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Minhagim of Brit Milah
by RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

The many Minhagim involved in fulfilling the commandment of Brit Milah greatly enrich and enhance our observance of this vital Mitzva. In fact, many Rishonim (see the sources cited by Professor Daniel Sperber, Minhagei Yisrael 1:235-237) use the phrase "Minhagan Shel Yisrael Torah He," the customs of the Jewish People constitute Torah. Rav Hershel Schachter quotes

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik as explaining this phrase as an obligation not only to abide by Minhagim, but also an obligation to study Minhagim. Minhagim, Rav Soloveitchik said, are Torah even to the extent that we must study them in order to understand them and discover the basis for them in the Gemara and Rishonim. Indeed, Rav Schachter recounts that the Rav devoted much time in his Shiurim at Yeshiva University to explaining the basis of many Minhagim. In this essay, we seek to explain the source and reason for some Minhagim of Brit Milah. We will discuss the chair set aside for Eliyahu Hanavi, the institution of the Sandek, the question of whether Tefillin should be worn during a Brit, the recitation of Aleinu after a Brit, and the Seudat Brit Milah.

Eliyahu Hanavi's Chair

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 265:11) records the celebrated custom to designate a chair for Eliyahu Hanavi at a Brit. The Vilna Gaon (Biur Hagra Y.D. 265:43) writes that the source for this practice is the Pirkei Derebbe Eliezer chapter 29. This Midrash relates that the Jewish People faithfully kept the Mitzva of Brit Milah until the Kingdom of Israel split into two halves. The wicked leaders of the Northern Kingdom, Achav and Ezevel, forbade their subjects to practice Brit Milah. Eliyahu Hanavi, in response, announced that it would not rain until Achav and Ezevel rescinded the anti-Milah decree. Ezevel ordered Eliyahu killed for this, and Eliyahu was forced to flee. Hashem appeared to Eliyahu and told Eliyahu that He will reward him for his zealotry in this situation and in killing Zimri Ben Saluh

(Bemidbar chapter 25 - recall that Chazal identify Pinchas with Eliyahu Hanavi). Eliyahu's reward will be having a seat of honor designated for him at every Brit Milah. This Midrash conveys a very powerful message. We repeat at the Brit a Pasuk from Yechezkel (16:6) "In your blood live," which emphasizes the vital importance of dedication and sacrifice for Torah. We cannot survive, much less thrive, without our willingness to expend maximal effort in our observance of the Torah. We must even be willing to risk or even give up our lives for Torah. Eliyahu Hanavi serves as a powerful role model of unswerving devotion to Hashem and His Torah and willingness to risk one's life for Torah and the Jewish People. The famous Mohel, Rabbi Harry Bronstein zt"l is a modern day example of

Eliyahu Hanavi. Rabbi Bronstein traveled to the Soviet Union on his American passport and clandestinely performed tens of thousands of Brit Milo until the KGB caught him and placed him in a Soviet prison. The Soviets released him after he suffered a serious heart attack and President Carter pressured Premier Brezhnev for Rabbi Bronstein's release. Due to Rabbi Bronstein's heroic efforts, tens of thousands of Jews established a connection to Judaism that they otherwise could not have done. It is important to emphasize that the Gemara (Shabbat 130a) notes that Jews have traditionally risked their lives in the face of government decrees forbidding Milah.

The Sandek

The Rama (Y.D. 265:11) records the practice of the Sandek holding the baby on his thighs. The Biur Hagra (Y.D. 265:44) cites the Midrash Shochar Tov that explains that this is based on the Pasuk (Tehillim 35:10) that states "All of my limbs shall say 'Hashem who is like you.'" The Midrash outlines how every body part is used in the service of Hashem. Our thighs participate in the service of Hashem, explains the Midrash, by placing the baby on our thighs during the Brit.

The Rama records a custom that a father should not honor the same individual twice with being the Sandek for his children. The reason is that the Sandek is compared to a Kohen offering the Ketoret (incense offering) in the Bait Hamikdash. The procedure regarding the Ketoret is that a Kohen does not perform this Mitzva more than once in his lifetime. Hashem rewards the Kohen who offers the Ketoret with wealth. Thus, we want to afford the opportunity to as many Kohanim as possible to become wealthy (Yoma 26a). Similarly, we wish to afford as many people as possible to serve as a Sandek and receive Hashem's blessing to become wealthy. The Gra (Y.D. 265:45) expresses some skepticism regarding this Minhag. First, based on its reasoning, the Minhag should have been that one should not serve more than once as a Sandek for any child, not just two different children of one family. Second, the Gra writes that we have never seen someone become wealthy because he served as a Sandek. Nevertheless, the Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 265:34) concludes, we should abide by the custom recorded by the Rama. The Aruch Hashulchan notes, though, that the custom in many locales is that the Rav of the city serves as the Sandek for all the baby boys. The Aruch Hashulchan justifies this practice by comparing the local Rav to the Kohen Gadol, who had the right to offer a Korban or Ketoret any time he desired (see Yoma 14a). Indeed, it is related that the Chazon Ish served as the Sandek for innumerable baby boys. Rabbi Yissachar Frand relates that Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman (the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Ner Yisrael) also served as the Sandek for countless baby boys.

Tefillin and Brit Milah

The Shach (Y.D.265:24) and Magen Avraham (25:28) record the Minhag that men do not remove their Tefillin until after the Milah. The reason, the Shach explains, is that the Torah describes both Tefillin and Brit Milah as an "Ot," a sign. However, Rav Moshe Pirutinsky in his Sefer Habrit (265:133) cites a number of Acharonim who object to this practice. They argue that the Tefillin are a "competing" Ot to Milah and thus wearing Tefillin during a Brit denigrates the Ot of Brit Milah. Moreover, these authorities note that the Gemara (Zevachim 19a) states that Kohanim do not wear Tefillin during the Avoda. This is a relevant point because Chazal compare a Brit Milah to a Korban (see, for example, the Biur Hagra Y.D. 265:40). Indeed, Rav Yitzchak Yosef (Yalkut Yosef p.895) rules that it is preferable not to wear Tefillin during the Brit. Moreover, the Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 265:38) notes that the Minhag has emerged that men remove Tefillin before the Brit. The Minhag today is that men remove their Tefillin before the Brit, except for the father of the baby and the Sandek. However, the Mishna Berura (25:55) writes that it is "proper" not to remove the Tefillin until after the Brit Milah. Indeed, I once met Rav Reuven Feinstein (the son of Rav Moshe Feinstein) at a Brit and I noticed that he did not remove his Tefillin until after the Brit. He told me that this is proper practice for all to follow. Rabbi Moshe Snow reports that Rav Dovid Feinstein does not remove his Tefillin until after the Brit.

Aleinu after the Brit

The Shach (ibid.) also mentions the Minhag to recite Aleinu after the Brit and all of its accompanying Berachot and Tefilot. The Pri Megadim explains that Aleinu emphasizes our separation from the rest of the world and the Brit celebrates the unique relationship between Hashem and the Jewish People. Another reason might be that in Aleinu we note our mission "to perfect the world through Hashem's kingdom." Similarly, the Brit signifies the need for us to improve ourselves as noted by the Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzva 2). The Sefer Hachinuch notes that males are not born with perfect bodies because Hashem wants man to perfect his body. Similarly, the Sefer Hachinuch writes, the Brit Milah should inspire us to perfect our souls and spiritual life. The Aleinu prayer underscores this theme.

The Seudat Brit Milah

The Rama (Y.D. 265:12) notes that one who does not participate in the Seudat Brit Milah is excommunicated from Hashem. This comment is based on Gemara Pesachim 113b and Tosafot Pesachim 114a s.v. Veein. Tosafot explains that the Midrash states that one who eats at a Seudat Brit Milah is spared from Gehenom. In fact, the Pitchei Teshuva Y.D. 265:18 and Aruch Hashulchan 265:37 note that we do not invite people to a Brit due to concern that the people will be excommunicated from Hashem if they do not attend. Rather, we merely inform people of the Brit's time and location. We might suggest another reason for the seriousness of this matter. We mentioned that Chazal compare a Brit to a Korban. Accordingly, we may compare eating at a Seudat Brit Milah to eating a Korban. Sharing a meal is a bonding experience. When we eat a Korban we celebrate our relationship with Hashem (see Rabbi Josh Berman's "The Temple," which develops this point at length). Similarly, when we participate in a Seudat Brit Milah we celebrate the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People. This also may be the reason why Chassidim insist on serving meat at a Seudat Brit Milah, even though meat is not especially appetizing early in the morning. Since Korbanot were meat, the Seudat Brit Milah should consist of meat. Indeed, attendance at a Brit Milah and its subsequent Seudah is of great significance. A ruling issued by Rav Hershel Schachter emphasizes this point. A group of Rabbeim wished to attend a Brit Milah of a child of their friend. However, the Brit was scheduled to take place at a somewhat distant location and the Rabbeim would have to miss teaching some of their Torah classes if they would attend the Brit. The Rabbeim asked Rav Schachter if attending the Brit enjoys preference over teaching the Shiur. Rav Schachter ruled that the Rabbeim should attend the Brit. Rav Schachter explained that the Rabbeim would be setting an example for their Talmidim to attend the Brit of their friends' children in the future.

Conclusion

Many more Minhagim are associated with Brit Milah that we have not discussed. An excellent resource for investigating the reasons and applications of the many Minhagim is Rav Pirutinsky's Sefer Habrit. I hope that this essay serves as an inspiration to follow Rav Soloveitchik's exhortation to explore in depth the customs of the Jewish People.

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From THE PRACTICAL TORAH - A Collection of Presentations of Halachah Based on the Parshas Hashavua
BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES
Parshas Lech Lecha: Changing One's Name
No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

Towards the end of this Parsha, we are told that Hashem changed Avram's name to Avraham (Bereishis 17:5) and then changed Sorai's name to Soroh (Ibid. Posuk 15). Based upon the juxtaposition of his latter Posuk describing Sorai's name change to the Posuk stating that she will eventually have a child (Ibid. Posuk 16), the Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (16b) derives that changing a person's name is one of the things which can alter a bad decree which may have been passed against that person. Interestingly, the Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (Parsha 44 Siman 15) derives this fact that changing one's name can nullify a bad decree from the earlier Posuk, describing Avram's name change to Avraham. The Midrash in Koheles Rabbasi (Parsha 5 Siman 4), while stating likewise that the value of Shinui HaShem--changing one's name--is learned from the Posuk relating to Avraham Avinu, mentions Sorai as well, concluding that a decree had been made that Avram and Sorai would never have child; Avraham and Soroh, however, would indeed have a child.

In explaining the reason why changing one's name can cancel a bad decree, the Maharsha on the above cited Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (Chidushai Aggados to Rosh HaShanah Ibid. s.v. Arba Devarim) quotes from the Semag (Mitzvos Aseh 17) that when one changes one's name, one declares that he is, in effect, a different person, and not the same person who committed the deeds which generated the unfavorable decree. The Eitz Yosef, in his commentary to the above cited Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (Ibid. s.v. Af), explains it similarly, saying that person declares that he is now, with his new name, not the same person he was, and, consequently, not the person against whom this bad decree has been passed. The Maharsha (Ibid.) then adds that after one has changed one's name, one should recognize that in actuality, it was not his original name, but his sins that caused Hashem to decree unfavorable things for him, and he should therefore become inspired to do Teshuvah and change his ways, and in that way become a truly different person. The Ran in Rosh HaShanah (3b in Rif s.v. Shinui HaShem) also stresses that changing one's name can annul a bad decree because this act will inspire the person to do Teshuvah. The Rambam thus rules (Hilchos Teshuvah Perek 2 Halacha 4) that part of the process of doing Teshuvah is to change one's name, meaning, to declare that he is now a different person, not the one who committed so many sins See Perek 7 Ibid. Halachos 6, 7).

In the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Siman 335 Sif 10), the Ramo, based on this idea that Shinui Hashem can cancel an unfavorable decree, writes that there is a practice to give a new name to a sick person when blessing him and davening on his behalf. The Aruch HaShulchan (ibid. Sif 12) writes that this means that he is given a new name in addition to, not as a replacement for, the name he already has. This is the case despite that fact that the Gemara in Berachos (13a) indicates regarding Avraham Avinu that it is improper to refer to him by his original name at all. He then states (Ibid.) that this name change is done when the illness is very severe, although he offers no guidelines as to how to determine that status. The Gesher HaChaim (Chelek 1, Perek 1, Sif 3, Ot 4) likewise writes that many observe this custom to change the name of a dangerously ill person by adding on a new name, and he then adds that the changing of the name is accompanied by the recitation of Tehillim in the presence of a Minyan and various other special Tefillos, including a special Yehi Ratzon recited specifically when giving someone an additional name, as printed in many Siddurim. As a side point, it is interesting to note that this idea in general of reciting Tehillim in order to be protected from anguish and harm is codified by the Rambam (Hilchos Avodas Kochavim Perek 11 Halacha 12).

As to precisely how to choose the new name to be added, Rabbeinu Yehudah HaChassid implies in the Sefer Chassidim (Siman 244) that it is done by means of a Goral, a kind of lottery, meaning that a Chumash (or a Tanach) is opened up, and the first name that one comes across is the new name given to the sick person. It is noteworthy that the Birkei Yosef, in his commentary to the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Siman 179 Sif Katan 8), quotes those who say that one can seek "advice" in general by opening up a Chumash or a Tanach and studying the Pesukim which one comes across. The Sefer

Ta'amei HaMinhagim (Kuntras Acharon to Siman 217, Inyanei Berachos Ot 7, Amud 105) quotes, however, that if the first name one sees is that of a wicked person, one may not give that name to the sick person, since the Gemara in Yoma (Ibid. 38b, and see Ibid. Tosafos s.v. D'Lo) indicates that one should not use the name of a wicked person. He then quotes from the Chida (Sefer Dvash, Maareches 300 Ot 4) that there are certain other names which should not be used for this purpose, and certain names which should be used. The common practice today is to give the sick person a name which somehow symbolizes life, health, strength, or some other type of Beracha which expresses the hope that the person will recover from his illness.

The Gesher HaChaim (Ibid. Ot 5) further writes that the new name being added should become the person's first name, and his original name(s) now become(s) the middle name(s). He then explains that whether or not the person will continue to be referred to by the new name will depend upon whether he recovers from the illness, and upon the nature of his recovery. If he recovers even a little bit, and is able to get up from this illness and establish himself with his new name for at least thirty days, even if he then gets sick again and dies after these thirty days, since he had established himself after having recovered from his illness for at least thirty days with this new name, that name remains associated with him forever. It is thus written on his tombstone, and is used when a Keil Molei Rachamim is said, when Yizkor is recited, and when Mishanos are learned in his memory, and so on. If, however, the person does not recover from the illness, meaning that he does not establish himself after having gotten up from the illness for at least thirty days with this new name, then he is referred to and remembered only by his original name, and the new name is ignored.

The Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim cited above (Ibid.) quotes from the Shaloh (Kitzur 335, Inyanei Sefer Torah) that whether or not the person recovers following the addition of the new name likewise determines whether this name will be used when the person and his sons are subsequently called to the Torah. In the Shulchan Aruch (Even HaEzer Siman 129 Sif 18), the Ramo rules regarding a Get that if one of the parties had a name added on because of an illness, the new name and any nickname associated with it is to be mentioned first. The Pischei Teshuvah (Ibid. Sif Katan 53, 54) discusses some details of this ruling; the Be'er Heitev (Ibid. Sif Katan 32) explains under what conditions the person's children will have to use the added name if they need a Get, and what should be done with this name if the sick person himself wants to divorce his wife while he's still sick. Interestingly, these Poskim do not mention the thirty day period. It is worth noting that the Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim (Ibid.) quotes authorities who stress that one must be very careful about changing someone's name, and that it should not be done lightly, but rather in the presence of a Talmid Chochom and a Tzaddik who will have the proper Kavanos.

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

Lot Traces His 'Lineage' To His Property

The parsha contains an 'awkwardly written' verse: "They took Lot and his property, the nephew of Avram, and they went and Lot was living at this time in Sodom" [Bereshis 14:12]. A grammar teacher would have a field day, because the sentence contains a misplaced modifier. The 'correct' way to write this sentence would seem to be "They took Lot, the nephew of Avram, and his property..." What is the Torah trying to convey by constructing the sentence in this seemingly awkward fashion?

The Beis Av cites an interesting incident in order to explain the pasuk [verse]. During World War Two, his family fled their home in Europe, and made their way to Vienna. Many other Eastern European refugees also arrived, fleeing the Nazis. Later, there was a rumor that the S.S. was about to enter Vienna. The Beis Av's father decided to leave, even though it meant leaving everything behind. Many of the

other refugees, however, tried to dissuade him, telling him that things would be alright and urging him not to cause a panic by fleeing again. The Beis Av's father refused to listen to their arguments and was determined to leave, even if it was only with the shirt on his back.

Their family left everything behind in Vienna, and survived. Those who remained in Vienna, as history proved, were taken away to concentration camps and killed. They lost not only their property, but their lives as well. What prevented the other people from leaving? They did not leave because they would have had to leave their property behind. When faced with the specter of losing either their lives or their life's savings, people sometimes try to convince themselves that everything will turn out well. They use various irrational rationalizations to avoid giving up their property.

As strange as this may seem, the Talmud says that to some individuals, their "money is more dear to them than their lives" [Brachos 61b]. This is the reason for the awkward sentence structure -- to teach us that Lot was such an individual.

In order to strengthen this interpretation, we may ask further: Why does this pasuk add "and Lot was living in Sodom"? We already knew that Lot was living in Sodom! The answer is related to the reason why Lot was in Sodom in the first place. There were opportunities in Sodom. One could make a good living in Sodom. "It was fertile" [Bereshis 13:10]. Lot wanted to have a nice living. He wanted to make money. This was perhaps the defining aspect of his character -- this verse is telling us what Lot was all about. So when the pasuk mentions Lot, it emphasizes: "Lot and his property, the nephew of Avram." He was first and foremost associated with his money. That, in his mind, was his 'yichus' (lineage). That is what he was proud of. Only as an afterthought was he also "the nephew of Avram." The pasuk adds, "...he was living in Sodom" -- in order to emphasize the point that the reason why he was there in the first place was because he was drawn there by the economy and the opportunity for easy living.

As hard as people may work for their money, they must keep things in perspective. There are priorities in life. Unfortunately in the worst of circumstances people sometimes mix up those priorities. Thousands of people have paid the ultimate price for that mistake.

No "Business As Usual" In A Morally Corrupt Society

Perhaps the over-riding theme of the entire book of Bereshis is "ma'aseh avos siman l'banim" ["the actions of the fathers foreshadows what will happen to their children"]. On one level, this concept is like a prophecy or a 'blueprint'. One who wishes to know what will happen to the Jewish people can look in the book of Bereshis and thereby glean insight into history.

But it means more than that. It also means that our strength, as a nation, to endure that which we have experienced as a people, comes to us by virtue of the fact that our Patriarchs experienced it first. If an Avraham Avinu went down to Egypt and survived, if a Yaakov Avinu went into exile and was able to survive, this made an impression on their souls. As a people, we share their souls. Consequently, the impression that those activities made on our collective souls gave us the strength to endure what we have had to endure as a people. This is the deeper meaning of "ma'aseh avos siman l'banim".

In this week's portion, Avram Avinu went down to Egypt. Our Sages tell us that Egypt was a land that was permeated with sexual immorality. It was a land that was morally bankrupt. The fact that Avram Avinu survived enabled his descendants to have spiritual strength to endure the later trials and tribulations of the Egyptian exile.

However, we learn something else from Avram Avinu. When Avram saw that he was going down to a land that was immersed in immorality, he took action. He realized that he could not conduct his life "business as usual" under those circumstances. He therefore told Sarai, "Please say that you are my sister..." [Bereshis 12:13]. Avram realized that when one is in a land that is immersed in immorality, one must institute special enactments and plan special defenses to deal with the threatening situation.

Regrettably, America has become a land that is immersed in sexual immorality. Things are said in the national media that one would not have dreamt of uttering in public 30 years ago, let alone broadcasting

them, quite literally, in front of the whole country. This is the society in which we live. Today, you cannot open a newspaper without being assaulted!

There was recently an article in Business Week that documented how advertisers have relaxed standards. The mass media uses print advertisements to promote products that it would have been unimaginable to publicly promote ten years ago. One cannot stand in the checkout line of a supermarket today without being hit by it. A man in Glen Burnie, MD, petitioned the local Giant grocery store. He asked that just as there are checkout aisles in which candy is not sold, there should be checkout aisles that do not sell tabloids and other offensive magazines.

It is hard for us to say it. This is a wonderful country and it has been wonderful for the Jews, but the country has literally lost its moral bearing. The liberties that the society takes regarding how men talk and act with women in social settings and in the work place -- these are literally not things that morally upright individuals can do.

The "ma'aseh avos siman l'banim" of this Torah portion is that when one knows that he is in such a society, life cannot be "business as usual". Each of us must carefully think about this issue, and decide how can we protect ourselves. But something must be done. Unfortunately, we live in a spiritually hostile society and we cannot continue with "business as usual".

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Parashah Talk
Parshas Lech Lecha
BRISKER RAV
EXCERPT FROM BRISK ON CHUMASH, BY RABBI ASHER BERGMAN.

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

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

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

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

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

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

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/rwil_lechlecha.html
[From last year]

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

Kibud Av V'aim vs. Living in Israel

The Medrash (39:7) relates that Avraham was afraid to leave Terach because people would say he left his aging father, and this would cause a chilul Hashem. Hashem responded, "Lech lecha" (12:1), I exempt you ("lecha") from kibud av, but nobody else. And I will record Terach's death before your journey.

The Maharal (Rashi 11:32) explains the uniqueness of Avraham's circumstance and the "death" of Terach as follows. Since Avraham began an entirely new era when he left Terach, his connection to Terach was completely severed. Therefore, Hashem exempted him, and only him, from kibud av, and emphasized the total break by viewing Terach as dead before Avraham's journey to Eretz Yisroel.

This Medrash corroborates the Rambam's view (Mamrim 6:11) that one must honor a parent who is a rasha. According to the Tur (Yoreh Deah 240: 18), a rasha need not be honored by his son and Avraham was not unique at all.

The Tur proves his position from the Gemara (Bava Kamma 94b) which states that a son, after his father's death, does not have to repay interest that his father accrued over his lifetime. Chizkiyahu's shabby treatment of his rasha father's body, which Chazal endorsed (Pesachim 56a), also support's the Tur's view.

To defend the Rambam, we must assume that kibud av contains an interpersonal (bein adam lechavero) component (see Minchas Chinuch No.33). However, this bein adam lechavero aspect applies only while the father is alive (see Maharam Schick, Y.D. 218). The obligation to honor a deceased parent (Kiddushin 31b) is purely bein adam lamakom.

The Ramban (Shmos 20:12) suggests that kibud av is included in the honor of Hashem because parents are Hashem's partner in creation (Kiddushin 30b). Therefore, a rasha, who is unworthy of being treated as Hashem's partner, is excluded from the bein adam lamakom dimension of kibud av. Thus, the Rambam requires one to honor a parent who is a rasha only because of the bein adam lechavero component. But because interpersonal obligations do not apply to one who died, one need not honor a deceased rasha. Hence, the Gemara (Bava Kamma, Pesachim) refers to a dead parent, while the Rambam refers to a rasha who is still alive.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 31b) relates that R. Assi left Eretz Yisroel to greet his mother. When he discovered that she had died and her coffin was coming, he said, "Had I known I would not have left." Why would he not have left? Isn't attending a parent's funeral a fulfillment of kibud av?

A more basic question can be raised. How was R. Assi permitted to leave? Tosfos (Avodah Zarah 13a) permits leaving Eretz Yisroel only to learn Torah or to get married. In fact, the issue of leaving Eretz Yisroel for kibud av is disputed by the poskim (Pischei Teshuvah, Even Haezer 75:6, Yechave Daas 3:69)

Perhaps, the bein adam lamakom aspect of kibud av does not warrant leaving Eretz Yisroel, as Tosfos implies. Therefore once Rav Asi discovered that his mother had died, and only the bein adam lamakom aspect of kibud av remained intact, he no longer had any justification to leave Eretz Yisroel. However, just as one is required to pay a personal debt, even if as a result he must leave Eretz Yisroel, so too one must repay his debt to his parents (see Chinuch #33) and honor them even by leaving Eretz Yisroel. Therefore, R. Assi was

permitted to leave Eretz Yisroel to honor his mother- a bein adam lechavero obligation.

If we equate remaining outside Eretz Yisroel with leaving it, there is further proof that kibud av overrides living in Eretz Yisroel from the Medrash. Only Avraham was exempted from kibud av to live in Eretz Yisroel, as derived from Lech Lecha. All others must honor even a rasha father, even if as a result the mitzva of living in Eretz Yisroel cannot be fulfilled.

From: aweiss@shaalvim.org Sent: Thursday, October 25, 2001
To: Yeshivat Sha'alvim Parashat HaShavua

YESHIVAT SHA'ALVIM PARASHAT HASHAVUAH
The Parasha Shiur is now written by Rav Moshe Ganz, RaM and Rosh Kollel at Yeshivat Sha'alvim. Rav Ganz is a talmid of Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, and this shiur, which was originally given as a sicha in the Yeshiva, reflects the depths of insight and wisdom of a true ba'al machshava.

Parashat Lech L'cha RAV MOSHE GANZ

Translated by Rachel Azriel

Eino Mitzuveh V'oseh

In Parshat Lech-Lecha G-d calls to Avraham, "Go for yourself out of your country." Rashi explains, "For you own good and benefit." The Ramban comments that lecha, is not always for one's good, but rather, this is a way of speaking as in, hageshem chalaf halach lo." Lo - his, from the same root as lecha - yours.

When we look at G-d's words to Avraham in this parsha, we discover that G-d does not present Avraham with any commandments. G-d gives to Avraham the promise of children, the land, and other promises as well. So it is at the outset of the parsha, and also after Lot parts from him, and again in the covenant, the Brit Bein Habetarim .A stove of smoke and torch of fire, the messengers of G-d, pass through the animals' parts. Avraham does not. Why? Because this covenant is one-sided, as is confirmed at the end of this passage, "In that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram saying; 'unto thy seed have I given this land.'" There is no demand from Avraham in this covenant.

Only when Avraham is already 99, 24 years after he was first spoken to by G-d (29 according to the "Seder Olam"), he is told by G-d, "walk before me and be wholesome." Then another covenant is made, the Brit Milah, and this time Avraham is an active partner. What is the meaning of this pattern of events?

Avraham has the quality of, "eino mitzuveh veoseh", he is not commanded to do mitzvot, yet he performs them anyway. It says in Kohelet, "Ma yafu paameich bat nediv - "How beautiful are your steps in sandals, prince's daughter" The princess, Avraham's daughter, is called nediv - benevolent, as it says, "Nedivei amim neesefu, am elokei Avraham" - "The princes of the peoples are gathered together, the people of the G-d of Abraham." Avraham works with G-d all of the time. He builds altars, calls in the name of G-d, rescues Lot, and refuses to accept gifts from the King of Sodom. All this is voluntary, not commanded.

As Rabbi Chanina said, there is special significance to one who is commanded and fulfills. But there is also value to the quality of benevolence. This is an expression of the deep, good will that is revealed from deep down inside of one without any goading or pressure. This is also the foundation for accepting the mitzvot that are commanded, mitzuveh veoseh, with love. Therefore Avraham's second lech-lecha, to the Akeida, is similar to his first - for your own good and benefit since doing G-d's will is his inner desire.

This quality of benevolence implanted in our souls is an inheritance from Avraham. Therefore we are called bat nediv, the daughter of the prince, of the benevolent. As a result, we received the Torah of "commanded and performs" - mitzuveh veoseh. A Torah of, "with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might" cannot be received without this quality of benevolence.

Even after the giving of the Torah we are left with horizons of 'not commanded and performs,' as in the areas of lifnim meshurat hadin - doing more than the law requires, hidur mitzva - strict fulfillment of a

mitzvah, and more. Hara Kook wrote (Igrot 1) that we were given only minimal, necessary commandments and everything else was left open to develop our natural good will and to give expression to it.

Therefore, for many years Avraham does the good and the upright without any commandment. Only before the birth of Yitzhak, when the forming of the nation begins, does the idea of mitzuveh veoseh start. First G-d says, "Walk before me and be wholesome" and then commands the mitzvah of the brit milah, which cannot be done without a specific commandment, since one does not make a covenant without a partner. The rest of the mitzvot are given only later at Mount Sinai.

These two forces - benevolence and discipline - are meant to complement one another. In Maayanei Yeshua Rav Charlop wrote about their relationship. When Chazal say that Avraham kept even the eruv tavshilin, this is because the eruv comes as a reminder of Shabbat, which the holiday could make us forget. The sanctity of Shabbat, not being dependent upon the date, is regular and permanent; it has the quality of commandment. The sanctity of the holidays has its source in Bnei Yisrael, who sanctify them at certain times. Thus the holidays have the quality of emotion and benevolence. Avraham Avenu, who is the foundation of benevolence observed the eruv tavshilin to remember the value of the commandment-because the reward of one who is commanded and performs is greater than that of one who is not commanded and performs.

Harav Kook wrote in Orot, that in the Mashiaich both these forces will be united, the natural and the learned. Apparently he based his words on the saying of Chazal relating to the verse in Yeshayahu, "Behold, My servant shall prosper, He shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high" to which Chazal remark, "more exalted than Avraham, loftier than Moshe, and even higher than the ministering angels."

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom
parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il
Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Lech Lecha (Genesis 12:1-17:27)
BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

This week's portion begins the history of the Jewish people by highlighting the life of the first Jew, Abraham. It opens with the Divine command that he "make Aliyah" to the land of Israel, describes in detail his religious discovery and his mission to teach ethical monotheism to the world, and we are told of his exploits as a great military hero. Indeed, we read of four kings who had placed a stranglehold on the other five nations of Canaan, and Abraham's success in freeing the region from terrorist invasions (Chapter 14).

Interestingly enough, the most dangerous historical enemy of the Israelites is not mentioned in this initial regional war - and that is the Philistines. Time and time again, in the Book of Genesis as well as in the later Biblical books of Judges, Samuel and Kings, we come upon

Philistine invasions and battles. But here the Philistines aren't mentioned at all. Why not?

I believe the answer is to be found in the origins of this inveterately warring enemy of our people - even though I do not believe that the Palestinians of today cannot legitimately link themselves biologically to the Philistines, there is a great deal to be learned from the kind of people with whom we can make treaties and the type of people with whom we cannot. A study of their origins will tell us precisely why they are such dangerous enemies with whom any attempt at signing a peace-treaty is a mere act of self delusion.

At the end of last week's Torah portion, the Bible delineates the origins of the various nations of the world, each of them emanating from the only survivors of the Great Flood, one of three sons of Noah. In this context, the Torah informs us that the children of Ham were Kush (Ethiopia), Egypt, Pratt and Canaan (Genesis 10:6), "and that Egypt bore the Patrusim from whom 'went out' the Philistines" (Genesis 10:13,14). The expression "went out" is used only in this context; otherwise the Torah speaks of the founders of the various peoples as having been born. Rav David Kimchi, famous medieval grammarian and commentary (known as the Radak), explains that the Philistines were apparently born to Egypt and naturally lived within the land territory of Egypt; they went out of their natural borders and tried to establish themselves in the nearby Land of Canaan. Indeed, the very world palash (Plishtim = Philistines) means to invade, to act as an interloper. These Philistines who made an incursion into a land which was not naturally their own. Hence, they were not part of the four indigenous Canaanite nations who were constantly terrorizing the other five indigenous nations.

After this initial battle, however, the more constant enemy of Israel were the Philistines. We first come upon them in chapter 20, when Abraham and Sarah attempt to settle in Gerar (the southern Negev area of the Land of Israel); Abraham introduces Sarah as his sister, and the King Avimelech takes her into his harem. Avimelech and his servants then become struck with impotence. G-d explains the true relationship between Sarah and Abraham to Avimelech in a dream, Avimelech confronts Abraham in righteous indignation, and Abraham explains that when he saw the lack of Divine fear on the part of the Philistine leadership, he felt he had no other recourse. Avimelech returns Sarah to her husband, declaring to Abraham: "Behold, my land is before you; you may dwell in any part of it you desire" (Genesis 20:16). Take note of the fact that Avimelech, the Philistine invader, describes the southern part of Israel as "his land."

Our next encounter with the Philistines is when Avimelech and his military General Pikhol ask Abraham to take an oath that he will never act falsely towards Avimelech's descendants; apparently this meant to secure Abraham's concession that he would not take away the land Avimelech claimed was his. Abraham takes the oath - and then chastises Avimelech for having stolen his wells. Avimelech pleads ignorance, Abraham gives him seven ewes, and they make a treaty together (Genesis 21: 22-33).

The next incident is the most distressing of all. This takes place a generation later, when Abraham's son Isaac settles in Gerar, claiming his wife Rebecca to be his sister. Isaac becomes wealthy, the Philistines "are jealous of him," and they "stop up" the wells his father Abraham had dug, filling them with earth. Avimelech, adding further insult to the injury of the stolen wells, orders Isaac "to go out from Gerar, because you have become mighty by taking away our (wealth)." Remember that Avimelech had previously told Abraham that he could live wherever he chose - and certainly could dig wells! Isaac distances himself from where he had previously settled, digs more wells - and runs into further difficulties with the Philistines. Ultimately, Avimelech comes to Isaac in Beer Sheba, brings two generals this time, and again requests a peace treaty, after all, he says, "you ought do us not evil because we did not harm you, we only did good to you by banishing you peacefully." Isaac agrees to the treaty. (Genesis 26: 7-33)

Three times the Philistines make a treaty, and each time it is broken. The Rashbam even claims that the binding of Isaac comes as a punishment to Abraham for having agreed to a Treaty with Avimelech in the first place. (Genesis 22:1, Rashbam ad loc) What was

Abraham's sin? Apparently, the Philistines claimed ownership over the Land of Israel - even though they were the invaders and had not right to the land. Avimelech only asked for a treaty when he became worried lest Abraham - who seemed to have special Divine protection - take the land away from him. He was never serious about the treaty - and he never kept any aspect of it either in the lifetime of Abraham or Isaac. The lesson is clear: when an interloper claims ownership over Israel, you cannot weaken your right to the land as the result of a treaty. The invader will only interpret your good will as weakness, will expect you to thank him if he merely banishes you and does not murder you, and he has absolutely no intention of allowing you to live in any part of the land or to develop its resources. Unless the other claimant is willing to relinquish at least part of his claim and recognize your rights - and as a moral position, not as a temporary tactic because he fears your reprisal - it makes absolutely no sense to enter into a treaty with him. Why do we constantly refuse to learn from history, even from the history of the Bible about which Nachmanides teaches: "The actions of the patriarchs is a foreshadowing of the happenings to their descendants."

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean To subscribe, E-mail to: <Shabbat_Shalom-on@ohrtorahstone.org.il>

From: listmaster@shemayisrael.com To: Peninim Parsha Subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum PARSHAS LECH LECHO

Go for yourself from you land.á (12:1)

Avraham Avinu rose to the occasion.á Hashem tested him when He told him to leave and go to another home.á It was a significant test, but Avraham passed it.á Certainly, to pick oneself up, to leave one's roots, takes incredible conviction.á Avraham heard the call, however, and he listened.á Interestingly, Lot, Avraham's nephew, also left with Avraham, even though he personally did not hear the call.á In effect, Lot withstood a much greater trial than Avraham did.á If this is the case, what happened to Lot?á He ended up in Sodom, the city that established the standard for evil.á In other words, Lot went to the extreme opposite of Avraham.á What happened to cause such a transformation?

Horav Yehudah Leib Chasman, zl, notes that this phenomenon is not uncommon.á Indeed, we see well-meaning individuals who seek the truth and strive to change their ways, to no avail.á What is it?á Why do some succeed, while others just simply cannot effect any change in their habits?á The difference, explains Horav Chasman, lies in the "clean-up job" one is prepared to undertake prior to attempting to reach a higher moral/spiritual plane.á One who seeks to acquire the attributes and virtues, the fear of G-d, and the character refinement that comprise the characteristics of a Torah Jew must first purge himself of his "old" habits, his tendency to evil and his base moral behavior.á Only then can he acquire the "good" that a life of Torah has to offer.

One cannot mix the two together.á Studying Torah and performing mitzvos just do not coincide with contemporary moral values.á What is normal for today's society is generally not in-sync with the Torah's viewpoint.á Consequently, Hashem told Avraham, "Lech lecha m'e artzecha," "Go for yourself from your land."á Although one first leaves his home, then his city and only as a last resort does he leave his land, Hashem suggested a departure from the norm.á He was addressing the habits and tendencies that had become ingrained in Avraham as a result of his environment.á It was much easier for Avraham to distance himself from the traits which were not intrinsic to him.á Thus, the effect of "his land" would be much easier to expunge.á Hashem wanted him to work his way up.á First, he was to rid himself of the easy habits, those that had not really taken hold of him.á Afterwards, he was to focus on the effect of the "city."á Last, he was to free himself of the effect most integral to him, the immediate environment of his home.á

Only then, could he strive to achieve spiritual perfection in "the land that I will show you."

This is the difference between Avraham and Lot: Avraham left everything when he turned towards Hashem. Lot, on the other hand, took along all of his baggage.

He proceeded on his journeys from the south to Beth-El to the place where his tent had been first. (13:3)

Rashi says that these "journeys" were part of an original itinerary, implying that Avraham Avinu stayed in the same places that he had stayed on his way to Egypt. Chazal derive from this seemingly insignificant detail that one should not change his usual lodgings unless he has had a bad experience there. Otherwise, he discredits himself, implying that he is either hard to please or of an unsavory character. He also gives the impression that his original lodgings were unsatisfactory, thereby harming the host's reputation. While we can understand this approach, should the individual settle for substandard accommodations?

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, explains that Avraham was teaching us more than a lesson in etiquette; rather, he was imparting an understanding of Jewish values. Avraham left as a poor man and returned as a wealthy man laden with gold and silver. He did not act like those nouveau riche who, as a result of their small-minded perception of life and their huge ego due to a low self-esteem, flaunt their wealth and call attention to themselves. No - Avraham did not waste his money; he did not believe in ostentatious display of wealth. He took the newfound wealth and gave it to charity. He went back to the same motel and continued with a lifestyle very similar to the one he had enjoyed before Hashem conferred His blessing upon him. Surely, he did not waste his G-d-given gift on foolishness. To paraphrase Rav Pam, "Avraham Avinu recognized that any money in his possession that was superfluous to his needs was a deposit from Hashem to be guarded and held in safekeeping until the Almighty directed him where to spend it. How could he take for his own personal use that which belonged to the Almighty?"

Fear not Avram, I am a shield for you, your reward is very great. (15:1)

Avraham Avinu triumphed in his war with the four kings. This was the first "world war." Upon returning victorious from the battlefield, Malki Tzedek, king of Shalem, greeted him with bread and wine. The king of Sodom also gave tribute to him. After this war, after the unparalleled victory, Hashem appeared to Avraham and told him, "Do not be afraid, I will be a shield for you." This is enigmatic. Should not Hashem have appeared to Avraham before the war, to encourage him, to give him hope for victory? Avraham was not entering the battle with a large, strong army. He had just 318 soldiers with him. There are even those that contend that Avraham only had his faithful servant, Eliezer, whose Hebrew name is the numerical equivalent of 318. It was as he was going to battle against such formidable odds that Avraham needed the encouragement.

Horav Aryeh Levine, zl, explains that specifically after Avraham had emerged victorious that he needed Hashem's reassurance. After they had suffered defeat, the enemy surely would not accept their humiliation. They had to regroup and attack with greater viciousness to save face, to prove to the world that they were truly superior to Avraham. Indeed, after they were defeated, they became like a wounded animal whose pain is intense and whose emotional state demands one thing - revenge.

We may suggest that the same is true in our daily fight with our archenemy - the yetzer hora, evil inclination. When we succeed in vanquishing him, we might think that the war is now over. Now, especially, we must be on the lookout for his reprisal. It would be a serious mistake to ignore the yetzer hora's hold upon us. It is when we revel in our victory that we lose, falling prey to him.

In loving memory of our dear Mother and Grandmother MRS. ADELE SUTTON Her love of life and her vibrant personality infused and enriched our lives. May the memory of her life be a blessing. Leon Sutton and Family

From: Ohr Somayach ohr@ohr.edu To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Lech Lecha
DATE WITH DESTINY

"Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your fathers house." (12:1)

Wheeling his lone Lancaster above the target at eighteen hundred feet, Freddy leveled off and tried to bomb the target one more time. Suddenly the cockpit radio spluttered into life: "Freddy! - What are you playing at?! Get out of there now! There's more flak around those dams than guests at a Buck House tea party!" "Sorry, skipper. I'm going in one more time - even if it means that you'll have to pick up my medal for me..."

Hashem tested Avraham Avinu ten times. The first of these tests was to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's house.

However, the extra words here - "for yourself" - indicate that Hashem told Avraham that this journey was for his own benefit.

If Avraham Avinu knew that leaving his roots was for his own benefit, how could this be a test?

The answer is that sometimes it is easier for us to serve G-d when we think we are being self-sacrificing, than when we know there's something in it for ourselves. It appeals to our innate sense of self-dramatization to see ourselves as martyrs to the cause. Many are the epics that play in the cinemas of our minds in which we have the title role of the selfless hero, taking arms against a sea of troubles, and all without benefit or profit to ourselves. The test that Hashem gave Avraham was that he would have to work without the romanticism of self-sacrifice and still do Hashem's will with the same enthusiasm as some dashing hero flying his plane to a date with destiny. Based on Rabbi Yechezkel Weinfeld, as heard from Rabbi Daniel Travis

The Letter of The Law "If so much as a thread or a shoe-strap; or if I shall take from anything of yours! ... Far from me! Only what the young men have eaten..." (14:23,24) For his part in defeating the four kings, the king of Sodom offered Avraham a share of the victor's spoils, as was Avraham's right. But Avraham would take nothing, for he wanted to show his devotion to Hashem, declining personal gain so that the king of Sodom could not claim that he made Avraham rich.

However, Avraham applied this stringency to himself alone. When it came to his followers, he permitted them to take everything that was lawful.

This teaches us a powerful lesson. Don't be "frum" (pious) on someone else's spiritual expense account! If, after careful consideration, we want to take upon ourselves stringencies, that's up to us. But from others, we should never demand, or even expect, more than the letter of the law. The Chafetz Chaim

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From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] To: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Lech Lecha Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Lech-Lecha: Ask for Spiritual Wealth October 27, 2001

Sponsored by The Edeson and Stern families, on the 57th 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) Aharon Yehuda ben Yisrael a"h (Leon Vogel)

Today's Learning: Bava Metzia 5:5-6 Orach Chaim 533:4-534:1 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 92

The midrash teaches: "One must always say, 'When will my deeds equal those of my ancestors Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?'" Why, exactly, must one say this? asks R' Yitzchak Blazer z"l (1837-1907). Is it a prayer?

He explains: We read in Mishlei (2:4-5), "If you ask for it as if it were silver, if you search for it as if it were a hidden treasure - then you will understand the fear of Hashem and discover the knowledge of G-d." There are two types of people who are likely to succeed in their search for wealth, writes R' Blazer. The first is someone who is energetic by nature and who applies his energy to traveling wherever the search for wealth takes him. (On the other hand, one who is lazy by nature is likely to act lazily in his search for wealth as well, and is likely to fail.) The second type of person who is likely to find wealth is one whose desire for wealth is very great. Even if he is lazy by nature, his desire for wealth will overcome his laziness and he will stand a good chance of success.

The same two types of people may be found among those who serve Hashem. Some people are endowed with special abilities that allow them to grow and to improve their Divine service. They actively "search" for the hidden treasure, i.e., knowledge of G-d. Others are less endowed, but still have a burning desire to serve Hashem. They can only "ask" for spiritual wealth.

Just as young businessmen spend many hours talking about their role models, so the aspiring servants of Hashem in the latter group express their desire to emulate their role models. The more they say, "When will my deeds equal those of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?" the greater is their chance of ultimate success. (Kochvei Ohr p. 50)

"Lot journeyed from kedem / the east . . ." (13:11)

Rashi comments: He journeyed away from the Kadmon / the One Who Preceded everything.

R' Yosef Leib Bloch z"l (Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe; died 1929) writes: The story of Lot demonstrates that it is not enough to know that there is a Creator and that He is actively involved with His world. The Sages teach that Lot was accustomed to seeing angels in Avraham's house. Nevertheless, he readily chose to leave Avraham and to live among the evil-doers of Sdom. How did this happen? It happened because a person who does not actively work on character refinement will forever remain enslaved to his human nature, the side of him which sees the wealth of Sdom but not its evil.

This explains, as well, why the generation of the Exodus stumbled repeatedly. They attained a knowledge of G-d and His Power that no generation before or since has attained. Nevertheless, unless one actively works on character refinement, all of his abstract knowledge will not save him. (Shiurei Da'at, Vol. I, p. 92)

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Posted by Alan Broder, ajb@torah.org .

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("Iehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives are available starting with Rosh HaShanah 5758 (1997) at <http://www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/> . Text archives from 1990 through the present are available at <http://www.acoast.com/~sehch/hamaayan/> . Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B learn@torah.org Baltimore, MD 21208

From: chrysler[SMTP:rachrysl@netvision.net.il] To: Midei Parsha
Subject: Midei Shabbos by RABBI ELIEZER CHRYSLER

This issue is sponsored by an anonymous donor and by a friend of the Zeigler family in recognition of their acts of chesed
Parshas Lech Lecha

The Mitzvah of the B'ris Milah (Part I) (based on the Yalkut Yitzchak) The Reason for the B'ris Milah

The Seifer ha'Chinuch, in presenting the reason for the Mitzvah of Bris Milah, explains that G-d wished to fix a sign on the bodies of the people whom He had designated to represent Him in this world. He wanted to extend the spiritual distinction that already exists in their Neshamos to their physical bodies, so that the distinction between them should be absolute. And He fixed it specifically on the part of the body that symbolizes the continuity of mankind.

He also chose to create man incomplete, designating him the task of completing himself, rather than creating him already completed, in order to convey the message that, just as he completes himself physically, so too is he able to complete himself spiritually. Indeed, he is obliged to.

The Nachalas Binyamin offers a similar explanation. He attributes the Mitzvah of Milah to the need to make a distinction between the chosen people and the rest of the world, in the same way as He distinguished between Kasher and non-Kasher species of animals as regards animals, birds and fish. It would have been befitting for Him to make a similar mark of distinction between the 'Kasher' and the 'non-Kasher' species of human-beings, he adds. But he didn't, so as to avoid conveying the impression that there are two Creators, each of whom created His own champion on earth. So He opted to create all of mankind equal, and instructed Yisrael to make the distinction themselves. With this explanation, the question as to why G-d did not complete man Himself, is automatically answered.

Why the Mitzvah of Milah Was not Given to Adam

G-d did not give the Mitzvah of Milah to Adam, explains the Eizor Eliyahu, because the work of Hashem's Hands is perfect. Consequently, Adam had to be created circumcised, and the Mitzvah was not practical, as far as he personally was concerned. Nor was it given to him to perform on his children, since having foreseen the degree of perversion reached by his early descendants, culminating in the generation of the flood, G-d withheld the Mitzvah, to prevent it from falling into abuse. Better wait, He decided, until His anger with the generation of the Flood abated, before searching for a worthy recipient who would cherish the Mitzvah, and treat it with respect. A Hundred Years Old

There are a number of reasons that Avraham waited until he was a hundred before performing the Mitzvah of Milah, the Eizor Eliyahu explains. Perhaps the best-known of them is because, seeing as a person can only perform the Mitzvah once, he preferred to wait until he was commanded to perform it. And he based his decision on the principle that 'someone who performs a Mitzvah when he has been commanded is greater than someone who volunteers to perform it'.

Others say it is bound up with the reason Chazal give for the Mitzvah, namely, in order to curb one's desires. That being the case, Avraham had no need for it, seeing as he was one of the three whom G-d assisted to overcome the Yetzer ha'Ra entirely.

But there is another reason for the Mitzvah, Hashem taught him. And that is to complete the name Shakai on a Jew's body (the two arms lifted up and the head forming the 'Shin', the arm and half the body forming the 'Daled'), and the Milah which forms a 'Yud' completes the Name.

And besides, the B'ris Milah is compared to all the other Mitzvos (see 'The Covenant of the Milah', Parshah Pearls). Consequently, Avraham first made a point of fulfilling all the other Mitzvos, even that of Eiruv Tavshilin (which is only mi'de'Rabbanan). Only then, did he perform the B'ris Milah, to demonstrate this to the world (in keeping with the saying 'Acharon Acharon Chaviv'), and the Divine command preceded its fulfillment, to stress the Mitzvah's importance.

According to the Medrash Tanchuma, Avraham waited until he was ninety-nine before performing this Mitzvah, to encourage potential Geyrim to convert, irrespective of their age. And in similar vein, the Korban Eliyahu attributes the fact that man is not created circumcised to the fact that, if he was, potential converts would be discouraged from going through with the conversion. The fact that native Jews would be Divinely circumcised, whilst they were circumcised manually, would give them the feeling of inferiority, causing them to go back on their decision to convert.

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] neustadt@torah.org
To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly-Halacha - Parshas
Lech Lecha - TOSEFES SHABBOS: HOW AND WHEN
Weekly-halacha for 5762
Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Lech Lecha

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav. TOSEFES SHABBOS: HOW AND WHEN

The majority of Rishonim maintain that the mitzvah of mosifin mi-chol al ha-kodesh - starting Shabbos early in order to incorporate a small part of the weekday into Shabbos - is a mitzvas assei min ha-Torah, a Biblical command(1). Although this seems to be a relatively easy mitzvah to perform, a mitzvah which most people assume that they perform routinely and correctly, this is hardly the case. In order to know how to perform this mitzvah correctly, we must answer the following questions:

HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD BE ADDED AS TOSEFES SHABBOS?

The Rishonim do not clearly define a particular amount of time as the minimum addition required to fulfill this mitzvah. Latter-day poskim suggest various amounts of time, ranging from a minimum of two(2), four(3), and five(4) minutes, up to twelve(5) or even fifteen(6) minutes. One who is particular to fulfill the mitzvah according to the views of all poskim is to be commended(7). Tosefes Shabbos is equally incumbent upon men and women(8).

HOW EARLY CAN ONE ACCEPT TOSEFES SHABBOS?

One may be mekabel Shabbos as early as pelag ha-Minchah, which is an hour and a quarter (zemanos) before sunset, but not earlier. Any kabbalas Shabbos made before pelag ha-Minchah, including lighting candles, is null and void and must be repeated(9).

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR BEING MEKABEL TOSEFES SHABBOS?

The correct manner, l'chatchilah, of performing this mitzvah is to state that one is being mekabel Shabbos for the sake of the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos(10). This statement can be made in one of the following ways(11): by reciting the entire Kabbalas Shabbos, by reciting Mizmor shir l'yom ha-Shabbos, by reciting Bo'i b'shalom, by answering Borechu, by davening the Shabbos Ma'ariv, by lighting candles [for women(12)], or even by stating aloud: I am mekabel Shabbos for the sake of the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos(13). According to some poskim(14), it is sufficient to be mekabel Shabbos in one's mind - without actually expressing it in words.

There are poskim who imply that the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos is not dependent on actual [either spoken or silent] kabbalah; as long as one refrains from doing forbidden work before sunset, it is considered as if he added some time on to the Shabbos day and he has fulfilled the mitzvah(15).

HOW LATE CAN ONE BE MEKABEL SHABBOS?

According to our custom, Shabbos begins at sunset. Once the sun sets it may already be night according to the halachah - the beginning of the Shabbos day. Obviously, in order to perform the mitzvah of adding to the Shabbos, one must be mekabel Shabbos before sunset. After sunset, one is not adding to the Shabbos since it is already Shabbos - regardless of his kabbalah.

The vast majority of shuls, especially during the winter, daven Minchah on Friday evening 10-15 minutes before sunset and then begin the Kabbalas Shabbos service. By the time Bo'i b'shalom is said, it is usually well past sunset. Thus, the majority of men, contrary to their assumption, are not fulfilling the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos according to the opinion of many poskim.

WHY ARE WE NOT MEKABEL SHABBOS BEFORE MINCHAH?

The Shulchan Aruch(16) rules that once Kabbalas Shabbos has been said in shul, Friday's Minchah may no longer be davened. If an individual came late to shul and answered Borechu or said Mizmor shir l'yom ha-Shabbos, he may no longer daven Minchah, but must rather daven Ma'ariv twice. According to the opinion of the Mishnah Berurah and many other poskim, this rule applies also to any expression of Kabbalas Shabbos made individually, such as lighting candles, or to any statement of Kabbalas Shabbos(17). Once Shabbos has been ushered in, the weekday Minchah service may no longer be davened(18).

This leaves us with a dilemma: The mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos requires us to be mekabel Shabbos before sunset. On the other hand,

one cannot be mekabel Shabbos until after Minchah, and most shuls do not finish Minchah until after sunset. Thus, one is faced with two mitzvos that [apparently] conflict with each other - davening Minchah and being mekabel Shabbos.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES

Start Minchah earlier, about 20-25 minutes before sunset. This will allow the congregation to be mekabel Shabbos before sunset; After finishing the silent Shemoneh Esrei, an individual may be mekabel Shabbos upon himself. He may still answer the Minchah Kedushah etc., although it is already Shabbos for him(19). This solution, however, will not help the Sheliach Tzibur who must repeat the Shemoneh Esrei; If an individual realizes that he will not be able to finish the silent Shemoneh Esrei before sunset, he should daven alone before sunset(20), be mekabel Shabbos, and then go to shul to answer Kaddish, Kedushah, etc. There is a disagreement among latter-day poskim concerning one who failed to follow any of the above options and finds himself - just before sunset - faced with a choice of either davening Minchah or fulfilling the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos. Some poskim advise that he should daven Minchah(21), while others rule that he should first be mekabel tosefes Shabbos and then daven Minchah(22).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Beur Halachah O.C. 261:2. 2 Eretz Tzvi 70; Igras Moshe O.C. 1:96. 3 Avnei Nezer 4:98. 4 Minchas Elazar 1:23; Maharsha'g 38. 5 Siddur Ya'avetz. 6 Mishnah Berurah 261:22 and Beur Halachah, based on Chayei Adam 5:2, maintains that tosefes Shabbos together with bein ha-shemashos (which is about 14 minutes long) is half an hour long. 7 Mishnah Berurah 261:23. 8 See Kaf ha-Chayim 261:16. 9 Mishnah Berurah 261:25. 10 Tosefes Shabbos 261:13; Tehillah l'David 263:8-10; Chelkas Yoav 30; Mishmeres Shalom 26:2; Mishnah Berurah 261:21 (as understood by Shoneh Halachos 261:3; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 46:2; Az Nidberu 1:1). See Ritva Rosh Hashanah 9a as a possible source. 11 See O.C. 261:4 and Mishnah Berurah 21 and 31. 12 Men who light candles are not automatically mekabel Shabbos - Mishnah Berurah 263:42. 13 Possibly, just saying "Gut Shabbos" is sufficient, if by saying "Gut Shabbos" one means to actually usher in the Shabbos and not merely to express a greeting - see R' Akiva Eiger O.C. 271. 14 Bach and Gr"a quoted in Mishnah Berurah 553:2. Tehillah l'David 263:10, however, rules that this is invalid. 15 See Aruch ha-Shulchan 261:2; Eretz Tzvi 60; Yabia Omer 7:34. See Chidushei Ra'ah (Blau) Berachos 26b, Beur ha-Gr"a O.C. 393:2 and Chayei Adam 5:2 as possible sources for this view. 16 O.C. 263:15. 17 Mishnah Berurah 263:43. 18 Often, people wish their family "Gut Shabbos" before going to shul for Minchah. One should be mindful not to be mekabel Shabbos with that statement. If his intention was to be mekabel Shabbos, davening Minchah now becomes questionable. 19 Tzitz Eliezer 10:15; Yabia Omer 6:21. 20 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 46:5. 21 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfei 1:56). This is based on the ruling of Mishnah Berurah that it is forbidden to daven Minchah after Kabbalas Shabbos. This person must therefore rely on the poskim quoted above who hold that refraining from forbidden work constitutes tosefes Shabbos. 22 Eretz Tzvi 60; Mishmeres Shalom 26:2 quoting the Minsker Gadol; Minchas Yitzchak 9:20; Tzitz Eliezer 13:42; Bris Olam, pg. 13. This is based on the ruling of several poskim that an individual's kabbalas tosefes Shabbos does not preclude his davening Minchah later.

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From: Kollel Iyun Hadaf[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il]
RABBI MORDECHAI KORNFIELD Subject: Insights to the Daf: Bava Kama
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BAVA KAMA 82 (30 Tishrei) - dedicated by Reb Mordechai Rabin
(London/Yerushalayim) l'Ilyu Nishmas his father, ha'Gaon Rav Gedalya Rabinowitz of
Manchester, England (and in his later years, Bnei Brak, Israel). Hearing a Shiur of his was
an unforgettable experience, as his many Talmidim, both Bnei Yeshiva and Ba'alei Batim,
can attest.

BAVA KAMA 85 (3 Cheshvan) - dedicated l'Ilyu Nishmas Malka bas Menashe (and
Golda) Krause, by her daughter, Gittle Bekelnitzky. Under both material and spiritual duress,
she and her husband raised their children in the spirit of our fathers, imbuing them with a
love for Torah and Yiddishkeit. Her home was always open to the needy, even when her
family did not have enough to feed themselves. SUPPORT D.A.F. NOW! Submit your
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Bava Kama 83 HALACHAH: A PET DOG QUESTION: The Gemara relates the
severity of raising dogs in Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara derives from verses that when there
are 22,000 Jews in one place, the Shechinah dwells among them. It could happen that there

will be 21,999 Jews, and a woman who is pregnant will be frightened by a barking dog and she will lose her baby. Hence, raising dogs in Eretz Yisrael can cause the Shechinah to depart from the Jewish people.

If a barking dog can cause a woman to miscarry, and cause the Shechinah not to dwell among the Jewish people, then why does the Mishnah (79b) and the Gemara here permit raising a dog if it is tied to a chain? Even when it is tied to a chain, it might cause a pregnant woman to miscarry if it barks at her!

ANSWERS: (a) It could be that since the pregnant woman knows that the Chachamim permitted raising a dog if it is tied to a chain, she will not be afraid when she hears it barking because she knows that it is tied to a chain.

(b) Another explanation is that the only fear is that a pregnant woman will "see" the dog as well as hear its bark. When she hears its bark but she does not see the dog, there is no fear that she will miscarry. Hence, when the dog is restrained by a chain, even when she sees it she will not be afraid, because she sees that it cannot hurt her.

A practical difference between these two approaches is a place where not all of the people are scrupulous about observing the enactments of the Chachamim, or a place in which Nochrims live. In such a place, when a pregnant woman hears a dog barking, she will be scared even though she cannot see the dog, because she knows that there is a possibility that it is not tied up. According to the first explanation, it will be prohibited to keep a dog even on a chain, since the barking alone will cause the pregnant woman to miscarry. According to the second explanation, it will be permitted to keep a dog when it is tied to a chain, since the only fear is that the woman will "see" the dog as well as hear it, and when she sees the dog on the chain she will not miscarry.

HALACHAH: The YOSEF DA'AS writes that he heard from RAV SHLOMO ZALMAN AUERBACH zt'l that the decree of the Chachamim applies only when the dog is not kept on a chain. When the dog is tied to a chain, there is no fear that a woman will miscarry, for the sound of barking alone will not cause her to miscarry. The Yosef Da'as cites RAV CHAIM KANIEVSKY, shlit'a, who says that we do not have to worry that although the dog is on a chain, the woman might not see the chain and still become frightened.

Bava Kama 85 PERMISSION FOR A DOCTOR TO HEAL QUESTION: The Gemara learns from the extra phrase of "Rapo *Yerapei*" (Shemos 21:19) that it is permitted for a doctor to heal.

Why would we have thought -- had the Torah not included the extra word "Yerapei" -- that it is "not" permitted for a doctor to heal a person? The verse is referring to a situation in which one person causes bodily damage to another person, and the victim needs to pay a doctor to heal him. It is obvious from the verse, even without the extra word, that a person who is harmed does not have to passively accept the fate of being wounded by the other person, but that he may go to a doctor to be healed!

ANSWERS: (a) RASHI and TOSFOS seem to explain that the Gemara is learning from the extra word that even in a situation in which a person becomes sick or bruised without human intervention, but rather as a Divine decree, it is still permitted for the doctor to heal him. We might have thought that it is a matter of faith in Hashem, and that a person should trust that just as Hashem brought the illness upon him, Hashem will take it away. The verse teaches that it is not considered a lack of faith when one turns to a doctor for healing (as long as he recognizes that it is ultimately Hashem who allows the doctor to heal him, -TESHUVOS HA'RASHBA 1:413).

The RAMBAN (Vayikra 26:11) indeed writes that a person with a high level of Emunah will not turn to a doctor but will ask Hashem to heal him directly. (See Insights to Berachos 60a.)

The Rashba adds that we learn from this verse that it is even permitted to heal using methods that are poorly understood and seem superstitious, but which are proven to be effective. As Abaye and Rava teach in Shabbos (67a; see Insights there), anything which is done in order to heal is not a transgression of "Darchei Emori." Accordingly, the verse is teaching that healing in such a manner does not border on Avodah Zarah.

(See Insights to Berachos 10b, where we explain that this might be the reason why the Chachamim praised Chizkiyah for hiding away the Sefer Refu'os.)

(b) The MOSHAV ZEKEINIM (Shemos 21:19) explains that this Derashah is similar to the Derashah of "Shale'ach Teshalach" (see Bava Metzia 31a) which teaches that one must send away the mother bird "even 100 times." Here, too, the verse teaches that a doctor may attempt to heal many times if previous efforts failed. We might have thought that if the previous efforts failed that it is a Divine sign that Hashem wants the person to remain maimed. The verse teaches that the failed efforts should not be construed as such, and the doctor may attempt to heal again if at first he does not succeed.

(c) RABEINU CHANANEL (cited by the Moshav Zekeinim) explains that one might think that it is prohibited for a doctor to heal using strong medications, because the medications might adversely or mortally affect the person being treated. The verse teaches that the doctor may practice medicine to the best of his ability, as long as he is genuinely attempting to help the person. This is also the way the RAMBAN (in Toras ha'Adam, p. 41) explains.

(d) TOSFOS HA'ROSH in Berachos (60a) cites RABEINU YAKOV of Orleans who explains that the verse is permitting a doctor to receive wages for his services. Normally one is not permitted to take money for doing a Mitzvah, such as for returning a lost object (see Nedarim 38b). It is permitted, however, for a doctor to take wages for his services.

(e) The TUR (beginning of YD 336) explains that the Gemara is not teaching that it is "permitted" for a doctor to heal, but that it is a "Mitzvah" for him to heal. He should not refrain from healing out of fear that he might accidentally harm the person he is trying to help (and face malpractice claims). Rather, he should view it as a Mitzvah and he should offer his services wherever possible.

The Ramban (in Toras ha'Adam) takes this further and says that it is an obligation for the doctor to heal because of "Piku'ach Nefesh," saving a person's life. (The obligation is the "doctor's" when the patient wants his services. However, the "patient" can act with Midas Chasidus and choose not to turn to doctors for help.)

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