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Parshas Lech Lecha

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand The Landlord Is Still Home

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 830, Standing for a Chosen. Good Shabbos!

Avraham Avinu returns victorious from the battle with the Four Kings and is greeted by the rescued King of Sodom who tells him "Give me the souls and you take the spoils of war." Avraham takes an oath that he will take not even a shoelace from the King of Sodom so that the King would not later be able to say "I made Avraham wealthy." [Bereishis 14:22-23] This booty rightfully belonged to Avraham but he did not want to take it.

The Medrash in Bereishis Rabbah comments on this refusal to take even a shoelace: "For this noble act, Avraham merited

that his children receive a mitzvah." What was this mitzvah? The Medrash actually lists several mitzvos that Avraham's children merited because of this act, among them the mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel — coming up to Jerusalem for the Festivals. This is alluded to by the pasuk: "Mah Yafu p'amayich bas nadiv" [Shir HaShirim 7:2]. This pasuk extols the virtues of the footsteps of Klal Yisrael.

The question we need to analyze in light of this Medrash is what is the connection between Avraham Avinu and the mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel? More specifically, how does the proclamation of Avraham to the King of Sodom regarding his refusal to take the spoils of war lead to his children meriting the privilege of having the mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel?

In order to answer these questions, we need to spend a few moments analyzing the mitzvah. The pasuk says, "Three times during the year, each male from amongst you should be seen before the L-rd your G-d." [Shemos 23:17] The three times a year that Jews have to leave their homes and travel to Jerusalem are the holidays of Pessach, Shavuos, and Succos. When one thinks about it, this obligation could not come at a worse time for the average Jewish household. It is equivalent to saying "in March and April, all accountants have to go up to Jerusalem." [Yearly income tax is due April 15 in the United States.] It is the middle of tax season, you do not know how you are going to finish all your work, but you have to drop everything and travel up to Jerusalem at the worst possible time.

That is the way it was for the farmer in the agrarian society. We celebrate Pessach during the planting season, in the month of Nissan, I need to leave the farm and travel to Jerusalem. Shavuos occurs during the harvest season. Again, the worst time in the world for a farmer to have to take a forced trip and leave his farm — together with all the hired help — right in the middle of the crop harvest! Finally, the real test comes on Succos — the time of the in-gathering of the crop — I need to bring the crop into the barns and silos before the winter rains begin. Again I need to drop everything and run to Yerushalayim.

It is no coincidence that at these times it is necessary to go up to the Beis HaMikdash. On these occasions — especially when a person is busy with the harvest — it is very easy for a person to fall into the trap of "My strength and the power of my hand made me all this wealth" [Devorim 8:17] — Boy am I a good farmer! Look at this crop! I am going to make a fortune! Therefore, at this very time, the Almighty tells us, "Go to Jerusalem and go to the Beis HaMikdash and get your priorities straight. Realize that 'my strength and the power of my hand made me all this wealth', is not correct, but rather, 'He who gives you the strength to prosper' [Devorim 8:18]".

This is one of the lessons we need to learn when we go up to Jerusalem at the time of the Festivals.

However, there is something even more acute than that. The Torah uses the expression — Adon [Master] — by Aliyah L'Regel. “Three times during the year, all your males should be seen before the Master, Hashem.” [Shemos 23:17] Hashem is rarely referred to as “Adon” in the Torah. “Adon” is simply not one of the more common names used to refer to Hashem in the Torah. Again, by Aliyah K'Regel in Parshas Ki Sisa, the pasuk says “before the Master, the G-d of Israel.” [Shemos 34:23] So by Aliyah L'Regel it is emphasized twice. This teaches a second lesson that we must learn from the mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel. The mitzvah reminds us “Who is the Master?” “Who is the ‘Baal-Habayis’ of the world? “Who owns everything?” The ‘Baal-Habayis’ is the Hashem. The nuance of the word ‘Adon’ means He is the Master, He is the ‘Baal-Habayis’.

To wit, the Yalkut Shimoni writes that anytime the Torah uses the expression ‘Adon’ the connotation is “He can take out the existing tenants and he can put in new tenants”. He is the “Baal Ha-bayis”. In English, we would say “He is the landlord!” That is why the Torah uses this expression concerning the mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel.

Every Jew who owned the smallest piece of land, leaves everything and goes up to Yerushalayim. Is this not a security risk? Is this not an invitation for disaster? Who will be watching the sheep, the cattle, the farm, the house? Everyone left town! The Jewish people rarely if ever lived in entirely tranquil times. What would stop the enemy from coming in and taking over? Imagine what would happen today if everyone left their homes to travel to Jerusalem. It would be an open invitation to our enemies to invade and take over the country, Heaven forbid.

How can we do that? We can do it because the Ribono Shel Olam says, “the ‘Baal haBayis’ is still home”. The Landlord remains on guard! “I promise you,” the Landlord says, that “no man shall covet your land when you go up to see the Presence of the L-rd your G-d three times a year” [Shemos 34:24]. I promise you that no ill will befall you when you perform this mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel. This is the message that is reinforced by this three times a year commandment: Do not ever forget who is in charge.

The Medrash in Shir HaShirim tells the story of two wealthy brothers in Ashkelon who had wicked Gentile neighbors. The neighbors plotted to loot the property of the brothers when they traveled up to Jerusalem. The brothers left on their Aliyah L'Regel journey, and the neighbors scouted out the property — expecting it to be unoccupied — but they saw two people still there, going in and out, in and out. They continued checking throughout the holiday and to their amazement, each

day the brothers still appeared to be on their land. Lo and behold after the Yom Tov was over, the brothers returned from Jerusalem and they brought their neighbors back souvenirs from the Holy City.

The neighbors questioned the brothers: Where were you? They said, “We were in Jerusalem.” The neighbors were incredulous. “What do you mean, we saw you each day. You were here the whole time!” The brothers assured them that they just gotten back from a two week journey to Jerusalem. The Medrash concludes that the Gentile neighbors recognized the miracle and responded, “Blessed be the G-d of Israel who does not abandon them and does not leave them orphaned.” It was a miracle. The Almighty made two angels appear who looked like the two brothers. Nothing happened to their house because “No man will covet your land”. G-d says, “I am the Landlord and the Landlord is still home.”

The Medrash relates a similar incident. The brothers left the door unlocked, a snake came and wrapped himself around the padlock so that the Gentiles could not enter. There are several such incidents in the Medrash. The points are all the same: There is a Ribono shel Olam who is in charge and who is the landlord. He brings tenants in and he kicks tenants out. He is the One who provides sustenance. He can protect us. He will protect us. This is the lesson of Aliyah L'Regel.

When Avraham Avinu came back from battle, the King of Sodom told him: “Give me the souls; you take the booty.” What does Avraham Avinu say? “I lift my hand to the G-d on High, who owns Heaven and Earth (koneh shamayim v'aretz)...” This expression “koneh shamayim v'aretz” is an expression we say daily in the Shmoneh Esrei in reference to Hashem. It connotes that he is the Landlord — he owns everything! Avraham will not accept a shoelace from the King of Sodom because he knows that it is the L-rd who owns Heaven and Earth who has promised to give him wealth. Avraham is confident that it will be He who will give him wealth and does not want to give the King of Sodom the opportunity to say “I made Avraham wealthy.”

This was Avraham's signature message to the world: There is One G-d, a personal G-d, an interested G-d, a G-d who runs the show and who is the Baal HaBirah (the Master of the Metropolis). This is the same Avraham Avinu in whose merit his children received the mitzvah of Aliyah L'Regel, which for all future generations would teach Avraham's offspring this very same message.

It is no coincidence that the Gemara says, [Brochos 7b] “Rav Yochanan stated in the name of Rav Shimon bar Yochai: “From the day the Holy One Blessed be He created the world, there was no person who called Him ‘Adon’ until Avraham came and did so.” Others recognized the Holy One Blessed be He. Adam recognized Him, Noach recognized Him, Shem

recognized Him. But Avraham was the first one to recognize him as the 'Adon', the Landlord, owner of everything that exists and all that happens in the world. Therefore, it was he who merited for his children the commandment of Aliyah L'Regel.

Once before, I mentioned that a person wrote a commentary on the Siddur, the Jewish prayer book, and brought it to the Gaon of Vilna for an approbation. The Vilna Gaon opened it to the first page and saw the first insight of the author — on the Adon Olam prayer. The author asked, "Why does the morning service begin with the Adon Olam prayer?" The answer is because Avraham Avinu was the first person to call the Almighty by the name Adon and the morning service was enacted corresponding to Avraham's practice to recite the morning prayer. The Gaon commented that for this insight alone, the rest of the commentary was worth buying.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion.

from: **Rabbi Efrem Goldberg** <reg@brsonline.org> date:
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OCTOBER 26, 2023

י"א חשוון ה' אלפים תשפ"ד

ISRAEL HAS CHANGED FOREVER, HAVE YOU?
BY RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG

While the primary horrors and atrocities in Israel occurred on October 7, the fallout and aftershocks are continuing every single day. Despite Hamas literally videoing, promoting, and memorialize their brutal and heinous attack using all kinds of media, there are still people questioning the scale and depravity of the massacre. In response, Israel held a stunning session for the international press sharing gruesome images of the atrocity so that journalists could document in an undeniable way what happened. Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, in a video announcing the session, said, "As we work to defeat the terror organization that brutalized our people, we are witnessing a Holocaust denial-like phenomenon evolving in real time as people are casting doubt on the magnitude of the atrocities that Hamas committed against our people, and in fact recorded in order to glorify that violence." The infiltration, casualties, number of hostages, relentless barrage of rockets, continuous attacks from Gaza and from Lebanon are indeed great reasons for concern, prayers, effort, and support. The world is coming to learn what Israel has known for a long time: she is surrounded by enemies who seek her utter destruction and annihilation. The infamous Hamas charter, written in 1988, doesn't speak of disputed territory, it

reads like the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and calls for a genocide against Jews. Hezbollah, Iran and other terror organizations and individuals in the West Bank and elsewhere speak of "from the river to the sea," a non-subtle euphemism for the destruction of all of Israel.

The last two weeks have seen countless headlines and analyses of the risks of a ground invasion, potential implications for the North in the event of a full-scale war and the possibilities of other nations like Iran or Syria getting involved. Indeed, there is so much to worry about, work on, daven for, and care about. But, here is the thing. While I daven, advocate, and lose sleep over the safety and security our brothers and sisters right now, I am not worried about the long-term future of Israel. Israel is incredibly resilient, capable, powerful, tenacious, fierce, smart, cunning and strong. Israel will persevere, the IDF will triumph, the people, though deeply wounded, will bounce back. These horrific atrocities have brought the people of Israel together, fostered a united country and people. (I had the privilege to represent our shul and our community this week by bringing supplies, goods, toys, hugs, and love to IDF soldiers and displaced citizens this week. I saw with my own eyes resolve, achdus, and energy the likes of which cannot be believed. I look forward to sharing more with you about this trip in the coming days.)

The people of Israel have revealed that underneath the important, often vociferous debate, is a nation of profound faith, unity and conviction. Israel will emerge stronger than ever.

This week's Parsha is filled with pesukim and stories that feel so relevant today: Avraham first settling in Israel, Hashem promising the land to Avraham and his descendants, the birth of Yishmael and the fateful promise about his future. One of the central highlights is the Bris Bein Habesarim, the "Covenant of Parts," in which Hashem tells Avraham about the destiny of his descendants: the slavery and suffering they would endure, and the subsequent redemption and settlement in Israel. The Torah describes how Avraham cut up a calf, a ram, and a goat, but ואת הצפור לא בתר – he did not cut the turtledove that was part of the covenant. Rashi explains that Psukim in Tanach compare other nations to calves, to rams, and to goats, and the Jewish people are compared to doves. The animals representing the other nations were cut up, representing their eventual demise. Why wasn't the bird cut? רָמַז שֶׁיְהוָה יִשְׁרָאֵל קִיָּמִין לְעוֹלָם – To symbolize the promise of the Jewish nation's everlasting future.

A video clip was circulating this week of an address given by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l, whose third yahrtzeit is next week. So many have expressed how much we miss Rabbi Sacks at times like these, and it brought such comfort hearing his voice at an AIPAC policy conference ten years ago,

delivering chizzuk with remarks that sound like they could have been given this week:

I have to tell you that what we grew up with, “never again,” is beginning to sound like “ever again.” And at the heart of it is hostility to Israel. Of course, not all criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic. But make no mistake what has happened.

In the Middle Ages Jews were hated because of their religion.

In the 19th century and the 20th, they were hated because of their race. Today, when it’s no longer done to hate people for their religion or their race, today they are hated because of their State. The reason changes, but the hate stays the same.

Anti-Zionism is the new anti-Semitism. ...

Today what is at stake in Israel’s survival is the future of freedom itself. Because make no mistake, this will be the defining battle of the 21st century, which will prevail: the will to power with its violence, terror, missiles, and bombs; or the will to life with its hospitals, schools, freedoms, and rights. ...

Every time I visit Israel I find among Israelis, secular or religious, an absolute unswerving dedication to Moshe Rabbenu’s great command Uvacharta Bachayim, “Choose life.” Israel is the sustained defiance of hatred and power in the name of life because we are the people who sanctify life. ... Judaism is the defeat of probability by the power of possibility. And nowhere will you see the power of possibility more than in the State of Israel today. Israel has taken a barren land and made it bloom again. Israel has taken an ancient language, the language of the Bible, and made it speak again. Israel has taken the West’s oldest faith and made it young again. Israel has taken a shattered nation and made it live again. Friends, let us not rest until Israel’s light shines throughout the world, the world’s great symbol of life and hope.

While we must not stop davening, donating, supporting and visiting, Israel will ultimately be ok. The real question is what will happen next for those Jews living outside of Israel? While even before October 7, everyone knew about the enemies surrounding Israel, few of us truly knew how many enemies were living in our midst and how, given the opportunity, they would boldly and brazenly rear their ugly heads and ideas. Surely, we thought, taking sides on an issue so clear and obvious like supporting innocent civilians, elderly, children and women who were victims of a series of pogroms and systematic murders versus associating with and sympathizing with, or full-on endorsing wicked and evil terrorists, the choice would be clear. Even if one was regularly critical of Israel and supportive of Palestinian statehood, surely it would be simple to condemn objective atrocities and express sympathy for butchered civilians and kidnapped hostages.

Instead, the last two weeks have been an enormous wakeup call to Jews of the Diaspora. Ivy League universities, once considered bastions of intellectualism, centers of

sophistication, capitals of progress and advancement have abandoned their Jewish students, failing to protect them from Hamas-sympathizing fellow students and professors. Long considered spiritually dangerous for Torah Jews, college campuses and others are now literally dangerous physically for those who proudly identify as Jews or supporters of Israel. Every day seems to bring new stories that should shake us all. An Israeli at Columbia got beaten with a stick. Jewish students at Cooper Union were locked in a library while a horde of threatening students, some encouraged by professors, banged on the doors and windows. Jews on campuses across the country are being threatened, harassed, and physically intimidated, while the academics at these institutions issue statements about “escalations of violence” at best or simply casting Hamas’s atrocities as “resistance” and blaming Israel for everything that happened on October 7 at worst. One professor at a prestigious college gave a horrifying speech, captured on video, in which he described feeling “exhilarated” watching the events of October 7 unfold.

The images and videos of pro Hamas rallies in cities across the US, Europe and around the world is shocking, jarring, and downright scary. They have included swastikas and actual calls to “gas the Jews.” We learned that for some, while Black Lives Matter and some other forms of prejudice are so serious and have zero tolerance, Jewish lives don’t matter and antisemitism is open for debate, as organizations purportedly devoted to civil rights and justice were unashamed to celebrate terrorists who paraglided into a rave killing 260 innocent people. We experienced a legacy media that abandoned journalistic principles and practices, all too eager to swallow and regurgitate Hamas propaganda without verification or substantiation.

We witnessed elected Congresspeople stand with the perpetrators over the victims and spread a blood libel falsely accusing Israel of striking a hospital, actions with real consequences.

Of course, we have also witnessed extraordinary expressions and demonstrations of support, from the majority of Congress who passionately and compassionately stand with Israel, to President Biden who has demonstrated enormous support by traveling into a war, asking for significant funding for Israel and steadfastly supporting Israel’s right to defend herself, to zealous advocacy for Israel from many elected officials, including those who stand to alienate themselves in their parties and caucuses, including Congressman Ritchie Torres. We have seen billionaires withdraw their funding and their longstanding ties with universities and institutions that are underserving of them. We have experienced media who were moved to tears over what happened in Israel.

Yes, there are reasons to be hopeful and optimistic but with all the enemies that Israel faces, the safety, security and rights of the Jews in the diaspora feel the most vulnerable and fragile of any point in my lifetime.

Of course, the simple answer to the now-revealed condition of Jews around the world is to move to Israel. Certainly, Israel is our homeland, it is our destiny, and now more than ever we should recognize it should be part of each of our final destinations. Even if we don't live in Israel now, Aliyah must be a question not of if, but of when, for all of us.

However, realistically, just as throughout our history there were multiple centers of Jewish life and Torah, the likelihood is that the millions of Jews living in the Diaspora are not picking up and moving tomorrow. So what will be? How should we confront the new reality we have seen? While spiritually and now physically unsafe, are there consequences of having universities and college campuses that have no Jewish students, nobody to advocate for Israel, no representatives of our people? Is there more we can do to ensure terrorist sympathizers aren't elected to any office in this country? Is cancelling subscriptions to legacy media that has a clear bias enough or can more be done to hold journalists accountable? And perhaps most importantly, have the rallies and people despicably tearing down posters of kidnapped Jews changed our security considerations at our Shuls, schools and Jewish communities? Do we continue to trust our outstanding local law enforcement and intelligence who protect us or does our sobering new reality demand elevated security measures for ourselves?

I don't have answers to these questions, but they need to be consistently spoken about and considered. Israel has changed forever, but so has the world of those who don't yet live there.

[From last week]

A Light from Within

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

Young Israel of Saint Louis, Noach, 5784

In most years it is hard to relate to Parshat Noach, to the notion of an entire civilization degenerating into evil, violence, and chaos. **וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס** Is humanity really capable of becoming so blind, corrupt, and evil that its only hope is a reboot? Today we know the answer! We just need to look at the images around us and across the globe, and see how 'rational voices' can be swayed by a lie, how academic institutions could tolerate public support for terrorism, how a world could accept a lie so pernicious that it threatens to engulf the entire planet in flames... We know

many midrashic sources that are critical of Noach for not trying to 'save' his generation. (Rashi compares Noach to Avraham. The Midrash (בר"ר ל"ג) similarly contrasts Noach and Moshe.) Today we know a profound and sad truth that perhaps in a different era and a different generation they didn't appreciate. Sometimes a society can indeed degenerate so much, and become so depraved that it is simply beyond 'saving'. Sometimes evil just needs to be called 'evil', and we have to apply a different paradigm: **וּבְעֶרְתָּ הָרַע מִקֶּרֶבְךָ**! **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֲמֹלָה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בְּרִאֲתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה עֹמֵלֵק – כִּי מָחָה אֶמְחֶה אֶת זְכַר עֹמֵלֵק – מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּזְנֶב בָּךְ כָּל־ הַנְּחָשִׁים**. An evil unleashed upon the most vulnerable in a society is an evil so ingrained and so inhumane that it cannot be 'saved'. So perhaps we know that Noach had no choice!

The only option was to build an "ark" to save that part of civilization – however small – that still understood the difference between truth and lies, between good and evil. **וְנֹחַ מֵצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה'**... את האלקים התהלך נח

But there is an additional message in the story of Noach that I think resonates today. Amongst all the many details and materials described in the making of the Ark, the Torah includes a seemingly odd detail: **צֹהַר תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה (ו':טז)** צהר? What is a צהר?

Ibn Ezra says it comes from the same root as **צָהַר** or light! Therefore a צהר was a mechanism that enabled light to fill the ark! That's why Rashi, in his first interpretation, says it is a window, **וַיֵּא חִלּוֹן**, is a window! **(רש"י)** How much light can a single small window let in to such a multistoried and enormous structure? Perhaps that's why the Radak and others suggest that its purpose was to be used not for light but to enable those inside to know when the rain stopped.

(רד"ק שם)... שיכנס ממנו האורה לאחר כלות הגשם

But Rashi quotes another option, a beautiful midrashic insight:

(רש"י שם) וַיֵּא אֶבֶן טֹבָה הַמְאִירָה לָהֶם

A stone which gave off light... A light source has two purposes. A window is designed primarily to illuminate from the outside in. It lets light outside shine upon the darkness inside. It offers a dark world a glimpse of a brighter one outside its borders. Hence the **רד"ק** says it was reserved for later, for when the rain stopped, for rebuilding, to know when it was safe to emerge into the world once again. But there is another kind of light, necessary for times when the sky is dark and gray, and kindness and goodness outside seems all but diminished. That is a light that illuminates from within - **אֶבֶן טֹבָה הַמְאִירָה**. The light inside the תיבה is created by hope, by חסד and kindness, by inspiration that comes from a world that still cares for one another inside the תיבה even as the world

outside it grows darker. That's a light that comes from a sense of unified purpose and clarity of vision. The world of the Flood started with the words השומר אחי אנכי defending the first act of violence and murder, and quickly degenerated into a society of violence and oppression, ותמלא כל הארץ חמס. Inside that ark was a world of שנים שנים, of חסד, of caring, of mutual responsibility, of מסירות נפש, of love for one another, the world of a family that understands how indeed שומר אחי as a statement, not a question. Inside that ark was light created from the אבן טובה that would shine outward, when the world was ready! Today Israel feels like it is inside an ark surrounded by a sea of darkness. At times like these where does Israel - and the Jewish people around the world - find the strength and light to shine? From INSIDE! From the אבן טובה of the חסד and unity of the Jewish people! From the heart of the Jewish people. □ From the stories like the hundreds of thousands of Israelis displaced from their homes due to mandatory evacuations of the south and north and yet nobody is on the street. Nobody is without a bed and roof. All housed – with families, with strangers (although in Israel no such thing as a real stranger) – or hotels... within hours! One story posted was how 6000 families had been placed with families within 45 minutes. □ From the unimaginable גבורה of organizations like United Hatzalah – first responders – or Zak”a charged with כבוד המתים and I need not elaborate... □ Or the stories of heroism – not just from soldiers but from ordinary citizens – saving lives, saving entire communities... □ Or a Chassidic Jew (unidentified) who stood by the El Al counter in NY the day after Simchat Torah and paid for the tickets of every Israeli soldier trying to get home to their unit in the IDF. That person paid over \$250,000 in tickets for Israeli soldiers! And he insists on remaining anonymous. □ From the volunteer ‘cyber’ unit created from grass roots professionals who left their day jobs to volunteer their time to help comb through thousands of pieces of social media footage and use the most advanced technology to identify the names and faces of the hostages... so the world will know, and those faces can be displayed on buildings in Time Square and tables set with empty chairs from Tel Aviv to Bondi Beach! □ from the solidarity of the Jewish people, from the sense of shared destiny – that all feel – דתיים, חילונים, דתיים – all labels erased... □ from images of achdut and unity within the country in ways once unthinkable: □ Charedim hugging soldiers, preparing food for them... □ Scenes of Chassidim in Shtreimles dancing at a wedding carrying an Israeli flag, or Viznitzer Chassidim and Kibbutznikim from the South singing together before Shabbat, singing לא לפחד כלל and והעיקר לא לפחד כלל. □ Two separate stories of non-religious restaurant owners koshering their entire operation so that they can send food to soldiers in the IDF that everybody can share... □ A news clip on Israeli

news outside of the IDF intake center (לשכת הגיוס) in Tel Aviv where Charedim are coming to volunteer service for the IDF in unprecedented large numbers, and a secular Israeli woman crying as calls out to them how much she loves and respects them for it.

□ Somebody posted this conversation: My neighbor's daughter is in the army. She told her that now that she's around all the חיילים, she should look out for a nice guy for herself. She answered: 'A few days ago I could have. But now, I can't tell who is dati and who isn't – everyone is wearing a kippah and tzitzit.' אבן טובה! When the world of darkness closes in from the outside, we find the light of the צהר from the miraculous heart of the Jewish people inside, מי כעמך ישראל! We will emerge from this תיבה, and we know with absolute faith that one day the world will come to us and beg us to share that light with all humanity. (ו) אֲנִי יְהוָה קְרָאתִיךָ בְּצַדִּיק וְאֶתְנֶם בְּיָדָהּ (ז) לִפְקֹם עֵינַיִם עֲוֹרוֹת לְהוֹצִיא מִמִּסְגָּר: וְאֶצְרֶךָ וְאֶתְנֶנָּה לְכָרִית עִם לְאֻר גּוֹיִם אֲסִיר מִבֵּית כְּלָא יִשְׁבִּי חֹשֶׁךְ: (ישע' מב) I GOD, in justice have I summoned you, grasped you by the hand, created you, and appointed you a covenantal people - to open the eyes of those who cannot see, to rescue prisoners from confinement, and from dungeons those who sit in darkness, a LIGHT unto the nations of the world! יְהוָה לְמַבּוּל יָשָׁב וַיֵּשֶׁב יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם: יְהוָה עָז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: Gd sat on enthroned at the Flood; Gd sits enthroned forever. May Gd grant His people strength! May Gd bless His people with peace.

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An Offer You Can't Refuse

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

After his victory in the battle of the four kings against the five, Avrohom is approached by the defeated king of Sodom, who tells him, "Give me the people and the possessions take for yourself." Avrohom responds that he will take nothing from the king, except for the provisions coming to his men, so that the king would not say that he made Avrohom wealthy (Bereishis, 14:21- 24). Avrohom's response needs explanation, both in regard to his failure to take the people, and his refusal to take any possessions. In fact, the Talmud (Nedarim 32a) brings an opinion that Avrohom was punished for not taking the offered people, because he could have influenced them to recognize God and accept His sovereignty over the world. Why, then, didn't he do so? After all, he was constantly teaching people about God and bringing them under the wings of the divine presence. What made this instance different? Rav Henoch Leibowitz, in his Chiddushei HaLev, explains that Avrohom felt that by refusing to take anything from the king he would sanctify God's name in public, and that this consideration took precedence over converting the captives. However, he was wrong, and should have taken the people and converted them. Rav Leibowitz does not really spell out why Avrohom was wrong, but I believe that the answer is implicit in the question. As Rav Leibowitz pointed out, Avrohom was constantly involved in influencing people to recognize God. It was, then this very activity, of teaching people to recognize God, that constituted Avrohom's essence, the contribution that he made to the world, and therefore, he should have taken every opportunity available to continue this work. We find something similar to this idea in Megillas Esther, as well; in regard to Mordechai. The Megillah tells us that when Haman would appear in public, all the servants of the king and people around the seat of power would bow and prostrate themselves to him, but that Mordechai would not bow and prostrate himself (Esther 3:21). The form of the verb to bow and prostrate, with regard to Mordechai, are written in the future, rather than in the present, indicating that Mordechai made a point of appearing before Haman and not prostrating to him, despite the danger that it would generate. Rav Yochanan Zweig explained that this was because Mordechai came from Binyomin who was the only tribe that did not bow down to Eisav when he visited Yaakov, and thus, it was part of his essence not to bow down to him. This being so, he took every opportunity possible to bring out this point, even when it involved danger. Similarly, Avrohom, should have availed himself of the opportunity offered by the king of Sodom, and was punished for not doing so.

We also need to understand why Avrohom refused to take any possessions from the king of Sodom. After all, when Avrohom was in Egypt and Pharaoh gave him gifts, he accepted them. What was the difference between the two cases? Rav Eliyohu Meir Bloch, in his Pninei Da'as, offers several answers. First, he says that when Avrohom was in Egypt, he had the status of a poor person, and, therefore, had to accept whatever he needed to stay alive. In addition, Pharaoh was the king of the land that Avrohom had chosen to live in at that time, and, therefore, out of honor for the king, he could not refuse him. The king of Sodom, on the other hand, having just been defeated in battle, was in a much weaker position, and Avrohom could therefore refuse him. Most significantly, Rav Bloch says that Avrohom did not want to negate whatever thoughts of repentance that the king of Sodom may have had. By giving the spoils of war to Avrohom, even though they were his by right, anyway, the king may have assuaged any feelings of guilt he may have had over his past actions and refrained from a possible repentance. A somewhat similar idea is offered by Rav Elimelech bar Shaul in his Ma'archei Lev, in discouraging the practice of vegetarianism. People, he said, have a certain amount of sympathetic feelings, and these should, first and foremost, be used in helping human beings. If they are expended on animals, humans may be neglected. This argument echoes that of the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, who observed that attendance to the theater may, rather than arousing one's emotions and making one sensitive to the plight of others, have the opposite effect, and waste whatever humanitarian feelings a person may have on fictional characters depicted on stage, leaving nothing left for real people. Avrohom, then, by refusing to take the spoils of war from the king of Sodom, was trying to facilitate his repentance, and, thus, in this aspect of his response, was following the essence of his personality, by trying to bring people closer to God.

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Themes in the First Pasuk of Lech Licha

Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The opening lines of Parshas Lech Licha represent one of the ten tests of Avraham Avinu, although rishonim differ as to how it is numbered among them. What is particularly surprising is a comment in the Midrash that suggests that this test may have been even more challenging than the other one that included the words "Lech Licha", i.e. the akeidah of Yitzchak. This seems baffling; the very nature of this instruction as a test is already difficult to understand, as Rashi fills in the words "l'hanas'cha u'lovas'cha", the journey will be for Avraham's benefit. Certainly, the notion that it could be

challenging on a level to rival the near-sacrifice of Avraham's beloved son is very difficult to understand.

To some commentaries, the challenge lay in the very fact of the personal benefit it contained; the test was to see if Avraham could carry out the instruction for the sake of Hashem's message, rather than any ulterior motive. Similarly, others felt that the mundane nature of this challenge raises it above the more dramatic akeidah; the true test of faith is in day-to-day challenges, more than isolated moments of extreme performance (it is, for this reason, the Maharal explains, the Torah does not include the extraordinary story of Avraham's rescue from the fiery furnace).

One approach to understanding this particular nisayon may come from a possible perspective on the akeidah itself. As some understand (see Darash Moshe, Meoros Yitzchak), the purpose of the nisyonos were not to test Avraham, as certainly Hashem needed no extra information; rather they were to elevate Avraham to new levels of faith. In the case of the Akeidah, Avraham had been promised a large nation would come from him, specifically through Yitzchak. Now, that seemed impossible, as he was destined to be sacrificed before having any children, apparently. Can Hashem's promise still possibly be true in any way?

In such a sense, the challenge of Lech Licha can be framed as well. Often, we have preconceived notions of what success looks like and what the path to happiness entails. If we are promised that we will be granted great blessings, but we are told that requires uprooting ourselves from our "land, birthplace, home of our fathers" and to pursue a vision completely different from that we had always expected, it takes great faith to believe that success actually can assume a different form. The investment we have made in the path we have taken this far is one that is very difficult to abandon, and to accept that happiness can be very found in a very different fashion requires great emunah indeed.

R. Eliezer Geldzehler (Sichos R. Eliezer) notes that much can be discerned from the language that gives the parshah its name. Lech – go – "Licha", to yourself; the purpose of a nisayon is make the potential actual; it is only thus that one's abilities can actually be claimed as their own (a theme often emphasized as well by R. Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht). "Licha", to yourself, because every individual has unique challenges and abilities; to be jealous of another's resources is folly, once it is realized that one's personal challenges can only be addressed with their unique toolset, and what seems like the superior assets of another may actually be inadequate to the task. "Lech", go, because it is a constant journey, as that is the purpose of life, to continuously develop one's potential. "M'Artzecha", as often doing so requires creating the proper conducive environment, even if that requires a difficult process of relocation.

The language may have halachic significance as well; the Medrash Rabbah (39:7) notes "Licha" you, Avraham, are released from the obligation of kibud Av in this case, while others would not be. This is invoked in the ongoing debate about whether one is permitted to make Aliyah, or stay in Eretz Yisrael, when parents object (see Panim Yafos; Resp. Mabit, 1:139; Resp. Maharam Rotenberg 28 and 79; Pe'as HaShulchan 2:21; Resp. Tashbetz 3:288; Chayei Adam in Shaarei Tzedek 11:5; Resp. Yechaveh Da'as 3:69; Resp. Dvar Yehoshua 2:71.)

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Hagar and Avraham's Encounter with Hashem
by **R. Gidon Rothstein**

Parshat Lech Lecha

From childhood, I have enjoyed analyses of the Torah that account for te'amim, the notes that guide how we chant the Torah.

Be'er Lachai or Lachai Ro'i?

In 16:14, HaKetav ve-Ha-Kabbalah finds an example. The verse tells us Hagar named the well where she encountered the angel who told her to return to Avraham's household, bear Sarah's treatment of her, and that she would have a boy. When the experience is over she calls the angel (or God Who sent the angel) E-I Ro'i, usually translated as the (Almighty) God Who sees, then names the well Be'er Lachai Ro'i, I think generally read to mean the Well of the Living God Who Sees.

R. Mecklenburg points out this version links lachai, living, to ro'i, Who sees, where the te'amim group lachai with the word be'er, well. (It's a mercha tipcha for be'er lachai, indicating a stop within a phrase, then the etnachta, the stop for the middle of the verse, for ro'i.) Whatever the words mean, the grouping suggest lachai describes the well rather than God. It's the lachai well of the Seeing God.

He just has to define lachai, a word he found in Ketubbot 91b, where it means good, as in "if this is satisfactory to you, lechayei, and if not, then take this." (As I've written, the word there is actually lechayei, with two yuds, but R. Mecklenburg does not seem to think it makes a difference.) For a closer example, when David contacts Naval (to share some of his bountiful harvest because David's forces had protected his flocks), I Shmuel 25:6, he tells the messengers to say lechai (here, it is leh chai, rather than le-chai, as we have it in Bereshit). For David, the word means something like "live well," or "be successful."

From those two examples, R. Mecklenburg claims Hagar named the well the good-fortune well of the Seeing God, different from usual translations, with his starting point how the te'amim group the words.

The Implications of an Unusual Name of God

Like his maidservant/concubine, Avraham gives God a Name we do not often see, notes R. Hirsch to 15;2. We might not spot the difference, because we read the Name Hashem Elokim, one we see many times in the Torah. However, that usually consists of the four-letter Name (written with a yud, hei, vav, and then another hei, but pronounced like the Hebrew word with the root adon, master). Here, it is actually written Ado... Then the second word, usually Elokim, is here the four-letter Name.

R. Hirsch tells us it appears only three more times in the Torah, once six verses from now, said again by Avraham, and twice by Moshe. The first word displays Avraham's sense of God as sole Master. Had it meant one master among many, Avraham should have said adoni, says R. Hirsch; the way we have it signals God is the sole One.

The second Name here, the four letter one (often considered an indication of the middat ha-rachamim, God's Attribute of mercy, or giving another chance), is pronounced as if it were the Name Elokim (the Attribute of Justice) to highlight the underlying rachamim in God's Justice. Justice and judgment are tools to reach God's kindness, he says. Even when God punishes us fully, to the extent we deserve, it lays the groundwork for a future with bounty and blessing.

In the current vision, Hashem informs Avraham of a difficult period in his descendants' future (four hundred years of exile), followed by great goodness. Avraham is declaring God his sole master, along with his awareness of the interplay between justice and kindness, his trust God is doing what is right and best, with good outcomes, even if he himself does not understand them.

A different Hashem Elokim than we are used to, this one—according to R. Hirsch—to declare one's submission to God's Justice, an announcement of one's confidence in the Master, Whose strictness always leads to a better world.

Avraham's Sense of Family

During the war of the four kings against the five, Lot is taken captive, with all his possessions and those of the people of Sodom and the other four cities. The verse that tells us Avraham heard of the situation, 14;14, speaks only of Lot's captivity, telling Malbim Avraham cared only about his relative, not the money.

His connection to Lot stands out because Lot had chosen to leave Avraham's company, yet Avraham still felt the need to save him. Malbim reminds us of Rambam's claim in the Guide that a low level of prophecy comes when the spirit of Hashem pushes someone to extraordinary acts, such as when Yehonatan the son of Shaul invaded the Philistine camp with just him and his attendant. Avraham, too, attacks the four

kings, and does not ask his allies to join him, only his students and the members of his household.

It worked, because despite their small numbers they chased the kings all the way north, to where Dan would eventually settle.

Avraham Was Supposed to Separate From Lot

Although R. David Zvi Hoffman agrees with Malbim about Avraham's sense of familial connection, in the introduction to the parsha he gives the sense Avraham was supposed to separate from Lot more quickly than he did. He says the chapter shows how Divine Providence brought about the fulfillment of Hashem's command to Avraham to leave his land and his father's house. Lot wanted to join, and Avraham did not have the heart to turn him down.

However, Lot wasn't a proper companion, as we see from his later choice to live in Sodom. (An important point: Lot's ability to live comfortably in Sodom itself reveals a flaw in his character.) So Hashem brought about circumstances where Lot would choose to leave, to achieve the goal, Avraham separating completely from his family of origin.

R. Hoffman sees support for the point in Hashem's appearing to Avraham immediately after Lot left, then reiterated the Divine promise that Avraham's descendants would inherit the Land, now adding the words "ad olam, forever," the promise firmed up once he has established a family free of those negative original influences.

The story also shows some of Avraham's qualities, says R. Hoffman, such as letting Lot choose where to live despite his being the senior member of the family, to avoid further fighting.

Two comments on God, Hagar's sense of the well as a place of good fortune from God and Avraham's appealing to the rachamim underlying God's Justice, and two on Avraham and his sense of family, leading him to come to Lot's aid, after having been required by Hashem to remove himself from that family.

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/perceptions-5784-lech-lecha/>

Perceptions

Parshas Lech Lecha

By Rabbi Pinchas Winston

October 24, 2023 (5784)

Friday Night

I COULD NOT have planned it better. This is Issue #2018, and #70 of Ain Od Milvado, two very important numbers in this week's parsha. Talk about Hashgochah Pratis.

More on that later, b"H. In the meantime, I was allowed to share the following personal note, which I feel is relevant to this week's parsha. This is what it says.

Dear God: I am writing this letter to You, and to me as well. Anyhow, you already know what I am about to write, even if I don't. You're probably even telling me what to write.

First of all, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to live in Your land, Eretz Yisroel. There is not a day that goes by that I don't appreciate it and feel eternally grateful to You for the merit. I don't know what I did to deserve it, or if I even do, but I'm so very glad that I am here.

Now with the latest war I want to add something. Everyone dies at some point, some sooner than later. We have already lost so many in the last two weeks alone, and so horribly. We don't get to choose when we go, or how and where. But if I die in Eretz Yisroel, even just "accidentally," I thank you again. Admittedly it would be nice to go out in a more meaningful way, but at least it was still in Eretz Yisroel, making death so much more meaningful.

I do ask one personal thing, though. If I am meant to go soon, which would be considered early by most standards, help my family survive it. They're going to be shocked and sad, so please help them cope. I want them to be strong and happy in life so they can serve You with a complete heart. Please don't let my death break them in any way.

Having said that, here is my request regarding the rest of my brothers and sisters, even the ones who say that they do not feel the same way about me. Although, I have to say, You have certainly brought a lot of people together who, just weeks ago, were headed in opposite directions. It is wonderful that has happened. It is so painful that it cost so much.

So please save us from any more division and destruction. Nineveh was saved because it didn't know its right from its left. We were almost destroyed because we knew the difference only too well. Dor HaFlagah, the Generation of the Dispersion, wasn't destroyed because they worked together. We were destroying ourselves by working against each other. So, I beg You God, let this air of achdus become increasingly stronger, so that we will never go back to our warring ways again. The only one our infighting strengthens is the Sitra Achra, and those he works through.

I'm asking this of You specifically because I have learned that creating achdus in the Jewish people is beyond our capability. No one is smart enough to talk to so many people with so many different opinions and make them all get along. It would take a huge miracle, and last I checked, that was Your department.

Shabbos Day

WHY HAVE I put a request for achdus before a victory over our enemies? Because I know that the latter depends upon the former. That's the reason, isn't it, why division in this country is usually followed by some kind of unifying war?

During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, I was told, many thought it was the end of the Jewish State, God forbid. But when some asked Rav Abramsky, zt"l, one of the Gedolim of that generation, why he wasn't as concerned as others about the outcome he told them, "With this much achdus the Jewish people will not lose the war!" He was right, Boruch Hashem. After all, You didn't bring us back to Eretz Yisroel to divide us. We are a nation that knows exile only too well. We are the only people to have been spread to the four corners of the earth, and the only one to have been ingathered from there afterwards. To do what? To fight against each other? To build walls between groups? We are supposed to be a single people with a single God living on a single land. It's in our dovening, in Shabbos Mincha. Granted, national unity has not been our history. Moshe Rabbeinu had to fight off dissenters and breakaways in his day, and that was right under the auspices of God. After getting to the land and building a kingdom, it later divided into two parts during Rechavam's reign, remaining that way until foreign powers eventually attacked and exiled all of us.

Even after we came back to the land, we had a difficult time being unified. The joke about "two Jews, three opinions" is no joke, just a sad reality. You would think that a nation that suffered the Holocaust would never want to fight one another ever again. We have enough enemies in the world. We don't need to become our own worst enemies as well.

But I think I know why it happens. I think I understand where the bad comes from. This was a land that once belonged to the most depraved people on earth, the Canaanites. But how can the holiest land be lived on by such evil people? Strangely enough, it was not a question I thought to ask until after I already saw the answer, in asfer, as You know, called Tuv HaAretz. It explains a lot.

Based completely on the teachings of the Arizal, it explains that Eretz Yisroel is not something that You created, but something that we, the Jewish people, have to create. It is our job to redeem the holy sparks that are the basis of the land out of the side of spiritual impurity and bring them to the side of holiness. That is what transforms Eretz Canaan into Eretz Yisroel.

I guess we never did that fully. It would seem from history that as close as we have come to doing it, we were still far enough away to be affected by the Klippos, the spiritual basis of evil in the world. I also assume that it is also possible to reverse some of the redemption and send sparks back to the Klippos, just as Adam HaRishon did when he sinned. Not only did he not fix the rest of Creation, he undid a lot of what You had already rectified. That's how Gan Aiden turned into this very non-paradise world of ours.

I suppose this is something that has to be resolved once and for all before Moshiach comes.

Seudas Shlishis

I GUESS ALSO that this might be the reason why we had to go through what we just did, and what might be coming up, may it be sweet and easy, please. We may have recovered the physical land of Eretz Yisroel back in 1948, but not all of the spiritual reality of it. Some of Eretz Canaan still lingered after all this time.

We have been told that Eretz Yisroel today is built upon the ashes of the Holocaust. Six million sparks were released from this world and somehow gave us the right to get and keep our homeland in preparation of the final redemption, may it come very soon and peacefully. Might it be then that the death and suffering over the last couple of weeks, reminiscent of the atrocities and cruelties of the Holocaust, be part of the final payments, part of the final extraction of the remaining sparks from the side of impurity in preparation for Moshiach's arrival. I don't just hope so.

I believe so.

As You told us, Your ways are not our ways, which is why we have a difficult time comprehending Your calculations. Sacrifices have been imposed upon us that we ourselves would not have made, given the choice. We don't have the big picture view You do to know why they need to be made in the first place. That kind of understanding, we have been told, won't come until later.

In the meantime, it seems, it is Lech Lecha for all of us. We're going to have follow You blindly and trust You implicitly.

We'll have to have faith that You will direct us down the best path possible, despite what the world and history seem to show us. Avraham did, and we have to learn from him how.

Isn't that what Bris Ben HaBesarim was all about? What a prophecy! Strangers in a land not ours for 400 years!

Oppression for long periods of time! Sure, eventual redemption. But how many would still be around to enjoy it?

How many of those generations were born and died in slavery, never getting a chance to realize the reality of the Your promise and their hope?

Now my bubby's prayer makes so much more sense to me than ever before. It was her own personal prayer that she constantly said because she had gone through so much in her lifetime, more than many other people of faith could ever handle and remain loyal to You. "God," she would say, "test me if You will, but also give the strength to pass Your tests."

Amen. Because it seems that, as children of Avraham Avinu, having our faith and trust in God tested is part of our legacy.

Help us make passing Your tests part of that legacy as well.

Ain Od Milvado, Part 70

THE BRIS BEN HaBesarim took place in 2018, the issue number of this parsha, and it was also Avraham's 70th year, the number of this week's chapter of Ain Od Milvado. How impressive is that, since I started number these many years back, and didn't start Ain Od Milvado until last year, and had no idea that they would come out together in the oneparshathat they make a difference. The odds must be astronomical against it, especially since not everyone is familiar enough those numbers and the history behind them to realize the "coincidence" as it happens.

What does it mean? No clue. We're not talking about the Urim u'Tumim here. We don't have prophets to find out or confirm our suspicions. But one thing it does do with certainty is make you feel the Presence of God, even on the level of your learning and teaching. And the truth is, the Zohar says that's what Lech-Lecha actually meant.

What's the purpose of life? What do you want from life? These are questions that many of us consider at one point or another in our lives, but the answer tends to be something very personal, something that gives us pleasure in life. Not too many people get the real answer, God's answer.

And what is God's answer? His revelation of Himself to us. Not for His benefit, mind you, but for our benefit. That's what God gave Avraham to encourage him to make the move to Eretz Yisroel, the promise of a more intense revelation of God, available nowhere else in the world.

And that's what God told us as well when He said, "I am God, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be a God to you (Vayikra 25:38). God's just not willing to reveal Himself as intimately anywhere else but in Eretz Yisroel, making it the only land where a person can really fulfill ain od Milvado.

Besoros Tovos for Klal Yisroel

from: Times of Israel <newsletter@timesofisrael.com>

Lech Lecha: On the Question of Human Shields

Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

The question of human shields has been in the news a lot these past few weeks. As Israel responds to the heinous massacre of innocent civilians, men, women, and children, perpetrated by the sub-human Hamas terrorists, it is being accused of targeting innocent civilians.

Some of these accusers are the very people who were quick to blame Israel for Hamas's atrocities even as the atrocities were ongoing. In my mind, these people have lost all credibility.

Anything they say going forward is capricious and without merit. I don't take them seriously. They are not after facts.

They are propagating their own agenda.

It is rich to be lectured on the value and sanctity of human life by nations that were involved or stood idly by while six

million Jews were slaughtered in the Holocaust. It is ironic to be accused of causing a holocaust in Gaza only days after Hamas murdered and tortured more Jews in one day than have been killed since the Holocaust. It is a sport for them. Hit Jews when Jews are down. When we are in pain, blame us. Never sympathize. Never consider us human. Just stick to your script and propaganda.

Is it not ironic that Jews, who taught the world about the sanctity of human life, are being lectured on this sanctity by murderers? Hamas accuses Israel of war crimes. Did you hear that? Hamas, the people who attacked innocent families, murdered them whole, abducted babies and the elderly, burned innocent civilians alive and to a crisp to the point that they can't even be identified, accuses Israel of genocide and war crimes?

Hamas was quick to blame Israel for bombing a hospital when it turned out they had bombed it themselves, albeit inadvertently. But get this. While people around the world were quick to point out that this is a war crime of the worst magnitude, there was stunning silence when Hamas targeted the Barzilai Hospital in Israel with rockets on October 8, only several days earlier.

Hamas denies that it targeted women and children after they recorded and published these atrocities on their GoPro cameras. Now, Hamas had the audacity to deny it. What's worse is that protestors around the world accept this bald-faced lie as truth.

And you have to love it when Vladimir Putin accuses Israel of war crimes and dehumanizing attacks after he targets and carpet-bombs civilians in Ukraine. Oh, I forgot, he, too, denies his wrongdoings. Then there is the United Nations. Don't even get me started on the United Nations.

I am sure you get my point. Jews are under no obligation to respond to and to fend off such allegations. Yet, I will respond anyway because there are many Jews who read and watch these allegations and take them at face value. It is important that rabbis and Jewish leaders present the Jewish view. Jews hate to kill, even in self-defense. We have no choice but to kill in defense of innocent lives. Jewish law is unequivocal about this. If you witness someone pursuing another with intent to kill, you must kill the pursuer to save the prospective victim. Jews have an obligation to kill every terrorist who pursues Jewish lives with the intent to kill. In other words, every terrorist.

Though we are under obligation to kill, we do it with a very heavy heart. In this week's Parshah we read that Abraham got involved in a war to liberate his nephew, who was taken captive and held hostage. Abraham was triumphant and released his nephew, but during this war, he was forced to kill many.

After the war, G-d appeared to Abraham and told him to have no fear. Our sages explain that G-d was referring to Abraham's fear that he would be punished for the killing he had done. He had no choice, yet he hated to kill. G-d told him, Abraham, have no fear. You will not be punished for this.

Golda Meir is reputed to have said that we could forgive the Arabs for killing our children, but we can never forgive them for forcing us to kill their children. This is not in the nature of Jews. Therefore, when world leaders accuse Jews of killing innocent civilians in Gaza, Jews are naturally prone to accept the blame and feel the guilt. This was Abraham's response. This is the prototypical Jewish response.

But Israel is not to blame; Hamas is. Israel would have been to blame had they targeted civilians and carpet bombed them as Putin did in Ukraine and as Hamas does every day to Israel with their rockets. Israel would have been to blame if they did to Gaza what Hamas did to Israel on October 7.

Israel targets legitimate military locations from which terror is exported to our people. Wiping out command cells, weapons factories, terror safe houses, rocket launchers, and weapons depots is an obligation. It is part of destroying the pursuer to save the pursued. The problem is that Hamas uses a diabolical, disgusting strategy that offers them a win-win.

They locate their military facilities in civilian neighborhoods. Often even in the basements or courtyards of schools, hospitals, and orphanages. They kill Jews and force Israel to respond. When Israel responds, they hide behind civilians so that Israel inadvertently kills the human shields. Then, they parade the dead bodies before the cameras and accuse Israel of genocide.

They have played the game so many times that you would think the world would awaken to their diabolical tactic. But they don't. Instead, they eat it up. Every time. This is antisemitism at its worst. But it's also anti-Palestinianism because Hamas is sending their own civilians to their deaths. But it does bring us back to the question. What is the moral responsibility of the defender when the pursued hides behind human shields?

I can't give you a definitive answer because Judaism often has more than one way to view a subject. I will share the halachic rationale that permits killing a human shield. In the book of Samuel, we read that King Saul prepared for war against the tribe of Amalek, sworn enemies of the Jewish people.

Members of the Keini tribe (Descendants of Jethro) lived among the Amalekites. King Saul gave them fair warning.

"Come, withdraw at once from among the Amalekites, that I may not destroy you along with them." (I Samuel 15:4.)

The former chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, pointed to this passage to demonstrate that if our killers are in our crosshairs, we must take the shot even if human shields are in

their path. This is especially true if the shields choose to act as shields, and worse, when they support the cause of the terrorists. In these cases, the shields themselves assume the status of pursuer and forfeit their right to life.

Of course, it is impossible to discern who supports Hamas and who does not, who opted in, and who was forced in. However, in a state of war, these considerations fall away. In a state of war, we are required to go after the combatants even if they are embedded among civilians. That is the meaning of war.

The caveat is that one must do as King Saul did. We must warn the pursuers and give them a chance to flee. If they choose to remain in place, it is morally correct to take the shot, even if it results in the inadvertent killing of human shields.

May G-d protect our land and our people. May there be peace in Israel. And may we live in harmony and serenity. Amen.

Rabbi Lazer Gurkow, a renowned lecturer, serves as Rabbi to Congregation Beth Tefilah in London Ontario. He is a member of the curriculum development team at Rohr Jewish Learning Institute and is the author of two books and nearly a thousand online essays. You can find his work at www.innerstream.org

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Oct 25, 2023, 9:42 AM subject: **Maaser Kesafim**

Since the first source of the obligation of maaser kesafim is in this week's parsha...

Maaser Kesafim By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Paying for Your Kids in Kollel "I agreed to support my married children for five years. May I use maaser money for this?" Question #2: Chomesh What is chomesh? Question #3: Tuition May I pay tuition out of maaser kesafim funds? Question #4: Testing Hashem! May I ask Hashem to pay me back for the tzedakah money that I give?

Which maaser? We should first note that the term maaser, without specifying which one, is used sometimes in the Mishnah and Gemara to refer to maaser rishon, and sometimes to refer to maaser sheini, and, in later halachic works, sometimes also to maaser kesafim. These three types of maaser have vastly different laws from one another. Usually, one can understand from context which maaser is intended. If the context alludes to maaser owned by a Levi, or to the first maaser being separated, maaser rishon is intended. If it refers to something that has sanctity, usually maaser sheini is intended. If it refers to a percentage of one's income that is donated to tzedakah, it refers to maaser kesafim. The above questions all relate to shaylos about how much someone should donate to tzedakah and how he should prioritize his giving. It is well known that Rav Moshe Feinstein used to complain that these are areas of halacha about which he was asked too infrequently. Maaser kesafim: giving ten percent of

one's moneys to tzedakah. The poskim dispute whether one subtracts household expenses from one's income, before calculating maaser.

The concept of maaser is primarily in the case of ayn ani bifanav, when I fulfill the mitzvah by putting aside money for tzedakah. In a case of ani bifanav I do not fulfill my mitzvah by giving him only ten percent. A person who distributes maaser kesafim to the poor is blessed with a special guarantee of wealth (Taanis 9a). This beracha happens only when someone is meticulous to calculate exactly a tenth of one's income for tzedakah (Shu't Avkas Rocheil #3). Furthermore, this beracha is fulfilled only if one gives this maaser money to the poor, but if one gives part of it to other causes, there is no guarantee that wealth will follow (see Shu't Radbaz 3:441). Therefore, although one may use maaser kesafim to buy an aliyah, pay for a "mi'shebeirach," purchase sefarim that will be used by the tzibur (Taz, Yoreh Deah 249:1) or similar communal needs, it is preferred to earmark maaser kesafim for the needs of the poor (Rema, Yoreh Deah 249:1). Donations to Torah institutions are considered distributions to the poor (Ahavas Chesed 2:19:2), as are hachnasas kallah expenses (to pay wedding and related expenses for a poor groom or bride). Chomesh: giving twenty percent of one's moneys to tzedakah. This is the optimal level of fulfilling mitzvas tzedakah, whereas setting aside ten percent is considered only "midah beinonis," an average person's conduct. Someone who gives a chomesh to tzedakah should first calculate and set aside one tenth, and then a second tenth. Before starting to give regular amounts of tzedakah on an ongoing basis, one should declare that he is following this procedure bli neder, without accepting it as a vow.

Paying for Your Kids in Kollel from Maaser Money "I agreed to support my married children for five years. May I use maaser money for this?"

The Chasam Sofer authored a responsum (Shu't Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #231) on this subject, which is fascinating for the many different halachic issues that he clarifies. Someone had arranged the marriage of his scholarly son to the daughter of a talmid chacham, with the following understanding: The father of the son accepted that he would pay every week a certain amount to his mechutan, the bride's father, who would sustain the young growing family in his home, thus enabling the son-in-law to continue his studies under his father-in-law's direction. The father of the chosson realized that it will be difficult for him to meet this commitment, and wants to know if he can use the maaser money from his business endeavors to provide the support for which he is responsible.

The Chasam Sofer opens his discussion by quoting two opinions that seem to dispute whether it is acceptable to use maaser money for such an expenditure. The Rema, quoting the

Maharil, contends that it is not permitted to use maaser money to pay for a mitzvah, such as donating lamps and candles to the shul, whereas the Shach states, in the name of the Maharam, that it is permitted to use maaser money for mitzvos. Thus, whether one may pay for mitzvos, other than supporting the poor, from maaser money appears to be a dispute among early authorities. The Chasam Sofer then quotes the Be'er Hagolah, who explains that the two above-quoted opinions are not in dispute. All authorities prohibit using maaser money to fulfill a mitzvah that someone is already obligated to observe. The Maharam, who permitted using maaser money for these purposes, was discussing a case in which the donor intended to use maaser money for this mitzvah from the outset, whereas the Maharil is discussing a situation in which he has been using his maaser money to support the poor, in which case he cannot now divert it for other mitzvos that do not qualify as tzedakah for the poor. Thus, according to the Be'er Hagolah, whether the father can begin meeting his obligations to his son and mechutan with his maaser money will depend on whether he has already accepted the obligation on himself to pay this from other funds, in which case he cannot use maaser money for it, or if it is an obligation that he is now accepting upon himself, in which case he can specify that he wants to use maaser money to fulfill it.

The Chasam Sofer does not consider the approach of the Be'er Hagolah to be fully correct. He (the Chasam Sofer) notes that the Maharil wrote that maaser moneys are meant to support the poor and not for the acquisition of mitzvos. Therefore, use of maaser money for any type of personal mitzvah is inappropriate, whether he is already obligated to fulfill the mitzvah or not.

The Chasam Sofer concludes that when someone begins donating maaser money, he may stipulate that, sometimes, the money will be used for a mitzvah donation, such as the lighting in shul. However, once he has begun donating his maaser money regularly to the poor, he must continue using it for tzedakah.

Family first

Having determined that there are definitely situations in which maaser money must be given to the poor, the Chasam Sofer then discusses when and whether money designated for the poor can be used to support an individual's extended family. There is a general rule that one is obligated to the poor to whom one is closest – close family first, more distant family next, neighbors third, members of one's city next and the out-of-town poor next.

Greater needs

Notwithstanding that family should be supported first, the Chasam Sofer quotes from his rebbi, the author of the Haflaah, that the rules of "closest first" or "family first" are only when

the funds are necessary for the same level of need, for example, all have enough to eat, but not enough for clothing. However, if some are short of food, and others have enough to eat but are short on clothing or other needs, the responsibility to make sure that someone has enough to eat comes first, even for someone out of town, regardless of whether there are neighbors or locals who are needy, as long as they have sufficient food. Yet, concludes the Chasam Sofer, this prioritization is not absolute. All needs of someone's family are considered his responsibility before the basic needs of others. In other words, the priorities should be as follows: (1) Family needs. (2) Most basic needs – food – regardless of location of needy. (3) People of one's city. (4) The out-of-town poor. Chasam Sofer's conclusion If the father had stipulated, at the time of obligating himself to support his son, that he would use maaser money for this obligation, he would be able to use it. Even then, the Chasam Sofer recommends that he use only up to half of his available maaser money to support his son. His reasoning is based on a Mishnah (Peah 8:6) which says that someone is permitted to save his maaser ani (the tithe one gives to the poor in the third and sixth year of the shemittah cycle) to support those that he chooses to, but he should not set aside more than half of his maaser ani for this purpose; the rest should be given to the local poor. However, this is only when he had originally planned to use maaser money for this purpose. Otherwise, once he created an obligation upon himself to support his son, it is similar to any other obligation that he has, and he may not use his maaser money for this purpose. Tuition Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled that one should not pay tuition for sons and daughters in elementary school and high school from maaser funds, because this level of education is obligatory. However, someone eligible 8 for a tuition reduction who elects to pay full tuition may pay the extra from maaser (Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:113; also see Ahavas Chesed 2:19:2). If paying the expected amount of tuition without resorting to maaser funds creates hardship, one should ask a shaylah. Yeshiva gedolah tuition and expenses may be paid from maaser, because a parent is not obligated to support a child at this age. Testing Hashem! At this point, let us discuss the last of our opening questions: "May I ask Hashem to pay me back for the tzedakah money that I give?" It is generally prohibited to "test" Hashem, as the Torah states, "Lo senasu es Hashem," "Do not test Hashem," (Devarim 6:16). One may not say, "I am performing this mitzvah so that Hashem will reward me by providing me with such-and-such (Sefer Yerei'im #361; Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 395, 424; Shu't Radbaz #882). However, there is one exception to this rule – one may give maaser kesafim, expecting to be blessed with wealth as a reward (Taanis 9a, as explained by Shu't Avkas Rocheil #3; Sefer Hassidim #144;

Rema, Yoreh Deah 247:4; Ahavas Chesed 2:18. Cf. Shel”a and She’ei’las Ya’avetz #3, quoted in Pischei Teshuvah 247:2). The Gemara (Taanis 9a) relates that, after Reish Lakeish’s passing, Rabbi Yochanan encountered his nephew (who was Reish Lakeish’s son). Rabbi Yochanan asked his nephew what he had learned in cheder that day. The nephew replied, “Te’aser kedai shetis’asher,” “Give maaser so that you get rich.” “How do you know?” asked Rabbi Yochanan. “Go test it,” answered the nephew, who then asked, “But is one permitted to test Hashem?” Rabbi Yochanan replied, “I heard from my rebbe, Rabbi Hoshiah, that this is an exception -- because of the pasuk in Malachi (3:10), where Hashem begs us to test Him when giving maaser and see for yourself that He opens the windows of Heaven and grants blessings until our lips weary of saying ‘Enough!’” We see from this that it is permitted to declare that I am giving the correct amount of tzedakah and expect that Hashem will reward me with wealth. I know several people who personally attest that this beracha was fulfilled!

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Oct 26, 2023, 8:32 PM

Alone But Not Lonely
By Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Jews should be feeling quite lonely these days. Antisemitism, an increasingly visible and unsettling feature of American Jewish life since the Tree of Life attack exactly five years ago, has spiked since the brutal Hamas massacre of October 7th. On the Israeli side, we have shifted from focusing on what seemed to be the growing circle of peace and friendship surrounding the Jewish state to consider instead its enemies poised to attack from all fronts. We fume at the callous and vicious hostility of the United Nations and watch with astonishment as the progressive champions of human rights leading, teaching, and studying in our universities salute and excuse monstrous butchers. And we celebrate any expression of support from American and other political leaders even as we anxiously parse their every phrase to identify possible cracks in that support.

We should feel desperately lonely, but we are not. A Jew is always alone but never lonely. Earlier this week, on a visit to Israel, I began to understand why. In the wake of the recent horrors, I had the privilege to meet a wide variety of Israelis who had experienced or observed unspeakable tragedy and were bearing it with dignity and grace. It is always both humbling and inspiring to see from up close the kind of emunah, deep-rooted faith, that seems to grow bountifully in Israel and is rarely seen elsewhere. It is there in the eyes of people who project a crystal-clear sense of purpose and the faith-based conviction that they are part of the

great march forward of the magnificent story of the Jewish people. It derives both from the mystical feeling of God’s guiding hand and from the mindset of the faithful who choose their path in life consistent with God and his Torah.

“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me.” “Were my father and mother abandon me, God would take me in.” King David was surrounded by frightening enemies and forsaken by erstwhile friends. It did not matter. His faith in God ensured that he was never alone. His Emunah was neither a slogan nor an abstraction. And it is similarly tangible to these understated Jews who viewed their life-changing experiences as a journey God was leading them on and they were choosing to take. Instead of feeling lost and abandoned, they have a clear sense of connection and direction.

These humbling Jews are not alone because God is with them. But they are also not alone because people are with them. So much has been said – and enough can never be said – about the incredible outpouring of kindness and caring that is sweeping through the land. We may be attacked by our enemies and abandoned by friends, but the Jewish family is hanging together across oceans and communities. Those who have suffered loss are being embraced by Klal Yisrael.

But the real healing of that loneliness is experienced by giving. A friend told me how his daughter went to a neighborhood market on Erev Shabbos and encountered a woman collecting foodstuffs for the neighborhood poor. She had never seen her doing this before, and it seemed especially odd as people were raising funds and goods for the current causes of the displaced, the bereaved, and the soldiers. She later learned that this woman’s son had been taken captive by Hamas. She was in so much pain that her pain was all she could focus on, leaving her completely wrapped up in herself and very lonely so she chose to go out to the corner market to do something for others who needed it. She was not alone because she cared, she gave, she saw others and she made them less lonely.

The original Jew, Avraham, was known as an Ivri, completely isolated, “the entire world on one side and he on the other.” This was not just an individual characteristic of Avraham; it originated what would become the collective fate of his descendants, “the nation that dwells alone.” It began the moment God chose Avraham, when he instructed him to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father’s house, to disconnect from every part of his human support system and follow God into the unknown.

Avraham was alone. But was he lonely? How could he be lonely when the Creator Himself would accompany him and show him his pathway forward?! One who walks with God is never lonely. And he could not be lonely because everywhere he went he noticed others and addressed their needs.

We are a nation that dwells alone but does not feel alone. Carried by emunah and committed to chessed, we will live and move on with God before us and with our hearts and hands extended to each other.

Rabbi Shmuel Reichman

@ReichmanShmuel

This is true bravery!

When everyone else at Drexel University was supporting evil, one student still showed up for Israel!

This lone ranger, Jay, left class clutching his Israeli flag and waved it in the air walking towards Students for Justice in Palestine, where students were chanting “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” as well as other anti-Israel and anti-Semitic chants.

Jay’s proud sister videoed him marching into the belly of the beast, where he proudly waved his Israeli flag

Jay staged a one-man counter-protest, and when the hostage-deniers asked him for proof of the hostages and the massacre, he pulled out his phone and showed them footage, silencing the crowd.

The timing of this event could not be more fitting!

In this week’s parsha (Torah portion), Avraham embarks on his Lech Lecha journey into the unknown.

Avraham was called the “ish ivri” because all the masses walked on one side of the river, and he walked on the other. (Ivri comes from the Hebrew word “ever” (the other side), as in “the other side of the river.” Ideologically, Avraham walked on “the other side.”)

He walked alone, choosing to live a life of truth rather than a life of social acceptance.

A true leader must always be willing to commit to the right path, even if he or she is the only one doing so.

The lonely path can also be the very means of self-discovery and self-transformation.

Sometimes one can see most clearly once they have distanced themselves from their current surroundings, as this gives them the ability to rethink, redirect, and then return with newfound purpose and meaning.

Avraham completely removed himself from his idolatrous culture.

Moshe spent many decades alone in the desert and on the run from Pharaoh, building his clarity and understanding of life before returning to lead the Jewish People.

David HaMelech grew up as an outcast before being appointed as king by Shmuel.

This is not always necessary, but often, a step back leads to a giant step forward. This is why teenagers who leave their homes in chutz la’aretz (outside Israel) and spend time

learning Torah in Israel often find it immensely transformative for their spiritual development.

These are definitely lonely times; but with that comes incredible opportunity.

May we all be inspired to embark on our own Lech Lecha journey; as individuals, there is always a certain existential loneliness in seeking the ultimate truth; but at the heart of our individual Lech Lecha journey is the realization that we’re part of something infinitely greater than ourselves; and it’s in that realization that we find a deep sense of connection, togetherness, and purpose!

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www.torah.org/learning/drasha Parsha Parables By Rabbi
Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Lech Lecha

Outsiders

And Hashem took Abraham outside and said, gaze toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able! And He said to him, so shall your offspring be!”(Genesis:15:5) With those words, the Torah tells us G-d’s promise, “Jews will be like the stars.” Something is troubling. Why was it necessary for Hashem to take a field trip with Abraham in order to impress upon him the vastness of the universe? At the time Abraham was 100 years old. Surely he knew that one cannot count the stars! Rashi, therefore, explains the verse on a deeper level. Abraham had been told by soothsayers and astrologers that he and Sora would never bear children. Hashem however, took him outside.”Go outside of your pre-ordained destiny,” He exclaimed.”You are no longer governed by conventional predictions. I am taking you outside that realm.”

It’s quite interesting to note that Abraham’s great-grandson, Yoseph, followed literally in Abraham’s footsteps. He too ran outside. Yoseph was about to be seduced by the licentious wife of his master, Potiphar. She claimed she had a vision that a union of Yoseph and her would produce prestigious offspring. (She did not know that Yoseph would legitimately marry her daughter.) In Genesis 39:12 the Torah tells us that”Yoseph dropped his coat and ran outside”. Perhaps he was saying,”I am not governed by your visions and predictions. I must do what my faith and morality teach me. Like my forebearers Abraham and Sora, I go outside your visors.”

Reb Yoseph Chaim had studied under the Chofetz Chaim before he settled in America. He had a very long and tranquil life until tragedy struck. His son Hirschel was in a terrible car accident and the doctors feared the worst. The family did not know just how to tell the news to the aged, yet very coherent, 87-year-old father. The hospital chaplain, Rabbi Schapiro, was

asked to drive the old man to the hospital and slowly break the news on the way. This would be the last time Yoseph Chaim would probably see his son alive. When he broke the terrible news, however, the Rabbi was shocked at the old man's indifference. "Perhaps I didn't explain the severity of the situation," he thought. He figured that the scene at the bedside would speak for itself. It didn't. Reb Yoseph Chaim walked up to the bedside, saw his son connected to a maze of tubes protruding from all over his body, and said to the surrounding physicians, "I guess he's not up to talking right now. We probably should come back a little later"

The entire family was stupefied. They knew their father had an astute grasp of almost every situation, yet in this instance he could not face reality. The doctors predicted that Hirschel was not going to survive. Yet his father was not even fazed. Reb Yoseph Chaim looked at all the shocked faces in the crowded ICU. "You doctors think you know the future? I know that Hirschel will be just fine. Let me explain. Many years ago the Chofetz Chaim wanted to make sure that his writings were understandable for the layman. He asked me to read the galley and point out any difficult nuances. He was very appreciative of my efforts, and before I left for America he promised me, "Yoseph Chaim, if you remain a faithful Jew and Shomer Shabbos, I promise that you will have a long life filled with nachas. You will not lose any one of your children or grandchildren in your lifetime.' Now gentlemen," Reb Yoseph continued, "who should I believe?" Needless to say, within weeks Hirschel was out of the hospital. (Reb Yoseph lived to the ripe age of 96 and all his children and grandchildren did outlive him!) The Jewish people are not controlled by the soothsayers of conventional wisdom. Predictions of defeat were abound when Israel's army is outnumbered 10 to 1 and — yet we survived. The dire predictions of mass assimilation amidst despair after World War II faded into a rebirth of a Jewish community and renewed Torah education on unparalleled levels. Conventional wisdom had lost hope for our Russian brothers and sisters, yet new embers of Torah Judaism are beginning to glow out of the former bastion of atheism. We are not ruled by conventional wisdom. Like our forefather Abraham, we Jews are just outsiders.

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<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/1199>
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

A special message for the Jewish community from the **Chief Rabbi Mirvis**

I have just listened to one of the most inspirational radio interviews I have ever heard.

Rav Doron Perez, head of world Mizrachi was being interviewed. And when the interviewer commenced, he said, "I

don't know how to say this, but I want to say Mazal Tov, and to also extend our commiserations at the same time." Why was that the case? Well, you see, last night Rav Doron and his wife, Shelley celebrated the wedding of their son Yonatan to Galya. On Shemini Atzeret, Yonatan was in the south of Israel, together with his fellow soldiers. They were fighting with every bit of strength and courage they had, against dozens of terrorists. Yonatan was saving the lives of his fellow Jews. But, after good while he himself was injured, and doctors say it was a miracle that he was able to survive.

And yesterday was Yonatan's wedding, a wonderful Simcha, but — and this is a big but — Yonatan's brother Daniel is missing. Like Yonatan, he is also a soldier in the south of Israel. His tank was attacked. One of his fellow soldiers was found dead in the tank, the other three are missing. The Perez family do not know where he is right now.

So, can you imagine, a wedding of one son and the worry about another? And in this interview Rav Doron gave a most incredible new Perush, a new commentary, to a passage in Ecclesiastes Kohelet chapter three, where King Solomon famously says, 'Lakkol zeman ve'et lechol-chefetz' — 'There is a time and a season for everything'. 'Et livkot ve'et lischok' — 'there is a time to weep and a time to rejoice'. Rav Doron said, sometimes the two times coincide with each other. At one and the same moment, you are weeping, and you are rejoicing. And that's what the Perez family experienced yesterday. But then Rav Doron went on to explain, how with his deep rooted emunah, his faith in Hashem, he and his family know that Am Yisrael will prevail, and this war will end with a great success. In parshat Noach, which we read this week, we have the very first Baruch Hashem on record. It was Noach who explained, Baruch Hashem 'Elokei shem', 'blessed is the Lord'. And you know, there is so much about which we can say Baruch Hashem right now. At a time of existential threat, Baruch Hashem, we have Medinat Yisrael. Baruch Hashem, we have a strong army. Baruch Hashem, we have notable global leaders and their governments supporting us. Baruch Hashem, we are blessed with the unity of the Jewish people at this time. But, at the same time, we are weeping, we are crying, we are concerned. Let us take a lead from the Perez family, who so inspirationally are telling us yes, we're grieving, we're crying, we're concerned. But, at the same time, let's also focus on the positive, because the Jewish people will prevail. Am Yisrael Chai. The Jewish people will continue to live on, and the reason for this is 'Od Avinu Chai' 'Our Father in heaven is looking after us and will protect us.'

Please Daven for Daniel Shimon Ben Sharon, together with all the others who are missing, all those who have been taken hostage, all those who have been injured. May peace come

speedily to the people of Israel. Oseh shalom bimromav, Hu
ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol Yisrael v'imru Amen.

