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Brisk on Chumash Insights on the Parashah from Brisk to Jerusalem

By Rabbi Asher Bergman

Parashas Lech Lecha

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 G-d 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 G-d 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."

— **Brisker Rav**

<http://www.artscroll.com/Chapters/romh-041.html>

Marked for Eternity from

Reflections of the Maggid Inspirational stories from around the globe and around the corner

By Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Marked for Eternity

Titanic

The word itself is a paragraph if not a book. The word evokes images of the colossal, the massive, that which is larger than life, something of

enormous proportions. Indeed the builders of the great ocean liner, the Titanic had just such prodigious thoughts in mind. The Titanic was the most enormous ship ever built, a staggering 46,329 tons. It accommodated over two thousand passengers. Its publicists advertised its durability with haughtiness befitting the size of the ship, as they bragged that it was "the ship that even G-d couldn't sink"

The world would soon know different. A hundred thousand people came to Belfast, Ireland, on April 3, 1912, to see the Titanic embark on its maiden voyage, and within days, millions the world over knew of the calamity that would become a legend in world history. Stories abound about the heroism, sacrifice, and misfortune that occurred that night, as the Titanic sank after crashing into a twin peaked iceberg on the open seas of the North Atlantic. I had never heard of a 'Jewish story' regarding the Titanic, thus when Mrs. Alyssa Hershkop in Beit Shemesh, Israel, insisted that she had a "great Jewish story" about the Titanic, I was skeptical.

However, research and interviews with descendants of the passengers on that voyage proved she was right. A remarkable episode with Jewish overtones did indeed transpire on that fateful trip. The emotion roused by this story is truly - yes - of titanic proportions.

I am grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert and Roberta Binder and Mrs. Marie Aks of Virginia Beach, Virginia, for providing recordings and personal information about this story.

In 1910, Mr. Sam Aks of Turek, Poland, immigrated to England where he married the former Leah Rosen. They lived in London for a while after their wedding, and they decided to move to America where there were better business opportunities. They settled on moving to Norfolk, Virginia.

By this time Leah was expecting their first child and her parents felt strongly that in her condition she should not make such an arduous trip across the ocean. They felt it would be too exhausting for her and dangerous for the unborn child. It was decided that Sam would travel alone, set up a home in Norfolk and a few months after the child was born, Leah would come with the infant.

The newspapers and media at the time were ablaze with the news of the opulent, gigantic ocean liner, the Titanic, that was to make its historic maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City, in April of 1912. The White Star Line, the Flagship Company of the Titanic, confidently claimed that their luxury liner was safe, sturdy and even majestic.

On April 10, Mrs. Leah Aks and her baby, with 912 other passengers, boarded the ship in Southampton, England, accompanied by hoopla, fanfare and ceremony. Leah and her infant were in steerage, the third class cabin, with many other immigrants to America. The high society wealthy people were in the luxurious first class cabins. More passengers boarded at other ports before the Titanic crossed the ocean.

Four days later, shortly before midnight on April 14, as the ship was ninety-five miles south of the Grand Banks in Newfoundland, it sideswiped and crashed into an iceberg that towered a hundred feet over the deck. [Ninety percent of an iceberg is hidden beneath the water. Thus the iceberg was literally a mountain of ice close to a thousand feet from top to bottom.[1] Its massive knife-like edges beneath the water surface punctured and gashed the ship along 250 feet of its hull]. Twenty minutes later, after consulting with the ship's designer, Thomas Andrews, Captain Edward Smith realized that the ship would sink within two hours. Everyone on board would lose their lives unless they could get on lifeboats and be rescued by passing ships.

Incredibly there were not enough spaces in the lifeboats for everyone. Though there were 2200 passengers and crew on board, there was room for only 1178 on the lifeboats. More than a thousand people would surely die! One is astounded at the negligence of not being prepared for disaster. As the boat began tilting there was panic and pandemonium. The captain and crew ordered that women and children would be saved first.

In the third class cabin, women were ordered to the front and men to the rear. Leah Aks held her son Frank Philip (Ephraim Fishel), in her arms and

tried to get out onto the deck, but the gate in front of the cabin jammed and no one could get out. She stood pressed against the gate, screaming for help. A sailor saw her with her baby in her arms and he reached over the gate and lifted her and the child out, so that she could run to the deck where women and children were being put into lifeboats. (Most of the people in the third class cabin could not get out and 75% of them drowned. The first class cabin fared better, as only 40% died).

Leah ran up to the deck with her child and waited by the railing, trying to get on line to be rescued. It was frighteningly cold. People were shoving and pushing frantically trying to get onto lifeboats. Meanwhile down below, water poured thunderously through the gaping holes, flooding the bottom of the ship.

As Leah stood on the deck, one of the wealthiest women on board, Lady Madeleine Astor, saw her and the baby huddled against the cold. Lady Astor, who was expecting a child, removed her beautiful eight-foot shawl and gave it to Leah saying, "Here wrap your baby, it's so cold out here." Her teeth chattering, Leah thanked her profusely.

During this time, a man had pushed onto a lifeboat that was about to be lowered into the water. When cabin stewards saw him, they forced him out of the boat and pulled him back on deck, yelling that women and children were being rescued first. Somehow this man managed to get onto another lifeboat and once again the stewards saw him and forced him off the lifeboat, fighting with him, as they insisted that women and children were being given priority.

Back on the deck, the man saw Leah standing there with her baby now wrapped in the shawl. He was enraged. His eyes were wild as he stalked back and forth consumed by anger and frustration. In a demented moment of madness he ran towards Leah and screamed, "You think women are first! You think children are first! I'll show you," and he grabbed the infant from Leah's arms and threw him overboard!

Leah shrieked in horror and cried out for her child. Men on board lunged at this maniac but the deed had been done. People were yelling and screaming – but now it was Leah's turn to get on a lifeboat. "I won't go without my baby," she cried. But the officers told her she had to save her own life. There was no point in staying on the sinking ship. The women around her tried to console her, but Leah cried hysterically as she was placed on the lifeboat and lowered into the water.

The lifeboats drifted for three hours until the Cunard liner, the Carpathia, came and rescued those who were fortunate enough to get off the Titanic. Only 705 were saved, 1523 people died.

Two days later, the grief-stricken Leah Aks was walking on the deck of the Carpathia when she saw a woman holding a child. The child lunged towards Leah. She recognized him. Leah screamed, "That's my baby! That's my child!"

The woman holding the child, Mrs. Elizabeth Ramell Nye, was dressed in a long black dress embroidered with a huge cross. "No it's not," she insisted. "This child was entrusted to me!" (Others contend, the woman was possibly Aryene del Carlo from Italy.)

A wild argument ensued and Mrs. Nye claimed that while she was in the lifeboat, a child came flying into her waiting arms. To her that was a sign from Heaven that she had to care for the child the rest of her life.

People took sides in the argument. Soon the captain of the Carpathia, Arthur H. Rostron, was called to decide the issue. Leah was crying hysterically while Mrs. Nye was insisting her position. She would not be denied this child.

When Captain Rostron arrived and heard the points of the argument, he told both women to come with the child to his quarters where he could reflect and decide the matter.

In the captain's quarters, Leah suddenly called out, "I can prove this is my child." The eighteen year old Leah spoke firmly and with certainty, "I am Jewish and my son was circumcised!" In Europe at that time, only Jewish children were circumcised.

When Captain Rostron saw that indeed the child had had a bris, ten-month-old Ephraim Fishel was reunited with his mother. Eventually the Carpathia brought all the survivors to New York.

Frank Philip Aks was raised in his rightful Jewish home. Eventually he married and had children and grandchildren. Frank passed away in 1991 at the age of 80. His wife, Marie, recently told me that as a youngster he would walk for miles on Shabbos to daven in the Orthodox shul in Norfolk, known as the Cumberland Street Shul.

After the traumatic events of the ill-fated journey, Leah was so grateful to Captain Rostron and his crew that years later when she had a daughter she named her Sarah Carpathia Aks. Incredibly there was some confusion among the hospital secretaries and they recorded her name on her birth certificate as Sarah Titanic Aks!

When I told this story to Rabbi Dovid Cohen of Brooklyn, he showed me the following Midrash.

When Hashem told Avraham Avinu to circumcise himself, Avrohom consulted with three of his friends and confidants, Aner, Eshkol and Mamreh. Aner said, "You are [nearly] a hundred years old, will you now risk your life by inflicting such pain to yourself? Eshkol said, "Would you dare [put such an indelible] mark on yourself [and thereby look obviously different] from all your enemies? [That alone could be life threatening]." Mamreh was the only one who encouraged Avrohom to have faith in Hashem and follow His direction, (Bereishis Rabbah 42:8 and 44:7).

Said Reb Dovid, "Isn't it remarkable, that the mark that Eshkol thought would bring scorn on Avraham Avinu and even endanger his life was just the mark that reunited this child with his mother and saved him, so that he would be raised with his family as a Jewish child?"

[1] This peculiarity gave rise to the popular saying, "That's the tip of the iceberg," meaning a situation that contains hidden dangers or problems under the surface.

From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz [<mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com>] Sent: Sunday, November 06, 2005 11:59 AM Subject: Shabbat Shalom - Lech Lecha

Dvar Torah based on Love Your Neighbor by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

The Torah states:

"And (the Almighty) took (Avraham) outside and He said to him, 'Look up, please, at the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them ... so, too, will be your descendants.'"

Rashi cites the Talmudic statement (Nedarim 32a) that the Almighty told Avraham to discount the effects of astrological influence. "Even if there is a sign in the stars that you (Avraham) will not have children, you will rise above this and will merit having children." From here the Talmud (Shabbos 156a) states, "There is no Mazel (arbitrary predestined luck) for the Jewish people." When the Torah says, "So, too, will be your descendants," it means that the Jewish people need not fear any negative predictions in the stars.

Trust in the Almighty and awareness of His unlimited power free a person from fears of predictions from astrology, Tarot, palm reading, etc. Prayer and the merit of good deeds will be able to change a negative destiny to a positive one!

From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 10:15 PM To: tw832@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Big Kiddush vs. Big Kiddush Hashem to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org to unsubscribe or for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

Big Kiddush vs. Big Kiddush Hashem

Rabbi Akiva in Avos (3:18) teaches, "chaviv adam shenivra b'tzelem - beloved is man for he was created in G-d's image". Rashi (Braisheis 1:26)

understands this to mean l'havin u'lhaskil - to understand and to gain wisdom. Man's intelligence is a reflection of his being created in G-d's image, and is the yardstick by which his actions are measured. Does he utilize the Divine gift of intelligence properly or not? Thus, the generation of the flood was annihilated as they went against their sechel (intelligence) with their rampant chamas (robbery). (In contrast, notes Rashi (Braishis 11:9), the dor haflaga, the generation that attempted to build the tower, was built upon love and friendship.)

The above cited mishna continues, "chavivin Yisroel shenikre'u banim laMakom - beloved are the people Israel, for they are described as children of Hashem." The mishna is providing for us a progression. First one has to be an adam - a mensch, and only then he can be included among the banim. The Torah of the banim, i.e. the mitzvos, is clearly stated beginning in Shemos (chapter 12). What however is toras adam? This is sefer Braishis, and specifically the personal lives, examples, and lessons we learn from the avos.

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 25a) identifies sefer Braishis as "Sefer Hayashar - the book of the upright", as it describes the lives of the avos who are called yesharim. In parshas Lech L'cha (13:3) the Torah teaches "vayelech l'masa'av" describing Avraham's travels. On his return trip from Mitzrayim, he stayed in the same lodgings he had stayed in on his way to Egypt. Rashi says- "Lelamdecha derech eretz"- Avraham was teaching proper conduct. One should not change his lodgings when traveling the same route, lest it be taken as a sign of dissatisfaction with the first host, and hence an affront to his dignity. This is part of toras adam. In addition- who told Avraham to endanger his life and rescue Lot? The Ramban (Bereishis 19:29) attributes this to Avraham's hakaras hatov, deep-felt appreciation of Lot's accompanying him. Once again, this is Avraham using his G-d given gift of intelligence- toras adam.

Chovos Halevavos teaches that Hashem communicates to us through sechel (intelligence). It is a holy directive from on High. Thus, there is a complete chapter (O.C. 170) in Shulchan Aruch dedicated to standards of propriety in accordance with which a person should conduct himself during his meal. For example, one may not eat as a glutton. One should sit and eat slowly. These are parts of toras adam. It is wrong to ask- where does it say that one is to conduct himself in accordance with the above? The answer is chaviv adam- this defines how an adam lives.

The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l noted on the verse, "veanshei kodesh tiheyu li - people of holiness shall you be to me" (Shmos 22:30), that the Torah first mandates that we be anshei- a person, a mensch, and the build upon that to become a kadosh (holy).

Too often the kiddush following davening does not reflect this toras adam. Similarly, the environment and demeanor at the shmorgassbord too often can bring out the worst in us. Chaviv adam is a directive to all mankind, and unfortunately too often we neglect it, substituting pleasure and technology in its stead. Compare photographs of people 50 years ago to that of this day and one can see the failing of a lack of toras adam.

Koheles (7:29) teaches, G-d has made man yashar (straight), but man has sought out many intrigues. Hashem made man a yashar by endowing him with sechel (intelligence). This is the book of Breishis and the many lessons of the avos are chapters in yashrus. The too familiar excuse, "it doesn't say in the Mishna Brurah" or "show me where it says it's assur", and then concluding that it therefore must be muttar, is an affront upon toras adam. May we be privileged to actualize the great potential of tzelem Elokim that Hashem has invested in us.

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From: **Rav Kook List** [RavKookList@gmail.com] Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 4:00 AM To: Subject: Rav Kook: The Atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael

The Atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael

The Unhappy Immigrant

Under the influence of Rav Kook, an American Jew came to Eretz Yisrael with the intention of settling there permanently. One day, however, he showed up the Rav's house and requested a farewell blessing. For some reason, he had decided to return to America.

'Why are you leaving so suddenly?' asked the Rav.

'Rebbe,' replied the man, 'I am sick of life here in Eretz Yisrael. I cannot stand the Sabbath desecration and overall disdain for our religion that is so rampant among the pioneer settlers of the Land. Therefore, I have decided to leave the country and return to America.'

These words, coming from the mouth of a simple, well-meaning Jew, giving voice to the yearnings of his soul, agitated and shook the Rav's heartstrings; but he contained himself. With a gentle smile, he turned to his guest and asked where he lived in America.

'My home is in Denver, Colorado,' replied the American Jew. Then, with a distinctive patriotism, he began describing the beauty of the city, with its overlooking mountains and remarkably crisp and pleasant air. 'There are no narrow, filthy alleyways' - he added mockingly - 'like here in Jerusalem. There the streets are broad, the houses large and elegant, and trolley cars speed through the city.' He then went on to speak, as if spellbound, about the beautiful nature that surrounds Denver.

After a while, the Rav interrupted the man and said: 'If I am not mistaken, Denver has a lot of tuberculosis sufferers. A man from Jerusalem recently returned from a trip to America and told me that when he was in Denver he met many people with incurable, chronic diseases. If what you are saying is true, that Denver's climate is so healthy and invigorating, why are there so many sick people there?'

'Does Your Honor really think,' replied the American Jew with silent indignation, 'that those sick people are natives of Denver? They all come from other cities, where fresh air and sunshine are sorely lacking. They contracted this terrible disease (TB) in their hometowns and came to Denver, on doctor's orders, to benefit from its fresh air and hopefully recover.'

'Of course,' continued the man, 'some people come with a very advanced form of the disease. They neglected their condition for a long time and came too late. Their lungs are so full of bacteria that there is almost no hope of recovery. That man from Jerusalem must have met some of those people in the streets of Denver, and he mistakenly thought that the city was to blame for their miserable condition. That naive man didn't realize that this city, with its healing air, actually brings relief and rehabilitation to thousands of desperately ill patients from all around the world.'

The Air of Eretz Yisrael

Rav Kook interrupted the flow of the man's words and replied in a calm and gentle manner: 'Think about what you are saying! The air of our Holy Land is also special; it makes one wise and has the ability to heal. Hapless Jews have come, and continue to come, to Eretz Yisrael from all over the world, where the foreign atmosphere of the lands of exile had a detrimental effect on their spirits, poisoning their souls. These Jews were on the verge of assimilating, G-d forbid, into the gentile culture and dying a spiritual death on foreign soil. Fortunately, though, the Healer of the Jewish people provided the cure before the ailment and infused them with a breath of life, inspiring them to love and yearn for Eretz Yisrael. They come to this therapeutic environment to breathe in some fresh air and spirit.'

'If you see so many affected souls here in the Holy Land, people with spiritual and emotional ailments, realize that they were born elsewhere. Had they not come here as soon as they did, they would have been in danger of assimilation. They are seriously ill, but we must treat them when they come here, just like they treat the tuberculosis patients in Denver. I firmly believe

that the atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael will have a positive, blessed influence on many of them, bringing them both physical and spiritual health.' [from "An Angel Among Men" by R. Simcha Raz (translated by R. Moshe Lichtman), pp. 431-434]

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<http://ravkook.n3.net> - Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

From: hamaayan-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Shlomo Katz** [skatz@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 8:07 PM To: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: **HaMaayan / The Torah Spring** - Parashat Lech Lecha
Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz
Lech Lecha: Avraham "Our Father"

Sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Irving Katz & Rabbi and Mrs. Sam Vogel on the bar mitzvah of their grandson Ze'ev

Today's Learning: Eruvin 1:9-10 O.C. 453:8-454:1 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Eruvin 38 Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Berachot 40

In this week's parashah, we begin to read about the activities and experiences of the Patriarch Avraham. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot (chapter 5) teaches: "Avraham Avinu was tested ten times, and he withstood them all." Many commentaries ask: Why is Avraham referred to as "Avinu" / "our father" in this mishnah, whereas he is not given that title in the previous mishnah which also mentions his name?

R' Chaim Sanzer z"l (18th century Poland; not to be confused with the chassidic rebbe R' Chaim Halberstam z"l of Sanz) explains: When Adam, the father of all of mankind, was created be'tzelem Elokim / in "G-d's image," he was meant to emulate the ten attributes (middot) of Hashem. When he sinned, he failed in his mission.

Not until the Patriarchs did anyone begin to correct the resulting spiritual damage. Specifically, Avraham's passing *ten* tests somehow rectified Adam's failure to emulate G-d's *ten* attributes.

Adam's sin did not damage his soul alone. Adam's soul included within it the souls of all his future descendants. Likewise, Avraham's spiritual accomplishments did not benefit himself alone. Rather, as Ramban writes, "Ma'asei Avot siman la'banim" / "The experiences of the Patriarchs foreshadow the experiences of their descendants." This is why specifically when we are told that Avraham withstood ten tests, he is called "Avinu" / "our father." (Ne'edar Ba'kodesh)

"You shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, " (12:2-3)

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) comments: The Torah says that man was created male and female and was commanded to procreate. This refers not only to physical activity, but to intellectual and spiritual growth as well. In the language of kabbalah, "male" refers to a giver and "female" refers to a recipient. A person who aspires to spiritual growth must be both male and female, able to impart to others whatever spiritual gifts he or she has to offer, and able to receive from others what they can contribute towards his or her (i.e., the recipient's) growth.

This was the blessing to Avraham recorded in our verses: You shall be a blessing to others, because you will give to them. And, those who bless you, shall be blessed, indicating that Avraham will also receive from others. (Yemei Zikaron p.32)

"Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Charan." (12:4)

R' Mordechai Shulman z"l (rosh yeshiva of the Slobodka Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) observed: The entire saga of Avraham Avinu's spiritual

elevation, the means by which he succeeded in transforming his body into a spiritual entity, is not recorded in the Torah. The ultimate test at Ur Kasdim [when young Avram was thrown into the furnace] is only hinted at.

Nevertheless, one who does not ponder the events which preceded Ur Kasdim and how Avraham reached the level where he could withstand that test, one who does not analyze the beliefs of that errant generation and see how strongly those beliefs influenced people's behavior, has no way of appreciating the power and greatness of Avraham's emunah / faith and the intensity of his closeness to G-d at a time when he was isolated from the whole world. One against everyone—a different path, a different faith—crying out against an indifferent world for many years, without any obvious support from Above, waging a tireless battle and continuing the fight in the face of the flames of Ur Kasdim.

One who does not evaluate all this properly does not understand the spiritual heritage we have received from Avraham. He cannot possibly fathom the power of actions performed out of such deep conviction that they can influence children and grandchildren for generations to come until the end of time—to the extent that these descendants are willing to sacrifice their lives for kiddush Hashem / the sanctification of G-d's Name [as Avraham was ready to do at Ur Kasdim]. Without pondering this, one cannot even begin to understand the basics of the concept of ma'asei Avot / the experiences of the forefathers, and he certainly has no idea how these actions form a siman la'banim / foreshadowing for their descendants, and how we benefit to this very day from our Patriarchs' deeds.

A person may say: What difference does it make if I don't understand the true significance of Abraham's recognizing his creator at the age of three?

R' Shulman answers: Our Sages (Tanna D'vei Eliyahu chapter 25) obligate a person to say, "When will my actions equal those of my forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?" Careful analysis of this obligation reveals that a person must understand how and why the Avot merited their great reward. Without this understanding, a person may, G-d forbid, arrive at mistaken ideas concerning reward and punishment—a form of denial of G-d.

R' Shulman concludes: In our days, there are people who say, "I live by simple faith." They imagine that they are following in the ways of Avraham Avinu. However, there is a vast difference between these people and Avraham. Avraham walked in simple faith because he saw the light. These people walk simply without realizing they are walking in darkness.

(Quoted in Legacy of Slabodka p.106)

"But also the nation that they shall serve, I shall judge, and afterwards they shall leave with great wealth." (15:13- 14)

Why should the nation that would oppress Avraham's descendants be judged when they would merely be fulfilling G-d's decree? asks R' Eliezer David Gruenwald z"l (leading Hungarian rabbi and rosh yeshiva; died 1928). He explains:

Rambam z"l states that the Egyptians were punished for oppressing Bnei Yisrael more than G-d intended, so-to-speak, along the lines of the verse (Zechariah 1:15), "I became slightly wrathful and they augmented the evil." However, says R' Gruenwald, we do not see this in our verses. Hashem did not say to Avraham, "If the nation that they serve augments the decree with additional oppression then I will judge them!"

Rather, writes R' Gruenwald, the expression "I shall judge [them]" should be understood differently. R' Yosef Albo z"l writes in Sefer Ha'ikkarim that there are two kinds of love. One type of love is based on the absolute qualities of the person or thing that is loved. The second type is based on the relative value of the subject. This explains the meaning of the prophecy of Malachi (1:2), "'I loved you,' said Hashem, and you said, 'How have You loved us?' Was not Esav a brother of Yaakov -- the words of Hashem -- yet I loved Yaakov." In other words, even when we do not merit Hashem's love because of our own (absolute) qualities, we still merit His love because of our (relative) qualities compared to Esav's descendants.

So said Hashem to Avraham: When your descendants are oppressed for 400 years, they will lose those qualities that make them special. But don't worry, for I shall judge the nation that oppresses them and find Bnei Yisrael to be special in comparison to that nation.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach Chasdei David)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil 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/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org
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From: Peninim-bounces@shemayisrael.com on behalf of Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2005 6:17 AM To: Peninim Parsha

Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum -

Parshas Lech Lecha

Hashem said to Avram, "Go for yourself." (12:1) The Midrash cites an analogy: A man was traveling from place to place. Along the way, he came across a large house that was lit up. The man said to himself, "Is it possible that this house has no owner?" Suddenly, the owner of the house appeared and said, "I am the owner of this house." Avraham Avinu was in a similar quandary. He saw a great, illuminated world which seemed to have no "owner." Is this possible? At that point, Hashem appeared to Avraham and told him, "I am the owner of this world." This is a Midrash that we have heard numerous times, going back to our elementary school days. Its simplicity, however, begs elucidation. Avraham was apparently the first person to question the "ownership" of this world. Were there no others before him who wondered and asked the same question: Is it possible that this world has no manhig, leader? We know this not to be true. There were righteous people that preceded Avraham, such as Chanoch, Mesushelach, Noach, Shem and Eivar. If so, what chidush, novelty, did Avraham add for which he has received such credit?

Horav Meir Chadash, zl, explains that Avraham developed a unique perspective of the world which previously had not been recognized. This is indicated by Chazal's analogy to a house that is all "lit up." Is it necessary to say that the house was lit up? What would be wrong if the man would have come across a large house that was not "lit up"? The answer is that the Midrash is not referring to a light that illuminates the inside of the house. Rather, the Midrash refers to a reflective light that lights the entire outer area which encompasses the house. Thus, the passerby takes note of a phenomenon unlike anything else he has seen before. Most houses have lights to illuminate the area within its confines. This house is lit in such a manner that it illuminated everything outside of it. Why would the owner of the house want to light up the area outside of his house? What benefit does he derive from this light?

Avraham Avinu realized what no one before him had comprehended. The purpose of this house was not self-serving. The owner of the house was not illuminating it for his own benefit. He was lighting the way for those who were outside, who traveled along the road past the house. This amazed Avraham. Never before had he seen a house that was built solely for the benefit of others. This house, of course, is a reference to the world that Avraham observed. He saw nature, the heavens, the entire creation. It was all there for its inhabitants, but where was the owner? He was not deriving any personal benefit from the house. This was a house built totally on chesed, kindness. The bricks and mortar of this edifice were pure altruism. How could this be? Where was this elusive owner? This is when Hashem

appeared to Avraham and explained, Olam chesed yibaneh, "The world was built on chesed."

Our Patriarch realized that if this is the reason that the Creator created the world, then he must be like Him; imitato Dei, as He is compassionate, so shall you be compassionate. Avraham then began to preach the importance of chesed for the continued existence of the world. He understood that a world that was created upon the foundation of kindness, for the purpose of doing kindness, must be a world in which acting benevolently is a constant reality: Under all circumstances, if one searches, he will find the opportunity to act with chesed. This is why, when Avraham was recuperating from his bris milah, he could not accept the fact that there was no one out there for whom he could do chesed. He was certain that the opportunity would materialize when chesed would be needed. Hashem created that potential.

Indeed, as descendants of Avraham, we understand that chesed is more than our mission in life, it is our raison d'etre. It is the reason for life itself. Chesed sustains life and serves as a catalyst for continued chesed, as evidenced in the following story:

The Dejer Rebbe, zl, was fleeing with his family from the Nazis. Their guide was to take them from their beloved home to the border of Romania. They camped in the forest for the night. By daybreak, their guide had disappeared. The Rebbe, his wife and eight children were left alone to stumble blindly through the forest. They walked at night and hid during the day. Tired, weak and hungry, they searched for food to no avail. Finally, they reached the edge of the forest where they noticed a little silo. They slipped inside and concealed themselves in the hayloft. While they now had temporary shelter, their hunger pains still had not been alleviated. It had been two days since they had last had a morsel of food. They knew that if they did not procure some food soon, they would succumb to hunger. They peered out of the silo and noticed two peasants tilling the soil. The rebbetzin and one of her sons decided they might as well take a chance, hoping that one of these men would have a kind heart.

They were fortunate that the first man they approached had mercy on them and told them not to worry. He would protect them. It happened that this man, whose name they later found out to be Tarnowan, was the village minister and judge. The rebbetzin took Tarnowan to meet her husband. The Rebbe extended his hand in greeting and graciously thanked their benefactor. "My name is Yoseph Paneth, and I understand you are Judge Tarnowan," the Rebbe said.

Suddenly, Tarnowan turned ashen, as he gazed at the Rebbe in awe and disbelief. "Did you say your name was Paneth? May I ask what was your father's name?" Tarnowan pressed on.

"My father was Rabbi Yechezkel Paneth," the Rebbe answered.

"My G-d, if you are Rabbi Paneth's son, then I owe you a debt of gratitude." The judge gave the following explanation. "Thirty years ago, our two-year-old son was struck with a strange disease for which no doctor could find a cure. We had traveled all over Europe to no success. Being religious people, we could not give up hope. We heard that there was a holy rabbi in the city of Dej who was a miracle worker. We figured that we owed it to our son to seek this rabbi's blessing.

"I arrived in Dej and immediately proceeded to the Rabbi's house. After waiting a short while, I was ushered into the rabbi's study. This kind-hearted man listened to me and, with a gracious smile, he promised me that my son would be cured.

"I have one request of you, however," the rabbi said. You must promise me that whenever you see people in trouble, you will help them.

"I returned home to discover that my son's health had already miraculously improved. It could be for no other reason than the blessing I had received from your holy father. Now, thirty years later, I have the opportunity to repay that blessing."

For two weeks, the Rebbe and his family were hidden by the Tarnowans, until they were finally able to escape from that part of the country. It was the realization that an act of chesed may not go unrequited that catalyzed

their salvation. For thirty years, this gentile had remembered the holy Rebbe's request: "Whenever you see people in trouble - help them."

Please separate from me; if you go left then I will go right, and if you will go right then I will go left. (13:9)

Avraham Avinu and his nephew Lot parted ways. When Avraham saw that Lot's shepherds, with his support, resorted to stealing from the pastures of the neighboring farms, he felt that their relationship should be terminated. Lot decided to go to the lush fields of Sodom, even though the spiritual climate left much to be desired. His lust for material abundance clouded his ability to think rationally. Avraham's actions concerning Lot are enigmatic. Avraham was the original founder of the outreach movement. Thousands from all walks of life flocked to him, seeking guidance and counsel. He was known to have had four openings to his tent. Simply, this was to allow easy access for anyone to enter. On a more profound note, however, Horav Avraham Farbstein, zl, explained that Avraham's tent was open to all people from all directions and cultures. From all four corners of the world, they had an address to which to turn. Yet, despite all of this, Avraham could not come to terms with his errant nephew. He could not find a place for him in his tent. Why? Was Lot that bad? Indeed, one cannot say that his sin was that iniquitous in comparison to the sins of many others that Avraham permitted across his doorstep.

Horav Shlomo Lorincz, Shlita, in his eulogy for Horav Simchah Wasserman, zl, asked this question. Rav Simchah had a similar quality about him. His heart and home were open to so many, but there were times when he would tell an individual to "separate from me." What was the barometer for distinguishing between people? Avraham opened his tent to anyone who had not yet been exposed to monotheism, to the principles of Judaic belief, to his lovingkindness and warmth. He was patient, caring, and loving. He taught; he guided; he gave advice. When Lot's shepherds decided to pervert Avraham's teachings, however, to suggest loopholes concerning the laws of theft, to sway from the truth, he lost patience. He would not put up with those who sought to undermine his work, to impugn the integrity of his teachings in their attempt to amend and refashion their belief in the Almighty.

Rav Simchah had a big heart and an open mind - for anyone who was sincere and sought to listen. In contrast, he zealously challenged those who knew the truth, but endeavored to undermine it. He had no tolerance for those who had deserted Judaism for the verdant fields of secularism. One must be willing to sacrifice in order to demonstrate his commitment.

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From: Daf-discuss-bounces@shemayisrael.co.il [mailto:Daf-discuss-bounces@shemayisrael.co.il] On Behalf Of **Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld** kornfeld@netvision.net.il Sent: Monday, November 07, 2005 10:21 AM To: discuss list Subject: GENERAL: How to dispose of Daf Yomi printouts
daf-discuss@shemayisrael.com THE DAFYOMI DISCUSSION LIST brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim Rosh Kollel: Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld daf@dafyomi.co.il

GENERAL: How to dispose of Daf Yomi printouts
Victor Saadeh asked:

>> I've been printing out the Daily Daf for a few days now so i could >> read on the way to work. I was wondering if i can throw them out >> after im done reading them, Or do i have to put them in Geniza? <<

The Kollel replied:

>> All words of Torah require proper Geniza.

However, some rabbis allow printed Divrei Torah made for temporary usage (like newspapers and computer printouts) to be placed in a bag which can be then be disposed of. <<

Yehudah Tzvi Hacohen harvey@grunerco.com asks:

Can they be shredded? Shomehow that seems more respectful than throwing the pages out whole and identifiable (even with a bag) where they can end up next to who knows what.

Yehudah Tzvi Hacohen, NYC -----

mmw0@verizon.net asks:

I thought the rule is simply: if it has Shem Ham'foresh on it, then it is Shemos; if not, then not. Isn't this why the wallet-sized Mincha Maariv, Bentchers, T'filas Haderech, etc. are printed with only a Daled (or Heh) representing Hashem's name, so as to avoid having the burden of Shemos?

Rabbi Yeshayahu HaKohen Hollander yeshol@zahav.net.il comments:

Dear Rabbi Kornfeld,

The issue raised here is of importance to many and should be addressed carefully.

>From discussions I have had with important poskim, it would seem that >there are two issues to be addressed:

1. the issue of Kedusha: is there any "kedusha" to be attributed to a printout? 2. The issue of avoiding bizayon - disgrace - to the Torah

These distinction between these two issues is often NOT related to in various notices about "kedushat hagilayon".

Issue 1:

question 1: Can a "kedusha" be acquired automatically without any human intent to give "kedusha" to the object?

question 2: Is the intent of having words of the Tora printed on a piece of paper enough of an intent to give "kedusha" to that piece of paper - even though the person doing the printing does not wish to give kedusha to the paper?

To question 1: with no intent to give "kedusha" - there can be no "kedusha".

HOWEVER: if what is printed on the paper is associated with kedusha, such as Tora or other objects of kedusha - there is an issue of avoiding bizayon: disgrace to the Tora, or disgrace to jewish tradition and practice, which is a part of Hillul HaShem.

to question 2: this is more difficult, but it seems that if the person who sends the print order to the printer, or who pushes the button on the printing press [?] is clear in his mind that he does NOT want any din of kedusha to apply to the printed object - then the object does NOT acquire kedusha.

But again: if what is printed on the paper is associated with kedusha, such as Tora or other objects of kedusha - there is an issue of avoiding disgrace to the Tora or disgrace to jewish tradition and practice, which is a part of Hillul HaShem.

In summary: 1. when one sends a print order - one must be clear that he has no intent of giving kedusha 2. one must dispose of all things which may be associated with tora or Jewish practice in a discreet fashion, such as in a non-transparent bag, or - for papers: by shredding discreetly, preferably when others are not present, and SURELY NOT when people who are not knowledgeable about the halachic issues are present, to avoid HILLUL HASHEM.

Rabbi Yeshayahu HaKohen Hollander

The Kollel replies: The Kollel thanks Rav Hollander for his T'shuvah. We previously published the following article on this issue.

"Throw away this article?" by Rabbi Michael J. Brojde

Modern technology has vastly increased the availability of regularly published Torah periodicals that address timely matters. While in timesf Torah in Hebrew. (2) There are those divrei Torah sheets that explicitly quote verses of Torah in English, and when they encounter the name of G-d, use an English translation of one of the seven un-erasable names. (3) There are those divrei Torah sheets that will quote whole verses of Torah, but when they encounter the name of G-d, they use the term Hashem, or G-d, or L-rd, thus avoiding even properly translating the name of G-d. (4) There are those divrei Torah sheets that address matters of interest to ei Torah after you have read them? Can one throw them out? Can one dispose of them neatly? Must one bury them, as one must a Torah scroll? What is the proper procedure?

This halachic matter divided into four different categories:

(1) There are those divrei Torah sheets that explicitly quote verses of Torah in Hebrew. (2) There are those divrei Torah sheets that explicitly quote verses of Torah in English, and when they encounter the name of G-d, use an English translation of one of the seven un-erasable names. (3) There are those divrei Torah sheets that will quote whole verses of Torah, but when they encounter the name of G-d, they use the term Hashem, or G-d, or L-rd, thus avoiding even properly translating the name of G-d. (4) There are those divrei Torah sheets that address matters of interest to the community without quoting a verse of Torah or mentioning the name of G-d.

Each of these four categories have different halachic rules, and different ways to dispose of them. In the case of a dvar Torah sheet that quotes Torah verses in Hebrew, even if the name of G-d is not used, Hashem (written in Hebrew) is substituted and no full verses are thus cited, it is improper to dispose of this dvar Torah sheet in any denigrating manner (Rama and Shach, Yoreh Deah 276:10). If one of the seven names of G-d is explicitly used in Hebrew, of course it is improper

to dispose of these divrei Torah sheets except in a geniza, or perhaps to burn or bury them in an very proper manner.

Indeed, as noted by the Talmud (Tractate Rosh Hashanah 18a and quoted by Rama Yoreh Deah 276:13) it is improper even to write the name of G-d in Hebrew on a piece of paper that is normally thrown out. (Shach YD 276:16 is more lenient on this matter, but even he is uncertain about this leniency, as noted in Nekudat Hakesef (on id.)). For more on this see Igrot Moshe YD 2:134-135, and Minchat Yitzchak 1:17-18.)

In the case of the English dvar torah sheets that quote full verses of the Torah in English, and use various translations of the names of G-d that explicitly denote the Divine in English, halacha prohibits one from disposing of these sheets in an irreverent manner, such as simply discarding them in a garbage can full of rubbish; however, they need not be put in a geniza and can be disposed of in some other proper manner, such as burning in a dignified way, or even perhaps bundling them neatly together and putting them in a recycling bin or the like. The reason for this is that when the name of G-d is used in a language other than Hebrew, no technical prohibition against erasing it attaches, but yet it is improper to dispose of this material in an undignified manner. For more on this, see Minchat Yitzchak 1:17:(14). Of course, one cannot take such reading material into a bathroom or the like.

In the case of English divrai torah that use the term "Hashem" for G-d, and which do not quote full verses of the Torah even in English, the halacha is even more lenient, and their status is the same as any essay written about any torah topic which does not mention the name of G-d. In such a case, it is the better practice to dispose of these items in a dignified manner, but there is no requirement that they be placed in a geniza, and may even be disposed of in a paper recycling bin, or perhaps even a dignified manner in a garbage reserved for paper disposal. This is particularly so for modern photo offset material, which is printed by people with no intent that they be holy (even if the writer intended such, the copy machine operator certainly did not), and were intended to be used once or twice and then disposed of. This is quite a bit different than the English translation of a page of the Bible, when it rips out of a chumash, as that work is intended for permanent use. More generally, it is widely asserted that printed material has a lesser level of sanctity than handwritten material, particularly so when the printers are Gentiles. For more on this, see Minchat Yitzchak 1:18(19-20), and Yabia Omer YD 4:21(4-6).

A related question is whether one can erase dvar torah pages when they are posted on the internet, and you are reading them "online." The question is whether directing the browser to the next web page, and thus causing whatever is on your screen to be deleted is called "erasing." The same question is posed when one downloads a dvar torah, and read it; can one delete the file from one's hard drive? It would appear to me that both of these activities are permissible to do, as the act of directing one's internet browser to the next web page is not called "erasing" that material; such is true, I think, even if the name of G-d, in Hebrew, is actually on the screen. This is even more so true when one is merely overwriting a file. For a related question that elucidates on this principle, see Yabia Omer YD 4:20, and Igrot Moshe YD 1:173. In sum: Do not throw out this dvar torah sheet if you are reading it from a printed flyer. Keep it in your files if the topic interests you. Otherwise politely dispose of it in a dignified place, and not in a garbage. If you are reading it on the world wide web, when you are finished reading it browse on to the next torah topic, as there is much torah to learn, and you have finished reading this dvar halacha!

Daf-discuss mailing list Daf-discuss@shemayisrael.co.il
http://www.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/daf-discuss_shemayisrael.co.il

From: Halacha [halacha@vutorah.org] Sent: Monday, November 07, 2005 9:55 AM
Weekly Halacha Overview
by **RABBI JOSH FLUG**

Pikuach Nefesh: Saving a Life on Shabbat Part II

Last week's issue discussed the source for performing melacha in a life threatening situation (pikuach nefesh) as well as the nature of the mandate to perform melacha. One of the issues discussed was whether Shabbat is suspended in the face of pikuach nefesh (hutrah) or whether pikuach nefesh overrides Shabbat (dechuyah). This article will explore other questions that may be contingent on the question of hutrah vs. dechuyah.

Minimizing the Melacha

The Gemara, Shabbat 128b, quotes a Beraita that if one must violate Shabbat to treat a yoledet (a pregnant woman who is in an advanced stage of labor), one should try to perform the melacha in an abnormal manner (shinui) in order to minimize the melacha involved. If it can't be done in an abnormal manner, one may perform the melacha in its normal manner.

Ramban, Torat Ha'Adam, Sha'ar HaSakanah, deduces from this Beraita that when violating Shabbat for pikuach nefesh purposes, one should try to do whatever

possible to minimize the melacha involved (if it will not cause any delay in treatment of the patient). Maggid Mishneh, Hilchot Shabbat 2:11 contends that Rambam disagrees with the opinion of Ramban on this matter. Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 2:11, records the requirement to minimize the melacha regarding a yoledet. However, regarding a life threatening situation, Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 2:1, omits any requirement to minimize the melacha involved. R. Yitzchak Z. Soloveitchik, Chiddushei Maran Riz HaLevi, Yoma pg. 52, explains that a yoledet is not in a life threatening situation. The reason why one is permitted to violate Shabbat to treat her is because failure to treat her may lead to a life threatening situation. Therefore, the treatments must be done in a way that minimizes the melacha. However, there is no requirement to minimize the melacha involved in treating someone who is already in a life threatening situation.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 328:4, implies that regarding a life threatening situation, there is no requirement to minimize the melacha involved. Nevertheless, Rama, Orach Chaim 328:12, rules that one should try to minimize the melacha involved in whatever way possible.

Some Acharonim (R. Shlomo Kluger, HaElef L'cha Shlomo, Orach Chaim 297 and R. Malkiel Tannenbaum, Divrei Malkiel 4:15) explain that the dispute between Shulchan Aruch and Rama is contingent on whether pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is hutrah or dechuyah. R. Tannenbaum adds that the Gemara, Yoma 6b, states that the term dechuyah connotes that if there is a possibility of minimizing the prohibition, one must do so. [This statement is not said regarding life saving missions but rather regarding the principle of tumah dechuya b'tzibbur, the concept that ritual impurity is overridden for the communal sacrificial order.]

Use of a Non-Jew to Save a Life

Another issue that may relate to the question of hutrah or dechuyah is the use of a non-Jew or a minor for life saving missions. If one assumes that pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is dechuyah, it should follow that if there is a need to perform melacha for pikuach nefesh purposes and there is a non-Jew or minor available, one should employ the non-Jew or the minor in order to minimize the melacha involved. Yet, a Beraita quoted in the Gemara, Yoma 84b, states that one should not seek out a non-Jew or a minor for life saving missions on Shabbat. Tosafot, ad loc., s.v. Ela, explain that one should not seek out a non-Jew or a minor out of concern that they may not act as quickly to perform the life saving mission. However, Ran, Yoma 4b, s.v. V'Ain, explains that the reason why one should not seek out a minor or a non-Jew is because there is a concern for a future calamity. One of the bystanders may deduce that in a life threatening situation, one must attempt to find a minor or a non-Jew to perform melacha. In the future, he may be in a position to respond to a life threatening situation and his initial reaction will be to seek out a non-Jew or a minor. If neither of them is available, the delay may endanger the life of the patient.

Presumably, the practical difference between the opinion of Tosafot and the opinion of Ran should be limited. Regardless of the reason, the Beraita states unequivocally that one should not seek out a non-Jew or a minor for a life saving mission. In fact, Or Zarua, Shabbat no. 38, sides with the opinion of Tosafot that the reason why one does not seek out a non-Jew or a minor is out of concern that they may not respond as quickly. Yet, he concludes that even in a situation where it is known that there will be no delay, one may still not use a non-Jew or a minor. However, Rama, Orach Chaim 328:12, rules that if there is a non-Jew available and there will be absolutely no delay if he performs the life saving mission, it is preferable to use the non-Jew in order to avoid melacha performed by a Jew.

Rama's ruling does not go uncontested. Taz, Orach Chaim 328:5, claims that even if one accepts the possibility of seeking out a non-Jew according to Tosafot, one must still be concerned about a future calamity. Basing himself on the opinion of Ran, Taz notes that every life-threatening situation serves as an informal training session in handling emergencies for all who are present. Therefore, one should shun the practice of seeking out non-Jews or minors. Furthermore, one should assign performance of melacha in life threatening situations to the rabbis and leaders of the community in order to teach the importance of pikuach nefesh on Shabbat.

R. Tannenbaum, op. cit., explains that if one assumes that pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is hutrah, there is no need to seek out a non-Jew or minor to perform the melacha. Only if one assumes that pikuach nefesh is dechuyah is it possible to require one to seek out a non-Jew or a minor in order to minimize the melacha involved.

However, R. Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Choshen Mishpat 2:79, claims that the question of whether to seek out a non-Jew or a minor is not dependent on the question of hutrah or dechuyah. If there is a life threatening situation where one option involves no melacha but does involve delay and the other involves melacha but no delay, one would certainly choose the latter, even if pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is dechuyah. If neither option involves any delay but one involves melacha and the other does not, one should choose the option that involves no melacha, even if pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is hutrah. R. Feinstein suggests that the question of hutrah or dechuyah is limited to a situation where there are multiple parties (or one party with multiple options) obligated to perform a commandment and one of those

parties can perform the commandment in a manner that would involve no prohibition. This does not apply to a situation where one must choose between an adult Jew and a non-Jew or minor. Neither the non-Jew nor the minor has an obligation to perform the life saving mission. Therefore, the adult Jew is assigned the primary responsibility of carrying out the life saving mission. There is no need to seek out a non-Jew even if pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is dechuyah. Rama's ruling that one should seek out a non-Jew or a minor if there will be no delay is only an added stringency and is not required from the letter of the law. For this reason Taz shuns this practice out of concern that it will lead to a future calamity. If there was a true requirement to seek out a non-Jew, the concern for a future calamity would not be sufficient to permit violation of melacha by an adult Jew when there is a non-Jew or minor available.

R. Feinstein implies that the question of whether one must perform the melacha in an abnormal manner is not contingent on the question of hutrah or dechuyah. One must explain that even if pikuach nefesh on Shabbat is hutrah, there is still a requirement to minimize the melacha involved if it will cause no delay. [Nevertheless, one is still compelled to understand the opinion of Maggid Mishneh - that there is no requirement to perform the melacha in an abnormal manner - as based on a more expansive approach to hutrah.]

Dear Readers, Due to time considerations, this e-mail will now be sent every other week.

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From: weekly-halacha-owner@torah.org on behalf of Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 7:07 PM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Lech Lecha WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

By **Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

QUESTION: At what age must a child-with or without his parent's help-wash his hands properly upon rising in the morning (negel vasser)?

DISCUSSION: There are a number of opinions in the poskim as to the age when parents should make sure that a child washes netilas yadayim in the morning:

* Some hold that the obligation begins when the child reaches the age of chinuch,(1) which-depending on the child-is approximately 5-6 years old.(2)

* Others write that once the child is old enough to touch food, his hands should be washed,3 since a ruach ra'ah (a spirit of impurity) adheres to objects that are touched by hands that have not been ritually washed upon awakening.(4)

* Harav Y. Kamenetsky is quoted as ruling that once a child is old enough to recite a verse from the Torah or answer Amen to a berachah, the parents should make sure that that his hands are washed properly.(5)

* Some poskim recommend that an infant's hands-even a newborn's-should be washed.(6)

QUESTION: Why do some people say morid ha-gashem with a kametz under the gimmel while others pronounce it with a segol under the gimmel- ha-geshem?

DISCUSSION: The Hebrew word for rain is "geshem," with a segol under the gimmel (and under the shin). Like many other words of comparable structure-two syllables, both vocalized with a segol (e.g., erez, kesef, eved, etc.), the first segol is changed to a kametz when the word appears at the end of a Biblical phrase(7) or sentence.

The correct pronunciation of the word ha-geshem or ha-gashem, therefore, depends on its location within the second blessing of Shemoneh Esrei. If the sentence- which began with the words ata gibor-ends with the words

mashiv ha-ruch u'morid ha-geshem, then ha-gashem is correct. If, however, mashiv ha-ruach u'morid hagashem is part of a longer sentence which ends with the words berachamim rabim, then the correct pronunciation is ha-geshem. In all of the old siddurim which were published hundreds of years ago, the word is written as ha-geshem with a segol. While more recently, many publishers changed the vocalization and printed ha-gashem instead(8) - and some poskim maintain that ha-gashem is the correct pronunciation(9) - most poskim(10) hold that the correct way to pronounce the word is ha- geshem, and this is how most contemporary siddurim print that word.

QUESTION: If one forgot to daven Mussaf (on Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh or Yom Tov) and only remembered to do so in the afternoon, which should he daven first - Mussaf or Minchah?

DISCUSSION: In most cases, Mussaf should be davened first, followed by Minchah. This is because the correct order of the tefillos follows the order of the korbanos that were brought in the Beis ha-Mikdash, and the Korabn Mussaf was always brought before the afternoon Korban Tamid, which was the last korban of the day.(11)

[The only exception to this halachah is the case of a person who is required to daven Minchah at that particular time, e.g., before partaking in a wedding or a Sheva Berachos meal. In such a case, since one is not allowed to partake of such a meal before davening Minchah, it is considered as if the time of Minchah has arrived and one should not daven Mussaf first.(12)]

The halachah remains the same even if a man remembered to daven Mussaf so late in the day that he would not have time to daven Minchah any longer. He should daven Mussaf, and then daven Maariv twice, once for Maariv and a second one as a tashlumin ("make up") for Minchah.(13) If this happened to a woman, however, she should daven Minchah and omit Mussaf, since she is obligated to daven Mincha and it is questionable whether she is obligated to daven Mussaf altogether.(14)

QUESTION: On Shabbos, is it permitted to leave an intercom on in a baby's room in order to allow parents to monitor their child's welfare?

DISCUSSION: All contemporary poskim agree that it is forbidden - for various reasons - to speak into a microphone on Shabbos even if it was turned on before Shabbos.(15) The same halachah applies to speaking into an intercom. It is, therefore, forbidden to leave a monitor on in a baby's room, since adults, too, will be entering the child's room and their voices will carry over the intercom system. In a situation where parents are justifiably hesitant to leave a baby alone in a room overnight, e.g., the baby is ill or is having trouble breathing, they may connect the intercom to a Shabbos clock which will turn the intercom off in the morning. If the parents must enter the room during the night to check or take care of the baby, they must be careful not to speak while they are in the vicinity of the intercom.

QUESTION: May one comfort a mourner on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

DISCUSSION: Although the Halachah permits nichum aveilim on Shabbos, the general custom is not to do so.(16) If, however, one would not be able to be menachem at any other time, he may do so on Shabbos.(17) Some have a custom that on Shabbos, nichum is not more than a brief stay without any explicit words of nechamah.(18)

QUESTION: Can one fulfill mitzvas nichum aveilim over the telephone?

DISCUSSION: The Rambam(19) says that there are two facets to mitzvas nichum aveilim: The first is to comfort the mourners who are distressed over the death of a loved one. This can be done by expressing sympathy to them and consoling them over their loss. One's mere presence at a house of mourning is a show of respect and a source of comfort at a time of sorrow. (20)

The second part of the mitzvah is for the sake of the deceased. By visiting the home of the deceased during the Shivah period, one "elevates the soul" of the departed individual.(21)

Accordingly, Harav M. Feinstein rules(22) that while it is possible to console a mourner over the telephone, it is not possible to "elevate the soul" of the deceased unless one actually comes to the house of mourning. Nor does one show proper honor to a mourner through a mere phone call.(23) Thus, if one can, he must be menachem avel in person. If, for some valid reason, he cannot visit the home of a mourner, he should still call him and console him and thereby fulfill at least part of the mitzvah.

The mourner may come to the phone and accept a caller's words of condolence. He may not, however, speak about other matters or ask about the welfare of the caller, even if the caller is a child or close relative. (24)

FOOTNOTES:

1 Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 4:2; Eishel Avraham O.C. 4; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 20, Devar Halachah 25).

2 See Mishnah Berurah 343:3 and 640:4 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 3.

3 Mishnah Berurah 4:10, based on Peri Megadim 7.

4 See O.C. 4:5. B'diavad, however, it is not forbidden to eat such foods; Mishnah Berurah 14.

5 Emes L'yaakov O.C. 4, note 10.

6 See Ben Ish Chai, quoted by Kaf ha-Chayim 4:23 and several poskim quoted in Tzitz Eliezer 7:2-4.

7 Most often the end of a phrase is indicated by an esnachta or a zakef katan.

8 See Minhag Yisrael Torah 114:1 that the original change was implemented by the maskilim.

9 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:40-15. See, however, Tefillah K'hilchasa 12:27 that Harav Feinstein subsequently revised his opinion on this matter.

10 Levushei Mordechai 4:213; Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabeinu, 1:213); Harav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes L'yaakov al ha-Torah, Bereishis 3:19); Harav Y.Y. Weiss (quoted in Ishei Yisrael 23:25); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 1:8-14); Az Nidberu 12:28; Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:81.

11 Based on Mishnah Berurah 286:12, Aruch ha-Shulchan 286:17 and Kaf ha-Chayim 286:35-36.

12 O.C. 286:4.

13 See Mishnah Berurah 286:13, Aruch ha-Shulchan 286:17; Da'as Torah 286:4 and Kaf ha-Chayim 286:36.

14 See Mishnah Berurah 106:4.

15 See Igros Moshe O.C. 3:55.

16 Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 287:3; Gesher ha-Chayim 20:5-2.

17 Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 287:1.

18 Kaf ha-Chayim O.C. 287:4.

19 Hilchos Avel 147.

20 Based on the Talmud (Moed Katan 21b) which quotes Rabbi Akiva's expression of gratitude to the multitudes of people who came to console him.

21 Based on the Talmud (Shabbos 152a) which states that ten people should sit shivah in the house of the deceased even if the deceased left no mourners behind.

22 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:40-11.

23 It can be argued, however, that a phone call from an honorable person can be considered as showing honor to the mourners.

24 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:40-11.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

SIR JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth [From 2 years ago 5764]

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

The Birth of Moral Selfhood G-d said to Abram: "Leave your land, your birthplace and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1)

These words are among the most consequential in the history of mankind. With them a new faith was born that has lasted for two-thirds of the course of civilization and remains young and vigorous today. Not only did Abraham give rise to what today we call Judaism. He was also the inspiration of two other religions, Christianity and Islam, both of which trace their descent, biological or spiritual, to him, and which now number among their adherents more than half the six billion people on the face of the earth.

There was no one like Abraham, yet the Torah is exceptionally understated in its account of him. As children we learned that he was the first iconoclast, the person who, while still young, broke the idols in his father's house. But this is a midrash, a tradition, inferred from hints in the biblical text rather than from explicit statement. Abraham does not fit any conventional image of the religious hero. He is not, like Noah, the sole survivor of a world hastening to its destruction. He is not, like Moses, a law-giver and liberator. He is not, like the later prophets, a man who spends his life confronting kings, wrestling with his contemporaries and "speaking truth to power."

To be sure, he is a man of exemplary virtue. He welcomes strangers and gives them food. He fights a battle on behalf of the cities of the plain in order to rescue his nephew Lot. He prays for them in one of the greatest dialogues in religious literature. He patiently waits for a child and then, when the command comes, is willing to offer him as a sacrifice, only to discover that the G-d of truth does not want us to sacrifice our children but to cherish them. But if we were asked to characterise him with adjectives, the words that spring to mind - gentle, kind, gracious - are not those usually associated with the founder of a new faith. They are the kind of attributes to which any of us could aspire. None of us can be an Abraham, but all of us can take him as a role model. Perhaps that is the deepest lesson of all.

In Sincerity and Authenticity, Lionel Trilling made the following comment: Not all cultures develop the idea of the heroic. I once had occasion to observe in connection with Wordsworth that in the rabbinical literature there is no touch of the heroic idea. The rabbis, in speaking of virtue, never mention the virtue of courage, which Aristotle regarded as basic to the heroic character. The indifference of the rabbis to the idea of courage is the more remarkable in that they knew that many of their number would die for their faith. What is especially to our point is that, as ethical beings, the rabbis never see themselves -- it is as if the commandment which forbade the making of images extended to their way of conceiving the personal moral existence as well.

Trilling is not quite accurate. The rabbis did speak of courage, gevurah. But he is right to say that that Judaism did not have heroes in the way the Greeks and other cultures did. A hero is one convinced of his own importance. He or she is conscious of playing a part on the world stage affairs under the admiring gaze of their contemporaries. The rabbis, said Trilling, "would have been quite ready to understand the definition of the hero as an actor and to say that, as such, her was undeserving of the attention of serious men." Abraham is the paradigm of an unheroic hero, one who (in Maimonides' lovely phrase) "does what is right because it is

right" and not for the sake of popularity or fame. If we were to define Judaism in Abrahamic terms it would be the heroism of ordinary life, being willing to live by one's convictions though all the world thinks otherwise, being true to the call of eternity, not the noise of now. Which brings us to the key phrase, the first words of G-d to the bearer of a new covenant: Lech Lecha. Is there, already in these two words, a hint of what was to come?

Rashi, following an ancient exegetical tradition, translates the phrase as "Journey for yourself." According to him what G-d meant was "Travel for your own benefit and good. There I will make you into a great nation; here you will not have the merit of having children." Sometimes we have to give up our past in order to acquire a future. G-d was already intimating to Abraham that what seems like a sacrifice is, in the long run, not so. Abraham was about to say goodbye to the things that mean most to us -- land, birthplace and parent's home, the places where we belong. It was a journey from the familiar to the unfamiliar, a leap into the unknown. To be able to make that leap involves trust -- in Abraham's case, trust not in visible power but in the voice of the invisible G-d. At the end of it, however, Abraham would discover that he had achieved something he could not have done otherwise. He would give birth to a new nation whose greatness consisted precisely in the ability to live by that voice and create something new in the history of mankind. "Go for yourself."

Another interpretation, more midrashic, takes the phrase to mean "Go with yourself" - meaning, by travelling from place to place you will extend your influence not over one land but many:

When the Holy One said to Abraham, "Leave your land, your birthplace and your father's house..." what did Abraham resemble? A jar of scent with a tight fitting lid put away in a corner so that its fragrance could not go forth. As soon as it was moved from that place and opened, its fragrance began to spread. So the Holy One said to Abraham, "Abraham, many good deeds are in you. Travel about from place to place, so that the greatness of your name will go forth in My world."

Abraham was commanded to leave his place in order to testify to the existence of a G-d not bounded by place -- Creator and Sovereign of the entire universe. Abraham and Sarah were to be like perfume, leaving a trace of their presence wherever they went. Implicit in this midrash is the idea that the fate of the first Jews already prefigured that of their descendants. They were scattered throughout the world in order to spread knowledge of G-d throughout the world. Unusually, exile is seen here not as punishment but as a necessary corollary of a faith that sees G-d everywhere. Lech Lecha means "Go with yourself" - your beliefs, your way of life, your faith.

A third interpretation, this time more mystical, takes the phrase to mean, "Go to yourself." The Jewish journey, said R. David of Lelov, is a journey to the root of the soul. Only in the holy land, said R. Ephraim Landschutz, can a Jew find the source of his or her being. R. Zushya of Hanipol said, "When I get to heaven, they will not ask me, Zushya, why were you not Moses? They will ask me, Zushya, why were you not Zushya?" Abraham was being asked to leave behind all the things that make us someone else - for it is only by taking a long and lonely journey that we discover who we truly are. "Go to yourself."

There is, however, a fourth interpretation: "Go by yourself." Only a person willing to stand alone, singular and unique can worship the G-d who is alone, singular and unique. Only one able to leave behind the natural sources of identity can encounter G-d who stands above and beyond nature. A journey into the unknown is one of the greatest possible expressions of freedom. G-d wanted Abraham and his children to be a living example of what it is to serve the G-d of freedom, in freedom, for the sake of freedom. What does this mean?

Alasdair Macintyre once pointed out that there are two kinds of atheist: one who does not believe in G-d, and one for whom atheism itself is a kind of religion. Of the latter, some of the greatest examples were (lapsed, converted, or non-believing) Jews - most famously, Spinoza, Marx and Freud. Instead of merely denying the truths of Judaism, they set out to provide systematic alternatives.

Fundamental to the Torah are two freedoms: the freedom of G-d and the freedom of human beings. G-d is not, in Judaism, an impersonal force. He acts (in creation, revelation and redemption) not on the basis of necessity but of choice. In choosing to make mankind in His own image he endowed us, too, with choice. There is no such thing as fate or predestination. "I call heaven and earth to witness," said Moses, "that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life."

It was this that Spinoza, Marx and Freud set out to challenge. Each sought to show that we are not free. Man is a predictable animal. Our nature and character are subject to quasi-scientific laws. There is a science of human behaviour as there is a science of atoms. History, personal or collective, is a form of inevitability. We are what we are because we could not be otherwise. Against this, Judaism is a living protest. Abraham and his children were summoned to a life of radical freedom - and it is this that is at the heart of G-d's threefold call.

Marx said that man is a product of social forces, themselves shaped by the interests of the ruling class, the owners of property of which the most significant is land. Therefore G-d said to Abraham, Leave your land.

Spinoza said that man is made by innate instincts and biological drives (nowadays this is called genetic determinism) given by birth. Therefore G-d said to Abraham, Leave the circumstances of your birth.

Freud said that we are the way we are because of the traumas of childhood, the influence of our early years, our relationships and rivalries with our parents, especially our father. Therefore G-d said to Abraham, Leave your father's house.

Lech Lecha means: Leave behind you all that makes human beings predictable, unfree, able to blame others and evade responsibility. Abraham's children were summoned to be the people that defied the laws of nature because they refused to define themselves as the products of nature (Nietzsche understood this aspect of Judaism particularly well). That is not to say that economic or biological or psychological forces have no part to play in human behaviour. They do. But with sufficient imagination, determination, discipline and courage we can rise above them. Abraham did. So at most times did his children.

Those who live within the laws of history are subject to the laws of history. Whatever is natural, said Maimonides, is subject to disintegration and decay. That is what has happened to virtually every civilization that has appeared on the world's stage. Abraham, however, was to become the father of an am olam, an eternal people that would neither disintegrate nor decay. Therefore it had to be a people willing to stand outside the laws of nature. What for other nations are natural -- land, home, family -- in Judaism are subjects of religious command. They have to be striven for. They involve a journey. They are not given at the outset, nor can they be taken for granted. Abraham was to leave behind the things that make most people and peoples what they are, and lay the foundations for a land, a Jewish home and a family structure responsive not to economic forces, biological drives and psychological conflicts but to the word and will of G-d.

Lech Lecha in this sense means being prepared to take an often lonely journey: "Go by yourself." To be a child of Abraham is to have the courage to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, whatever the idols and whichever the age. In an era of polytheism, that meant seeing the universe as the product of a single creative will - and therefore not meaningless but coherent, meaningful. In an era of slavery it meant refusing to accept the status quo in the name of G-d, but instead challenging it in the name of G-d. When power was worshipped, it meant constructing a society that cared for the powerless, the widow, orphan and stranger. During centuries in which the mass of mankind was sunk in ignorance, it meant honouring education as the key to human dignity and creating schools to provide universal literacy. When war was the test of manhood, it meant striving for peace. In ages of radical individualism like today, it means knowing that we are not what we own but what we share; not what we buy but what we give; that there is something higher than appetite and desire - namely the

call that comes to us, as it came to Abraham, from outside ourselves, summoning us to make a contribution to the world.

Jews, wrote the non-Jewish journalist Andrew Marr, "really have been different; they have enriched the world and challenged it." It is that courage to travel alone if necessary, to be different, to swim against the tide, to speak in an age of relativism of the absolutes of human dignity under the sovereignty of G-d, that was born in the words Lech Lecha. To be a Jew is to be willing to hear the still, small voice of eternity urging us to travel, move, go on ahead, continuing Abraham's journey toward that unknown destination at the far horizon of hope.

From: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column**

[Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il] on behalf of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column [parshat_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 3:32 AM 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)

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Efrat, Israel - "And also to Lot, who was going with Abram, there were sheep and cattle and tents" (Gen. 13:5)

The Biblical reading of Lekh Lekha is filled with a kaleidoscope of fast-moving, intriguing and exciting incidents – from Palace intrigue of attempted rape, to inter-family conflict and separation, to a major war leading to a stunning victory with crucial ramifications for the future of the fertile crescent, to G-d's mysterious covenant with Abraham, and to Abraham's search for continuity. Are these all disparate stories held together merely by a chronological time-line or is there a conceptual scheme cohesively placing these particular incidents within the perspective of our higher Jewish mission?

I believe that an analysis of the division of the seven aliyot (various individuals called upon to make a blessing over a specific portion of the Biblical reading) will provide the uniting theme behind the stories as well as the most important – and often overlooked – role which Israel must play amongst the nations.

Rav Elhanan Samet points out the strange discrepancy between the chapter divisions and the aliyah divisions. Our Biblical portion opens with Chapter 12, which begins with the Divine command to Abram to leave his birthplace for the Land of Israel, includes his advent to the Promised Land, the subsequent famine in Israel, and his sojourn to Egypt, and logically concludes with Pharaoh sending Abram and his family out of Egypt. Chapter 13 opens with Abram's return to Israel, includes his separation from his nephew – adopted son Lot, and ends with G-d's bestowal once again of his special blessing upon Abram and his seed. Chapter 14 deals with Abram's successful war against the four terrorizing Kings of the region, and Chapter 15 details G-d's covenant with Abram. These chapter divisions appear to be most logical, with the Egyptian sojourn merely serving as a passing episode, almost as a momentary foil for the much greater Jewish adventures in Israel.

The "aliyah" divisions, which seem to have much sounder traditional roots, appear at first glance to the far less logical – especially the placement of the second aliyah. Since the Egyptian sojourn begins in the opening aliyah soon after Abram makes his move to Israel (Gen 12:10), and only extends for ten verses, logic would dictate that the second aliyah should begin where chapter 13 begins: "And Abram came up (to Israel) from Egypt, he and his wife and all that were his, and Lot with him, to the Negev (Southern Israel)" (Gen 13:1).

But no, the second aliyah starts seven verses earlier, when Abram enters Egypt and the Egyptians take captive his beautiful wife Sarai for Pharaoh's harem. And the next (third) aliyah portion opens not with Abram's return to Israel, where Chapter 13 begins, but rather four verses later: "And also to Lot, who was going with Abram, there were sheep and cattle and tents," with that entire aliyah segment dedicated to Lot's separation from Abram. Is Lot's altercation a more significant event than Abram's return to Israel?

I do believe that Lot is a significant – perhaps even the central – personality in the first half of our Biblical reading and continues to appear in various guises throughout the Bible. Our Biblical reading opens with G-d's command to Abram to make aliyah and with G-d's election of Abram: "I shall make you a great nation, I shall bless you, and I shall make your name great; you shall be a blessing. I shall bless those who bless you, and those who curse you, I shall curse; all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you" (Gen 12:2,3).

G-d is promising Abram two things: physical growth and spiritual greatness, the development of a powerful nation – state from his loins which will serve as the source of blessing for the entire world. The Vilna Gaon ingeniously suggests that the

Hebrew parallel structure should have mandated the more common verb form for verse 3: "umekallekha akallel;" why does the verse state "a'or"? He responds the "a'or" may mean "I shall curse" (from the Hebrew verb ara), but it may also mean "I shall show the light" (from the Hebrew ohr). Israel must be a light unto the nations, a kingdom of priest-teachers who bring the message of ethical monotheism to the world.

Abram desperately requires progeny for both of these mandates to come to pass: he cannot become a paterfamilias without a family, he cannot become the patriarch of a nation – state without a tube of descendants, and Abram likewise cannot ultimately influence the other nations to accept a G-d of peace, justice and compassion unless he has descendants to whom to hand over the torch of his truth.

Initially the childless, barren Abram and Sarai place their future hopes on Lot, Abram's deceased brother's son (a kind of yibum in reverse, with the living but childless brother adopting the deceased brother's living son so that the living brother might have a future!) Hence, the Bible records – in the very verse following the blessing and the charge – "And Abram went in accordance with the way the Lord spoke to him, and Lot went with him... And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot the son (of his brother) and all the wealth they had acquired..." (Gen 12:4,5).

But then came the famine and the sojourn into the second aliyah highlights Egyptian Exile as fraught with both physical danger (Sarai is seized for the harem) as well as spiritual danger (the materialistic blandishments of Egypt vs the responsibility of the national mission). Abram and Sarai survive the physical danger, Sarai is miraculously returned untouched. But Egypt seems to have had a deleterious affect on Lot, the heir apparent: "And Abram came up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that were his, and Lot next to him..." (Gen 13:1) – not like what the text had previously stated, at the time of the family's initial journey to Israel before the Egyptian sojourn, when Lot is mentioned right after Abram and Sarai, before their wealth, and where Lot goes with Abram physically and spiritually (ito) and not merely in physical proximity (imo) as now.

At this juncture in the text, however, this change in Lot is merely hinted at; the next aliyah, "And also Lot, going with Abram, had sheep cattle and tents... And the land was not sufficient to carry both of them..." (Gen 13: 5,6), leaves no room for doubt. Israel is no longer big enough, Abram's mission is not materialistic enough, to contain Lot's dreams; Lot is not desirous of perfecting the world to G-d's vision of peace and love; Lot is desirous of owning the world! So he leaves Abram's land and Lord in favor of the more Egypt – like, lush and luscious Sodom, to pursue matter rather than spirit, comfort rather than content.

The great message of this week's Torah portion, the election of Abram, goes far beyond land and geography; it is all about nation and universal mission and vision. Hence, the second aliyah concludes with "And Abram called out (to humanity) there with the name of the Lord" (Gen 13:4), and the third aliyah concludes with, "And Abram built there an altar to the Lord" (Gen 13:18). The fourth aliyah deals with Malki Zedek, the son of Noah, who recognizes the G-d of the world who denounces terror from his throne in Jerusalem. And the rest of the Biblical portion deals with G-d's covenant with Abram. His promise of an heir who will make Abrams progeny bring light to the world like the stars of the heavens.

One thing is clear: Abram's greatness, and the reason that he was elected and not Noah or Shem or Ever, was because only he felt the burning mission to perfect the world (Maimonides, Laws of Idolatry, 1.3, Ravad and Kesef Mishneh). And remember too: Yishmael repents (Gen 25:9), and so eventually does Lot, but for Lot we must wait many generations until the conversion of Ruth (descendant of Moab who was the son born to Lot and his daughter). Apparently G-d has cosmic patience, and so must we have, if we are to be His true emissaries.

Shabbat Shalom

From: **Rabbi Berel Wein** Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2005 8:43 PM To: rabbiwein@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Lech Lecha www.RabbiWein.com

Weekly Parsha November 11, 2005 <http://www.rabbiwein.com/parsha-index.html> LECH LECHA <http://rabbiwein.com/column-1010.html> Our father Avraham and our mother Sarah are the paradigm Jews. Their lives and the events that occurred to them are symbolic of the story of the Jewish people throughout the ages. This is certainly the meaning of the well known phrase of the rabbis that "the behavior of our forbearers are the signs of the future for their descendants." Thus in this week's parsha we see Avraham and Sarah going into exile in Egypt. This occurs after G-d has promised them that the Land of Israel will be given to them and their descendants. Almost immediately, they are forced to enter Egypt where the incident of Sarah's abduction by the Pharaoh takes place. In spite of all of the troubles, Avraham and Sarah succeed in the Egyptian exile. They become wealthy and accepted, even respected. But Avraham and Sarah return home to the Land of Israel. Their sojourn there is also one crisis after another. They are devastated by the betrayal of Lot and by the delinquency of Yishmael. The Land of Israel is not an

especially hospitable place. They are caught up in a regional war that initially does not concern them but their participation in becomes almost inevitable when Lot foolishly moves to Sdom and is taken captive. Betrayal, heartache, danger and disappointment dog their steps in the Land of Israel. But Avraham and Sarah refuse to give up or to lose faith in God's promise to them. The dream of a productive life in the Land of Israel remains real in their hearts and minds.

This is truly a paradigm of our situation today here in the Land of Israel. Even though many of our Israeli brethren arrived here with little choice in the matter, most Jews are here because of their will to be here. We can all leave for success and acceptance in the "Egypt" that abound in the world today. And even though "Egypt" always carries with it the danger of a "Pharaoh's" behavior towards us, the fact is that most Jews emerge from "Egypt" with wealth, acceptance and even begrudging respect. Yet, it is obvious that the center of the Jewish world has now shifted to the Land of Israel. The Jewish people are unwilling to relinquish God's promise to us – to let Him off the hook, so to speak. So we are confronted by betrayals and delinquencies, wars and struggles, disappointments and unforeseen difficulties. Somehow, even Sdom is allowed to flourish in our holy land and it is the followers of Avraham and Sarah who are constantly held up to ridicule and abuse.

Yet, in spite of all of this, the faith of the Jewish people in God's promise regarding this land is valid and firm, and it allows us to continue and improve and be of good spirit in the face of all of our troubles. This is an exact imitation of Avraham and Sarah, a reaffirmation of the continuity and tradition of Israel over more than 3700 years of history. It is this spirit that guarantees us, as it did Avraham and Sarah, success, eternal reward and achievement.

Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein