

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON LECH LECHA - 5760

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SHIUR HARAV SOLOVEICHIK ZT"L ON PARSHAS LECH
LECHA (Shiur date: 1955)

Avraham is portrayed as the great personality of Jewish History. The previous 2 parshios are a preamble to Avraham, the other patriarchs and the birth of Knesses Yisrael. Avraham's life culminated at the time that he consummated a covenant with Hashem. He did this twice. The covenant was consummated many years before the birth of Isaac. The sole purpose for the birth of Isaac was to carry on the Bris. There are 2 covenants in this parsha. The first is Bris Bayn Habesarim. The Torah says Bayom Hahu, on that day Hashem made a covenant with Avram to give him and his children the land of. At the end of the Parsha there is another covenant, which included Bris Milah, and again the gift of the land to Avraham and his children is repeated. [It is interesting to note that at the Akeidah there was no new Bris, rather the original Bris was reaffirmed.] Hashem commands Avraham to include Ishmael and circumcise him, but the covenant will not be passed to his children.

The first covenant very clearly revolved around the gift of the land to Avraham. Why not have only one Krisas Bris? When thinking about the granting of the land to the Jewish People, we very often overlook the second Bris with Avraham and instead focus on the Bris Bayn Habesarim. Another question is why separate the 2 covenants with the story of Ishmael and Hagar? Why not juxtapose the 2 covenants immediately next to each other?

The Rav answered the first question that Bris Bayn Habesarim says that Hashem gave the land to the children of Avraham. It does not say for how long. The first Bris did not guarantee the eternal ownership of the land. The second Bris says that it is given to the Jewish Nation forever.

Jewish History is very perplexing to one who attempts to understand the continuity of the Jewish Nation. How were we able to survive tragedy and holocaust throughout the millennia? In fact there is a doubly fascinating aspect here. The first is based on the Bris Bayn Habesarim, that Eretz Yisrael has waited for us. The Midrash says Vhashimosi Ani Es Haaretz (And I will lay waste to the land), this is a good thing for Bnay Yisrael, for it means that the enemies of Israel will derive no benefit from the land and would never conquer it and claim it. If one would analyze the colonial periods of the 1600s through the 1800s we find that major portions of the world were colonized. The Americas, Australia etc. The non-Jewish world excelled in their colonizing ability. However many countries attempted to colonize Eretz Yisrael. Germany which was well known as being expert colonizers failed to colonize Eretz Yisrael. It is interesting to note that many of the nations around Israel were much more developed than Eretz Yisrael through this period. Egypt and Iraq were much more developed than Eretz Yisrael. Eretz Yisrael remained untamed and barren, a land of sand, stones and sea. Had the land been colonized it would have been much more difficult for the Jews to return. Eretz Yisrael is Kolet, absorbs, its inhabitants. Eretz Yisrael also has the ability to expel, L'Hakey, those that it rejects.

The Beis Halevi says that when Jeremiah says Al Har Tzion Sheshamem Shualim Hilcu Bo, Atah Hashem Lolam Teshev it implies a blessing for the Jewish people. Many wanted to settle the land but were unsuccessful. This is a sign that the Kedusha is eternal. Its stones could not be colonized. The land remained loyal to the people. Reb Yehuda Halevi in his Kinot says Tziyon Halo Tishali L'shlom Asirayich. How do

B'S'Dve know that Tzion inquires as to the welfare of its inhabitants, the Jews? It is written in the barrenness of the hills and land of Judah and Israel, the fact that no one else was able to colonize it.

In Judaism we have the concept of Agunah. It implies someone who is locked in limbo, who is constantly waiting for her husband to return even though she is aging and realizes that her chance to remarry is slipping away with each day that passes. Yet she waits. The land of Israel is an Agunah in this respect. It waits for its mate to return even though he has been gone for so many years. The Bris Bayn Habesarim guaranteed that the land would remain loyal to the people.

If the inanimate land elects to remain loyal to the people, it has the ability to remain loyal indefinitely. However the problem is how to ensure that the people remain loyal to the land? A husband can be an Agunah as well, someone who waits for his wife to return. The Jewish Nation has been an Agunah, waiting for the land. Achad Haam (someone far from religion) wrote that he came to Jerusalem and visited the Kotel on Tisha B'av and observed how Jews from Aydot Mizrach were mourning. He observed that the stones are witness to the destruction of our land and these people are witness to the destruction of our nation. He asked which is worse? He answered that a land that was destroyed can be rebuilt by those that return, like Ezra and Nechemia. But who will rebuild a nation that is destroyed?

Achad Haam's mistake was that the group of people he observed were not witnesses to the destruction of the land. But the principle is correct. The question is how can a nation express its identity and live uniquely under such conditions? Everything about the Jew is different than the world around us. The way we write, the way we pray, the way we set our calendar are all examples of how we differ from those around us. Jews lived in Europe for a thousand years and remained loyal. Eretz Yisrael is another example of the uniqueness of the Jewish Nation. Rationally one should not support Israel, how can it survive against so many enemies? Yet this is the great wonder and power of our nation, our ability to wait for the land and to return to it. The same applies to the relationship of the Jew to Torah, especially Torah Shbeal Peh. Just like one can't learn and appreciate Mathematics by simply reading a book. It is a method that must be incorporated in the thought processes of a person. The same is true of Torah Shbeal Peh, it is a method that becomes part of a Jew's personality, distinguishing him from those around him.

The fact that people would wait for a land for so many years is based on Hashem granting us the land Ldorosam, forever. This eternal gift was granted in the covenant associated with Bris Milah and not in the covenant of Bris Bayn Habesarim. The second covenant grants the land eternally to a people that keeps Torah Shbeal Peh, a people that rejoices differently and cries differently. This is the essence of Bris Milah. Milah is a Chasimah. Chasimah is not just a signature but rather it is the mark of the individual. It expresses the uniqueness of the individual that no one else can copy. Milah is called Chosam Bris Kodesh because the Jewish Nation is different and unique from all others. It is this uniqueness that guarantees our constant yearning for and connection to the land.

Why is the story of Ishmael introduced between the two covenants? Because any nation can survive while they are on their land, even Ishmael. The distinguishing characteristic between Ishmael and Isaac is in their ability to maintain their uniqueness when they are removed from the land. That's why Hashem says that He will transfer the Bris and its fulfillment to Isaac and not Ishmael. Because Isaac and his children will remain unique forever.

Hashem retains responsibility to recognize and fulfill the Bris Bayn Habesarim so that the land maintains its loyalty to the people. However our job is to fulfill the covenant of the Bris Milah and to retain our uniqueness and identity as the Am Hashem.

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand [SMTP: ryfrand@torah.org]
"RAVFRAND" LIST - RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS LECH
LECHA

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 212, Non-Jews and Kibbud Av. Good Shabbos!

Visit <http://www.yadychiel.org/> or send e-mail to tapes@yadychiel.org ! Special Announcement: New Book By Rabbi Frand: "Listen To Your Messages -- And Other Observations On Contemporary Jewish Life" [Mesorah / Art Scroll]

Reward May Come -- Even For Small Deeds, Even Many Years Later After the war involving the King of Sodom (among others), "the escapee came and told Avram that Lot was captured" [Bereshis 14:13]. There is a Rabbinic tradition that this escapee was Og, the future King of Bashan, who actually 'escaped' from the Flood by holding on to the back of the Ark. However, the Rabbis attribute sinister and diabolic intentions to Og's deed. Rather than merely wishing to participate in the meritorious act of redeeming captives, Og really wished to take Sarah for himself. His plan was to draw Avram into a hopeless battle of trying to rescue Lot, have Avram die in battle, and then take Avram's widow -- Sarah -- for himself.

Nonetheless, the Talmud tells us [Niddah 61a] that many years later, G-d had to reassure Moshe prior to his battle with Og. Moshe feared that in the merit of Og delivering the message of Lot's capture to Avram, Og would be protected now in his battle against the Jewish people. Rav Leib Chassman points out, based on Moshe's concern, that the Torah gives significant credit to even a small, imperfect, mitzvah. This small good deed of Og was performed with the worst of motives. Chessed (kindness) was the furthest thing from Og's mind. Og had diabolical motives. However, since Og was in fact responsible for the rescue of Lot, Moshe was afraid to fight against him hundreds of years later.

This is a great lesson regarding the power of a single mitzvah.

I will relate a true story that may help to bring this lesson down to our own level. The incident involved a family named Hiller -- a husband, a wife, and a small boy named Shachneh, who lived in Krakow in 1942. At that time, the Germans were drafting able-bodied people into work details. Those that were strong were able to survive; children, as a general rule could not make it. The family had a dilemma -- what to do with their little son.

The situation deteriorated to such an extent that they realized that their only option was to give their son to a non-Jewish family whom they knew in Krakow, named Yakovitch. This was a childless family -- friends, whom they trusted. They decided to take the drastic move of giving over little Shachneh to this family. On the night of November 15, 1942, Mrs. Hiller -- at risk to her life -- walked through the Jewish Quarter of Krakow to the non-Jewish Quarter of Krakow, and brought her child to her friend, Mrs. Yakovitch. Mrs. Hiller said, "If we ever make it through the war, please return our child to us; but if we do not make it through the war, here are two letters -- addressed to relatives in Montreal and Washington, DC. When this terrible war is over, please contact them and they will take Shachneh. We ask only one thing, that he be raised as a Jew.

As fate had it, the Hillers were killed in the Holocaust. Mrs. Yakovitch raised the child as her own. Mrs. Yakovitch, who was a religious Catholic, started taking the child to Mass. After a while, the child learned the Hymns and became, for all intents and purposes, like a Christian. In 1946, Mrs. Yakovitch decided that it was time to baptize

the child. She took the child to the parish priest and asked him to baptize the child. The priest, seeing the 10-11 year old boy, wondered aloud how it was that a boy of this age was not already baptized. He had a discussion with Mrs. Yakovitch, in which she related all the details of the story.

The priest told her she was acting improperly. The wishes of the boy's dying family must be honored. After this discussion, Mrs. Yakovitch had second thoughts and contacted the families in North America. Finally, in June 1949, through the efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress, this child -- together with 13 other orphans from Poland -- came to Canada. Ultimately, in February 1951, through a special bill signed by President Truman, the boy came to the United States, to his family in Washington, DC.

The lad grew up in the United States, but kept in touch with Mrs. Yakovitch, to whom he felt sincerely indebted. He sent her letters, packages, and money. He grew up as a religious Jew. He became the vice-president of a corporation, did very well for himself, and always felt a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Yakovitch.

Finally in 1978, Mrs. Yakovitch, who was getting older, wrote a letter to him, telling him for the first time of her terrible dilemma and her initial decision to have him baptized. In that letter, she revealed the name of the parish priest who convinced her otherwise: Karol Wojtyla, more commonly known as Pope John Paul II.

The Bluzheve Rebbe (Rav Yisroel Spira; 1890-1989) said that although we are not privy to G-d's ways, we can perhaps speculate that G-d chose to reward this young parish priest for his noble action by raising him to leadership as the Pope.

A Seemingly Arbitrary Linkage of the Word 'KOH' in Different Locations Provides a Source of Merit for the Priestly Blessing

The pasukim [verses] in this week's parsha say, "After these matters, the word of G-d came to Avram in a vision saying: Fear not, Avram. I am a shield for you; your reward is very great... And He took him outside and said, 'Gaze, now towards the Heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them!' And He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be. [KOH Yiheyeh zar- echa.]" [Bereshis 15:1, 5]

There is an interesting Medrash on Parshas Lech Lecha. The Medrash discusses the source of merit by which the Jewish people deserve the Priestly Blessing. The Medrash gives three opinions. For our purposes, we will zero in on the opinion of Rav Nechemia who held that the merit stemmed from Yitzchak: As it is written regarding the Akeidah [Binding of Yitzchak], "And I and the lad will walk to this place (ad KOH)" [Bereshis 22:5]. For this reason the Jewish people merited the priestly blessing which begins with "Thus shall you bless (KOH teVarchu.) the Children of Israel" [Bamidbar 6:23].

This Medrash seems very strange. How does a seemingly arbitrary linkage of the word 'KOH' in two remote locations provide a source of merit?

The Tiferes Tzion gives a beautiful interpretation: First the Tiferes Tzion describes a Medrash in Bamidbar which explains that all conceivable physical and spiritual blessings in the world are included in the formula of the Priestly Blessing. The Medrash asks, from where do we see this great privilege that the Kohanim do not need to be poetic or expansive or original; but that through the mere recital of these words everyone's needs will be met? The Medrash answers that they merited this privilege from the words "And I and the lad will walk unto this place (ad KOH)."

The Tiferes Tzion notes that the word 'KOH' seems out of place. The smoother reading would be 'ad sham' [I and the child will walk there]. 'Koh', if anything would mean 'here'; not there -- as Avraham truly intended. The Tiferes Tzion explains that when Avraham said 'Ad KOH' at the Akeidah -- he was referring to the word 'KOH' that is used here in Lech Lecha -- "KOH' Like this (i.e. like the stars) will your children be".

At the Akeidah, G-d seems to be telling Avraham to take his only

son, upon whom Avraham was pinning all his hopes, and kill him. Avraham's response is that "we will nevertheless continue to proceed 'ad KOH' -- wondering what will happen to this blessing of 'KOH Yiheyeh Zarecha'. But even if we do not understand how 'KOH Yiheyeh Zarecha' will be fulfilled, it does not matter, for we will still willingly accept 'and serve G-d' [Bereshis 22:5]."

Even if an explanation appears elusive, and we have questions and cannot understand what is happening to us, we nevertheless have faith in the blessing of "KOH (like these stars) will be your children". We will not be deterred.

It was through this faith in G-d's promise of 'KOH' that the Jewish people merited receiving the Priestly Blessing, Birkas Kohanim, with its magic-like formula introduced by the word 'KOH', came about as a result of the pure faith in G-d's Promise, which was introduced by the word 'KOH'.

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PENINIM AHL HATORAH: PARSHAS LECH LECHA BY
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And Sarai, Avram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maidservant and gave her to Avram her husband, to him as a wife. (16:3) Avraham and Sarah had almost everything, they lacked only a child to carry on their legacy. Sarah suggested that Avraham take Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant, as a wife. Sarah would raise the child, that would hopefully be born to them, as her adopted child. One would think that Hagar would be enthusiastic about the idea of becoming Avraham's wife. Indeed, her father told her, "Better to be a maidservant to Avraham and Sarah than a mistress anywhere else." Rashi, however, says that Sarah had to convince Hagar to marry Avraham. This hardly seems consistent with a person who pursued any avenue in order to get close to the Patriarchal family. Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, offers a profound explanation into Hagar's behavior. He first cites the Navi Melachim I 2:8, in which David Ha'melech instructs his son, Shlomo, to use his wisdom to punish Shimi ben Geira in a dignified manner. Veritably, Shlomo was to think of a way to "trap" Shimi, so that he would commit an error that would warrant his execution. What "brilliant" idea did Shlomo conceptualize? He forbade Shimi to leave Yerushalayim. He was permitted to do whatever he wanted, but he was never allowed to leave the city. At first, this seemed to be a convenient punishment for Shimi. He was quite comfortable remaining in the city. It was not a terrible imposition to be confined to Yerushalayim. Obviously, not only was this a compelling punishment, but it was also an act of brilliance, since Shlomo was to carry out his father's command, to act with wisdom. After three years, Shimi left the city. He was later put to death for his infraction. Why did Shimi do it? What provoked him to leave the city? Did he not realize that he would be executed if he left? Did he have a death wish that caused him to leave? Why would such a wise man do something so foolish? Rav Chaim cites the Alshich Hakadosh who says that while a person can certainly live in Yerushalayim for an extended period and never leave the city, it is difficult to live there in a state of imposed confinement. It is not significant where a person is confined, the mere thought that he is told what to do, that he is incarcerated in a state of siege, so to speak, can provoke a rational individual to act in a most illogical manner. Shimi

knew what would happen were he to leave the city. The thought, however, of being cornered, restrained by the king's edict, was too much for him to handle. He took his life into his own hands. Rav Chaim suggests that the same idea applies to Hagar. While she certainly wanted to be as close to Avraham as possible, were she to be presented with a direct command, she might have balked. Human beings by nature seek freedom. Restraints of any kind, whether they are made of steel or imposed by others, have a devastating effect upon a person. Sarah knew that Hagar, like most people, could not handle having anything being forced on her, even something which she had sought with great anticipation. We see from here that people often react, rather than act. We tend to do things out of reflex, as an automatic response, not because we really want to do them. It is necessary for a person to think before he acts, determining clearly and truthfully what is really motivating his action. A Jew should act for a single reason-it is the will of Hashem. In fact, one must force himself to isolate all other motivations and act in response to Hashem's command. All too often we attempt to convince ourselves-and others-that we should perform various observances due to ulterior motives. This artificial reason for doing the right thing, for observing Hashem's command, works at the onset, but in the long run a person must reason with himself and focus on the logical truth. Yaakov told Yosef that he buried Rachel on the road to Efras, rather than in Chevron, because that was the will of Hashem. The Midrash relates that Yaakov told him, "It had nothing to do with the weather nor the distance. I buried your mother on the road, because Hashem told me to." The lesson is clear. Yaakov did not seek to rationalize his actions-not to himself, nor to Yosef. He trained himself to act because it was the will of Hashem. He sought to eliminate any outside reasons for his actions. If one does something right for the wrong reasons, he might end up doing something wrong for the same reasons.

Your name shall no longer be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham. (17:5) In the Talmud Berachos 13A, Chazal remark that anyone who refers to Avraham Avinu as Avram violates a negative and a positive commandment. Interestingly, we do not find this distinction in regard to Yaakov Avinu, whose name also underwent a change. We note (in Bereishis 32:29 and 35:10) the Torah states: "Your name shall not always be called Yaakov, but Yisrael shall be your name." What difference is there between Yaakov and Avraham? While Yaakov's name was also changed, it had no halachic consequences? We still refer to him as Yaakov. Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita, explains that the difference lies in the reason for the name change. Chazal attribute the change in Avraham's name to the actual change in Avraham's essence. Originally Avraham "ruled" over two hundred forty three organs of his body. He was in control over almost his whole body. With the advent of his Bris Milah, he grew in spiritual stature. He now controlled his entire body. The letter "hay" is the numerical equivalent for five, the added number of organs he now sublimated to serve Hashem. To call Avraham by any other name denigrates his stature and undermines his influence over Klal Yisrael. The father of Am Yisrael was an individual who towered over his entire body. He was in total control. He serves for us as the benchmark of spiritual ascendancy. Indeed, to refer to him by his "old" name is an affront to the Patriarch and to the entire nation. Conversely, Yaakov's name change relates to the events of his life. The name Yaakov implies underhandedness and guile, which are, regrettably, necessary characteristics one must apply in dealing with people like Eisav and Lavan. Indeed, in dealing with the wicked, Yaakov must resort to the methods which they understand. When his name was changed to Yisrael, it implied that he had within him the strength and ability to reign over men, to withstand temptation. He had to overcome challenges of both a physical and spiritual nature, to serve Hashem in a manner that projected dignity and nobility. Indeed, Yaakov was to become like a "Sar," a sovereign. Yet, when dealing with Eisav and Lavan, he resorted back to the characteristics of Yaakov. That is the only way that they understand!

Yisrael is his name, symbolizing his true essence. Yaakov represents a behavior pattern which, at times, it is necessary to implement. The prayer is that one day it will no longer be necessary to be "called" Yaakov, that we will never find it necessary to act in this manner.

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Sponsored by: The Edeson and Stern families, in honor of the 55th anniversary of Jacob S. Edeson's bar mitzvah
RABBI AND MRS. SAM VOGEL, on the yahrzeits of their fathers Aharon Shimon ben Shemaryah a"h (Arthur Kalkstein) and Aharon Yehuda ben Yisrael a"h (Leon Vogel)
Today's Learning: Challah 4:1-2 Orach Chaim 180:4-181:1 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Mo'ed Kattan 16

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Naming Children

It is customary among both Ashkenazim and Sephardim that a new-born boy is named at his berit milah. While there is no clear source for this custom, there is a hint in the Book of Shmuel (II:12:18). There, King David's seven-day old boy is referred to as "the child." Since the boy is not referred to by a name, this suggests that boys were not named before the eighth day of their lives. (Heard from R' Yisroel Reisman shlita)

The following are some reasons given for this custom:

(1) Hashem changed our patriarch's name from "Avram" to "Avraham" at the same time that He commanded him to circumcise himself. Likewise, we give a boy a name at the time of his circumcision.

(2) A child achieves greater purity at the time of his berit milah. We wait to name the child until he achieves this purity. (This answer is quoted in the name of R' Yaakov Ha'gozer z"l.)

(3) One of the prayers recited at a berit milah beseeches: "Preserve this boy . . ." We name the child during that prayer as a way of asking that the name we give the child be approved by Hashem. (This relates to Chazal's teaching that a person's name alludes to his mission in life.) (Kuntreis Ziv Ha'shemot p.32-33)

There are several different customs as to when girls are named. Sephardic girls are named at a ceremony known as a "Zevved Ha'bat"/"The Daughter's Gift." The ceremony begins with reading Shir Ha'shirim 2:14: "My dove . . . your voice is sweet and your countenance is beautiful." For a first daughter, some read Shir Ha'shirim 6:9: "Unique is she, my constant dove, unique is she to her mother . . ." Afterward, a mi she'bairach is recited and the name is given. (Ibid. p.37)

There is no set time for holding a Zevved Ha'bat. (Heard from R' Chaim Arzouan)

Among Ashkenazim, some name a girl on the day she is born. Most wait until a day when the Torah is read. Preferably, this should be done on the first day when the Torah is read rather than waiting until Shabbat. (Kuntreis Ziv Ha'shemot p.37-38)

R' Chaim Elazar Shapiro z"l (the "Munkatcher Rebbe"; died 1937) offers the following reason in the name of his ancestor, the Bnei Yissaschar: A child's name is his/her soul. [As explained above, the name alludes to the person's mission.] Why should we deprive the child of a soul longer than necessary?! (Darchei Chaim Ve'Shalom No. 219)

One should make a festive meal on the day his daughter is named. (Ta'amei Ha'minhagim: Inyanei Milah)

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From: Jeffrey Gross [SMTP:jgross@torah.org]
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Weekly-halacha for 5760 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Lech Lecha

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

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

LISTENING TO KERIAS HA-TORAH

There are two basic opinions among the early poskim concerning the nature of the obligation of kerias ha-Torah on Shabbos morning.

One opinion holds that every adult male is obligated to listen to the weekly parshah read every Shabbos morning from a kosher Sefer Torah. He must pay attention to every word being read, or he will not fulfill his obligation(1).

The second opinion(2) maintains that the obligation of kerias ha-Torah devolves upon the congregation as a whole. In other words, if ten or more people are together on Shabbos morning, they must read from the weekly parshah. While each member of the congregation is included in this congregational obligation, it is not a specific obligation upon each individual, provided that there are ten people who are paying attention.

There are some basic questions concerning kerias ha-Torah whose answers will differ depending on which of these two opinions one follows: Is one actually required to follow each word recited by the ba'al koreh without missing even one letter [and, according to some opinions, even read along with him to make sure nothing is missed(3)], or is one permitted - even l'chatchilah - to be lax about this requirement?

Is it permitted to learn or to recite shnayim mikra v'eachd targum during kerias ha-Torah?

If an individual missed a word or two of the Torah reading, must he hear the Torah reading again in this or in another shul?

If ten or more people missed one word or more from the reading, should they take out the Sefer Torah after davening and read the portion which they missed?

If one came late to shul and arrived in time for kerias ha-Torah, should he listen to the Torah reading first and then daven?

If a situation arises where tefillah b'tzibur and kerias ha-Torah conflict, which takes precedence?

If a situation arises where, by listening to kerias ha-Torah, one would not be able to daven altogether, which takes precedence?

The answer to these and other such questions depends, for the most part, on which of the two views one is following. Clearly, according to the first opinion, one must give undivided attention to each and every word being read. Davening, learning or reciting shnayim mikra v'eachd targum during kerias ha-Torah would be prohibited and even b'dieved one would have to make up any missed words. But according to the second opinion, the answers to all these questions would be more lenient, for as long as the congregation fulfilled its obligation to read the Torah correctly, and as long as ten individuals paid attention to the reading, the individual's obligation is no longer a matter of concern.

Shulchan Aruch does not give a clear, definitive ruling concerning this dispute. Indeed, while discussing the laws regarding the permissibility of learning during kerias haTorah, he quotes both opinions without rendering a decision. Instead, he concludes that "it is proper for a meticulous person to focus on and pay attention to the words of the reader". This indicates that Shulchan Aruch and many other prominent poskim(4) hold that while it is commendable to be stringent, it is not absolutely essential. Mishnah Berurah(5), though, quotes several poskim who maintain that the halachah requires that each individual listen to every word of kerias ha-Torah(6). Harav M. Feinstein rules that even b'dieved one does not fulfill his obligation if he misses a word and he

must find a way to make up what he missed(7). There are, however, a host of poskim who maintain that kerias ha-Torah is a congregational obligation, not an individual's(8).

Several contemporary poskim suggest what looks like a compromise. Clearly, l'chatchilah we follow the view of the poskim that each individual is obligated to listen to kerias ha-Torah and it is standard practice for each individual to pay undivided attention to each word that is recited. Indeed, in the situation described above where kerias ha-Torah conflicts with tefilah b'tzibur, the obligation to hear kerias ha-Torah takes precedence, in deference to the poskim who consider it an individual's obligation(9). But, b'dieved, if it were to happen that a word or two was missed, one is not obligated to go to another shul to listen to the part of the reading that was missed. Rather, we rely on the second opinion which maintains that so long as the congregation has fulfilled its obligation, the individual is covered(10). Accordingly, if listening to kerias ha-Torah will result in missing davening altogether, davening takes priority, since we rely on the poskim who maintain that kerias ha-Torah is a congregational obligation(11).

But regardless of the above dispute and compromise, the poskim are in agreement about the following rules:

There must be at least ten men listening to the entire kerias ha-Torah. If there are fewer than ten, then the entire congregation does not fulfill its obligation according to all views(12).

Conversing during kerias ha-Torah is strictly prohibited even when there are ten men paying attention. According to most poskim, it is prohibited to converse even between aliyos, *bein gavra l'gavra*(13). One who converses during kerias ha-Torah is called "a sinner whose sin is too great to be forgiven"(14).

Even those who permit learning during kerias ha-Torah stipulate that it may only be done quietly, so that it does not interfere with the Torah reading(15).

"Talking in learning" *bein gavra l'gavra* is permitted by some poskim and prohibited by others. An individual, however, may learn himself or answer an halachic question *bein gavra l'gavra*(16).

SITTING OR STANDING? Although the *ba'al koreh* and the person receiving the aliyah must stand while reading from the Torah, the congregation is not required to stand. Indeed, there are three views in the poskim as to what is preferred: Some hold that it is preferable to stand while the Torah is being read, since kerias ha-Torah is compared to *Matan Torah* at Har Sinai where everyone stood(17).

Others maintain that there is no preference and one is free to sit or stand as he wishes(18).

A third view holds that it is preferable to sit while the Torah is being read(19).

The basic halachah follows the middle view that there is no preference and one can choose his position. There are, however, many people who are stringent and insist on standing while the Torah is being read. Most poskim agree with the following:

A weak person who will find it difficult to concentrate should sit. Between aliyos there is no reason to stand.

For Borchu and its response, everyone is required to stand(20), but during the recital of the birchos ha-Torah themselves there is no obligation to stand.

There are conflicting opinions and customs as to whether or not the congregation stands when the *Aseres ha-dibros* and *Shiras ha-yam* are read. One should follow the custom of the shul where he is davening(21).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Shiblei ha-Leket 39, quoted in Beis Yosef O.C. 146. This also seems to be the view of the Magen Avraham 146:5 quoting Shelah and Mateh Moshe. See also Ma'asei Rav 131. See, however, Peulas Sachir on Ma'asei Rav 175. 2 Among the Rishonim see Ramban and Ran, Megillah 5a. Among the poskim see Ginas Veradim 2:21; Imrei Yosher 2:171; Binyan Shelomo 35; Levushai Mordechai 2:99 and others. See also Yabia Omer 4:31-3 and 7:9. 3 Mishnah Berurah 146:15. 4 Sha'arei Efrayim 4:12 and Siddur Derech ha-Chayim (4-5) clearly rule in accordance with this view. This may also be the ruling of Chayei Adam 31:2 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 23:8. 5 146:15. Aruch ha-Shulchan 146:6 and Kaf

ha-Chayim 146:10,14 concur with this view. 6 There are conflicting indications as to what, exactly, is the view of the Mishnah Berurah on this issue; see Beur Halachah 146:2 (s.v. v'hanachon) and Beur Halachah 135:14 (s.v. ein). 7 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:23; 4:40-4-5. If ten or more people missed a section of the Torah reading, then they should take out the sefer after davening and read that section over; *ibid.* 8 See also Eimek Berachah (Kerias ha-Torah 3), 9 Minchas Yitzchak 7:6; Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling, quoted in Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 140). 10 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Siach Halachah 6:8); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 140) 11 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling, quoted in Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 140). 12 Aruch ha-Shulchan 146:5. 13 Bach, as understood by Mishnah Berurah 146:6 and many poskim. There are poskim, however, who maintain that the Bach permits even idle talk *bein gavra l'gavra*, see Machatzis ha-Shekel, Aruch ha-Shulchan, and Shulchan ha-Tahor. See also Pri Chadash who allows conversing *bein gavra l'gavra*. Obviously, he refers to the type of talk which is permitted in shul and on Shabbos. 14 Beur Halachah 146:2 (s.v. v'hanachon) who uses strong language in condemning these people. 15 Mishnah Berurah 146:11. 16 Mishnah Berurah 146:6. 17 Rama O.C. 146:4 as explained by Bach and Mishnah Berurah 19. 18 O.C. 146:6. 19 This is the view of the Arizal as understood by many of the latter authorities, see Chesed l'alafim 135:14, Sdei Chemed (Beis, 29), Kaf ha-Chayim 146, Da'as Torah 146:4 and Shulchan ha-Tahor 146:4. Note that this view has an early source, see Sefer ha-Machkim, pg. 15 and Teshuvos Rama mi-Pano 91. 20 See, however, Kaf ha-Chayim who writes that the accepted practice is to remain seated even during Borchu. 21 See Igros Moshe O.C. 4:22 and Yechaveh Da'as 6:8

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FROM: DR. ZALMAN KOSSOWSKY[SMT@RABBI@ICZ.ORG]
Morei v'Rabotei,

Last week we read in the Tora about a righteous man named Noach whom G'd saved from the fate that was meted out to the rest of his generation. This week we read about another righteous man, Avraham, upon whom G'd chose to bestow special favour. Next week we will read about a third relatively righteous man, Lot, whom G'd also chose to save from the fate that was to befall his neighbours and city.

Yet we all know that these were three very different people and that the form and style of their righteousness differed greatly one from the other. This morning I would like to first examine the way in which their righteousness differed from each other and then identify the message that we can and should draw from this lesson.

Let us start with Noah. The Tora portion opens with the verse *Elu toldot noach. Noach ish tzadik tamim haya b'dorotav. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man. He was a pure man in his generation. [Genesis 6:9]*

While the saga of Noah and the flood is well known, Noah himself remains a somewhat elusive personality. Little is known about the nature of Noah's goodness. The Tora defines him as a *tzaddik* -- which can be variously translated as a good, or a just, or a righteous man -- but the qualification, "*in his generation*", seems to change the quality of the compliment. The implication seems to be that in a corrupt generation, Noah stood head and shoulders above all others. However, it is possible that in another generation he would not have been so noticeable.

Thus in fact we find Rashi, the great 11th century commentator, offering two opinions. He writes: "*There are among the sages who view Noah positively. Certainly had he been living in a generation of just individuals, he would have been more just. While some view him negatively. Had he been living in the generation of Abraham he would have been considered worthless.*"

We can understand this Rashi better when we look at the generation in which Noah lived.

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of the rulers saw the daughters of men that they were pretty; and they took as wives all those whom they chose. . . . The earth also was corrupt before G'd, and

the earth was filled with violence. And G'd looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And G'd said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.' [Genesis 6:1-2, 11-12]

The Tora describes the generation of Noah as a generation in which all moral boundaries had broken down. In fact, the very fabric of society had become corroded. It is in this context that we see Noah's goodness. Noah did not partake of the licentiousness and thievery of his generation. Noah did no evil. That alone could make him a **tzaddik**.

However, we also do not find any mention of him performing good deeds either. To a certain extent there is almost a sense of "neutrality" about Noah. Not hurting others, but also seemingly not helping them. Thus we see the greatness of Noah, as well as the tragedy of Noah. There is a very poignant teaching in the **Zohar**, the chief work of the **Kabbalah** that highlights this dimension of Noah.

In the less well-known segment called **Hashmatot Ha'Zohar**, [Bereishit 254b], we find a dialog between Noah and G'd, which takes place after the flood:-

When Noah came out of the Ark and saw the world destroyed, he began to cry before G'd and he said, "Master of the universe, You are called compassionate. You should have been compassionate for Your creation." G'd responded and said, "You are a foolish shepherd. Now you say this?! Why did you not say this at the time I told you that I saw that you were righteous among your generation, or afterward when I said that I will bring a flood upon the people, or afterward when I said to build an ark? I constantly delayed and I said, 'When is he [Noah] going to ask for compassion for the world?' . And now that the world is destroyed, you open your mouth, to cry in front of me, and to ask for supplication?"

Along somewhat similar lines I recently heard a teaching from one of the great moralists of the previous generation, Reb Sholom Shewadron, z"l, who compared Noah and Avraham. He noted that Noah was occupied with the building of the Ark for 120 years, while Avraham was a 'mere' 75 years old when he came to the Promised Land, with Sarai, Lot and **"kol ha'nefesh asher a'su b'Charan B** with all the souls that they had 'acquired' in Haran". "How is it", Reb Sholom asked, "that Noah in 120 years did not convince even one additional person to join him in the Ark, while Avraham, in less than half that time, inspired a whole multitude of people to join with him in a voyage of discovery to G'd's Promised Land?" To which he pithily answered in Yiddish, in his inimitable manner: **"Avrohom hot gegeben zu essen, Noach hot gegeben -- musser B** Avraham gave the people food **B** while Noah gave them moralizing lectures". Reb Sholom z"l supported this interpretation by noting that Noah was indeed punished for this lack of hospitality, and that for a period of twelve months **B** akin to the maximum amount of time a soul has to spend in **Gehenom** (Purgatory) he had to feed an Ark full of animals. **"Wenn man gibt nicht die menshen zu essen - dan muss man die chayas geben essen B** if one will not feed people, then one will have to feed the animals"

Powerful words with a very clear message. To which I would like to add a further support from next week's **Parsha**. Even before Avraham attempts to intervene on behalf of the doomed cities of Sodom, G'd sends a special Angel to save the nephew Lot, and any members of his family who are willing to flee with him. One can legitimately ask why Lot was to be spared, after all he had chosen to move to Sodom and become one of the inhabitants of that sinful city. I would like to suggest that what saved him was the **mitzva** of **hachnasat orchim** -- *hospitality to the guest and the stranger*. True, Lot chose to live in Sodom, despite its corruption -- however, even there he remained true to the imperative that he had imbibed in Avraham's home. **E'shel Avraham** -- Avraham offered every stranger who came by **B e'shel** -- **a'chila B** food, **sh'ti'ya B** drink and **li'na B** a place to sleep. And so, even in Sodom, does his

nephew Lot. **That** is what saved Lot from the fate that befell the rest of that city.

My friends, as we reflect on this message and what it can mean for us today, let me add another thought. Next week, G'd Himself reveals to us His expectation of us in this regard. The verse (Ch. 18, v. 19) says: **ki y'da'tiv l'ma'an asher y'tza've et banav v'et beto acharav v'shamru derech Hashem la'asot tze'da'ka u'mishpat B** For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him - to do **ze'da'ka B** righteousness and **mishpat B** justice. I find it significant that of the three heroes, if we may call them that, only Noah is referred to by the Tora as a **tzaddik**. For Avraham, I submit, that is not enough. Evidently one can be a **tzaddik** and still be passive. From Avraham and his descendants **B** more is expected. We are called upon **B la'asot tze'da'ka** -- to ACT OUT our **tze'da'ka**. This is our role. This is our destiny. We should not try and avoid this challenge, lest, as Reb Sholom z"l said: **"Wenn man gibt nicht die menshen zu essen - dan muss man die chayas geben essen B** if one will not feed people, then one will have to feed the animals".

And as a final thought this morning I would again like to cite Reb Sholom z"l who ended his teaching by pointing out that even in this punishment that was meted out to Noah, the attribute of **rachamim B** of mercy, played its role. Therefore, even though the responsibility and duty of feeding the animals was a punishment, the energy and the effort expended were given their due reward. Thus, after the flood, there are two changes in the order of the world. Firstly, Noah and his descendants are allowed to eat of the flesh of the animals; and secondly, the animals are commanded to acknowledge the debt of **ha'karat ha'tov B** of gratitude and therefore (Ch. 8, v. 5) **"And surely the blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it"**.

My friends, it is our belief that all our actions and even all our thoughts are noted. And every erg of energy that we expend is measured and recorded. As we confront and contend with the world around us, let us strive to remain true to the teachings of **Avraham Avinu**. And as we cross our Jordan rivers, may we do so not alone and on our own, but in the company of friends whom we have helped to inspire.

Halevai. Shabbat Shalom

<http://www.jpost.co.il/Columns/Article-3.html>

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SHABBAT SHALOM: Are we a nation, or a religion? By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(October 21) "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great." (Gen. 12:2)

God established two covenants with the Jewish people, the first in this week's portion of Lech Lecha, and the second right after the Revelation at Sinai. At first glance these eternal, irrevocable contracts allude to the paradox of Israel: Are we a nation, bound together by a common gene pool? Or are we primarily a religion, united by our commitment to Jewish law?

The first covenant stresses lineage and land. God promises Abraham numerous descendants, and guarantees an eternal relationship with the Land of Israel. This covenant established the Jewish nation-state.

The second covenant is about laws: "And he [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read it aloud to the people, and they said: 'All that God has spoken will we do and obey.'" This covenant established the Jewish religion, circumscribed by legal-ritual boundaries.

The covenant of Abraham stresses the fact that all future descendants are part of one extended family. Generally speaking, a nation - in effect, a distinct ethnic group which emerges from a family - is dependent upon a national homeland with clearly defined borders.

In contrast, the second covenant stresses the religio-legal

commitment. Abraham and Sarah's descendants are required to accept the Torah, the Law of Moses.

This religious structure transcends any particular land; the commandments link the practicing Jew in Sydney to the practicing Jew in Singapore. Committed co-religionists from the furthest recesses of the world belong to a kind of international fraternity which allows a New York Jew to feel perfectly at home spending a Shabbat with a Habad family in Hong Kong.

Each of these two aspects plays a role in conversion to Judaism. The conversion process is comprised of two essential elements: first, the ritual immersion in living water (mikve), symbolizing one's rebirth as a Jew and entrance into a new family-nation; and second, the acceptance of the commandments, demonstrating commitment to the laws of the Torah.

Which of the two - nation or religion - is of greater significance is the topic of a fascinating difference of opinion between Rav Abraham Isaac Kook and Rav Joseph Soloveitchik, and echoes an earlier difference between Maimonides and Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi.

In his work, Kol Dodi Dofek, Rav Soloveitchik calls the covenant with Abraham the "covenant of fate." After all, no one asks to be born to a particular set of parents, or into a particular nation. Therefore, the symbol of this covenant is the brit mila, because we cannot ask the eight-day-old child if he wants to be circumcised. Now if circumcision is the symbol of the covenant of fate, then Rav Soloveitchik suggests that Sinai becomes the "covenant of destiny"; by choosing to follow a prescribed set of laws and customs, we are turning our fate into destiny, and declaring our willingness to live for an ideal.

In a similar but contrasting way, Rav Kook also speaks of two covenants. The first, the covenant with Abraham, he calls the internal covenant, the feelings of the heart which link an individual to another individual of his/her family/nation. This Rav Kook calls the sanctity of s'gula or treasured uniqueness, which comes at birth (or conversion) and is the inextricable source of our sanctity.

In contrast, the covenant of Sinai he calls an external covenant. A person who observes the Sabbath and festivals, eats only specific foods and dresses in unique fashion is very much involved in the external, tangible world of Torah commandments.

This Rav Kook calls the sanctity of choice.

In a much earlier period, Maimonides saw the sanctity of Israel as linked to a life of Torah and commandments, and therefore Rav Soloveitchik, a Maimonidean, would claim that the higher covenant is the covenant of destiny, the covenant of Sinai. But Rav Kook, who follows more in the footsteps of Rav Yehuda HaLevi, believes that the sanctity of Israel comes from what he calls segula, our inner and internal chosenness, the fact that we're descendants of Abraham and Sarah. For him, a Jew who feels an inner connection to all other Jews, committed to the revitalization of the Jewish nation-state, has a degree of sanctity higher than one who may be committed to ritual observances but does not feel linked to the nation and the Jewish land.

The Talmud speaks of the messiah arriving on a donkey. Some take this literally, but Rav Kook explains it from his perspective of internal and external sanctity. A donkey, he says, has no external signs of purity; it neither has split hooves nor chews its cud. The donkey does, however, have internal sanctity, as evidenced by the fact that its first born must be redeemed by a priest. The donkey, therefore, represents the Jew with a heightened development of family-nation consciousness, and it is because of him that the Messiah will come!

When I first started out as a rabbi, there was one elderly gentleman who, after each Friday night service, would confront me with heretical questions. He was a classic maskil, who didn't believe in keeping any laws. Since he was quite learned, our conversations would often take close to an hour - which caused my wife and our guests to become rather impatient. After a few weeks, I asked him: If you don't believe, and

apparently my answers don't satisfy you, why do you continue to come to shul? He responded with words that taught me a profound lesson: "An Apikoros bin ich yoh, ober a goy bin ich nit (I may be a heretic, but that doesn't make me a gentile!)."

Shabbat Shalom The writer is dean of the Ohr Torah Stone colleges and graduate programs and chief rabbi of Efrat.

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]
PARSHA PERSPECTIVES WAKE-UP CALL BY RABBI
MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Hashem has different ways in which He reveals Himself to humans. The Torah tells us that Moshe was special. Moshe's nevuah was B'aspaklaria haM'eirah, a clear and enlightened vision. Others, however saw Hashem in a machazeh or a dream. This week the Torah tells us of Avram Avinu's vision. It was very animated. "And the word of Hashem came to Avram in a vision, 'Fear not, Avram-and He took Avram outside and said, 'Count the stars, if you are able to count them-Thus shall be your offspring'" (Braishis 15:1-5). Avram goes outside and is told to try to count the stars. Then the Torah tells us about Avram's next vision. This one, however, takes on another type of setting. "The sun set and a deep slumber fell upon Avram and behold a dark fear descended upon him." (Braishis 15:12). Note the contrast between the two prophecies. The first seems dynamic and upbeat. The second begins with a sense of despair and darkness. The mefarshim explain that the first nevuah engendered the good news about the growth and future prosperity of Avram's descendants. The second vision, however, predicted the doom and exile of Klal Yisrael in Mitzrayim. That is why Avram trembled. However, Avram trembled as "a dark fear descended upon him," even before hearing the news about the Egyptian galus. In fact, the fear set in as soon as the deep slumber fell upon him. Could the sleep alone have precipitated the premonition of fear? Perhaps the deep slumber set off some impending feeling of despair that caused the great fear. How?

Perhaps the Torah hinted to us a lesson for us to learn, actually personified through the following story I heard from Rabbi Shimshon Sherer, Rav of Kehilas Zichron Mordechai. Rabbi Shimshon Zelig Fortman was the Rav of Congregation Knesseth Israel in Far Rockaway during the 1940s. During that period, many naysayers had all but discounted any chance of a rebirth of Orthodox Jewry. Torah observant Yidden had hardly a voice in Washington, they were disorganized and fragmented, and the destruction of European Jewry was almost the last nail in the alleged coffin of traditional Torah Yiddishkeit. Rabbi Fortman had a young son-in-law, Moshe, who had studied in Yeshiva Ner Israel in Baltimore. He would tell his father-in-law how he saw a future for Orthodox Jewry that was filled with honor and power, with representatives that would have direct access to Congress, the Senate, and even the President of the United States. They would influence legislation with their values and fill stadiums and coliseums with Torah assemblies and prayer gatherings! Rabbi Fortman was very concerned about his young son-in-law's ivory-towered dreams. He felt that he these dreams distracted him and he would never accomplish anything. Rabbi Yosef Kahanamen, the Ponovezher Rav had recently come to America to raise funds for his Yeshiva in Israel, and was staying by Rabbi Fortman in Far Rockaway. "Surely," Rabbi Fortman thought, "Rabbi Kahanamen will end Moshe's fantasies and teach him about the realities of accomplishment." Moshe and Rabbi Kahanamen met for nearly an hour. The Rav listened intently and then told young Moshe, "Dream my son. Continue to dream. In fact you can continue to dream as long as you live. But remember one thing. Never fall asleep." Young Moshe was eventually known to hundreds of thousands of Jews world-over as the man who may have been one of the most influential personalities in the emergence of Torah Jewry today-Rabbi Moshe Sherer, the President of Agudath Israel of America-until his passing last year.

Perhaps, homiletically, Avram began to tremble the moment that sleep set in. He understood that great visions of grandeur might occur in a dream. His children would be like the stars numbering multitudes that he was not able to count! But when darkness fell and Avraham succumbed to a deep sleep, he shuddered, perhaps meaning that nothing good could appear if he fell asleep! For when the visionary falls asleep, all the dreams are lost in slumber! The setting for visions of greatness is when Avram stands outside, is animated, and points heavenward. The setting for a specter of doom is when Avraham falls asleep. Let us all awaken with a fervor to Avodas Hashem and await the visions of greatness in excited anticipation. Only then they will surely come!

From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz [SMTP: packouz@aish.edu]

DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

The Torah states regarding Avraham and his family, "They went to go to the Land of Canaan and they came to the Land of Canaan." (Genesis 12:5) Why does the Torah tell us "that they went to go" and that "they came" to the Land of Canaan?

When Avraham made-up his mind to travel to the Land of Canaan, he followed through on his plans and reached his destination. This stands in sharp contrast with Terach, Avraham's father, about whom we read in the Torah Portion of Noah (Genesis 11:31) that he started out to go to the Land of Canaan, but when he reached Charan in the midst of his journey, he settled there; he never made it to Canaan. This, said the Chofetz Chaim, is a lesson that we should learn from Avraham: If you accept upon yourself a goal to accomplish something, don't become sidetracked!

One must keep his eye on the goal -- to love G-d, to be happy, to have a happy marriage, to raise healthy, happy children; to live life with integrity. Don't be distracted by desires. People confuse "want" and "desire." The soul "wants," the body "desires." Go for the soul every time! ...

From: Yated USA [SMTP: yated-usa@ttec.com]

KORTZ UN SHARF-SHORT AND SWEET PARSHA VERTLACH BY SHAYA GOTTLIEB

"Lech Lecho Mayartzecho" - Go out of your land 12:1 Hakodosh Boruch Hu commanded Avrohom Ovinu to leave his birthplace and travel into the unknown. Rashi explains, "L'hanoscho U'litvoscho" - go for your own benefit. Avrohom will benefit from the move. If the move was for his benefit, where was the nisayon? The answer? That alone was the nisayon - to test Avrohom and see whether he will obey Hashem's command for his own benefit, or do it because Hashem commanded him. Indeed, Avrohom went 'kaasher diber Hashem', because his Creator told him to.

Rashi says: L'hanoscho U'litvoscho - for your enjoyment and benefit. Why does Rashi use two expressions of benefit? Because not everything a person does and enjoys is truly for his benefit... -Rav Henoch of Alexander

"Lech Lecho Mayartzecho" - go out of your earthiness, raise your neshomo to be above the ground. -Baal Shem Tov

"Mayartzecho, Umimoladitcho, Umibais Ovicho" - from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house 12:1 Why does the possuk begin with 'the land', followed by birthplace, and his father's house is mentioned last? Because when a person leaves his home, and all that is dear to him, the most important things remain in his memory for the longest amount of time. Thus, first he forgets his land, then his birthplace, and last, his father's house. -Alshich

The above possuk alludes to the three things discussed in the Mishna: "Remember three things and you will not come to do an aveiro."

Remember where you are going-Mayartzecho, you will be buried in the ground. Remember where you came from, Moladitcho, your humble origins. And remember your father's house, the ultimate din v'cheshbon in shomayim, "Lifnei Melech Malchei Hamlochim Hakodosh Boruch Hu." -Cheshvoh L'Tovah

"V'escho L'Goi Godol," And I will make you into a great nation 12:2

Rashi on Lech Lecho: Now you will merit sons. It is not so necessary for you to move for your own sake, but for the sake of your children. In your birthplace, amongst the idol worshippers, you cannot hope to have nachas from your children.

Rashi: Zeh Sheomrim Elokei Avrohom - This means that people will call the Ribono Shel Olam the "father of Avrohom." When one describes an average citizen's fortune, which amounts to several hundred thousand dollars, it is enough money to make an impression. However, if one should use the same description to depict a prince's fortune, the description will fall flat. All the more so, when one describes a king's fortune, the mere mention of money is not enough. One must describe his vast estates, thousands of servants etc. for people to be impressed. When we are talking about the King of Kings, Hakodosh Boruch Hu, all these descriptions are paltry. The Ribono Shel Olam owns the entire world! This is the meaning of "Sheomrim Elokei Avrohom." The yichus of Avrohom Ovinu will reach so far, that when people will praise the Ribono Shel Olam, they will say, "This is Avrohom's Creator." -The Dubna Maggid

"V'eagadlo Shimecho" - and I will make your name great. 12:2 One can only become great in a foreign land, because "Any Novi B'iro" - in the city where one is born, the neighbors don't appreciate one's greatness. -Rav Moshe Chafetz

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PARSHAS LECH LECHA INREACH

Kiruv (Outreach): The mitzva of the times. On the one hand, it is undoubtedly an exceedingly urgent mitzva. Millions of our brothers and sisters are spiritually drowning, without even realizing the vital need to breathe. On the other hand, one who is untrained in the halachos (laws) of Kiruv will undoubtedly not observe the mitzva properly. Just as one must know how to lay tefillin or how to hold a lulav in order to fulfill one's obligations, so too is it regarding "Hilchos Kiruv."

Furthermore, Kiruv can be dangerous. Not everyone is cut out for professional -- and all the more so, amateur -- outreach. Medical practitioners who treat patients in a ward of infectious diseases are trained to exercise extreme caution so as not to catch the illness they have come to cure. What precautions can we take as we prepare to reach out?

What qualified Avraham to serve as the first patriarch of the Jewish Nation? Adam, Chanoch, Mesushelach, Noach, Shem, Eiver, etc., were all great Tzaddikim. What was so exceptional about Avraham? One probable answer: Avraham was the first to devote himself to outreach -- the first Jewish Outreach Professional (See Rashi to 12:5).

My rebbe, Rav Nison Alpert zt"l, asked: Why is it that the Torah writes nothing of the life and times of Avraham before age seventy-five? So many interesting things happened to him (See Rashi to 11:28). The answer is that the Torah writes only that which has implications for all time. As the Gemara reveals, although well over a million prophets thrived among our nation, only 48 men and 7 women were inscribed for future generations, for only they conveyed messages for posterity (Megilla 14a).

Apparently, before age seventy-five, Avraham had yet to produce a lasting achievement. Although many meaningful rungs had been climbed, nevertheless, they were not of an eternal nature. Only at 75 did he begin to attain timelessness.

The obvious question is: What changed? What pivotal event

signaled the traversal from temporal to eternal? What notable deed helped Avraham cross the time barrier?

Explained Rav Alpert: Lech Lecha. Go for yourself. Comments Rashi: For your own benefit, for your own pleasure. What does this mean? Was Avraham to become selfish? Is that the way of the archetypal Ba'al Chessed?

And the answer is -- yes, but it must be qualified. Before a person can hope to reach out to others, first he must work on himself to be the best Jew that he can be. The prerequisite for OUTreach is INreach. This was the revolutionary change between before 75 and afterwards. Previously, Avraham was in Ur Kasdim or in Charan, and was involved primarily in the war against idolatry and the dissemination of ethical monotheism. Only after he left his home, his birthplace, and went into isolation to perfect himself, did he succeed in carving a lasting impression.

Outreach is clearly one of the most pressing mitzvos of our time. The vast majority of our people have been mercilessly brainwashed by their society and "clergymen", to the point that they don't have the slightest idea what True Judaism is about. The fires are burning, and all available personnel are called upon to join the fight to stem the tide of ignorance and assimilation. But let us not forget where kiruv begins. Kiruv begins at home. If the roots are weak, what can be expected from the branches. And let us never forget, kiruv is a two-way street. Who will be mekarev whom?

To illustrate: Years ago I attended a Michlala Shabbaton with my wife in Migdal HaEmek where we were graciously hosted by Rav Nachman Bulman Shlit"a. I related to him this "vort" from my rebbe (whom Rav Bulman described as a "yedid" of his) and he responded with a true life story from Migdal HaEmek. Several young women had arrived there for a year's stint in Sherut Leumi (National Service). Their assignment was to reach out to non-religious Israelis, to show them the light, so to speak. Rav Bulman was concerned, lest they end up catching the disease they had been sent to treat, but his warning went unheeded. Tragically, with the passage of time, his prediction came true, and one or more of the girls left the faith in order to pursue a relationship with one of the young men she was ostensibly supposed to help.

Let's not forget the sage words of Rashi, "Avraham proselytized the men, and Sarah proselytized the women (12:5)." Why, in real life, does it often seem to be the opposite?

Lech Lecha. Let us first -- and forever continue -- to develop our personal potential with at least the same zeal and enthusiasm that we apply to others. Only in this manner will we merit Hashem's blessing to Avraham: "And I shall make you into a great nation..."

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RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu THE INTERNET CHABURAH -- Parshas Lech Lecha (fwd)

Prologue: Sometimes the price is not worth the effort. At times, the expenses involved in attaining certain goals far exceed the benefits. When this happens, the actual goal pales in the reality that is the cost of achieving one's heart's desires.

With that understanding, one could find grave difficulty understanding Hashem's end point to Avraham at the Bris Bein HaBesarim. Avraham was told that his children would be slaves in lands not belonging to them for 400 years. Only following the punishment would they leave the land with great reward. What is the reason that Hakadosh Baruch Hu stressed the great reward to Avraham? It would seem as if the price for the great reward - 400 years of poverty, slavery

and suffering - far outweighed the benefit?

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (HaGadda) and Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop (Mei Marom, V) offer similar explanations for the seemingly extra stress on reward. These Gedolim highlight the notion that one can only begin to appreciate the rewards fully when one realizes the costs that those rewards come at. When one inherits a great Rechush that he does not work for, he cannot derive the same pleasure that the hard working individual gains when he enjoys his own fortune. By realizing the time and effort that went into the fortune, one could appreciate the full benefit of the fortune. Similarly, Hashem felt that Bnei Yisroel would need to be Avadim for 400 years. There were lessons to be learned from the Avdos and Chovos to be paid. However, once the free moment came, Hashem wanted Bnei Yisroel not only to experience freedom, rather he wanted them to receive that which they truly deserve to experience, the effects of the great wealth which they earned and could then fully appreciate - having the benefit outweigh the cost.

At times, a simcha is truly experienced only by those who have been able to deal with the hardships that are endured while on the road to that Simcha. Recognizing those hardships helps one make his simcha more complete. This week's Chaburah examines what happens when one's simcha cannot be complete. It is entitled:

BAR MITZVA: FREEDOM FOR WHOM?

The Rema (Orach Chaim 225:2) notes the Minhag that when someone's son becomes a bar Mitzva, the father recites the Beracha "Baruch She'pitarani Me'onsho Shel Zeh." Similarly, the Midrash notes (Berashis Rabba 63:14) that Rabbi Elazar used to say that until 13, one must be involved with his children. However, following his 13th birthday, the father must recite the Beracha of Baruch She'pitarani.

Two reasons are noted in the Halachic literature for this Beracha: The Mogen Avraham (225:5) explains that the reason for the Beracha is the father's declaration of his new exemption from the Mitzva of Chinuch. Until this point the father had been responsible for the son's transgressions because of the former's obligation to educate him. Now, with Bar Mitzva, the boy takes on responsibility for his own Mitzvos. To that, the father recites Baruch She'pitarani.

The Levush explains the Beracha differently. He understands that until this point, the son has been punished because of the father. Now, the son takes on his own punishment for his own transgressions. Hence, the father recites the Beracha of Baruch She'pitarani because now he is truly Patur from causing the son punishment. The Levush cites a Gemara (Shabbos 149b) in support of his position. The Rambam (Teshuva, 6:1) and Yalkut Shimoni (Rus, 400) also weigh in as supporting these two positions concerning the son's punishment for sins until thirteen respectfully.

The Shach (al hatorah, Parshas Lech Lecha) notes that a son should make the Beracha Baruch She'pitarani Me'Onsho Shel Abba. However others argue that no posek held that way and one should not make such a Beracha because as such, he is declaring his father to be a sinner.

All of the above concerns the Beracha at a regular Bar Mitzva with a natural father and son present. However, what does one do when his step-son or adoptive son becomes a Bar Mitzva? Can he recite Baruch She'pitarani?

One immediately is drawn to the words of Chazal (Sanhedrin 19b) that one who raises an orphan in his home is like he birthed him. Based upon the simple understanding of that Gemara, it would appear that one could recite the Beracha for his step-son. The Maharsha seems to include adoption in the category of this Gemara as well. However, we must understand what the phrase "it is as if he birthed him" really means.

Rav Yaakov Emden (She'elos Ya'avetz I, 165) explains that if the child will live as his own and inherit him upon his death, it is as if he were a natural son. We see similar examples in Shas of adoptive parents and children sharing the same relationship as natural parents and children (See Berachos, 62a; Shabbos, 66a; 133a; 134a; Eruvin, 59a for a start). Rav Yaakov Emden uses Abaye's experience to teach us that the adoptive parent becomes the source for the child's name to the exception of the natural parents.

The Chasam Sofer (Even HaEzer, 76) allowed one to be called to the Torah by his adoptive father's name. Rav Unterman took the same position in Eretz Yisroel. However, it should be noted that this action creates big problems in terms of writing a Get (or Kesuba) <For further analysis see Reshimos Chaburos al Hil. Ishus MiHaGrid Bleich, 5759>.

Either way, Rav Menashe Klein (Mishneh Halachos 26) feels that the Beracha of Baruch She'pitarani does not apply to the Bar Mitzva boy in this case whether you hold like the Levush or Mogen Avraham. The Pri Megadim (225:20) disagrees noting that since this individual accepted responsibility to educate the boy, he should recite Baruch Shepitarani. According to Rabbi Klein, the adoptive father should not recite the Beracha as it would be L'vatata. The Beracha would be regulated to the maternal grandfather based upon the Shach's (Yoreh Deah, 245:1) position that a maternal grandfather also has an obligation to teach his grandchildren Torah. The Pri Megadim would disagree since the only obligation for the beracha is on the one with the responsibility to teach him and this adoptive father accepted that responsibility.

Battala News Mazal tov to Dr. and Mrs. Jeremy Kurz upon the birth of a baby boy. Mazal tov to Shmuel Maybruch upon his recent engagement Mazal Tov to Moshe Roth upon his recent engagement

