he led the fight for truth in a world shrouded in darkness and ignorance, victorious by virtue of the truth of his vision.

He was also Vatik, respected for his integrity and unwavering principles. His Torah was no abstract philosophy. It was a way of life, refining conduct and character alike, elevating the everyday through holiness, morality, and justice. And finally, Abraham was Ne'eman, a man of steadfast faith. As the Torah records, "He believed in God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

Abraham and his revolutionary faith kindled a nascent spark of faith among the nations. This flame of faith continues to illuminate the paths of many nations — a flame that will be elevated in the future into a pure and perfected faith in God. (Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 264)

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Taamei Hamitzvos - Wholehearted Faith

Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by **Rabbi Shmuel Kraines**

Parashas Lech Lecha traces Avraham's rise to greatness and shows us the path to follow. After passing several critical tests of faith, Hashem promised him enormous reward, to which Avraham said, "But You have not given me any children [to inherit whatever reward I will receive]..." Avraham knew that according to the signs of astrology, he was not destined to bear children. Hashem took him outside and told him that his descendants would be uncountable like these stars (15:1-6). On a deeper level, the verse means that Hashem took Avraham "outside" the astrological influence of the stars and under Hashem's direct influence. According to nature, he could not have children, but for Hashem — who is above nature — anything is possible (Rashi).

Later in this parashah, Hashem commanded Avraham to have wholehearted faith (17:1). This meant that Avraham — and his descendants who strive to continue in his path — should not be overly concerned about astrological signs, and they should not seek stargazers and fortunetellers. Rather, even if the astrological signs forecast doom, they should place their trust in Hashem alone (Ramban there and in Teshuvos HaMeyuchasos §283).

We can illustrate this idea with the well-known story of Rabbi Akiva's daughter: Stargazers predicted that she would die on her wedding night, but she was saved by the merit of an extraordinary act of charity she performed by giving her portion of food to a poor person (Shabbos 156b). As heirs of Avraham's legacy of faith, we can override the influences of astrology and other rules of nature through good deeds, prayer, and finding favor in Hashem's eyes.

Much later in the Torah, Hashem repeats the Mitzvah to have wholehearted faith, this time to the Jewish people. The verse states, "Be whole [in your faith] with Hashem, your God" (Devarim 10:10). Rashi there comments that when our faith in Hashem is whole, we are with Him. This means that the more we internalize that He is the ultimate controller of every aspect of our lives, the more we merit to rise above natural influences and be "with Hashem" alone. Similarly, R' Chaim Volozhiner famously said that when a person meditates on the fact that there is none other than Hashem, he is invulnerable to any harm (Nefesh HaChaim 3:12). This precept is central to Jewish life. If a Jew becomes ill or experiences other types of suffering, he is meant to recognize that Hashem is disciplining him and prodding him to correct his conduct (Berachos 5a). Before taking medication, for

example, he should first pray that it works, recognizing that Hashem is the ultimate Healer (Mishnah Berurah 230:6). Otherwise, there is a concern that he may place his trust at least partly in the doctor and medicine — which is a violation of the Mitzvah to place one's trust entirely in Hashem. With a short prayer, a person reminds himself of Who is ultimately in control; this recognition alone can be enough to merit relief. One should similarly involve Hashem in all aspects of his life by praying for all of his needs and thanking Him after having received them (see Shaar HaTziyun, ibid., and Berachos 9:5)

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subject: Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha - Environmental Hazard

“And it occurred, as he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai...” (12:11)

As they approached Mitzrayim, Avraham asked Sarah to claim that she was his sister. This was to protect him from the Egyptians who might lust after Sarah, and kill him if they were to know that he was her husband.¹

Why is it necessary for us to know that this discussion transpired as Avraham and Sarah drew close to their destination? Why, in fact, was an issue of such gravity not discussed prior to their departure from Eretz Canaan? The Midrash explains that as they neared their destination, Avraham became aware of Sarah's exceptional beauty.² Why is this the juncture where Avraham becomes aware of his wife's beauty?

Mitzrayim was a country notorious for the immoral and lascivious behavior of its inhabitants.³ Generally, an individual living in such a society would be affected, even if he himself would not indulge in any perverse behavior. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us that although a tzaddik of Avraham's caliber would not be dragged down by the immorality of the society where he lives, the influence of the society does have a subtle effect on him. In Avraham's case, this manifested itself in his becoming aware of his wife's beauty.

1.12:11 2.Tanchuma 5 3.20:15

It's Not The Thought That Counts

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

Chazal identify the “fugitive” as Og, the king of Bashan, who had escaped the onslaught of the four kings and fled to Avraham to inform him that his nephew Lot had been captured.¹ The Midrash relates that for this deed, Og was blessed with longevity. At the same time, the Midrash reveals that Og's true intentions were malevolent; he hoped that Avraham would pursue Lot's captors and be killed, allowing him to marry Sarah.²

In Parshas Chukas, we find that Hashem reassures Moshe, telling him not to fear, for Bnei Yisroel will successfully defeat Og and his nation.³ The Midrash explains that Moshe feared that the merit of Og's service to Avraham would protect him against Bnei Yisroel.⁴ It is difficult to understand Moshe's fear, in light of the evil intent which was the impetus for Og's actions.

Human nature is such, that we find it difficult to express gratitude for benefits we have received from others. One technique we employ to avoid expressing gratitude, is to focus on the intent of the benefactor. We rationalize that if the intent of the benefactor was a selfish one, then the act was done for his benefit and not ours. Therefore, we are exempt from showing gratitude. Chazal are teaching us that “hakaras hatov” – acknowledging the benefit we have received, is not dependent upon the intent of the benefactor, rather the benefit which has been provided. The lesson can be especially helpful in the relationship between a child and his parents. The child should focus on the benefit he has received from his parents, the gift of life being the ultimate benefit, and not on their motivations.

1.Bereishis Rabbah 42:8 2. Ibid 3.Bamidbar 32:33 4.Tanchuma ibid.

Badge Of Honor

“if so much as a thread to a shoe strap; nor shall I take anything of yours! So you shall not say ‘It is I who made Avram rich.’” (14:23)

After Avraham defeated the largest army ever amassed and recaptured all the spoils and captives from the four kings,¹ the Torah records a dialogue between Avraham and the king of Sodom in which the king offered to divide the spoils with Avraham; Avraham would take the possessions, while the king of Sodom would receive the freed captives. Avraham rejected this proposal with the statement, “If so much as a thread to a shoe strap; nor shall I take anything of yours! So you shall not say ‘It is I who made Avram rich.’”² The Talmud teaches that for having refused to accept even a thread or a shoe strap, Avraham's

children merited to receive two precepts, Tzitzis for the thread and Tefillin for the strap.³ Aside from the obvious play on words, how is Avraham's reward commensurate with his actions?

Rashi explains that Avraham's actions were particularly meritorious, for he did not want to benefit from stolen property.⁴ The Maharsha questions the claim that this was stolen property, for halachically the spoils of war are the legal possession of the victor.⁵

Although Avraham was legally entitled to the spoils, it is clear that this was not the king of Sodom's perception. The mere fact that he offered to divide the bounty with Avraham implies that he felt he had rights over these possessions, and that he was making a magnanimous gesture. What the Sages find meritorious in Avraham's actions is the fact that he dealt with the king of Sodom within the context of the king's perception. According to the king's perception, if Avraham were to take everything by force, he would be a gazlan, a thief. As Hashem's representative, Avraham could not allow for the perception that he had either stolen his fortune or that the money had been given to him as a mortal's magnanimous act, for this would detract from Hashem's honor. Avraham showed that in order to protect Hashem's honor, he was willing to deal with people based upon the reality which they had created for themselves, even though the basis for their position was unfounded.

This characteristic is rewarded with Tzitzis and Tefillin for the following reason: The same section in the Talmud that teaches that Avraham was rewarded with the mitzva of Tefillin, explains that when a Jew wears Tefillin, he instills awe in all who see him.⁶ This is not because they fear the person himself, rather they sense the presence of a Higher Authority who is being represented by this individual. We could compare this to a policeman who wears a badge; one does not fear the man himself, rather the institution which he represents. Tefillin are the badge that represents Hashem's presence. It is interesting to note that the Tefillin are worn on areas generally designated for displaying a badge, the sleeve and the cap. Concerning Tzitzis, the Talmud teaches a similar concept. A Jew wearing Tzitzis is akin to a slave who wears the insignia of his master on his garment.⁷ These two mitzvos reflect the Jew's designation as Hashem's representative and facilitate the perception of Hashem's presence in this world.

Avraham showed the ability to accept someone else's perception of reality. Therefore, he was a fitting candidate for the precepts which allow Hashem's presence to be perceived. The reason is as follows: Egocentricity prevents a person from seeing a differing point of view. Avraham displayed a complete lack of egocentricity, which is the cornerstone for the acceptance of Hashem. All too often we require that others live within our reality, especially if we consider their position to be incorrect. Although it meant giving up that which was rightly his, Avraham dealt with the king of Sodom within the king's own reality, in order to preserve Hashem's honor in this world.

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