



יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהֶי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלָמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לַפְּצוּעֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה, וְלַנִּפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוֹר וְאִנְטִישְׁמִיּוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם - עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima
to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel,
may He facilitate the return of the hostage bodies; may He end this war
with success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever they are.**

YERU SHALAYIM

in/out times
for
Parshat

LECH L'CHA

י' מרחשון
ה'תשפ"ו

October 31
to
November 1
'25



 **4:15PM** PLAG **3:42PM** •  **5:27PM** R' Tam **6:02PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

PhiloTorah (277ll) - 1 - all@once file



This Tuesday evening, October 29th, at Maariv - which is Leil 7 Marcheshvan, we - in Israel - begin saying V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA in every weekday Amida. The words become an integral part of the BAREICH ALEINU b'racha, until and including Erev Pesach.

Check out the separate link on philotorah.co -

V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA

This is not an active link on this page - just on the website - so don't try to click here.

The practical details are on the linked file. Here, I would like to address another issue.

Even though the Torah commands us to daven daily (Rambam's opinion; Ramban says that T'fila is a mitzva d'rabbanan), the texts of our prayers are composed by Chazal.

This includes additions to the Amida for certain occasions and changes made in the text on certain occasions.

For example, Yaaleh v'Yavo is an addition to the Amida; HaMelech Ha-

Kadosh is a change.

And they made the rules for situations when a person messes up.

Sometimes, a mistake invalidates the Amida, requiring repeating it - and - sometimes it doesn't.

We sometimes (often) take these rules for granted (once we learn them), but they deserve a closer look.

Chazal could have said - about all additions and changes, that if you mess up, then repeat the Amida correctly. But they didn't say that.

The could have said - about all additions and changes, that if you mess up, just leave the Amida standing and be more careful next time. And they didn't say this either.

Each addition and change has its rule. And we have to follow them.

For example: A person is saying Birkat HaMazon after the Purim Seuda and he forgets AL HANISIM. He feels terrible. Once a year he has a Purim Seuda and he can't believe he forgot AL HANISIM. So he decides to repeat the Benching in honor of Purim and remember to say AL HANISIM this time around.

FOUL! Not correct. If you forget AL HANISIM on Purim or Chanuka in Benching or in Davening, you do NOT repeat. Doesn't have to make sense to us - you don't repeat the Amida.

For another example: Next week (when we in Israel are already asking for TAL UMATAR), you daven Mincha and say V'TEIN B'RACHA instead of T&M. As soon as you step back at the end of the Amida, you realize that you didn't ask for T&M. You figure that at least you asked HKBH to give a blessing. And you figure that Jews all over the world (except for Israel) and still saying V'TEIN B'RACHA. You further figure that repeating the full Amida of 19 brachot, rendering the first Amida that you said null and void in essence means that you said 19 B'RACHA L'VATALA, wasted brachot. So you figure that it is better to let your Amida stand (pun intended) and just remember T&M for the next davening. You would have figured wrong. Without T&M, your Amida is invalid and you have to repeat the Amida.

The point is that we don't make the rules. Chazal made the rules. We follow them. That's why you should see the file on PhiloTorah, so that you do the right thing.

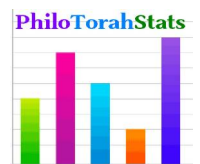
Of course, it is better to say it right first time around, but some of us are human and occasionally make mistakes. So we need to know how to handle them. There are reasons and take-aways from each rule. Whether we agree with them or would have suggested otherwise if we were on the committee of Anshei Knesset

HaGedola for make the rules, we might have swayed the vote. But the rules were made a long time ago. So we learn them and follow them. And try to understand them.

For T&M, the rules - see the link - make two important points. One - rain is very important to us, and two - prayer is important and real. It isn't a game. It requires our words and our hearts and our minds.

May we be blessed with GISHMEI V'RACHA this year and every year.

LECH L'CHA



3rd sedra of 54;
3rd of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 208 lines, ranks 23rd

7 Parshiyot; 3 open, 4 closed

126 p'sukim - ranks 13th
- same as R'ei; smaller than R'ei
in other categories

1686 words - ranks 18th

6336 letters - ranks 19th

Ranks 7 of 12 in B'reishit
- all categories

Shorter than average p'sukim, which
accounts for the drop in rank for
words and letters

MITZVOT

1 mitzva (positive), namely, BRIT MILA

FYI, a total of 5 sedras have only one mitzva

17 sedras have no mitzvot and six have 2 or 3 - that accounts for 28 sedras, over half of the Torah's 54 with between 0-3 mitzvot.

As we've pointed out many times, the 613 mitzvot are not at all distributed evenly throughout the Torah.

To continue with the numbers - one sedra has 5 mitzvot, three have 6. Two have 7. One has 8. Two have 9.

That's 37 sedras with single-digit number of mitzvot.

We're on a roll! One sedra has 11 mitzvot. two have 12. One has 16. Two have 17. Two have 18. And one each with 20, 24, 28, 41, 51, 53, 55, 63, 74. That's 17 sedras with more than 10 mitzvot each. Total, 54 sedras.

To sum it up - almost a third of the sedras have no mitzvot. a bit more than a third have 1-9 mitzvot each. And almost a third of the sedras have 11-74 mitzvot.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is **Perek:Pasuk** of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in **[square brackets]** are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND

Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. **A**=ASEI; **L**=LAV (prohibition). **X:Y** is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 12:1-13

[P> 12:1 (9)] G-d tells (note the softer VAYOMER rather than the harsher VAIDABER) Avra(ha)m to leave his land, birthplace and father's home and go to "the Land which I will show you".

SDT: LECH L'CHA - GO FOR YOU (or for yourself) - How do we understand L'CHA? Famous question.

Rashi says that it means "for your benefit", G-d was sending Avram to the future Eretz Yisrael so that he would father a great nation, so that he would be able to have children, so that he would be blessed.

Kli Yakar points out that L'CHA is only used in the context of Eretz Yisrael.

Abravanel says that L'CHA means you, without your father (who had begun the journey with you).

Ramban says that it is the style of the language (without a necessary further meaning.)

Otzar M'forshei HaP'shat

SDT: "Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father's house." Ramban explains that each "point of departure" was progressively more

difficult for Avraham. Leaving one's land is difficult, even more so if he was born there. Leaving one's family is most difficult. Ramban says that the Torah is showing us the great extent of Avraham's love of G-d.

Someone raises a question on this Ramban. What was so difficult in Avraham's leaving the place where he was ridiculed, persecuted and thrown into a fiery furnace for his beliefs? Would he not have left joyfully? The question actually carries the answer. The Ramban was pointing out a significant aspect of human nature. No matter how bad conditions are, how much a person wants a better life, there still will always remain a sadness and regret for the "good old days" and "the old country" - even when they weren't so good. This aspect of human nature explains a lot of Jewish History.

G-d promises that a great nation will descend from him (Avraham) and that he will be a blessing for all (his descendants and all the world).

SDT: Avra(ha)m is promised great rewards and benefits for listening to G-d. Yet pasuk 4 states that he went "as G-d had spoken to him". His ALIYA is considered a test of his faith. He passed this test because he came to the Land because G-d asked him to, not for any material promises.

The call to the Jew to come on Aliya continues. THE only real "right"

reason to come is because it is a mitzva and this is what G-d wants of us. MITZVAT HAMELECH and R'TZON HASHEM. All blessings that will follow are fringe benefits. And the difficulties one might encounter are parts of the test of our faith. Avraham Avinu led the way when there were no Aliya Shlichim and no Nefesh b'Nefesh to facilitate Aliya and K'lita. Actually, there was One Shaliach Aliya and One supporter, and He is still and always in that role.

Coming on Aliya via EL AL is easier than Avraham and Sara had it. But it is no less of a command by G-d to the descendants of that special first couple of the Jewish People.

Avra(ha)m was 75 years old at the time he came to Eretz Yisrael with Sara(i), nephew Lot, and many people who were brought over to monotheism by Avra(ha)m and Sara(i).

[P> 12:10 (29)] Driven from the Land by a famine, Avraham and Sara go down to Egypt. Their plan is to say that they are brother and sister, rather than risk Avraham's being killed because the Egyptians might take Sara and kill her husband. Being her brother is a different story..

SDT: Midrash P'li'a points to this episode as proof that one may violate Shabbat to save someone else's life. The idea that one may violate one Shabbat so that he will be able to keep many Shabbatot of the future -

from V'CHAI BAHAM - is part of the understanding of the Torah's permission (requirement) to violate Shabbat to save one's own life. This permission can be seen to be extended by Avraham's request to Sarah that she put herself at risk to save him. In other words, not only can one violate (most) mitzvot to save himself, one may also violate mitzvot to save someone else.

Levi - Second Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 12:14-13:4

In Egypt, Sarai's beauty is noticed by the people and she is taken to Par'o's palace. Avra(ha)m, as her "brother", receives many gifts. Par'o and his household are afflicted by G-d as a punishment for taking Sarai. When Par'o realizes that Sarai is actually the wife of Avra(ha)m, he confronts him, returns Sarai to him and then asks them to leave Egypt.

Avra(ha)m and company, laden with riches, return to Eretz Yisrael via the Negev. Avra(ha)m returns to the Altar he had built and continues to proclaim G-d's Name.

Avraham, on the run from his hometown, a stranger in a strange land, has his challenges and tests. Avraham loaded with wealth and prominence, has new challenges and tests. Poverty and famine are tests; so is wealth. And it is hard to know which is harder.

In the opening passage of Rosh Chodesh Benching, we ask G-d for many things -- long life, a life of peace, blessings, etc. There is one thing we ask for twice - YIR'AT SHAMAYIM, fear of G-d. Why? Because after asking for it the first time, we ask for a life of wealth and honor. If we are blessed with that, then we must humbly ask for YIR'AT SHAMAYIM again, because wealth sometimes blinds a person to his gratitude and obligations to HaShem. It is relatively "easy" for a poor person to believe in G-d and pray to Him. Wealthy people often have a difficult time with that. (There are other explanations, as well.)

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 13:5-18

Lot also has great wealth, too much to remain together with Avra(ha)m. Quarrels between their shepherds (caused by disparate ethical standards - we are taught) lead to a parting of the ways. Avra(ha)m gives Lot "first choice" of territory, and he (Lot) chooses the then fertile area of S'dom and the Jordan Valley. The Torah makes a point of telling us of the wickedness of S'dom society, an obvious criticism of Lot's distorted priorities.

This, too, is a recurring theme in Jewish life, containing warnings for us all - sadly, many Jews moved away

from Jewish neighborhoods to places with country clubs, golf courses, and other "important" things; often the shuls and schools were far away from their new home... they seem to have made the Lot choice.

Only after Avra(ha)m parts company from Lot, does G-d once again appear to him, encouraging him to look over the whole land to the north, south, east, and west, which will some day belong to his descendants. G-d also tells him that his descendants will be too numerous to count. (Hidden message: They will sometimes be lowly, like the dust of the ground, trodden underfoot by our enemies. Contrast this with the later comparison to the stars of the heavens, which has the opposite, positive, connotation.)

TRIVIA: Scientist say that there are more stars in the known universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches of Earth. Just thought you might have wondered about that. Do it suggest anything? Maybe, that when we are worthy of being compared to the stars, we will also have a further population growth.

Avra(ha)m settles in Hevron and builds an altar to G-d.

SDT: One commentary says that although Avraham knew that his spirituality was compromised by Lot's presence, he nonetheless did not chase Lot away until he had no choice. Avraham felt a moral obliga-

tion to take care of Lot (including saving him even after they parted) even though he knew that G-d was "keeping His distance", so to speak, with Lot around. There are some interesting ramifications for us, of this behavior of Avraham's. How do we view time spent doing chessed and kiruv, or Hachnasat Orchim, at the expense of Torah learning and personal growth. Think about it.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 20 p'sukim - 14:1-20

[P> 14:1(24)] This portion tells of the battle between the Four Kings and the Five Kings and of the capture of S'dom, including Lot. When Avra(ha)m hears (from Og, "refugee" from the Flood) of Lot's capture he sets out to rescue him, taking with him a force of 318. Or...

Rashi refers to the Gemara which suggests that Avraham took only his servant Eliezer with him to rescue Lot. The numeric value of the name Eliezer = 318. As G'matriyas go, this is one of many. What makes it very unusual, is that Rashi says it and bases it on a number in the text of the Torah.

Avra(ha)m launches a successful surprise attack and frees the people of S'dom. Victory is celebrated with a religious ceremony of thanking and blessing G-d in the presence of Malki-Tzedek (a.k.a. Sheim son of

No'ach). A tithe of the spoils of war is given to this servant of G-d.

- Rashi tells us that AMRAFEL, king of Shin-ar is none other than NIMROD who was the one who tossed Avraham into the fiery furnace for challenging paganism in public and espousing belief in One G-d. Ironical, is it not, that Avraham has this opportunity to do successful battle against Nimrod.

- Malki-tzedek is king of Shalem. Onkeles identifies Shalem as Yerushalayim. SHALEM is the part of the city's name contributed by Sheim. Avraham gave it the first half after the Akeida – YERU.

More TRIVIA: The English version of SHALEIM is SALEM. There are 30 (out of 50) US states with a Salem - some states have more than one). Salem, Massachusetts, is the biggest and most well-known.

There are 39 places in the world called Jerusalem (in 21 different countries). There are 5 Jerusalems in Mexico...

Chamishi 5th Aliya - 10 p'sukim - 14:21-15:6

The king of S'dom offers Avra(ha)m great wealth. Avra(ha)m refuses to take as much as a "thread or shoelace".

SDT: It is said that in the merit of the refusal to take even a shoe-strap or

thread, we have the mitzvot of Tallit and T'filin - both of which we wear at Avraham's t'fila - SHACHARIT.

Avra(ha)m did accept payment on behalf of his allies who helped him.

[S> 15:1 (21)] Afterwards, G-d appears to Avra(ha)m in a vision and again promises him great rewards for his faithfulness. Avra(ha)m, still childless, expresses his disappointment, but resignation, that Eliezer will be his heir. G-d assures Avra(ha)m that he will indeed have his own child to follow in his footsteps.

G-d then takes Avra(ha)m outdoors and promises him that his descendants will be as countless (and exalted) as the stars in the heavens.

The GR"A cites the Talmud's mention that Avraham Avinu was the first person to address G-d as ADON (Master). We acknowledge this by beginning Shacharit - Avraham's davening - with the poem Adon Olam.

Being compared to dust and sand and to the stars is not just a matter of numerousness, but also to the quality of life. We can be like the dust of the ground - stepped on, trodden upon... Or we can be as lofty, wondrous, grand as the stars of the heavens. The terms reflect the ups & downs of Jewish History.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 37 p'sukim - 15:7-17:6

This portion begins with "the Covenant between the Pieces". Part of this experience is actual, part is prophetic vision. G-d tells Avra(ha)m that his descendants will be oppressed in a foreign land and will subsequently leave there with great wealth. The promise of the Land to Avra(ha)m is reiterated once more.

Both Rashi and Onkeles understand the terms M'SHULASH and M'SHULESHET to mean that Avraham took three each - calves, goats, and sheep for the BRIT BEIN HA-B'TARIM. Tos'fot and others define the term as "prime, of the best quality". They hold that there was only one each of the animals. Others say the animals were to be third-born or three years old or part of triplets.

The Living Torah by R' Aryeh Kaplan z"l

[S> 16:1 (16)] Sarai, being barren, gives her hand-maiden Hagar to Avra(ha)m (after 10 years in K'na'an) to bear him a child. When Hagar becomes pregnant, she taunts her mistress. Hagar then flees from Sarai's retaliation. An angel finds her, promises that her child, too, will sire a countless multitude, that her son to be born shall be called Yishmael, and that she is now to return to Sarai.

Yishmael is born when Avra(ha)m is 86 years of age.

[S> 17:1 (14)] When Avra(ha)m is 99...

G-d appears to him and asks him to "be complete". G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham, symbolizing his role as father and spiritual guide to great nations. Once again Avraham is promised "countless" progeny.

SDT: Notice the jump from 86 years old to 99 years old. What happened during the 'missing' 13 years? The answer is, nothing that we need to know about; no lessons for us to learn. The Torah is not a complete journal or history book. The Torah tells us what G-d wants to tell us because of the mitzvot and moral lessons we can (and should) learn.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 21 p'sukim - 17:7-27

G-d promises that a special relationship will always exist between Himself and Avraham's descendants, and repeats the promise of the Land. G-d reveals the form that the "Covenant" is to take - the circumcision of all males [2, A215 17:10].

MITZVAnotes

This mitzva is the first "non-natural" commandment. Until this point, the 7 categories of Noahide mitzvot are all

logical, rational, reasonable, common-sense laws. This 8th mitzva, for the 8th day, represents the challenge to the Jew to rise above nature and complete his spiritual form just as he is being commanded to complete his physical form.

The mitzva is ideally performed on the 8th day, counting the day on which the baby was born - even if he was born right before sunset. Mila may not take place at night. Only an 8th day Mila (as opposed to a Brit that was postponed because of health reasons, for example) can be done on Shabbat. A baby delivered by C-section on Shabbat, will have his Brit on the following day, Sunday (the baby's 9th day). In other words - due to a technicality based on the analysis of the text in Tazri'a, only an 8th day Brit of a natural birth can take place on Shabbat.

The mitzva of Mila is "repeated" in Parshat Tazri'a. Its specific wording there, teaches us some details.

With the two texts dealing with BRIT, it is noteworthy that most mitzva-counters count MILA from LECH L'CHA rather than TAZRI'A. Lech L'cha's context is the story of Avraham Avinu. In Tazri'a we have a straightforward command - Speak to the people of Israel... on the 8th day, you SHALL circumcise...

Most significant in the matter of Brit Mila is this: The physical removal of

the foreskin is only part of the mitzva of Mila. This can be seen by looking at the brachot that are said for the Brit. The first bracha is AL HAMILA. This bracha is immediately followed by a second Birkat HaMitzva (very unusual to say two mitzva-brachot for the performance of one mitzva), "to enter him into the covenant of Avraham". This is not just a HINENI MUCHAN UMZUMAN type of introduction to a mitzva, not a peripheral concept, but an integral part of the mitzva. The challenge of raising the child to be a good Jew and a good person is an obligation of the parents which is part of MILA (we can say) and THE part of the mitzva that takes much more time and energy than "the cut". The context of Lech L'cha says it all. Its choice as the "official source" of Mila helps us understand this important mitzva.

Note too that when a Mohel does the Mila at the behest of the father, the Mohel says the Mila bracha, but the father nonetheless retains the second bracha (and Shehecheyanu). Parents can use an agent to perform the MILA part of BRIT MILA, but the BRIT part remains theirs.

• Note that the gimatriya of the word B'RIT is 612. Add the one mitzva of MILA for a total of 613. We can say that the mitzva of circumcision combines the single mitzva of MILA with a commitment to educate and

bring the child up to know, love, and observe all the other 612 mitzvot, for a grand total that represents the complete Torah. This echoes the idea that G-d asked Avraham to become complete before Him, and that Mila is the sign of that completeness.

[S> 17:15 (13)] G-d then changes Sarai's name to Sarah. Name changes represent changes in character, role, and destiny. G-d promises that Sarah will bear the true heir of Avraham. Avraham laughs with joy upon hearing that he will be a father at 100, and Sarah a mother at 90. He thought that Yishmael was the son that G-d had repeatedly promised him, but G-d assures him that it will be Yitzchak who will fill that role.

Yishmael will also be blessed and give rise to great nations, but the Covenant will be passed down through Yitzchak. Avraham circumcises himself (at age 99), Yishmael (at age 13), and other male members of his household, in fulfillment of G-d's command.

Haftara - 21 p'sukim - Yishayahu 40:27-41:16

This passage is the national counterpart of some of the personal experiences of Avraham. Just as G-d made promises to Avraham Avinu, so He makes promises to the Children of Israel. Just as Avraham tenaciously clings to faith in G-d, so too do his descendants. Endurance, confidence,

victory, self-perfection - these qualities are shared by THE ancestor and his descendants, us.

We can see in the sedra-haftara pair, MAASEI AVOT SIMAN LABANIM, the deeds of the ancestors set the patterns for the their descendants.

From A Candle by Day by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein z"l

We must learn how to become involved in things without becoming entangled in them.

The fact that there are two sides to every story does not mean that they are both correct.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Koresh the... Mashiach?

**LECH L'CHA - 21 p'sukim
- Yishayahu 40:27-41:16**

This week's selection from the 40th and 41st p'rakim of Sefer Yishayahu, opens with the navi's words to Israel, questioning their lack of faith in Hashem's constant guidance and guardianship over His nation. Reminding his generation of G-d's unequalled abilities to "right the wrongs" for Israel, he closes the 41st

perek by encouraging the people that those who retain faith in Hashem will renew their strength, "yachalifu ko'ach", never to fall or flag.

The beginning of the 41st perek, however, is an interesting - and even surprising - prophetic message directed to the foreign nations and not to Israel, explaining to them that, they too, like Israel, "yachalifu ko'ach", would renew their strength, IF, they too, would recognize the boundless power and limitless achievements G-d had wrought. In detailing some of the achievements of the Divine, Yishayahu begins reminding them "mi he'ir baMizrach", "Who stirred up one from the East?" - a statement that has been explained as referring to Avraham Avinu (hence, the connection to our parasha). There is, however, a different approach, that we might consider to be a more logical message for the non-Israel nations.

Rav Moshe David Cassuto contends that he who was "stirred up from the East", actually refers to Koresh, Cyrus the Great, who overthrew the Babylonian Empire and called for the exiled Jews to return to Yerushalayim and rebuild the Beit HaMikdash. Nor should we be surprised to hear Yishayahu refer to the pagan King as a model for G-d's power and accomplishment. After all, the navi opens his 45th perek by quoting

Hashem, saying: KO AMAR HASHEM - "this is what G-d said". But to whom was He addressing His words? LIMSHICHO, to his MASHI'ACH, i.e. His appointed agent. And the very next word reveals who this MASHI'ACH is: L'KORESH - YES! Hashem's appointed agent to whom He spoke was Koresh - Cyrus the Great! G-d refers to him as mashi'ach!

This surprising choice of mashi'ach is, actually, quite understanding. We must remember that the navi Yishayahu was addressing the foreign powers at this moment, and these nations would not relate to, or even recognize, the remarkable miracles G-d had performed for B'nei Yisrael. For this reason, the prophet uses Cyrus, a well-known conqueror and powerful emperor, to stand as an example of a Divinely-gifted regent.

The aim of this prophetic message - and its importance - was to educate the pagan worshipers (and to remind the Israelite population) that HAKADOSH BARUCH HU was not a "national deity", meant to defend or protect a specific nation or land. The message that Yishayahu was sharing with all nations was HASHEM ELOKEINU - HASHEM ECHAD - that there is but ONE and ONLY true power in the universe and that K'VODO MALEI OLAM - His presence and glory is EVERYWHERE!

This is what the first seven p'sukim of

Parashat Lech-L'cha tells of the first individual who understood the One and Only. Our haftara hopes to bring that understanding to all of Israel. 🌟



NO'ACH

There is a KEY above a picture of Tim Conway, giving us KITIM from the sedra.

[illegible]

PhiloTorah (277ll) - 13 - all@once file

before the king of S'dom, that he would not even take a thread or a shoelace (considered a remez to the threads of Tzitzit and the straps of T'filin) <> Telescope and stars for G-d's taking Avraham outside to see the stars and to promise that his descendants will be as countless as the stars <> Father with his baby son is for Brit Mila <> Tent that Avraham pitched a few times in the sedra (2 of the 4 doors are visible) <> Brit Bein HaB'tarim, with each split animal <> The bird above the "split" animals was not cut <> And a flaming torch went between the pieces <> Liver, as in KAVEID (in Hebrew), a word meaning "heavy" and applied in Lech L'cha to the famine as well as to Avraham's wealth when he left Egypt <> glue, hammer, nails are from the haftara <> Hagar the Horrible, for HAGAR who behaved horribly towards Sara when she (Hagar) became pregnant <> Alarm clock with the time 3:18, for Avraham's rising early in the morning, and for the number of people Avraham took with him to fight to save Lot. Or just Eliezer, gimatriya 318 <> Seder plate reminds us of the prophecy of going down to Egypt and eventually coming up from there <> ESHKOL (cluster of grapes), A NEIR (a candle), and a MEM-RAY are for Avraham's three allies <> Winston Churchill who was a famous BRIT, goes with the picture below it of the musical notes. Those

notes are E and the A above it, also known as MI and LA. Putting it all together to get BRIT MILA <> four doors with an arrow pointing to the 4th door is for DOR R'VI'I, the fourth generation that is mentioned in the Covenant between the Pieces, the generation that will return to the Land, following the exile in Egypt <> they can also represent the four doors to Avraham's tent <> The chessboard is obvious - battle between the four kings and the five <> And there are also four human kings vs 5 animal kings - see if someone at your Shabbat table can name the kings - don't tell them straight out. I'll tell you - King Charles, Alan King, Billy Jean King, Sky King, Stephen King vs the Lion King, King Julien (from the movie Madagascar), King Louie from the Jungle Book, and Babar, king of the elephants <> Mickey, Snoopy, and Woodstock walking in the rain, for V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA <> There is a tree - It is a LOTE - can refer to several species, most commonly Celtis australis (European Nettle Tree) and Ziziphus spina-christi (Sidr tree) <> the five words in the lower-right are one, two, three, four, five in the LOTE language - an Austronesian language spoken in Papua New Guinea <> 2048-2448 are the 400 years that Avram was told that his descendants would be strangers in a strange land and enslaved. Yitzchak Avinu was

born in 2048 and the Exodus took place in 2448 <> pairs of letters in the lower-right, Re is the chemical symbol for the element Rhenium, atomic number 75. Rn is the symbol for Radon, atomic number 86. Es is for Einsteinium, element 99. These numbers are the age of Avraham when he came to Canaan, when Yishmael was born, and when he circumcised himself. All those ages are mentioned in the Torah. <> 50-50 is the numeric presentation of LECH L'CHA <> +5, -5 is for the name-changes: Avram got 5, the HEI, to become Avraham. Sarai became Sara and the YUD (10) went down by 5, to become a HEI <> and two word Unexplaineds

לע"נ

הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Our Children Walk on Ahead

LECH L'CHA

The call to Avraham, with which Lech L'cha begins, seems to come from nowhere:

"Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father's house, and go to a land which I will show you."

Nothing has prepared us for this

radical departure. We have not had a description of Avraham as we had in the case of No'ach ("No'ach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; No'ach walked with God"). Nor have we been given a series of glimpses into his childhood, as in the case of Moshe. It is as if Avraham's call is a sudden break with all that went before. There seems to be no prelude, no context, no background.

Added to this is a curious verse in the last speech delivered by Moshe's successor Yehoshua:

And Yehoshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the river (Euphrates), Terach, the father of Avraham and of Nachor; and they served other gods (Yehoshua 24:2).

The implication seems to be that Avraham's father was an idolater. Hence the famous midrashic tradition (B'reishit Rabba 38:8) that as a child, Avraham broke his father's idols. When Terach asked him who had done the damage, he replied, "The largest of the idols took a stick and broke the rest."

"Why are you deceiving me?" Terach asked, "Do idols have understanding?"

"Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying", replied the child.

On this reading, Avraham was an iconoclast, a breaker of images, one who rebelled against his father's faith.

Rambam the philosopher, put it somewhat differently. Originally, human beings believed in one God. Later, they began to offer sacrifices to the sun, the planets and stars, and other forces of nature, as creations or servants of the one God. Later still, they worshipped them as entities - gods - in their own right. It took Avraham, using logic alone, to realise the incoherence of polytheism:

After he was weaned, while still an infant, his mind began to reflect. Day and night, he thought and wondered, how is it possible that this celestial sphere should be continuously guiding the world, without something to guide it and cause it to revolve? For it cannot move of its own accord. He had no teacher or mentor, because he was immersed in Ur of the Chaldees among foolish idolaters. His father and mother and the entire population worshipped idols, and he worshipped with them. He continued to speculate and reflect until he achieved the way of truth, understanding what was right through his own efforts. It was then that he knew that there is one God who guides the heavenly bodies, who created everything, and besides whom there is no other god. (Hilchot Avoda Zara 1:2)

What is common to Rambam and the Midrash is discontinuity. Avraham represents a radical break with all that went before.

Remarkably however, the previous chapter gives us a quite different perspective:

These are the generations of Terach. Terach fathered Avram, Nachor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot ... Terach took Avram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Avram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Charan, they settled there. The days of Terach were 205 years, and Terach died in Charan. (B'reishit 11:29-32)

The implication seems to be that far from breaking with his father, Avraham was continuing a journey Terach had already begun.

How are we to reconcile these two passages? The simplest way, taken by most commentators, is that they are not in chronological sequence. The call to Avraham (in B'reishit 12) happened first. Abraham heard the Divine summons, and communicated it to his father. The family set out together, but Terach stopped half-way, in Charan. The passage recording Terach's death is placed before Avraham's call, though it

happened later, to guard Avraham from the accusation that he failed to honour his father by leaving him in his old age (Rashi, Midrash).

Yet there is another obvious possibility. Avraham's spiritual insight did not come from nowhere. Terach had already made the first tentative move toward monotheism. Children complete what their parents begin.

Significantly, both the Bible and rabbinic tradition understood divine parenthood in this way. They contrasted the description of No'ach ("No'ach walked with God") and that of Avraham ("The God before whom I have walked" - 24:40). God Himself says to Avraham "Walk ahead of Me and be perfect" (17:1). God signals the way, then challenges His children to walk on ahead.

In one of the most famous of all Talmudic passages, the Babylonian Talmud (Bava Metzia 59b) describes how the Sages outvoted Rabbi Eliezer despite the fact that his view was supported by a Heavenly Voice. It continues by describing an encounter between Rabbi Natan and the Prophet Eliyahu. Rabbi Natan asks the Prophet: What was God's reaction to that moment, when the law was decided by majority vote rather than following that Heavenly Voice? Elijah replies, "He smiled and said, 'My children have defeated Me! My children have defeated Me!'"

To be a parent in Judaism is to make space within which a child can grow. Astonishingly, this applies even when the parent is God (Avinu, "our Father") Himself. In the words of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik:

"The Creator of the world diminished the image and stature of creation in order to leave something for man, the work of His hands, to do, in order to adorn man with the crown of creator and maker." (Halachic Man, p. 107)

This idea finds expression in halacha. Despite the emphasis in the Torah on honouring and revering parents, Rambam rules:

Although children are commanded to go to great lengths [in honouring parents], a father is forbidden to impose too heavy a yoke on them, or to be too exacting with them in matters relating to his honour, lest he cause them to stumble. He should forgive them and close his eyes, for a father has the right to forgo the honour due to him. (Hilchot Mamrim 6:8)

The story of Avraham can be read in two ways, depending on how we reconcile the end of chapter 11 with the beginning of chapter 12. One reading emphasises discontinuity: Avraham broke with all that went before. The other, continuity: Terach, his father, had already begun to wrestle with idolatry. He had set out

on the long walk to the land which would eventually become holy, but stopped halfway. Avraham completed the journey his father began.

Perhaps childhood itself has the same ambiguity. There are times, especially in adolescence, when we tell ourselves that we are breaking with our parents, charting a path that is completely new. Only in retrospect, many years later, do we realise how much we owe our parents - how, even at those moments when we felt most strongly that we were setting out on a journey uniquely our own, we were, in fact, living out the ideals and aspirations that we learned from them.

And it began with God Himself, who left - and continues to leave - space for us, His children, to walk on ahead.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) What does it take to leave something familiar behind for something unknown?
- (2) What is the difference between courage and rebellion?
- (3) They didn't always agree with each other, but what lessons do you think Avraham learned from his father Terach?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Parsha

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

Three Engines of Destiny

HAFTARA of LECH L'CHA

The connection between this week's haftara and the parsha is not immediately obvious. The haftara, from the Book of Yishayahu and focused on a prophecy of love and encouragement, does contain one passing mention of the patriarch Avraham - the parsha's protagonist. Yet the more striking parallel to the parsha's account of the founding of the Jewish people appears not in that verse, but in the cryptic passage that immediately precedes it, at the beginning of chapter 41 (vv. 1-4):

Hush before Me, coastlands and nations; renew your strength, and then come forward, speak, draw close; let us come into judgment. Who roused the one from the east and called victory to his feet? Who herded nations before him, laid their kings low, and made his swords numerous as dust, his bowshots like chaff in the wind? He pursued them and came through in peace on paths that his feet never walked. Who was it who acted and did this, who called forth generations long before? I, the Lord, am the first, and I shall be, I, with the last who will be.

The reference to this mysterious savior “from the east” has fired the imaginations of commentators throughout the ages. Who this figure might be has been intensely debated, and these different suggestions together reveal a valuable lesson: Multiple forces in history can converge to create the necessary conditions for redemption. It is a process that continues to play out before our eyes today, even during the difficult years since the attacks of October 7 and the multi-front threats faced by Israel and the Jewish people, not only from neighboring countries, but from antisemitism globally.

The prophet Yishayahu describes an unnamed individual called from the east by God to achieve victory over numerous nations and bring an era of peace and prosperity to Israel. But is this an event that has already happened? Or one that is yet to come? The original Hebrew text leaves this question open. Commentators have offered three possible figures for this mighty easterner, each representing a different paradigm of redemption.

According to Rashi (ad loc., following B'reishit Rabba 43:3), the prophet is referring to Avraham Avinu. Rashi explains that the Jewish people's oldest patriarch was called out of the east by God to journey to the land of

Canaan in the paramount act of faith. Avraham marked military victories over ancient Levantine kings (see B'reishit 14), but more importantly, he became a spiritual champion for everyone around him, serving as a model of justice and righteousness that inspired an entire civilization and reintroduced God into the world. As the first Jew, Avraham exemplified an authentic version of chosen-ness, highlighting the responsibilities, rather than the privileges, of being selected by God.

Ibn Ezra, in contrast, suggests that the savior celebrated in our haftara is in actuality King Cyrus of Persia. This great non-Jewish emperor is celebrated in the Scriptures as a deliverer who conquered and punished the Babylonian tyrants responsible for the first destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the Temple. The text portrays Cyrus, whose empire extended over much of the Near East, as graciously inviting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their shattered homeland. In performing these acts of kindness – knowingly or not – Cyrus was advancing God's plan for the Jewish people's sacred destiny.

A third possibility, found in the Midrash (Shir HaShirim Zuta 2:9), envisions the mysterious figure as the Mashi'ach. Emerging from the east like the rising sun, the Messianic King will usher in a new dawn for the

Jewish people and the world. According to this interpretation, Justice will prevail, and the Jewish people will finally know true peace, spreading the light of God and the Torah to the farthest reaches of the world.

History shows the necessity and utility of all three of these prototypes in furthering the process of redemption. The Jewish people, embodying Avraham's model of moral and spiritual leadership, must choose every day to uphold justice and responsibility. Leaders of other nations around the world, symbolized by Cyrus, can similarly facilitate or hamper God's vision for the world by supporting or opposing the people of Israel in their sacred work. Lastly, the divine hand of God in history, personified by the Mashi'ach, guides the world, sometimes mysteriously and convolutedly, toward its ultimate purpose.

In our times, we have seen all three paradigms converging marvelously and miraculously in the great and terrible multi-front war that still continues today, even though some relief has been achieved by the recent return of the remaining living hostages from Gaza. We have seen the Jewish people choose, time and again, the path of justice and morality in war, standing as a beacon of what humanity can be and become even in the most difficult of circumstances.

These choices are only the latest in a longstanding tradition of moral, intellectual, and scientific leadership that the Jewish people have shown in the world at large, always in the interest of furthering peace and prosperity.

At the same time, certain world leaders have stepped forward, standing up in the face of overwhelming global hate and antisemitism in support of the State of Israel. To be such a leader in today's world is still to move against the tide, but that makes such individuals' decisions all the more impressive and noteworthy. They are modern Cyruses, choosing to be instruments of God in the world and history, and they will be viewed as such by future generations.

And finally, we have seen the hand of God revealed in the innumerable miracles, occurrences, happenstances, and coincidences that have saved so many lives over the past two years and which have made the Jewish future seem more assured now than at any other time in recent history.

More than three thousand years have passed since Avraham first embarked on the Jewish mission. And, at every moment since that time, the forces of history – natural and human, seen and unseen – have never ceased to advance that mission toward the state of redemption that we all await.

Let us pray that the process of salvation that we have begun to witness comes swiftly to its conclusion, and that we will all merit to witness the fulfillment of God's words of comfort that we hear in the Haftara this week:

"I strengthen you and help you, uphold you with My right hand of righteousness" (Yishayahu 41:10). 🌟



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Gerund (Noun) and Infinitive (Verb)

The wording of the title is a personal tribute to Mrs. Ruth Silver, my 8th grade English teacher at Crown Heights Yeshiva.

Allow me to explain.

First of all, this PTDT is a follow up to the MITZVANotes in the Sedra Summary that deals with the Mitzva of Brit Mila. It is highly recommended to read that first and then come back to this PTDT.

One of the points discussed there was the two aspects of BRIT MILA. It was pointed out that there are two Mitzva B'rachot said at a brit, one by the Mohel - AL HAMILA - and the second one, by the father of the baby

- L'HACHNISO BIVRITA SHEL AVRAHAM AVINU.

Notice that these b'rachot differ in style. I refer to the way the mitzva is described. AL HAMILA, on the circumcising. Contrast to L'HACHNISO... to enter him (the child) into the covenant of Avraham Avinu.

AL HAMILA, rather than LIMOL.

L'HACHNISO, rather than AL HACHNASATO.

Look at some other mitzva-brachot.

AL ACHILAT MATZA, rather than LE'ECHOL MATZA.

AL MIKRA MEGILA, rather than LIKRO ET HAMEGILA.

On the other side, we say L'HADLIK NER... not AL HADLAKAT NER...

LIKBO'A MEZUZA, not AL K'VI'AT MEZUZA.

And so on.

The brachot whose ending begins with AL, continue with a noun or a gerund (which is a verb turned into a noun by adding -ing).

The brachot whose ending begins with L', continue with a verb.

Know that these are not arbitrary and they are not exchangeable.

The bracha is AL NETILAT YADAYIM - not LITOL YADAYIM.

The bracha is LEISHEIV BASUKA - not AL YESHIVA BASUKA.

There are a number of suggested explanations for the difference. But the one that fits best (with an occasional not-so-perfect fit for some brachot), is the following.

When we are at the Seder Table and get up to Motzi-Matza, we take a proper piece of matza, recite HaMotzi and then AL ACHILAT MATZA, we then bite, chew, swallow, bite chew, swallow... until the mitzva is completed. We said a bracha and did the mitzva and that's it. (Any further matza is optional, not required.)

Same thing for Megilat Esther - bracha, read & listen, then 35-55 minutes later, plus or minus, the mitzva is completed. AL MIKRA MEGILA. (Night and Daytime readings each get their own brachot.)

As opposed to lighting Chanuka candles. Bracha, light them... and the mitzva is not yet complete. The candles have to continue burning at least for a half hour after stars-out.

You make a bracha, affix the Mezuzah to the doorpost. You haven't finished the mitzva. The Mezuzah has to stay put as long as you live in the house. LIKBO'A, not AL K'VI'AT.

The mohel's part of the mitzva, as agent for the father, is performed in a very short period of time and it is

done. AL HAMILA.

The parents are encharged to raise the child to be a good Jew and a good person. How long does that take? Let's just say, a long time. At the Brit, the mitzva is begun, but it continues on and on. L'HACHNISO... not AL.

One KAZAYIT or two of matza, and the mitzva is done - AL. In the Sukka, there is a different story. The mitzva continues and continues throughout the seven days of the Chag. L' (or in this case, LEI (same thing)). As I mentioned earlier, we will have questions about some mitzva-brachot that will seem to not fit. But that can be explained.

Why go through all of this? To add a dimension of our KAVANA when we say birchot hamitzva.

And, of course, the same should be a goal for all other kinds of brachot. We should say them with proper concentration and intent. Not just by rote.

PTDT



A polyhedron is a three-dimensional solid with flat polygonal faces, straight edges, and sharp corners or vertices.

A cube is a 6-faced polyhedron. Which makes it a hexahedron.

So is a pyramid. And a prism.

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



LECH L'CHA

Process or Purpose

When God tells Avram, pre-Avraham, LECH L'CHA ('Go for yourself', 'Get thee out', 'Get yourself going'), what is God asking or demanding? Is this a request which serves as an end in itself (a purpose) or is it the beginning of a journey which will unfold over time (a process)? Would you believe that our Sages have debated this issue over many generations? That would be akin to believing that the sun rises in the East or the Pope is Catholic (and from Chicago, Wow!)

Indeed, there have been many debates on this topic. Most of the Rabbis who claim 'purpose' follow the opinion of the Ramban who posits that Avraham and his father had already aimed to settle in the Land of Canaan; he was now commanded to finish that journey. In this view, the purpose is called Zionism.

However, many rabbis disagree. They believe that Avraham was instructed to go to enhance his role as founder and father of the Chosen People. The simplest and most famous interpretation comes from Rashi: Go for your own benefit, for your own good! Somehow this trip will enhance and

enrich Avraham. There are tough experiences which make us better and stronger. This journey would do that for Avraham.

A well-known Midrash illustrates Avraham's growth through this travel: A traveler observes a palace with a fire burning within, and wonders: 'Is it possible that this building has no one in charge of it?' The owner of the building looked out at him and said: 'I am the owner of the building.' Similarly, Avraham our Patriarch inquired: 'Is it possible that this world is without someone in charge?' The Holy One, blessed be He, looked at him and said, 'I am the owner of the world.' 'Then the King will desire your beauty, for He is your master' (T'hilim 45:12) - showcasing your beauty in the world. (B'reishit Rabba 39:1)

The S'fat Emet commented on this Midrash many times. In one interpretation, he wrote: Similarly to the palace with the fire, Avraham observed Creation and yet it seemed incomplete, so he asks if there was no one in charge. God responded with LECH L'CHA, Avraham must continue his journey to detach from worldliness to repair this world. This self-sacrifice for God surpasses wisdom... The verse signifies the awakening from God that people experience. Then, one must connect to the Divine and detach from everything else.

Only then can one expand this point, acknowledging that everything in their life comes from God... This concept also resonates in every Shabbat, which resembles a mini LECH L'CHA. When one refrains from work by accepting Shabbat there is a nullification of the material, which repairs the days of the week. Dedication to Shabbat, empowers the repair of the week.

Great! We all experience and create our own LECH L'CHA moments! We do it whenever we allow a Mitzva experience (in the Rebbe's example Shabbat) to remove us from worldly demands. It can be learning or davening. Whenever we allow ourselves to be drawn away from earthly concerns and become immersed in God's demands, we align with our Alte Zeidie's path.

Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk sees the triple command (leave homeland, birthplace, and family hearth) as preparation for serving God on three spiritual levels:

1. One needs to break the hold of natural desires...
2. A person must constantly seek and search, in order to observe the greatness of God in everything...
3. One needs to detach from personal choices so as to use their traits only for holiness; only then can they truly understand and observe God's greatness.

So far it seems that everyone views this journey as either for the 'purpose' of Zionism or the 'process' of spiritual growth. Rav Shimshon Rephael Hirsch provides a different perspective. He explains the verse as not telling us to go to any specific place. He translates the LECH L'CHA phrase as: Avram isolate yourself. If the purpose were merely to leave, the correct verb would be TZEI. He goes on: The word LECH implies separating from one's present location. This can be a means to get somewhere else or it can be a purpose in itself, simply to escape where one is. The addition of the pronoun (L'CHA), emphasized this idea: Go for yourself, Go to yourself, Isolate yourself... This demand makes leaving, its own purpose.

Now for those who think that this idea was specifically to go to Eretz Yisrael, like the Ramban, Rav Chaim Navon adds a linguistic touch to what Rav Hirsch said: Eretz Yisrael is not presented here as Israel's homeland. On the contrary, Eretz Yisrael is portrayed here as the land on behalf of which one leaves one's house and homeland. Eretz Yisrael is presented as the antithesis of a homeland, as Avraham's place of "exile", as a place whose name is not even mentioned. Eretz Yisrael is not the natural homeland of the Jewish people, but rather the land that God gave them so that they may serve Him there.

The Torah emphasizes the fact that Eretz Yisrael is not our natural homeland.

This idea aligns well with Rav Soloveitchik's unusual explanation of the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael: K'dusha, under a halachic aspect, is man-made; it is a historical category. A soil is sanctified by deeds performed by a sacred people, never by any primordial superiority. The halachic term KEDUSHAT HA-ARETZ, the sanctity of the land, denotes the consequence of a human act, either conquest (heroic deeds) or the mere presence of the people in that land (intimacy of man and nature).

According to the Rav, starting with Avraham, WE made Eretz Yisrael into the Holy Land. In this view, we get a brand new perspective. The journey was neither a 'process' nor a 'purpose'. It was to create a 'partnership' in the eternal enterprise of the Jewish people: Create and spread K'DUSHA! 

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison
www.ravkooktorah.com

Great Like the Stars

Stars and Sand

When Avraham complained to God

that he was childless, God promised that his children would be as numerous as the stars in the sky:

“God took him outside and said, 'Look at the sky, and count the stars if you can! So will be your descendants.'” (B'reishit 15:5)

On another occasion, God promised Avraham that his children would be like “the sand on the seashore” (22:17). Why are the Jewish people compared to both stars and grains of sand?

Greatness at Mount Sinai

The Sages took note that God's promise uses the uncommon word KO (KAF-HEI) – “So [KO] will be your descendants.” They explained that this word alludes to the Jewish people's future greatness at Mount Sinai, where the word KO also appears: “So [KO] shall you say to the House of Yaakov” (Sh'mot 19:3). What does the state of the Jewish people at Mount Sinai have to do with being likened to stars?

In general, we need to understand the metaphor of the star. The psalmist wrote that God gave each star a name (T'hilim 147:4). Why do stars need names?

Personal and Collective Missions

What is in a name? A name reflects an entity's inner essence. It defines the nature of its existence and indicates

its fundamental purpose. Stars are wonderful, powerful creations. Each star has a unique function for which it was created, and each star has a unique name corresponding to its special purpose.

The comparison of Avraham's descendants to stars indicates the importance and greatness of every individual member of the Jewish people. Every soul is a universe unto itself, as the Sages wrote: "One who saves a single soul of Israel, it is as if he has saved an entire world" (Sanhedrin 37a).

But the Jewish people also have a collective mission, as indicated by their comparison to sand. A single grain of sand is of no particular consequence; but together, these grains of sand form a border against the ocean, establishing dry land and enabling life to exist. Israel's collective purpose is to bring about the world's spiritual advance, as it says, "This people I have created for Me [so that] they will proclaim My praise" (Yishayahu 43:21).

It is logical for God to first establish the collective mission of the Jewish people, and only afterwards adjoin their individual goals. Thus, upon leaving Egypt, Israel was formed into a people with a unique collective purpose. This collective mission is an integral part of their very essence, regardless of any individual merits.

The collective aspect of the Jewish people was valid even though the Israelites lacked personal merits and good deeds when they left Egypt, as it says, "I have made you [Israel] numerous like the plants of the field, and you have increased and grown... yet you were naked and bare" (Yechezkeil 16:7).

Like the Stars

The prominence of the stars, on the other hand, is indicative of the special mission of each individual. This metaphor refers to the potential for greatness that each member of the Jewish people acquired at Mount Sinai.

These special goals are a function of each individual's efforts, deeds, and Torah study. This level is based on the revelation of Torah and mitzvot at Mount Sinai. The Midrash teaches that when Israel promised to obey the laws of the Torah, the angels tied two crowns to the head of every Jew. These spiritual crowns reflected the greatness of each individual; every Jew was a prince, bearing his own unique crown of holiness.

*Sapphire from the Land of Israel.
Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 110-121*

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Avraham and the Stars

LECH L'CHA

The Robbery and the Foolish Messenger

Isaac was a wealthy man living in a small village. His fortune wasn't just in gold but in priceless family heirlooms and fine jewelry – too valuable, he thought, to keep at home. So, he entrusted these treasures to a reliable friend in a nearby town, who rented a safe deposit box at the local bank. Foolproof, they both agreed. What could possibly go wrong?

But, as sometimes happens, even the best-laid plans can go awry. Masked bandits broke into the bank, taking everything they could – Isaac's valuables included.

News of the robbery reached Isaac through a messenger, who arrived at his door panting as though he'd just run a marathon. He relayed the details of the theft, his words tumbling out in a blur of urgency and disaster.

Isaac, a man of action, wasted no time. He immediately organized his

men, issuing orders to patrol the roads in search of the thieves. He would not sit idly by while his possessions slipped away.

As Isaac was mobilizing his troops, the messenger muttered under his breath, "You're wasting your time. The valuables are lost. Why bother chasing after them? It's over."

Isaac stopped and turned to the messenger with a pointed stare. "Tell me – why are you here?"

The messenger blinked in confusion. "What do you mean, why am I here? Your friend sent me to inform you of the robbery!"

"Listen to your own words!" Isaac snapped at him with impatience. "Why did my friend send you to tell me about this calamity in such haste? He must have believed that it is still possible, with immediate action, to recover the stolen goods. The very reason you were sent here contradicts your own ill-advised counsel!"

Forget Your Astrological Speculations!

Avraham had long since given up hope of having a child with his wife, Sara. He had studied the stars – only to conclude that his future was childless.

But then, when he was ninety-nine years old, God told Avraham to step

outside his tent. "Look at the sky", God commanded, "and count the stars... That's how numerous your descendants will be!" (B'reishit 15:5).

"Stars?" Abraham must have thought, squinting at the sky. "I've already counted them all. I know exactly what's in store for me. No children. Ever."

But, according to the rabbis, God was suggesting a different message altogether: "Forget your star charts and astrology! The very stars you thought foretold your childlessness – those same stars will show you that you will have children!"

The rabbis wanted to teach us a profound lesson: When a prophet is sent to deliver a message, it is not to seal our fate, but to offer us an opportunity to change it. It is a call to action, a prompt to examine the root cause of our situation and correct it.

When the prophet Yishayahu came with a grim warning – that King Chizkiyahu's failure to fulfill the mitzva of procreation would bring about his death – Chizkiyahu, though shaken, did not accept it passively. When Yishayahu insisted, "The decree is already set", Chizkiyahu correctly responded: "Son of Amotz! Stop prophesizing and leave!" Why do you think God sent you, if the matter was already decided? Clearly, God wants me to rectify my actions!

This, too, is the deeper message behind Avraham and his astrological predictions. Avraham had no prophet to guide him, and so he looked to the heavens for answers. Seeing the stars, he read them as a sign – his future would be childless. But what Avraham failed to grasp was that the stars were not a decree – they were a prompt. As the Sages taught, "Why were the matriarchs barren? Because the Holy One desires the prayers of the righteous." The signs in the stars were not a sentence, but a signal: it was time for prayer.

Avraham thought the stars were an immutable decree. And so, God's response was swift and clear: "Forget your astrological speculations!" God was telling Avraham, "You've read the message, but you've misunderstood its purpose. Don't resign yourself to fate. Act! Pray! Your actions, your faith, your prayers – these are what shape the future."

This, in essence, is the heart of all our struggles. The obstacles in our lives – the "brick walls" that seem insurmountable – are not there to defeat us. They are there, as the great educator Randy Pausch wisely said, "to give us a chance to show how badly we want something." They challenge us not to accept things as they are, but to act. To pray. To change.

Adapted from Mishlei Ya'akov, pp. 29-31

The Daily Portion

- Sivan Rahav Meir

Five things for this Shabbat

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

1) This week's parasha is Lech L'cha, the third parasha in the Torah.

After Parashat B'reishit and Parashat Noa'ch, God instructs our ancestors, Avraham and Sara, to leave their land and go to the land of Israel in order to establish a new nation there.

2) Avraham and Sara are both the first Jews and the first Olim to Israel. As the verse states, "And HaShem said to Avram, "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." They were the first to call Israel home.

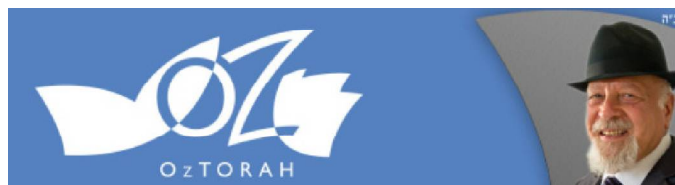
3) There is only one mitzva in this parasha, which is the first mitzva observed by our father Avraham: brit mila. Almost one hundred percent of his descendants have scrupulously observed this mitzva until this day.

4) Pay attention to the phrase, LECH L'CHA (which is difficult to translate into any other language). The first command to the first Jew is to move forward. Walk. Proceed. Progress. Act. Do not stand still. Be a messenger with a specific task to

accomplish in this world. Our sages explain that this calling to Avraham still echoes in the world; it is up to us to hear it.

5) Notice that the action is not directed outward but inward: LECH L'CHA – look inside yourself to discover your unique essence, your special calling, your own soul. May we merit to walk in the footsteps of Avraham.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

We that are Left Grow Old

Avraham and Sara were no youngsters when their son was born. Far from it. They were so advanced in years that Sarah laughed when she heard she would have a child.

Yet despite their age, Avraham and Sara now began the most productive period of their life, creating a future for their faith, tradition and family.

In a later generation, Moshe began his great period of leadership at an age when conventional wisdom would have thought him too old.

Aharon, his brother, was even older, and his sons Nadav and Avihu had to be punished by God when, according to one rabbinic version, they said of their father and uncle, "When will these old men die so that we can take charge?".

Had Avraham, Sara, Moshe and Aharon lived today, there would have been modern Nadavs and Avihus desperately anxious to push them aside and consign them to the scrap heap of history.

It sounds like the Greek custom of leaving older people on the hilltops to die. Fortunately, discrimination on the grounds of age is now increasingly unlawful, and those who are capable of a continuing contribution to society are not being lost from the workforce.

The fact that an arbitrary age like 60 or 65 does not automatically make a person a has-been is well illustrated by Jewish history; had there been a retirement age for leadership in Judaism there would have been no Ten Commandments, no Torah, no Jewish tradition, no Judaism.

But no-one can keep going for ever, at least at the same punishing pace. Which is why you have to prepare yourself psychologically as well as economically for the time when you decide to vary your pace. It is good to move into the new mode in advance.

A good analogy is Jewish experience when the Temple was destroyed. Despite the tragedy, Judaism kept going, because the shul was waiting in the wings, ready to take over as the spiritual focus of Jewish life.

A person should always have something waiting in the wings - a new career, new commitments, a new busyness... and a new attitude that leaves no room for depression or self-doubt.

Everyone should say in the morning, "I can choose to be unhappy - or happy. My choice is to be happy!"

How To Be a Blessing

What does the Torah mean when it says (B'reishit 12:3), "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed"?

One line of thought (Targum Onkelos) explains, "Because of you shall the whole human race be blessed."

Jewish ideas and achievements will bring benefit to the world even if the source of the particular development is not always acknowledged.

Another line of thought (Rashi) understands the phrase as saying that the peoples will "bless themselves in you" by saying, for instance, "May I be as hospitable as Abraham", "May I be as great a leader as Moses." -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

LECH L'CHA

G-d appeared to Avram and said to him: "...Your name shall no longer be Avram, but Avraham". (17:1,5)

The Baal HaTurim claims that heaven and earth were created in the merit of Avraham Avinu. "These are the products of heaven and earth B'HIBAR'AM (2:4), when He created them. Rearrange HIBAR'AM and you get Avraham. The entire Creation happened in Avraham's zechut.

Let's add. Observe that the HEI in HIBAR'AM is a specially small one. Drop that small HEI and rearrange, and you get Avraham's previous name, Avram. We can say that it was only after many years of his EMUNA, chesed, and influence that G-d raised his given name Avram to the spiritually higher name Avraham. So, that HEI in his name was a later addition, and thus by tradition it appears in a different size to the rest of the Torah text. This illustrates that Avraham was not born with the merit of the world being created for him; but that he subsequently earned that merit by prompting G-d to reflect that the creation of the heavens and the earth was worth it after all. As Pirkei Avot reminds us: The world was created in 10 declarations... there were 10 generations from No'ach to

Avraham to teach us that all those generations provoked him until Avraham Avinu came and received the reward that they all potentially could have earned (Avot 5:1,3).

So Avraham's greatness did not come from his background, but from his journey. LECH L'CHA, "go for yourself... to that Land that I will show you" (12:1). Some individuals in perpetual travelling mode stride along the way to nowhere. They stop, they are barely noticed if at all, and are completely forgotten as they move on. They are like the rolling stone that gathers no moss. On the way from nowhere to nowhere. Not, G-d reassured, with Avraham Avinu. G-d did not tell him just LECH - go, but LECH L'CHA, go for yourself. The L'CHA, Rashi explains, is for your benefit. Not only will your journey eventually bring you a family of your own, but it will blaze a trail of good, bring wonderfully influential interactions with those you meet, and set new standards for humanity. As Rashi puts it: 'so that I will make your nature known throughout the world'.

Indeed, though the 10 trials of Avraham Avinu (Avot 5:4) placed exceptional strain on him, what stands out for generations is that he is a father of chesed and derech eretz, civilized and decent behaviour, the key foundation for Matan Torah. We see him striving to work together with his nephew Lot and make an

amicable separation when that arrangement could not continue. We see him fighting against the imperial powers penetrating the region to rescue Lot. He took responsibility for him and did not turn his back on him. Later on, we see him offering hospitality to strangers under very difficult conditions (Rashi to 18:1), seeking some merit in which the people of S'dom might have last-minute reprieve from total destruction, and then accepting that G-d knew better that he did when He told him to turn his son into an offering. And yet he set his boundaries. He defined which moral standards would and would not be tolerated in his household to the degree of eventually throwing his eldest son out even though it caused him great pain.

We, his descendants and his disciples, are here to continue his work. We are not asked to sacrifice our children. On the contrary, G-d gave the ultimate Avraham Avinu-level NISAYON to Avraham Avinu and to Avraham Avinu only. And even that NISAYON turned out to imply that He wants us to take care and cherish our children, in sharp contrast to those who see the sacrifice of their nearest and dearest as the ultimate level of devotion to their pagan practices.

Yet as Torah followers, we strive to follow the mitzvot through thick and thin in the understanding that these are what G-d wants from us. We

strive to learn Torah daily and daven three times a day even where there are other things that easily get in the way. We are constantly reminded to bear the needs of others in mind and assist them where we can without thought of personal gain. We have a stand to take against anti-Torah forces and 'settled-science, cancel-culture' ideologies, too many of which have been extending their craftily-veiled tentacles towards the kedusha of our communities.

Avraham Avinu started this process in earnest with chesed and derech erez. Through Moshe Rabbeinu that and a lot more became formalized as our Torah codes. Since then, we have been applying them within the changing environments through which we ourselves do our own proactive LECH L'CHA - our own journeys.

Life is a journey. We are not here to stand still, neither as individuals nor as communities. On our journeys we constantly face new situations and our challenge is growth through interacting with them in a suitable way and influencing those we come in contact to do likewise. That is the legacy of Avraham Avinu. That is why we are told to reflect that, like Avraham Avinu, 'the world is created for me' (Sanhedrin 37a). 



ParshaPlates is a concept and website - parshaplates.com - which makes a Parsha Connection between the weekly sedra and a recipe for your Shabbat Table that will hopefully trigger conversation about Parshat HaShavua, in addition to providing a tasty treat in honor of Shabbat.

RugaLECH Footsteps

In this week's Parsha, Hashem speaks to Avram and commands him to "Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land which I will show you." Avram and Sarai, his wife, as well as his nephew Lot, all journey to the land of Canaan. The food of the week is rugalechs with a toothpick in it to look like a person's leg and shoes walking as Avram, Sarai, and Lot had done.

Shabbat Shalom & B'tayavon!

Ingredients

For the dough:

- 1 Tbsp rapid rise yeast
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 cups flour

Filling:

- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Instructions

- 1] Mix all the dough ingredients in a bowl and knead for a few minutes.
- 2] Grease a bowl and form the dough in a ball shape
- 3] Let dough rise in a greased bowl for at least 1.5 hours, cover with sealed plastic wrap.
- 4] After the dough has risen, roll the dough out into a flat circle.
- 5] Spread the cinnamon filling onto the flattened-out dough.
- 6] Use a pizza cutter or a knife to cut the dough into 16 triangles.
- 7] Roll each triangle from the wide end part to the narrow middle part.
- 8] Place all the rugelachs onto a baking pan. Brush the rugelachs with a beaten egg wash.
- 9] Bake at 350 degrees F (175 C) for 20 minutes.
Place a toothpick on each rugalech.



Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

LECH L'CHA

In this week's parsha we begin with Avram's command to journey to the unnamed but promised land that one day would be called the land of Israel.

And Avram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew and all their substance they had gathered in Charan, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan. (12:5)

This epic journey seems to set Avram apart from all others. Yet, in the text, an earlier travel seems very similar, not led by Avram but rather his father Terach. At the end of last week's parsha (11:31), it is Terach who took his son Avram and his grandson Lot and Sarai and he departed Ur to go to the land of Canaan. The two texts describing the journeys are very similar. Both father and son each set out to travel to the Promised land. Both had the same destination of the land of Canaan. Yet, with a closer look, we see a major difference between the two trips, between Terach's journey and that of Avram's. Terach started the trip but never made it there. Avram, on the other hand, succeeded to reach Canaan.

Terach is seen as one who had a

tremendous goal, but he got stuck in Charan. The Rabbis discuss the meaning of the name of Charan as a location. They say it represents the "anger of G-d" - CHARON AF SHEL MAKOM. Charan was seen as the exact opposite, in idea from the Holy Land of Israel. Charan was a bustling city that never slept, center of commerce of the region, a place of entertainment and a place where one's material dreams can turn into reality. Terach got sidetracked and was influenced to stay, never completing the original destination.

Avram, at his first chance after spending a number of years with his father in Charan, sets out to Canaan and gets there. He didn't get tempted or sidetracked by any other city or placed. Rather, Avram plowed on until he reached his intended destination. VAYAVO'U ARTZA K'NA'AN - Avram reaching his destination turned the place into Eretz Yisrael the Promised Land, a Holy Land for future generations.

Terach and Avram, both father and son had similar goals, similar ideas but Avram succeeded because of his perseverance, something which Terach lacked. The fact that it was presented as father and son who had these two unique, yet different journeys stress the message that if this can happen to two close family members, how much more so that it could happen to anyone. The legacy

of Avram to his future descendants that it is not enough just to know, or think you know your destination but rather it is dependent on one's perseverance to transform one's dream into a reality, to turn the Land of Canaan to the Holy Land - a land full of spirituality. We too, must understand our goals of how we want the Land of Israel to be and thrive both materially as well as spiritually and then we must internalize that dream and work hard to make it to come true. 🏠

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

LECH L'CHA 5785

Rav Soloveitchik would often comment that from the dry formalistic halacha properly understood and interpreted, one can distill great moral truths and religious motifs. In such an exercise of halachic/homiletical exegesis, the great author of the Halachot Gedolot, R. Shimon Kayyara (9th c., Babylonia), in recording some specific halachot regarding the Lulav, indirectly alludes to a deeper understanding of the Biblical narrative which describes how Avraham chose to separate himself from his nephew, Lot.

The Torah relates that there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Avraham's cattle and those of Lot.

Avraham then says to Lot: "Let there be no strife between [us]... for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? - Please part from me: if you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north." So, Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan... Thus, they parted from one another." (13:7-11)

The Baal Halachot Gedolot (Behag) quotes this verse (13:11) - and specifically the verb, VAYIPAR'DU - "and they separated" - in his albeit laconic discussion of a technical halachic ruling regarding the qualifications for a kosher Lulav (Siman 15, Hilchot Lulav, p. 204). In so doing, the Behag would have us examine a bit more closely the family dynamic that was unfolding between Avraham and his errant nephew. That is, if we wish to understand the nature of the split between Avraham and Lot, we would do well to study the rules that pertain to the "split-spread-dangling" leaves of the Lulav.

The Mishna rules (Sukka 3:1) that a Lulav whose leaves were severed [from the spine of the Lulav], is unfit. If its leaves, [although still attached], were spread - LIFR'DU ALAV [and are no longer completely joined to the spine], [the Lulav] is fit. Rabbi Yehuda says: [In that case], one should bind the Lulav from the top [to join the leaves that spread to the spine]." Pursuant to this Mishna, the Gemara

(Sukka 32a) states: "Rav Pappa said: Severed [means that the leaves are completely detached from the spine, and one ties them to the Lulav, so] that [the Lulav] is made like a broom. Spread - LIFR'DU [means that the leaves remain attached but are merely] separated [from the spine and simply jut outward]."

Enlisting this halachic paradigm, the Behag apparently argues that Avraham chose his words carefully when, in parting from Lot, he employs the verb HIPAREID. It was as if he said: "Let us separate, but not completely sever our relationship. Much like a kosher Lulav, whose leaves are spread out at the top, but remain connected at the root, with our differences notwithstanding, we remain kinsmen, joined together at our familial root. And as such, I will be there for you as a shield and protector." And indeed, this is exactly how Avraham responds when Lot is taken captive by K'dorla-omer (14:12). Avraham pledges to remain "attached", as it were, to Lot despite their parting of ways.

However, there would be one important condition to ensure the stability of this fraternal relationship. Once again, we turn to the halacha: If the jutting-out palm branches above harden so that they cannot be at least theoretically bound together, the Lulav would be invalid. The message here is equally important. A

wholesome family bond not only finds expression in its common ancestry and identity - blood relationships are indeed very strong and enduring, but a family merges, binds together also by virtue of their ideals that define the uniqueness of that family. When the top leaves of the Lulav adhere and can be joined, it underscores the common values and goals that are shared by the family members.

Here too, we detect that for all of Lot's delinquencies, there were certain moral principles that remained firm and unyielding. If Avraham's defining virtue was chesed (Micha 7:20), then Lot almost innately emulated his great uncle by demonstrating such chesed-hospitality to his angelic guests even while risking the fury of his Sodomite neighbors (B'reishit 19:2-3). And later, in the wake of the destruction of Sodom and Amora, the Torah relates that HaShem remembered Avraham and saved Lot (19:29). The Midrash (B'reishit Rabba 51:6) explains exactly what it was that Gd remembered about Avraham that merited Lot's rescue. "[While in Egypt], Lot was aware that Sarah was Avraham's wife and yet when he heard Avraham declare Sarah as his sister, he did not reveal the matter... Therefore, HaShem had pity on him." As the Rav Soloveitchik explains, Lot was fascinated by his uncle and revered him greatly, and therefore, even as he

was unfortunately overtaken by the boundless fantasies and hedonistic pleasures of a depraved Sodomite culture, he nevertheless remained loyal to those noble family traits that so exemplified the life of Avraham and Sarah.

Because Lot never completely severs his relationship with his uncle, he manages to retain and then transmit many of Avraham's great moral virtues to his two daughters. The Rav beautifully expands upon this fact in his comments on the verse, "And all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you [Avraham]" (12:3). The Talmud states (Y'vamot 63a): "I have two goodly shoots to graft on to you [Avraham]: Ruth the Moavite and Naama the Ammonite." Ruth, a descendant of Moav, would be the mother of the Davidic dynasty (Ruth 4:17). Naama, a descendant of Ammon, would be the mother of Rehavam (Melachim I 14:21). Together, the Mashi'ach will be a descendant of David, Shlomo and Rechavam. Lot's daughters, who gave birth to Moav and Ammon, both contributed to the emerging personality of the Melech HaMashi'ach.

Parenthetically, in this regard, there is a critically important halacha, based upon a fascinating discussion in the Talmud (Bava Batra 133b) which rules that a father may not disinherit a wayward son. True, the son,

because of his misbehavior, may not deserve the bequest, but nevertheless, the father was instructed not to do so. Either because it would generate dissension and animosity within the family, or because by so alienating the son, the father will have precluded his son's descendants from ever returning to the fold. To put it quite bluntly, one should never "sit shiva" for a sinful child.

What emerges then from this depiction of Avraham's relationship with Lot is the enormous potency of healthy family interactions. Indeed, the laboratory in which the ethics of justice and compassion, chesed and goodness are best nurtured and cultivated is the family home. Or, as the Behag might have taught: A home where principles are taught in an atmosphere of love and respect is a home that will powerfully impact the lives of all its members even if they "separate" one from another. "Separate", yes, but so long as they are joined at the root and plaited together at the top in common objective and purpose - such a family becomes a building block in the grand edifice of the Messianic dynasty!

In a word, what begins with a morally wholesome nuclear family can - with Gd's help - eventually expand outward to characterize and distinguish an entire people. And that, B"H, we have witnessed in the

wake of the October 7th tragedy where although the "palm leaves may have separated" - that notwithstanding our many differences - we, as a people, have exhibited amazing devotion and allegiance to our roots and our destiny! We did not, thank Gd, "detach" one from another!

It should now come as no surprise then that HaShem's initial blessing to Avraham was to state that "all the families" - not individuals, not nations, but families - "shall be blessed in you." Blessings come through families, that precious unit-gem of humanity that will ultimately guarantee its redemption. 🙌

LECH L'CHA

GM Avraham Avinu (still as Avram) has arrived in the future Eretz Yisrael, and HaShem makes several promises to him about the Land. One such promise is in B'reishit 13:17 -

קוֹם הַתְּהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ לְאַרְכָּהּ וּלְרוֹבָהּ
כִּי לְךָ אֶתְנֶנָּה:

*"Rise, walk the land,
through its length and breadth,
for I will give it [all] to you."*

We do not keep the Land without a commitment to Torah and Mitzvot. Here is a GM (1992) of the above pasuk - Sh'mot 21:1

וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשִּׁים

לפניהם:

*"These are the laws that you must set
before them [the Israelites]."*

The fact is that HaShem allows us to stay in the Land with the hopeful expectations of our changing for the better. But without Torah and Mitzvot, we aren't doing our share to deserve the fulfillment of the promises.

GM The very first Rashi in the Torah quotes a Midrash: Rabbi Yitzchak said: The Torah which is the Law book of Israel should have commenced with the verse (Sh'mot 12:2) HACHODESH HAZE LACHEM - which is the first commandment given to Israel. What is the reason, then, that it commences with the account of the Creation? Because of the thought expressed in the text (T'hilim 111:6) "He declared to His people the strength of His works (i.e. He gave an account of the work of Creation), in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations." For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan", Israel may reply to them, "All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. When He willed He gave it to them, and when He willed He took it

from them and gave it to us" (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah, 187).

We can say that Creation took place so that in the future, B'nei Yisrael would get Eretz Yisrael. This idea is expressed nicely by a pair of p'sukim that are Gimatriya Matches.

וַיִּצֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עָפָר
בֶּן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפּוּז בְּאָפְיוֹ נְשִׁמַּת וַיְיָם
וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

"Hashem, God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Then we move to Parshat Lech L'cha, where we find 13:15 -

כִּי אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה רֹאה
לְךָ אֶתְנַנָּה וְלִבְרִיךָ עַד-עוֹלָם:

"For all the land which you see, I will give to you, and to your offspring forever."

Both p'sukim have the gimatriya of 2999, and together they convey Rabbi Yitzchak's point as to why the Torah begins with Creation.

RED ALERT!

LECH L'CHA

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- Our Patriarch Avraham was destined for greatness from a very early age. In the Midrash, the Rabbis try to figure out at what point in Avraham's life he was aware of the Almighty, Creator of the Universe. Whether it was very early, or as an adult, he still stands alone in the world at that time. He was required to live a nomadic life, a life that would take him from Ur Kasdim (possibly Iraq) to Charan (possibly on the Syrian-Turkish border), a distance of over 600 miles, and then to travel south from there to Canaan, a distance of about 450 miles. This trip took him through different lands with different cultures, customs, language, climate, and character traits of people. The majority of his life he was totally distant from the original family which settled in the Charan area. A lot of this trip took him through hostile populations. The nomadic life was seemingly to separate him from existing peoples who rejected him as an outcast and a strong-willed personality. Just being told by Hashem to leave his family and home was in and of itself a mandate that would form a style of

life. He was not permitted to settle in any one region for any length of time.

- When he reached Canaan, he was still living a nomadic life. The Midrash describes this lifestyle to be divinely mandated to spread the beautiful perfume in the region. What good is perfume if it cannot be spread so that people can enjoy the aroma? This was a test for Avraham, one that was needed to display what he was and what he developed, and his ideas to the outside world. Avraham's nomadic life did attract spiritual followers who were certainly enamored by Avraham and Sara's open hospitality and elevated way of life. What happened to these people is not known. It could be that their attraction to Avraham was based more on his personality and the home that Avraham and Sara conducted rather than the spiritual teachings of both of them.

- After the generation of the Tower of Babel the division among the people also caused strife to exist between these nations who could not communicate well with each other. The strife led to a war mentality that spread throughout the region. The civilized world as it was back then became a world of hand-to-hand combat. Four thousand years ago the Hittites, who were settled in the area of Turkey, invaded the south through Canaan and had a major military encounter with Egypt. These battles

between formidable foes were primarily located in Syria and in Canaan. It was this backdrop which makes the story of the war between the Four Kings and the Five Kings simple to accept; it was part of the reality of life in ancient times. When the Torah introduced us to Nimrod in last week's parsha of No'ach, it designates Nimrod as a warrior and set the tone for the warlike life that people had yet from his day onward. The Midrash puts Avraham in Nimrod's clutches. It was Nimrod who cast Avraham into a fiery furnace according to the Midrash. That Midrash is so accepted that most commentators feel that the encounter between Avraham and Nimrod is one of the ten tests that Avraham had to endure. The fact that he survived such an encounter is proof of Hashem's protection of Avraham. The military and warlike conditions of the time overwhelmed the entire land of Canaan during Avraham's nomadic life in the region.

- In this story of Avraham, Hashem is the one who commanded him to make ALIYA, to leave his father and the family back in Charan and to live in the spiritually elevated area of Canaan, the Promised Land. The divine mandate to make aliya is discussed in the Midrash at the end of Parshat No'ach, where it states that Terach had died. If Terach was actually still alive then the question

was raised about a son defying the parent's wishes to make aliya. This is something raised in the Midrash which we see in America to be a topical issue. The other form of aliya that the Rabbis offer as a model is the mandate that Avimelech later gives to Yitzchak to kick him out of the P'lishtim lands and live elsewhere in Canaan. This raises two models of the modern day aliya experience. One is when the host country in exile is no longer a welcoming site for Jewish living. Discrimination in a hostile environment is the Avimelech motivation for Jews of that country to make aliya. The Avraham model of aliya is more like a Nefesh B'Nefesh type of message that we see in North America. This has enveloped thousands of Jewish people in North America who have heard their own form of Lech L'cha, deciding to make aliya because of the spirit of a divine message of Avraham, and not because they are running from a hostile environment.

- The Brit Bein HaB'tarim, the Covenant Between the Pieces, was the second covenant that Hashem made with mankind according to the writings of Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman. The first was the covenant after the Flood in which Hashem promised not to wipe out humanity again through flood. The second covenant on the other hand was to establish the Chosen People on earth through

Avraham's descendants. The people would be purified first by the terrible oppressive slavery in the "iron furnace" of Egypt. Then they would exit Egypt with much wealth and return to the Promised Land. Hashem was telling Avraham at this time not only that he would inherit the land, but also about the nature of that inheritance, that the land had tremendous quality, spiritually and materialistically. Avraham displayed tremendous faith in Hashem and consequently Hashem rewards him for that Emunah, that faith. That would enable the descendants of Avraham to eternally live as spiritual guides for the rest of mankind throughout history. We are supposed to become the kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation. This was what Hashem meant when He told Avraham "your reward will be very great." (15:1)

- When Hashem tells Avraham to circumcise himself and his son Yishmael and the other males of his household, Avraham consults with his three comrades and dear friends, Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre. According to the Midrash the three friends were approached separately and each had different opinions that they offered to Avraham. Aner told him that it was a bad idea because Avraham would end up incapacitating himself. The relatives and the kings that Avraham had slain would come and kill him.

Eshkol told Avraham that he was an old man, the surgery would cause much blood loss, and he would end up dying. Mamre was the only one who gave positive advice, stating that God already saved him from a fiery furnace and had created many miracles to protect him, He would protect Avraham in this situation too (Tanchuma). The real question I ask: Why does Avraham consult with these people? Did he consult with them following the other tests that God had given Avraham? From what we know of Avraham the entire Midrashic line of thought here is challenging and perplexing. Avraham listened and obeyed every command that he heard from Hashem. Was there any question in doing it? Maybe Avraham was not consulting them; maybe he just wanted to know what these friends would think of him in doing something that in their minds made no sense whatsoever. Perhaps Avraham was not asking his comrades for advice about what to do, but rather to hear them so that he would feel that they would not be rejecting him when Avraham would perform the divine commandment. The Midrash in turn would symbolize the non-Jewish reaction to the commandments that the Jewish people have embraced. I do think that when the founders of Christianity wanted to appeal to the pagan world with their new religion, repealing the mitzva of circumcision was a pivotal decision made by those original

Christians in order to make their new religion palatable to the pagan world.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. How old was Avraham when he left Charan to go to Canaan? (12:4)
2. During the famine in Canaan, where did Avraham go? (12:10)
3. Who was winning the war between the Four Kings and the Five Kings? (Ch. 14)
4. Who were the three non-Jewish allies of Avraham? (11:24)
5. How many times is the word BRIT mentioned in the chapter in which Hashem tells Avraham to circumcise himself?

From Rashi

6. What three things does one suffer when he travels? (12:2)
7. What happened to Lot's father, Haran? (11:28)
8. What did the shepherds of Lot and the shepherds of Avraham argue about? (12:7)
9. Who was Amrafel, the king of Shinar (Babylonia)? (14:1)
10. The "refugee" came from the war of the Four and Five Kings to tell Avraham that his nephew Lot, was taken captive (14:13). Rashi says the refugee was Og. How could Rashi

state that this is not a Midrash, but the literal meaning of the verse “refugee”?

From the Rabbis

11. Why did Avraham accept Pharaoh’s gifts while later he would reject the gifts offered him by the king of S'dom? (Abravanel)

12. What is Hashem’s message to Avraham when Hashem compares Avraham’s descendants to the stars in Heaven? (Megila 16a)

13. What transpired to cause Hagar not to feel that she was Sara’s servant anymore? (Radak)

Midrash

14. Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would desire Eretz Yisrael because of all the sacrifices offered in the Holy Temple. What was Hashem’s answer to Avraham’s question “what will happen when the Holy Temple is destroyed?” (Megila 31b)

Haftara - Yishayahu

15. The choice of the Haftara is based on two words. What are they? (40:8)

Relationships

- a) Avraham - Lot (two answers)
- b) Sara - Yiska
- c) Yishmael - Par'o
- d) Avraham - Midyan
- e) No'ach – Canaan

ANSWERS

1. 75.

2. To Egypt.

3. The Four Kings.

4. Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre.

5. Thirteen

6. The ability to bear children, one’s wealth is diminished, and travel harms one’s reputation.

7. He died in the fiery furnace in Ur Kasdim.

8. Lot’s shepherds allowed their animals to graze from others’ fields, arguing that the Land was given to Avraham, and Lot was currently Avraham’s heir.

9. Nimrod

10. Rashi quotes a verse in D'varim (3:11), that states that Og was the refugee from Refa'im.

11. Had Avraham rejected Pharaoh’s gifts, he would have aroused Pharaoh’s suspicions about his wife being his sister.

12. Bnei Yisrael will be above all the others.

13. Once Hagar gave birth to Avraham’s son, she no longer felt like Sara’s servant.

14. Hashem will accept our reciting the sacrifices in our prayers.

15. “Avraham, who loved Me.”

Relationships

- a) Nephew; and according to the Midrash, Brothers-in-Law
- b) Same person
- c) According to the Midrash, Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter, therefore Grandson & Grandfather
- d) Father & Son
- e) Grandfather & Grandson