

BS"D



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**INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON LECH LICHA - 5765**

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The role of a king is to unite the nation. "vayehi b'yeshurun melech b'hisasef roshei am yachad shivtei Yisroel" (Devarim 33:5). Only a nation can have a king. Bnai Yishmael will be numerous, but they will have twelve distinct leaders. Only the descendants of Sara will bear true kings. It is only through Yitzchak that the promise of "u'nesaticha l'goyim" will reach fruition.

The bris at the end of parshas Lech Lecha is not merely a restating of previous promises. It is the creation of an eternal nation which always will be blessed with Eretz Yisroel. It is the creation of a nation that is always assured, "Thiyos lecha l'elokim u'l'zaracha acharecha."

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND
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"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Lech Lecha

Sponsored this week by Sherry Simantov, in loving memory of her father, Yehuda Aryeh Ben Yehoshua



From: torahweb@torahweb.org Sent: Oct. 20, 2004
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**RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY
THE CREATION OF A NATION**

At the end of parshas Lech Lecha Hashem enters into a new bris with Avraham. Hashem once again promises Avraham that he will receive Eretz Yisroel and that Hashem will have a special relationship with him and his descendants. The eight pesukim (17:7-12) that describe this bris have several phrases that are repetitive. The phrase "zaracha acharecha" - your descendants following you - is repeated five times in this short span of pesukim. The word "l'dorosum" or "l'doroseichem" - for all your generations - is stated three times. The word "olam" - forever - is also repeated three times. What is the significance of these phrases and why are they emphasized specifically at this bris?

Immediately prior to this bris, another promise is made to Avraham. In 17:6, Avraham is told "umelachim mimcha yeitsei'u" - kings will descend from you. This assurance is significant as it is repeated in 17:16 concerning Sara - "malchei amim mimena yiheyu." The descendants of Sara will be kings in contrast to Yishmael who will have twelve princes as descendants, as the Torah draws this contrast in 17:20. What is the significance of having kings as descendants that this plays such a central role in this bris?

As an introduction to this bris, Avraham is promised he will become a father of nations. The Ramban in 17:6 interprets the phrase "unesaticha l'goyim" as referring to the creation of Klal Yisroel. The central theme of this new bris is that Avraham will no longer be an individual. Even his descendants will no longer be individuals. It is at this point that the concept of Am Hashem comes into being. A nation is not just made up of a multitude of individuals, but rather it is a new unit in and of itself.

Chazal express this with the halachic principle "tzibbur aino meis" - the community of Klal Yisroel never dies. If an individual designates a korban and then dies, under certain circumstances the korban can no longer be brought. If the tzibbur designates a korban and all of them die, their descendants are still considered the original tzibbur. The entity of Klal Yisroel is the same unit today as it was in the days of the avos.

The promises of Eretz Yisroel and having a special relationship with Hashem are as valid today as they were when given to Avraham because they weren't given to Avraham as an individual but rather as the father of a nation. This is why the Torah repeats for emphasis "zaracha acharecha" - your descendants who follow you. Your descendants and you are one and the same; you are all the newly created entity called Am Yisroel. Once this tzibbur has been created, the promises can now last "l'dorosum" and "l'olam".

What Happened To Lot?

The pasuk [verse] in this week's parsha says, "And they took Lot and his possessions, the nephew of Avram and they left; for he lived in Sodom" [Bereshis 14:12]. We have commented in past years on the strange grammatical construction of this pasuk: "The nephew of Avram" seems to be a misplaced modifier. It seems that the way the pasuk should have been written is "And they took Lot, the nephew of Avram, and his possessions..."

Recently, I saw an insight into this pasuk from Rav Shimon Schwab, zt"l. Lot began the parsha as a righteous person. He was a disciple of Avram Avinu. He followed Avram into exile. He went down with him to Egypt and supported him in his risky plan to pretend that Sarah was only his sister. [The Medrash states that Lot's loyalty to Avram during this era earned him the merit by which he was rescued from Sodom.] The pasuk references the fact that Avraham referred to himself and Lot as "anashim achim anachnu" [We are like brothers] [13:8]. In other words, we are both righteous individuals.

Somewhere along the line, something happened to Lot. Somewhere along the line, he deviated "off the path". The pasuk references this "departure" from the path when it says "And G-d spoke to Avraham after Lot parted company from him" [13:14]. The Medrash Tanchuma explains that G-d did not want to speak with Avram as long as the wicked Lot was with him. What happened to Lot, who had started out as a righteous "brother" of Avraham, that caused him to suddenly become wicked?

Rav Schwab suggested that although we do not have an explicit answer to this question, the above quoted pasuk hints at an answer: "And they took Lot and his possessions, the nephew of Avram". That which separated Lot from Avraham was "his possessions". Lot's money is what separated the "brothers" not only in this pasuk but in their entire outlook on life as well. This is one of the oldest stories of humanity. Money can have a very corrosive effect on people.

It seems that after accumulating a little money, Lot wanted to go live "the good life". Lot moved to Sodom. What kind of person would do that? Imagine if a person was living together with his righteous uncle in Monsey or in Baltimore and he suddenly decided to move to Atlantic City. What kind of person would do that? What happened? "The possessions" - that's what happened. Lot's wealth went to his head. His desire to live "the good life" drove him off the straight and narrow path of Avraham.

Adon Olam Is The Prayer of Avraham Avinu

Someone once wrote a Siddur commentary and showed it to the Gaon of Vilna for his approbation. The Gaon saw the following insight and said that for this insight alone, the work was valuable.

The author asked why the Siddur begins with the prayer "Adon Olam" (Master of the World). The Talmud [Brochos 7b] quotes a teaching of Rav Yochanan in the name of Rav Shimeon Ben Yochai that from the day G-d created the world no creature called G-d by the term "Master" (Adon) until Avraham came and called Him Master as it is written "And he said Adon-ai..." [15:2].

We attribute each of the three daily prayers to a different one of the Patriarchs. The prayer of Avraham is the morning prayer, Shachris. It is therefore only right that the morning prayer begins with "Adon Olam" (Master of the World...).

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch further clarifies the nuance implied by referring to G-d as "Adon" (Master) as opposed to King or Monarch. Rav Hirsch points out a difference between a "King" and a "Master". The relationship between a King and a citizen of the country is a very tenuous one. "What do I have to do with the King? The King does not know that I exist. He is not aware of my needs or my problems." The word "Adon" is used in connection with a servant. The relationship between a master and his servant is a very different one from the relationship between a king and his citizen. The master knows his servant very well. A personal relationship exists between them.

It could be that when Rav Shimeon Ben Yochai spoke of the novelty of Avraham Avinu referring to G-d by the name Adon, he was referring to this nuance. Avrohom introduced into the world the idea that G-d is not merely our King - He is our Master. He was the first person to recognize that despite the fact that G-d is King of all kings, he is also MY personal G-d, my Master.

This idea fits in very nicely with the flow of the liturgical poem Adon Olam. The poem begins with the terminology Master of the WORLD who ruled before any form was created. But it later says, "He is MY G-d and MY living Redeemer; Rock of MY pain... MY banner; MY refuge..." This makes it even more appropriate to label Adon Olam as the prayer of Avraham Avinu, because Avraham was the person who taught that the Almighty is both the King as well as my personal G-d.

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From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online [feedback@kby.org] Sent Oct. 20, 2004
To: parsha KBY
Parshat Lech Lecha

"When You Eat the Labor of Your Hands"

Rosh Hayeshiva RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG shlita

The Midrash writes (Bereishit Rabbah 39:8):

When Avraham was traveling through Aram Naharayim and Aram Nachor, he saw them [the residents] eating, drinking and reveling. He said, "I wish that I should have no share in this land." Upon arriving at the ladder of Tyre [near Israel], he saw that they were busy weeding at the time of weeding and hoeing at the time of hoeing. He said, "I wish my share were in this land." Hashem said to him: "To your offspring I will give this land". (Bereishit 12:7)

A land that possesses natural wealth can create an atmosphere of idleness and boredom, on the one hand, and, at the same time, an atmosphere of materialism and possessiveness. Eretz Yisrael does not possess natural

deposits of gold, oil, or the like. Its wealth lies in its human resources, and because the land does not possess natural wealth the residents learn that they have to struggle and toil both in the material and spiritual realms. This embodies the pasuk: "When you eat the labor of your hands, you are praiseworthy and it is well with you." (Tehillim 28:2)

The common belief, "The more a person develops the physical world – the more the spiritual world gets destroyed," is relevant only outside of Israel. In Eretz Yisrael work does not cause harm. Just the opposite; developing the body and settling the land creates a fabulous vessel which lifts up the soul.

The Chatam Sofer writes: (Sukkah, 3rd chapter):

R. Yishmael also applied the pasuk: "That you may gather in your grain" only in Eretz Yisrael, and when most of Am Yisrael are dwelling [on their land], when the work itself is a mitzvah to settle the land, and to extract its holy fruits. This is what the Torah referred to when it commanded: "That you may gather in your grain." Boaz was winnowing barley that night on the threshing floor because of the mitzvah. Just like saying: "I will not wear tefillin because I am studying Torah," here, too, one cannot say: "I will not gather in my grain because of Torah study." It is possible that this includes even other occupations that contribute to the development of society. They are all included in the mitzvah. However, when we are spread out in this world among the nations, and the more the world develops the work of Hashem is further harmed – even R. Yishmael will admit to R. Shimon b. Yochai [that one should forsake all worldly matters and focus on Torah alone].

This is what the Vilna Gaon used to pray for: "May Hashem grant me to plant trees with my own hands near Yerushalayim in order to fulfill, 'When you shall come to the land and you shall plant' (Vayikra 19:23) – at the revealed end [of the Redemption].

The battle and inner turmoil between a person's spiritual tendencies and his material dealings is unnatural, especially in Eretz Yisrael. This is what Rav Kook zt"l wrote: "The holiness in nature is the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. The Divine Presence that descended in exile with Am Yisrael is the force for establishing holiness, against nature. However, holiness that goes against nature is an incomplete holiness." (Orot p. 77)

"The is another difference between Eretz Yisrael and the rest of the world. In the rest of the world, the main focus of worship is to weaken the hold of impurity, whereas in Eretz Yisrael the focus of worship is to reveal the holiness." (Ma'ayanei Hayeshua, by Rav Y.M. Charlop, p. 256)

Unfortunately, in recent years more and more parts of the nation are becoming like the rest of the world. The contamination of materialism is spreading and weakening the local service, and many of the land's inhabitants abhor physical labor and prefer to sit idle and live off of charity. At the same time, the pasuk "Yeshurun became fat and kicked" (Devarim 22:15) is being fulfilled through us. These also are signs of the days that precede the Mashiach.

It is told that while Yigal Alon was serving as Minister of Labor, he was asked by one of the Kibbutzim to assist them in purchasing new tools in order to work. He sent them a telegram saying: "The hoes are on the way; in the meantime lean on the trees!"

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago]

Lech Lecha The Paradox of Ownership

It was the first, but certainly not the last, quarrel over the land. Abraham and Lot have returned to Canaan after their brief exile to Egypt.

Abraham "had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold." Lot too had accumulated a large entourage of servants and flocks and herds. The result was conflict:

The land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they could not stay together. Quarrels broke out between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. Abram said to Lot, "Let there not be quarrels between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Let us part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." (13: 6-9)

Lot makes his choice, a bad one as will later become clear. He chooses the Jordan valley because of its fertility and prosperity ("like G-d's own garden, like the land of Egypt"). However, what is interesting is what happens after the two men separate:

G-d said to Abram after Lot had parted from him: "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land you see I will give to you and your offspring for ever . . . Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I will give it [all] to you." (13: 14-17)

What is the sequence here? What is the logic of the divine promise then, after the conflict and Abraham's resolution of it? What is at stake here is not a simple incident in the life of the first of the patriarchs but something far more general and enduring. It is an utterly counter-intuitive answer to the question, "What do we own?"

Solomon won a reputation as the wisest of Israel's kings. One decision in particular (I Kings 13: 16-28) made a great impression and is one of the most famous passages in Tenakh. Two women came before him, each claiming that a child was their own. Both had given birth. One had accidentally suffocated their child by rolling over on it while she slept. Each attributed the accident to the other and argued that the living child was theirs. Solomon, in a masterpiece of lateral thinking, ordered his servant to take a sword and cut the child in two, giving each woman a half. One protested in horror. Let the child be given to the other woman, she said. I abandon my claim. You, said Solomon, are the mother and you shall have the child. How did Solomon know? Because she was willing to give the child away rather than see it die. We truly own what we are willing to give away.

Much of the sacrificial system in the Torah is about offering to G-d the first of what He has given us: the firstborn of animals, the first grain of the harvest (the Omer), and the first-fruits of the crop (eaten under conditions of sanctity in Jerusalem). After the tenth plague in Egypt, firstborn Jewish males were scheduled to spend their lives dedicated to the service of G-d. That arrangement was cancelled by the sin of the Golden Calf. From then on, priesthood ceased to be a function of the firstborn and became instead the right and duty of Aaron's sons. To this day, however, parents redeem their firstborn, if it is a male, in acknowledgement of that historic destiny.

The sacrificial system in Israel is hard to understand. Sacrifices made eminent sense in the worldview of pagan antiquity. The gods were capricious. They could strike at any time, bringing drought, famine, storms, floods, military defeat or other disasters. To avoid this, the ancients sought to propitiate them by bringing them offerings (not unlike the offerings Jacob sent Esau when they were about to meet again after their long estrangement). The G-d of Israel, however, was not like that. He sought justice, not sacrifice; righteousness, not burnt offerings; structures of societal grace, not the elaborate rites of shrines. What then is the meaning of these offerings of the first of flocks and herds and harvests?

The Talmud (Berakhot 35 a-b) contains a fascinating discussion of the logic of making blessings over the things of this world that we enjoy:

Rav Judah said in the name of Rav: To enjoy anything of this world without making a blessing is like making personal use of things

consecrated to heaven, as it says: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1).

R. Levi contrasted two texts: It is written, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and it is written, "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the children of men" (Psalm 115: 16). But there is no contradiction - the first verse refers to the situation before one has made a blessing, the second applies once one has made a blessing.

The world belongs to G-d. He owns it because He made it, and without Him it would cease to exist. It follows that there is no concept in Judaism of absolute human ownership. We are G-d's guests on earth. All that we possess, we do not ultimately own. We merely hold it as His guardian or trustee. A blessing is therefore an act of acknowledgement of G-d's ownership. If we do not make one prior to enjoying the things of this world, it is as if we had made secular use of G-d's property. Once we have made a blessing we have, as it were, redeemed the source of pleasure (buying it back for private use by our offering of words). Once we symbolically give something back to G-d, He gives it back to us ("the earth He has given to the children of men").

This is the logic of the offerings of firstfruits and firstborn animals. It is a symbolic renunciation - an act of giving back to G-d what we rightly acknowledge as His. Once we declare Him the owner of nature and the land, He empowers us to act as His trustee. Nowhere is this stated more clearly than in the laws (Vayikra 25) relating to Shmittah and Yovel, the sabbatical and jubilee years.

There are inalienable conditions to Israelite residence in the land. Some of its produce must be shared with the poor. Slaves and debts must be released every seven years. Every fifty years, land must return to its original owners. There must be, in other words, periodic redistributions precisely because (as we know from the economics of globalization) the free market does not ensure equality of outcomes. The key word *tzedakah* does not mean "charity" or "justice" but a combination of both - and it exists as a concept only because Judaism sees property not as ownership but as guardianship. What we give to the poor is not "charity" but one of the conditions G-d makes to our possessing property at all, namely that we share some of what we have with others who have less. Hence the great verse, "The land must not be sold in perpetuity, because the land is Mine; you are but aliens and My tenants." We are entitled to possess only that whose ownership we renounce. We truly own what we are willing to give away.

That is the deep meaning of Abraham's offer to Lot. It is only when he is willing to give part of the land away ("If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left") that G-d tells him the whole land will be his ("All the land you see I will give to you and your offspring for ever"). We only own what we are willing to share.

From: RABBI BEREL WEIN [rbwein@torah.org] Sent: Oct. 21, 2004 PM To: rabbiwein@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Wein - Lech Lecha www.RabbiWein.com

Jerusalem Post Oct. 22, 2004 www.rabbiwein.com/jpost-index.html
A FRIENDLY RESPONSE <http://rabbiwein.com/column-828.html>

One of the banes of urban living is the insularity and surliness that it breeds among humans. In small towns, people usually say "good morning," "thank you" and "excuse me" to one another on a constant and regular basis. My experience when living in large cities, both here in Israel and in the United States, is that such pleasantries are often omitted and even when offered remain unanswered. I have often seen the look of incredulity on the face of a stranger when I had the temerity to say "Shabat shalom" to him while walking on the street on Shabat. Instead of receiving an answer in kind, I usually am given a stony-faced silent treatment or a look of disgust, which translates to "What is your problem, anyway?" I am especially perturbed and disappointed when the

person that I am addressing is an observant Jew and is thus allegedly aware of Jewish behavior and values. The insensitivity to others in not responding to a friendly greeting is completely not in keeping with Jewish tradition and life-style. It is a very pernicious and bad character trait. Our schools should emphasize its crudeness and stress its unacceptability in a truly Jewish society. By graciously responding to a greeting from a stranger one softens one's own inner characteristics and helps create a much more civil and decent community. It is always the small things in life that color human society and to a great extent influence our daily lives. Responding properly and graciously to the greetings of others is one of those small but defining positive societal norms.

The Talmud tells us that the great Rabbi Yochanan, the head of the yeshiva in third-century Tiberias and the founding editor of the Talmud Yerushalmi, always greeted every person he met on the street, Jew and non-Jew alike. The Talmud compliments some of its greatest sages, not by emphasizing their great knowledge and erudition, but by stating that their merit lay in that they made sure to be the first to greet passersby immediately. The rabbis saw in that behavior not only respect for other human beings but also respect for the Creator that has fashioned all human beings. Jews were always sensitive to the concept expressed in the Bible that humans are created "b'tzelem elokim" - in the image of G-d, so to speak. By respecting the created, we thereby express our respect and reverence for the Creator as well. By demeaning other human beings, we therefore commit the severe sin of demeaning the Creator as well. And I feel that this is exactly the case when one does not respond graciously to a greeting that is offered to that person. There is nothing as insulting as ignoring someone who has spoken to you. The insult may be unintentional, but that in no way justifies it or minimizes the hurt felt by the person being so ignored. It is boorish behavior to act that way and the rabbis in Avot stated succinctly that "a boor is not a person who truly fears sin." Judaism stresses that "its paths are ways of pleasantness." This is an overriding value in Jewish life and Torah perspective.

The great medieval Jewish scholar and ethicist, Rabbi Bachya ibn Pakuda, in his famous work of philosophy and ethics, Chovat Halevavot - The Duties of the Heart - portrays the ideal person of piety. The first quality that he lists for such a person is that "his face and countenance towards others is joyful and friendly while his heart within him is somber and broken." Being a grouch to others is tantamount to inflicting one's personal problems and disappointments upon others. That is really unfair and wrongful behavior. Now it is undoubtedly difficult to maintain a cheerful outward appearance and a friendly demeanor when sad things are happening all around us. But the difficulty of the task in no way diminishes the essential value of attempting to do so. Judaism views a positive response to the greetings of others as not merely a formal sign of politeness, important as that alone may be. Rather it sees in this simple act a reinforcement of the Torah value of the inherent worth of every human being and it functions as a tribute to the One Who has fashioned us all. In a crowded, gruff, defensive society such as ours, an attitude of responsiveness and friendliness can ease much of our tensions and create a better environment in which all of us can function more happily and efficiently.

Parsha Oct. 22, 2004 <http://www.rabbiwein.com/parsha-index.html>
LECH LECHA <http://rabbiwein.com/column-832.html> The first two parshiyot of the Torah, Bereshit and Noach, span two thousand years of human life and events. The Torah records these two millennia in an almost fast forward mode, stopping to dwell on a few instances of historical importance - the stories of Gan Eden, Kayin, Noach, the Flood and the Tower of Babel. But basically the Torah is very sparse in detail regarding the lives and events of this long period of time. In this week's portion of Lech Lecha, the Torah slows down appreciably, barely covering a century in relating to us the life of our father, Avraham. It is

as though the Torah in the two previous parshiyot was in a hurry to get to Avraham and his life and tell us the achievements and struggles. The Midrash indicates that this is in fact a true analysis of the Torah's intent when in the beginning of Bereshit it clearly indicates that the entire process of creation was enacted for the purpose of Avraham's coming on the world scene. Avraham is the pivotal figure in human history. He is the one who raises the banner of monotheism in a fashion that can be understood and followed by millions of humans. He is also the father of goodness and kindness, compassion and sensitivity towards others as a way of life, a value system, and not merely as isolated acts of momentary compassion. And perhaps most importantly, he alone emerges as the symbol of human resiliency - able to withstand "tests," and to not only overcome adversity but to grow from the experience. In this he is the true ancestor of the Jewish people, the most optimistic and productive of all nations.

The Torah purposely dwells on the details of Avraham's life, almost in slow motion, as it were, in order to impress upon us what one human being can accomplish in a lifetime. The Torah champions the individual over the state, the human being over seemingly inexorable rules of economics and social science. The world is still reeling from the ideologies that destroyed over one hundred million human beings in the last century. All those ideologies were based on the priority of the state and ideology over the life of an individual human being. The prophet Yeshayahu praises Avraham by calling him "one," a single unique individual. It is this one individual who turned human civilization away from barbarism and paganism and gave humankind a vision of what a good person and a good world can and should look like. The Talmud stresses therefore that Jews do not call themselves "the children of Noah," though biologically we certainly are Noah's descendants. Rather, we call ourselves the children of Avraham and Sarah, for it is their vision that lights our life and guides all of Jewish life and history. The Rabbis taught us to constantly ask ourselves "when will my actions and behavior be in line with that of Avraham?" Avraham remains the measuring stick of human accomplishment and spiritual behavior. There can be no greater title that a human being can bear than being called a child of Avraham.

Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column [parshat_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Oct. 21, 2004 To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Lekh Lekha by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Lekh Lekha (Genesis 12:1-17:27) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - "And he (Abram) moved on from there to the mountains, from the east to Bet-El; and he pitched his tent with Bet-El to the west and Ai to the East. And he built there an altar to the Lord, and he called it in the name of the Lord" (Genesis 12:8).

The cornerstone of the Ramban's (Nahmanides') Biblical interpretation is that "the actions which were done by the ancestors serve as sign-posts for the future of their descendants." The first altar to G-d which Abram builds upon his entry into the Promised Land is in Shekhem - Elon Moreh (Genesis 12:6,7), the city which the Israelites are destined to enter when they cross the River Jordan under Joshua. Shekhem is

likewise the City of sibling rivalry, the place where Shimon and Levi killed the newly circumcised inhabitants who had remained silent while Dinah was captured and raped, despite their agreement with the other sons of Jacob; it is also the site of Joseph's grave, and the locus from where David and Solomon's United Kingdom was split into two separate kingdoms.

Abram built his third altar to G-d in the oaks of Mamre which was in Hebron (Genesis 13:18), where our matriarchs and patriarchs are buried and where Biblical history really began. And Abraham built his fourth altar to G-d on Mount Moriah, the place of the binding of Isaac, "the (Temple) Mount from which the "Lord will be seen" (Genesis 22:14) by the whole world when all nations will ultimately accept a G-d of peace.

But the altar which seems to the least significant, the one which is not even identified with a specific city but which is merely situated between Bet El and Ai, is the second one in our Torah reading (Genesis 12:8); and it is specifically to this place that Abraham returns after his Egyptian sojourn and where he builds yet another altar (Genesis 13:3,4)! What is to be the future significance of this area in the desert only identified as being between Bet El and Ai?

Rav Mordechai Allon, the great Torah teacher of Jerusalem, gives a most insightful explanation, to which I would add what I believe to be an important theological reflection. Bet El is the place of Father Jacob's Israel - defining dream of "a ladder rooted on earth with its top reaching to the heavens; angels of G-d are ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). It is Jacob's vision immediately before going into exile, and it is the place to which he will return as Israel and build an altar to the Lord. The message is clearly one of uniting heaven and earth, positing a sacred partnership between the earthly powers from below who are ascending to G-d and the Divine powers from above who are descending to the province of human beings.

Let us now move on to Ai. First we must remember that the first great conquest of Joshua and the Israelites was the city of Jericho, whose walls "came tumbling down" when the Israelites - amidst the blowing of ram's horns and in the presence of the Ark of the Lord - surrounded the city for six days once each day and seven times on the seventh day. Jericho fell, its inhabitants perished, and all its wealth was declared forbidden for human use and holy to G-d. "And the Lord was with Joshua, whose fame spread throughout the land" (Joshua 6:27).

Unfortunately, there were many - under the influence of Akhan the son of Karmi of the leading tribe of Judah - who betrayed Joshua's declaration sanctifying the booty to G-d and looted the wealth of Jericho for themselves. The Israelites then went on to attempt the capture of the City of Ai. Joshua sent out spies, who returned with the Intelligence report that two or three thousand Israelite soldiers would be sufficient to take the city; three thousand soldiers were dispatched, the soldiers of Ai killed 36 of them and chased the Israelites away, "causing the hearts of the Israelites to dissolve and turn to water" (Joshua 7:1-5). Joshua rends his garments and prays all day before the Ark of the Lord.

At G-d's behest, he routs out those who looted the sacred booty and has Akhan and family punished with death. The entire nation then goes out to war against Ai. Joshua sends out 30,000 of his men for an ambush, "and they lay in wait between Bet El and Ai to the west of Ai" (Joshua 8:9).

The Israelite army succeeds in demolishing Ai.

What actually happened? In modern terms, there was a gross failure in the Israeli Intelligence information, similar to the Intelligence failure at the time of the Yom Kippur War. Despite the massive deployment of enemy troops from Egypt and Syria - and warnings from Jordan - Prime Minister Golda Meir refused to call up the reserves and strengthen the Bar Lev line. What caused such a gross error? Apparently, after the lightning victory of the Six Day War, the "powers that were" believed Israel to be invincible, that no Arab army would dare go to war against us. And indeed, the car stickers after the Six Day War cried out, "All

glory to the Israeli Defense Forces," deleting any reference to Divine miracle!

Such was the brazen arrogance of Akhan and his cohorts who took of the booty, refusing to recognize that the spoils belonged to G-d. "Our strength and the force of our hands wrought the victory," they declared, and so they felt that the wealth of Ai legitimately belonged to them. And because they had become almost drunk with power and self-importance, they egregiously underestimate the power of Ai.

After the Yom Kippur War - which we ultimately won with even greater miracles than in the Six Day War - much of Israel learned its lesson. After this war, the car stickers read, "Israel depends on the Lord." But the real truth is the message of Jacob's dream: there is a ladder connecting heaven and earth, humans must work together with G-d in effectuating His Divine will; we must do whatever is in our power to do and understand that ultimate victory depends on G-d's intervention as well. Only if we understand the message of that partnership will we do our very best, but without falling into the pitfall of complacency which comes from the arrogance of believing that we did it alone. This was the crucial message which should have been learned by the Israelites in the fateful battle between Bet El and Ai!

Shabbat Shalom.

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Oct. 21, 2004

PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
Parshas Lech Lecha

...

From there he relocated to the mountain east of Beth-el and pitched his tent, with Beth-el on the west and Ai on the east. (12:8)

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, makes a powerful observation on the text. Beth-el and Ai were not mere villages. They were large cities, metropolises which were ruled by distinguished kings. Yet, the Torah records them only as having secondary geographical significance in regard to Avraham Avinu's famous tent. The Torah says that the tent was situated with Beth-el on one side and Ai on the other, as if to say that their entire significance was their proximity to the tent and not vice versa. Indeed, this is really the way it should be. Avraham's tent was the spiritual center of the world. The foundation for monotheistic belief was established there and disseminated throughout the world. The genesis of the Jewish nation, Avraham's descendants, was in this tent. The great cities of Beth-el and Ai have been lost to antiquity, while the Jewish People thrive, becoming stronger in their conviction and belief in Hashem. In fact, even when these cities were in their full prime, what were they? Anything that is not founded in spirituality lacks a stable foundation. Avraham's tent symbolized the eternity of Torah, its precepts, values and lessons. The enduring nature of the Torah has sustained the Jewish People throughout the millennia. No, this was not merely a tent. This was the bedrock of Torah civilization.

That it may go well with me for your sake. (12:13)

Simply, this means that if the Egyptian nobility were to shower Avraham with gifts in order to win his "sister's" hand, the rest of the people would respect him and be afraid to harm him, thereby assuring Sarah Imeinu's safety. The commentators question Avraham Avinu's statement. First, as Shlomo HaMelech declares, Sonei matanos yichyeh, "One who hates gifts will live." In other words, the Torah frowns upon one who is beholden to others for their favors. Second, why was Avraham inclined to take gifts from the king of Egypt, while he refused to accept even the slightest courtesy from the king of Sodom?

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, gives a pragmatic, but profound, response. Avraham's purpose in life, his raison d'etre, was to disseminate the Name of Hashem throughout the world. He would seize any opportunity that was availed to him. He taught the world that following the path of Hashem, believing in Him and cleaving to His precepts, would only engender benefit and good fortune.

Chazal teach us that one should be meticulous in giving proper honor to his wife, for she is the source of all good fortune in the home. They substantiate this statement by noting that, according to the Torah, Avraham was the recipient of great benefits because of Sarah. The Talmud adds that Rava told the people of

Mechuza, "Learn to appreciate and value your wives. As a result, you will become wealthy."

Avraham accepted Pharaoh's gifts, so that he could proclaim to the world that his success and wealth were because of his wife. She was his source for fomenting blessing in their home. This is what Avraham means when he says, "That it may go well with me for your sake." He used this as an opportunity to teach others that the woman is the source for blessing in the home. Avraham did not care about gifts. He sought an opportunity to teach the world a lesson. If that opportunity availed itself as a result of his taking gifts from the Egyptian king - so be it. This would inspire others to cherish and appreciate their wives. Avraham's overwhelming love for Hashem stimulated him to do whatever was in his power to publicize the daas Torah, wisdom of Torah, that he who is good to his wife, who appreciates her, will reap great material benefit.

Avraham had no reason to accept a gift from the king of Sodom, since there was no objective to be derived from it. He did not believe in taking presents from anyone, unless a greater good was to be taught as a result.

Then there came the fugitive and told to Avram, the Ivri. (14:13)

The Midrash identifies Og, the king of Bashan, as the fugitive who came with a malevolent intention to spur Avraham to battle, in the hope that he would be killed. This would free Sarah, so that Og could marry her. Og was rewarded with longevity for his positive actions, but was punished for his wicked motive in that he ultimately met his fate at the hands of the descendants of Avraham Avinu.

When Moshe Rabbeinu was confronted with having to battle with Og, he was concerned lest Og's merit would protect him. This fear was realistic, despite the fact that Og's positive action was clouded by a nefarious motive. This should inspire us. For, if Moshe and all of Klal Yisrael were concerned with Og's zchus, merit, despite his malevolent motives, how much more so should we take into consideration the incredible reward which is stored away for us when we perform a mitzvah with the correct and proper intentions.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that he heard a similar thought from Horav Meir Sonnenfeld, Shlita. In the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 33b, Chazal derive the obligation to blow one hundred tekios, sounds with the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, from the mother of Cisro, the general who fought with Klal Yisrael. When she saw that her son was late in returning from battle, she became disconcerted and moaned one hundred times. In order to "balance the scale," we blow one hundred tekios on Rosh Hashanah. The question that confronts us: Who was counting? Who is really concerned with how many times his mother moaned? After all, we are talking about the mother of a wicked person who was late in returning from pillaging Yerushalayim and murdering its inhabitants. She was probably comforted with the claim that Cisro was late because he discovered more Jews to murder. The answer is that a special angel is assigned to count every moan, every bit of suffering that a person sustains - even if she is the mother of a wicked person. A mother is a mother, and her moans are meaningful sounds.

Let us now take stock of this. If Hashem appoints an angel to count a mother's tears, even if it is for a son who is evil, how much more so does He count each and every tear shed by a Jew who weeps for kavod Shomayim, Hashem's Glory, for Moshiach Tzidkeinu, may he come soon. Do we have any idea of the value of these tears and the merit that they engender? Everything that we undergo or give up in order to perform a mitzvah is counted in our favor.

Then came the fugitive and told to Avram, the Ivri. (14:13)

The Midrash says that the fugitive was Og, the future king of Bashan. They add that he was called Og because when he came to Avraham, the Patriarch was busy making ugos, little cakes of matzah, for Pesach. He is therefore called Og because of the ugos. The Sifsei Tzadik wonders why a person should receive a name based upon something he saw. What relationship is there between Og's witnessing matzah baking and his name? He explains that when Og saw Avraham preparing matzah with extreme devotion and great fervor, he himself became so inspired that this experience was engraved in his psyche. It became an intrinsic part of his personality. Hence, the Torah calls him Og as a result of this experience.

Veritably, comments Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, this is the responsibility of every ben Torah, to inspire others with his behavior and demeanor. He relates a powerful story in which Rav Shimon Galei, who was critically injured in a traffic accident, was able to influence a young couple - who were not Shabbos observant - to change their lifestyle. While he was crossing the street one afternoon, Rav Galei was struck by a car whose driver had lost control. Lying on the ground in extreme agony and bleeding profusely, he was approached by the driver of the car who happened to be a policeman, "What can I do to help you?" asked the driver, as they waited together for the emergency medical services to arrive. Amidst the overwhelming pain, the rav turned his head toward the driver, looked into his eyes,

and said, "If you really want to help me, then take it upon yourself to observe the Shabbos."

Incredible! All he cared about was how he could influence another Jew to observe Shabbos! At the time of the accident, a young, not-yet-observant couple was walking by and witnessed the accident and the ensuing interchange between the driver and the rav. They were so taken aback by the rav's response that it planted a seed of spiritual inspiration within them. So great was the impression, that they felt compelled to visit the rav in the hospital and to follow up on the conversation which was subtly impacting their spiritual perspective. Standing there at his bedside, they could not utter a word. It was difficult for them to believe that a person could be so selfless that his only concern, even at a moment of extreme personal pain, would be the spiritual welfare of another Jew. They finally spoke in what was to become an ongoing dialogue that eventually led to their adopting an observant lifestyle. Their exposure to a ben Torah left an enduring impression, one that changed their lives dramatically.

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[From a few years ago]

From Parshat Lech Lecha Vol.10 No.8 Date of issue: 13 Cheshvan 5761 -- November 11, 2000

MAKING TEA ON SHABBAT BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

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

Iru'i Kli Rishon and Kli Sheni The Shaar Hatziyun (318:55) notes that Rav Yaakov Etlinger (Teshuvot Binyan Tzion 17) and other authorities rule that placing a tea bag into water constitutes Bishul. The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 328:28) confirms this point quite emphatically. Thus, Iru'i Kli Rishon (pouring hot water from the tea kettle into a glass containing a tea bag) is forbidden since Halacha accepts the opinion that Iru'i Kli Rishon cooks the outer layer of food (Mishna Berura 318:35).

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

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

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

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

Later authorities had trouble resolving this dispute. The Shach (Yoreh Deah 105:8) writes, "I am unable to decide which opinion is the correct one." Accordingly, it is not surprising to find that the Mishna Berura (318:45,65, and 118) and Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 94:32 and 105:20) rule that one should be concerned with the stringent view of the Maharshal.

Therefore, one should not pour oil or garlic on a hot potato even if it is in a Kli Sheni. However, one may pour ketchup on a hot potato since the ketchup was

already cooked during its processing and the rule of Ein Bishul Achar Bishul applies (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 1:58).

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

The Rama (318:5) cites the opinions of both the Yereim and the Tur. He notes, however, that common practice is not to place Challah even in a Kli Sheni due to concern that Challah is classified as Kalei Habishul. Parenthetically, we should explain that although the Challah was baked, people were concerned for the opinion of the Yereim that although we believe Ein Bishul Achar Bishul, cooking may occur after baking.

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

Is Tea Classified as Kalei Habishul? The Yereim's concern applies only to items that the Mishna or Gemara does not specifically mention. The Mishna, however, specifically states that spices cannot be cooked in a Kli Sheni. Accordingly, why do the Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan reject Rav Chaim's ruling that tea is a spice and we are permitted to prepare it in a Kli Sheni? Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in Shmeirat Shabbat Kehilchata 1: note 152) explains that the spices in the Mishna were large and unprocessed. Today, commercially available spices are ground very finely and present a concern for Kalei Habishul. Thus, one might argue that since tea leaves are incomparable to the Mishna's unprocessed spices, they should be classified as Kalei Habishul. Indeed, the Aruch Hashulchan notes that it is observable that tea cooks in a Kli Sheni.

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

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

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

liquid in a Kli Sheni. First, perhaps Ein Bishul Achar Bishul even applies to a liquid, and second, perhaps the tea concentrate does not cook in a Kli Sheni.

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