TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



פרשת לך-לך

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה

ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה

ר'שרגא פייביש ב"ר מרדכי צבי ערליך ע"ה

ר'יעקב ב"ר שלום הלוי פרידמאן ע"ה

ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה

ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

Yitzchok's Collections אוספי יצחק

לך לך

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Three Great Paths

There were three different paths expressed by **R' Zusha of Anipoli, the Kedushas Levi and the Baal Shem Tov**. R' Zusha didn't have to judge a Jew favorably because he never saw any bad in a Jew, as he only saw the good. On the other hand, if a Jew acted in an evil way, the Kedushas Levi judged him favorably. The Baal Shem Tov however loved each Jew despite any evil he did, because you can hate the action but not the person himself.

Holy Haran

The Sefas Emes is bothered why **לוט** merited to be with Avraham as well as having Dovid Hamelech and Moshiach descend from him.

Rashi tells us that Nimrod threw the iconoclast Avraham into the **כבשן האש**, fiery pit after he smashed his father's idols. Haran, who was there, said to himself if Avraham is victorious then I am of his supporters whereas if Nimrod is victorious then I am on his side.

[Haran was caught in the middle, unable to decide on his own. This is alluded to in the letters of his name. In mathematics, there are sets of ones, tens, and hundreds. The letters א through י are in the set of ones, letters from י through צ are in the set of tens, and letters from ק through ת are in the set of hundreds.

The letter ה of **הרן**, which has a gematria of 5, is exactly in the middle of the ones. The next letter, ר - 200, is in the middle of the

hundreds, since the highest single letter gematria in the hundreds is **ת** - 400. Lastly,**נ** - 50, is in the middle of the tens.]

When Avraham was saved, they asked Haran whose side he is on. He answered Avraham's. They then threw him into the pit, and he was burned.

Although it seems that Haran's act wasn't so righteous, let us see the view of some commentators. The Sefas Emes remarks **לוט** merited what he did in the merit of his father Haran who was Moser Nefesh himself by the **כבשן האש** although it wasn't a fully altruistic act like Avraham's. This is still included in being burned for the sanctification of Hashem's name. So, **לוט** was saved in the merit of his father.



The Chassam Sofer comments elsewhere that Haran was a big Tzadik (but not like Avraham) as he was Moser Nefesh by the **כבשן האש**. As a result, the women of the Jewish people come from him. Haran had three children: **מלכה , יסכה** and **לוט**. **יסכה** is Sarah. Milka was the grandmother of Rivka and the great-grandmother of Rachel and Leah. So, the Jewish people come from Haran. There were also another two holy women not included in this who were also from Haran. That is, Rus and Naama, as they were from Amon and Moav who descended from Lot. This is where Moshiach comes from.

"It disgusts me to see them acquiring and acquiring – another hat, a second silk dress. We need only one of a thing. Maybe two if it's shoes." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l.

Fright of a Fight

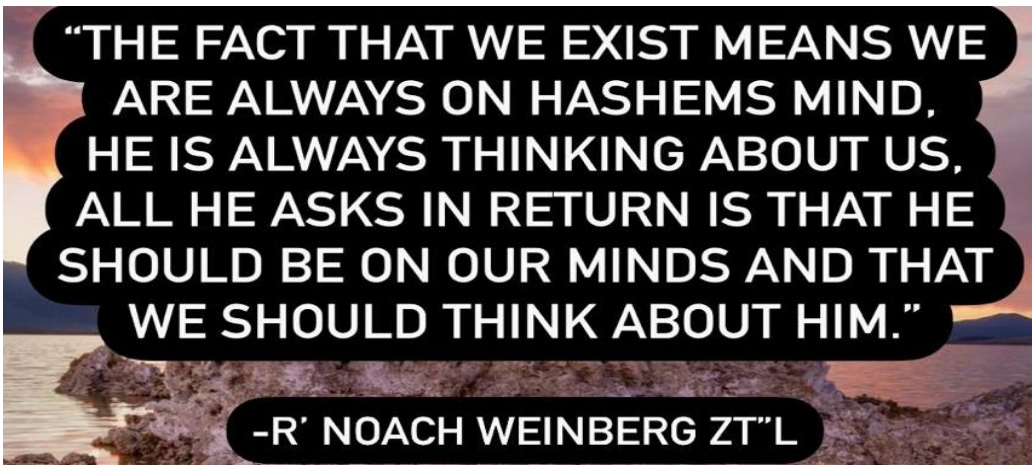


It has been pointed out that when one flatlines, he is dead. It is only when the line is going up and down on the machine that one is alive.

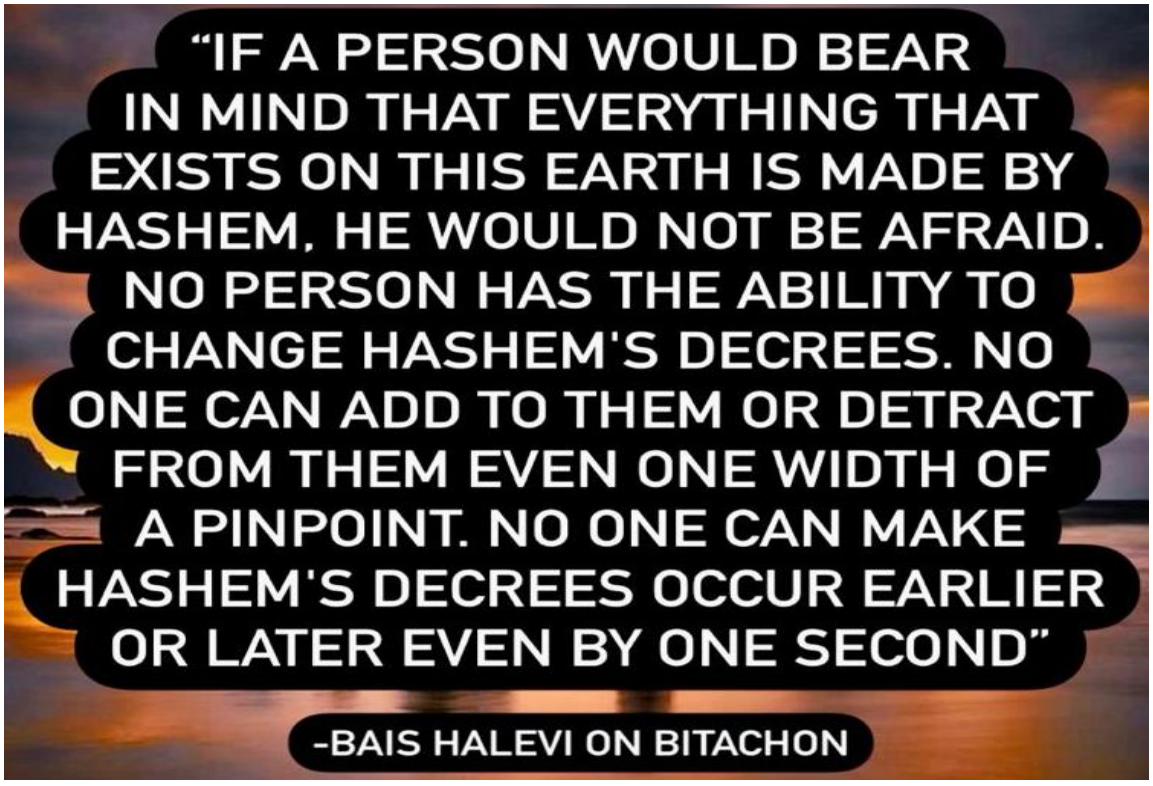
In 1941 when **R' Mendel of Vishiver** (1885-1941) was lying on his deathbed, his nephew **R' Yidele Horowitz of Dzikov** (1905-1989) visited him in the hospital. When R' Mendel told the doctor that his pain subsided, R' Yidele was relieved, but the doctor gasped.

He explained to R' Yidele that the illness was still extant and that as long as the body was fighting, there would be pain. If there is no pain, that means the body has despaired. A few hours later, R' Mendel passed away.

R' Yidele would repeat this story and comment that the yetzer hara is waging war on us. As long as we have tests and feel the struggle then it means we are alive and fighting. However, the moment we are complacent with the yetzer hara, it means we have despaired and that the yetzer hara has been victorious.




"AVRAHAM AVINU WAS 75 YEARS OLD WHEN HE WENT ON THE JOURNEY OF LECH LECHA. 75 IS THE GEMATRIA OF בטחון - TRUST IN HASHEM. THE ONLY WAY AVRAHAM AVINU WAS ABLE TO LEAVE HIS HOMELAND AND GO ON THIS JOURNEY AT 75 WAS WITH THE POWER OF בטחון"
-The Bas Ayin
STORIES TO inspire


"IF A PERSON WOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS ON THIS EARTH IS MADE BY HASHEM, HE WOULD NOT BE AFRAID. NO PERSON HAS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE HASHEM'S DECREES. NO ONE CAN ADD TO THEM OR DETRACT FROM THEM EVEN ONE WIDTH OF A PINPOINT. NO ONE CAN MAKE HASHEM'S DECREES OCCUR EARLIER OR LATER EVEN BY ONE SECOND"
-BAIS HALEVI ON BITACHON





How do we explain בִּנְפֹל אוֹיִבְךָ אַל תִּשְׂמָח – In the downfall of your enemy you shouldn't rejoice (Mishlei 24:17)?

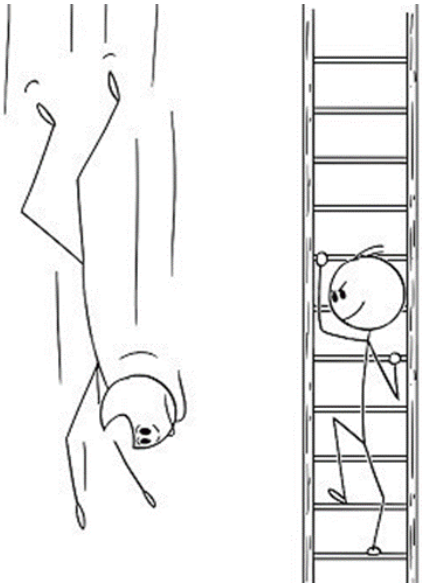
בִּנְפֹל אוֹיִבְךָ אַל תִּשְׂמָח – *When your enemy falls, do not be happy,* **וּבְכָּשְׁלוֹ אַל יָגֵל לִבֶּךָ** – *when he stumbles, your heart should not rejoice,* **פֶּן יִרְאֶה ה' וְרַע בְּעֵינָיו** – *lest Hashem sees and it is evil in His eyes,* **וְהֵשִׁיב מֵעָלָיו אַפּוֹ** – *and His wrath will turn away from him (ibid.).*

That's only – your enemy means the man who has a bargain store across the street from you; he's your competitor. But if the enemy is, let's say, if a man who has a different color is chasing you with a knife and his intentions are as cruel as could be and as he's running he trips and falls down. And to make it even better, he falls on the end of the knife, the point of the knife. And so, if you'll jump up and down and yell for glee, you're doing nothing more than you're expected to do. It doesn't apply there.

The enemy means the yeshiva man sitting across the aisle from you who is banging on the shtender and he's saying pilpulim and you are a quiet fellow and you can't make a good show in the beis hamedrash. Your enemy means the fellow who finally married the girl you wanted to marry. Enemy means the man in the shul who is being elected president instead of you.

And so suppose a man is sent to the amud by the gabbai to daven and you wanted to daven. And at the amud he makes a big mistake, don't rejoice in his error. If your fellow yeshiva man makes a mistake in

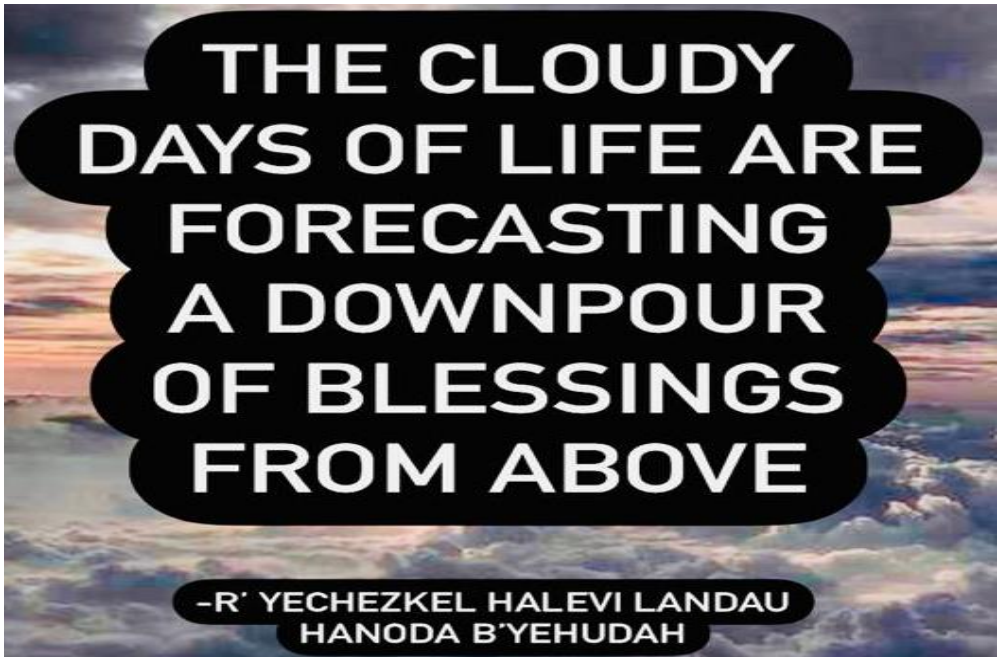
saying a dvar Torah, don't rejoice. If your competitor across the street makes a mistake and buys merchandise which he cannot sell, don't rejoice. Don't rejoice in your enemy's discomfiture.



But it doesn't refer to reshaim gemurim where there's no question that it's a mitzvah to rejoice. Not only a mitzvah to rejoice – if you were able not only to rejoice in this man's downfall, if you were able to knock him down and you yourself could put the dagger through him, it would be a big mitzvah.

You say you shouldn't rejoice?! You should put the dagger through him yourself. What's the question about rejoicing there?

You have to know, like you say in Yiddish, *vu ein vu ois*. You have to know where to apply things. Just to take a blanket injunction and say 'don't rejoice'? When Hitler took poison, you shouldn't rejoice?! When Haman was executed, you shouldn't rejoice?!





What should be our reaction to the great campaign against the State of Israel that's being conducted by the Reform Jews and all the Jewish liberal organizations like the UJA and the American Jewish Committee? And they even appeal to the United States Government, to the Congress, to stop giving support to Israel because they are mistreating the poor Palestinian Arabs.

Now, I'm not a Zionist. Very far from it. But there must be a certain amount of *yosher,* a certain amount of decency. Even the irreligious Jews in Eretz Yisrael are fighting for their lives. They're fighting for their lives! They have bitter enemies, terrorists who are killing Jews – private people, innocent people – for nothing. So what can they do?! You have to defend yourself! - And so if they're throwing Molotov cocktails at you, what should you do? Just thumb your nose at them?

Therefore the Reform Jews are the criminals. They're the ones who are the *mosrim.* They're the enemies of the Jewish people. They're appealing to the United States Government to stop helping the State of Israel because Israel is doing terrible things to the poor Palestinian Arab! What should be our reaction? Our reaction should be not a penny to UJA! Not a penny to the Federation! Not only that, we should send letters to them telling them never will we help you with even one dollar because you are enemies of the Jewish people. That should be our reaction.

"Accepting reality does not mean that you do not have pain. It means that you have accepted that it has been given to you from Hashem. – The pain is part of the experience He intended for you. It's part of your journey." ~ Rabbi YY Jacobson.



Generally we have the principle of siman tov; we like to give good simanim by means of our speech. So how come we say of this month that it's Mar-Cheshvan, Bitter-Cheshvan?

The *mem reish* in Mar Cheshvan doesn't mean bitter Cheshvan. No. No. Oh no, it doesn't mean that.

If you wish to say something so *mem reish, mar,* means *adon. Mar* is *adon*, a master. *Amar mar. Mar, marusa,* ownership, mastery.

I don't know if that's what Mar-Cheshvan means but *mar* doesn't mean bitterness, that's certain. No, no. It's not bitter.



How much of an interest should one take in the matzav in Eretz Yisroel and what can we do to help?

We can daven. Eretz Yisroel today has so many frum Jews, *tai'ereh* frum Jews – it's a pleasure to look at them. Frum families, frum mosdos hatorah. We have to pray to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that there should be a mapalah, a big downfall, for all the wicked Arabs. Every day in shemona esrei I say that. I ask for a mapalah for all the wicked Arabs.

And a mapalah also for all the wicked Jews too. The BAGATZ, the Supreme Court. A mapalah for them and for Meretz and all the reshaim. I say it every day in shemona esrei. I say it bifeirush – I say their names every day. A mapalah to the Arabs and to the Reform rabbis. And to the Jews for Yushkeh, the missionaries, too – I add them in for good measure. I mention all of them. I say it bifeirush every day in Elokai netzor at the end of shemona esrei; I add all these things.



We should pray, however, for the safety of Am Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel! They should be rescued. It's so important that the Arabs should be defeated! If the Arabs would come in – *chas ve'shalom, chas ve'shalom.*

Now, somebody asked me a question – he said, "What?! Do you want to give a victory to the IDF when we know that all kinds of sins are done in the Jewish army?" That's right. But suppose there is an apikoris who is trying to save you from an enemy, from an Arab who is running after you and trying to kill you. Do you want that apikoris to be killed? No. You want him to live until – at least until – he saves your life. After he saves your life, that's something else. So we want the army to be successful until they defeat all the Arabs.



Why did Hashem allow the Arabs to attack us on Yom Kippur?

So, I presume that there are two parts to this question. Why did He allow them to attack us? And why did He allow them to attack us on Yom Kippur?

But first I have to make an amendment. The word, 'us,' is not properly used. The Arabs didn't attack 'us.' The Arabs attacked the people in Eretz Yisroel. And that's important because for certain purposes, the people in the State of Israel wish to create the impression that the Arabs are attacking the whole Jewish nation, which is not true.

Not that the Arabs love us so much, but the Arabs had no intention of attempting to destroy chalilah all of the Jewish people, as was stated in one Hebrew kol korei. Like it says **אָמְרוּ לְכוּ וְנַכְחִידֵם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא יִזָּכֵר שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד**. That was said in that kol korei, and I don't understand that at all! The Arabs didn't say that. If they wanted to destroy the State of Israel, we have to differentiate. They didn't want to destroy, *chalilah,* the Am Yisroel.



Now why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu permit it? Hakodosh Boruch Hu permits many things that we don't like but He understands like the physician does. If you go to a physician, he does a number of things sometimes that you would prefer he shouldn't do. He pushes certain things down your throat or up the other end of you and he makes various examinations that you might not like. But he does it because he has good reasons.

And Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the big Rofei and if it says **הַיֹּסֵר גּוֹיִם הֲלֹא יוֹכִיחַ** – *the One who brings suffering on nations, isn't He showing something,* **הַמְלַמֵּד אָדָם דָּעַת** – *isn't He teaching man understanding?* (Tehillim 94:10) So, we understand too that He certainly wishes to teach the Am Yisroel.

Only if we had the foresight to learn from misfortunes that happen to other nations, then we could sometimes spare ourselves undergoing these experiences. If we study the yessurim that other people have, then it's enough. But if we fail to learn from the yessurim of others, then sometimes we ourselves will have to suffer chalilah.

Let's say, had the people of the State of Israel learned from the Vietnam War or other wars which were sent upon the nations for the purpose that the Am Yisroel should become afraid and do teshuva. The Gemara says that. **אין פורענות באה לעולם אלא בשביל ישראל** – *No misfortune comes upon the world if not for the sake of Yisroel* (Yevamos 63a).

You hear that? All misfortunes are only for the sake of our people. Even what comes on the nations of the world. And Rashi says **כדי ליראם** – *in order to put a fear into the Jews so they should do teshuva.* So, if we learned properly from the wars that the nations are undergoing, then we could be spared those wars closer, at home. When Hakodosh Boruch Hu sees that they don't learn sufficiently, so He brings the lessons closer to home.

And why did it happen on Yom Kippur? Because Yom Kippur is the day when we should have learned most lessons. That's the day that's best suited to teshuva. And therefore, when Hakodosh Boruch Hu sees that Yom Kippur is passing by and soon it will be over and they'll be back to the old derochim that they did last year after Yom Kippur and the year before after Yom Kippur, so therefore this Yom Kippur He added a little more vitamins in order that the lesson should be more potent. So the purpose of all suffering is teshuva and suffering on Yom Kippur surely is for teshuva.

The Kotzker zt'l (Siach Sarfei Kodesh, Inyanim Shonim, Avodas Hashem 43) teaches that there's a tall ladder going down from heaven to earth, and Hashem brings down neshamos to this world with this ladder. Then Hashem takes the ladder away and says, "Now, come back to Me." - Some lose hope and don't even try. Some jump up and fall, and then they lose hope. But some jump repeatedly until Hashem has compassion on them and He brings them up to Him.

The Weekly Vort



Mashgiach of Baranovitch

◣ The students of the Baranovich Yeshiva in Poland would mention his name with awe and trepidation. They spoke of his *Ge'onus* in Torah, his sterling character traits, his deep humility. But above all, they spoke of his golden heart. **R' Yisroel Yakov Lubchansky**, the revered, beloved and holy Mashgiach of the Baranovich Yeshiva, was goodness itself.

R' Yisroel Yakov once defined the word "good" as one who can forgive another who sinned against him and caused him to suffer; one who always feels unconditional love, friendship, peace and acts with truth towards others; and one who does not complain about his bitter fate, silently bearing the burden of his personal troubles.

R' Yisroel Yakov was unknowingly characterizing himself. His fiery faith and efforts in character self-improvement, stirred his students to strive for greater heights. He lived in holiness and died in holiness when he gave his life *al kiddush Hashem*.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov was born in 1872 to his father, R' Chaim Leib, in a village near Baranovich. His father, the first Rav of Baranovich, was widely acclaimed as a *Gaon, tzaddik*, and one who deeply loved his fellow Jews. R' Yisroel Yakov's parents' home was a hospitable center for wayfarers. They never sat down to a meal without at least one guest. Their son, Yisroel Yakov, was nurtured in this holy environment, and emulated their worthy ways.

◣ As a young child, his talents and *middos* were already discernible. R' Yisroel Yakov learned in a number of yeshivos, where he amazed his fellow students and Rebbeim with his sharpness of mind and breadth of knowledge. He gained fame as a *tzaddik* and a man of *mussar*. He would exult in performing *tzedakah* and *chessed*. He would take pains never to hurt another person, holding even young children in high esteem. He would greet each person with genuine joy and happiness. He was a self-made "mentsh" of the highest caliber.

◣ When R' Yisroel Yakov reached marriageable age, The Alter of Novardok, R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz, chose him as a son-in-law. He was greatly influenced by the great *mussar* personality that was the Alter. During WWI, R' Yisroel Yakov assisted the Alter in running the Novardok Yeshiva in Charkov, Russia.

◣ When his father passed away, R' Yisroel Yakov was appointed Rav of Baranovich. He cared not only for the spiritual welfare of his *kehillah*, but for their physical well-being as well. He would often arise in the middle of the night to clandestinely draw water with which to fill the basin in the *Beis Medrash*.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov did not remain in his position as Rav for very long. As the Novardoker par excellence, he could only achieve the Novardoker goal of "Let your wellsprings flow outward" (Mishlei 5:16) within a yeshiva setting. Thus, he became the Mashgiach of the Yeshiva Ohel Torah of Baranovich, headed by R' Elchonon Wasserman. There he deeply influenced and guided thousands of *talmidim*. But even as Mashgiach he continued to care for the needs of the people in the city.

Every Erev Shabbos, right before candle lighting time, he would walk through the marketplace and streets, reminding the storekeepers to close in observance of the oncoming Shabbos. When the proprietors saw R' Yisroel Yakov approaching, they would immediately lock up their shops.

Once, R' Yisroel Yakov was informed that one of the storeowners was planning to keep open his shop on Shabbos. He decided to have a heart-to-heart talk with this storeowner. But before he did so, R' Yisroel Yakov stood in front of the *Aron Kodesh*, crying for half an hour that his words find favor in the storekeeper's heart. He sighed and cried, until a number of people gathered around him, and followed as he walked towards the "delinquent" store. The impression of such a great crowd approaching startled the storekeeper so much, that he handed over the store keys to R' Yisroel Yakov.



◣ As Mashgiach, R' Yisroel Yakov provided for the needs of all students – especially the newly arrived ones. Only when he had seen to all the student's physical needs, would he speak to him of matters of *mussar* and fear of Hashem. His burning love for each of his students radiated into their hearts, thus motivating them to make every effort to find pleasure in his eyes through their behavior and diligence in Torah.

◣ Though his head reached the very heavens in his levels of Torah, *mussar* and fear of Hashem, he humbly regarded himself as but a simple person. He often "announced" that he was not to be regarded as a *talmid chochom*. Once during a meal, a radish was opened and found to be rotten and wormy. R' Yisroel Yakov stood up and said, "This radish is just like me. Everyone thinks I am a *tzaddik* while deep inside I am just like that rotten, wormy radish."

◣ At the *Chanukas HaBayis* of the Yeshiva of Kletzk, R' Yisroel Yakov suddenly fell to the floor and began rolling near the feet of the

Gedolim who had come to join in the *simcha*. He was fulfilling – literally – the words of Pirkei Avos, which state, "and you shall cling to the dust of their feet."

◣ Reb Elchonon Wasserman would say, "R' Yisroel Yakov has a *ta'avah* (a desire) for mitzvos!" Indeed, he passionately pursued any *mitzvah* opportunity and performed them with utter perfection. He honored his mother in an exceptional manner, never failing to pay her a daily visit. He would open the door, bow as if to a queen, and say "Good morning, Momma." If she would simply say, "sit down," R' Yisroel Yakov would exuberantly knock over everything on the way to the chair. He would then sit there for a very long time, considering every moment of sitting as part of the *mitzvah*.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov and his Rebbitzen remained childless. They raised his sister's young children, Vichna and Dovid Eisen, when they became doubly orphaned. Vichna grew to become Rebbitzen Vichna Kaplan, the outstanding disciple of the founder of the Bais Yakov movement, Sara Schenirer. Rebbitzen Kaplan, in turn, became the architect of Bais Yakov in America. When she spent time teaching in Brisk, prior to her marriage, the Brisker Rav, R' Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, was lavish in his praise of her love of Torah and *Yiras Shomayim*. He would say that Rebbitzen Kaplan had a great advantage in that she was raised and educated in the home of her uncle, R' Yisroel Yakov, and that she had absorbed much Torah, fear of Heaven, and exemplary *middos* from him, which she drew on to educate her students. Thus, R' Yisroel Yakov's influence continues to shape generations of Bais Yakov students and the families they build.

◣ Breaking one's nature – *shviras ha'middos* – was his favorite theme. He spent his lifetime breaking his in-born nature of *ka'as* (anger). He was always biting his lips, for his father once told him, "When you get angry, bite your lips!" Thus, he simultaneously controlled his anger, and fulfilled the *mitzvah* of honoring one's father. As the quintessential *Baal Mussar*, R' Yisroel Yakov knew well that the

antidote for *ka'as* is humility and kindness. He practiced these traits gloriously throughout his entire life.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov found unique ways to practice humility and kindness. While serving as Rav, he would walk the few miles to the railroad station to help people carry their packages to town, as they could not afford to hire a horse and buggy. Local people refused his help, but strangers, not realizing that a Torah giant was serving as their volunteer porter, gladly accepted his offer. While walking with them to town, R' Yisroel Yakov would use the opportunity to strengthen their faith and trust in Hashem.

◣ It was the duty of the *shammash* of Baranovich to light the shul's oven early every morning. The *shammash* was slack in his duties, tending to rely on the overnight beggars to keep the oven burning. If there weren't any beggars, however, the shul would remain freezing, and complaints would abound. Soon, the oven was found burning hot every morning. No one suspected that R' Yisroel Yakov was doing the job!

One morning, the *shammash* walked in as R' Yisroel Yakov's head was in the oven, blowing to try and ignite the wet firewood. Thinking he was a beggar, the *shammash* gave R' Yisroel Yakov a friendly kick. Knowing how ashamed the *shammash* would feel if he knew it was him, R' Yisroel Yakov stuck his head deeper into the oven. The smoke was burning his eyes and choking his lungs – but he would not remove his head until the *shammash* walked away. By the time he escaped from the shul, half of his beard had burned off!

◣ **R' Yisroel Yakov Lubchansky** was regarded as one of the key figures in the entire yeshiva world in the pre-WWII generation. He was so highly revered in the Novardok Yeshiva, that his appearance at their annual assembly, held in Bialystok on the Alter of Novardok's yahrzeit, was regarded as a special event.

◣ His love for the yeshiva's students was boundless. As lofty as R' Yisroel Yakov was, he regarded each of his much younger students

as a great person. Dozens of students found food and shelter each day in his home, all at R' Yisroel Yakov's personal expense. No one in need of attention escaped his sensitive and caring eyes. Once, a shy youngster entered his home, as fifteen other students sat eating at the table. R' Yisroel Yakov, noticing the young boy slinking away to the corner, approached him with a water-filled mug and soothingly said, "Go and wash for the meal."

◣ His students will never forget R' Yisroel Yakov walking "long miles" up and down the aisles of the Baranovich Yeshiva for hours, biting his lips. The severity of a student's misconduct could be determined by the intensity of the Mashigiach's lip-biting during the rebuke.

◣ A person's dignity was priceless to him. He would avoid the slightest disrespect even to the youngest student. R' Yisroel Yakov would ask forgiveness from a student, in public, if he felt he had overreacted to some misconduct.

◣ Despite his extreme modesty, R' Yisroel Yakov showed firm resolution when upholding the Torah's honor. At the dedication of a new yeshivah building, R' Yisroel Yakov was called upon to speak immediately after a local Jewish activist, who had once been principal of the secular Jewish school. R' Yisroel Yakov refused to speak, saying, "At least some line of demarcation should have been drawn. They should first call upon a flour miller from the market, and then have me speak."

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov was once informed that a youth affair involving immodest activities was being planned, to raise a large sum for *Linas Hatzedek*, the local organization that benefited the sick. At that time, a respected Jewish lay leader, R' Eliyahu Shmuel Zackheim, had passed away. When eulogizing him at the *levayah*, which the majority of the community attended, R' Yisroel Yakov cried out, "Until now the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) found work for itself in Paris or in other similar places. Now, it seeks to attach itself to entities of holiness, such as the *Linas Hatzedek* (of Baranovitch), and to render it a 'mitzvah performed by transgression.'" His words

created a furor, and the affair was canceled. On the following Shabbos, he exhorted the townspeople to donate generously to the *Linas Hatzedek* and thereby negate the necessity of raising funds by such unworthy means.

◣ As he and his wife were childless, one could see the extra effort R' Yisroel Yakov would make to show her respect and honor. Once, the Rebbitzen put kerosene, instead of cooking oil, into the Shabbos cholent. The ever-present students at the table excused themselves politely, in various ways, for not eating. R' Yisroel Yakov ate his entire portion, purposely praising the cholent, and asking for seconds and thirds. By then, the Rebbitzen discovered her mistake, and grabbing the plate away from him, said, "Why are you all of a sudden so hungry for cholent? I have yet something else to serve in honor of the Shabbos!" Not a word was mentioned about the terrible mistake.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov could say a *shmuess* for long hours, always touching the listener's *neshomoh*. The climax of his *shmuessen* came every week right after *Shalosh Se'udos*, when he would reveal his genius in understanding of human character. Close to 500 students and many communal laymen would sit enveloped in darkness, as he tore apart their egos, and then tore at their *neshomos*. He would then call out, "Let's all together ask loudly, **לב טהור ברא לי אלקים ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי** – *Create in me a pure heart, oh Hashem, and renew a righteous spirit in me.*" The assembled called out in unison from deep within their souls. Then, still in darkness, they would daven *Maariv*, which was akin to *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur. R' Elchonon Wasserman, the Rosh HaYeshivah, sat in the back, amongst the assembled. When the lights went on, there was not a dry eye in the entire *beis medrash*.

Usually there was a puddle of tears on the windowsill near where R' Elchonon had been leaning. As one student, Reb Chaim Shapiro, said, "One who never heard R' Yisroel Yakov say *hisorerus*, has never heard his *neshomo* cry!"

◣ Sometimes R' Yisroel Yakov would enter the *beis medrash* in the middle of the night, open the *Aron Kodesh*, and thrust his head inside, breaking into sobbing. He would be praying for a student who did not yet possess a burning desire for Torah study, or one who was excessively distracted by his inclinations.

◣ While he served as Rav in Baranovitch, R' Yisroel Yakov delivered public addresses. Once, while davening *Mincha* just prior to one such address, a brilliant idea flashed across his mind. He longed to incorporate this thought into his lecture. However, while still in Novardok, he had resolved to discard any idea that occurred to him during davening, especially during *Shemone Esrei*. He thus omitted the new idea, but nevertheless felt his mind opening up as other new and splendid ideas gushed forth. He delivered one of the best discourses of his life.

◣ His self-effacement in the presence of R' Elchonon Wasserman was a Torah lesson in itself. When R' Elchonon asked him to learn together *b'chavrusa,* R' Yisroel Yakov was so overawed that he sat silently the entire time. R' Elchonon, wanting an active "give and take" learning session, terminated their *chavrusa* arrangement. R' Yisroel would humbly remark that he had been "fired" by R' Elchonon. The reverence of R' Elchonon for R' Yisroel Yakov was mutual. When R' Yisroel Yakov was dancing at the *sheva brachos* of R' Chaim Shmuelvitz (Rosh Yeshiva of Mir), R' Elchonon bent down and kissed the corner of R' Yisroel Yakov's frock coat.

◣ At the outbreak of WWII, R' Yisroel Yakov escaped with the yeshiva students to Vilna, and subsequently to other smaller towns. Heroically, he continued to shoulder the burden of maintaining the yeshiva. When he learned that the communists were searching for him, he secretly fled to Kovno.

There, in the Kovno ghetto, with his steadfast faith and lofty personality, he strengthened and encouraged the suffering people. Incredibly, his face radiated joy and gladness. When asked why he seemed so happy, he replied, "I am by nature a coward, but why

should someone else suffer because of me? So, I try to suppress my fears and look cheerful so as not to demoralize others." He continued to exhibit a cheerful appearance until the very day he was executed by the Nazis y"s.

◣ The last time his student, Reb Chaim Shapiro, saw him was in Slobodka. Reb Chaim had escaped from Vilna, and en route to his home in Lomza, had stopped in Slobodka to rest. He was surprised to find the *beis medrash* empty, but nevertheless, sat down there to rest. Suddenly he heard someone calling to him from the shadows, warning him to escape as the communists would come to arrest anyone they found in the *beis medrash*.

Reb Chaim quickly ran out into the street. From a distance, he saw someone walking alongside the outside of the Slobodka Yeshiva. The way he was walking looked unmistakably familiar. Yes – it was R' Yisroel Yakov! How could he forget his unique way of walking; he had watched him walk those "long miles" down the aisles of the yeshiva as he bit his lips! He ran over and found his beloved Mashgiach wearing a plain leather cap, instead of his usual rabbinic black hat, obviously in disguise to avoid arrest.

When R' Yisroel Yakov saw his beloved student, unchecked tears rolled copiously into his beard. He bit his lips so strongly that his lips bled. With little time to exchange words due to the ever-present danger, he asked Reb Chaim where he was headed. When Reb Chaim relayed that he was escaping to his home, R' Yisroel Yakov blessed him, "Run quickly! Run *l'chaim u'l'shalom*!" Reb Chaim quickly ran away. He felt strongly that it had been the Mashgiach who, in his typical fatherly way, had warned him to escape from the *beis medrash*; and it was the Mashgiach's heartfelt *brocha* that helped him to survive the subsequent grueling four years of war.

R' Yisroel Yakov ztk"l ben R' Chaim Leib was killed Al Kiddush Hashem in 1941, around this time of year. May Hashem avenge his blood.

● **מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך – *From your land, from your relatives and from your father's house*** (12:1)

Nesivos Shalom notes that the stages of disengagement are listed in reverse order of their chronological sequence. One first leaves his father's home, then his hometown and extended family and only afterwards, his land. Why is the order reversed?

First Avraham had to distance himself from the spiritually contaminating influences of his land. Then he had to separate himself from the negative traits of the immediate surroundings of his native habitat. Last, and most difficult, Avraham had to free himself from all vestiges of his father's home – the place which had the greatest impact on his values and personality. Thus, the Torah lists Avraham's challenges in ascending order of difficulty. Only after extricating himself from all these influences could Avraham begin the process of becoming a great nation. (The Torah Treasury)

● **אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל... – *I will not keep even a thread or shoe strap*** (14:23).

Our Sages state (Chullin 89a): "As reward for having said, 'I will not keep even a thread or a shoe strap,' Avraham's children received two *mitzvos*: the string of *techeiles* that is placed on the *tzitzis*, and the *tefillin* strap."

Rashi explains: The reason that Avraham did not wish to accept anything from the king of Sodom was because he did not want to derive any benefit from stolen goods. He was duly rewarded with the *mitzvos* of *tzitzis* and *tefillin*.

The Meshech Chochmah (R' Meir Simcha of Dvinsk) suggests that perhaps this is the reason that we don *tallis* and *tefillin* specifically during *Shacharis*, as this was the *tefillah* instituted by Avraham Avinu. (A Shabbos Vort)



Parnassah

The Agra d'Kalah says **אברם** is roshei teivos **מחשבות בלב רבות איש**, "*There are many thoughts in man's heart.*" (Mishlei 19:21). People are constantly thinking up ideas of how to amass wealth. **ועצת ה' היא תקום** we should follow Hashem's counsel and engage in the parnassah that He prepared for us.



Avram's name was changed to **אברהם**. The extra **ה** can be written out fully in three ways: **ה״י, ה״א, ה״ה**. The filler letters spell **הי״א**, and the **Shlah HaKadosh** explains that it comes from the pasuk **וַעֲצַת ה' הִיא תָקוּם**.

The roshei teivos of **הי״א** are **אם ירצה ה'**, "If Hashem wills it." - So, instead of **רַבּוֹת מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלֶב אִישׁ**, many thoughts of how to earn parnassah, follow **עֲצַת ה'** – Hashem's counsel, the parnassah He prepared for you, **הי״א** , *im yirtzeh Hashem*, **תקום**, that will be enough for you to earn your parnassah.

מגן אברהם - Bitachon

Avraham battled four powerful kings, and he allowed himself to be thrown in the furnace at Ur Kasdim rather than bow down to idols. He did dangerous things, but he had a high level of bitachon, and he trusted that Hashem would protect and save him.

Hashem told Avraham (Bereishis 15:1) **אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך**, "*Do not fear, Avram, I will protect you.*"

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explained that **אנכי מגן לך** (and the brachah **מגן אברהם**) means that Hashem will always protect the pintele Yid, the spark of Judaism, that is embedded in every Yid.

Even if one committed many severe aveiros, rachmana litzlan, there remains a part of the Yid's soul that is pure and holy. Hashem protects that spark that it should never be extinguished.

The Gemara (Succah 29.) says the Jewish nation is compared to the moon. **The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt'l** noted that the moon is always there, only sometimes we don't see it. Similarly, the spark of a Yid is always present, only sometimes it is concealed, and cannot be detected. But the holiness is there, his spark can be ignited, and then he will return with teshuvah sheleimah.

The Abudarham (motzei Shabbos) says that the entire chapter (Tehillim 91) **יושב בסתר** doesn't have the letter **זיי"ן**. - This chapter discusses bitachon, and it hints that when one has bitachon, he doesn't need **כלי זיין**, weapons. - His enemies will fall before him in the merit of his bitachon.

Zera Kodesh writes that people think they must be tzaddikim to have bitachon. They know their aveiros, they feel unworthy, so they believe that bitachon doesn't apply to them. "This thought comes from the yetzer hara, but it isn't so. Hashem is kind to the good and to the bad. **בטחון** means **טח**, to paste, to connect oneself to Hashem."

We aren't on Avraham's high level of emunah and bitachon, but we should strive to go in his ways as best as possible.

People asked the **Chofetz Chaim's** son-in-law what attribute of his father-in-law impressed him the most. He replied that it was his tranquility. Even when the Chofetz Chaim went through difficult times, he never lost his peace of mind. And this is because of his emunah in Hashem.

Rebbe Fishel Stripkover zt'l would say that Hashem can cause it to snow over an entire city just to test one bachur, to see whether he will wake up to learn Torah despite the cold.



הפרד נא מעלי *Let us separate*. (13:9)

The question is well-known. Avraham *Avinu* reached out to an entire pagan world in order to teach the people the verities of monotheism. He converted many. His nephew and close disciple, Lot, was one of these many souls whom Avraham brought closer to Hashem. Yet, when Lot manifested an attitude that was inappropriate; when his ethical standards came into opposition with those of Avraham, the Patriarch bid him, "Good day," and separated himself from him.

Why did Avraham have patience for everyone (certainly his pagan candidates left much to be desired), but not Lot? Why was Avraham so firm in demanding that he and his nephew part ways? Furthermore, it is not as if Avraham were unaware of Lot's moral and ethical shortcomings. Yet, he reached out to him, because he had hoped that perhaps he would succeed in convincing him to alter his deviant lifestyle. Lot's actions came as no surprise to Avraham. Why did he make such an about-face and divorce himself from his nephew? Does a disagreement among their herdsmen warrant such a harsh reaction?

Horav Moshe Neriyah, zl, addresses the source of the controversy between Lot's and Avraham's shepherds. *Va'yehi riv bein roei mikneh Avram u'bein roei mikneh* Lot, "There was quarrelling between the herdsmen of Avram's cattle and those of Lot's cattle" (ibid 13:18). *Chazal* describe the nature of this controversy: The animals of (belonging to) Avraham *Avinu* would go out muzzled (for fear that they might eat from the fields of others without permission), while the animals belonging to Lot were not muzzled." Lot's herdsmen excused their actions, claiming, "Hashem told Avraham, 'To your seed, I will give this Land' (ibid 12:7). Avraham is barren, unable to

have children. He will pass from this world and Lot, his nephew, will be his heir. The animals are eating from their own." Alternatively, when Avraham's shepherds accused Lot's shepherds of stealing, they would respond, "Stealing? You are the ones that are acting inappropriately by depriving animals of a proper, nutritious meal. You keep them muzzled, thereby not permitting them to eat more, when it actually belongs to them."

We see from the arrogant manner in which Lot's herdsmen presented their claim to whatever produce their animals ate, that it was not simply "them" talking. They had a "*rebbe,*" mentor, who *paskened*, ruled, and guided them. They followed their mentor's definition of right and wrong, proper and inappropriate. Apparently, if they were to permit themselves to allow their animals to eat from anywhere they chose, it would be with Lot's direction and blessing.

Rav Neriyah sees this not as a case of petty theft, but rather, as the espousal of a perverted and malignant ideology which permitted them to do and take what they wanted because, after all, one day it would all be theirs.

In other words, Lot's herdsmen implied: "We follow the direction of our mentor, Lot, not Avraham." Once Lot had become a "*rav*" and a "*posek,*" it was too dangerous for Avraham to be in his proximity.

The time had arrived for *Hipared nah meialai*, "Let us separate." Lot's further actions indicated that it was much more than a momentary difference of opinion. Lot was opposing Avraham across the board, because he now believed in himself and in his ability to define and determine what was right and what was wrong. He was not privy to Avraham's standards. He was doing it <u>his</u> way. He had his own standards. He was his own *rav* and *posek*.

It is sad how today we see that the more things change, the more they really stay the same.

ויאמר אליו אני ד' אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים And He (Hashem) said to him, "I am G-d Who brought you out of Uhr Kasdim." (15:7)

The fact that the Torah does not mention the miracle of Avraham *Avinu* being spared from death in Uhr Kasdim, except in passing, begs elucidation. Hashem just says, "I am G-d Who brought you out of Uhr Kasdim" – nothing at all about saving him from certain death. Apparently, as far as our Patriarch was concerned, Uhr Kasdim was not much of a *nisayon*, test, for him. Why?

Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, zl, explains that Avraham *Avinu* lived his life on the ultimate spiritual plateau of *V'chai bahem*, "By which he shall live" (*Vayikra* 18:5). This teaches that one's entire life should be dedicated to living for Torah and *mitzvos*. Nothing may stand in the way of *mitzvah* performance. Without *kiyum haTorah*, Torah fulfillment, he has no life.

The *mitzvah* of *V'chai bahem* was not given with regard to idolatry. In other words, when one is confronted with the choice of worshipping an idol or relinquishing his life, it is not actually a choice. In either event the individual has no life. Worshipping an idol is equivalent to death. When Avraham was confronted with the choice of death or idolatry – it was no choice, no test. For Avraham, this was a choice akin to death by sword or firing squad. In any event, the result would be the same. Thus, the *nisayon* of Uhr Kasdim is not mentioned, since, for Avraham, it was no *nisayon*.

Reb Yehudah Diner Shlita, rav of beis medresh Divrei Shir, Bnei Brak, observed that when people are worried or upset, they ask למה, "Why did this occur?" or מה יהיה, "What will be?"

The gematriya of למה is 75, as is are the words מה יהיה. The solution is בטחון, which is also gematriya 75.

ויאמר אברם אל לוט אל נא תהי מריבה ביני ובינך... כי אנשים אחים אנחנו... הפרד נא מעלי *And Avram said to Lot, "Please let there be no discord, please, between me and you… for we are kinsmen (men who are brothers)… Please separate from me."* (13:8,9)

It appears that the reason for them to separate from one another was their kinship. If they were not kinsmen, would discord have been more acceptable? Strife is strife – discord devastates – controversy destroys. Does it make a difference if the fight is between brothers or two unrelated individuals? *Chazal* (cited by *Rashi*) teach that Avraham *Avinu* and Lot had similar countenances. Does it make a difference whether or not they looked alike?

The simple explanation is that Avraham was concerned with the fact that he and Lot looked the same. Imagine, one day Avraham is seen in the *bais hamedrash*, *davening* with fervor, learning diligently with great passion. When he leaves the *bais hamedrash*, he can be found carrying out acts of *chesed* for all people. Avraham appears to be an unceasing powerhouse of spiritual activity – until the next day, when he is seen wobbly leaving the bar, paying a visit to the local house of idol worship, etc. People begin to wonder: Is Avraham for real? Is he a chameleon who changes his image to suit himself? Avraham told Lot: "I have a lofty, spiritual mission to reach out to humanity and teach the world about Hashem. If my reputation is sullied as a result of our matching appearances, people will view me in a negative light and, consequently, ignore anything that I might have to say."

Our Patriarch was simply being realistic. Alternatively, *Pardes Yosef* explains that when two opponents argue and one is an undisputed *tzaddik*, righteous person, and the other is unquestionably a *rasha*, wicked, a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name, is unlikely to occur. People will simply assume that the *tzaddik* represents all that is good and just, while the *rasha* represents evil, those who would destroy anything spiritually positive in Jewish life. When the positions are clear, people assume that the *tzaddik* was compelled to take a stand

against those who would usurp Torah and *mitzvos*. When the lines of demarcation are blurred, however, when both sides present themselves as exponents of Orthodoxy, fighting for what is right and just, a strong possibility exists that a desecration of Hashem's Name will result. Clearly, both of them cannot be righteous. One must be a fraud. Such talk, although possibly incorrect, is damaging and plants the seeds for a *chillul Hashem*.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, suggests another approach toward understanding why the fact that Avraham and Lot were family, that brotherly sentiments existed between them, was, in and of itself, sufficient reason for separating from one another. When Hashem instructed Avraham to uproot himself, leave his home, his birthplace, his community and his family, Avraham took Lot along with him. Why? Was Lot not part of his family? Was he not supposed to leave his family?

Lot was a nephew. That is family. Apparently, he took Lot because Lot, as a student, was so subservient to him that Avraham viewed Lot to be a part of his own household – not a member of his father's household. Hashem told Avraham to leave his father's household. Lot was a member of <u>his</u> family.

All this was good and true if Lot remained Avraham's student. When an issue arose, Lot did not offer an opinion. Whatever Avraham said was sufficient. He did not have his own opinion. Everything went in accordance with Avraham's ruling.

Once Lot became his own spokesman, when he no longer refrained from offering his personal opinion, even differing with Avraham, as was the case in their present discord, Lot reverted to becoming part of Avraham's father's household. He was no longer family. *Anashim achim anachnu*, "We are kinsmen," both members of my father's household. We are on an equal basis. That is sufficient reason for separation.

ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן *And the souls they made in Charan*. (12:5)

Avraham *Avinu* made souls – so did Sarah *Imeinu* – each focusing on members of his or her own specific gender. Developing the spiritual qualities of their students and leading them to belief in the Almighty was much more than spiritual refinement. It was a process by which Avraham and Sarah transformed their students, actually made them anew. They developed the potential of each student, bringing it to the surface. They accomplished this through the medium of *mitzvah* performance, which teaches us that every act of *mitzvah* performance is transformative, capable of altering a Jew's overall essence.

In *Pirkei Avos* (5:22), *Chazal* distinguish between the students of Avraham and those of Bilaam *harasha*, the evil one. Avraham's *talmidim*, students, were identifiable by their good eye, humble spirit and meek soul. Those who possessed the opposite – a greedy soul, an arrogant spirit and an evil eye – were students of Bilaam.

In his commentary to *Parashas Balak*, the ***Sfas Emes*** wonders why one requires the services of a *rebbe* to teach bad/negative *middos*, character traits. No pedagogical process is necessary. All one needs to do is remain in the proximity of an unrefined, uncouth, self-centered, evil person – and those traits will eventually rub off. It sounds almost as if one must "learn" these negative *middos*, when, in reality, it should be understood that one who does not strive to develop good/positive character traits will invariably develop negative ones!

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, teaches us a critical lesson in Torah *chinuch*. *Chazal* are not addressing the teaching of *middos*, but rather, the learning of *chochmah*, wisdom, from a *rebbe*. One must be acutely aware that separating the educational material from the personality of the *rebbe* is impossible. Thus, when one studies wisdom from a mentor whose *middos* are vulgar, insensitive,

discourteous, iniquitous and revolting (just to mention a few), his mentor's deficiencies will rub off on him.

When one manifests good *middos*, it indicates that he has studied under a *rebbe* who possesses refined character traits. Someone who possesses negative character traits attests to the inferior ethical and moral quality of his mentor. Avraham's students were walking advertisements for the *Rebbe* and institution in which he mentored the students. Likewise, those who attended Bilaam's school of wisdom demonstrated by their very behavior who their mentor was.

This is a powerful lesson to parents from a *Rosh Yeshivah* who transformed the lives of thousands of students: the establishment of an appropriate environment through the influence of a mentor, friends (who also mentor) is an essential aspect of the educational development of a child. It is not only all about learning. It is about who your child's mentor is that often determines the direction the child will take in life.

ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן *And the souls they made in Charan*. (12:5)

Avraham *Avinu* was the *amud ha'chesed*, pillar of kindness. What was his greatest kindness?

It was reaching out to people and teaching them about Hashem. To save a person from the clutches of idol worship and inculcate him with belief in monotheism is the greatest act of kindness, because this person has been saved – not only spiritually, but physically as well.

We involve ourselves in all forms of *chesed* projects, but the most basic act of reaching out to our estranged brethren seems to elude us. This is especially true if the subject is in an environment that is foreign to us or does not sit well with our sensitivities. People that are in restricted environments; those who are unwell and infirm; those who are victims of various forms of abuse and addiction: are

at the bottom of the list of those whom we are prepared to help. When our acts of *chesed* are prefixed with dollar signs, a preference criteria of whom we will help and when – our *chesed* is really self-focused and not worth very much. Avraham *Avinu* set the standards for *chesed;* he had no criteria and no preferences. He reached out to everyone, whenever, and wherever and whomever needed him.

Why is it that many observant, good people, who are well-meaning and sensitive, shy away from acts of *chesed* to those who just do not fit in their comfort zones? For some reason, we Jews have the ability to live a life filled with contradictions. Some will call this modern or centrist, when, in fact, it is a life of contradictions. We will go out of our way to perform acts of kindness, but, if the beneficiary does not fit into our guidelines for humanity, we will defer to others – at times, those who are not observant.

I read about the funeral arrangements for Cardinal Jean-Marie Listiger, the long-time Archbishop of France. He was a confidante of Pope John Paul II and had risen to a pinnacle in the Catholic Church, a level which is attained by only a select few. So what was so special about this? People work diligently and remain focused on achieving a specific goal; is it that strange if they make it?

This would be true had Cardinal Listiger been born a devout Catholic. He was, however, born a Jew! As a fourteen-year-old boy, he hid in a convent in France while his mother was murdered in Auschwitz. It is well-known that he kept his parents' *yahrzeits* and even recited *Kaddish* for them. He asked that the *Kaddish* be recited for him at his funeral in front of Notre Dame! Now, that is a contradiction! Was he the first to live a life of contradiction? Certainly not, and, sad to say, he was not the last.

Chesed is founded upon the principle of care, sensitivity, empathy; its basic foundation does not allow for the "convenience" of contradiction. Yet, there are those whose attitude toward *chesed* is filled with contradictions. If they are following the standard set

forth by our Patriarch, then they had better check their GPS. Our Patriarch was *yashar*, straight, and did not sway or wane in his commitment. Why do we?

At times, the most difficult question can be elucidated with a simple answer. I think the greatest *chesed* that we can perform for someone is to attempt to figure out what makes him tick, what drives him to act in a different manner. In other words, are we prepared to understand and accept another person's situation? True, he may act in a weird manner, but he might have a good reason for his strange behavior.

The fellow that has been locked away for various felonies, both moral and ethical, which might make us cringe (and they should!) or infringe upon our sensibilities, has a criminal history and pathology that have brought him to this stage. Perhaps if we try to comprehend his situation, we might understand his mindset. This, I think is the greatest act of *chesed*. This is empathy at its apex. While this might be the author's personal perspective, it has been inspired by an incredible story.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski relates that when he was the resident psychiatrist in a large state hospital, this hospital catered primarily to hundreds of mentally challenged patients. At times, medical students came to see and study cases, which, although they may have been discussed in psychiatric literature, were to be found only in such a resident facility.

He took the group to the chronic care building, where they housed the most difficult cases, i.e., the patients who were hardest to reach. He introduced them to the unit's senior resident, a man who had spent the last 52 years in the hospital. He was presently 69 years old.

The patient, whom we will call "Sam," had not spoken a word in 52 years. Other than his daily routine, which consisted of a weird practice, he seemed docile and harmless.

Every day, following breakfast, he would walk to a corner of the community room and assume a strange position on the floor, his body erect and his hands directed upward. It almost looked as if he were holding up something invisible. He remained in this position until lunch, after which he would return until dinner and thereafter until bedtime. This had gone on every day for the last 52 years. No therapy, medication or innovative electric shock treatment had succeeded in altering his behavior. No amount of convincing could get him to sit down on a chair in a normal manner – except for meals.

During the visit, one of the medical students asked for permission to speak to the patient. Although he wondered what impact the student's conversation could have on the patient, if decades of variegated psychiatric treatment had proven fruitless, nonetheless, Rabbi Twerski said, "Certainly, go for it."



The student went over to the patient, smiled, and said, "Why don't you sit down for a bit? I will take over." The man looked at the student with his blank look – no words, no smile, no recognition. The student then assumed the same contorted position of the patient, perfectly paralleling his posture, and repeated, "Why not sit down now? I will take over for you." Without a word, for the first time in fifty-two years, the patient left his position and sat down in a chair!

What happened? First and foremost, there is no rationale to explain the behavior of one who is mentally challenged. We do not know for certain what is going on in his mind.

Rabbi Twerski concluded, however, that, quite possibly, this man believed that the world was going to fall and he alone was able to

support it. Clearly, when one carries such an awesome responsibility on his shoulders, no entreaty will move him to let go – until someone else relieves him. The fact that he took meal breaks and sleeping time off – well, I said there is no rhyme or reason to the actions of such a person.

For fifty-two years, this man was dismissed as insane. No one ever bothered getting into his mind, attempting to reach out and give him some consideration. He was labeled as strange and left to rot for half a century. It took the compassion and sensitivity of the medical student to make the attempt to get into the patient's mind in order to try to understand what made him tick – differently. Furthermore, finally, a connection was established between a mind that had wavered off, that was no longer cogent, and one what was rational. Sadly, it was five decades too late.

Let us take this one step further. There is a gap between *frum*, observant, and non-observant. Gaps exist within the observant camp with some who seek to modernize, revolutionize the hallowed traditions and *halachos* to which we have adhered throughout the millennia. A gap exists between young and old, "off the *derech*" teens and mainstream *yeshivishe, chassidish*, young people.

While in no way shall we shift one iota from our beliefs, we might attempt to use compassion and common sense to peer into their minds, understand the pathologies, environment, and backgrounds from which they hail, or where they have regrettably made their home, in order to see that our differences are not necessarily ideological in nature, but rather, the result of insecurity, lack of self-esteem for various reasons, abuse and simply a lack of education.

Chesed begins at home. If we were to delve into the home and background of those with whom we differ, we might be surprised to discover that there is a "method to their madness."

וילך אברם כאשר דבר אליו ד' וילך אתו לוט *So Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him*. (12:4)

Lot was Avraham *Avinu's* nephew, whom the Patriarch took in and supported following the untimely death of his brother, Haran, at the hands of Nimrod. Nimrod had his followers throw Avraham into a fiery furnace. He challenged Haran to choose between Nimrod and Avraham. Haran wanted to "hedge" his bets, first waiting to see what would happen to Avraham before he made his choice. If Avraham would emerge from the furnace unscathed, then Haran would support him. If Avraham would suffer a tragic death, then Haran was not interested in adding to the toll. He would then support Nimrod.

When Avraham miraculously emerged from the flames, Haran sided with him, and he was promptly flung into the furnace. Since Haran's commitment was contingent on being spared – not on his conviction – he was not saved. He did not enjoy the same results as did his brother, Avraham. Nonetheless, since he died *al Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying Hashem's Name, he merited Lot, the son who would be the link in the Messianic dynasty, from which Rus and then David *Hamelech* would emerge.

We understand why Avraham left his land and family. Hashem commanded him to leave. This was one of his *nisyonos*, trials. Why did Lot go along? It was Avraham's trial – not Lot's. Lot left everything to follow Avraham to a yet to be determined destination. Avraham had no idea where he was going, and, by extension, neither did Lot. In the end, as a result of Lot's tagging along, he eventually split with Avraham and went to Sodom, where Avraham later saved him. As a later caveat, he fathered two sons, from whom descended Rus *Ha'Moviah* and Naamah *Ha'Amonis* – all because he accompanied Avraham.

This does not explain Lot's original motivation in deciding to accompany Avraham.

Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, quotes the ***Sefas Emes*** who posits that Lot merited to be a link in the chain that leads to *Moshiach* solely because his father, Haran, died *al Kiddush Hashem*. Now Lot saw all of this: Avraham lived; his father Haran died. He deduced that, for the rest of his life, he would follow Avraham, because he had demonstrated his full commitment to Hashem. Avraham was deeply committed to Lot's welfare. Thus, even though Hashem did not appear to Avraham as long as Lot was in in his proximity, Avraham felt that he could not turn his back on his nephew.

It was Lot who ultimately ceded from Avraham. While he did maintain <u>some</u> *emunah*, faith in Hashem, it was insufficient to sustain him in the long run. At some point, his faith gave out.

Emunah is translated as faith. It is the unwavering belief in the Almighty – and only in the Almighty. It is an inherent conviction, a perception of truth that transcends reason. One who is a *maamin*, believer, is certain. He believes even when reason gives up or his belief is beyond rationale. Some people have *emunah peshutah*, simple faith, which means they rely on the faith of others. Their conviction is solid, but not profound.

Some have a level of *emunah* in which the believer feels this truth to be part of himself, of his essence and being. Thus, such a person will readily relinquish his life for his conviction, because essentially his life is his *emunah*. (Obviously, this subject extends far beyond the parameters of this paper.)

Horav Mordechai Pogremonsky, zl, was one of the greatest *illuyim*, geniuses, of the last century, who was introduced to Torah study at the age of fourteen. It was ***Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl***, who discovered him and brought him to Kelm. Shortly thereafter he went to Telshe, where he grew in learning. He visited a number of *yeshivos* for the purpose of absorbing the essence of each one and integrating its distinct approach to *avodas hakodesh*, service to the Almighty, into his own *avodas Hashem*. His learning experience

extended as well to *Chassidus*, but ultimately he employed the teaching of ***Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl***, to be his guide to life.

Between his Torah genius, which enabled him to consume and absorb the depth of *Torah She'B'ksav* and *She'Baal Peh*, Written and Oral law with its commentaries, and his deep-rooted yearning to refine himself to better serve Hashem, *Rav* Mottel (as he was reverently called) became the exemplar of a Torah Jew, a scholar without peer.



He was totally immersed in Torah and *avodah*, service, of the Almighty. His *emunah* in Hashem was his reality. To him, the Torah was a living reality. When he studied, he was one with the Torah.

During the war, *Rav* Mordechai was incarcerated in the Kovno Ghetto. It was there that his commitment to Torah, *halachah* and *avodas Hashem* were evident. He demonstrated them on a regular basis. He never sat on a chair in the ghetto, sitting instead on a large stone which he had designated for his own personal use. He explained that all the furniture in the ghetto had previously been owned by other Jews, everyone's personal effects had been jumbled together. Thus, he had no way of ascertaining to whom any given piece of furniture belonged. Any chair might belong to a Jew who was still alive and had hopes of one day retrieving his possessions. Whoever used that chair was a thief.

Despite the intense tribulations to which the Jews interred in the ghetto were subjected, *Rav* Mordechai's *emunah* remained firm and unwavering. He once declared to a group of Jews, "What do you see when you look around? You see German soldiers and the ghetto walls which surround us. I see only Hashem, our eternal Protector,

guarding us and watching over us. That guard could lift his rifle and shoot us all – and nothing would happen to him. What is preventing him from killing us? Hashem! He does not allow him to hurt us."

On another occasion, he turned to a *yeshivah* student in the ghetto and asked, "What do you think Hashem wants from us at this time?" When no immediate response was forthcoming, *Rav* Mordechai said, "He wants us to <u>feel</u> that, without His help, we would not exist for one moment."

Twice, he escaped from the jaws of death. On the first occasion, the Nazis raided the ghetto, searching for all adult men. *Rav* Mordechai hid behind a door in an upstairs room and went undetected, <u>despite</u> the fact that they searched the area multiple times. He said, "I just spent the entire time focusing on *Ein od milvado;* There is no other (entity) than Him."

The second occasion took place in 1945, when the Germans, fearing the Russian Army, attempted to liquidate the ghetto of its Jewish inmates. They were bent on annihilating every last Jew.

Rav Mordechai was living in an attic together with his student, ***Rav Avraham Yitzchak Winkelstein, zl***, and a few others. The Nazis demolished building after building and murdered its residents who had somehow stayed alive until then. *Rav* Mordechai was about to flee, but *Rav* Avraham Yitzchak encouraged him to stay. He listened. The Nazis demolished the entire building except for one pillar, which, unbeknownst to them, supported the attic. Satisfied that no one could have survived the demolition, the Nazis left, allowing for the inhabitants of the attic to escape. The very next day, the Nazis returned and burned the building to the ground.

For the rest of his life, *Rav* Mordechai harbored a profound sense of gratitude to *Rav* Avraham Yitzchak. This was one more miracle in the life of a Torah giant who saw Hashem in every avenue, at every juncture, of his short life.

אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך. שכרך הרבה מאד *Fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you. Your reward shall be very great.* (15:1)



The words, "*Your reward shall be very great*," imply that not only is a reward waiting for Avraham Avinu, but the reward that had normally been stored away on his behalf was not diminished as a result of the miracles which were wrought for him. Why is this?

Yaakov Avinu feared that his z'chusim, merits, would be diminished as a result of Hashem's saving him from Eisav's reach. Why should Avraham be different? Indeed, is this not what reward is all about?

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, quoted by **Horav Boruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita**, compares this world to an upscale restaurant in which the food prices are commensurate with the surrounding ambience. A cup of coffee in a greasy drive-in will certainly be more economical than a cup of coffee served on china at a table, in a luxurious, carpeted dining room with beautiful paintings on the wall, accompanied by soft music piped in through a superior sound system.

Everything costs money. It might be the very same cup of coffee, but once it is served amid luxury, the price rises. Our world is a fancy restaurant which offers us every ambiance to accompany our enjoyment.

We must remember that the luxury does not come cheap. It costs, and we must pay. The more we enjoy, the more we pay. Therefore, tzaddikim, righteous people, who seem relegated to a life of frugality and are sustained on the bare minimum, are actually benefitting greatly. By sufficing with less, they gain more, because their reward/merit account has not diminished.

One exception exists to the "coffee in the upscale restaurant pricing" rule: the waiters. Someone who works at the establishment eats whatever he wants for free. Workers do not pay. Furthermore, nothing is deducted from their pay. It is usually one of the perks of employment.

This is what Hashem intimated to Avraham (explains the Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah): You have nothing to worry about. You are a company man. As a result of your extraordinary humility, you might consider yourself to be a guest who pays dearly for the food and other pleasures he receives.

You are wrong. As a man on a mission to elevate the glory of Heaven and teach a pagan world about monotheism, you are assisting in maintaining My world. You will not lose as a result of your material enjoyment.

Rav Yisrael teaches that in order for one to pass through this world and not have the benefits that he experiences have a depreciating effect on his merit account, he should become a company man and do whatever is in his power to raise the glory of Heaven, to reach out to Jews and bring them under the kanfei ha'Shechinah, the ways of the Divine Presence.

אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל ואם אקח מכל אשר לך ולא תאמר אני העשרתי את אברם ***I will not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap of what is yours; you shall not say, "It is I who made Avram rich." (14:23)***

Avraham *Avinu* refused to accept any material gifts from the king of Sodom. He was not interested in the pagan patting himself on the back knowing that he had increased Avraham's wealth. Yet, we do not find this same attitude when Pharaoh offered gifts. Avraham readily accepted them. Furthermore, when Avraham had an incident with Avimelech, in which the king sought to assuage his guilt, he, too, gave Avraham gifts, which the Patriarch also accepted. Why did he

refuse the gifts from the Sodomite king, yet accept the gifts proffered by Pharaoh and Avimelech?

Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita, explains that actually Avraham refused to accept gifts from all three kings. Pharaoh and Avimelech's gifts, however, were different in the sense that they constituted compensation for their mistreatment of Sarah *Imeinu*. Thus, they never viewed their gifts as altruistic renderings, but rather, as a form of appeasement to assuage their guilt feelings. Indeed, in Avimelech's case, it was a sort of remuneration for Avraham's prayer in his behalf that he be healed from the plagues that were his well-deserved punishment.

Avraham's acceptance of gifts from Avimelech and Pharaoh was actually a form of giving, since, by taking their gifts, he was basically granting them absolution for their revolting behavior. Indeed, using their own unique powers of deep insight, *gedolei Yisrael* are able to discern from whom to accept gifts and from whom not to.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* questions why, earlier in the *parsha*, Avraham comments that perhaps the Egyptians might give him presents when they leave. Even if he had had good reason to accept their "reparations," it should not have been something which he actively sought or to which he looked forward to receiving. This sounds inconsistent with the image of the Avraham *Avinu* that we have contrived up in our minds.

He cites the *pasuk* in *Chayei Sarah*, "*And to the children of the concubines that were to Avraham, he gave gifts and sent them away* (25:6)." *Rashi* explains that these were no ordinary gifts, but rather, everything that he received as a result of Sarah's stay in Egypt and Plishtim and other gifts, he gave them to them because he refused to derive any benefit from the pagans. Why did Avraham do this?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* asks further: How could Avraham give his material possessions away to the children of the concubines? His material possessions, having first belonged to him, incurred a degree

of *kedushah*, holiness, because they had served an *adam kadosh*, holy man. The material possessions of a holy person develop spiritual status as a result of their consecration for a higher purpose. This is all the more reason that Avraham certainly would not have wanted to share his possessions with the heathens.

This, explains the *Rosh Yeshivah*, is the reason that Avraham sought Pharaoh's and Avimelech's gifts. He did not accept them for personal use. He knew that he would have to leave something for the *bnei ha'plagshim*, and he refused to defile his consecrated possessions by giving them away to them. Thus, when he had the opportunity to benefit from Pharaoh and Sodom, he did so.

וגם ללוט ההלך את אברם היה צאן ובקר ואהלים *Also Lot who went with Avram had Flocks, cattle and tents. (13:5)*



The Torah relates that Lot, who was traveling with Avraham *Avinu*, was very wealthy. Since the Torah wastes no words, informing us of Lot's wealth hardly seems significant. Why does the Torah mention it, and what are we to learn from it?

Rashi explains that Lot's affluence was caused by his traveling with Avraham. How did *Rashi* understand that this is implied by the *pasuk*?

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, explains that every physical entity is a manifestation of a spiritual source. If Lot were wealthy, it could be traced back to its spiritual source. Lot's wealth was not created simply by chance or due to his astute business mind. His wealth was directly tied to his relationship with Avraham *Avinu*.

The following vignette echoes this concept. On one of his trips to the Diaspora, ***Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman****, Zt'l,* was asked if it were really necessary to have so many able-bodies young men studying Torah full-time in *Kollel*. First, it places a "strain" on the "working" community who are asked to do their share in supporting Torah study. Second, probably throughout most of our history, there was not nearly such a high percentage of young men devoting themselves to full-time Torah study.

Rav Shteinman replied that actually the question should be asked in the opposite way. Why do we need such a high percentage of wealthy Jews today, when, in fact, throughout our history, most of the Jewish People have been poor?

Rav Shteinman explained that the reason such affluence exists among the Jewish People is specifically because there are so many *bnei Torah* studying in *Kollel*. They require support to learn. Thus, Hashem has spread the wealth to a greater percentage of Jews – <u>for this purpose</u>. If there were to be fewer men learning Torah full-time – there would be no need for such wealth. Spiritual bounty generates financial prosperity. - Lot was blessed with material bounty because he traveled with Avraham. It is not as if Avraham lacked material assets. Lot, however, was blessed, so that he could share. - We should not make the mistake of thinking that Hashem blesses us so that we can build mansions and live in opulence. The money we have is for the specific purpose of sharing.

We all have something to share, whether we're wealthy or not. Maybe it's an invitation to a Shabbos meal, or maybe it's just a smile or a kind word. - Every one of us has something to give.

Imagine if we can work together, and open up the wellsprings of happiness, laughter and love, and make Klal Yisrael the nation it's supposed to be, the nation it really is. ~ R' Dovid Orlofsky.

וירק את חניכיו ילידי ביתו ***He armed his disciples who had been born in his house. (14:14)***

A war was to be waged in order to rescue Lot. Avraham *Avinu* wasted no time in gathering his students and setting out to the battlefield. Obviously, the Torah has a reason for relating this piece of history. Certainly, it is not to teach us about Avraham's physical prowess and his skill as a soldier and as a general.

Indeed, the image of our Patriarch that is presented in this *parshah* is blurred. On the one hand, *Chazal* teach that Avraham took hold of a hammer and smashed his father's idols. He followed this up by arming himself and going out to war against those who had taken Lot captive.

On the other hand, Avraham is the *amud ha'chesed*, Pillar of Kindness, the individual who reached out with love and sensitivity to a primitive, cruel, spiritually dispassionate world. He welcomed strangers and taught them the most important spiritual lesson: monotheism. All the while, he was sustaining them physically. What was Avraham? Was he kind and benevolent, or was he an extremist who lifted up the sword against those who acted improperly?

Truthfully, we find two individuals in the Torah who acted paradoxically: Avraham and Pinchas. Avraham was considered a *Kohen* to Hashem. While he became the beneficiary of the *Kehunah*, Priesthood, from Malkitzedek, who lost it due to his unsuitability, Pinchas earned the *Kehunah* due to his zealousness in avenging Hashem's Name.

Both became *Kohanim* after acting zealously. It all depends upon one's focus and mission statement. Avraham and Pinchas served Hashem with great devotion. Thus, whatever was necessary, whatever action had to be taken to ensure that Hashem's Name remain glorified – they took, regardless of how unpopular it might have made them.

ברך עלינו את השנה הזאת ***Bareich Aleinu es ha'shanah ha'zos.***



The *Zohar HaKadosh* teaches that *nitzotzos ha'kedushah*, holy sparks, which contain the Divine Light, are imbedded all over the physical world within *klipos*, shells, of impurity.

When one makes a *brachah* prior to food consumption, he releases these holy sparks which ultimately attach to him. If he does not make a blessing, or if the food lacks appropriate spiritual standards, the holiness disappears and the impurity of the *klipos* attach to the soul of the person who consumes this food. This ultimately causes him to wane in his service to Hashem, until he eventually completely turns his back on Hashem.

Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz, zl, contends that this might be the reason we observe people gravitating toward sinful behavior following a meal. Since they had not been careful in guarding the sanctity of the meal, the impurity of the food attaches to them. It is almost as if one who is about to drive to a place of sin stops to "fill up" with gas.

ויהי ריב בין רעי מקנה אברם ובין רעי מקנה לוט ***And there was a quarrel between the herdsmen of Avram's livestock, and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. (13:7)***

Avraham *Avinu's* cattle went out with their mouths muzzled, specifically so that they would not eat what did not belong to him. Lot did not seem to maintain this stringency. His animals ate whenever and wherever they pleased. This caused friction between the two. As a result, Avraham asked Lot to separate from him, to

choose any area that he pleased, and he would go elsewhere. This way they could remain "friends," and Lot could do as he pleased without suffering the pain and rebuke.

Rav Yosef B'chor Shor explains further that Avraham was concerned, "What would the neighbors say when they saw two close relatives quarrelling with one another?" This would create a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name, that such a devotee of Hashem as Avraham could quarrel. It just did not look good.

What was Avraham's concern? Anyone who knew Avraham and Lot was well aware of the intrinsic differences between the two. Furthermore, everyone was aware that Avraham's animals were muzzled, and Lot's were not. Why would anyone remotely think negatively of Avraham? Furthermore, Avraham *Avinu* had an inn that functioned 24/7 to welcome and assist travelers and anyone who was in need. Who would think that a person of such elevated moral standing would steal? Clearly, Lot would be considered the "bad guy" in this dispute.



Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, posits that human nature always veers to the negative. Thus, while they all knew that Avraham was righteous, an individual of impeccable character, if there was a vestige of negativity about him – however remote – they would believe it.

Rav Galinsky quotes the *Yerushalmi Yoma* 2:2, which teaches that *Rav* Yanai was compelled to do some work in his vineyard during *Chol Hamoed*, the Festival Intermediate Days, because it was a *davar ha'avud,* something which would otherwise be lost. Everyday labor is prohibited during the Intermediate Days unless it is for a *davar ha'avud*, which incurs a loss. Any thinking person would

realize that, if *Rav* Yanai was working on *Chol Hamoed,* it was a *davar ha'avud*. Nonetheless, everyone who observed this act of labor immediately went to work in their own vineyards. After all, the *Rav* was doing it – why not I?

The following year, he made his field *hefker*, relinquished ownership, so that there would not be any misunderstandings. Then, no one questioned his actions. Why?

Yalfi mikalkalta v'lo yalfi mitakanta, "People (choose to) learn from the misconduct and not from the repair." In other words, people tend to look for the negative; it is what they want (or, at least, have no problem) to believe.

A young father attending the private *minyan* of the ***Chazon Ish***, became very cross with his young son who was making noise during *davening*. The *Chazon Ish* later told the father, "Your son learned two lessons from you today: one should not make noise during *davening;* it is permissible to lose one's temper and become angry. Which one do you think he will remember?" Indeed, the *Chazon Ish* writes (*Emunah u'Bitachon*) that, if a *rebbe* has inappropriate *middos*, character traits, the students will be influenced by them – despite all of the other wonderful lessons he teaches them.

This is a powerful lesson for all of us. No one remembers the hard work, dedication, long hours, generosity and all of the positive contributions that a person has made – if it comes in contrast with one (albeit minor) error. Human nature is not perfect, and neither are people. Nonetheless, human nature tends to focus on the imperfection. It always makes a person feel good that he is better than someone else. This is especially true of those who only seek out the negative attributes in others, precisely because they realize that they have nothing positive to manifest about themselves.

וילך למסעיו *He proceeded on his journeys. (13:3)*

L'masaav, on his journeys, implies that Avraham *Avinu* took a specific, planned itinerary. It was not a haphazard trip. *Chazal* teach that our Patriarch lodged in the same places that hosted him on his original trip to Egypt.

Our sages derive a lesson in *mentchlichkeit*, human decency, proper etiquette, from this idea. One should stick to his usual lodgings. There is no reason, –nor is it appropriate – to switch from one's customary lodgings unless he has suffered harassment and anguish there. Otherwise, he inadvertently gives the impression that he was displeased with his lodgings, which could cause a financial loss to his host, or he discredits himself by having people think he is a difficult guest to please.

Alternatively, *Rashi* suggests that Avraham incurred charges during his original trip, relying on the good graces of the inn owners to extend credit to him. He now returned to pay his bills.

The *Baalei Mussar*, Ethical Masters, add that, when he left Charan, Avraham was not yet wealthy. Thus, he chose the simple, economically correct, motels as a place of lodging. On his return trip, he was a wealthy man who could have stayed in a five-star hotel. He did not waste his money on luxury. What was good for him earlier would suffice now. His bankbook might have grown, but <u>he</u> did not change. He found it necessary neither to compete with others nor to publicize his good fortune.

Rashi's pshat, exposition, suggesting that Avraham returned to pay his credit bills, begs erudition. When Avraham left Charan, he was far from wealthy. He had not established himself in the world. For all intents and purposes, his financial portfolio was non-existent. Who would extend credit to him? True, he was a respectable, dignified person – in the Torah's barometer. In the pagan world that prevailed at the time, Avraham was a rabble-rouser, who claimed

that idol worship was false worship, who stood up to the country's leadership and mocked them. Why would anybody trust him?



Horav Aharon Walkin, zl, explains that the credit Avraham owed to people was not financial– it was ideological. They demanded an explanation, which he owed them and was now delivering, so that he could validate his earlier predicament.

Avraham *Avinu* had proclaimed Hashem's Name throughout the world. He decried the fallaciousness of the idols, claiming that the only true G-d was Hashem. Great! So why was he compelled to leave as a result of the hunger? If G-d was so great, why was He not sustaining Avraham?

Our Patriarch had listened to Hashem and reached out to the pagans. He took everything that he had and supported those in need. He did all this so that he could speak with them about Hashem. People listen more intently on a full stomach, especially if they did not pay for the food. Yet, despite all of Avraham's constant *chesed*, kindness, he was forced to leave due to the hunger. He was poor, without a morsel of food for himself.

Is this the manner that a benevolent G-d treats His most loyal devotee? These were good questions – powerful questions, which demanded answers, which Avraham was not prepared to give – at this time. The people were not committed enough to understand. They would only scoff.

On his return trip, Avraham was powerful. He had amassed great wealth. He was now an important, well-known and dignified person. After all, he had money. To these people, that is all that counted. With his return, he was intimating that we are all part of Hashem's

Divine plan. Everything that He does is for our benefit. At times, we are afflicted; we are down; we have economic woes, but it is all part of a scenario that must play itself out. We must trust in Him and be patient.

Our turn for success will evolve and be realized when we least expect it. We must trust and maintain our faith, not permitting setbacks to define or sully our life's perspective. In the eyes of the weak people of that generation, Avraham's plight represented a *chillul Hashem,* desecration of Hashem's Name. He now returned to correct it and show them the true glory of the Almighty. Patience and trust – and more patience.

Horav Eliezer Sorotzkin, zl, offers a practical explanation about why Avraham returned to his original hosts. Let us face it, when Avraham left Charan, he had no money and less fame. Very few people were interested in extending themselves to him. Money talks and people listen. Only individuals with very acute hearing are able to apprehend the cries of the less fortunate.

It was these kind-hearted, decent people who opened their homes to Avraham. They knew he had no money, but they did not care. He was a human being who needed a place to rest his head, to have a warm meal. They were more than happy to accommodate him and offer their hospitality.

Now, as Avraham, who had achieved great wealth and dignity, was returning, he did not ignore those who had cared for him when he had nothing. Unlike common practice, Avraham remembered those who had opened up their hearts to him when he had nothing. He did not forget the little *shteibel*, *shul*, that had welcomed him when he was but a poor refugee. He did not ignore the simple, well-meaning people who had reached out to him when he had nothing. He did not forget – and neither should we.

והאמין בד' ויחשביה לו צדקה And he trusted in Hashem, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (15:6)

Rashi notes that, concerning Hashem's promise to Avraham that he would be blessed with offspring, the Patriarch did not ask for a sign. Concerning the promise that he would take possession of *Eretz Yisrael*, Avraham *Avinu* asked, *Bama eida*, "Whereby shall I know?" requesting a sign from Above that he would inherit it. Why did the Patriarch ask for affirmation regarding the Land and not regarding the offspring?

Horav Yitzchak Volozhiner, zl, explains this with an analogy that goes to the very crux of the issue which continues to haunt us until this very day: A king was once traveling on the road when he chanced upon a poor person begging for alms. Something about this poor man impressed the king. He invited him into his carriage and gave him a large quantity of money, enough to solve his financial problems. The king continued along with his travels. Sometime later, he came upon a drunkard lying in a pile of garbage yet covered with a fur coat. The king saw this and instructed his driver to remove the fur from the drunk and give it to the poor man.

The poor man accepted the coat gladly – as he did the money which he had received earlier. He did have one request of the king, 'My lord, I humbly request of his honor a letter stating that I received the fur from his honor as a gift." The king acquiesced, but was stymied that the poor man wanted a letter to cover the coat, but not regarding the money that he had given him. Certainly, the money had greater significance than the coat.

The poor man replied, "No one will question me concerning the money, since it came from the king. Everyone will believe that I was the recipient of good fortune from a benevolent king. The fur, however, belonged to another man, albeit taking it was well within the king's purview. Nonetheless, I am afraid that, if and when the drunk sobers up, he might come with a claim that I stole his fur. He will not believe

that his highness gave it to me. Thus, I request a letter confirming my right to the fur."

The *nimshal*, resemblance, to the blessings Avraham received from Hashem is clear. Concerning the blessing of children, he did not require affirmation, because no one would complain if the elderly Avraham were to be blessed with offspring.

Regarding the promise of the land, there was an issue. It was presently inhabited by nations who felt that it belonged to them. The fact that Hashem created the world and gave *Eretz Yisrael* to His People would not seem to sway them. Avraham would need some assurance, *Bama eida*, that it would revert to him.

Until this very day, there are those who feel that they have a right to contest our gift from Hashem. Reading about it in the Torah does not seem to impress them. One who peruses history will note that, during the periods that *Klal Yisrael* did not inhabit the Holy Land and it was instead inhabited by Christians and Muslims, it was not agriculturally productive. The land will only "work" for the nation to whom it was gifted.

Eretz Yisrael has maintained its fidelity to *Am Yisrael*. We should reciprocate.



וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו ה' וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־חָמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתֹו מֵחָרָן ***So Avram went…and Lot went with him; Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Charan*. (12:4)**

Lot was the orphaned nephew of Avraham *Avinu's* brother, Haran, who had died in the flames of Ur Kasdim, in his support. Our Patriarch felt a filial responsibility for his nephew. Therefore, he took him along when he moved. This explains why the Torah mentions this, even though it was not part of Hashem's command. Why, however, does the Torah inform us of Avraham's age at the time of departure? Does it really matter?

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, distinguishes between *ito* and *imo* – two words which are used to imply "with" someone. There is a difference regarding the term "with" and in what manner one is going "with" someone. *Imo* means "with" in the full sense of the word – together physically and for the same purpose. *Ito*, however, means that two people travel together, but not necessarily for a similar purpose.



When the Torah writes that Lot travelled with Avraham, it says *ito*, implying that while Lot accompanied Avraham, he did not go for the same purpose. Avraham was going in response to Hashem's command. Lot had another reason for joining his uncle on this journey. He sought Avraham's wealth. After all, his uncle was seventy-five years old; he had no children, no heirs. If he played his cards right, Lot was in line to have it all. He better stick with Avraham so that, when the time comes, he will be in place to inherit his wealth.

Motive is a powerful illuminator, elucidating and defining the true character of an individual. Attendance at a spiritual experience does not determine the real standing of a person, his true feelings concerning the objective of the experience. Just being there has very little consequence. His underlying motive and purpose in being there indicate his true essence.

The Torah does not want us to perceive Lot as anything other than who he really was: a money-hungry, materialistic opportunist, who was willing to join with the saintly Avraham, as long as a pot of gold was located somewhere in the equation.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ *And He said, "Gaze, now, toward the Heavens, and count the stars if you able to count them!" And He said to him, "So shall your offspring be!"* (15:5)

The *Divrei Chaim* explains the analogy to stars. Seen from the distance of the earth, stars appear miniscule. However, when seen in close proximity from above, their actual size is remarkable. Likewise, *Klal Yisrael* might be viewed as being diminutive and inconsequential in comparison to the nations of the world. But, upon Heavenly examination, their image changes immensely. Their true size increases as they are viewed through a Heavenly perspective.

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, offers a practical explanation for our being compared to stars. Hashem instructed Avraham *Avinu* to gaze upon the Heavens and count the stars – something which is impossible to do. After all, they are too numerous to count. Yet, despite the futility of this endeavor, Avraham made the attempt. Why? Because feasibility, or lack thereof, concerning any endeavor is not the determining factor in its successful completion. A Jew must endeavor, regardless of the fact that success is not within his reach. It is all dependent upon one's *ratzon*, will, determination.

To paraphrase the *Lubliner Rav*, "We do not measure inclination based upon ability; rather, we measure ability based upon inclination." When a person really wants something with all his heart and soul, he can accomplish great things which, otherwise, have been totally unrealistic.

Ko yiheyeh zaracha, "So shall your offspring be." As you push forward, despite the impracticality of the endeavor, so, too, will your descendants continue in their service of Hashem, even under the most difficult circumstances. They will never allow lack of ability to stand in their way.

Hashem does not demand more of us than we are able to handle. Man has to open that small hole, the size of a pinhead. Hashem will do the

rest, granting him Heavenly assistance. There are two primary challenges to upward growth in Torah: emotional/philosophical and physical/acumen/attitude. There are those who have been challenged by problems of faith, situations that weigh down on them emotionally, philosophically and theologically. To put it simply: they have been turned off for some reason. In such an instance, there is very little *ratzon*, will, desire to succeed. If one can survive the challenge, climb the mountain, triumph over adversity, Hashem will carry him the rest of the way.

The other challenge is acuity. Not everyone has a *Gemora kop*, a head for understanding some of the difficult dialogues and logical analysis involved in learning the *Talmud*. There are those who, although blessed with a sharp mind, are either lazy, have poor study habits, or just want to have a good time. Once they make up their mind, they, too, will grow in Torah.

The following two vignettes reflect these situations and illuminate the attitude one must maintain: One *Seder* night in one of the concentration camps during World War II, a father and his young son – the only surviving members of their once sizeable family – were sitting together "celebrating" *Pesach*.

Even under the dreadful conditions that marked that period in time, they were able to obtain a *Haggadah*. They read it together and when they reached the *Mah Nishtanah*, at which time the young son was to ask his father the famous Four Questions, the boy stopped. He looked at his father and said, "*Tatty*, I have six questions to ask you, the usual four and two extra questions. They are: Do you think that I will sit with you next year at the *Seder* and ask the Four Questions? Also, can you promise me that next year you will sit next to me and reply to my Four Questions?" In other words, the boy sought assurances that he will be around to ask, and that his father would be there to reply.

His father stared at his young son for a few moments and replied, "My son, I have no idea what will be in five minutes. How can I assure

you what will be in a year? I do not know if either of us will be alive, or if we will be able or willing to conduct the *Seder* next year. One thing, however, I can promise you with my whole heart and soul: Next year and every year until *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* arrives, thousands of Jews will gather around the *Seder* table on *Pesach* night, and young children will ask the Four Questions, and fathers will reply.

Our nation has been assured by Hashem, *ki lo sishkach mi'pi zaro*, 'The Torah will never be forgotten from His children.' Regardless of the situation, the troubles notwithstanding, someone, somewhere, will continue learning Torah. We never give up – regardless of the circumstances."

The second episode was related by ***Horav Baruch Shimon Schneerson, zl, Rosh Yeshivas* Tchebin**. The *Tchebiner Rosh Yeshivah* was a child prodigy. Thus, he was accepted in the premier European *yeshivah* of *Chachmei Lublin* under the guidance of *Horav Meir Shapiro, zl*. He was a student there for some time. As a young man, he was selected by the *Rosh Yeshivah* to be a *bochen*, tester, for those students who were just entering the *Yeshivah*. The *bechinah*, entrance exam, included a thorough test on the prospective student's knowledge of *Shas*, his analytical skills, acumen, and a complete appreciation of his observance, *yiraas Shomayim*, Fear of Heaven, ethical and moral conduct. The *yeshivah* sought only the best, and this meant that each student excelled in every aspect of the defining character of a *ben Torah*.

One day a young man presented himself to the *Yeshivah* administration seeking to gain entrance into the *Yeshivah*. It was evident that he was a special student, his *yiraas Shomayim* and *middos*, character traits, were outstanding. After being tested by the different *Roshei Yeshivah*, it was evident that he was not the brightest student. His knowledge and understanding of the material were far from exceptional. His analytical skills were quite lacking. Regrettably, this extraordinary young man was

not *Chachmei Lublin* material. The first group of testers signed off on him with a rejection slip.

When *Rav* Baruch Shimon's turn to test the prospective student came around, he was visibly impressed with the young man's demeanor, his fear of Heaven and his overwhelming desire to learn Torah. Alas, the other *Roshei Yeshivah* had already rejected him. *Rav* Baruch Shimon was very upset. What could he do? Clearly, *Chachmei Lublin* was founded for the purpose of providing a high standard of Torah education, specifically for such students as this young man. How could they reject him? He was a unique student with incredible potential. Although it was true that he also had a long, difficult road ahead of him to achieve his goal.

Rav Baruch Shimon could not sleep. He decided to walk to the *bais ha'medrash* and perhaps spend some time learning in its welcoming environment. It was two o'clock in the morning, and no one was in the *bais ha'medrash* – or so he thought. He entered the sanctuary of Torah and heard a commotion. What was the source of the noise?

He began to follow the sound until he worked his way to the back of the building. In the corner, he discovered the young man who had that day been rejected, weeping uncontrollably. He was repeating over to himself how much he had wanted to attend this *yeshivah*, bemoaning his lack of ability, entreating the Almighty to please help him. He wanted so much to learn Torah in Lublin.

Rav Baruch Shimon could no longer contain himself, and he, too, burst into tears. How could they say "no" to such a *ben Torah*? He decided that although the hour was late, he was going to the home of one of the *Roshei Yeshivah* whose decision carried great weight and demand that this *bachur* be accepted in Lublin. He woke up the *Rosh Yeshivah,* and, with great emotion, made his pitch, demanding that the *Rosh Yeshivah* accompany him to the *bais ha'medrash* to see for himself a *bachur's* yearning for the opportunity to grow in Torah scholarship.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* went to the *bais ha'medrash* and saw for himself the spectacle that had so captivated *Rav* Baruch Shimon. His heart melted at the sight of this young man pouring out his heart to Hashem. The very next day, the *Roshei Yeshiva* convened and elected to accept the student. He did not let them down. Indeed, within a short time, he was counted among the *Yeshivah's* outstanding students.



לך לך מארצך *Go you from your land*. (12:1)

Two *Avos*, Patriarchs, left their homeland – Avraham *Avinu* and Yaakov *Avinu*. The Torah uses "different" vernacular in describing their respective departures. Avraham is to *lech lecha*, leave, go, while concerning Yaakov, the Torah writes, *va'yeitzei*, "And he (Yaakov) went out." *Rashi* comments that when a *tzaddik*, righteous person, leaves a place, it makes an impression. He impacts the city's beauty, glory and luster. Why does the Torah choose to make Yaakov's departure impactive, while Avraham's departure seems more like an escape, as if no one really cared?

The **Chasam Sofer, zl,** distinguishes between the communities that hosted Avraham and Yaakov. The third Patriarch left a city that had come under the influence of his father, Yitzchak *Avinu*, and his grandfather, Avraham. Torah, *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, ethics and morality were the hallmarks of this community. The citizens were refined and upstanding individuals who appreciated and venerated the individual who had raised the standard of their community. Thus, when Yaakov departed, a void was felt in the community. One of its *tzaddikim* had moved on; his presence would no longer be felt within the community.

Avraham, on the other hand, lived in a city where idol worship was the norm and moral depravity was the accepted way of life. Nimrod, with his heretical beliefs, held sway over the minds and hearts of its inhabitants. Avraham was neither revered, nor liked. He was an

outcast, a *persona non grata*, whose monotheistic teachings were reviled. Therefore, his leaving made no impact on the community. Indeed, the people were happy to be rid of him.

This explanation seems enigmatic. One would think that in a city filled with *tzaddikim*, the departure of one *tzaddik* would not leave much of an impression. On the other hand, in a city where ethics and morality are at a premium, every *tzaddik* would be venerated and elevated. Yet, we see the opposite. Why?

The answer is "appreciation": If a *tzaddik* is to leave an impression on a community, he must be appreciated. People must acknowledge his value and contribution to their community, to their personal and communal lives. Otherwise, he is not appreciated. He is just another citizen. Impact comes with appreciation, and appreciation only comes with acknowledgment. One must open his eyes to observe how the *tzaddik's* presence has changed his life. Otherwise, the *tzaddik* may as well live elsewhere.



***"And when Avram heard that his kinsman (his nephew, Lot) was taken captive, he armed his disciples who had been born in his house."* (14:14)**

וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיָּרֶק אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ

Empathy for another person is a character trait we should learn from Avraham *Avinu*. As soon as he heard that his nephew, Lot, was taken captive, he immediately assembled a small army and risked his life to save him. From a cursory perspective, it seems like the right thing to do. My nephew is in trouble – I go out to save him. Is that what we do? How often do we find a way to rationalize away our responsibility to our fellow man? Avraham had every reason to turn his back on Lot. It is not as if Lot did not ask for this by moving away from Avraham and seeking the lush, fertile land of Sodom. Lot was greedy; he received what he deserved.

Yet, Avraham did not act this way. He sought every reason to justify Lot's move and to risk his own life to rescue him from captivity. All

too often the response to the suffering of another is apathy. Whatever happened to the "Jew" in us, as descendants of Avraham *Avinu*, who could not tolerate an injustice, even if the person on the receiving end probably "asked" for it?

As Jews we are all part of one unit – one people – one nation. When another Jew in any part of the world suffers, we should feel it. Life goes on. We hear constantly of Jews suffering throughout the world. Whether it is illness or persecution, they are suffering. We respond with some *Tehillim*, which we at first recite with feeling. After a while, however, the emotion dissipates, and the feeling becomes less intense.

The Nazis that exterminated six million *Kedoshim*, in the most inhuman manner were, for the most part, considered normal people. They did not look like beasts. For all intents and purposes, they did not act like beasts. They believed that Jews were a subculture and, therefore, a threat to the human race. They were indifferent to the persecution of innocent people, because they did not consider them people. They rationalized away their indifference. Thus, they were able to continue their dirty work without a heavy heart.

It begins with rationalization, progresses to indifference, and ends with downright cruelty. I recently read some poignant but compelling remarks made by a German Protestant minister, who, upon his release from a Nazi concentration camp, said the following:

"In Germany, they first came for the Jews, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Communist.

"Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the gypsies, and I did not speak up, because I was not a gypsy.

"Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Catholic. Then they came for me. And by that time, there was no one left to speak up."

Avraham *Avinu* taught the world and imbued his descendants with the mindset that the empathy we have for another person defines



our humanness. Lot was Avraham's nephew. Yet, the Torah calls him "his brother", *achiv*. When another Jew is in need, we do not dismiss our responsibility. He is our brother, and for a brother there is no rationalization-we just do it.

In an incredible *mussar shmuess*, delivered to an audience of elderly rabbis, ***Horav Yitzchak Aizik Sher, z.l.***, reiterated the theme of *kavod ha'briyos* and the importance of empathy. On a visit to America shortly before *Rosh Hashanah* of 1939, he addressed this august assemblage. He began by posing a question: "What are you worried about? *Yom HaDin*, the Day of Judgment? You observe *Shabbos* and *Kashrus*; your integrity is impeccable; you do not speak *lashon hara*, slander, of anyone. So what is it that worries you?"

After a lengthy discourse, *Rav* Sher arrived at his response, "My friends, you are all fine, upstanding Jews, and you do not sin. Yet, you pick up the *New York Times* in the morning, read that a man was killed, and you <u>continue</u> to drink your coffee. How can you drink coffee when you read that a woman just became a widow and children lost a father? You should faint in anguish, but you do not. Why? Because you do not care how death affects <u>other</u> people. As long as it is not you or yours, you simply continue with your coffee. Yes, you have something to fear on the *Yom HaDin*, for the *Ribono Shel Olam* is stricter with the righteous than with ordinary people. On the Day of Judgment, you all have to be careful."

The message is timeless. Are we any different today? We read the paper; we listen to the news; the *korbanos* in *Eretz Yisrael* increase steadily, and to us it is a mere statistic. True, we recite *Tehillim*, but

has our lifestyle been altered in any way? Do we continue with our cup of coffee, rationalizing our lack of empathy for our brethren throughout the world – and at home? When I recently asked this question of an individual, his response was, "Things are so bad, I can no longer read the paper with my breakfast; it is so depressing." This person simply has no clue. Are we any different?

וּבֶן־שְׁמֹנַת יָמִים יִמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם "*At the age of eight days every male among you must be circumcised.*" (17:12)



The *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* is a critical *mitzvah* which inducts the young boy into the Jewish People. Throughout the millennia our people have been willing to sacrifice their lives, so that this *mitzvah* may be fulfilled properly. Many stories have been recorded detailing the selfless devotion our People have demonstrated to this *mitzvah*. I relate a story that poignantly portrays how one Jewish mother actualized her perception of the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*.

This occurred in Soviet Russia at a time when the Communists were in power. Their disdain for any religion was overshadowed by their revulsion of Judaism. They made every attempt to extinguish whatever observance they could. *Bris Milah* was at the top of their list of *mitzvos* which they sought to abolish. Fearing for their lives, people adhered to the terrible decree.

As usual, however, a few dedicated Jews were *moser nefesh*, risked their lives, to circumcise their sons clandestinely. This story is about a Jewish mother who, afraid for her life, refrained from

circumcising her son. One day, she heard that another woman had a *Bris* performed for her son. She decided at that point that she, too, would have her son circumcised.

The *Bris* was performed, and they brought the infant back to the mother. Suddenly, she fainted. After a few minutes, they were able to revive her. The people who had assembled to share in this august experience looked at her incredulously and asked, "Why did you faint now? The *Bris* is over. If you were going to faint due to anxiety, you should have done so before the *Bris*."

Her response should cause each of us to tremble. She said, "When my son was born, I wanted to hug and kiss him, but I could not. Every time I was about to kiss him, I held myself back, reasoning, 'How can I kiss my baby if I have not yet given my baby a *Bris*, thereby demonstrating my appreciation to Hashem for giving me this beautiful gift?' Only after my child was circumcised could I allow myself to kiss him. I was overwhelmed, so I fainted."

Can we begin to grasp the depth of this woman's resolution and strength of character? She waited for this child and carried him in her womb for nine months. After she delivered a healthy baby, she did not kiss him until she had shown her appreciation to her Benefactor. This is the type of Jew that lives on, the Jew whom the Russians could not break: the Torah Jew.

"I'm still waiting to see "the children." Many parents don't learn Torah because they are busy working so their children should be able to study Torah. Those children also don't study Torah because they are busy working so their children should be able to study Torah. He is still waiting to see those children who everyone is working for.- Instead, it would be much better if everyone would designate times for Torah study, so each person can grow in Torah to the best of their abilities." ~ The Kotzker

וַיֵּצְאוּ לָלֶכֶת אַרְצָה כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אַרְצָה כְּנָעַן – *'They left to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan.'* (12:5)

The primary rule in spiritual growth is never to lose focus of one's goals. ***Horav Leib Chasman, zl,*** emphasizes the importance of setting an objective and not losing sight of it – even momentarily. Often, we accept upon ourselves the obligation to perform good deeds, we undertake lofty endeavors, all very worthwhile and within our grasp – if we abide by our agenda.

We begin our quest, steadily moving forward, heading towards our goal. After a while, however, something briefly distracts us. Before we realize it, we are no longer on track. Our enthusiasm has waned, our desire has dissipated. How did this happen? People think that as long as they are on track, everything will be fine. This is not so.

One must maintain the same drive and enthusiasm he displayed when he started. The slightest deviation from that early elation can bring us down, where we fall into the grips of the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination. In our twice-daily recitation of the *Shema*, we say, "*And these matters that I command you today shall be on your heart.*"

Chazal teach us that we should view the Torah as if it is being given to us today – fresh and exciting, not stale and archaic. The Torah should constantly stimulate us. It should challenge us intellectually and emotionally. By taking this perspective, we are ensured that we will not tire of it.

This is the underlying meaning of our *pasuk*, "*They left to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan.*" With every step that Avraham took on his way, he revitalized Hashem's imperative. He never waned from following the command to go to Canaan. Every movement represented a *mitzvah*, performed with excitement and joy. Even when he was at the last step prior to entering the land, Avraham maintained his original focus. His initial enthusiasm continued as if he had just now been commanded.

"And Hashem said, 'Nevertheless, your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you should name him Yitzchak.'" (17:19)



The name Yitzchak does not mean, "he who laughs," or "he who rejoices", it means "he who causes laughter," who brings a smile to the lips of his parents. Also, the word generally denotes an ironic form of laughter, brought about by something utterly ridiculous or inconceivable. Indeed, the fact that Yitzchak is given his name simply to "commemorate" the laughter his forthcoming birth provoked, is especially significant.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l., in raising these issues, comes to the following conclusion.

To expect a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman, who had never before had children, to give birth to a child is truly anomalous. To then expect this child to be the progenitor of a great nation, which will be the hope for the future of mankind, is an added absurdity.

To place the greatest, most noble aspirations upon the smallest, almost inconsequential beginnings is nonsensical and somewhat bizarre. This apparent disparity between present and future, between what seemed to be "reality" and what was promised, simply was too much for Avraham to bear. His immediate response to this "ridiculous" declaration was laughter. This burst of laughter was considered so characteristic that it was to be eternalized for all future generations in the name of the child that was to be born.

In this name lies the essence of Jewish survival from its early beginnings. To the one who considers natural cause and effect as the basis for survival, the Jewish people, its history, continued survival

and Messianic hopes, must appear as the most inane and laughable pretension.

Our existence only makes sense when we look at the "real" source which gives rise to all the other causalities – it is the will of the Almighty Who created, guides and wills into existence everything which occurs. The *Avos*, Patriarchs, were taught to realize this truth and transmit it to their descendants, to believe and keep uppermost in their minds.

This is why Hashem waited until the first Patriarch and Matriarch had reached an age which was "absurd" to be bearing a child. The first seed of our nation was specifically conceived at a time which was viewed as preposterous. He waited to produce the seeds of continuity at a time when all human hope for its realization had ended. He was creating a nation which would stand in opposition to all the laws of "nature" and world history, who would from their very beginnings be linked with a miracle, as a Divine sign of the Almighty's bond with them.

They must, therefore, appear in a manner which to the spiritually obtuse would be an impossible phenomenon — completely inexplicable, indicating the clear existence of a power which rises above the "laws of nature."

The burst of laughter which accompanies the Jew throughout his tumultuous history confirms the existence of the Almighty Who protects them and guides them on the Divine path.



וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ "*And he led him outside and said, look towards the heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them. And He said to him so shall be your seed.*" (15:5)

This *posuk* can be read as a dialogue between Hashem and Avrohom. After he is told to count the stars in the heaven, Avrohom proceeds to do the impossible and begins to count. Hashem then stops him and

says, *"do you really think you can count the stars in heaven? So will be your seed."*

Just as you attempted to fulfill my "impossible" command without question, so too will be your seed. They will observe My commandments without seeking a reason or rationale for their fulfillment.

"*One's will should not be measured by ability, but rather ability should be measured by one's will."* Very often a *mitzvah* or good deed seems very hard to fulfill, either because of lack of time or strength or whatever excuse may arise. If one makes a proper self-evaluation, he will see that he is not lacking in ability but rather in proper will and desire to perform the *mitzvah* or good deeds.

"Never despair because every effort in tefilla makes a difference. Every single word counts. Each word is penetrating the heavens. Just like drops of water falling onto solid rock, it appears as though there is no impression left, but in reality, every single drop contributes to the eventual permanent impression that will shallow out the rock." ~ The Living Tefilla Manual by Rabbi Jonathan Rietti.

Splendid Quote with Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"***Keep blessing your fellow Jew; it is the best way to get blessed***."

Because Avram left his country, Hashem promised to bless him. One of the ways that he will be blessed is by others blessing him. To ensure that others bless him, Hashem promised that anyone who blesses any Jew would be blessed. We should always bless others to receive this blessing.

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

וַיִּסַּע לוֹט מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּפָּרְדוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו ***"Lot journeyed from kedem / the east . . ."*** (13:11) Rashi comments: He journeyed away from the Kadmon / the One Who Preceded everything.

R' Yosef Leib Bloch z"l (Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe; died 1929) writes: The story of Lot demonstrates that it is not enough to know that there is a Creator and that He is actively involved with His world.

The Sages teach that Lot was accustomed to seeing angels in Avraham's house. Nevertheless, he readily chose to leave Avraham and to live among the evildoers of Sedom. How did this happen? - It happened because a person who does not actively work on character refinement will forever remain enslaved to his human nature, the side of him which sees the wealth of Sedom but not its evil.- This explains, as well, why the generation of the Exodus stumbled repeatedly. They attained a knowledge of G-d and His Power that no generation before or since has attained. Nevertheless, unless one actively works on character refinement, all his abstract knowledge will not save him. (Shiurei Da'at, Vol. I, p. 92)

אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ

In this week's parashah, we begin to read about the activities and experiences of the Patriarch Avraham. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot (chapter 5) teaches: **עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְנַסָּה אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם וְעָמַד בְּכֻלָּם** "*Avraham Avinu was tested ten times, and he withstood them all.*"

Many commentaries ask: Why is Avraham referred to as "Avinu" / "our father" in this mishnah, whereas he is not given that title in the previous mishnah which also mentions his name?

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

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

Adam's sin did not damage his soul alone. Adam's soul included within it the souls of all his future descendants. Likewise, Avraham's spiritual accomplishments did not benefit himself alone. Rather, as **Ramban** writes, "Ma'asei Avot siman la'banim" / "The experiences of the Patriarchs foreshadow the experiences of their descendants."

This is why specifically when we are told that Avraham withstood ten tests, he is called "Avinu" / "our father." (Ne'edar Ba'kodesh)

"When one davens, one must believe that Hashem can help, and your tefillos can make a difference." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.



בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם (Devarim 14:1)

Just as children rely on their parents to take care of them in the best way, we are Hashem's children, and we should trust that He is leading us with kindness and with compassion. We don't always understand, but like children, we know that it is always good." ~ Ibn Ezra.



Avrohom Was Unique!

Our Parashah opens with Hashem commanding Avram to leave his land, his birthplace, and his family, and to travel to an unspecified destination. Interestingly, the Torah tells us nothing about what led up to this command. What kind of person was Avraham? How did Avraham come to be the person chosen by Hashem for a new mission?

R' Yosef Ze'ev Lipovitz z"l (1886-1962;Tel Aviv) writes: Once we reflect on everything that Hashem asked Avraham to give up–homeland, birthplace, and family–and the fact that he did so without hesitation, we immediately see Avraham's greatness. What could the Torah have told us that would reveal Avraham's greatness more than this information does?

R' Lipovitz continues: In the eyes of our Sages, Avraham's past is not important because Hashem created him specifically for the mission that begins in our Parashah. The Midrash connects various phrases in the account of Creation to different historical eras. On the phrase, "Elokim said, 'Let there be light'," the Midrash comments: This was Avraham Avinu.

With Avraham Avinu's arrival on the scene, there was light in a dark world. Just as Hashem created light as a foundational element of the world, so He created Avraham.

Avraham was not a Tzaddik like other Tzaddikim, whose good deeds need to be defined so we can understand who they are. Avraham was a unique creation, formed by Hashem and then uprooted from his past in order to carry out a mission. As Hashem said to the prophet Yechezkel (33:24), "Avraham was one, unique." (Nachalat Yosef)

לָמָּה תֹאמַר יַעֲקֹב וּתְדַבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל נִסְתְּרָה דַרְכִּי מֵה׳ וּמֵאֱלֹקַי מִשְׁפָּטִי יַעֲבֹור
"Why do you say, Yaakov, and declare, Yisrael: 'My way is hidden from Hashem, and my judgment has been passed over by my Elokim?'" (Yeshayah 40:27 — from the Haftarah)

R' Saadiah Gaon z"l (882-942; Egypt, Eretz Yisrael and present-day Iraq; author of the earliest known work on Jewish Thought) writes: The prophet is rebuking the Jewish People for thinking that Hashem is not aware of our situation in the exile and that He is not judging us fairly.

Rather, we are assured by the prophets that He will redeem us, either at the preordained time, or earlier if we repent. (Ha'Nivchar B'emunot V'de'ot 8:2)

Better A Second Time Around



In this parashah we read of our Patriarch Avraham and Matriarch Sarah's journey to Eretz Yisrael. The chassidic rebbe **R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l** (the Bnei Yissaschar; died 1841) writes in his work Igra D'Pirka (section 108): "I heard in the name of a certain tzaddik that the merit of living in Eretz Yisrael is even greater if one was there and then left. The second time, one `tastes' the holiness even more than the first time.

How do we know this? From Avraham, whose primary spiritual accomplishments were attained after he descended to Egypt and then returned to Eretz Yisrael."

R' Yissachar Shlomo Teichtel z"l (Hungarian rosh yeshiva; killed in the Holocaust) adds in the name of the Sefer Chareidim (16th

century): Even Avraham's journey to Eretz Yisrael described at the beginning of our parashah was not his first. Rather, Avraham had toured the Land five years earlier and then returned to his home. [Ed. note: At the beginning of the parashah, Avraham is 75 years old. However, at the time of the Brit Bein Ha'betarim / prophetic vision and covenant described near the end of the parashah, Avraham was apparently 70, since that event occurred 430 years before the Exodus.

This can be explained if we assume that the events occurred in reverse order, with the Brit Bein Ha'betarim having taken place on Avraham's previous visit. (See Ramban to Shmot 12:40).]

The midrash thus attributes to Avraham the verses (Tehilim 55:7-8), "*Would that I had a wing like a dove! I would fly off and find rest*! *Behold, I would wander afar; I would dwell in the wilderness*."

This alludes to our Sages' statement that it is preferable to dwell in a wilderness in Eretz Yisrael than in a castle outside the Land. Before Avraham had visited Eretz Yisrael, he felt no such longing; only after he visited there and experienced its spiritual glory did he have such feelings. (Eim Habanim Semeichah p.205)



וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ

"Hashem said to Avram, 'Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you'." (12:1)

The first phrase of Hashem's words can also be translated, "Go to yourself." **R' Moshe Alsheich z"l** (1508–1593; Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael) explains: When a soul comes into this world, it remains attached to its source ("root") in Heaven. In this way, a righteous person is always "attached" to Hashem. On the other hand, if a person sins, he creates a "wall" that separates his soul below from its source above. As a result, he becomes distanced from Hashem.

Likewise, R' Alsheich continues, the soul of a person who dwells in Eretz Yisrael is more closely connected to its root than is the soul of a person who is in the Diaspora. In the Diaspora, the "air" is impure, and it forms a wall between the soul below and its source in Heaven. Thus, when Avraham was told to relocate to Eretz Yisrael, he was being told to go "to" himself, i.e., to get closer to the source of his soul. (Torat Moshe)

R' Yoel Sirkes z"l (Poland; 1561-1640; known as the "**Bach**" after the initials of his Halachic work Bayit Chadash) writes: R' Alsheich's teaching that one who goes to Eretz Yisrael goes to the source of his soul is what Ruth referred to when she said to her mother-in-law, Naomi (Ruth 1:16), "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you, for wherever you go, I will go." This, continues the Bach, is one of the six advantages of living in Eretz Yisrael compared to living in the Diaspora. The others are:



(2) When the Bet Hamikdash stood, the daily Tamid-offering atoned for everyday sins such as improper thoughts and Avak Lashon Ha'ra. Thus, no one in Eretz Yisrael ever went to sleep without having been cleansed of these sins. Ruth referred to this when she said, "Where you sleep, I will sleep."

(3) In the Diaspora, Hashem relates to people through angels who serve as intermediaries. In Eretz Yisrael, we have a direct relationship with Hashem and can be called "Hashem's People." Thus Ruth said, "Your People are my People."

(4) For the reason just stated, our Sages refer to one who lives in the Diaspora as having no Elokim, while one who lives in Eretz

Yisrael has an Elokim. Ruth referred to this when she said, "Your Elokim is my Elokim."

(5) When a person dies in the Diaspora, his soul has a more difficult time ascending to Heaven because it must traverse the impure "air." About this Ruth said, "Where you die, I will die."

(6) One who is buried in Eretz Yisrael is considered to be buried under Hashem's "Throne" and will arise more easily at the time of Techiyat Ha'meitim. Thus Ruth said, "And there I will be buried."

The Bach concludes: There are other advantages to living in Eretz Yisrael as well, as Ruth concluded: "Thus may Hashem do to me–and more!" (Meishiv Nefesh Al Megilat Ruth 1:16)

Tehilim

Siddur Avodat Yisrael cites a custom to recite Psalm 110 - **לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר נְאֻם ה'** on the Shabbos on which Parashat Lech Lecha is read.

The Gemara (Nedarim 32b) interprets this chapter as referring to Avraham Avinu's war against the Four Kings and his meeting afterwards with Malki Tzeddek, two events that are described in our Parashah.

מִי הֵעִיר מִמִּזְרָח צֶדֶק יִקְרָאֵהוּ לְרַגְלוֹ ***"Who aroused [Avraham] from the east, who would proclaim tzeddek / righteousness at every footstep?" (Yishayahu 41:2 — from the Haftarah)***

The Gemara (Shabbat 156b) says that tzeddek was in the west, but Avraham relocated it to the east. **R' Yehoshua Horowitz z"l** (Dzikover Rebbe; died 1913) explains: We are taught that the world stands on three pillars–Torah, avodah (prayer), and chessed. Some claim, writes R' Horowitz, that performing acts of chessed and tzedakah is reserved for those who are not capable of learning

Torah or praying properly. But this is wrong, as the world stands on all three pillars.

This is what is meant by tzeddek having been in the west. On the verse, *"It was morning, and it was erev / evening . . .,"* the midrash says that "evening" refers to those who are not righteous. And the word "erev" is related to the word "ma'arav" / "west" (because the sun is in the west in the evening).

Avraham moved tzeddek from the west to the east, i.e., he made chessed the domain of the righteous as well. (Ateret Yeshuah: Likkutim No.39)

The Best Is Yet to Come

וּמַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם "Malki-Tzeddek, the king of Shalem ." (14:18)

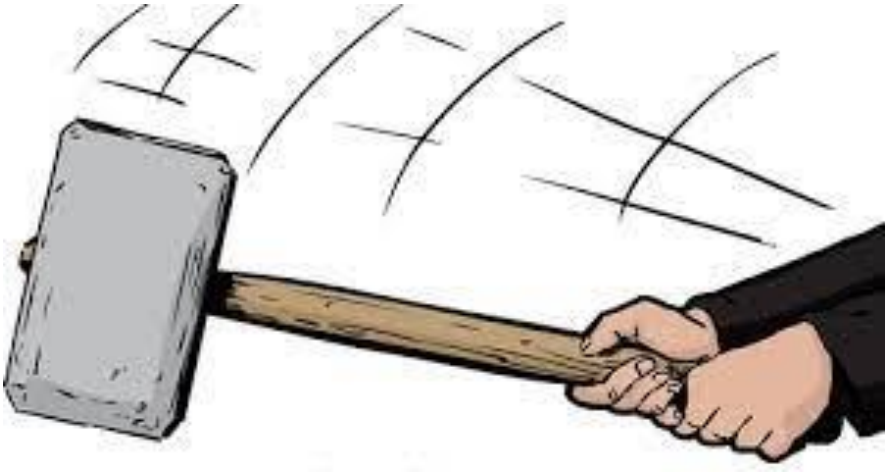
"Shalem" is the city that we now call Yerushalayim. Our Sages teach that the city's present name is a combination of the name "Shalem" given by Malki-Tzeddek, and the name "Hashem Yireh" given by Avraham (Bereishit 22:14).

R' Moshe Eisemann shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani of Yeshiva Ner Israel) observes that these two names reflect the different world views of the people who gave them. Chazal say that Malki-Tzeddek was none other than Shem, the son of Noach. Although he was an exceptionally righteous person, he was content with his spiritual standing. He saw himself as "Shalem" / "whole."

This is not the Jewish way. Our philosophy, and Avraham's, is that one must be constantly growing. "Hashem Yireh" / "G-d will yet see." The best is yet to come.

"Nothing is small, because everything you do for Hashem and for other people is forever." ~ Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l.

Freedom of Man



A well-known midrash relates how Avraham's father Terach left his young son in charge of his (Terach's) idol store one day. When Terach returned, all but one of the idols were smashed to bits; the largest idol, standing in the center of the store, was holding a large ax. Terach was not impressed by young Avraham's explanation that the idols had begun to fight and, not surprisingly, the largest one had won. Rather, Terach had Avraham arrested for this blasphemy.

Hearing this story as children, says **R' Moshe Eisemann shlita**, we probably laughed at Terach. If he knew that the idols were powerless against each other, why did he believe in them? The key to this story is the difference between Avraham's worldview and that of an idol-worshiper such a Terach. In a word, it is "freedom."

Polytheism recognizes many gods, each bound by nature and limited in potency to the confines of a particular realm. Such a belief does not recognize the omnipotence, the freedom, of a unique G-d, Creator of all. A Terach is not disturbed by the inability of one idol to destroy another, for each is limited to its own province.

If the gods are not free, then certainly man is not. According to this view, man is an impotent midget, powerless against the forces which surround him. Only with this analysis can we understand the full import of Avraham's rebellion: he discovered that not only G-d, but man, has freedom. This means, however, that man has accountability; if man controls his deeds, then he must take responsibility for them. This was a blow to the entire society in which Terach lived.

לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ "Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your family, to the land which I will show you." (12:1)



Why didn't Hashem tell Avraham his destination? **R' Yehuda Leib Chasman z"l** explains that one who seeks greatness cannot appreciate what he seeks until he attains it. Every person, even if he abstractedly realizes that there is room in his character for self-improvement, usually feels content with his spiritual standing. Only after achieving a higher level can he look back and recognize how great the need for change was.

This makes starker the greatness of Avraham's blindly "following" Hashem to Eretz Canaan. As long as Avraham remained at home, he was relatively content with his situation. However, when Hashem told him, "Go to a place where you will become even greater" (a paraphrase of verses 1-3), Avraham went immediately.

Verse 4 records: "And Avram went as Hashem had commanded him, and Lot went with him." At first glance, Lot's action seems even greater than Avraham's. After all, Avraham had Hashem's promise that he would benefit spiritually and materially from this trip, but Lot did not! Remarkably, however, Lot's trip ended in spiritual downfall, for the Torah tells us that Lot "camped near S'dom" (13:12), the "capital" of spiritual degeneration. How did this happen?

Two people can aspire to similar goals, yet one reaches them and the other does not. The reason is that one works on attaining those goals, and the other doesn't. Rather, he merely aspires and continues to aspire. He makes no effort to examine his present situation, and certainly not to change it. He may be compared to a person who writes on a full sheet of paper, without first erasing what is written

there. The more he writes, the more unreadable and confusing the document becomes.

This was Lot's approach to achieving greatness. Without erasing his faults, he tried to add new aspects to his character. The result? A personality that went with Avraham – that appeared to be equal to or greater than that tzaddik – but then failed the test presented by the wealth of S'dom. (Ohr Yahel)



וַיְבַתֵּר אֹתָם בַּתָּוֶךְ וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ־בִּתְרוֹ לִקְרַאת רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַצִּפֹּר לֹא בָתָר ***"He cut them in the centre and placed each piece opposite its counterpart. The birds, however, he did not cut up."*** (15:10)

At the "Berit Bein Ha'betarim"/"Covenant Between the Parts," what was the symbolism in the fact that Avraham cut up the heifers, goats and rams, but not the dove? **R' Zvi Hirsch Kalischer z"l** explains as follows:

Hashem's instructions to Avraham symbolized His promise that He would keep the covenant even if Avraham's descendants' sin. Even though we sin, Hashem will eventually replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. The former is represented by the animals, which symbolize man's earthiness and physical desires. These will be "cut up," leaving only pure intelligence.

However, man's free will cannot be tampered with. The bird, which flies freely wherever it wishes, represents free will. This was not cut up; the fact that Hashem will "replace" our hearts does not mean that He will take away our free will. Rather, from all the miracles which He will show us, everyone will know Him, and man's heart will change of its own accord.

Alternatively, the animals represent the nations that subjugate us. They are cut up to symbolize G-d's promise that we will never suffer

extended periods of unbroken oppression. The bird, on the other hand, symbolizes the redemption. It is left uncut to symbolize that once the redemption comes, it will never end. (Sefer Ha'berit)

Naming Children

It is customary among both Ashkenazim and Sephardim that a new-born boy is named at his berit milah. While there is no clear source for this custom, there is a hint in the Book of Shmuel (II:12:18). There, King David's seven-day old boy is referred to as "the child." Since the boy is not referred to by a name, this suggests that boys were not named before the eighth day of their lives. (**R' Yisroel Reisman shlita**)

The following are some reasons given for this custom:

(1) Hashem changed our patriarch's name from "Avram" to "Avraham" at the same time that He commanded him to circumcise himself. Likewise, we give a boy a name at the time of his circumcision.

(2) A child achieves greater purity at the time of his berit milah. We wait to name the child until he achieves this purity.

(3) One of the prayers recited at a berit milah beseeches: "Preserve this boy . . ." We name the child during that prayer as a way of asking that the name we give the child be approved by Hashem. (Kuntreis Ziv Ha'shemot p.32-33)

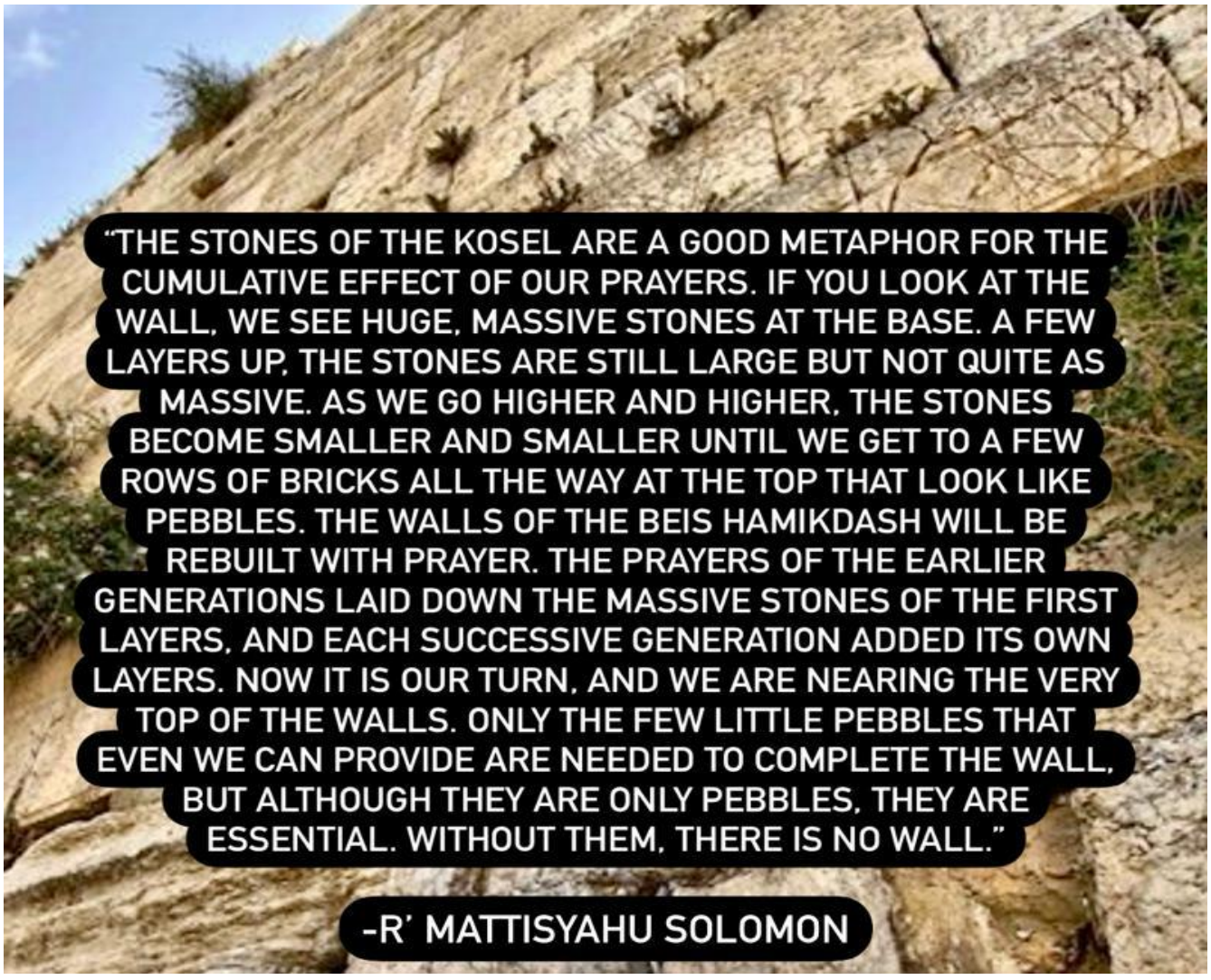
There are several different customs as to when girls are named. Sephardic girls are named at a ceremony known as a "Zevved Ha'bat"/"The Daughter's Gift." The ceremony begins with reading Shir Ha'shirim 2:14: "*My dove . . . your voice is sweet and your countenance is beautiful.*" For a first daughter, some read Shir Ha'shirim 6:9: "*Unique is she, my constant dove, unique is she to her mother . . .*" Afterward, a mi she'bairach is recited and the name is

given. (Ibid. p.37) - There is no set time for holding a Zevved Ha'bat. (Heard from **R' Chaim Arzouan**)

Among Ashkenazim, some name a girl on the day she is born. Most wait until a day when the Torah is read. Preferably, this should be done on the first day when the Torah is read rather than waiting until Shabbat. (Kuntreis Ziv Ha'shemot p.37-38)

R' Chaim Elazar Shapiro z"l (the "Munkatcher Rebbe") offers the following reason in the name of his ancestor, the **Bnei Yissaschar**: A child's name is his/her soul. Why should we deprive the child of a soul longer than necessary?! (Darchei Chaim Ve'Shalom)

One should make a festive meal on the day his daughter is named. (Ta'amei Ha'minhagim: Inyanei Milah)



Letters from Our Sages



This week we present an excerpt from a letter by **R' Samson R. Hirsch z"l** (1808-1888) to **R' Zvi Hirsch Kalischer z"l** (1795-1875). The former was rabbi of Frankfurt am-Main and the architect of the revival of Orthodox Jewry in that city. The latter was rabbi of Therin and a founder of the Chovevei Zion movement. The letter was written in 1864 and appears in Shemesh Marpeh, p.211.

My wisdom is too small to recognize what good or true [things] your lofty opinion holds will result from your efforts regarding the settlement of Eretz Yisrael. What, to your heart, appears to be a mitzvah and a great obligation, to my weak mind does not appear so.

In my humble opinion, since I have no business with secrets [such as when mashiach will come], there is no good [way] except to follow the well-worn path of our fathers and predecessors, their souls are in Eden. They taught us only to concern ourselves with using all our strength to put ourselves on the road of Torah, to remove stumbling blocks from our path, and to anticipate the redemption daily if we will hearken to His voice. They never placed [the responsibility] on our shoulders to pave a way for the redemption by strengthening and fixing the Holy Land, but rather by strengthening and fixing our hearts and our deeds.

My vision is too short to see the dawn of the redemption in the fact that some [Jewish] families are close to royalty [a reference to British Prime Minister Disraeli and French Senator and Justice Minister Cremiuex]. Virtually all of them, except the one and unique lord who lives here [i.e., Baron Willy Rothschild], are far from the ways of the Torah and mitzvot, and they are counted among the new ones who have thrown off the yoke of religion . . .

Moreover, what can I do? Everyone who has come from there [i.e., Eretz Yisrael] and all my confidants assure me that it is impossible for any real good to come out of this because of the difficult times and the awful state of

the country. Also, my worry cannot rest lest we see another stumbling block on the Holy Land through transgression of the Shabbat and of the agricultural laws that relate to the Land . . . If I am mistaken, may the good G-d forgive. [Nevertheless,] I have never spoken a word of this in public and I do not say, "Accept my opinion." It was never my intention to cast aspersions on your honor and those who follow you and whose lofty opinions agree with yours. However, man only knows what he sees.

As long as our intentions are good and our goal is to do the mitzvot of our Creator as we see it, one will act and one will refrain, one will be rewarded for acting and one for holding back, and the good G-d will forgive the one who errs and causes others to err. With these words I have fulfilled my obligation.

If It Bothers You Enough . . .

A midrash records how a young Avraham concluded on his own that Hashem exists. Just as a palace cannot exist without a builder, he reasoned, so a world such as ours cannot exist unless it has a Creator.



When the students of the Mir Yeshiva took refuge in Shanghai, China during World War II, they found a vast, empty synagogue available for the yeshiva's use. There was no rational reason for a synagogue of that size to exist in a city that had never had more than a tiny Jewish presence. Subsequently, **R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l** (mashgiach ruchani of the yeshiva) observed in a 1941 address: "Although we have never seen the builder or the caretaker of this shul, we understand without a doubt that there was a builder and there is a caretaker."

He continued: But how does a person like Avraham, who lives in a world devoid of knowledge of G-d, come to recognize G-d? The answer is that if a person is troubled enough by a problem, he finds a solution. Even if the solution is beyond one's normal abilities, one finds a way to attain it when he feels that he has no other choice.

The gemara teaches that although prophecy has been taken away from the prophets, it has been given to the wise. Indeed, said R' Levenstein, it is nothing less than prophetic when a person struggles over a problem and then sees light. Avraham, too, could not rest because he was so troubled by not knowing who had "built the palace," and thus he found an answer. (Mi'mizrach Ha'shemesh p.40)



וְגַם אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָּן אָנֹכִי "But also the nation that they shall serve, dan Anochi / I [shall] judge . . ." (15:14)

R' David Hanaggid z"l (1224-1300; grandson of **Rambam z"l**) writes: According to the rules of grammar, G-d should have said, "adun," rather than "dan." However, "dan" alludes to the Ten Plagues–the dalet alludes to the first plague, "dam" / "blood," while the nun alludes to the last plague, which the Torah (Shmot 11:1) refers to as a "nega" (literally, "plague"). (Midrash Rabbi David Hanaggid al Haggadah Shel Pesach p.2)



וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וֶהְיֵה בְּרָכָה "Be a blessing." (12:2)

R' Ovadiah Seforno z"l (1470-1550; Italy) explains: These words are a command. They cannot mean, "Give Hashem a blessing," as our blessings do not add anything to Hashem's greatness.

Indeed, what can we give Him? Rather, when we bless Hashem, we are expressing our desire that He will be pleased with us. In that vein, our verse– "Be a blessing!"–commands us to cause Him to be pleased with us.

R' Ovadiah elaborates: Hashem's goal for creation can be attained only through man's exercise of his Bechirah / Free Will. Therefore, Hashem commanded Avraham, "Be a blessing," meaning, "Make the effort to acquire perfection and to teach others to do the same [for that is what pleases Hashem].

In this light, adds R' Ovadiah, we can understand the exchange recorded in the Gemara (Berachot 7a): Hashem said to the Kohen Gadol, "Yishmael, My son, bless Me."

The Kohen Gadol replied, "May it be Your will to have mercy on Your sons [so that You will be pleased with them]." (Beur Ha'Seforno; Shiurei Rabbeinu Ovadiah Seforno)



וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו ה' . וַיִּצְאוּ לָלֶכֶת אַרְצָה כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אַרְצָה כְּנָעַן

"So Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him . . . and they left to go to the land of Canaan." (12:4-5)

R' Moshe Shoham z"l (approximately 1740-1820; rabbi of Dolina, Ukraine) asks (Divrei Moshe): Of course, if he went as Hashem commanded, then he left to go to Canaan!

He explains: We read about Avraham's father at the end of last week's Parashah that he took his family and "They departed . . . from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Canaan." Why did he not make it? Terach had an ulterior motive: he needed to flee Ur Kasdim, so he decided to go to beautiful Eretz Yisrael. Such a person does not deserve the Holy Land. In contrast, Avraham's only intention was to fulfill Hashem's command; he left only "to go to the land of Canaan."



"Once we run away from jealousy, materialism, and status-seeking, the world will become a place bursting with happiness." ~ R' Eliyahu Dessler zt"l.



From the Haftarah

וְקַוֵּי ה' יַחֲלִיפוּ כֹחַ "Those whose hope is in Hashem will exchange their strength." (Yeshayah 40:31)

R' Yitzchak of Volozhin z"l (1780-1849; rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin) writes in a footnote to his father's commentary on Pirkei Avot: The word "exchange" is to be taken literally. One who studies Torah with all his powers exchanges physical strength for spiritual strength. If one does not put his physical strength into his studies, he will not take spiritual strength out of his studies.

For this reason, R' Yitzchak explains, Torah scholars are referred to as "Those who have acquired wisdom," i.e., they have paid for it. (Ruach Chaim 1:1)



וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיָּרֶק אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ שְׁמֹנָה עָשָׂר וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וַיִּרְדֹּף עַד־דָּן "When Avram heard that his kinsman [Lot] was taken captive, he armed his disciples . . ." (14:14)

The Gemara (Nedarim 32a) teaches: Why was Avraham punished that his descendants were enslaved in Egypt for 210 years? Because he took Torah scholars to war!

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; Mashgiach of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of Enayim La'mishpat) observes that Mashiach will be a descendant of Lot. [Mashiach will come from King David, who came from Ruth the Moabite, who was a descendant of Lot.]

We see how Hashem brings the cure–the Final Redemption–from the very same source as the malady–the first exile, i.e., both are results of Avraham's rescuing Lot. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha'geulah p.55)



One form of tzedakah is to be mevater to others



"He said to Avram, 'Know with certainty that your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own. They will serve them, and they will oppress them four hundred years." (15:13)

In fact, as the Gemara quoted above notes, Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt for only 210 years. We say about this in the Pesach Haggadah, "The Holy One, He is Blessed, calculated the end."

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; Mashgiach of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of Enayim La'mishpat) observes that Mashiach will be explains: From the moment that Avraham Avinu was told that his descendants would be enslaved, he felt their pain. Hashem factored in Avraham's pain when He "calculated the end," counting the 400 years from Avraham's days rather than from when Bnei Yisrael actually arrived in Egypt. (Ibid p.56)

וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵ֖ן יֵצְא֣וּ בִרְכֻ֑שׁ גָּדֽוֹל

"Afterwards they shall leave with great wealth." (15:14)

We read in the Haggadah, "If He had given us their money and not split the sea for us, it would have sufficed!"

What good would the Egyptians' wealth have been to Bnei Yisrael if the latter had lost their lives when the Yam Suf failed to split?

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; Mashgiach of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of Enayim La'mishpat) explains: The wealth that Bnei Yisrael received from the Egyptians removed the stigma of slavery from Bnei Yisrael by making them paid workers. That was the real purpose of stripping the Egyptians of their wealth, not to enrich Bnei Yisrael or even to demoralize the Egyptians. That is why it was important enough for Hashem to mention in His prophecy to Avraham. (Ibid p.67)

וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן־תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנִים וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־קֵל שַׁ-דַּי הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֱהְיֵה תָמִים ***"When Avram was ninety-nine years old, Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him, 'I am Kel Shakkai; walk before Me and be tamim." (17:1)***

R' Avraham Halevi Fattal z"l (died 1981; father-in-law of **R' Ovadiah Yosef z"l**) explains: Avraham Avinu's greatest desire was to teach others to recognize Hashem. He did this by persuading people with rational arguments to believe that there is one G-d and that He is the Creator.

Avraham might have worried that the mitzvah of brit milah, which causes pain, would discourage potential converts. Therefore, he was commanded to be "tamim," in the sense of "innocent," i.e., not questioning G-d's judgment.

This interpretation is alluded to in the midrash which explains that G-d used the Name that we pronounce as "Shakkai" as if to say, "I am the One who said 'Dai!' / 'Enough!' to Creation." He meant: If I had not said "Enough!" the universe would have continued to expand forever. But that was not My desire. Similarly, I am not interested in the numbers of converts you assemble, but in their quality, which will be tested by their willingness to sacrifice part of themselves at My command. (Va'yomer Avraham)

The Arizal used to pour compliments on his disciple, R' Chaim Vital zt"l and would even compare him to the great tana'im in the Mishna. When he objected stating that he doesn't come close to their level, the Arizal explained that due to the tumah in the world in their generation, it's very difficult to serve Hashem. Therefore, every small deed is comparable to many great deeds of the past generations. - This was 450 years ago. How much more so does this apply today!

"וְקֹוֵי ה' יַחֲלִיפוּ כֹחַ יַעֲלוּ אֵבֶר כַּנְּשָׁרִים יָרוּצוּ וְלֹא יִיגְעוּ יֵלְכוּ וְלֹא יִיעָפוּ Those whose hope is in Hashem will have renewed strength, they will grow a wing like eagles; they will run and not grow tired, they will walk and not grow weary." (Yeshayah 40:31 – Haftarah)

R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz z"l (1847-1919; the **Alter of Novardok**) writes: There are two ways that a person can work on improving his Middot / character traits–either he can start by making easy changes and gradually make harder and harder changes, or he can make a dramatic change in one step.

Rambam z"l (1135-1204; Egypt) writes that the latter approach is the appropriate one; one who tends to one extreme in some area should adopt the opposite extreme until he rids himself of his bad habit and thereafter can adopt a middle-of-the-road approach.

In this light, writes the Alter, we can understand our verse: "Those whose hope is in Hashem" refers to those who know they cannot yet stand on their own against the Yetzer Ha'ra, so they hope for Hashem's help. "They will run and not grow tired, they will walk and not grow weary"–first they will run, making dramatic changes; only later they will walk calmly. Such people will "grow a wing like eagles"–they will find that change is not as difficult as they thought.

Incremental change is more difficult than dramatic change, the Alter explains, because a person who plots out each step separately will inevitably rationalize why the next step is not necessary. One who simply takes the plunge won't have the opportunity to make this mistake. (Madregat Ha'adam: Berur Ha'midot ch.9)

The Trisker Magid writes that when people speak forbidden speech, this contaminates the air and is the root of all contagious disease.

Saved in Yaakov's Merit

Many commentaries count among Avraham's ten tests his being flung into a fiery furnace by King Nimrod. Yet, there is no mention of this episode in the Torah. Why?

R' Menachem Mendel Krochmal z"l (Poland, 1600-1661; the "***Tzemach Tzeddek***" – not to be confused with the chassidic rebbe of the same name) explains: We read (Misheli 17:6), עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים -"*The crown of the elders is their grandsons*."

Says the midrash: "Avraham was not saved from the furnace except in the merit of his grandson Yaakov." Why was Avraham's merit alone not enough to save him? And, why does the midrash cite the merit of his grandson Yaakov and not that of his son Yitzchak?

R' Krochmal answers: Why did Nimrod to sentence Avraham to death? Because Avraham smashed the idols in his father's store. Avraham endangered himself and brought this sentence on himself, which he had no right to do according to halachah.

This is why the event is not mentioned in the Torah; the purpose of reading the Patriarchs' stories is to learn from them; here Avraham acted contrary to the Torah and we should not learn from it. This also is why Avraham was not saved in his own merit.

Yaakov's behavior was the opposite of Avraham's. Hashem had promised to return Yaakov safely to his homeland, but Yaakov nevertheless took necessary precautions against Esav such as sending him bribes and praying for G-d's assistance.

This is behavior that the Torah wants us to learn; indeed, comparing Yaakov's actions to Avraham's highlights the lesson for us, and thus Avraham could be saved in Yaakov's merit. (Pi Tzaddik, Drush II).

Memories of Yerushalayim



R' Yisrael Meir Lau shlita (former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel) records the following memory of **R' Ovadiah Yosef Zt'l** (1920-2013; former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel), who passed away earlier this week. This story took place in the early 1950s, when the orphaned Yisrael Meir Lau was a teenager studying in Yeshivat Kol Torah in Yerushalayim.

My father's sister, Aunt Mata, worried about my health and sent me from New York an $18 money order with which to buy food to supplement the meagre rations in yeshiva. I didn't use it for that purpose –first, because I didn't want to eat alone and there wasn't enough money to feed all the students; second, because of my great desire to buy sefarim. . .

There were three used-sefarim stores in the Meah Shearim neighborhood: Pappenheim, Shtitzburg, and Schreiber.

On Fridays, when I was free from yeshiva, I used to go and wander in the stores, searching for bargains. These were very small stores, with sefarim piled from the foundation until the ceiling. It was

impossible to walk around in these stores; there was barely room to stand there.

One of the three booksellers said to me, "You are beginning to remind me of Rabbi Ovadiah." He explained – 'There is a married student here, a Yerushalmi Torah scholar, by the name of Ovadiah Yosef. He comes to the store wanting to look at the sefarim. He has no money to buy sefarim. He is the father to a large family. I allow him to stand on the ladder, which he does for three hours at a time– one leg on one side and one leg on the other–studying a book until he completes it. Thereafter, that book is stored in his head as if it were filed away.' (Al Tishlach Yadcha El Hanaâar p.139)

R' David Shlomo Grodzenski z"l

R' David Shlomo Grodzenski was the father of **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski**, one of the leading figures in the Lithuanian Torah- world between the World Wars. However, R' David Shlomo also was a noteworthy figure in his own right.

R' David Shlomo was born after his parents had been childless for approximately 25 years. His father, R' Moshe Aryeh, was his first teacher, and he later studied in the Neviezer kollel headed by R' Yisrael Salanter.

In 1857, R' Moshe Aryeh passed away, and R' David Shlomo inherited his position as rabbi of Ivye, Lithuania. Although he was offered more prestigious positions, R' David Shlomo remained in Ivye until his death in 1904.

The following story is told about R' David Shlomo during his tenure in Ivye:

Early one morning, the rabbi was making his way to the bet midrash to study for a few hours before the morning prayers when he encountered a wagon-driver berating his apprentice. "Imbecile! I told you to buy pitch for the wheels last night before

the stores closed. What were you doing instead — stuffing yourself with food? Now we will be delayed at least three hours until the stores open."

The rabbi interrupted the wagon-driver and offered to buy pitch for him. However, being a stranger in town and not knowing that the man offering his help was the rabbi, the wagon-driver refused to advance the two kopecks needed to buy pitch without taking security. So leaving his hat behind, the rabbi set out to buy pitch.

Word of the rabbi's act spread through the town, and an irate community council dispatched one of their members to admonish the rabbi for his seemingly undignified behavior. The messenger, however, did not have the nerve to criticize the rabbi, so he instead began speaking to the rabbi of the evils of haughtiness. His plan was that the rabbi would think that he was being accused of possessing that trait and would defend himself by referring to the morning's events; then the messenger would argue that the rabbi's humility had taken him too far.

Instead, R' David Shlomo stood silently and accepted the messenger's rebuke. When the messenger finished speaking, R' David Shlomo said, "Yes, haughtiness is despicable, and I suffer from it. However, I can tell you that I have worked for many years to overcome this trait and I hope that someday I will."

R' David Shlomo's wife Rivka Elka was a niece of R' Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn, author of Peirush Maharzav on Midrash Rabbah.



"Our Amidah prayers are all in the plural, because a prayer isn't truly a prayer unless it includes others as well." ~ Rabbi Eli Mansour.

Take the Initiative!

We learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.5), There were ten generations from Noach until Avraham. This teaches how patient Hashem is, for they all angered Him continuously until Avraham Avinu came and received the reward of all of them. Commentaries ask: What about Noach, his son, Shem, and the latter's great-grandson, Ever, all of whom were righteous?

R'Ovadiah Yosef Zt'l explains: Rashi (to Bereishit 24:7) writes that Avraham told his slave, Eliezer, 'Originally, Hashem was the G-d of the heavens, but I accustomed people to know Him so that He is the G-d of the earth also.' This is a reference to the fact that Avraham and Sarah converted many believers to monotheism.

In contrast, Noach, Shem and Ever did not reach out to others. Though our Sages speak of the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, only a small, isolated group of students studied there, and only if they (the students) had sought out the teachers.

This, writes R' Yosef, is the difference that caused Avraham to receive the reward for the good deeds of all of them. They did not trouble themselves to sanctify Hashem's Name in public, while Avraham did.

To what may this be compared? To the Gemara's teaching (Berachot 47a), 'One should always arise early to be among the first ten in shul.' Even if 100 more men come afterward, he receives reward equal to all of them [because of his initiative.] (Anaf Etz Avot p.325)

Sometimes you don't know whether to punish a child or hug him. If you punish him when he needed a hug, you've made a serious mistake. But if you hug him when perhaps he should have been punished, you've just brought some extra love into the world.

Letters from Our Sages



This letter was written by **R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z"l** (1817-1896), rabbi of Kovno, Lithuania–considered by many to be the leading Lithuanian halachic authority of his era. In view of R' Spektor's statement in the letter that he was away from home without needed sefarim, it is noteworthy that the original letter is full of citations to halachic sources (which have been omitted here to enhance readability.)

B"H, Thursday, 12 Tamuz 5646 [1886]

Much peace and salvation to his honor, the friend of Hashem and of the house of Israel, and my dear friend, the well-known rabbi, gaon and tzaddik, glory of Israel and its holy one, etc., our rabbi and teacher **Azriel Hildesheimer shlita [z"l]**, av bet din of Berlin, peace and all good things, selah!

After inquiring regarding your welfare with much love . . .

In the matter of your request that I tell you my opinion regarding those who refuse to circumcise themselves–whether to distance them and not call them for aliyot to the Torah, not to count them for a minyan, and [even] for their bar mitzvahs–according to halachah, a person who is a mumar l'arelut / an apostate vis-á-vis circumcision is not considered a mumar / apostate vis-á-vis the whole Torah. The Shulchan Aruch states that even a person who sinned is counted for a minyan so long as he has not been shunned by a bet din. Therefore, according to halachah, he should be counted for a minyan and everything else. And we should not distance him, for then he might distance himself more and leave the fold. Although these people already distance themselves from the tzibbur /

congregation, we must worry that they will become enemies of our people and faith, G-d forbid, as our eyes have seen in these times due to our sins.

Therefore, in my opinion, they should not be distanced entirely. In that way, maybe they will return little-by-little until they have returned entirely, with G-d's help. . .

I have more to say, but because I am very weak and my eyesight also is weak, may we be spared, I have no strength to write. And, I am presently residing outside of my city on doctor's orders and I don't have the necessary sefarim; therefore, I have written briefly. Regarding the main point, your honor should do as his pure eyes see fit.

May Hashem come to our assistance and enlighten our eyes with His holy Torah to teach us the proper way . . . (Igrot R' Yitzchak Elchanan, Vol. I, no.61)

Zemirot Shabbat

דּוֹרְשֵׁי ה' זֶרַע אַבְרָהָם אוֹהֲבוֹ. הַמְאַחֲרִים לָצֵאת מִן הַשַּׁבָּת וּמְמַהֲרִים לָבֹא.

"Seekers of Hashem, descendants of Avraham, His beloved, who delay departing from the Shabbat and hurry to enter [it]." (From the zemer Kol Mekadesh)

R' Yitzchak Meltzen z"l (1854-1916; Lithuania and Eretz Yisrael) writes: When one follows in Avraham's footsteps, doing everything with love of Hashem and with joy, he will depart from Shabbat later than the earliest possible time and will accept Shabbat earlier than the latest possible time. He will not treat Shabbat like an obligation to be observed against his will, bringing it in at the last possible moment and counting the minutes until he can recite havdalah. One who knows and believes that Shabbat is a gift from Hashem will want it to last as long as possible. (Siach Yitzchak)

Why is "Tosefet Shabbat" / "adding" to the Shabbat connected with Avraham Avinu in particular?

R' Chaim Tirer z"l (**R' Chaim of Czernowitz**; died 1817) explains: Avraham is the paradigm for a man of chessed / loving-kindness, whose nature is to do more than he is obligated to do. So, too, by adding to the hours of Shabbat, we express our desire to do more than we are required to do. (Sidduro Shel Shabbat I 4:11)

Before one's Shabbat can end, it must begin. Why, then, did the song's author write, "who delay departing from the Shabbat," before, "and hurry to enter [it]"?

R' Aharon Perlow z"l (1802-1873; Karliner rebbe) writes in the name of his father, R' Asher z"l (1760–1826): The poet is referring to the first Shabbat that Bnei Yisrael observed. Never having tasted the sweetness of Shabbat, they did not hurry to begin Shabbat early. But, having experienced Shabbat once, they delayed departing from it. Then, the following week, they did hurry to enter it. (Beit Aharon)

When the Chasam Sofer zt"l was a child, his prayers were quite lengthy and took a lot of time. One of his friends chided him: "Moshe, while you stood and prayed, I learned several pages of Gemara!"

R' Moshe replied: "I am not concerned. The Gemara says (Berachos 54b) that someone who lengthens his prayers will have his days and years lengthened. I will catch up with my learning during the extra days and years that I will receive due to my extended prayers…"

There's no shame in admitting that one made a mistake. But to stubbornly refuse to admit to a mistake is indeed shameful. ~ Pele Yoetz.

Letters from Our Sages



This letter was written by **R' Yitzchak Hutner z"l** (1904-1980; Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn) in response to a former student. The correspondent apparently had bemoaned the fact that he faced spiritual struggles; as quoted by R' Hutner, he had written: ***"I will never forget the desire that I once had to succeed and to climb 'from strength to strength,' but now, my hope is lost."*** The letter is found in Pachad Yitzchak: Igrot U'ketavim No. 128.

'Your letter reached my hand, and your words touched my heart. Know, my friend, that your very letter belies the descriptions that it contains. Now, let me explain this statement.

It is a terrible problem that when we discuss the greatness of our gedolim, we actually deal only with the end of their stories. We tell about their perfection, but we omit any mention of the inner battles which raged in their souls. The impression one gets is that they were created with their full stature.

For example, everyone is impressed by the purity of the **Chafetz Chaim**'s speech. [Ed. Note: The Chafetz Chaim led the battle against lashon hara and is held up as the model of how a Jew should

speak.] However, who knows about all the wars, the battles, the impediments, the downfalls, and the retreats that the Chafetz Chaim experienced in his fight with the evil inclination?!

As a result [of this gap in our knowledge of gedolim], when a young man who is imbued with a [holy] spirit and with ambition experiences impediments and downfalls, he believes that he is not planted in the house of Hashem. This is because this young man thinks that being planted in Hashem's house means experiencing tranquility of the soul "in lush meadows beside tranquil waters" [Tehilim 23:2].

However, know my friend, that the key for your soul is not the tranquility of the yetzer hatov, but the war against the yetzer hara. Your letter testifies that you are a faithful warrior in the army of the yetzer hatov. There is a saying in English, "Lose the battle and win the war." You surely have stumbled and will stumble again, and you will be vanquished in many battles. However, I promise you that after you have lost those battles, you will emerge from the war with a victor's wreath on your head.

The wisest of all men [King Shlomo] said [Mishlei 24:16], "The tzaddik will fall seven times and will rise." The unlearned think that this means, "Even though a tzaddik falls seven times, he will rise." The wise know well that the meaning is: "Because a tzaddik falls seven times, he will rise." On the verse [Bereishit 1:31], "And Elokim saw all that He had made and it was very good," the midrash comments, "'Good' refers to the yetzer hatov; 'Very good' refers to the yetzer hara." [In line with this midrash, R' Hutner continues:]

If you had written to me of your mitzvot and good deeds, I would have said that it was a good letter. Now that you tell me of your falls and stumbles, I say that I have received a very good letter. Please, don't picture to yourself that a gadol and his yetzer hatov are one and the same; rather, imagine the gedolim at war with all types of base tendencies . . .

I have seen fit to write these words to you so that you can refer to them from time to time. Regarding specific details, it is preferable to speak face-to-face.

You are one who is planted in Hashem's house!

Sharing in your suffering,

Confident that you will prevail,

Praying for your success,

[Signed] Yitzchak Hutner.

P.S. Now you understand the opening sentence.'

Letters from Our Sages

The following are excerpts from a letter written by **R' Tzaddok Hakohen z"l** (1823-1900; Rebbe of Lublin; considered to be one of the greatest scholars and thinkers of the chassidic movement) to a doctor in Manchester, England named Asher, described as a childhood friend of the author. The letter is dated a week after Pesach in 1864 and is printed in Sifrei R' Tzaddok.

Your letter reached me on the 11th of the month [of Nissan], the day on which the prince of the tribe of Asher brought his offering [at the time of the dedication of the Mishkan]. This is surely an omen that you are following in the ways of your ancestors. [As noted above, the recipient's name was Asher.

R' Tzaddok goes on to write that he had heard incorrectly that his friend had settled in America, where most people had thrown off the Torah. He was happy to read that his friend was actually in England, where the Jewish community "was more loyal to the ways of Moshe Rabbeinu". R' Tzaddok continues:]

Perhaps you remember the days of old, when I was twelve years old – it is engraved in my memory that I wrote the year [5595 / 1835] in my letter [to you] as the gematria of the phrase, "Shaiv ba'aretz"

/ "Settle in the land." As the Gemara (Bava Batra 12b) says, "Now that there are no prophets, prophecy was given to children." I was hinting to you then that you should not wander to the ends of the earth . . . It also hinted to that which you were destined to ask me 29 years later. [Ed. note: Although it is nowhere stated, Asher apparently asked R' Tzaddok's advice about settling in Eretz Yisrael.]

In truth, based on your station in life, there is no question. It is obvious to any thinking person that leaving England, which is rich in silver and gold, but poor in Torah and mitzvot, is an absolute obligation upon every loyal Jew, a believer the son of believers, who fears Hashem and loves Torah and mitzvot . . .

And even if you will tell me that it is not an obligation, nevertheless, no one denies that living in Eretz Yisrael is a great thing even nowadays . . .

Go and succeed, and I pray to the Blessed Hashem that He will direct your heart and the hearts of your family members to fulfill this matter as soon as possible. . . [Ed. note: R' Tzaddok himself attempted to leave Lublin to settle in Eretz Yisrael, but his chassidim dissuaded him.]

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz writes, "Joy and peace of mind are signs of genuine belief in Hashem."

If you want to know whether your bitachon is sincere, measure your tranquillity. If your bitachon and trust in Hashem are genuine, you won't be worried or stressed.

'When we accept the circumstances that Hashem gives us and do the best we can with joy and emuna – we soar to the greatest heights and open the door to our salvation.' ~ Rabbi Dovid Ashear

An Astonishing Midrash

אִמְרִי־נָא אֲחֹתִי אָתְּ *"Say you are my sister"* (12:13)

From here we learn that one may slaughter an animal on Shabbat to give fresh meat to one who is sick.

The Torah commands (Vayikra 18:5), **וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטָי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם** - "***You shall live by them***," from which we learn that virtually all Torah laws are pre-empted when human life is at stake.

Thus, for example, a person may transgress a law of Shabbat if his life would otherwise be endangered. How do we know, however, that a person may transgress a Torah law in order to save someone else's life? We learn that from this verse, where Avraham asked Sarah to lie in order to save his life. ~ (Ketav Sofer)

וַיְהִי־רִיב בֵּין רֹעֵי מִקְנֵה־אַבְרָם וּבֵין רֹעֵי מִקְנֵה־לוֹט. וְאַבְרָם אֶל־לוֹט אַל־נָא תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין רֹעַי וּבֵין רֹעֶיךָ כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנָחְנוּ *'And there was a Riv / quarrel between the herdsmen of Avram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. So Avram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no Merivah / quarrel between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen for we are kinsmen.'* (13:7-8)

Why does the Torah change from the masculine form "Riv" to the feminine form "Merivah"?

R' Yerachmiel Shulman Hy"d explains: The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni states, "Sins are barren and do not bear fruit, while Tzedakah bears fruit, as it is written (Yeshayah 3:10), 'For they shall eat the fruits of their deeds'." It is human nature, explains R' Shulman, that a person quickly forgets the kindness that another did for him, whereas he remembers another's wrongdoings for a long time.

Hashem acts in the opposite way, however: "Sins are barren and do not bear fruit"–they are forgotten, while "Tzedakah bears fruit"–it provides long-term benefits to the one who did it.

R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (**Shelah Hakadosh**) answers our question as follows: There was a "Riv" between Avraham's shepherds and Lot's shepherds.

The masculine form is used because it had not yet become a quarrel that had the potential to "bear fruit" and create lasting enmity. Avraham said: Let us nip this quarrel in the bud before it becomes a "Merivah," using the feminine form to indicate the ability to "bear fruit." (*Peninei Ha'shlaimut: Sha'ar Ha'savlanut 1:6)*



לְךָ־לְךָ֙ מֵאַרְצְךָ֣ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ֔ וּמִבֵּ֖ית אָבִ֑יךָ אֶל־הָאָ֖רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֥ר אַרְאֶֽךָּ
***"Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house.."*(12:1)**

R' Moshe Chafetz z"l (early 18th cent.) writes that a person usually loves his home for one of three reasons: He is used to it, he was born there, or his ancestors have lived there for many generations. Human nature is that it is difficult for a person to leave a place that has all three of these "traits" in order to go to a place that he has never even seen.

This was Avraham's first test, that he had to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's home and go to a land that he did not know. Generally, people love their homes even when they are bad places, as Iyov said (Iyov 17:13-14), "In as much as I crave the nethermost depths as my home, I spread my mattress in the dark. I called to the pit, 'You are my father!', to the worms, 'My mother, my sister!'." Avraham's test was to love Hashem instead of his hometown. (Melechet Machshevet)



"One can't succeed in Torah without Tefillah, and one won't succeed in Tefillah without Torah. Torah and Tefillah are bound to each other." ~ The Beis Aharon of Karlin zt"l.



Parshah Pearls *(Adapted from the Chochmas Chayim)*

Still Time to Go

וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת־אַבְרָם אֶת־הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית שִׁפְחָתָהּ מִקֵּץ עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים לְשֶׁבֶת אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן ***–"And Sarah the wife of Avram took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, at the end of ten years after Avram had dwelt in Eretz Cana'an, and she gave her to Avram her husband as a wife" (***16:3).

Chazal, pointing to this Pasuk, rule in Yevamos (64:a) that if after ten years of marriage, a couple have not had children, the man should divorce his wife and pay her the Kesubah (though it is not done nowadays).

A couple once came to **R. Yosef Chayim Sonnenfeld**, and asked him for his consent to divorce, seeing as they had been married for ten years and were still childless.

They were rather taken aback when R. Yosef Chayim asked them why they were in a hurry. After all, ten years is a long time, and their decision could hardly be deemed hasty. But he went on to explain that he vividly recalled their wedding, which he had attended and had even been honored with the B'rachos under the Chupah, and that according to his reckoning, there were still two and a half months to go until the ten years would expire.

Consequently, he told them to go home and assured them that G-d would answer their prayers favorably. Full of hope and trust, they followed the Rav's instructions, and sure enough, within the year, they had a daughter, and this was followed by two sons, all of whom went on to raise G-d-fearing families.

"Even on the darkest day, you can find a corner of light." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

JEP 50 OVER 50 YEARS
Jewish Education Program
Queens

וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמַסָּעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד־בֵּית־אֵל עַד־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה שָׁם אָהֳלֹה בַּתְּחִלָּה בֵּין בֵּית־אֵל וּבֵין הָעָי "***He [Avraham] continued on his travels from the south to Beis-Eil, until the place where he originally had [set up] his tent, between Beis-Eil and Ai".*** **(Bereishis 13:3)**

When Rabbi Yisroel Brog was a youngster, he once asked **Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l** why he merited long life. Rav Yaakov responded that it was because he had never told a lie in his entire life.



When Rav Yaakov was a yeshiva student in Europe, the custom was to eat meals at different people's homes.

One Pesach, Rav Yaakov was at someone's house but became concerned about the level of kashrus. He did not want to offend his host, so he apologized and said that the reason he could not eat in the house was because his custom was not to eat *gebrokts*. (Some people have the custom not to eat matza that has come-in-contact with water, on Passover, as an extra stringency. For example, they will not eat matza balls in their soup.)

Although Rav Yaakov's custom had been to eat *gebrokts*, he stopped eating it for the remainder of his life. Since he had told his host that he does not eat *gebrokts*, he wanted to be totally honest. So he never ate it again on Passover.

Rav Nosson Kaminetsky, one of Rav Yaakov's sons wanted to trace his family's roots. He went to visit the small European town in which Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky had been the Rav. While he was there, he discovered a very interesting historical fact. Even though much of Lithuanian Jewry was wiped out during the Holocaust, most of the Jews of that particular town survived the war.

Rav Nosson Kamenetsky asked the mayor of the town how so many the Jews of this town survived. The mayor said, "I can tell you exactly why the Jews escaped."



He said that before the war, the fellow who eventually became the mayor had been the postmaster of the town. He made a test for the clergy members of that town – both Jews and non-Jews. When they bought postage stamps, he would purposely give them more change than they deserved. He wanted to see whether they would return the money or not. This was his acid test to see what type of people he was dealing with.

He did this three times with Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky. Each time he gave Rav Yaakov more money than he was entitled to, Rav Yaakov would always return the money.

This postmaster was so impressed with Rav Yaakov, who was the head of the Jewish community. Therefore, years later, when he was the mayor of the town, any time he became aware of a German action that was being planned to kill the Jews, he would notify the Jews and they would go hide. That is how the Jews of the city were saved.

Hashem told Avraham to leave his birthplace and travel to the place that Hashem would show him. When arrived there, in the Land of Israel, Hashem tested him further by causing a famine in the land. That necessitated Avraham's temporarily moving to Egypt, to get food. While there, Avraham became wealthy from the gifts that Pharoah gave him. When Avraham returned to Israel, he "continued on his travels". **Rashi** explains that on his return, he paid the debts he had previously incurred at the inns that he had stayed in, on the way down to Egypt.

The **Chida** (quoted in Talelei Oros by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin) wonders how Avraham could have gone on such a long journey to Egypt without money. How could he have assumed that innkeepers and merchants would extend credit to him? Furthermore, why did they extend credit to him?

The **Taz** (Divrei Dovid-Turei Zahav) answers that this shows the esteem in which Avraham was held. Even though Avraham went down to Egypt with all that he had, indicating that he may not return, the innkeepers still trusted him when he said that he would return to pay them.

The **Chida** has a different approach. He says that Avraham did have a small amount of money with him. The innkeepers noticed his impoverished state, so they charged him discounted rates which Avraham was able to afford at the time.

On the return trip, Avraham was wealthy. He returned to all the innkeepers and merchants who had given him discounted rates. He paid them the full amount for the services that he had previously received at their discounted rates. In his honesty, he felt that these payments were not "extras". Rather he felt that these were settlements of unpaid bills.

Rav Safra was an amorah, a rabbi of the Talmud. The Talmud (Makkos 24A) relates a story illustrating the level of honesty that Rav Safra had. The Talmud relates that Rav Safra was

once sitting in his store when a customer walked in and offered him a price for some merchandise. Rav Safra did not respond because he was in the middle of reciting Kriyas Shema. The customer, thinking he was rejecting the offer, offered a higher price. When Rav Safra still did not respond, the customer raised his price again.

Rav Safra finished saying Kriyas Shema and was able to talk. He turned to the customer and told him that he would have been willing to accept the first price that he had offered. Therefore, he would not charge him more than that. The Gemara concludes that this level of integrity is known as "dover emes b'livavo", speaking the truth in his heart.

The **Torah** exhorts us to distance ourselves from falsehood (Shmos 23:7). The **Sefer Hachinuch** (74:2) explains that falsehood is abominable. Hashem is the G-D of truth. Blessing only takes effect for those who liken themselves to Hashem in their actions by being truthful, compassionate, and by doing acts of kindness.

Hashem's "signature" is emes, truth. Hashem wants us to be truthful in all our dealings and with all people. Doing so will bring blessing into our lives. We will also sanctify Hashem's name and will inspire others.



There was an argument between Avraham's shepherds and Lot's, and the Canaanites and Prezites were then settling the land (13:7, see Rashi 12:6). Why were foreign nations able to settle the land? Because the Jews were busy fighting among themselves. (**R' Moshe Alshich**)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה' אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים לָתֶת לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ -'***I am Hashem who brought you out of Ur Kasdim***.' (15:7)



Rashi says that the city was called Ur Kasdim - Ur meaning fire - the fire in which Nimrod attempted to burn Avraham. Chazal (Avoda Zara 9a) describe the first two thousand years of the world as desolation. The next two thousand years are described as - Torah.

Avraham was born in the year 1948. At the age of three, he recognized that there is a Creator of the world and began serving Hashem and spreading Hashem's word. He was thrown into a furnace by Nimrod at the age of fifty-two in the year 2000. Why did not the age of desolation end and the age of Torah begin when Avraham was three in the year 1951? Why do Chazal say that the age of Torah begins in 2000? After all, Avraham began spreading Torah at the age of three in 1951?

It is only after Avraham was Moser Nefesh - ready to give up his life - for Torah and Hashem, that the age of Torah began. True dedication to Hashem and Torah is only if one is ready to be Moser Nefesh for it. (**Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar**)

"The purposefulness of things must be pursued without rest, and every day should bring some new observation, or some deeper perception in the old observations." ~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l.

Giving It a Chance -The Soul of Kaddish – R' Yechiel Spero

Standing inside a Meah Shearim shul in a long ponytail, a tank top, shorts, and sandals, the man most definitely stood out among the congregants normally gathered there to daven. Perhaps he had gotten lost and somehow landed there?



But he seemed to have a purpose in coming that day, as he turned to **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank**, the rav of Yerushalayim, and asked him directly, "When is Minchah? Can I lead the davening?"

What a ludicrous request! The man was not dressed appropriately. Shockingly, though, Rav Tzvi Pesach said that it was time for Minchah and directed him to the amud to lead the davening.

Whoever heard the exchange was flabbergasted. That man is going to be the chazzan? How could the rav allow this? Nevertheless, no one dared oppose the direct ruling of the rav of Yerushalayim.

The man led the congregation through the recitation of Minchah. Soon after, Rav Tzvi Pesach motioned to him to continue, and he davened Maariv, as well. When he was finished, he turned and walked out the door.

Immediately, the befuddled crowd approached Rav Tzvi Pesach to gain some clarity into his actions. Rav Tzvi Pesach's response was cryptic. "If I would not have allowed him to daven, no one else would have allowed him either."

The following day, the man returned once more, this time in a proper shirt. The day after that, he had added long pants. After a week, the fellow was about to leave after his Minchah/Maariv duties when Rav Tzvi Pesach managed to stop him and get in a shalom aleichem. "Nitzachtani, you've won me over!" the man exclaimed and began to cry.

Rav Tzvi Pesach was confused. All he had done was say shalom aleichem to the man, but he was afraid that he had triggered something painful. And then, quite suddenly, the man ran out of the shul.

Though Rav Tzvi Pesach hoped that the man would return and the rav would be able to find out what had gotten him so upset, the man did not come back the next day. A full week passed, and then another.

Finally, three weeks later, the fellow walked in, dressed from head to toe like the other men in the shul. Once more, Rav Tzvi Pesach approached him and again the man began to cry. This time, though, he composed himself and told his story:

One month ago, I came here directly from the funeral of my mother, who passed away at the age of ninety-six. I loved her so much. She was my world, and now she was gone. Though I was raised religious, I had thrown the yoke of Torah and everything that I'd been taught and went off to an irreligious kibbutz. Before she died, my mother had one request: that I say Kaddish for her.

I didn't know what to do. Where would I go? Besides, I had no interest in saying Kaddish, so I decided to perform a test. I would go to a shul in Meah Shearim, and if they allowed me to daven for the amud, I would continue to recite the Kaddish for her. But if they

would turn me away — which seemed more likely — I promised myself I would never walk into such a place again. Even more, I would do the absolutely worst things a Jew could ever do.

As I said, I was almost certain you wouldn't allow me to daven. But you did. I felt like I wanted to show a little more respect the next time, so I wore a proper shirt and then long pants, but I still wasn't prepared to fully embrace your standards. But after a week, I felt that I had been won over. During all those days in which I davened for the amud, no one said a bad word to me. You even allowed me to take my time and go at my own pace toward adopting your standards. At that point, I realized that the life I had been living was not the life I wanted to continue to live.

My mother was a smart woman. She knew I just needed another taste of Yiddishkeit and I would be hooked. Well, I went back to my kibbutz, and seeing with my own eyes that there was no life for me there, I packed up my stuff. I'm going to live here, where I can continue to grow.

And then he concluded, "Nitzachtani — You've won me over."

More Zechusim - Rays of Hope by Rabbi Chaim Aryeh Zev Ginzberg

An elderly Yid was approaching his hundredth birthday and was greatly troubled. Every day, he would share with his son the reason for his agitation. "I need to understand why I am zocheh to this arichus yamim," he said. "My father died at 46 and his father before him at 41. I am a simple person, not learned or accomplished. Why have I been zocheh to live until this old age?"

Any response that his son shared with him was inadequate. Concerned for his elderly father's well-being, the son decided to present his question to the gadol hador, **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman**. The rosh yeshivah's answer was absolutely mind-boggling

and could only have come from someone whose vision of the happenings of this world is worlds apart from our own.



The rosh yeshivah responded, "Tell your father the following reason why he is zocheh to arichus yamim.- Hakadosh Baruch Hu is working to bring an end to Galus Edom. The zechus that Edom had all these years was the great kibbud av that Eisav accorded his father. And so, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, in recent times, has changed the nature of the world, allowing people to live longer. This way, Klal Yisrael can care for their elders for a longer period, generating additional zechusim of kibbud av to counteract the zechus of Edom and finally bring an end to Galus Edom."

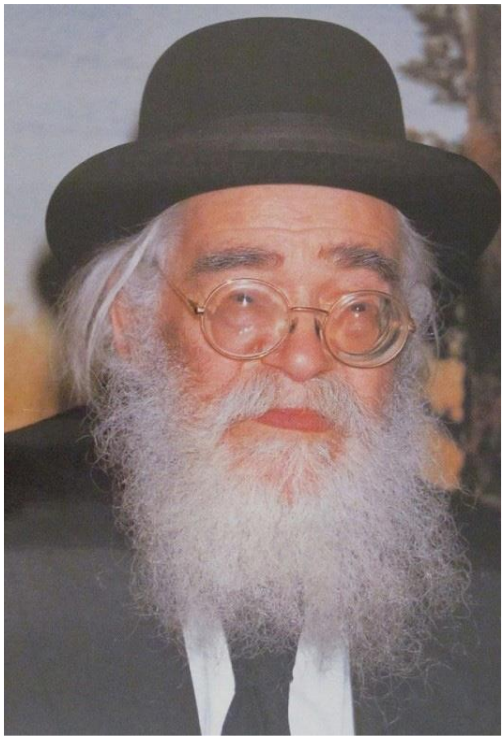
In other words, this person was zocheh to arichus yamim so that more zechusim could be generated by his children, to benefit Klal Yisrael. What an astounding idea!

What our eyes see as the good fortune of increased life expectancy is really part of Hakadosh Baruch Hu's plan to bring the geulah.

"I didn't come to this world merely to fulfil my obligations." ~ The Kopschnitzer Rebbe.

"It takes a smart person to have the last word – and not use it." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.

Giving In! - The Art of Being You



Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach served as rosh yeshivah of Yeshivas Ponevezh in Bnei Brak for close to fifty years. Known for his incredible insight into human nature and spot-on advice, his exemplary character traits were evident in his home life, as well.

"When we talked about getting married," Rav Shach's wife once shared with his students, "my husband proposed that we take turns giving in to each other. He'd give in to me during our first disagreement, and I'd give in the next, and so on. In this way, there would be no ill will or hard feelings since we both knew that things would even out the next time around.

After telling me about his idea, my husband said he'd be the first one to give in." The students expected to hear that she got the next turn, but she explained, "I never had my chance to be the one to give in. My husband always 'took my turn.'" - Rav Shach always gave in. - Every single time!

"When I was 17 years old, my parents and my uncle, the Chazon Ish, worked very hard to find a shidduch for me. Yet, shidduch after shidduch did not come to be…. Now, consider this. When the search for my zivug began, my future wife Batsheva, was not yet bas mitzvah! She was certainly not ready to begin shidduchim. But since she was my "bashert," Hashem caused those who were suggested for me to not want to proceed…" ~ R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

One Hundred *Brachos* With Gratitude

The holy *Zohar* in this *parashah* (77 1) writes that the words "לך לך" are numerically equivalent to 100. He explains that the first *passuk* in this *parashah* reveals that before the *neshamah* descends to the world, HaKadosh Baruch Hu stipulates that it will recite one hundred *brachos* each day.

Sparks Of Shabbos

The Maharal writes that when Moshiach comes, we will still have the opportunity to increase our merits, but this is only true if one has chosen the proper path before Moshiach arrives. If he hasn't, he has no more opportunity. (It is only at the later stage of olam ha'ba that one can no longer advance his spiritual level.)

He likens this to eruv tavshilin, that only if one began cooking before yom tov may he continue to cook on Friday for Shabbos and then enjoy the food on Shabbos. Similarly, only one who has set out in the right direction before Moshiach comes, may continue to develop and grow once he arrives.

Perhaps this is what Chazal mean that Avraham observed even eruv tvashilin; that he was headed in the right direction even before he started to accrue the zechus of Torah and mitzvos. In a similar vein, one should prepare the entire week for Shabbos in order to fully experience the kedusha of Shabbos.

If there is something you wish to do tomorrow, see to it that it was done by yesterday. ~ R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor zt"l.

L'Maaseh



A man once came to **Rav Yehuda Zev Segal zt"l** seeking his beracha to relocate to Eretz Yisroel. When the Rosh Yeshiva asked if he will be able to dedicate more time to Torah study, he replied that he planned to. Rav Segal insisted that planning isn't enough but if he promised to strengthen his limud ha'Torah, he would see beracha and hatzlacha. The man agreed.

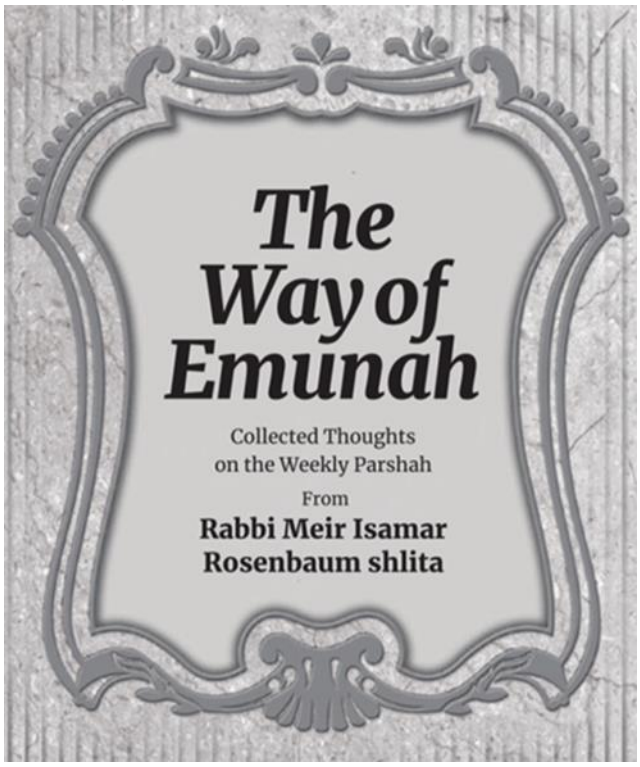
A few days after arriving in Eretz Yisroel, he rented a car and was in an accident. Boruch Hashem he was fine, but the rental company insisted the accident wasn't covered and he had to pay out of pocket.

A few months later, he still hadn't been paid by his employer and there was one financial disaster after another.

Finally, he recalled the words of the Rosh Yeshiva and realized that he had slacked off in his learning. An hour later, he met another English speaker who was looking for a chavrusa. The two hit it off and agreed to learn that night.

Within an hour, the phone rang. It was the rental company saying they had made a mistake and he was in fact covered for the accident. Then, the accounting department of his company called to say they had made an error and two months backpay was deposited in his account by the end of the day.

He made sure never to miss his nightly chavrusa.



Thrown Into the Furnace to Purify His Body

וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ

And Hashem said to Avram, "Go for yourself from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house." (12:1)

The Sanzer Rov zy"a would occasionally relate the famous story of the ger tzedek, Count Pototsky. When he would say the story, he would become very emotional and fiery. He would relate how after the ger was arrested for converting to Judaism, imprisoned and sentenced to death, his family visited him and begged him to renounce his new religion, which was a great source of shame for them.

The ger tzedek told them, "One may ask why some gentiles convert to Judaism, while some Jews sadly convert to Christianity. Why would someone want to change his entire identity?"

He answered this question by quoting a Medrash that says that before Hashem gave the Torah to Klal Yisroel, He went around to all of the nations and asked if they wanted it. They all rejected it and only the Jewish people accepted it with love. Does this mean that there wasn't a single non-Jew who wanted to accept the Torah and that there wasn't a single Jew who didn't want it?

No. There was a minority that did not agree with the consensus, but Hashem goes with the majority. Since the majority of gentiles did not want the Torah, they couldn't get it, and since the majority of Jews wanted it, they did get it. However, the non-Jews who wanted the Torah deserved to receive it.

Therefore, Hashem caused their souls to return to this world and convert to Judaism. So too, the souls of the Jews who didn't want the Torah were destined to return to this world and to convert out of Judaism.



He continued, "From the time that the Torah was given, my soul yearned to be a Jew. This has now been proven by my conversion. Therefore, you cannot change me. Now, I have a Jewish soul, but my body was born impure and needs to be purified. If you want to burn my body and purify that as well, that is fine with me. Then my soul and body will be completely cleansed and purified."

As the Sanzer Rov related this story, he would place his hand upon his heart and say numerous times, "Our souls are holy, but our bodies are impure. How can we purify our bodies as well?"

My father the **Kreitchnifer Rebbe** of Yerushalaim shlita (Gilyon Divrei Torah Kretchnif-Yerushalaim) used this story to explain Hashem's command to Avrohom Avinu. When Avrohom was in Charan, his avodah was to eradicate evil. He broke his father's idols and stood in opposition to the entire world. He convinced people that Hashem created and guided the world.

While he succeeded in purifying his neshama, he was still bothered by the fact that he had been born with an impure body as the son of Terach. Since he greatly desired to purify his body, he willingly entered the fiery furnace in Ur Kasdim, which purified his body and removed all traces of impurity.

This answers the question of how Avrohom could leave his father's house. What about the mitzvah of kibud av v'eim?

The answer is that after he purified his body in the fiery furnace, he was pure like a newborn child. He no longer was considered to be Terach's son and no longer had a mitzvah to honor him. After emerging from the fire with a pure body and soul, Hashem told Avrohom to leave his homeland. He no longer had any connection to his father's house and no longer had to work on eradicating evil. Rather, he now had to start a new avodah of increasing kedusha and connecting to the loftiest levels of holiness.

And that is what he did. He came to Eretz Yisroel and opened his home to all passersby, bringing them close to their Father in Heaven and teaching them how to be pure and holy.

Avrohom Himself Was the Bracha

וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וֶהְיֵה בְּרָכָה

And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. (12:2)

The Chidushei Harim zy"a asks what the pasuk means when it says that Avrohom "shall be a blessing." Why doesn't it simply say that he will be blessed? He answers that the pasuk is saying that Avrohom himself was the bracha.

So too, whenever anyone emulates Avrohom's middos, which are to have - **עַיִן טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ נְמוּכָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ שְׁפָלָה** - "***a good eye, a lowly sprit and a humble soul***" (Avos 5:19), he himself is a bracha, meaning that blessings will rest upon him at all times.

"Struggle is not the opposite of growth - it is part of growth." ~ R' Yitzchok Hutner zt"l.

The Converts Did Not Accept Yitzchok's Authority

וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־אָחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכָשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לָלֶכֶת אַרְצָה כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אַרְצָה כְּנָעַן *'And Avram took Sarai his wife and Lot the son of his brother…and the souls that he made in Charan.'* (12:5)

Rashi says that the souls that Avrohom made in Charan were the converts that he brought under the wings of the Shechinah. Since he brought them close to Hashem, it was considered as if "made" them.

Rav Henoch of Alexander zy"a (Sefer CHashbah L'Tova) asks what ultimately happened to these people. Why are they never mentioned again?

He answers that after Avrohom died, they did not want to accept the authority of his son, Yitzchok. This was because Avrohom only showed them kindness and charity, and they were unable to tolerate the middah of "pachad" and strength of Yitzchok. They therefore thought that they no longer had a rebbi, so they left and went back to their old ways.

On The Way There, He Paid Like a Pauper; On The Way Back, He Paid Like a Wealthy Man

וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמַסָּעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד־בֵּית־אֵל *And he went on his journeys, from the south and until Bais Keil. (13:3)*

The Chida (Sefer Pnei Dovid) asks how Avrohom had debts. Did people give loans to a wanderer whom they didn't even know? Furthermore, why would Avrohom leave home without any money?

He answers that Avrohom had money and he did pay for everything he purchased. However, he did not have a lot of money, so he rented the cheapest rooms and paid as little as possible. He paid the amount a poor person would be expected to pay. On the way back, however,

he went back to the inns and paid everyone the difference between the amount a poor man pays and the amount a rich man pays.

Serving Hashem Through Eating

וּמַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וָיָיִן וְהוּא כֹהֵן לְאֵל עֶלְיוֹן And Malkitzedek the king of Shalem brought out bread and wine, and he was a kohen to the Most High G-d. (14:18)



Rashi says that Malkitzedek was Shem, the son of Noach. **Rav Menachem Mendel of Vorka zy"a** (quoted in Sefer Bais Yitzchok) says that Shem-Malkitzedek taught us a new type of avodas Hashem.

He taught us that even when we are eating – when we eat bread and wine at the Shabbos seudah – we can be like a kohen to Hashem because eating for a mitzvah is a means of serving Hashem.

"There are no good times and bad times; there are only happy times when a Jew chooses to be b'simcha, and sad times when we don't see that everything happens for a reason. All that we experience in our lives is the same will of Hashem — it just depends on how we receive it." ~ Baal Shem Tov.

People's personalities are varied. You must find your own path in Avodas Hashem, through becoming aware of how you can apply your unique personality and character to excel in a life of Torah & Mitzvos. ~ Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk

One Who Gives Bread to a Poor Man is Rewarded



My grandfather, the **Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a** (quoted in Gilyon Kol Emunah) explains this pasuk by quoting the Gemara (Tainis 23B) that the greatest form of tzedakah is done by woman, who give poor people food that they can eat immediately (as opposed to me, who give money to poor people, which they can use to buy food). - Accordingly, their tefillos are answered immediately.

So too, Malkitzedek did the mitzvah of tzedakah in its highest form by giving bread and wine, as opposed to giving money. Therefore, he was rewarded immediately by being given maaser from all of Avrohom's belongings.

The Holy Power of Avrohom's Food

My father, the **Kretchnifer Rebbe shlita** notes that Avrohom served Hashem in Eretz Yisroel through the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim. In this way, he drew people close to Hashem.

Why did he specifically choose to bring people to Hashem through eating and drinking, rather than through words of Torah and mussar.

He answers with the following story: When the **Sanzer Rov zy"a** was in Vienna, his tish was attended by very simple people. One of them was very far from Torah and mitzvah observance, and he often ate non-kosher food. At the tish, the Rov called him over and gave him some "shirayim".

After the man ate the Rov's shirayim, he began to vomit. He threw up everything he ate that day. From then on, his body could not tolerate any of the food he ate, and he was constantly vomiting.

After a while, he was very sick and seemed to be at death's door. The man was brought to the Rov, who told him what he must do. He said that from then on, he should only eat kosher food. He explained that since his body had ingested holy food, it could no longer tolerate treif food, and it would expel any non-kosher food he tried to eat.

It is certain that the same was true of the people who ate in Avrohom's house. After eating his holy food, their bodies could no longer tolerate non-kosher food. In this way, Avrohom made them holy and brought them close to Hashem.

His Middah of Tzedakah Became Evident After His Son's Birth

וְהֶאֱמִן בַּה׳ וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לּוֹ צְדָקָה ***'And he believed in Hashem and it was considered to him as righteousness.'*** (15:6)

Rav Hillel of Kolomaya zy"a explained that although Avrohom Avinu excelled in the mitzvah of hachansas orchim, there were people who belittled his action and said that he only was spending all of his money on guests because he had no children. They claimed that if he would have children, he would save his money for them.

However, after Hashem promised him that he would bear sons who would be his heirs, and he still continued to spend his money on his guests, everyone had to admit that his actions were truly righteous.

Thus, the pasuk is saying that Avrohom believed in the promise Hashem had given him that he would merit a son, but he still continued to give tzedakah; therefore, everyone considered it as a righteousness on his part. They all could see that he wasn't saving money for his children. Rather, he continued to give it away to the poor and needy.

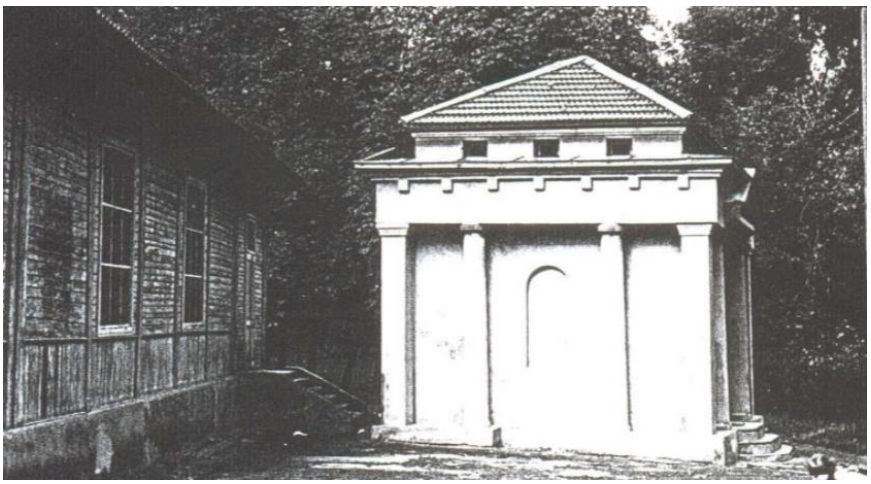
One Doesn't Need Miracles to Have Emunah

Rav Eliezer Dovid Friedman zt"l (Sefer Peninei Torah V'Chasidus) relates that **Rav Bunim of Peshischa zy"a** only performed miracles on very rare occasions.

He would say, "If I thought there was any benefit for avodas Hashem, I would take the trees from the city of Danzig and move them to Peshischa in one second. That wouldn't be hard for me at all. But there is no reason to do that today because Hashem already gave us His holy Torah, Shas and Poskim, and miracles are not needed to display His greatness.

Only on rare occasion is it necessary to perform a miracle to help a Jew in need. Otherwise, we do not need them to have emunah."

Saving a Person Who Has Passed Away in The Merit of Tzedakah



Sefer Shama Shlomo relates that before **Rav Shlomo of Karlin zy"a** became known as a renowned tzadik, he was very poor. At that time, he had three sons and his family suffered greatly from poverty. Rav Shlomo would sit in the bais medrash all day while wrapped in his talis and tefillin.

He had a next door neighbor who was a very wealthy milk dealer but who did not observe Torah and mitzvos. One day, his neighbor was cooking meat in his house. Rav Shlomo's children smelled the meat and since they were so hungry, they became faint from the smell of the food and passed out. This caused quite a commotion as many people came running to help the children who had fainted.

After this occurrence, the merchant decided that he would go to the bais medrash to see if his neighbor really was such a tzadik. He told himself: If he is really sitting and learning all day, I won't say anything, but if he isn't, I'm going to thrash him for being so cruel and allowing his family to starve.

He came to the bais medrash and saw Rav Shlomo standing up and leaning his on his left hand, without doing anything at all. He ran over to him full of anger, but Rav Shlomo said, "If you want to hit me, go ahead and hit me."

The merchant saw that his face with shinning and he backed off. He became frightened and ran back home. He gave some money to Rav Shlomo's wife to buy food for her family and, from then on, he regularly gave her small amounts of money for bread and water.

A number of years passed, and Rav Shlomo started working as a melamed. Slowly but surely, his reputation as a holy man started to spread and people began to come to spend time with him. He eventually became very famous and was recognized as a tzadik.

Many years later, the merchant got sick. He died on an erev Shabbos and Rav Shlomo came to the funeral. As the grave was being filled, Rav Shlomo took a small twig from a tree and stuck it in the earth. He then went home to prepare for Shabbos.

That night, as he sat by the Shabbos seudah, Rav Shlomo was very emotional. His face was bright red, and he had to rest his head on his hands. He sat like that for several hours, immersed in his thoughts, without tasting any of the Shabbos food. He became so emotional that sparks of fire started to come out of his head. Suddenly, he came out of his trance and asked for some of the Shabbos food. -The many chasidim who were present at the seudah were baffled by the Rebbe's behavior.

One of the chasidim who was particularly close to the Rebbe was unable to sleep all night because he was so troubled by what he had seen. In the morning, he went over to the Rebbe and asked him what

he was thinking about for so long and why he was so deeply immersed in his thoughts. The Rebbe replied, "I will tell you the truth. When I placed the twig into the merchant's grave, it made it impossible for the damaging angels to touch him. This created a big commotion in Heaven. The angels asked: Who did this? This man committed many sins. Why aren't the damaging angels being permitted to touch him? "

The angels were told that this was done by Shlomo ben Yuta because this man supported his family for many years. It was decided that I would be called to court to explain myself. I told the Heavenly court that I did this because he saved my wife and children from starvation and anyone who saves one Jewish life is considered to have saved an entire world. And the Heavenly court ruled that I had acted correctly."

From this story, we can learn the greatness of the mitzvah of tzedakah. In the merit of giving a small amount of food to a poor family, this man was not punished for all his sins.



Short And Sweet Story of The Week by R'yoni Schwartz

As **Rav Moshe Feinstein, ZT"L**, got older he was no longer able to walk back and forth to his Yeshiva, Mesivta Tiferes Jerusalem, to daven on Friday night, so he davened in Rabbi Halpern's minyan. This was a small Friday night minyan that took place in the building attached to his. To do this, he had to walk down a flight of stairs and up another one.

Rav Moshe would attend this Minyan for a few years until he was no longer able to walk up and down the stairs. At this point, he started davening alone in his home every Friday night.

People approached Rav Moshe and asked why he wished to daven alone when they could easily have a minyan gathered at his house. Rav Moshe responded that if he were to do so and even one member of Rabbi Halpern's small minyan left, it could harm the honor of Rabbi Halpern. So, Rav Moshe continued to daven alone on Friday night for years to come out of concern for another Jew's honor.

Rav Moshe rules in Igros Moshe that davening with a minyan is a great obligation; yet, when faced with the choice, he ruled that protecting the feelings of a fellow Jew is a greater obligation.

Comment: In this week's Parsha, Avraham and Lot's herdsmen get into a quarrel and they are forced to part ways. Avraham, one of the greatest men to ever live, did not say, "I'll go this way and you go that way." Instead, Avraham gave Lot the first choice by telling him to choose which path looks best and most fertile. He told Lot that he will take the alternate path. Avraham adjusted the entire course of his journey out of respect for Lot's honor!

Loving your fellow just like you love yourself is the Jewish way of life. Our sages teach us (Avos 4:1), "Who is respected? One who respects others." In Judaism, our greatness is not defined by how much honor we receive, but by how much we give. The more we give, the greater we become.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Avraham was careful to return from Mitzrayim following the same route he took when he went down to Mitzrayim, in order to repay any outstanding debts (Rashi, 13:3).

The Chasam Sofer suggests a novel approach to understanding this. Avraham expressed his monotheistic beliefs publicly, and he was mocked with questions of, "Where is your G-d when you need Him? Why hasn't He given you food or money? Isn't He all powerful?"

Avraham left these questions unanswered. Now that he had wealth and miraculous experiences of protection, he was able to return and answer the questions. Avraham was able to show how Hashem was always with him, watching over and protecting him.



הוא היה אומר

R' Itzele Volozhiner *zt"l* (Peh Kadosh) would say: **וְהָיָה שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אַב הֲמוֹן גּוֹיִם נְתַתִּיךָ** (17:5) - Why does it say **וְהָיָה שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָהָם** - in a future tense, when changing his name, and when *Hashem* changed Sarai's name, it says **לֹא תִקָּרֵא אֶת שְׁמָהּ שָׂרָי כִּי שָׂרָה שְׁמָהּ** in the past tense? (17:15)

Because when one becomes a king, his wife does not need to be appointed queen - she automatically becomes the queen when her husband is appointed king.

Here, too, after Avram's name will be changed to Avraham, Sarai's name will already have been changed to Sarah."

דרגה יתירה

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ

In *Tehillim* (55:23), we say the famous *posuk*: **הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל־ה' יְהָבְךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָ** – "***Throw on Hashem the heaviness of your burden, and He will sustain you.***"

The first word of this *posuk*, **הַשְׁלֵךְ**, has in it the word "LECH." The last word of this *posuk*, **יְכַלְכְּלֶךָ**, has in it the word "LECHA."

This is one of the greatest messages that we can learn from our *parsha*, "**לֶךְ־לְךָ**." These words represent the tests that every Jew

must go through in order to fulfil his mission and purpose in life, for only through the challenges in our lives do we truly achieve our potential in this world.

How can a person go through difficulties that sometimes seem unbearable? Some hardships are so debilitating that they threaten to break us. The one and only solution is, **הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל־ה' יְהָבְךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָּ** - *"Throw your burdens upon Hashem and He will sustain you."*

A person certainly cannot handle difficulties of such magnitude on his own. People have to remember that they are never alone. It was *Hashem* that put them in it, and it is only *Hashem* that will get them through it.

The question is, why does the *posuk* say "**הַשְׁלֵךְ**"? THROW? Why can't we just give our troubles over to *Hashem*? Why must we "throw" them at Him?

The answer is because when you give something to someone, you are still holding it when you pass it on. When you throw something, you have to entirely let go of it before you pass it on. - When it comes to challenges in life, we must learn how to "Let Go!" We need to show *Hashem* that we totally rely on Him and put our faith and trust in Him to get us through.

Here in *Eretz Yisroel*, as well as *Yidden* all over the world, we are experiencing turbulent times! It is difficult to watch the suffering of our brothers and sisters and it is scary to feel the earth trembling beneath our feet, not knowing what tomorrow may bring.

Our greatest strength is *Emunah* and *Bitachon*. We need to hold on tight to our beloved Father in Heaven and truly feel that we are being carried lovingly in our Mother's arms.

"Anything that is important enough for you to do, is important enough for you to do better." ~ R' Yisroel Reisman Shlita.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

וְקַוֵּי ה' יַחֲלִיפוּ כֹחַ *But those who put their hope in Hashem shall renew [their] vigour*. (Yeshaya 40:31)

Yeshaya HaNavi notes that those who "*trust in Hashem shall renew their strength,*" indicating that Jews who trust in *Hashem* will continually draw new strength and so to speak, grow eagles' wings enabling them to "soar" back to *Eretz Yisroel* at the time of redemption. - *Chazal* say that Yeshaya specifies the eagle because it flies higher than all other birds - indicating that *Klal Yisroel* has a special, Heavenly spiritual strength enabling them to survive borne out of the *Torah* itself.

R' Ezriel Zelig Noach Kushlevsky *zt"l* (Sefer Ein Tzofim) adds that *Chazal* teach us that learning *Torah* transcends everything physical. He relates a story about **R' Yitzchok Elchanan Spektor *zt"l*** of Kovno, who was elderly and weak, and required medication to manage and strengthen his heart rhythm.

One *Purim*, R' Yitzchok Elchanan was exceptionally frail and his doctor was worried about his health. But as soon as the reading of the *megillah* began, the physician noticed a change come over the *tzaddik's* face. Concerned, he quickly raced over to check R' Yitzchak Elchanan's pulse and was amazed to discover that it was steady and strong - more so than it had been in a while. - Surprised, he asked how that could be and the *tzaddik* smiled pointing to the *megillah*.

The best medication for a Jew is the happiness of performing a *mitzvah* and the study of *Torah*, for while one is truly engaged in *Avodas Hashem* and *Limud HaTorah*, he will not feel physical pain.

Such is the power of the *Torah* when one places his complete trust in *Hashem*.

זכרו תורת משה
לעילוי נשמת ר' משה בן החבר צבי זצ"ל ור' משה יצחק בן אברהם צבי הכהן זצ"ל
HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Challenge!

In the city of Radin, one of the townsmen was *niftar*. To spare the **Chofetz Chaim** the distress, his *talmidim* withheld the news from him, thinking that he didn't need to know of the *petirah* of a simple Jew. Why trouble the Chofetz Chaim with news of the misfortune?

After a while, the Chofetz Chaim noticed that the man wasn't attending shul. When he inquired about his absence, he was told about how he had been *niftar* some time ago. The Chofetz Chaim was bothered: "Why didn't you tell me about his passing?"

"We didn't want to bother you by telling you the news," replied the *talimidim*. "We thought that he was just a simple fellow, and that he didn't mean to you."

The Chofetz Chaim replied something that will change the way we think, shedding a new light on the approach we should have toward life and its challenges.

"We don't know who's great in the Next World," the Chofetz Chaim told them. "Only Hashem knows who's truly great. Hashem knows what's in each man's heart.

"One thing we do know, and that is that *yisurim* cleanse a person (*Brachos* 5a), and this man was definitely a *tzaddik*, judging by how many *yisurim* he endured. Thus, it's only right to have gone to his *levayah*. He was cleared of all his sins and is befitting the title of *tzaddik*. That's why I would've wanted to partake in the *levayah*."

This story is surely an eye-opener. The Chofetz Chaim's perspective is certainly different than that of the mindset out there. We perhaps think that "everything must work out perfect, and if not…"

But, as we see, the outlook of our *gedolim* is that *yisurim* are a cleaning process and a greatness process. They understood its value. They know that *yisurim* are a sign of greatness that will ultimately get us the imaginable reward in the World to Come.

To take this a step further, *yisurim* aren't just another mark of greatness but are one of the *primary* marks of greatness. The *yisurim* that one endures are one's greatest entry ticket to the World to Come.

This we can learn from the following story: The **S'fas Emes** was present at the *levayah* of a *chashuv* individual. All the eulogies focused on his remarkable greatness in Torah, mitzvos, *maasim tovim*, etc. The S'fas Emes stopped the eulogists and said that they were omitting a big part of his greatness, namely that this man had "*yisurim*." They can't be overlooked, he explained, but must be mentioned first among his many praises.

The Great Benefits

Among the benefits of *yisurim* are that (a) they arouse us to do *teshuvah*, and (b) they cleanse us from our *aveiros*. When we remember that our primary place and purpose is *Olam Haba*, we understand that these wake-up calls and the atonement and purification we get from them are certainly for our benefit.

The **Dubno Maggid** told the following *mashal*:

A child had just gotten a serious concussion, and his parents were told by the doctor that they under no circumstance could let him fall asleep. If he did, he might never awaken. The parents spoke to the child to keep him awake, but the child was tired and began to close his eyes. The father took away the pillow from under the child's head and talked to the child some more. When he was about to fall asleep again, the father placed the child on the cold floor. - The young child didn't understand why his father was torturing him. When the child

began falling asleep again, the father hit him. It seemed cruel, but the parents knew that they were doing the greatest kindness by doing everything in their power to keep him awake.

The *nimshal* is that Hashem gives us wake-up calls. They are the *yisurim* we endure in life. They all come from His immense love and compassion for us, so that we don't fall asleep in *galus* and forget our purpose in life.

"Out Of Love!"

In 1943, the **Nesivos Shalom** was stricken by a skin condition that gave off a highly-contagious puss and mucus. He was instructed by the doctors to be secluded from everyone to prevent its spread.

His two-year-old daughter also had to stay away from him, which was very hard for her. The Nesivos Shalom said, "she thinks the reason that I'm distancing from her is because I dislike her, but this is not true at all. If I didn't care for her, then I'd be careless about contact and potentially expose her to getting the disease. But I care so much for her, and therefore I have to distance myself from her, although it's very hard."

The Nesivos Shalom said: "We think that when we encounter challenges, they come because they're a sign of Hashem's 'dislike' or 'hatred' of us, *chas v'shalom*. On the contrary, they're coming from Hashem's immense love for us!

The **Avodas Yisroel** (*parshas Devarim*) compares it to a father who rebukes his child harshly, but then he draws him near and shows him how much he loves him. The great kindness makes up for the hard times that preceded it. The Avodas Yisrael writes, "It is a *mashal* to a father who hits his son with a staff to educate him, afterward which the father is kind to the son, comforts him, and tells him how much he loves him…"

"Should I Lose My Mind?"

Even if someone is confronted by challenges, they must not lose their mind.

There's an incredible story about the great *tzaddik*, **Reb Zalman Brizel**. One time, when he had just returned from a fundraising trip in *chutz l'aretz*, he couldn't find the parcel he'd stored the money. While his family frantically searched all over the home for the money, they soon saw their father dancing. At first, they assumed that he must've found the money, but when they asked him where the money had been, he replied, "I don't know. It's still lost."

They were perplexed. "So why are you dancing?

"Fine, I lost the money, but should I also lose my mind? The first part is hard enough, I don't have to make it worse than it is!"

This teaches us an incredible lesson. When encountering challenges, it is up to us how to respond. Remembering that it's coming from Hashem will ease the pain and give us the emotional support we need to ensure it.

Working on our Middos

The Sheivet Mussar (431) tells a story of a Rasha who committed Aveiros his entire life. When he was old and on the verge of passing away, his family asked him, "Why didn't you eat anything today?" He replied, "If you give me a cooked egg, I will eat it."

However, before he was able to eat the egg, a poor person came to the door and asked for some food. The ill man instructed his family to give the egg to the poor person. This was the first and only time in his life that he gave Tzedakah. - Three days later, he passed away, and he came to his son in a dream. He said, "My dear son, make sure you always give Tzedakah, and you will merit to enter Olam Haba. I

gave Tzedakah only once in my lifetime, and the Mitzvah has tipped the scales in my favor, and I merited to be in Olam Haba!"

The Sheivet Mussar explains how giving Tzedakah only once, tipped the scales to his merit, even though this man had sinned for so many years. The poor man who came to his door was about to pass away himself, and if it were not for the egg, the poor man would have died from hunger.

This means that all the Mitzvos this person will do in his lifetime and the lives of his children and future descendants who will be born, are all to his credit. - This is why his Mitzvah was so significant. And with it, he merited to earn Olam HaBa!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, was often inspired during sunrise to express his great joy at the immense benefits that we get from sunshine. He would joyfully say, "How fortunate we all are! How thankful we must be to Hashem our Creator, for His infinite kindness in giving us such wonderful Brachos!"

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l, once said that an American boy from the Mirrer Yeshivah went to the Yeshivah in Radin to learn under the **Chofetz Chaim**.

Someone commented to the Chofetz Chaim, with a bit of surprise, "This Bachur has come from America to learn in the Yeshivah."

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "Why are you surprised? Americans are good businesspeople, and Torah is the best business! Let more Bochrim come and learn Torah!"

L'Maaseh

Rav Meilich Biderman, Shlit"a, related a story. Rav Berel Cohen, a resident of Kiryas Sanz in Netanya, once bought a lottery ticket. To his great surprise and happiness, his ticket won the lottery, and this meant that an enormous sum of money would be his. He had never been a rich person, and this new fortune would drastically change the life of his family.

Unfortunately, his good fortune lasted only for a few days. The lottery officials discovered that there had been an error in the drawing, and they had declared the wrong winner. The money was to go to someone else.

It is one thing not to win the lottery, but to actually have the winning ticket, and then be forced to give up the winnings, is very difficult, and the family took the news very hard. Rav Berel, however, remained calm, and he was filled with his usual sense of joy.



One of his children found it difficult to understand how his father could stay so upbeat, despite the emotional waves of the experience. He asked his father, "How can you remain happy at a time like this?"

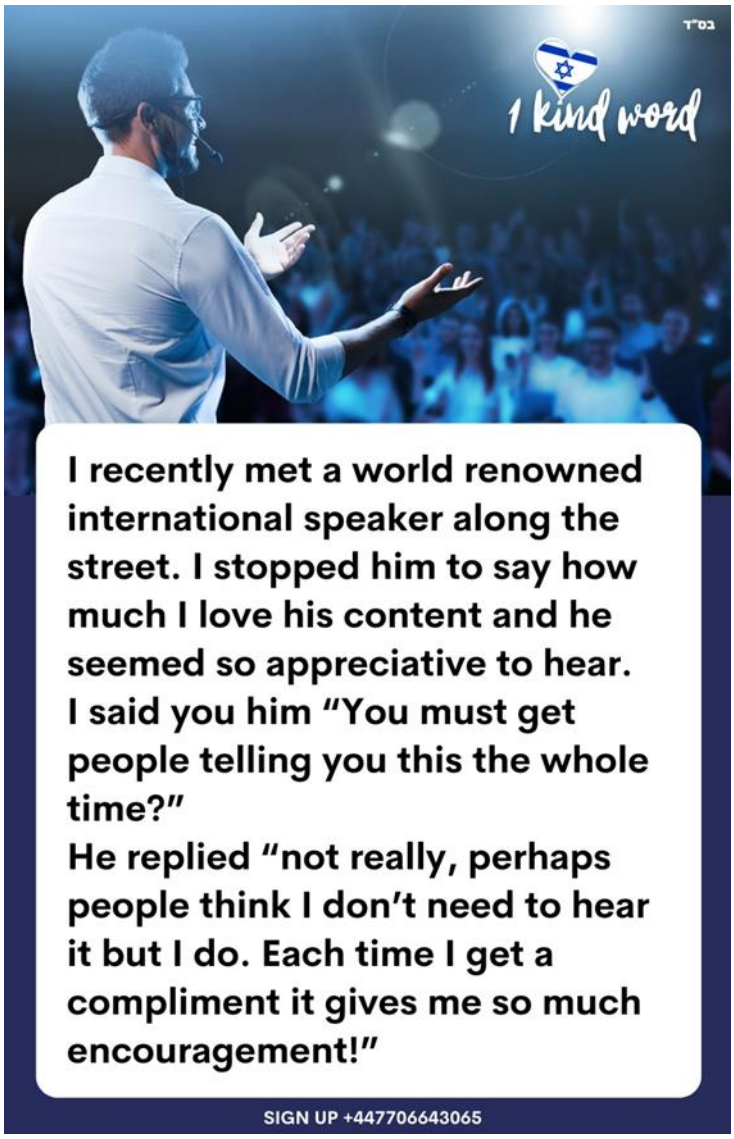
In his typical calm manner, Rav Berel answered, "Chazal teach us that if someone does something that he Chayav Misah for, and he is sentenced to death, at times, Hashem will make this person lose all of his money and leave him poor, in exchange for this person's life. As the Gemara says, 'A poor person is like someone who is dead.'

I always wondered that while this may be a good solution for someone who is rich, what about someone who is poor to begin with?

What can he do? He really has nothing to lose, and there isn't anything he can exchange in place of his life.

Then I realized, what about me? I have nothing. I am not a rich man. If, Chas V'Shalom I am deserving of death, I have no way out! What would I do?

Baruch Hashem, Hashem was very aware of my 'problem'. Therefore, He provided me with an enormous sum of money, and He made me a very wealthy man, but only for a short time. After that, I lost it all, and I am poor again. - Baruch Hashem, now I can live!"



"When I was in prison in Russia, I was surrounded by men who'd given up hope, who were despondent and broken. I always tried to be upbeat, and one of them asked me how I could be happy in such a miserable place.

I answered that before he'd been taken to prison, he had been a respectful banker, with a prominent position and an upscale lifestyle. Then, they took him away from his life, ripped him away from his position and material good, and threw him into jail where he had nothing. Of course he was devastated. He had lost himself.

But I had one identity before being arrested: I was a chassid, intent on serving my Maker. In prison as well, I had that very

same goal: trying to serve Hashem. My material situation was far more difficult, but the overall goal hadn't changed, even if the circumstances had, so why not be happy? - I was chassid before, and I was still a chassid!" ~ R' Mendel Futerfas

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - Navigating Thorough Challenging Times

Over the course of the past weeks, we have witnessed acts for the Jewish people by the Jewish people which are simply incredible. We have seen heinous and treacherous acts, and on the other hand, we have seen acts of untold greatness and generosity.

We are a nation characterized by three unique aspects: bashful, merciful and kind (*Yevamos* 79a). We are people who will do favors, be generous and bestow kindness on others even when there would seem no reason that we should. I had the great privilege of hosting Dr. Dov Reichman last Shabbos, and he told me that they are treating the terrorists in the hospitals in Israel! The very people who attempted to inflict merciless harm on our people… and yet what does Israel do? How does the Jewish nation respond? Provide them with medical attention at the highest level. It's mind-boggling, but we are a nation whose kindness and compassion for human life in unparalleled.

Hashem has told us to be a light unto the nations, and that light needs to spread love and generosity. Who do we see coming to the aid of earthquake victims, when lives are buried underneath rubble and crumbled buildings? The little nation of Israel sends their experts, first and foremost.

So what did we do in just a matter of hours?

We mobilized across the nation and across the world. Whether it be food, drinks, supplies or other provisions needed for the soldiers or otherwise, we stepped up with commitment and responsibility. In Los

Angeles, they learned how a certain group of soldiers liked a particular energy drink, and without delay, they bought hundreds of the energy drink and shipped it off to Israel!

That's what the Jewish people are made of: brotherhood, love and peace.

The people in Israel have gone above and beyond to help the troops. One of the greatest weapons we have unlocked is the secret power of prayer. People all over the world have stopped their regular schedules in the middle of the day, and joined in communal prayer.

There was a wedding held on a military base. Where else do you see a nation readying for war and yet there is a wedding? A solider preparing to head to the front lines, and gets married to his kallah, surrounded by soldiers dancing and singing and rejoicing together. Where do you find that?

Where do you see soldiers, away from their families, and yet they gather to recite the Friday night prayers? One soldier needed to keep watch, and there he was, crouched with his gun pointed outward from the wall to ensure they would not be attacked. And what is he doing? Singing Lecha Dodi.

The amazing power of our holy soldiers of the Israeli army is beyond words. The derech eretz, the respect and dignity, in which they carry themselves is singular. Acts of great kindness have been carried out across the globe just so it should bring more merit for all our soldiers and people of Israel. And the soldiers have been telling us to keep up the prayers and keep up the learning, whether it be the boys in yeshiva or girls in seminary or anyone else in any capacity. Keeping steadfast to the mitzvos will give them strength.

We are not after war. We are after peace.

There is a wonderful family by the name of Kessler. The Kessler's had a daughter, Gila, who was in the army. She assisted everyone by playing beautiful music, and the children loved her. She was the most

peaceful person you could find. It is heartbreaking that a terrorist snuffed out the life of Gila hy"d.

So many people wrote in their sentiments and sorrow, and a book was put together. Divrei Torah was included along with other reflections. I received an inscribed copy from Gila's parents, who are dear friends of mine. When I took a look at it, one of the pages read as a headline: "It's very difficult to grasp that she is not with us." Everyone whose life was tragically ended… it is difficult to grasp that they are no longer with us. May Hashem avenge their blood.

I was filled with great emotion and pride when I noticed displayed along the buildings in Manhattan posters with pictures of the hostages. Included are their names and ages. Three years old, five years old… a young mother, twenty two years old… a young father, twenty eight years old… an elderly grandmother, eighty two years old. When we see this, we spring to action. It compels us to think about what each of our personal obligations are toward our brothers and sisters at this time.

The Gemara (Sotah 49b) tells us that one of qualities which will be apparent in the days preceding Mashiach will be the absence of truth. In order to arrive at the truth, it is very rare.

So what happens when we hear things and yet we need to get to the truth? The truth is something everyone needs to hear.

Just this past Monday, the mayor of New York City, Mr. Adams, asked me to attend a prayer vigil and speak on behalf of Jewish community. I was very privileged to be there, and Mr. Adams was quite emotional given all that has happened. All of a sudden, after I finished speaking, a man tapped me on the shoulder. "Rabbi," he said, "I'm a Moslem." "It's very nice to meet you," I said. "It's my honor." "After I listened to your speech," he continued, "I feel like maybe I should go to Israel and help them out."

Hearing this, I thought to myself that this is unreal. As the saying goes, the truth will set you free. A man like this has a truthful

understanding of the situation at hand, and recognizes that we all need to contribute. We are all human beings living in this world, and we all need to make the world better.

The Navi Yeshayahu tells us, "They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift sword against nation and they will no longer learn the art of war" (Yeshaya 2:4). This is what the prophet told us. We are a nation who looks only for peace. And we know that in the future, there will be peace as we read in all the prophetic writings.

Right now, we have been thrust into a war which is the antithesis of our nature, which demands that we go about our day with a heightened sense of self-awareness and our spiritual selves. All of us need to become better people. The soldiers need us to be a part of their efforts and be connected to them. Everything that we do has an immediate effect on all of the soldiers and people of Israel.

Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l often said that when you do something in New York, it can affect somebody in California, someone in Australia, someone in London, someone in New Mexico, someone in Afghanistan, and someone in the Holy Land of Israel. We have a higher calling now. We must step up and take whatever challenge we have at hand and personally improve.

The word for war in Hebrew is *milchamah,* whose *gematria* is 123. Similarly, the words "Am Echad," one nation, also equals 123. At times of war, we forget our differences, we bind together, and we feel the heartbeat of one nation. We seek the commonality and goodness in each other, and using this power, we become capable of destroying the power of evil in this world.

Each one of us can be an ambassador of peace. Likewise, everyone in the world from among all the nations can do the same. The Jewish nation is a small nation, and any and all support helps to ensure better days ahead with the help of the Almighty.

Rabbi Yaakov Rahimi - The Tzitzit that Saved



Just this past Monday, I spoke with Rabbi Chaim Zaid, head of the Yeshiva Nachalat Shlomo, located in the Kiryat Herzog neighborhood of Bnei Brak. He personally verified the following true story.

Last week, a student of Rabbi Zaid called him and mentioned that she has six thousand *shekalim* saved up in her savings account. However, she decided that she wanted to use the money to buy pairs of tzitzit for the Israeli soldiers. Rabbi Zaid at first tried determining if she was fully intent on using her entire savings account toward this, for after all, it was all the money she had set aside. "Perhaps you can donate a portion of it and leave some for yourself for whatever purposes you need." But the girl was adamant. "I want to use all of it for tzitzit for the soldiers," she confidently told Rabbi Zaid.

Appreciatively, Rabbi Zaid took the donation and purchased boxes upon boxes of tzitzit. But then came the more complicated part. Rabbi Zaid was intent on having these tzitzit brought directly to the soldiers stationed in the south. Of course, the areas there are fraught with danger and little access is granted to civilians. But with resolute purpose and mission, Rabbi Zaid arranged to have police escort that would safely bring him near the border of Gaza.

As Rabbi Zaid was making his way to the south, the car came to a slow halt. Dozens of police officers and helicopters stood by, patrolling and guarding the area. Rabbi Zaid was told with no uncertain terms: he couldn't continue past that point as it was too dangerous. With no recourse, Rabbi Zaid opened the trunk, opened one of the boxes with tzitzit, and began handing each pair out one by one to the nearby officers, soldiers and other military personnel.

Noticing the commotion and catching sight of Rabbi Zaid handing out pairs of tzitzit was one soldier. The problem was that he stood on the other side of the barricade. Raising his hand and signaling that he too wanted a pair of tzitzit, Rabbi Zaid grabbed hold of a pair and threw it above the barricading wall.

As the tzitzit made its way over the wall, it eventually landed on the floor on the other side in a light crumple. And then shots went off, ringing not in the far distance, but immediate area. Rabbi Zaid stood still, frozen.

The pair of tzitzit, which had been thrown over, had landed on a bush, under which a terrorist had been laying low. When the pair of tzitzit, however, made its way down, the terrorist had gotten startled, unsure what was being hurled in his direction. His immediate reaction was to move and stand up, at which point the nearby Jewish soldier caught sight of him and put a bullet through him.

Who knows how many Jewish soldiers were saved from that one pair of tzitzit?

This story is one of many, and it speaks to where our focus should be concentrated these days. We must be on a campaign of increased Torah study and performance of mitzvot. Every mitzvah you do has an unbelievable effect on the world. Do not hesitate or doubt how much power you have. Learn more Torah for the soldiers, do more mitzvot for the hostages, focus more on Tehillim, Shabbat, candles

on Friday night, Tefillin, kindness. Everything you do makes for a difference in the Land of Israel. Don't stop. Keep on going.

With G-d's help, the Jewish nation will see a tremendous salvation, and we will all be safe.



How to Change Your Mazal by Michael Winner

My wife received this email that was sent to a group she belongs to:

"You won't believe this. My son in Tzanchanim (Paratroopers) 890 mentioned to me last night that every single boy in his unit has begun wearing tzitzit every day (even the most secular boys). In the last week, they've reveived visits from Rav Grossman shlita, Rav Zamir Cohen shlita, Rav Guetta shlita, and many more.

Being that they've all experienced deep tragedy, but also seen great miracles, they're inspired, they're lit up, and... they're also scared. It's an emotional time, and they are turning to Hashem. My son also mentioned nonchalantly that there's a long line every morning to borrow his tefillin. He is one of only a handful of boys (out of 65) who owns tefillin. Does anyone know of an irgun or chesed organization that gives tefillin to soldiers? They want tefillin now more than cookies, cigarettes, and hot food. "

Somebody sent us a clip from one of the news sites on Israeli television. In it, one of the hosts (I assume) was saying, "The Jewish nation does not run by nature, it is above nature…"The woman herself was religious, but the fact that such a thing is being said on Israeli television says something. Most notable to me though was the little icon for their station that was kept on the top left-hand corner of the screen.

The "motto" of the war is "b'yachad n'nazteyach," "together we will be victorious." It's everywhere. Even the receipt at our local store has it printed on it. It's a wonderful saying, very moving, and very powerful. But it's missing one "small" ingredient. And this station actually got it right. Instead of printing it as their icon, they wrote, "b'ezras Hashem, b'yachad n'natzeyach," "with the help of Hashem, together we will be victorious."

I don't remember seeing these things in previous operations.

Through prayer, Torah, and acts of kindness, we have the power to make changes in not only the next world, but also this. We are not on the level to always see those changes, but we do have the Torah to testify for us, that they do indeed work.

In these times, the Jewish people are in real danger. And if one thinks that it's only limited to those living in Eretz Yisroel, they are sorely mistaken. Antisemitism is on the rise around the world, and we have no place to run. The only thing we can do is make a sincere effort to change the judgment we received not so long ago with these three tools at our disposal.

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

In this week's parsha, Lot was captured and Avrom went to save him. Why did Avrom feel obligated to save Lot?

The Pe'er Yosef answers that earlier in this parsha, when Avrom and Lot separated, Avrom said, "If you go to the left, I will go to the right, and if you go to the right I will go to the left."

Rashi says that when Avrom said this, he was promising Lot that he would come defend him no matter where he lived.

Since Avrom gave Lot his word, he felt that if he didn't go to save him, it would be a chillul Hashem. [Dvar Torah from **ספר טללי אורות**]

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ (15:5)

Hashem told Avram that his children would be like the stars above, unable to be counted. Avram trusted in this promise, and it was considered an act of righteousness. Why was it an act of righteousness? Either he believed the promise or he didn't. It wasn't an act. Secondly, what is the deal with the stars being impossible to count?

The reason one can't count the stars is not merely because there are so many of them. It's impossible because they are not all visible to the eye. Similarly, when Hashem made Avram the promise that he would have children, even though he was already past the age when most people had them, he made a conscious decision to believe it, knowing that there are some things we can't see.

Lip Service

Though normally Lot is called Avraham's nephew, when Avram was told that Lot was captured, it says, **וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיָּרֶק אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ** ***"And Avram heard that his brother was captured, and he armed his household…"*** (14:14)

The Malbim points out that we see here how important family is. Though Avraham had at most a few hundred people, the love of his family gave him the courage to take on massive armies in order to save Lot.

As Jews, who share one Father, we are all brothers, and we should be ready to put ourselves on the line for each other. We should be strengthened by our principles and not fear, for the G-d of Avraham comes to our aid.

In a similar vein, the Tzror HaMor comments that Avram realized Lot was captured out of malice and ill-will towards Avram and his beliefs. In fact, they thought Lot was Avram's brother, not his nephew. Therefore, when he went to save Lot, Avram would only take those who had grown up in his home and been well-trained in Mitzvos.

Why? Because when it is Avodas Hashem which is being attacked, only those who truly appreciate it can defend it properly. Those who merely follow through for ulterior motives or as lip service cannot properly defend Torah.

R' Elazar Menachem Man Shach z"l 16 Cheshvan (1988/9-2001)



His age was estimated at anywhere from between 103 to 108. R' Shach's name was known throughout the world, and his death was even reported in major American newspapers. Yet, while R' Shach was known to the non-Jewish world, and even much of Jewish world, primarily as a leader who influenced Israeli politics and policies in profound ways, he was first and foremost a rosh yeshiva, a Torah scholar, and a profound lover of all Jews, whether or not they shared his own outlook on life.

R' Shach was born in Vaboilnick in northern Lithuania, the fourth child of Ezriel and Batsheva Shach. (R' Shach's birth year is taken from his Lithuanian passport, but some sources put his age at 103. His birthday, 29 Tevet, was reported by R' Shach himself, who noted

that he was inspired by the fact that his birthday was the yahrzeit of the sage, **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin**.)

His parents infused within him yiras shamayim and an intense love for Torah. They taught him to regard avodas Hashem, even what we would consider minor acts, with the utmost seriousness. Once when Rav Schach was four years old, his yarmulke fell off. He slowly bent to pick it up and saw his mother crying. "Lazer, how could you not jump quickly to get your yarmulke? What will be with your yiras Shamayim?"

His mother's tears made such an impression upon him, that for the rest of his life if his yarmulke slipped while putting on tefillin or while he was asleep Rav Schach would rush to straighten it. Even as a zakain muflag-well past 90 years of age-his talmidim relate, that if his yarmulke fell off his head in the middle of sleep, he'd awake in a sweat with his mother's words ringing in his ears!

At a young age, the future R' Shach traveled away from home to join the yeshiva in the town of Ponovezh. Shortly after his bar mitzvah, he transferred to Yeshiva Knesset Yisrael in Slobodka, where he attracted the attention of one of the senior students, **R' Isser Zalman Meltzer z"l** (1870-1954). R' Shach became a close disciple of R' Meltzer, and, in 1924, married R' Meltzer's niece, Guttel. (Rebbetzin Guttel Shach died in 1969.) Throughout his Slobodka days, R' Shach lived in great poverty, having only one suit of clothing. On Thursdays, when he washed his solitary shirt for Shabbat, he was forced to remain shirtless in the cold until it dried.

R' Shach related that when he was a young teenager in Slobodka, the well-known communal activist R' Yaakov Lipschutz (formerly the secretary to **R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor**) used to take him for daily walks and discuss current events with him. **The Chafetz Chaim**, too, used to discuss communal matters and current events with the young scholar. R' Shach later recalled that he wondered at the time why these older sages bothered to discuss

such things with a young student. In hindsight, however, it appears that both R' Lipschutz and the Chafetz Chaim foresaw that this young student was destined to be looked to by multitudes to provide the Torah's viewpoint regarding current events.

During World War I, R' Shach suffered terribly as a refugee. Following the war, he traveled to Slutsk to continue his studies under R' Meltzer (who was then rabbi and rosh yeshiva in that town). When the Russian civil war reached Slutsk, R' Shach and his teacher were arrested and imprisoned.

Upon their release, they moved to Kletsk, Poland, where R' Meltzer's son-in-law, **R' Aharon Kotler**, had a yeshiva. R' Shach served as a rosh yeshiva in R' Kotler's yeshiva, and later in the yeshiva in Luninetz. (R' Kotler later headed the famed yeshiva in Lakewood, New Jersey.)

In late 1939, **R' Simon Shkop**, one of the senior roshei yeshiva in Lithuania, passed away. R' Shach was one of the two leading candidates to succeed R' Shkop; it was even said that R' Shach's style of learning was very similar to R' Shkop's. In the end, however, it was decided that R' Shach, then in his early 40's, was too young.

Shortly thereafter, R' Shach set out for Eretz Yisrael, where he headed several small yeshivot until 1946. In that year, he joined the faculty of the Ponovezh Yeshiva, where he remained for the rest of his life. During his first two decades in Eretz Yisrael, R' Shach also enjoyed a very close relationship with **R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik, the "Brisker Rav."**

There is not enough space here to describe the countless Torah and chessed projects in which R' Shach was involved during the second half-century of his life. Innumerable people – Torah giants, yeshiva deans and teachers, politicians, struggling ba'alei teshuvah, and "everyday" folk – passed through R' Shach's study to seek his advice about matters of national and personal significance, or to ask for his blessing.

R' Shach passed away on Friday morning, 16 Cheshvan / November 2. His funeral, held a few hours later was attended by approximately 600,000 people, and was broadcast live in many places in the diaspora.

R' Shach is survived by two children: Devorah, the wife of **R' Meir Zvi Bergman**, a rosh yeshiva in Bnei Brak, and Dr. Ephraim, an official of the Israeli Education Ministry. (R' Shach's first daughter, Miriam Raisel, died in 1939, at age 14. It is reported that **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski**, at that time the leading halachic authority in Lithuania, baby- sat for little Ephraim Shach during his sister's funeral.)

R' Shach also left a number of written works: Avi Ezri on Rambam's Mishneh Torah; a Pesach Haggadah; Rosh Amanah, a collection of insights on chumash; and Michtavim U'ma'amarim and B'zot Ani Botaiach, collections of letters and speeches.

Among the recurring themes in R' Shach's letters and speeches are a Jew's obligation to see G-d's hand in current events, his duty to remember that we are still in a state of galut / exile, even in the State of Israel, and the need to strengthen Torah study in times of national crisis.



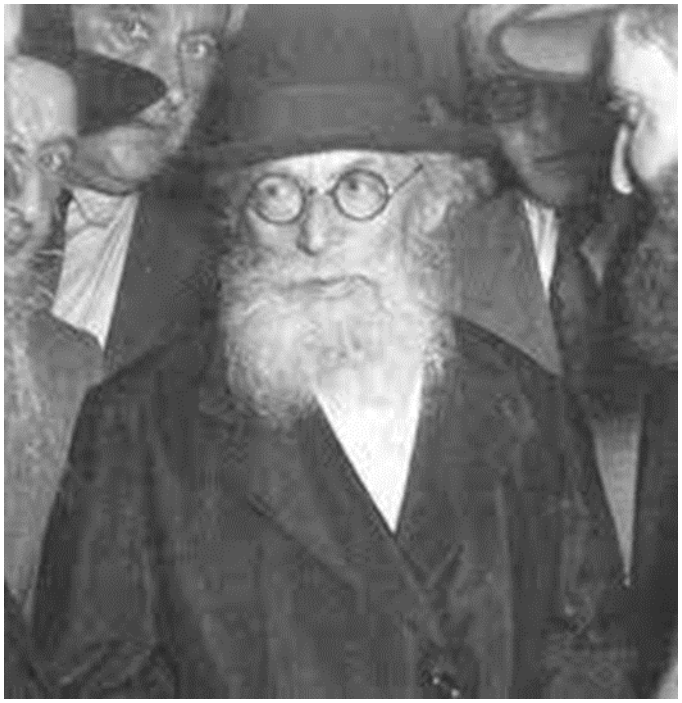
Rav Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz Chazon Ish (Cheshvan 15)

Torah Is Life

Rav Avraham Chaim Brim related the following stories about the **Chazon Ish zt"l**:

The Chazon Ish said about himself that, due to sickness and a weak constitution, he never studied as much Torah as he wished he could.

Nevertheless, he admitted that whenever he did study, he did so to the point of utter exhaustion and sheer collapse!



In fact Rav Mordechai Shulam related that when he used to study Torah with the Chazon Ish, the seder limud (study session) always ended only once the Chazon Ish dropped from fatigue!- When they recommenced it was only because he had regained enough strength to go on!

One time, as they studied, the Chazon Ish grabbed a fruit and bit into it, beginning to eat without reciting a beracha. He later explained that he had studied and pushed himself to such a point of exhaustion that he felt he had no strength whatsoever even to recite the beracha [because the way the Chazon Ish recited a beracha took some time!] before waiting and had he not eaten he felt his health might have been in a state of emergency.

Whoever knew the Chazon Ish could testify that when he quotes from another sefer and apologizes, saying he is paraphrasing because he does not have access to that sefer, this does not mean that he did not have a copy in his home, nor does it mean that he did not have a copy in that very room. It could even have been right there in his room on the bookshelf – but he simply did not have any strength left at that time to get up and take it!

This means that as the Chazon Ish was writing about some of the deepest, most difficult sugyas (topics) in Torah, he had exerted himself till he was at such a point of weakness and exhaustion that he did not even have the strength to get a sefer from the bookcase and look up a source.

He truly embodied and fulfilled the teaching that the Torah is only miskayem (enduring) in one who literally kills himself over it – **ממית עצמו עליה**!

Rav Mordechai Shulam once found the Chazon Ish in bed with his feet on the pillow and his head at the foot of the bed!

The Chazon Ish excused himself, saying that had he had enough strength left before collapsing into bed to know which way was which, he would have used that strength to study more Torah.

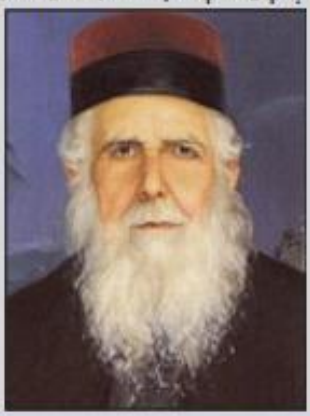
The Chazon Ish remarked that he could only recognize the difference between cold and heat before he delved into a sugya; once immersed in Torah, he could no longer differentiate.

Furthermore, he once commented that any taste in food and even any feelings of hunger were only distant childhood memories, because today he was so immersed in deep study and learning that he had simply forgotten these matters altogether and they no longer existed for him. - He explained that nowadays when he felt so weak and sick that he would faint and collapse, that signalled to him that he should eat – but only to regain his strength to learn more, not because he felt hunger! (Marbeh Chaim p. 27-28)

The Chazon Ish used to say that there were three giants of mussar who excelled in emuna: In **Rav Eliyohu Eliezer Dessler** we see his greatness in emuna of mind, in **Rav Eliyohu Lopian** we see his greatness in emuna of the heart, and in **Rav Chatzkel Levenstein** we see that he had emuna in his hands – he had experiential emuna, the kind you can touch and feel with your very hands! (Otzros Rabbeinu Yechezkel, p. 23)

"This is a lesson that one should live by: Treat your friends as you do your artwork and your pictures, and always make sure to place them in the best light." ~ R' Yisrael M'Kazakov zt"l

חָכָם רָפָאֵל בָּרוּךְ טוֹלִידַאנוֹ זַצ"ל



From a young age R' Raphael Baruch Toledano זַצ"ל was known for his יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם and diligence in learning for long stretches at a time. One time R' Raphael Baruch visited the חָזוֹן אִישׁ. It was obvious from the unusual honor that the חָזוֹן אִישׁ showed during and after the visit that he greatly admired his humble visitor. The חָזוֹן אִישׁ said to one of his תַּלְמִידִים as R' Raphael Baruch was leaving: "True יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם emanates from this man."

The Baseball Fan

A young boy dressed in a baseball uniform came to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"Are you a player?" asked the Rebbe.

"No" said the child, "I was there as a fan, to cheer my team."

The Rebbe continued "If the score is 7 to 0, can a player on the team that is losing leave, even before the game is over?"

"No, of course not," the boy said, "he's still in middle of the game."

"But a spectator can leave if he wants to, right?" the Rebbe asked.

The boy nodded.

"In life," the Rebbe looked the boy in the eye, "try not to be a spectator, who can simply get up and walk away when things look like they aren't going your way: try to be a player, in it until the end, knowing that it's your responsibility to try to make a difference!"

The most beautiful things cannot be seen – they can only be felt with the heart. ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

We Have Lost A Father by Jonathan Rosenblum



The Jewish world lost one of its greatest leaders, Rabbi Shach, whose concern encompassed every Jew.

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grozinski of Vilna, leader of pre-WW II Eastern European Jewry, was once told of an unlearned shoemaker who had lost one of his eight children. Reb Chaim Ozer was inconsolable. Those present could not understand the extent of his tears. Not long before, R' Grozinski had lost his only child, a daughter who was bitten by a rabid dog shortly after becoming engaged. Yet even then he had not cried so bitterly. He continued writing halachic responsa almost until the moment of her death.

"When my daughter passed away," Rabbi Grozinski said, "I could console myself with the knowledge that she was going to a better world. That is clear to me. But I don't know that the World-to-Come is as real to the shoemaker. I'm crying for his pain, not my own."

Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach, who passed away Friday, Nov 2, was a worthy heir to the mantle of leadership once worn by Rabbi Grozinski. He never sought the role. He needed no other joy than that of studying and teaching Torah, and until the age of 70 he did nothing else.

As a young yeshiva student, he owned only the clothes on his back. His pants were so full of holes that when tested for admission to the Slutsk Yeshiva he wore them inside out to conceal how threadbare they were. When he married, he and his wife did not even own a closet. Two pegs on the wall sufficed for all their possessions.

He became the guide of Orthodox Jewry around the world because the community sought his guidance. He was neither elected nor

appointed. An entire community simply knew, as if intuitively, that he was now their shepherd.

The burden was enormous. It meant being available whenever a Jew anywhere in the world needed his advice. Each issue, whether it involved an individual or an entire community, was weighed carefully. He consulted with experts and sought to be continually updated about changing circumstances. When in his late 90s he could no longer give each matter that same thorough consideration, Rabbi Shach retired from public activity.

They turned to him - individuals, yeshiva heads, and communal leaders - because they knew that whatever he said was the absolute truth as he saw it - a truth shaped only by the Torah to which he had devoted his whole life.

Rabbi Shach was the antithesis of modern political leaders, zigzagging according to the advice of their pollsters. No suspicion of personal interest attached to him. A wealthy man once offered his son-in-law $100,000 for the latter's yeshiva if Rabbi Shach would write a letter of recommendation. Rabbi Shach refused. A leader, he felt, cannot afford to be beholden to anyone.

Money and honor were meaningless to him. At a time when the media was filled with stories of Rabbi Shach's political power, a secular journalist who interviewed him was astounded by the way he lived: a cot for a bed, bookshelves made of the packing crates, and a bare bulb in the living room.

In his late 80s, Rabbi Shach required surgery to remove a growth on his leg. The surgeon told him that general anesthesia would be required. Rabbi Shach would not agree because the anesthesia would cloud his thinking, and he could not afford that. He told the surgeon that he could deal with the pain. Students pinioned his leg to prevent any involuntary movement when the surgeon cut into his flesh.

During the same period in his life, he was informed that a helicopter had crashed, killing four soldiers. He burst into tears. He did not ask

whether the soldiers were religious or not. That was irrelevant. They were Jews.

His own physical pain he could control, but the pain at the death of a Jew, he could not control.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Rabbi Shach's passing is that so many Jews do not know what a loving father they have lost.

R' Simcha Avrohom Hakohen Sheps z"l born April 18, 1908 or 1911 – died November 5th 1998 (16 Marcheshvan 5759)



R' Simcha Sheps, was a longtime maggid shiur/Talmud instructor at Yeshiva Torah Vodaas in Brooklyn. R' Sheps was born in Wysokie Mazowieckie, Poland (near Lomza).

At thirteen, young Simcha traveled to Baranovitch to study under **R' Elchanan Wasserman and R' David Rappaport**. At first, the yeshiva refused to accept the boy because it was already overcrowded; however, he announced that he would learn there anyway, but would not eat with the other boys in order not to be a burden on the yeshiva. For a period, the boy sustained himself by eating the scraps left behind by the other students. When this was discovered, he was invited to eat all of his meals in the home of the yeshiva's mashgiach/dean of students (presumably **R' Yisrael Yaakov Lubchansky**).

From age sixteen until World War II (except for 1936-37), R' Sheps learned in the Mir Yeshiva. He soon attracted the attention of the

rosh hayeshiva, **R' Leizer Yehuda Finkel**, and the latter invited the young man to learn with him all night, every Wednesday night. R' Finkel reportedly said of his student, "You can awaken him at any time of the night and ask him about any part of the Talmud, and he will answer you." (The two years that he was not in Mir, he was in Brisk, studying under **R' Velvel Soloveitchik**.)

In 1941, R' Sheps escaped Europe through Siberia and Japan, and settled in New York. Soon after, he joined the faculty of Torah Vodaas, first as a tutor, and then, in 1943, as the substitute for the ill rosh yeshiva, **R' Shlomo Heiman**. After R' Heiman passed away and was replaced by **R' Yaakov Kaminetsky and R' Reuven Grozovsky**, R' Sheps continued delivering a daily shiur in the yeshiva.

When recalling their teacher, R' Sheps' students spoke not only of his Torah learning and teaching, but also of his love for them. R' Sheps had an income independent of the yeshiva and gave generously to support married students. He also was known for the trait of hakarat hatov/acknowledging the good done for him by others. He once insisted on attending the funeral of a chassidic rebbe with whom he had no particular connection only because he had once refreshed himself in the air-conditioned lobby of the rebbe's bet midrash. (Source: Yated Ne'eman)

"A person's obligation in this world is to see the hand of the Almighty in nature. When you see the smallest insect, immediately focus on the Creator who is the cause of all nature. Do the same when you see a mighty lion. - The world is full of opportunities to remind you of the Creator." ~ R' Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l

We love those for whom we do. ~ R' Eliyahu Dessler zt"l

Rabbi Meir Shapiro Zt'l



The *daf hayomi* learning cycle of studying one page of the Babylonian Talmud every day was inaugurated at the instigation of Rabbi Meir Shapiro in 1923 (Rosh Hashana, 5684.) This program of daily Talmud study has tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of participants, and has grown in popularity and strength over the past decades. It is a tribute to the greatness and genius of Rabbi Meir Shapiro. His idea of daily universal Jewish study of the Talmud has stood the test of time. But, it should not be that surprising to us, since Rabbi Meir Shapiro was an unusually gifted and prescient personality.

Rabbi Meir Shapiro was born in Shotz, Poland, on 7 Adar, 5647 (1887). He was descended from noted Chasidic luminaries (Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz was his great-great-grandfather) and his grandfather was the rabbi of Monastritz, Poland.

In October 1933 he fell ill with a viral type of pneumonia and on 7 Cheshvan, 5694 he died at the age of only forty-six. He was buried in Lublin, but his remains were reburied twenty-five years later in Jerusalem on 26 Elul, 5718 at Har Hamenuchot.

The Jewish world has not since seen his equal in the combination of Torah scholarship and greatness, Chasidic warmth, political astuteness, fund-raising talents and creative programming and initiative. The Jewish world was orphaned by his demise. His *daf hayomi* project lives on as a comfort to us.

A Light From Lublin: Rav Meir Shapiro's Quest To Build Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin by Dovi Safier



Rav Meir Shapiro's name is synonymous with daf yomi, his innovative program for Gemara learning that has Jews across the globe studying the same folio in unison. But he often remarked that he had two "children" — two epic missions that would serve as his eternal imprint in the world. At first glance, it might seem that only the first child — the daf yomi initiative — remains a dominant force in the Torah world. After all, the other child, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, was dismantled and most of its students were slaughtered by the Nazis.

But in many ways, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin still exerts influence. Rav Meir's vision did not encompass the building alone. Despite doubts, outright opposition, and funding pressures that drove him to penury, he dreamed of an institution that would change the definition of what a yeshivah could and should be, and that would elevate the status of lomdei Torah. A century later, the changes he instituted are alive and thriving.

January 1927

In a small town outside Philadelphia, a crowd of Jews gathered at a reception held in honor of a visiting Polish rabbi. They were eager to hear the charismatic orator talk of his groundbreaking initiative to construct a massive five-story building in the heart of the Second Polish Republic. More than a mere building, it would serve as a "Central Yeshivah," an elite institution that would transform the landscape of Torah study in Eastern Europe.

The chairman commenced his introductory remarks, describing the many accomplishments and talents of the dynamic young rabbi from Poland: just months shy of his fourtieth birthday, he was already serving in his third rabbinic position while simultaneously nearing the end of a five-year term as a delegate to the Polish Sejm. The chairman proceeded to introduce Rav Meir Shapiro as the headmaster of a school serving "hundreds of young Jewish girls."

"I had the urge to correct the record," Rav Meir recounted several years later to the journalist David Flinker (1897–1978), "but my companion, familiar with American manners and etiquette, whispered in my ear: 'One mustn't ever contradict a chairman. His words are considered sacrosanct.' Left with no alternative, I waited in silence for my turn to speak."

Rav Meir rose to address the crowd. Building on a theme from a recent parshah, he told of Pharaoh's daughter rescuing a baby from the Nile, a child who ultimately blossomed into the savior of the Jewish nation. "The scholars and students of Poland are drowning in the floodwaters of misfortune and poverty!" he told the crowd. "If American Jewry won't reach out and save them, who can say how many potential leaders will be swept away?"

Stepping down from the podium, Rav Meir was certain his passionate exhortation had made an impact. Then he overheard an exchange between a member of the audience and his young son.

"Dad, did the Poles really try to drown that fellow?" the youngster asked, gesturing in the direction of the speaker.

"You heard him," affirmed his father.

"And he survived?" the son persisted.

"Well, here he is," replied the man.

"He's a good fellow," declared the boy. "Give him a few dollars."

Today it's hard to imagine such a dubious reception for the brilliant and accomplished visionary who founded both *daf yomi* and Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. But back when Rav Meir Shapiro shared his pioneering concept of a yeshivah that provided its students with material stability along with true dignity, he encountered significant and sustained opposition. It took years of fundraising, behind-the-scenes lobbying, and the loss of both his personal savings and health to ensure the stability of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. But the glorious institution that resulted from his perseverance became much more than a yeshivah. It set new, higher standards for the welfare of its own — and, ultimately, all — yeshivah students, permanently elevating their status amid the communities entrusted with the responsibility for their care.



Just a few years earlier, on Lag B'Omer 1924, the old Jewish cemetery of Lublin had pulsated with unusual vitality. A small group of yeshivah students from Piotrkow along with some curious onlookers assembled in the cemetery, their collective gaze fixed upon one magnetic figure.

Amid the ancient gravestones stood the 36-year-old Rav Meir Shapiro, an unusually gifted scholar and rosh yeshivah who had risen to prominence in the preceding years and had recently been appointed rav of Piotrkow. As he faced the gravestones of some of Poland's greatest Torah scholars, the words he uttered seemed to resonate with the weight of centuries:

"To you great rabbanim, the scholars of Lublin, who spread Torah in this city. You established great yeshivos and nurtured many students… I have come to tell you that I, your servant, Yehuda Meir ben Margala, has decided to restore the crown to its rightful place and I am inviting you to join us in the laying of the cornerstone for this yeshivah, a place where we will raise the honor of Torah until the coming of Mashiach. I am confident that it's in your merit and in the merit of the Torah that I will succeed in my endeavors for the sake of His great Name and His Torah."

The cornerstone for the most ambitious yeshivah project of its time was laid later that Lag B'Omer day in front of 50,000 onlookers. The new yeshivah was named Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, in acknowledgment of the city's seminal historic role in the blossoming of Torah study in Poland. Lublin had been host to some of the Jewish nation's most influential disseminators of Torah — including but not limited to Rav Shalom Shachna, the Maharam of Lublin, the Maharshal, as well as chassidic masters such as the Chozeh, Rav Leibele Eiger, and Rav Tzaddok HaKohein — and Rav Meir hoped his new yeshivah would be a fitting addition to the city's impressive Torah pedigree.

Flanked by rabbinic and chassidic leaders, Rav Meir addressed the groundbreaking ceremony, where he explained that timing the event

for Lag B'Omer was hardly coincidental, for Rabi Shimon bar Yochai had been spurred by the same motive. "*Chas v'shalom*, Torah will never be forgotten," Rabi Shimon had declared, citing the *pasuk*, "*Ki lo sishakach mipi zaro*."

The continent had recently emerged from the First World War, which had wreaked havoc upon Eastern Europe, uprooting families and entire communities. The region's yeshivos were victims as well; many had completely disbanded during the war years. When recovery commenced, the rampant hunger, disease, and homelessness took priority over reinstating Jewish education. (At the previous year's Knessiah Gedolah, Rav Pesach Pruskin (1879–1939) had bemoaned the fact that among Poland's three million Jews, there were hardly six or seven thousand yeshivah students.) But a select few chose to act on Rav Shimon's pledge of "*Ki lo sishakach mipi zaro*," and invested prodigious efforts to ensure that Eastern Europe's Torah learning would be restored to its former glory.

Rav Meir Shapiro was one of those select few. What forged his tenacity and vision?



Rav Yaakov Shimshon Shapiro was named after his ancestor, Rav Yaakov Shimshon of Shepetovka, a close student of the Maggid of Mezeritch, and of Rav Pinchas of Koretz

Chapter I: A Class of His Own - Every Precious Day

Rav Yehuda Meir Shapiro was born on March 3, 1887 (7 Adar 5647), in the town of Suceava (Shatz), Romania. His father, Reb Yaakov Shimshon, was a learned chassid and a descendant of Rav Pinchas of Koretz, one of the prime disciples of the Baal Shem Tov. His mother, Margala (Margalit), was the daughter of the gaon of Monistritch, Rav Shmuel Yitzchak Schor, author of the *Minchas Shai* and a descendant of the author of *Tevuas Shor*. His ancestry traced back to Rabbeinu Yosef Bechor Shor of Orleans, one of the Baalei Tosafos. Margala Shapiro also carried a maternal connection to the eminent halachic authorities the Bach and Taz.

During his early studies at the local cheder, young Meir faced significant challenges. At the time, these struggles seemed to destine him for a future as a local laborer's apprentice. He had a form of dyslexia that made the initial steps of reading a formidable task. But he circumvented this challenge with significant exertion and gained an uncanny ability to recognize words in their entirety, sidestepping the conventional method of piecing together individual letters.

An often-overlooked factor in Rav Meir's growth was the unwavering commitment of his mother, Margala, to his Torah learning. When a private *melamed* they'd hired named Reb Shalom of Sochatchov was late in arriving after Pesach in 1894, Margala's distress was palpable. "Do you know, my son," Rav Meir recalled her saying, "that every day that passes without Torah study is an irreplaceable loss. We offered him [what we thought to be] a very handsome salary, but maybe we offered him too small a sum. Torah is so great and priceless; it may have been too small a sacrifice. Who knows?"

(Rav Avrohom Ausband, rosh yeshivah of Telshe Alumni in Riverdale, has theorized that this emphasis on the indispensability of daily Torah study may have been the driving force that later spurred Rav Meir to initiate the *daf yomi* program.)

This Reb Shalom was the cornerstone of young Meir's education for six formative years, and his teachings set Meir on a path to greatness. Sadly, Rav Meir Shapiro's mother passed away during the turbulent years of World War I, never to see her son's ascent to prominence in the world of Torah. But the memories of her dedication and sacrifices left an indelible mark on him, as this story, shared by one of Rav Meir's leading students, Rav Yitzchok Dovid Flekser (1917–1999), later one of the roshei yeshivah at Yeshivah Sfas Emes in Yerushalayim, demonstrates:

"Once, when speaking at a large gathering in Poland, Rav Meir suddenly stated with great emotion, 'Rejoice and be glad, my mother in Gan Eden, be happy, see the stature and respect accorded to your son, who has grown to become one of the *gedolei Yisrael*!' The audience was surprised, not knowing why Rav Meir had praised himself in this fashion, but he immediately turned to the women's section and called out, "And you, women of Israel, worthy mothers, if you want your sons to become great *talmidei chachamim* and rabbanim, follow the path of my saintly mother, who sacrificed herself in order to dedicate her son to Torah."

After advancing beyond the local cheder, young Meir was taken under the wing of his maternal grandfather, Rav Shmuel Yitzchak Schor of Monistritch. This would be a foundational phase in his development. Rav Schor nurtured his grandson's inherent abilities, also introducing him to the multifaceted environment of communal responsibility. In tandem with his meteoric growth in Torah knowledge, the seeds of his legendary leadership skills were sown.

In 1903, his grandfather suddenly fell ill. During his final days, he drew his grandson close and issued final instructions: "Return to your parents in Shatz. The truth is that I believe you really don't need me anymore. I hope and trust that you will be able to learn and absorb more Torah than I ever could convey to you." On the 7th of Adar, as "the Illui of Shatz" turned 16, his grandfather passed away, and the budding Torah giant returned to his hometown.

Saved By the Shotzer

It wasn't only local Torah scholars who welcomed the young scholar back to his hometown. Rabbi David Avraham Mandelbaum — who has devoted his life to furthering the legacy of Rav Meir Shapiro and the story of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin — shared a startling anecdote in his work *Igros V'Toldos: Rabbeinu Maharam Shapiro M'Lublin ztz"l*.



The long list of luminaries who served in the rabbinate in Rav Meir's hometown of Shatz include Rav Yoel Moskowitz, son-in-law of Rav Meir of Premishlan, his grandson Rav Shalom (the famed Shatzer Rav), Rav Meshulam Roth and Rav Meir's cousin, Rav Moshe Chaim Lau (pictured here), father of Israel's former Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau

Upon young Meir's return to Shatz, enlightened family members attempted to convince him to attend the regional technical school in the Moldavian cultural capital of Jassy (modern-day Iași). Upon hearing of these influences, Rav Shalom Moskowitz, the Shatzer Rav, immediately protested so vociferously that he threatened to lie down in the street and physically obstruct the path of any carriage transporting the town's prodigy to a secular school.

Rav Meir obeyed the Shatzer Rav and remained under his tutelage. Under the Shatzer's guidance, he ventured into the esoteric world

of Kabbalah, a sphere many deemed too advanced for someone his age. As his understanding and wisdom grew, Meir was empowered to impart knowledge and assisted in laying the foundations of a yeshivah in the quiet town of Shatz, a step that cemented his reputation in the Torah world.

One Lag B'omer, when he was a mere 17 years old, Rav Meir amazed Rav Yisrael Hager, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz (1860–1936), by delivering an impromptu speech connecting the various statements of Rabi Shimon bar Yochai throughout Shas. Upon meeting him for the first time, Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron, the Maharsham (1835–1911), was so impressed that he recited a brachah. Soon enough, an array of renowned Torah scholars ordained him.



Rav Yisrael Hager, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz, was amazed by a 17-year-old Rav Meir Shapiro

Rav Meir's primary mentor was Rav Yisrael Friedman, the Tchortkover Rebbe (1854–1934). As a Tchortkover chassid (and a lifelong follower of the Rebbe), the Rebbe advised him over the course of his varied roles in communal leadership. Even as Rav Shapiro's own star ascended, their bond retained its essence: a deep

chassid-rebbe connection rooted in mutual respect and reverence for Torah.

In 1907 Rav Meir married Malka Toba, the daughter of Reb Yaakov Dovid Breitman, a prosperous Tarnopol landowner. The young couple shared a mutual vision for Polish Jewry. The financial standing of the Breitman family aided Rav Meir's ambitions, with Malka Toba staunchly supporting him in each of his endeavors.

Educational Architect

The couple initially settled in Tarnopol, where Rav Meir transformed his father-in-law's home into a hub of Torah study. In 1910, with the encouragement of the Tchortkover Rebbe, Rav Meir was appointed rav of the Galician town of Galina. Writing in the town's Yizkor book, a former resident, the journalist Asher Korech (1879–1952), describes Rav Meir's decade-long rabbinic tenure (which was punctuated by several years in Tarnopol and Lemberg during World War I). For several years Rav Meir refused a salary from the town and referred halachic inquiries to two elder *dayanim,* Rav Yechezkel Hochberg and Rav Dov Goldberg, enabling them to retain their positions.

Korech writes, "Even when the community council persisted in offering him a salary, Rav Shapiro's innate magnanimity shone through. He chose to distribute the funds among the impoverished yeshivah students and those ardently dedicated to Torah study. His guiding principle was clear: uphold G-d's glory and put personal pride aside for the greater good."

When a member of the community complained that at the age of 23, Rav Meir was perhaps too young for such a position, the young rabbi smiled and responded that every day he would do something about it.

Korech notes the crowning achievement of Rav Meir in Galina was the establishment of Yeshivah Bnei Torah, which changed the town's spiritual trajectory:

The landscape of Torah study within our city underwent a seismic shift with the arrival of the esteemed Rav Meir Shapiro. His arrival couldn't have been timelier, as the town had undergone a palpable decline in Torah dedication among its youth."

A majority had transitioned from traditional Torah study halls to the school established by Baron Hirsch. Consequently, these chambers of Torah wisdom, once bustling with spirited debates and fervent study, now echoed with an eerie silence… The community, although deeply distressed by this evolution, felt powerless to reverse the trend.



The early years of Yeshiva Bnei Torah in Galina. Rav Meir is seen at centre

However, Rav Shapiro perceived this shift not merely as a challenge but with true, heartfelt sorrow. Possessing an unwavering passion for Torah and an indomitable spirit, he sought to rekindle the city's once-vibrant Torah spirit. As a testament to his dedication, he instituted the "Bnei Torah society." With an eye toward the future, he repurposed a centrally located edifice, tailoring it to serve as a Torah institution, replete with sections spacious enough to accommodate a burgeoning student body.

For the youth, he ensured that the finest educators were appointed, implementing a curriculum he envisioned. Initially, he personally supervised the classes, ensuring the highest standards. Later, this mantle of responsibility was passed on to his advanced yeshivah students, who continued his legacy of vigilance, guaranteeing that educators remained devoted and true to their sacred task.

Under his aegis, the institution thrived, marked by exemplary discipline and fairness. Salaries for educators were punctual, freeing struggling parents from any financial concerns. Students were periodically assessed, with report cards detailing their progress, a testament to the structured approach he championed. Economic standing was never a criterion; both affluent and underprivileged were judged solely by their commitment and prowess in Torah, with the latter group being exempt from tuition fees.

Rav Meir realized early on that the quality of the educational institution depended on the quality of the teachers. When speaking of the importance of having excellent, well-paid teachers of Torah he said, "Look at the difference. When a community hires a shochet, they examine him closely to see if he knows all the laws of shechitah and he is a God-fearing man. And what do they entrust to his hands? An animal! And yet, when they must hire a *melamed*, to whom they entrust the *chinuch* of the children, they're not quite so particular!"

In his early twenties, Rav Meir authored his first sefer, a Torah commentary called *Imrei Daas*, which linked Talmudic passages to the weekly sedra. Tragically, the manuscript was destroyed during the Russian shelling of Tarnopol during World War I.

One page of the sefer, which was salvaged from the blaze, was ultimately buried with him. Also surviving were the *haskamos* written by some of the greatest *gedolim* of the time, including the great Galician gaon Rav Meir Arik (1855–1925), the Maharsham, and the aforementioned Vizhnitzer Rebbe, who refers to Rav Meir as "a new vessel containing old wine" who was "learned in

all areas of Torah study," and "a reason to rejoice for there were now new *gedolim* emerging to take the place of the previous generation."

In choosing the name and venue of his yeshivah, Rav Meir Shapiro was acknowledging Lublin's prime location on Poland's Torah map. For centuries, it served as a city of great scholarship and as home to some of history's preeminent *talmidei chachamim*.

Poland's first great yeshivah was founded in Lublin in 1518 by Rav Shalom Shachna (1495–1558), a student of Rav Yaakov Pollack (1465–1541), considered the pioneer of the *pilpul* methodology of Talmudic study, and one of the early rabbinical leaders in the old Polish kingdom as German Jews migrated east to Poland during the 15th century. Another student of Rav Yaakov Pollack was Rav Meir Katzenellenbogen (Maharam Padua), who emerged as a leader of Italian Jewry.



The Maharshal's shul in Lublin (1567-1942)

Rav Shalom Shachna's students included his future son-in-law, Rav Moshe Isserles (1530–1572), more commonly known as the Rema; Rav Chaim ben Betzalel (1520–1588), elder brother of the Maharal; and Rav Shlomo Luria (1510–1573), the Maharshal. The Maharshal, whose

classic works include *Yam Shel Shlomo* and *Chochmas Shlomo*, established a yeshivah in Brisk before assuming the rabbinate in Lublin, a role that also included the stewardship of the local yeshivah.



The Lublin yeshivah was the most prominent one in the entire Polish Kingdom, and there the Maharshal nurtured the next generation of Torah scholars, including Rav Shlomo Ephraim Lunshitz (1550–1619), author of the *Kli Yakar* and rav in Prague; Rav Yehoshua Falk Katz (1555–1614), author of the *Derisha/Perisha* and *Semah;* and Rav Mordechai Yaffe (1530– 1612), author of the *Levush*.

Later Lublin was home to Rav Meir ben Gedalia (1558–1616), the Maharam of Lublin, whose list of students included the Shelah Hakadosh, Rav Yeshaya Horowitz (1558–1630); and Rav Yehoshua Heschel Charif (1580–1648), author of *Meginei Shlomo*. In the 17th century, Rav Meir Shapiro's ancestor, the "Rebbe Rav Heshel," served as rav of Lublin and teacher of Rav Dovid Segal (the Taz) and Rav Shabsai HaKohein (the Shach).

The golden age of Torah in Lublin ended with the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648–1649, known as *gezeiros Tach v'Tat* for the

Hebrew years when the bulk of the destruction occurred. More than a century later, the chassidic movement arrived in Lublin.

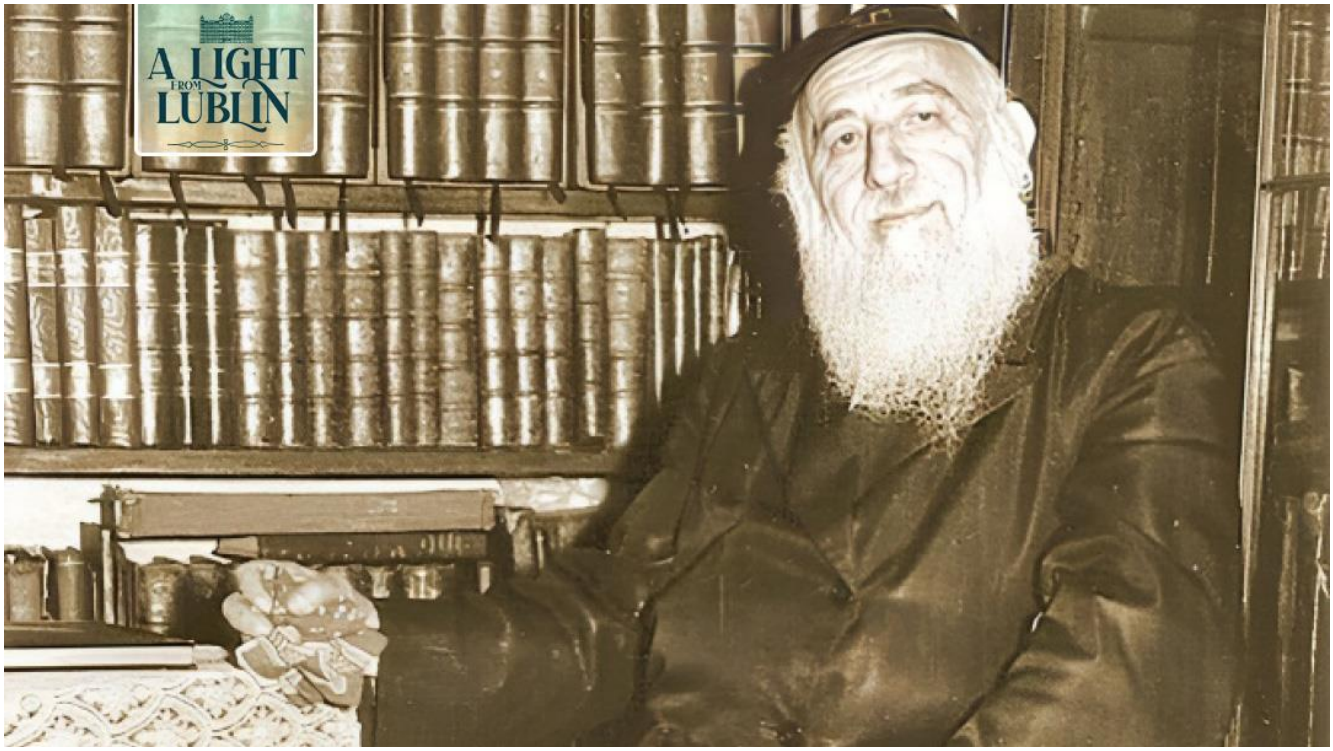
The chassidish character of the city was significant to Rav Meir Shapiro, who wished to fuse chassidic values with Torah supremacy. At the turn of the 19th century, one of the most influential tzaddikim in the history of Polish *chassidus*, Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz (1745– 1815), the Chozeh of Lublin, established his court in the city. Some 50 years later, Lublin was graced with the founders of the Lublin chassidic dynasty as an offshoot of Ishbitz. Its leaders, Rav Leibel Eiger (1815–1888) and Rav Tzadok HaKohein (1823–1900), originated from non-chassidic backgrounds. The Eiger family continued to lead the city's chassidic community until its destruction in the Holocaust, with Rav Shlomo Eiger serving for a time in a capacity in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.

From 1580–1764, Lublin was the seat of the "Vaad Arba Ha'aratzos" (Council of the Four Lands), the semi-autonomous political-administrative body for the Jews of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and was the site of the first Hebrew printing press in the region during the 16th century. This led to an interesting phenomenon where many yeshivos in the Lublin district studied the same *masechta*, in order to assist the local publisher in completing the first set of Shas printed in Poland. This practice also proved to be a unifying force among the local yeshivos. Perhaps this tradition further entrenched the concept of *daf yomi* in Rav Meir's mind.

In channeling the rich history of Torah learning in Lublin, Rav Meir Shapiro believed that he was not merely building a new yeshivah, but rather reviving the city's rich heritage. The name Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin was full of meaning, and the revival of the historic period of Torah greatness in Poland, at a time when Torah study and observance were on the decline, was the mission of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.

Rav Shalom Moskowitz was born on 17 Kislev 1878 in Vyrbranivka, near Lvov. One of 17 children, his illustrious lineage is traced to Rav

Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, the Zlotchover Maggid (1731–1786), while his grandfather Rav Yoel was the son-in-law of Rav Meir of Premishlan. The family were devoted Belzer chassidim and he was named for the first Belzer Rebbe, the Sar Shalom (1781–1855).



The Shatzer Rebbe from London

His early Torah education was under the tutelage of Rav Eliyahu Shmuel Schmerling of Babruysk and Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron of Brezan (the Maharsham), who deeply influenced Rav Shalom with his clear and decisive halachic rulings. His exposure to the teachings of Kabbalah came through his uncle Rav Leibish Halperin.

Physically Rav Shalom was an imposing figure, tall and regal. His radiant countenance, accentuated by a flowing white beard, commanded respect. His 16-year tenure as rabbi of Shatz ended following a disagreement with community leaders over a local shochet. Refusing to compromise on halachic principles, he left the town, without any idea how and where he would earn a living. Marrying his cousin Shlomtze in 1897, their life journey took them through various European cities, including Tarnow, Cologne, and

eventually London, where he resided for the last three decades of his life.

His commitment to Torah study was unparalleled, and he often dedicated 18 exhaustive hours daily to his davening and learning. In the years preceding his passing, despite having suffered the loss of his beloved wife and five adult children, he remained steadfast in his rigorous study routine. With only his daughter Miriam Chaya at his side, he poignantly remarked, "Were it not for the Torah that is my delight, I would have perished in my anguish" (Tehillim 92). A testament to his erudition came from the Chazon Ish, who once remarked, "*Der Rebbe fun London kenn lerenen* — the London Rav is a scholar."

Rav Shalom's quest to master both the hidden and revealed Torah was vast and unique. When he passed away in London in 1958, he was deeply engrossed in the writing of *Daas Shalom*, a commentary on Chumash arranged according to the order of *Perek Shirah*. To ensure accuracy and gain a profound understanding of the subject matter, he studied zoology and made regular visits to the London Zoo. He was also interested in astronomy and botany and frequently visited Munich's Sternwarte Planetarium while residing in Germany. On one occasion he drew the attention of the curator to two errors in the description of the exhibits.

The Shatzer Rav's legacy remains an inspiration and continues to this day with frequent visits to his gravesite in London. At the Enfield Adath Yisrael cemetery, his ethical will is emblazoned across the wall of the *ohel*:

It's well known that I have always tried to help people to repent of their evil ways, and thanks to Hashem I have succeeded many times. Therefore, whoever is in need of any kind of yeshuah (salvation) or refuah (recovery from illness) for himself or for someone else, should come visit my kever, preferably on a Friday before noon, and light a candle for my neshamah and make his request. Let him state his name and his mother's name. Then I shall certainly intercede with

my saintly forefathers that they should awaken G-d's mercy for a yeshuah or refuah.

But there is a definite condition attached: the person concerned must promise to improve his standard of Yiddishkeit. For example, he whose business is open on Sabbath must promise to keep it closed. He who shaved his beard with a razor blade should now remove it in a way that is permissible. A woman who does not cover her hair must promise from now on to wear a sheitel (wig). All this must be clearly known to those who come to my tomb. They must keep their promise and should not try to deceive me, G-d forbid, for I shall be very angry. Unfortunately, there is already too much deceit in this world.

Chapter II: A Vision for Poland's Yeshivos - A Yeshivah for Every Court

In 1921 Rav Meir Shapiro was appointed rav of Sanok. His acceptance included the stipulation that he bring the Galina yeshivah along with him, and in its new location the yeshivah grow in both quality and quantity. With nearly 300 students, Yeshivah Bnei Torah was one of the largest in Poland.

Yet despite the success of his own yeshivah, Rav Meir noticed that Poland's Torah landscape was sadly bare of similar institutions. Despite its storied past as a bastion of Torah study and chassidic life, the country for the most part lacked the structured, institutionalized yeshivos that had developed in Lithuania during the 19th century.

This distinction was stated explicitly in an oft-cited responsum of one of the fathers of Galician *chassidus*, Rav Chaim Halberstam (1797-1876), the Divrei Chaim of Sanz. In 1862 he wrote, "Yeshivos are not found in our land [Galicia] for a number of good reasons… rather [young men] sit in groups in the beis medrash and they study Torah, Talmud, and Tosafos."

Unlike traditional yeshivos, Polish Torah centers revolved around charismatic personalities, usually a town rabbi or chassidic rebbe.

The yeshivah of Sochatchov, for example, drew its spirit from the revered Rav Avrohom Borenstein (1838–1910), the Avnei Nezer. In a similar vein, the 20th-century yeshivah in Sokolov was steered by the Avnei Nezer's great-nephew, Rav Yitzchak Zelig Morgenstern (1866–1939), the Sokolover Rebbe.

This pattern persisted in greater Galicia as well. Bobov's yeshivah network, Etz Chaim, was under the guidance of its rebbe, Rav Ben Tzion Halberstam (1874–1941), the Kedushas Tzion. Tarnopol's yeshivah was led by Rav Menachem Manish Babad (1865–1937), the author of the *Chavatzeles Hasharon*, while Rav Aryeh Tzvi Fromer (1884–1943) established Kozhiglov's yeshivah. The character of these institutions hinged on the educational qualities of the individuals who led them, not on a collective institutional approach or organized curriculum.

Moreover, these leader's positions as roshei yeshivah were secondary to their primary function as chassidic leader or communal rabbi. Even in the yeshivah in Sochatchov, where the Avnei Nezer primed the next generation of Polish geonim (The *Kli Chemda, Chelkas Yoav, Eretz Tzvi,* and *Nefesh Chaya* were just some of the classic seforim authored by his students), no sleeping quarters were provided, nor were there any meal arrangements or financial support.

In his monograph on Polish yeshivos, Hillel Seidman (1907-1995) points to an additional challenge. Chassidim were generally quite particular regarding their children's education and went to great lengths to ensure that their children weren't exposed to foreign influences. "Foreign" in this context wasn't limited to blatant digressions from the traditional path but included any deviation from the specific customs and values associated with the particular chassidic dynasty of the family. Despite the intense Torah study that existed in the *kloisz* in Belz, one would be hard pressed to find a Gerrer chassid studying there and vice versa.

Most chassidic yeshivos in Poland were identified with a specific dynasty. Eitz Chaim was affiliated with Bobov, Bais Yisrael was founded by Rabbi Yitchok Menachem Danziger (1880-1942) of Aleksander, Sochatchov and various other courts of Polish *chassidus* each had their own institutions.

One exception was the vast network of Keser Torah yeshivos established and funded by the Rebbe of Radomsk, Rav Shlomo Henoch Rabinowitz (1882–1942), in interwar Poland. At its peak it counted 36 yeshivos with over 3,000 students. These yeshivos were less "partisan" and attracted chassidim of all stripes. But outside the Keser Torah network, yeshivos were limited to individual chassidic streams.



Boro Park real estate developer and philanthropist Max Jonas (center) is pictured along with local rabbanim and dignitaries on a 1925 visit to his hometown of Sanok, where he dedicated a new cheder and medical center. He would later assist Rav Meir on his fundraising trip to America and joined the international board of directors of the yeshivah. Tragically, he died just weeks apart from Rav Meir at the age of 41.

Rav Meir Shapiro was determined to recalibrate this scenario. While deeply respecting the existing structure, he envisioned a yeshivah system in Poland mirroring the administrative and academic rigor of

Lithuanian yeshivos, where elite students could shine in an environment uniquely tailored to their abilities, and where tribal differences were laid aside at the entrance to the beis medrash. It would be a place where a talented chassidish bochur could be accepted and valued primarily for his Torah knowledge, not for his particular chassidish affiliation — and where he would find elite students with whom to climb spiritual heights.



Rav Shlomo Henoch Rabinowitz of Radomsk (far left) alongside his devoted chassid Reb Naftali Besser and the rebbe's son-in-law, the great gaon Rav Dovid Moshe Rabinowitz, who served as rosh yeshivah of the Keser Torah yeshivah network

Bread & Salt

Poverty was another factor Polish yeshivos had to contend with, and Rav Meir aimed to confront this challenge as well. Yeshivah students were particularly affected by the poor economic conditions. Rav Meir saw their degraded status as an impediment to their learning and an insult to their standing as honorable members of society.

The memoirs of Alphonse (Avraham) Honig ("La Métamorphose du Juif errant," published in 1978 by La pensée Universelle) provide a

firsthand account of a student in Sanok, who yearns to study in Rav Meir's yeshivah, but can't tolerate the austere lifestyle:

Despite all my various difficulties, despite my loneliness and homesickness, which I have described in the preceding pages, I nevertheless have the opportunity of being a student of Rabbi Shapiro. Attending his morning classes is a privilege to which all young Talmudists aspire. The atmosphere there is extraordinary, and every day we discover something new. When I get up in the morning and think of the classes I am about to attend, I feel pious joy. I quickly get dressed and say my prayers so as to arrive early and watch Rabbi Shapiro enter the classroom. He energetically crosses the room, ascends to his podium, and, before beginning the class, casts a penetrating glance over his audience.

A thrill of excitement goes through my entire body whenever I feel that his eyes are resting on me. There is such silence that one can hear a fly. The whole room transforms itself into eyes and ears and prepares to listen. His words, like a prophecy, seem to come from afar. All the students sit hypnotized during the three-hour class. His method of teaching is both novel and original. For the subject of his class he has chosen the tractates Berachos and Mikvaos. These two tractates are not taught in any other yeshivah — and rare are the Talmudists who have studied them.

I would like to see the look on the faces of the Talmudists from home when they hear about this, because for them the study of Aggadah is a waste of time. But Rabbi Shapiro, thanks to his great knowledge and intellectual powers, succeeds in giving them new meaning, and interpreting them in a way that fascinates his students. His interpretation is fiercely debated among the students, and each gives his personal version, as is the practice in other yeshivos, with regard to the legal tracts. Rabbi Shapiro is not only a gaon, respected for his Talmudic knowledge, but the students have great affection for him. He, too, loves them like a father. He calls them

by name, despite their great number. He knows the material difficulties and emotional difficulties of each student.

The memoirist describes the shame associated with the *Teg* system, under which each night the students were hosted by local families on a rotation basis. They often felt unwelcome, especially since many families were poor and hardly able to provide for their own children. Other times the opposite held true:

Obviously, it is quite humiliating to go to a different benefactor each day. For those boys with a sense of self-esteem, and I think I am one of them, it is unbearable. I prefer to tighten my belt and make do with the little money I get, rather than eat my fill at the home of some portly citizen where I would have to listen to his platitudes and endure the arrogant and mocking looks of his children.

Avraham Honig saw the pain Rav Meir suffered from having his students take part in this system, and his efforts to provide them with some pocket money so they could alleviate their hunger.

It was worth the suffering to acquire the knowledge of the Torah, as it is written in the mishnah: "A little bread with salt… and sleeping on the ground, is the path to the Torah."

But Rav Meir Shapiro himself found this saying to be wrong when it comes to young men who are devoting their lives to the Torah, and added a question mark, which changes the meaning of this sentence completely: "Is eating bread and salt and sleeping on the floor really the way of the Torah?"

In the Town Square

In 1922 Rav Meir was implored by Agudas Yisrael to represent the party in the upcoming elections to the second Polish Sejm (parliament). The first Sejm in the Second Polish Republic (1919-1922) included two representatives of Agudas Yisrael (Rabbis Moshe Eliyahu Halpern (1872-1921) and Avraham Tzvi Perlmutter (1843-1930)). Before the next election, a more experienced Agudas Yisroel

was better organized and sought candidates who would draw both more respect and more voters.



Rav Meir exiting a meeting in Vienna along with two leaders of Agudas Yisroel, Rav Aharon Walkin of Pinsk and Rabbi Dr. Samuel Spitzer, Chief Rabbi of Hamburg

On the surface, a rosh yeshivah such as Rav Meir was not the most ideal candidate — but Avraham Honig's memoirs explain why Agudas Yisroel wished for him to serve as their candidate:

A custom existed in Poland that when the Prefect (regional governor) visited his constituents in one of the towns in his region, upon entering the town he is received by representatives of all the communities. Each delegation in turn approaches the carriage of the Prefect to pay their respects and their grievances. The Jewish delegation is usually led by the town rabbi carrying the Torah.

Rabbi Shapiro, of Romanian origin, having lived in Poland for a short time, did not know a word of Polish. [He later gained a rudimentary fluency of the language.] The representatives of the Jewish community were very embarrassed about the speech that Rabbi Shapiro had to make in honor of the governor. He, on the other hand, did not seem worried at all.

That day he gave his class as usual, in no hurry. After it was over, he had one of the students who was a graduate of the University of Krakow translate his speech [from Yiddish into Polish]. A few moments later, he left to head the delegation to receive the governor.

To the great satisfaction of the Jewish notables and to our great astonishment, he delivered his speech without the aid of the notes prepared by the student.

Initially, Rav Meir turned down the Agudah's request to serve in a political capacity, knowing well that he'd have to leave his beloved yeshivah in order to be present in Warsaw during government sessions. But the Rebbes of Ger and Tchortkov believed his candidacy was essential. In his unpublished memoirs (later translated into English by Charles Wengrov and published by Feldheim as *A Blaze in the Darkening Gloom*), his student Rabbi Yehoshua Baumol cites a mishnah in *Taanis* (2:1) to explain his logic.

"In a time of peril, a sefer Torah is taken out to the town square." This "living sefer Torah" was thus compelled to exit the confines of the beis medrash for the public square, where his talents could be utilized to further the needs of the Polish Orthodox community.

Ultimately, Agudas Yisrael persevered in the election, garnering six seats in the Sejm, mainly due to the bump it received from joining a voting bloc that consisted of Jewish and minority parties. The Agudah deputies now included (in formation) Reb Eliyahu Kirschbraun, Rav Aharon Lewin, Reb Leibel Mintzberg, Reb Feivel Stempel, Reb Leizer Syrkis, and Rav Meir Shapiro.

Dr. Simcha Bunim Feldman (1874–1954), an attorney turned educator, served as a deputy in the Sejm representing Mizrachi at the same time Rav Meir Shapiro was representing Agudas Yisrael. The Yizkor book for the city of Biala describes Feldman as a righteous individual who was respected by all — even the chassidim — for his religious devotion.



In 1938 he penned his memories of Rav Meir in the Mizrachi newspaper HaTzofeh:

His sense of responsibility was very strong. I will never forget his enthusiasm and energy, when he took part in a stormy opposition that the Jewish Caucus organized during a session of the Sejm, as a protest against proposed legislation, which was completely directed at the Jews and their economic position. He pounded on the bench with us for a full hour, and cooperated with us in an action whose intent was to protest the discrimination against Jewish citizens in the legislative field. In the period of the second Sejm, which lasted five years, I was lucky enough to greatly benefit from the light of his Torah and wisdom, from the many conversations we held on the benches of the Sejm as well as other occasions.

One Shabbos (parshas Vayishlach, 1922) when the Sejm and Senate came together for the legally required "National Assembly" to vote for President, we all arrived early at the Sejm building. The voting took all day. There were seven candidates. This caused the votes to be so divided that no single candidate received a definitive majority, requiring the voting process to be repeated five times, and following each cycle, the candidate with the least number of votes was taken off of the candidate list. So we were forced to remain in the Sejm

building, which is far from the Jewish neighborhood, until the evening. When it came time for Minchah, we davened together in the Caucus's room, and then the issue of Seudah Shlishis arose. One of the members obtained some rolls for us, and we ate Shalosh Seudos while the Sejm was tallying the votes after a new round of voting.

After we finished the meal, I suggested to Rav Meir Shapiro that he share some divrei Torah, specifically of halachic nature. He started saying a nice chiluk in Maseches Yoma, and we were enchanted by his style of lecture and enlightening explanation. It seemed that the walls of the Sejm never heard such a pshetl. To our dismay, he was unable to conclude his sharp pilpul. Suddenly the hallway bells started ringing a long ring, calling us to the Sejm hall for a new round of voting. The pshetl was stopped in the middle, and we were successful in the final round. From this round, Gabriel Narutowicz came out as the President of the Polish Republic.

As we exited to the street after this victory, masses of Poles were ready for us with curses, "blessing" us for our "Jewish President" (he was referred to as such because he was elected with the assistance of the Jewish parties). The second Shabbos, President Narutowicz was murdered by the artist and writer Niewiadomski. I didn't hear the end of the chiluk on Maseches Yoma as we had many other chilukim afterward that occupied our thoughts….

Once, we traveled together from Warsaw to Lvov. We were together in the first-class cabin, due to the privilege that was given to us as delegates to the Sejm. We departed at night, and we discussed various matters until the late hours after midnight. Primarily he shared with me divrei Torah. On that night he revealed to me his plans for daf yomi, which he intended to present to his colleagues in the Agudah. The delegate to the Polish Sejm never forsook for a minute his love of Torah, and his life mission to spread Torah to the masses.

Rav Meir served in the Polish Sejm for more than five years, though as time went on, he focused his attention on two other endeavors which would completely change the face of Torah learning.



A rare photo of Rav Meir Shapiro (right of center) surrounded by fellow Agudists at the first Knessiah Gedolah in Vienna in 1923

Chapter III: A Yeshivah Like No Other - Two Children

Though Rav Meir Shapiro and his wife, Malka, did not have biological children of their own, he refused to consider himself childless. His close student Rav Shmuel Wosner recalled a summer evening stroll in the gardens of the yeshivah, during which Rav Meir declared himself the father of two offspring: the enduring legacies of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin and *daf yomi*.

The first of his "offspring" had its genesis in 1912, when Agudas Yisrael was formed at a conference in Katowice, Poland. When news of this historic gathering reach Rav Meir, he famously commented:

"I wondered how Rav Chaim of Brisk, a Lithuanian gaon, would find a common language with Reb Yaakov Rosenheim, who grew up in German Frankfurt, or how a Jew from Tzfas or Poland would communicate with his colleague from Holland or America. Then I opened a volume of Maseches Berachos and realized that the Mishnah was written in

Eretz Yisrael, the Gemara was written in Bavel, Rashi learned from teachers in Germany and wrote his commentary in France, the Baalei Tosafos lived in France, the Maharsha had resided in Lithuania, and the Maharam in Poland. Each most certainly had different qualities and characteristics, but the common pursuit of Torah truth unites them all; I then understood that Agudas Yisrael represents the Torah outlook, and it is this common thread that unites us all, from one end of the world to another."

(This quote has been commonly attributed to a speech Rav Meir delivered at the Katowice Conference, although according to this author's research on the subject, Rav Meir was not in attendance, so the speech was likely delivered at a later Agudah event.)

Rav Meir's observation about the unifying power of Torah learning would sow the seeds for his proposal at the next gathering of Agudas Yisrael in the summer of 1923 (delayed nearly a decade due to World War I), the groundbreaking concept of *daf yomi*.

The story of Rav Meir's speech at the 1923 Knessiah Gedolah and the subsequent commencement of the first *daf yomi* cycle a few weeks later on Rosh Hashanah have become a vaunted chapter in our nation's annals. Few, however, are aware of the rest of that groundbreaking speech he delivered on 7 Elul at the inaugural Knessiah in Vienna, where he laid the seeds for his second "child," Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin (which he would officially announce four months later). New York's *Yiddishe Tageblatt* shared Rav Meir's emotional words:

Owing to the World War, two generations were denied a life of Judaism. Jewish children who were [as young as] ages 14–15 [at the start of the war] were subject to military responsibilities, and were forced to cease their studies. The younger generation, those who were ages four to six, were deprived of chadarim to learn in, and grew up lacking any Jewish education. Thus two generations were lost, and unless we do everything we can to save the third generation, Judaism risks the danger of a spiritual death.

We have, however, also lost much Jewish talent that we could have taken pride in. How many sharp Jewish minds were neglected? Should one wish to present a demonstration of this catastrophe, the following anecdote, which I witnessed, can serve as an illustration:

A year following the end of the war, a 15-year-old boy approached me and asked to be accepted into my yeshivah. He comes from the village of Bialozorka, near the Russian border. The Bolsheviks had entered [the village] several times. Some of the Jews fled, and he had nobody to teach him Torah. He had already been to Lemberg, Warsaw, Lodz and Bialystok, but nowhere was he wanted or accepted, since he was destitute and would need to be supported. So, he was advised to approach me.

It was, however, a difficult period for me as well. [My] town [of Galina] was impoverished, and inflation was rampant — I had to struggle greatly to sustain the yeshivah. "But one boy," I told him, "we will certainly find space [for]."

At this, the boy began to sob: "If I would only [be speaking for] one boy, I would have already found a place. We are, however, a group of ten boys from our town. We swore to each other that we would all be accepted to yeshivah together, and none of us would leave any of the others behind."

"This was the story," says the Sejm member, as tears trickle down his face, "and I did everything to ensure these boys were taken care of. And now, listen to this: the [leader of this group] studied at my yeshivah for three months. At the final examination at the end of the term, he knew 270 blatt of Talmud, with commentaries, by heart! He will develop into a great leader of the Jewish people. His name is Elkana Weizman. His fellow students are just as brilliant as he."

If those in the West, who support the Jews of Eastern Europe, would be able to understand the importance of not losing these phenomenal Jewish talents, they would perhaps provide an even greater measure of support. We should be eligible for a great deal

of credit, since we offer the best of guarantees. No government on the globe can offer such high returns. For every hundred dollars [given by] the American Jewish community, we can repay the loan with a Jewish genius, with a great Jewish leader, who will be the pride of the whole nation and the entire world.



Rav Meir seated at the dais at the second Knessiah Gedolah of Agudas Yisrael in Vienna in August 1929

Can't You Hear It?

At the Knessiah, Rav Meir met a businessman and philanthropist named Shmuel Eichenbaum from Lublin. Poland echoed with tales of his generosity, with hardly a single chassidic rebbe untouched by his largesse.

The camaraderie that developed between Rav Meir and Reb Shmuel led to an invitation for Rav Meir to spend a Shabbos in Lublin. There his host led him along the paths of Lublin's rich past, from the hallowed Maharshal Synagogue to the whispers of the ancient cemetery. But it was when Shmuel Eichenbaum pointed out his recently acquired property in the heart of Jewish Lublin at 57 Lubartowska Street, that the destiny of Torah in Poland took a defining turn.

What intention, Rav Meir wondered aloud, might have driven Eichenbaum to purchase this prime real estate? Before Eichenbaum could even respond, a gleeful Rav Meir interjected, assuring Eichenbaum that the Divine plan was clear to him. One could almost sense the palpable energy of Rav Meir's vision for that piece of land.

Following Shabbos, a Melaveh Malkah was held at the Eichenbaum residence. Addressing friends and family of Shmuel Eichenbaum, Rav Meir spoke with passion. "*Ich vil epes iberlozen noch zich*," he said, "I desire to leave a legacy." For a rav bereft of offspring, what better legacy than a yeshivah, a beacon of Torah?

Eichenbaum, seeing an opportunity to contribute, offered his newly acquired land for this purpose. Rav Meir grabbed his host and practically danced him over to the site, even though it was well past midnight. Once they reached 57 Lubartowska, Rav Meir, in an act of complete jubilation, prostrated himself with his ear facing the ground and sang out, "Can't you hear the *kol Torah* already?"

Yet no great deed ever goes unpunished. When people heard about Eichenbaum's generous gift, voices of dissent rose, attempting to sway him from his generous pledge. But the bond forged in Vienna, and solidified in Lublin, remained unbroken. A written agreement was signed, the first major step of Rav Meir's grand journey complete and on its way to its grand realization.

(Amazingly, Chaya Mindel Eichenbaum summoned her husband to a *din Torah* over the matter — not because she opposed the gift, but because he granted it without her involvement, limiting her own merit in the endeavor. Ultimately, a workaround was found so that she could share in the mitzvah.)

Property in hand, Rav Meir began in earnest to collect funds toward the construction of the grand edifice he envisioned, one that would eclipse all other yeshivos. Four months later, in December of 1923, Rav Meir felt confident that the project was on its way to becoming

a reality and drafted a letter to Polish Jewry that appeared in local newspapers as well as other outlets:

Lublin.

We direct our gaze to the days of old, to the golden age of the Council of the Four Lands, when a world-class yeshivah existed here that served as a center of Torah in the state of Poland. Also, Torah and halachic instruction went forth from it to all of the Jewish people.

We have gathered today to raise up the yoke of Torah, to resurrect a world-class yeshivah under the name: Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.

To this end, we have decided to erect a massive building that will contain classrooms, dormitory quarters, and a cafeteria, so that 500 gifted students will be completely cared for, spiritually and physically.

And the following individual will always be remembered favorably: the philanthropist Reb Shmuel Eichenbaum, who was moved to donate to us as a permanent gift — a suitable plot of land the size of 3,500 square meters.

May Hashem show his kindness to us all, and help us succeed in implementing His will to restore the crown [of Lublin] to its ancient glory, and this holy, precious institution, an institute to nurture Torah and yiras Shamayim, will soon stand in all of its beauty, to the glory of global orthodox Jewry.

We the undersigned

16 Teves 5684, Shabbos '43

Meir Shapiro, Rabbi of Sanok

Shmuel Eichenbaum

Moshe Tsheransky

Moshe Eisenberg

Yechezkel Ehrlich



Rav Meir at a gathering along with prominent members of the Lublin community: Seated L-R: Moshe Eisenberg (chairman of the Building Committee), Shmuel Eichenbaum (donor of the yeshivah property), Rav Meir, Herschel Zilber (president of the Lublin kehillah)

Detractors Without & Within

While many rejoiced at the news of this exciting project, there were the inevitable detractors. The local radical Jews of the Bund looked upon the large expenditure as wasteful and an affront to their beliefs, using the headline, "Concerning the Resurrection of the Shtreimel" in an article about Rav Meir's initiative. Rabbi Dr. David Slavin (whose tireless research on Rav Meir Shapiro has been essential to this author) unearthed an article from the anti-religious *Folzeitung* which he summarized as follows:

The article stated that the Gerrers knew how to use the press for their own purposes, and were now pulling all of the Jewish people into the mikveh, the masses into the cheder. The article conceded that the building was impressive, but stated that it would be more appropriate to house a benk (bank in Yiddish) rather than benk kvetchers (bench huddlers). This was a brilliant play on words —

"bench huddlers" is a reference to yeshivah bochurim who sit on benches studying all day.

Instead of modernizing, students at the yeshivah would be told to hold onto their old ways. Students would sit and study shnayim ocha'zin be'dalus — two [litigants come before the court] grasping poverty — this is another cynical play on words, referencing the first mishnah of Bava Metzia, but substituting the word tallis (garment) with dalus (poverty). The author describes all the modern facilities, but how the outdated students would misuse them for old-fashioned religious purposes.

In addition, anti-Semitic elements found it unacceptable for such a showy edifice to be erected in the heart of Lublin and arranged for the government to halt construction of the yeshivah three times.

At one point, a group of Polish clergymen claimed that the yeshivah's land had formerly housed a church and had construction halted in protest of this "desecration." They even went as far as erecting a large wooden cross on the site one night. Eventually, pressure from Agudah's political machine ensured the project received the proper permits.

Complaints about the palatial edifice being erected came from both Lithuanian roshei yeshivah as well as some in Polish chassidic leadership. Economic woes still bedeviled the Jews of Poland and many "competing" *mosdos* complained to Rav Meir that the hundreds of thousands of dollars he needed to collect could be used instead to erect dozens of other yeshivahs, built in more pedestrian style. As always, Rav Meir was prepared with an answer, this time in the form of a parable:

One day, in a large chicken coop, everyone was surprised to find a large turkey among the chickens. The chickens objected, saying that the feed the stingy master offered was barely enough to sustain them, let alone their new "housemate."

The turkey urged them not to worry, reassuring them. "True, I have a bigger appetite to sate. However, let me assure you that because I can scream and make a racket louder than all of you, I will leave the master no choice but to come and feed us more often and generously. As a result, the entire coop will be better fed."

Rav Meir explained that he was the "turkey" in the fundraising efforts of Poland. When he encouraged people to donate money, they would be inspired to donate — not only to his cause, but also to many others. As a result, everybody would benefit. Rav Meir wanted to expand the total "pie" of donations and he was also certain that Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin would enhance the image of Torah learning, in general. He was convinced that people would spend money on causes that were important to them. If the public face of Torah learning came to be valued and perceived as honorable, then funds available to all learning institutions would increase.



The crowd at the groundbreaking event held on Lag B'Omer 1924. The Tchortkover Rebbe can be seen at center

As illustrated in Rav Meir's allegory, his motivation in building the yeshivah was to raise the public face of all Torah learning. And considering the lowly status accorded to yeshivah students, a transformation was sorely needed.

Israel's former Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau (who proudly carries the name of his cousin Rav Meir Shapiro) shared that at the groundbreaking for the yeshivah, Rav Meir publicly expressed his gratitude to the "thieves of Poland" for their role in the project.

"Why am I planning to build a yeshivah with a dormitory?" he asked. "For this, we have to be grateful to the thieves of Poland. If there were no thieves in Poland, the storeowners wouldn't allow the yeshivah boys to sleep in their shops because they wouldn't need (night) watchmen. And if the boys didn't have where to sleep, they would not come to cities like Warsaw and Lublin to study Torah. So we have to thank the thieves for the Torah studied in Poland." He then switched from irony to passion: "I will not allow this situation to continue! This is why I am building a dormitory!"

In an interview with the producers of "Only with Joy," a documentary on the life of Rav Meir, Rav Yisroel Yehoshua Eibeshitz, author of *BeKrovai Akadesh* (1916–2019), told of his experience studying in a Polish yeshivah in the 1920s: "In order to get a place to sleep I was locked into a store every night as a watchman. There was no water or bathroom. Had a fire broken out I could've been burned to death. Every morning the owner frisked me from top to bottom and checked even my shoelaces in case, G-d forbid, I might be stealing something. That was the system. I was a 13-year-old boy the first time I left my mother's apron and came to a strange place to study Torah. Every day my blood was spilled. All this Rav Meir Shapiro wanted to change."

Not only did Rav Meir aim to build a dormitory, he wanted the building to be aesthetically impressive. His students point to his relationship with the Tchortkover Rebbe, Rav Yisrael Friedman, the grandson and namesake of "Der Heilige Ruzhiner," in order to understand his reasoning.

Once during a visit to the yeshivah by the Sadigura Rebbe, another Ruzhiner descendant, Rav Meir took the opportunity to articulate the link between the *chassidus* of Ruzhin and the yeshivah.

"It is well known," he said, "that the *derech* of *chassidus* comprises a number of different pathways. The path of Ruzhin is that of *Hod Sh'biTiferes*, splendor and majesty. Its goal is to beautify the Torah and the mitzvos. Just as a diamond needs the correct setting to showcase its qualities, so too each mitzvah needs its own special place and setting.

"The Ruzhiner demanded that the external trappings of the mitzvah also be beautiful and glorified. This is the *derech* of our yeshivah, whose source is rooted in this *derech* of majesty and whose purpose is to show the true splendor of our holy Torah."



The home and beis medrash of the Tchortkover Rebbe

Go West

In order to garner large-scale support for the project, Rav Meir planned a grand groundbreaking event (as portrayed earlier) for Lag B'omer of that year. The event attracted dozens of prestigious rebbes and rabbanim from across Poland as well as thousands of spectators and even more "well-wishers" — but far too few donors.

Sensing that he'd exhausted his fundraising opportunities in Poland, Rav Meir decided to travel to Western Europe, where he thought

he'd find more sympathetic Jews — who would be capable of larger donations as well.



The Keren HaTorah committee, which helped oversee and fund projects like Sarah Schenirer's Bais Yaakov and assisted with the establishment of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, consisted of important Torah activists from across Europe

In "Keeper of the Law," memoirist Eli Ginzberg tells of Rav Meir's visit to Germany: "The Frankfurters in the congregation were fond of telling, among themselves, the story of Rav Meir Shapiro's visit. 'Rabbiner Shapira' was both impressed and dismayed at the manner of Jewish observance; impressed at the organization of the Frankfurt community and dismayed that it tended to override the kind of fervor he knew as a chassid."

During this trip, Rav Meir formed a close bond with Rav Shlomo Zalman Breuer (1850 – 1926), son-in-law of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, who he'd met years earlier when traveling to Frankfurt to get medical attention for his wife. Rav Meir affectionately referred to Rav Breuer as the "Western Wall," as he served as the "spiritual line of defense" in the country west of Rav Meir's home in Poland.

When Rav Breuer asked for Rav Meir's opinion on the davening style of the Frankfurt community, Rav Meir pointed to a sign promoting kosher ice cream, telling Rav Breuer that the davening was the same as the ice cream: "frozen with the hashgachah of the Rav."



Unlike most roshei yeshivah, Rav Meir would regularly conduct interviews with the media, even conducting press conferences on a regular basis to update both the Jewish and secular media on the yeshivah's progress

This point was not lost on German Jewry, who gave Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin a backhanded compliment when they wrote in *Der Israelite* that the yeshivah would be a turning point for chassidim, who would "now focus on scholarship instead of being drinkers."

Rav Meir had high hopes for his August 1924 visit to England, arriving following a successful visit to France. He was excited to reconnect in London with the Rebbe of his youth, the Shatzer Rav. (His all-encompassing grasp of history came in handy when asked by a reporter about any connections between Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin and the Jews of London. Hardly pausing, he replied that Menasseh Ben Israel (1604–1657), who played an important role in the readmission of Jews to England, sent his son to study in the great yeshivah in Lublin.)

While he had some successes in England, for the most part the trip was a disappointment. One day he traveled to a town outside London for an appointment with a wealthy man who contributed absolutely nothing. Rav Meir said sarcastically that he now realized the great extent to which England welcomed her guests. "While in Poland I have the privilege of traveling by train for *gornisht* (nothing) on account of being a Member of Parliament; here, too, I have traveled by train for *gornisht*."

Rav Meir also traveled to Ireland as well as Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland, but he soon realized that there was only one place that might bring him the funding necessary to realize his dream: America.

Chapter IV: American Dream - Across the Atlantic

On the evening of August 15, 1926, the main railway station in Warsaw was packed with throngs of well-wishers, eager to escort the Piotrkower Rav as he embarked on the first leg of his voyage to the United States. Campaigning in the *goldeneh medineh* for the welfare of Eastern European Torah institutions was a popular fundraising tactic in the roaring 20s: nearly every major Lithuanian rosh yeshivah visited (at least once). During the course of his American visit, he would be joining up in some cities with Rav Meir Dan Plotzky (1866–1928), author of the *Kli Chemda*, who sought aid for the Mesivta of Warsaw.

In the months prior to his departure, Rav Meir published his sefer of responsa, known as *Sh'eilos uTshuvos Ohr Hameir*. He proudly carried with him several boxes of the new sefer, to distribute as gifts to the rabbanim and laymen who assisted him throughout his trip. The inscriptions from those seforim (of which this author has come across quite a few) have been helpful in tracing Rav Meir's journey across the continent.

Rav Meir booked passage on the Cunard line's HMS Majestic (the sister ship of the Titanic). He was accompanied on the journey by Moshe Eisenberg (a prominent member of the Lublin community) and

Yosef Rappaport, the son of Reb Hirsh Rappaport (1830-1899), the gabbai of the Tchortkover Rebbe. The six-day cross-Atlantic voyage was unavoidably extended several hours due to the foggy weather, but finally, at 12:30 p.m. on August 25, the Majestic managed to dock at Pier 59 in New York City. The arrival of the young, charismatic Rav of Piotrkow (who also served as a delegate to the Polish Sejm) generated no small amount of publicity, which Rav Meir was more than happy to channel in pursuit of his vision.

In a news conference, Rav Meir shared with the reporters from the Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish press his plans to balance the yeshivah's budget:

The Rabbi declared that according to calculations, the cost would be $100 per year per pupil. About 200 pupils will be admitted at the start, the number to be gradually increased to 1,000; at full capacity the budget will call for $100,000 yearly. The following unique plan will be adopted to collect this budget: 50,000 yeshivah boxes (pushkes) will be distributed in Jewish homes all over Poland, each box to contain an average of seven zlotys yearly. This will net an approximate sum of $35,000; one-third will come from pupils' fees, and the last portion it is hoped for will come from a government subsidy and as yet to be discovered sources worldwide.

(Professor Shaul Stampfer has written extensively about the *pushke* campaign, which became the source of major controversy when Keren Rabi Meir Baal Haneis complained that they had the exclusive rights to distribute *pushkes*. The conflict resulted in a *din Torah* that ruled in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin's favor — though this hardly ended the controversy, which continued for years.)

A quick glance at the Jewish newspapers of the time makes it clear that despite all the positive coverage generated by his arrival, very little of it promoted the true purpose of his trip. One English-language outlet completely ignored the fact that Rav Meir had come to America on behalf of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin and reported that "Grand Rabbi Maier Shapira, a member of the Polish Parliament,

together with his official staff, will shortly confer with President Coolidge at Washington on trade concessions between Poland and the US."

Yet another report focused on Polish economics:

Rabbi Shapiro is one of the youngest members of the Polish Parliament and a good friend and active supporter of Marshal Pilsudski, the Polish Dictator. On his arrival in New York, he was given an official reception by Polish Government officials, including the Polish Envoy and Consul in New York.

When questioned as to economic conditions in Poland, the rabbi replied that "the Polish economic situation is not at all good. Poland is a country rich in natural resources. With an abundance of oil, natural gas, and coal, it has no capital to carry on its industries. Until credit can be established, Poland will be unable to utilize its riches.

"Businessmen are required by banks and private individuals to pay the high rate of interest of four percent per month. The government, however, lends money at a rate of one half that charged by the banks. Our budget system is working much better and at the present time is very efficient."



Rabbi Shapira, renowned Polish statesman and Gaon of Pietrokow, was the guest at a Dinner on Wednesday evening, June 15, of Mr. and Mrs. H. Wolofsky. The Polish Consul, Mr. Straszewsky, and the Vice-Consul, Mr. R. Mazurkiewitz, were also present, the other guests being S. W. Jacobs, Lyon Cohen, Rabbi Hirsch Cohen, Rabbi Rothberg, F. Wolofsky, Leon Crestohl a ofsky. will be see ere repr sentative o lanthro and politic ng prov an unusual event.

A LIGHT FROM LUBLIN

Dismal Results

For the first several months, Rav Meir stayed within the confines of the New York metro area. During the week, his base of operations was the Broadway Central Hotel, while Shabbos and Yamim Tovim were spent with relatives and admirers, such as his cousin Mendel Shapiro of the Lower East Side (who served as president of the Melitzer Shtibel), and Rav Levi Yitzchak Kahane (d. 1950), a rav in Williamsburg.

On the evening of August 31, a grand welcome reception was held at the Beth Shalom Shul in Williamsburg. While New York's Republican Senator James Wadsworth (1877–1952), then in the heat of what would turn out to be a losing reelection bid that fall, was unable to attend, he did send a close confidante to represent him: Assistant United States Attorney General William "Wild Bill" Donovan (1883–1959), who would later become the founding father of the CIA.

Despite all the publicity, the initial fundraising results were dismal. Rav Meir was so desperate to realize his dream that he accepted a job leading Yamim Noraim tefillos in a Williamsburg shul: davening from the *amud*, speaking, and even blowing shofar. (When his companion Moshe Eisenberg took ill on Simchas Torah and could not make it to shul, Rav Meir had the sensitivity to put on a full reenactment of the *hakafos* ceremony in their lodgings, pretending to take the "sefer Torah" out of the "*aron*" and dance, as if there was a large crowd present….) For his services, the shul presented him with $500 in addition to a gold cane.

Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that some American rabbanim simply disagreed with what they viewed as the extravagant plans for Chachmei Lublin. "Why build such an expensive building in such a poor country?" Rav Meir was asked. He responded with a parable about a poor man who was offered a high-risk business venture with a possibility of high profit margin. The pauper's rebbe advised him that if he had wealthy relatives who could help him were

he to fail, then he should proceed. "So too, similarly, in Poland, I feel we can rely on our rich relatives in America."

Moreover, most of the American Rabbinate at the time aligned with Mizrachi, whereas Rav Meir was a prominent and unabashed Agudist.

When several Mizrachi rabbis who did sympathize with his vision suggested that perhaps he should cease identifying with Agudah to improve fundraising, Rav Meir famously replied: "If I would be 'in the Agudah,' I could simply resign… In reality, however, the Agudah is 'in me'…."

Rav Menachem Mendel Hager, one of the current Vizhnitzer Rebbes of Bnei Brak, related the following episode at a 2013 gathering in Tzfas:

When my holy grandfather [the Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz] ztz"l was in America in 1949 and 1950 in order to [raise funds to] establish Kiryas Vizhnitz, many people didn't believe in his vision and even suspected that the whole operation was a scam and that he was taking the money for himself, G-d forbid. He persisted.

One evening, when he arrived back at the (Broadway Central) hotel, the owner honored my grandfather by allowing him to stay as a guest in the room where the Gaon Rav Meir Shapiro had stayed while serving as an emissary for his holy yeshivah in Lublin. The hotel owner told him that even Rav Shapiro suffered many embarrassments. He was broken over the lack of recognition of his mighty enterprise, and upon his arriving at the hotel, paced the corridors engrossed in thought. Suddenly, said the hotel owner, Rav Meir broke out in heartfelt song (one of many he would compose) to the words of Tehillim 94: "Im amarti matah ragli chasdecha Hashem yisadeini — If I said my feet have faltered, in Your kindness, Hashem, You have supported me." He continued singing and dancing with dveikus until his great exuberance had its effect, and from all of the hotel rooms Jews emerged and gave him hearty donations.

The significance of this, said my holy grandfather, was the great merit of acting with mesirus nefesh in order to strengthen the Torah at any cost, and that is what enabled Rav Shapiro to implement his sacred task of establishing the study of the daf yomi. That same burning desire is what also helped him transform that program into an eternal heirloom for the Jewish People in every place they may be found. There are thousands of Jews following his light each day, and thanks to his efforts, the merit of the multitudes is established for all generations.



Rav Meir is greeted by a crowd on a visit to the partially completed yeshivah building following 13 months in America

New York & Beyond

Over the fall of 1926, aside from campaigning for Chachmei Lublin, Rav Meir visited and delivered *shiurim* at the yeshivos of New York: RIETS and Yeshivas Rav Shlomo Kluger on the Lower East Side, Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin in Brownsville, and Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg. He was particularly impressed with Torah Vodaath and took a special liking to the young man who was likely the continent's youngest *daf yomi maggid shiur*: the 15-year-old Gedaliah

Schorr (1910–1979), presenting him with a signed copy of his work *Ohr Hameir*.

Many years later, Rav Gedaliah would still recall the impassioned *hesped* Rav Meir delivered that autumn on the Lower East Side, marking the passing of Rav Yissachar Dov Rokeach (1854–1926), the third Rebbe of Belz: the room, estimated in the press as packed with 1,500 people, was filled with audible sobs.

At one point, Rav Meir led the entire assembly in sitting on the floor, as a sign of their immense mourning. He reminisced of his personal interaction with the Belzer Rav: The Rebbe was once extremely bothered — to the point of sleeplessness — about a problem he had discovered regarding the measurements of the Beis Hamikdash, remarking that the one who could resolve this difficulty for him would always be remembered by the Rebbe "both in this world, and the next."

In the fall of 1922, the Rebbe's son-in-law, Rav Pinchas Twersky (1880–1943), received a letter with a proposed solution to the problem from a relative of his, the 35-year-old Rabbi of Sanok, Poland, Rav Meir Shapiro (see: *Ohr HaMeir*, #25). The Rebbe was very pleased with this solution, declaring it "Toras Emes!" (Rav Meir offered to discuss the topic with anyone in the audience, following the conclusion of the event.)

In media interviews given shortly before departing Europe, Rav Meir had sounded confident that he could meet his fundraising goals in the United States within three or four months, leaving him time to travel to Mandatory Palestine before returning home. However, it soon became clear that this timeframe had been too optimistic, and that the New York City region alone could not provide the funding necessary to build the yeshivah (by the end of October, the campaign reported a total of $3,000 raised).

On December 16, a week after Chanukah, Rav Meir boarded a southbound train heading for Baltimore.

Aside from a one-day stopover in February, he would not return to New York City until the end of July, spending the next seven and a half months on a whirlwind of fundraising events crisscrossing the continent. From Boston to Denver, and as far north as Canada, he spent time in every major interwar Jewish community in North America, tirelessly campaigning in speech after speech for his vision of Chachmei Lublin.

By the time Rav Meir returned to New York City on July 29, he had $70,000 cash in hand for the cause, with additional funds in outstanding pledges. (The total raised after travel and marketing expenses was $53,000.) The tour of America's heartland had indeed yielded fruit.

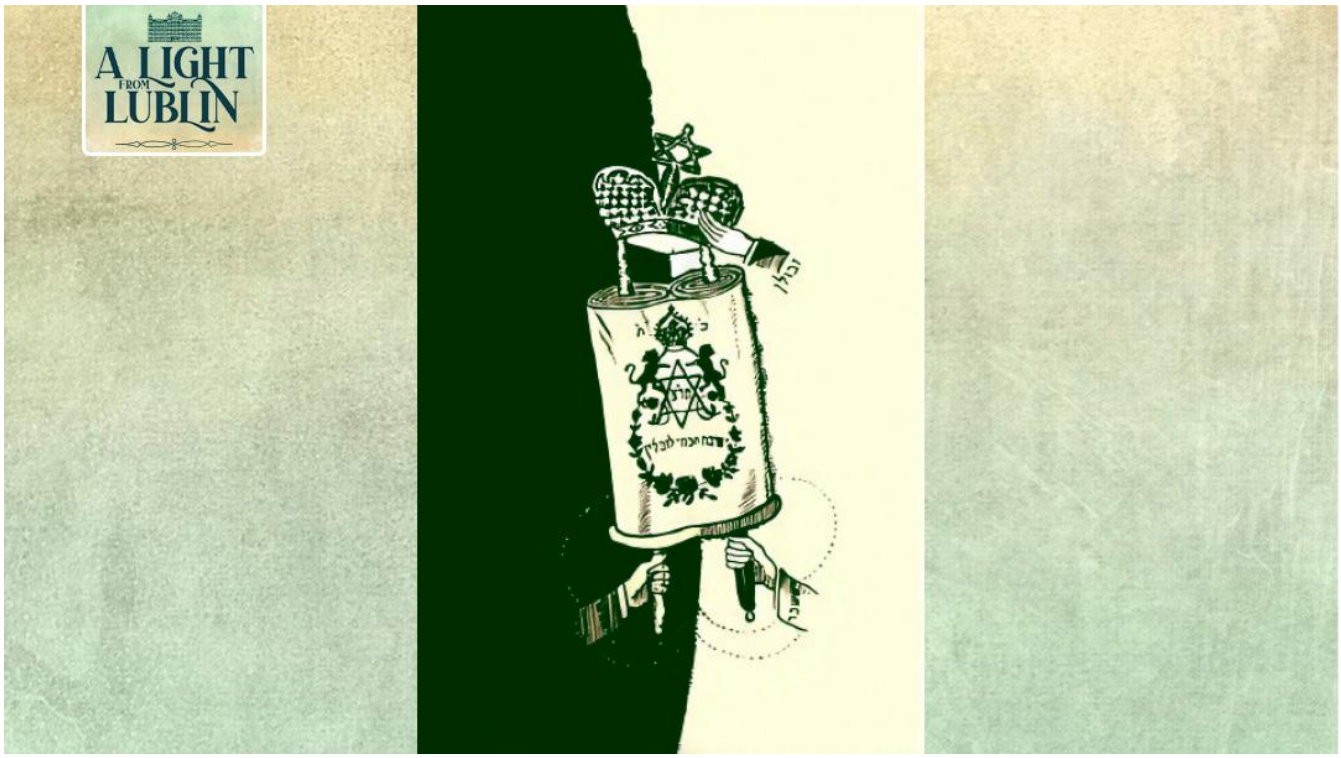


The Chachmei Lublin flag was designed by Rav Meir to embody the values and ideals of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. At its center, the flag depicted a Torah scroll supported by hands with "Yissachar" written on the sleeves, and a crown placed on it by the "Zevulun" hand from above. The black and white backdrop of the flag represents the partnership between Yissachar and Zevulun. This partnership highlighted Zevulun's dedication to supporting the Torah studies of Yissachar.

August 1927 was Rav Meir's final month in the United States. While largely remaining in New York (speaking in Brownsville and the

Bronx), he did attend several receptions in the cities of New Jersey, such as Passaic, Paterson, and Jersey City. On August 28, one year and three days after he stepped off the Majestic, a large farewell banquet was held for Rav Meir at Cooper Union in Manhattan.

Rav Meir departed for Europe on the liner Berengaria on August 31, having penned a public letter earlier that same day in support of… Mesivta Torah Vodaath. For Rav Meir Shapiro, in the fight of his life to build Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, all yeshivos were sacred and deserved to be supported generously.



The black and white colours also alluded to the saying of the Sages that the original Torah existed as black fire imposed over white fire. The Izhbitz-Radzyner Rebbe, Rav Yaakov Leiner (1828-1878) writes in his sefer Beis Yaakov, that while fire symbolizes light, sometimes its brightness requires moderation for comprehension. Just as we use a pinhole to view an eclipse, our bodies serve as vessels to limit the soul's intensity.

The concept of black fire is a necessary filter for the white light, making the Torah's teachings more accessible. Additionally, fire symbolizes the removal of physical constraints. Thus, the black fire on white fire in the Torah illustrates its multi-layered meanings: some aspects may be beyond human understanding, while others provide guidance and purpose in our lives.

Chapter V: The Dream Comes to Life - Journey to the Land of the Yeshivos

As his dreams for the yeshivah came closer to fruition, Rav Meir faced a pressing dilemma: Which *derech halimud* (approach to learning) should the yeshivah adopt? The luminaries of Lublin's past — the Maharam of Lublin, the Maharsha, and the Maharshal — each had their distinct methodologies.

Rabbi Yehoshua Baumol expounds upon this quandary:

Open, then, just about any large, thick volume of Talmud in a standard edition, and in the back sections you are quite certain to find all three on a single page: on the upper part, Maharsha; and below, side by side, Maharam and Maharshal — three commentaries from Lublin with three ways of study:

Maharsha — a quiet thoughtfulness and a clear, penetrating understanding in depth (the approach is apparent in virtually every line); Maharshal — to derive the essence of the halachah, the normative, definitive law, that can be found in the Talmud text (this approach emerges more emphatically in his Yam shel Shlomo); and finally, Maharam — a simple insistence on the plain, basic meaning of Talmud text.

Thus Rav Meir could find three "chachmei Lublin," three great scholars of the city's illustrious past, with three distinct ways of Talmud study. And so the question remained: What method should be adopted for the new, modern Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin?

Unable to decide on his own, Rav Meir decided to take a trip to the "land of the yeshivos," which following World War I was now Polish Lithuania, to personally observe the Litvish approach to learning. (At that time, Poland and the independent nation of Lithuania whose capital was Kovno did not have diplomatic relations, so he could not travel to the region where Telz, Slabodka, Ponevezh, and other prominent yeshivos were located.)

His first stop was in Radin where he consulted with the elderly Chofetz Chaim, the acknowledged *gadol hador* and someone who had been instrumental in heartily endorsing his *daf yomi* concept. (Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, one of the great students of Chachmei Lublin (1918–2001), related that the Chofetz Chaim instructed Rav Meir to arrive late to the keynote session, and upon his arrival the Chofetz Chaim stood up and gave Rav Meir a prestigious welcome, thus ensuring the young rabbi would receive the respect of the audience.)

The Chofetz Chaim held Rav Meir Shapiro in immense respect, largely due to Rav Meir's revolutionary initiative of *daf yomi*, which ushered in a renaissance in the study of long-neglected "orphaned" *masechtos*. Traditionally, many Jews had focused their studies on just a few select *masechtos*, often sidelining others. *Daf yomi* shifted this paradigm, democratizing the entirety of Shas. Previously, engaging with all of Shas was a privilege held mainly by distinguished scholars. With the introduction of *daf yomi*, even ordinary Jews were presented with the opportunity to delve into every single *masechta*.

Recognizing the magnitude of Rav Meir's accomplishment, the Chofetz Chaim drew a symbolic parallel between the mitzvah of *pidyon shevuyim* (ransoming captives) and the rescue from obscurity of these "imprisoned" *masechtos*, especially those of seder *Kodshim* (for which the Chofetz Chaim had a special affinity). At this historic meeting in Radin, the Chofetz Chaim prophetically remarked that the study of *Kodshim* (both through *daf yomi* and as it was popularly studied in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin) would play a role in expediting the arrival of the redemption.

Rav Meir Shapiro also visited the great Torah citadel of Mir, where he drew encouragement from Rav Yerucham Levovitz (1875–1936), who spent hours discussing each and every detail of the planned yeshivah. During davening, Rav Meir grew curious when he noticed that the Mirrer Yeshivah students did not appear to be wearing tzitzis. (They were in fact tucked in, a style that seemed foreign to

the visiting chassidish scholar.) When Rav Meir questioned one of them regarding the oddity, the bochur answered in jest based on the mishnah in *Taanis 26*, "In order not to shame those who are lacking them." A short time later, a package arrived at the Mirrer Yeshivah filled with tzitzis. It was addressed to "the students who don't have them," courtesy of Rav Meir Shapiro.

(When word of its arrival reached Rav Yerucham, he admonished the students, explaining another mussar principle: that one may joke with someone who will understand the witticism, but not with someone who will take it seriously.)

Rav Meir also visited Baranovitch, where he was so impressed with Rav Elchonon Wasserman (1874–1941) that he asked if the famed rosh yeshivah would consider joining the faculty in Lublin. Rav Elchonon pointed to his students and asked, "But what would I do with my children?"



In the prized library of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin (R-L): Rav Pinchas Hirschprung, Rav Binyamin Yitzchok Vernick, yeshiva librarian (and editor of the journal Kerem Beis Shmuel) Rav Yisrael Yitzchak Weinacht, and Rav Yaakov Moskowitz

Chassidus Is Essential

In general, Rav Meir brought back a favorable impression of the yeshivahs in Lithuania, with their strong discipline, persistence, assiduous study, and an essential inner love for *Torah lishmah*.

Yet at the same time, he came to realize a tremendous distinction between the outlooks of the chassidim and their counterparts in Lithuania, something Rabbi Baumol recalled him asserting with a parable, another testament to Rav Meir's legendary wit:

A chassid and a misnagid were studying Gemara Sukkah together. They came to the daf (28a) that speaks of the greatness of Rav Yonasan ben Uziel. The Gemara recounts that when a bird flew over him while he was studying, it was immediately consumed by fire.

The chassid immediately exclaimed: "Can you imagine the extraordinary level of holiness that Yonasan ben Uziel attained? I wonder how one can reach such lofty spiritual heights!"

The misnagid, however, was lost in a totally different train of thought. "Was the Tanna obligated to pay for the bird or not?" he wondered. "Is this considered direct damage, or indirect damage?"

"That," concluded Rav Meir, "is the difference between the thinking of a chassid and a *misnagid*."

(Rav Lipa Geldwerth, rav of Khal Kol Torah in Flatbush related to me that he once heard from Rav Avraham Shkop that he repeated this anecdote to his grandfather, the Grodno rosh yeshivah, Rav Shimon Shkop, who immediately replied, "*Takke, min daf klerrin!*")

Chassidus itself, Rav Meir decided, was to be an integral feature of the students' *chinuch*. What the Mussar Movement founded by Rav Yisroel Salanter accomplished in the Lithuanian yeshivos, *chassidus* would achieve in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. Beyond studying Gemara and halachah, *chassidus* was necessary for *avodas Hashem*, the refinement of *middos*, uplift of

the *neshamah*, enthusiastic tefillah, and the joyous celebration of every Shabbos and Yom Tov.

(In fact, the yeshivah would later become a haven for Breslover chassidim at one point. When the border dividing Poland and the Soviet Union became impenetrable in the aftermath of World War I, Breslover chassidim in Poland sought an alternative locale to spend Rosh Hashanah since they could not reach Uman.

At first, gatherings were held in all major Polish cities, like Warsaw, Lublin and Lodz. Around 1928, however, the decision was made to consolidate all the various groups into one, and on Rosh Hashanah of that year, Breslover chassidim in Poland traveled en masse to Lublin, marking the Yom Hadin in a large building (used as a cigarette factory) that the community offered them.

This scene repeated itself the next year as well, but in 1930, the Breslov community asked Rav Meir Shapiro whether they might use the newly opened Chachmei Lublin campus (since the student body comprised of primarily chassidic young men, it tended to empty out on Yamim Noraim, as the different groups flocked to the courts of their respective rebbes).

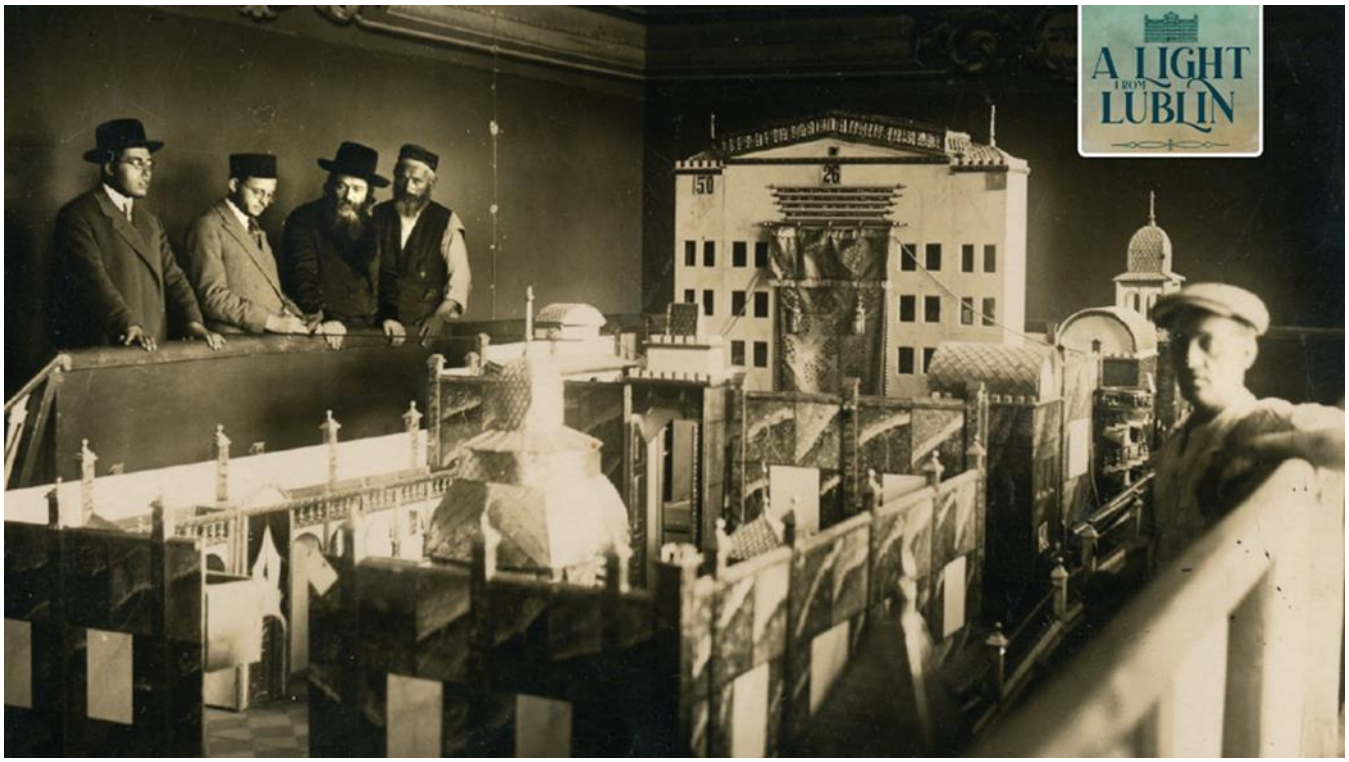
Rav Meir not only acquiesced; he actively participated, serving as the *baal tokeia* and davening Maariv from the *amud*. The visitors were offered a tour of the library, which featured an impressive model of the Beis Hamikdash along with its seforim collection.

Breslover chassidim continued using Chachmei Lublin in lieu of Uman, with the exception of one year, right up until the Holocaust. The one year that they did not utilize the main beis medrash was the last Rosh Hashanah of Rav Meir's life, when he implored his *talmidim* to stay in yeshivah for the Yamim Noraim.

The Breslover chassidim had to use the downstairs area. However, at various points during davening, they came up and joined the main minyan with dancing.)

The Gates Open

After more than five years of trials and tribulation, construction was finally complete; the building of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin stood ready for its students. The building had five floors (a sixth remained unfinished) and over a hundred rooms. There were washing machines and dryers for the students' laundry, a large dining hall 30 meters in length, where meals were served by waiters on china, a heated mikveh, a double kitchen for meat and dairy, an infirmary, *shiur* rooms, a three-story beis medrash, a vast library, luxurious dormitory rooms, and more.



In line with the emphasis on learning *Kodshim*, there was a room that contained a model of the (second) Beis Hamikdash built by the artisan Chanoch Weintraub. And there was also a large garden where students could stroll and relax while remaining inside the safe environs of the yeshivah.

Upon entering the yeshivah, each student was issued a number that identified his place in the dining room and seat in the beis medrash. This number was sewn into all his clothes. If his things needed cleaning, he deposited them into the laundry basket in his room and

the next morning would find his laundered clothes in the box bearing his number.

At the front of the building, a sign in gold letters spelled out the verse, **לְכוּ־בָנִים שִׁמְעוּ־לִי יִרְאַת ה' אֲלַמֶּדְכֶם** - "***Come, children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of Hashem***" (Tehillim 34:12).

Before the yeshivah opened, the Tchortkover Rebbe told Rav Meir, "Perhaps you should open the yeshivah quietly, so that it will not be affected by *ayin hara*, for we find that the first Luchos, which were given at Har Sinai before all of the Jewish nation and with the knowledge of the entire world, were broken."

Rav Meir asked permission from his Rebbe to respond, and when this request was granted, he answered as follows:

Didn't Hashem know that giving the Luchos publicly would prove harmful and that they would ultimately be broken? Why then did He give them with such fanfare?

In those days, before the giving of the Torah, the world was filled with ignorance and idolatry. Had Hashem given the Torah in silence, how would people have known that He controls the world? How would they have heard the voice stating, "I am Hashem your G-d"?

Hashem, as it were, said, "Even if the Luchos will be broken later, let everyone hear that Hashem gave the Torah to His nation."

So, too, at this time, a great public ceremony marking the opening of the yeshivah will cause a stir in the world, and will thereby bring about a kiddush Hashem and will raise aloft the banner of Torah.

The Rebbe greatly appreciated Rav Meir's reasoning and granted his approval to the festive opening. Again, tens of thousands of people streamed to Lublin from near and far to see the glory and radiance of Torah.

Rav Meir commenced his address with the words of David Hamelech: "In my trouble I prepared a House for Hashem" (Divrei Hayamim I 22:14), and ended with a fervent prayer: "He Who created the world

and all within it, may He complete (*hashleim*) this building." He homiletically used the word "*hashleim*" in the sense of payment, saying that he hoped that the yeshivah would be able to pay all its debts.

The Gerrer Rebbe shared a blessing that the building become great, a place where Torah and *yiras Shamayim* would be taught together, and those who studied within it would succeed. The Tchortkover Rebbe proclaimed that the true construction of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin — that of its spirit — was just beginning, and the holy Torah was celebrating its entry into this new house. The Rebbe was honored with affixing the mezuzah on the yeshivah gate.

It is said that Rav Meir gave the youngest of the students the golden key to open the yeshivah and said in a loud voice, "Just as the gates of the yeshivah below have been opened, so You, Hashem, open above the gates of salvation and consolation for Israel." All answered, "Amen, Amen!"

The next day, 29 Sivan, Rav Meir delivered the first *shiur* in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. All the students came, as well as hundreds of invited guests and Jews from Lublin and the surrounding area. Rav Meir arose with a mixture of joy and awe, and in a trembling voice pronounced the prayer of the Tanna, Nechunya ben HaKanah: "That I should not err in a matter of halachah, and that my friends should delight in me… and save me from any obstacle or error, both in teaching and in learning Torah… Open my eyes so that I may see the wonders of Your Torah."

A new era had begun for Poland's yeshivah students.

(Rav Meir was also appointed as Rav of Lublin, but that did not happen until a year later, as he awaited the endorsement of the previous rabbi, Rav Eliyahu Kletzkin (1852-1932), who had departed for the land of Israel several years earlier, as well as approval from municipal authorities.)

Give Me Your Seforim

Ever the ambitious visionary, Rav Meir was not satisfied with a grand building. He also saw the need for a comprehensive "Central Torah Library of Lublin." He reached out to the global Jewish community, urging contributions to create an expansive collection encompassing every important work of Torah, from ancient to contemporary.

As modernity's influence grew, many Jews distanced themselves from Orthodoxy and stopped learning the holy seforim, leading to neglected collections of Jewish texts. Rav Meir aimed to prevent the disrespectful disposal of texts containing the written name of G-d and to uphold Orthodox pride. He encouraged people to donate their collections to Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin and even sent representatives to gather books.

The response was inspiring. Jews, even those with limited means, came forward with sacred books. Rav Binyamin Guth of the Chasam Sofer Shul in New York donated as many as 4,000 volumes and $1,000 to the library. Special committees established throughout Poland sent thousands of books to Lublin, including priceless old prints and manuscripts, which they collected from institutions and private donors.

When the yeshivah opened in 1930, the library already included several thousand volumes and was constantly growing. It had become one of Poland's largest and most valuable Jewish religious libraries at that time, eventually reaching some 60,000 volumes in 1938.

Yet Rav Meir's ambitions went further. Recognizing that many students had access to only basic texts, he drew inspiration from the *Shitah Mekubetzes,* a collection of Talmudic commentaries by the 16th-century gaon, Rav Betzalel Ashkenazi. Rav Meir proposed a groundbreaking initiative: young scholars at his yeshivah would use the yeshivah's vast library to create a series of new, profound commentaries on all the tractates they studied. This project would

gather novel insights and interpretations from the vast rabbinic literature.

Furthermore, Rav Meir envisaged a synergy between spirituality and practicality. In collaboration with donors, he hoped that these new insights would be published as affordable volumes, democratizing access to deeper Torah knowledge. According to his plans (which unfortunately were not realized) this endeavor would not only stimulate renewed enthusiasm for learning, but also provide sustenance for the scholars and students, marrying spiritual growth with material support.

Countless legends surround the fate of the grand library of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin following the building's seizure by the Nazis in 1939. The theory that the collection was burned by the Nazis has never been verified by any legitimate source. While various seforim have turned up in different libraries and private collections throughout the world, the vast majority of its holding have never been found.



Rav Meir with members of the Baumol Family (L-R): the author Rav Yehoshua (1913-1942), Rav Yosef Mordechai (1911-2006), their father Rav Yoel Moshe (1886-1937), Rav Meir Shapiro, and Rav Naftali Hertz (1890-1975), the brother of Rav Yoel Moshe

Chapter VI: The Glory Days - Elite Strategy

Soon enough young men in the hundreds flocked to the new yeshivah from all over Poland. A core group arrived from Rav Meir's yeshivah in Piotrkow, where he'd served as rav since 1924. Rav Meir knew he would be unable to accept all the others who hoped to attend and so he instituted a basic condition: before a student could be accepted, he must know 200 *dapim* of Gemara by heart. While it's unclear how long this requirement lasted, the first crop of students (approximately 70) to be accepted did apparently meet it.

Rav Meir's selectivity stemmed from his desire to raise the status of yeshivos and the perception of bochurim, by making Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin — or Yachal, as he called it for short — an institution for the most outstanding students. The demanding entrance requirements left no doubt as to the extraordinary qualities of those students who learned at his yeshivah and as a result, public appreciation for both the institution and its students increased.

During one entrance exam, Rav Meir asked prospective student Shmuel Tanchum Rubenstein (1916–1998) whether he had studied the whole *Yoma* by heart. Testing his affirmative response, Rav Meir asked how many times Rav Ada Bar Ahava was mentioned in the mesechta. Rubenstein answered that this name was mentioned four times, and listed them as being on *dapim* 14a, 16b, 44a, and 44b. Rav Meir subsequently asked him if he had learned the seventh *perek*, to which he responded, "No." Later, when Rubenstein looked in the last *perek*, he found that the name appeared again on *daf* 72b.

The yeshivah used a scouting system, similar to that used by professional sports teams today. Using this technique, many Jewish prodigies were discovered. One of the yeshivah's greatest students (and later a member of the *hanhalah*) was Rav Pinchas Hirschprung, originally from Dukla. Gifted with a compassionate heart, brilliant mind, and photographic memory, he became a prime student of Rav Meir, who once attested that Rav Pinchas has mastered all

2,711 *dapim* of Gemara by heart while still a youngster. By the time he was a teenager, he had already written two seforim and was among those who would test the prospective *talmidim* seeking to gain entrance. Rav Moshe Chaim Lau (who inherited Rav Meir's position in Piotrkow), Rav Avraham Dovid Gelbfish (the head of the Chachmei Lublin affiliated *mesivta* in Otwock), and several senior students also assisted with the testing process across Poland.

Rav Hirschprung was regularly sent on scouting missions for the yeshivah and it was on one of these trips that he "discovered" 12-year-old Velvele Cohen in Lodz, who informed him that while he did not know the required 200 *dapim* by heart, he did know the entire *Nedarim* with the *Ran* and the *Rosh*. Seeing such acumen at such a young age was enough for Rav Hirschprung to recommend his acceptance — based on potential alone.

Rav Shmuel Wosner was one of those who did not pass the examination. As he had to wait several hours until the next train departed for his hometown of Vienna, he sat down in the beis medrash and used the time to learn. Observing this, Rav Meir promptly accepted him to the yeshivah.

Avrohom Mordechai Hershberg (1916-1985), later a rav in Chicago and Chief Rabbi of Mexico, was another student who applied. While awaiting the official reply, he worked in the dining room. One of his jobs was to set the table. He knew he had been accepted in the yeshivah when he was informed to start setting another place.

Special exemptions were made for heirs apparent of chassidishe rebbes; they were accepted to the yeshivah even if they were less academically accomplished. Rav Meir explained that since they were going to become rebbes in any case, it would be better for them and their followers if they had a rigorous Torah education. (There are stories of rebbes' children arriving at the yeshivah with two or three attendants, though it's unclear whether the attendants were permitted to stay.)



Seated on left: Rav Moshe Chaim Lau (1892-1942) Middle row L-R: Rav Shabsi Schonfeld, Dr. Levi Nimtzotz, Rav Avraham Lebel (note the yeshivah flag in the background)

Around the Clock in Yachal

At its high point, Yachal housed close to 400 students. A reporter once asked Rav Meir where he expected to find 400 rabbinical posts for all the students in the yeshivah. "Perhaps only two will become rabbis," Rav Meir answered. "But the other 398 will become *balabatim* capable of appreciating a rav!"

(Another version of the story was written in the book *Merry Heart* by Felix Mendelssohn in 1951. He writes that when Rav Meir came to fundraise in the US, he visited the secular German-Jewish philanthropist Felix M. Warburg (1871–1937). "How many students will study in your academy?" asked Warburg.

"About 400, maybe more," replied Rav Meir.

"And how many will be ordained as rabbis?" inquired Mr. Warburg.

"Not more than five or six."

"If that's the case," commented Mr. Warburg, "I see no reason why you should maintain so many students."

"The reason is very simple," Rav Meir explained. "We need learned laymen so that they may intelligently choose rabbis for their congregation.")

As the yeshivah grew, Rav Meir found himself weighed down by the growing administrative responsibilities. In addition to Reb Yosef Koenigsberg (1881-1943), a local businessman who came aboard as executive director (and later took on more duties), he hired Rav Shimon Engel, known as "Rav Shimele Zelechover," to join the yeshivah's leadership. Rav Shimele became a revered *mashgiach ruchani* who inspired and led the students, thanks to his prodigious knowledge and pious behavior.



Rav Meir poses with journalists and students at the yeshivah's opening in 1930

In Yachal, the yeshivah day began at 5:30 a.m. with bells ringing to wake the students. (Some have asserted that the bells were unnecessary because many of the students were already awake and in the beis medrash.) The first *shiur* began at 6:15 a.m.

Study continued until 7:30 a.m., when Rav Meir entered the beis medrash wearing his tallis and tefillin, marking the beginning of Shacharis. Davening took an hour and a half, during which time no

student left his place as a mark of respect and discipline. (One student described the davening of Rav Shimele Zelechover, the mashgiach, as "awe-inspiring, sometimes exceeding four hours.")

An interesting observation was made by Rav Mendel Meir Morgenstern, the Sokolover Rebbe, who was a student at the yeshivah in 1936. He recalls that to ensure bochurim arrived to seder on time, the doors were open for only 15 minutes, after which they were locked. After 15 minutes they were reopened, but only briefly. This sequence continued another few times. Its point was to prevent bochurim from arriving intermittently every two or three minutes. If they were late, they would be (at least) 15 minutes late.

To ensure the students would arise early, the lights were turned off in the beis medrash at 11 p.m. sharp. Only the light in the stairwells stayed on throughout the night. According to a reporter from Riga's *Heint*, that hardly ensured that the light of Torah stopped burning:

The studiousness that burns in the yeshivah still hasn't ended the old "fight" between the students and the yeshivah administration. Usually, the administration wants the students to sleep at night, to rest up, while the students want to learn. The Rav ztz"l ruled that at 11–12 at night, the electricity shall be turned off in the beis medrash. The bochurim don't capitulate however, and they go into the spacious hallways and sing to themselves the sweet Gemara melody. Hearing this, the remaining masmidim throw themselves out of bed, and so turn the wheels of "kinas sofrim."

It is said that the Rav ztz"l one time became very "angry" when this occurred. In the middle of the night, he dressed and came and "shouted" at the bochurim, "Why don't you let me sleep?" The bochurim ran out of the hallway of the Rebbe's residence and found positions in other hallways. This hallway battle still takes place to this day.



Rav Meir giving a shiur in the yeshivah

Daf yomi's role in the daily schedule of the yeshivah is debated among former students and historians. Rabbi Eliezer Katzman writes in his essay *Nitzotzei Ohr HaMeir* that when Rav Meir was setting up Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, he consulted with different Polish Torah leaders regarding the role *daf yomi* should play in the yeshivah's daily schedule. One suggestion was that since *daf yomi* was Rav Meir's "child," it would make the most sense to conduct the yeshivah's learning based on the *daf yomi* learning cycle: a page daily.

He asked one of Warsaw's rabbinic leaders, Rav Avraham Weinberg (1872–1942), for his opinion on this issue, and he was answered with the following parable: "A man entrusts his son to a baker to learn the trade. The baker places him at the front of the shop by the till. The boy may sell a lot of bread, but he will not become a proper baker unless he is placed in the back of the shop. Similarly, just hearing a daily lecture on *daf yomi*, he will only learn the skill of delivering a *shiur* but will never learn how to delve into a *sugya*."

As a result of this advice, Rav Meir did not structure the study schedule based on *daf yomi*. [some students studied the *daf* but

according to Rav Tzvi Meir Lichtig, later a rav in Brooklyn, it was not part of the regular curriculum but rather an optional *shiur*.]

No Separations



Rav Meir would eat his meals with the students, a time he often utilized to learn Shaarei Teshuva or share stories of tzaddikim with them

During Rav Meir Shapiro's lifetime, the students of the yeshivah were not separated into different classes or levels. Everyone attended the same *shiur* — everyone was considered elite. (That changed following Rav Meir's death, when several different levels of classes were implemented.)

An outstanding feature of the yeshivah — arguably the most important — was the fact that it welcomed students from all chassidic affiliations and was not designed to promote or strengthen a particular chassidic court. In the words of Rabbi Slavin:

Rav Meir Shapiro aimed to develop a chassidic identity that was deeper than just allegiance to one's own rebbe, but was viewed as an effort in 'pan-chassidic' solidarity that would have Torah learning at its core. He wished to transcend chassidic sectarianism and to create a place where all chassidim were welcomed and felt at home, based on the centrality of the high-level Torah scholarship.

(Even while maintaining its chassidic roots, the yeshivah was so innovative that it was perceived as too "modern" by some of the fiercely traditionalist elements in Poland and Hungary. The story is told that a student returned home for Pesach, now brushing his teeth daily as was customary in yeshivah; his father, convinced his son had been ensnared by modernity, banished him from the home.)

A reporter from the Warsaw Yiddish daily *Unzer Express* who visited the yeshivah in its later years observed that Rav Meir had succeeded in eradicating the petty partisanship that existed elsewhere:

Even the various chassidim live together here. In the dining room, usually 12 sit per table — six on each side, forming small cliques. In this fashion, a Belzer table is formed, a Tchortkover table is formed, and so on. At the celebrations, however, this neat system became a little mixed up, in order to accommodate the guests and because it was necessary. I observed the unity of the Belzers with the Tchortkovers and others. This gives the yeshivah a style of the academia. However, all of the differences are wiped away when it comes to dancing. Here in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin was where I first saw that a dance is an avodah!

He continues with his impression of the yeshivah:

The yeshivah is satisfied with, for example, a bochur such as Mordechai Yehuda Lubar, of Kutna, who spurred himself to go through seder Kodshim tens of times, clearly a great accomplishment. And a bochur like Velvele Cohen [the same Velvele Cohen that Rav Hirschprung discovered], who knows 500 blatt Gemara by heart — that's also no small thing. And a bochur such as Yossel Ehrlich, the talmid from Vlatzlavk, who learns 20 hours out of every 24, without exaggeration — this is something special in today's day and age.

However, here, you have different types and different approaches to things. It is certainly praiseworthy that the yeshivah

administration doesn't squelch the unique nature of the talmidim; rather it unites them and lets each develop individually.

They don't want to stereotype or dictate — learn a certain way, act a certain way. Therefore, each gifted student is encouraged to remain an individual. In line with this approach, the yeshivah does not overly emphasize studying b'iyun. A student with a natural affinity for bekius is permitted to work on bekius.

More than a Father

Misbehavior was extremely rare in the yeshivah. Chachmei Lublin alumnus Rabbi Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro (because he shared his name with Rav Meir Shapiro, fellow students affectionately nicknamed him "The Yid Hakadosh," an ode to Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Rabinowitz), who was known by that moniker because he carried the same name as his teacher, Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the Chozeh of Lublin), said that the concept of wasting time simply didn't exist among the students of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. He referred to a comment that the Gerrer Rebbe made to Rav Meir: "The yeshivah was not designed to turn bochurim into geonim; rather it was an institution for those who are already geonim."

No tests or "report cards" were needed, but it was clear that Rav Meir and other *hanhalah* members were monitoring the progress of each and every student. The year was divided into two *zemanim,* or semesters. Just because one was admitted for a semester did not guarantee he would be invited back the following semester.

In an interview with Rabbi Slavin, the future Sokolover Rebbe recalled the humiliation of a student was not invited to return. "It was a terrible blow to both the student and his family and these decisions were final. *Gornisht geholfen*, nothing whatsoever could help."

But for those within the yeshivah walls, Rav Meir's affection was abundantly clear. Rav Meir's close disciple, Rav Shmuel Wosner, writes:

One of the signs of his love for, and closeness to, us, the students, could be seen in his custom of eating lunch together with us every Monday and Thursday, in the dining room of the yeshivah. During the meal, he would learn Shaarei Teshuvah of Rabbeinu Yonah with us. So too, it was his custom on Shabbos to eat all three meals with us.

On the same topic, the famed Yiddish journalist Moshe Prager writes:

He was not just a father to his students. All his students, and especially the exceptional ones, were like only sons to him…. The Lubliner Rav was the father of hundreds of only sons… and his wife, the Rebbetzin, who outlived him by only half a year was his helpmate in this regard. A motherly heart for the students beat within her. She would seclude herself in a corner of the yeshivah kitchen and help peel the potatoes for the precious students. She would stay up until midnight in her room, mending clothing and knitting socks for them, though she rarely saw them… If a student became seriously ill, the Rav would remain awake the entire night at his bedside… If a student felt depressed, the Rav immediately sensed it… If there was a simchah in a student's family, oh, how the Rav would rejoice!

I once took part in the funeral of one of the students of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. Yaakov Yitzchak of Tashnastachov, one of its best students. He was the son of poor parents, and their only consolation in life. The Angel of Death came and snatched the crown from their heads. The bereaved parents stood before their son's coffin and the sound of their weeping tore at the heavens.

Suddenly, a shudder seized those present. The Lubliner Rav had come! He had managed to arrive at the funeral at the last moment, after a lengthy and arduous journey. The Rav fell upon the coffin of his beloved student, and it was like a storm — a heart-rending storm of distress and pain.

I do not know what the other people present felt at the time, but I have to confess that I instinctively looked at the bereaved parents.

The father and mother suddenly went silent, standing as if frozen at the coffin. It appeared to me that they were ashamed to show their grief. Here they stood, the father and mother who had given birth to the boy and raised him, and here was the rebbi who had taught him Torah. Yet, his weeping was more intense than theirs had been. The parents were ashamed, and their weeping ceased….



Rav Meir would often take students to meet his rebbe, Rav Yisroel of Tchortkov, where they would receive special attention from the rebbe

Rav Meir's fatherly love for his students earned their own love and esteem in return. Rav Shmuel Wosner remembered that one year, as the 7th of Adar approached, marking Rav Meir's birthday, a student posed a touching query: "What gift would the Rebbe appreciate on his birthday?" Without missing a beat, Rav Meir's shared his wish: for 60 bochurim to apportion the entirety of Shas among themselves, dedicating the day to its intense study and finishing with a *siyum* as a birthday gift.

The hallowed halls of the yeshivah echoed with fervor and zeal as the day dawned. Each bochur was ensconced at his *shtender*, immersed in the sea of Shas. Among the sea of inspired faces, Yosef Boim emerged as a beacon, navigating the vast waters of *Maseches Bava Basra* in its entirety, all 176 pages. Another student took

on *Maseches Nazir*, completing it with all its *mefarshim* (commentators).

By twilight, a monumental feat was achieved: the entirety of Shas had been studied. Rav Wosner, with an unmistakable gleam in his eye, reminisced, "Our hearts swelled with a joy so profound, it defies articulation."

A Humble Mystic Hovers over Yachal

Rav Shimon Engel was born in Zolichov, Poland, in 1877 (he was known as Rav Shimele Zelechover). For reasons unknown, he left home as a child and was raised within the hallowed walls of the Kozhnitzer Rebbe, Rav Zelig Eliezer. After returning to his hometown, Rav Shimele explored the world of business, but destiny soon redirected his path. He became the Rosh Yeshivah of the Sanz Yeshivah. In Kishinev and later led the Tomchei Temimim yeshivah in Warsaw, also spending time at the helm of branch of Keser Torah in Chrzanow as well as the Beis Yisrael yeshivah in Stolin.

When Rav Meir sought another staff member to help lead the yeshivah, he employed an unconventional approach, placing an advertisement in newspapers inviting candidates to present their credentials to join the yeshivah's leadership.

The application Rav Meir received from Rav Shimele was a testament to both his erudition and profound humility. Declaring mastery over both *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, Midrash, Zohar, sifrei Maharal, sifrei *chassidus*, and the Arizal, his credentials were almost surreal. For Rav Meir, it seemed like someone was playing a practical joke, until he showed the résumé to the Tchebiner Rav. Knowing Rav Shimele's depth, the Tchebiner Rav assured that this was merely a glimpse into his capabilities — and he had yet much more to offer!

Subsequently, Rav Shimele began his tenure at Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. Starting with teaching a Gemara *shiur*, he soon became Rav Meir's trusted confidant, taking on the role of *mashgiach ruchani*, guiding the spiritual journeys of the students.

Word of his dedication and fervor spread like wildfire across Poland. Each dawn saw Rav Shimele engrossed in comprehensive studies even before davening. His routine encompassed the weekly parshah, intricate commentaries, several pages of Gemara, and numerous chapters of Mishnah, all before Shacharis, which was a sight unto itself.

Rabbi Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro once shared his recollections of Rav Shimele with renowned author Yisroel Besser: "I slept in a room with him. He didn't do much sleeping since his nights were spent learning Kabbalah. He seemed to inhabit a different world. Reb Shimele saw the world through his mystical perspective.

His Nishmas on Shabbos morning was not of this world — there was so much *shiflus*, humility, in it. It was an ode of praise, but it was offered from the depths of a broken heart."

Rav Shimele's reverence for Rav Meir Shapiro was evident. He frequently extolled Rav Meir, particularly highlighting his unwavering allegiance to the Tchortkover. To Rav Shimele, Rav Shapiro's humility, even in the face of his immense stature, and his deference to his rebbe, exemplified true spiritual magnanimity. At the same time, there were differences between the two giants regarding the yeshivah's *derech halimud* as well as the high standard of living at the yeshivah, which Rav Shimele did not approve of.

Following the passing of Rav Meir, Rav Shimele grappled with educational challenges at Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. His fervent belief in teaching Kabbalah to younger students was met with resistance from the new *hanhalah*. This eventually led him to set roots in Kraków, where he established the *kloiz* of Rabbi Aaron. In Kraków, Rav Shimele penned influential works, most notably *Kochavei Aish*, where he explored the profound depths of the Maharal's teachings in light of Kabbalistic and chassidic thought.

Even the dark shadow of the German occupation could not deter Rav Shimele's indomitable spirit. In the Kraków ghetto, he exemplified

unwavering commitment to the Torah, continuing his teachings against all odds until he was massacred by the Nazis in 1943. Despite the void of his passing, his teachings and influence continue to reverberate through the annals of Jewish history. The stature of Rav Shimele is aptly encapsulated in the words of the Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch: "For several hundred years, there wasn't in the world a mind with a memory like that of Rav Shimele of Zelechov."

Even as the yeshivah struggled financially, Rav Meir made plans to grow. One of his pet projects was building a mechinah (preparatory school) network across Poland. Via these yeshivahs for 13-17 year-olds (which were staffed by alumni), Rav Meir hoped to prime the greatest young minds across Poland for entry into Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin

Chapter VII To the Last Breath - Until the Bitter End



The weight of sustaining Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin grew heavier with each passing year. Rav Meir tirelessly roamed across Poland to garner the funds needed to keep the yeshivah's doors open. The local community, which had promised kehillah funds, was unable to keep its promise as the Polish currency deteriorated further.

At the same time, Rav Meir became more vocal about another dream he'd long harbored: opening a branch of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin in Eretz Yisrael. He even made plans to visit there for Pesach of 1934, with some speculating that he would be scouting out locations to move the yeshivah there in its entirety, either to Jerusalem or to Tzfas, where his ancestor, Rav Yaakov Shimshon of Shepetovka (1720-1801) had resided for a short time following his ascent to the Land of Israel in 1794.

Years earlier, he had discussed the idea of establishing a yeshivah there with the Tchortkover Rebbe. The Tchortkover, like many other Ruzhiner descendants, had a special affinity for the land and also wished to move there. Following World War I, which had seen him flee to Vienna, his chassidim begged him to return back to Tchortkov, but he refused, citing the fact that Vienna was just a stop en route to the Holy Land and he could not turn back. However, when Rav Meir asked him about establishing his yeshivah there initially, he told him that in *galus*, the "*daled amos shel Torah*" contain the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. Thus, Rav Meir focused on building the yeshivah in Poland. Hillel Seidman writes of another explanation that Rav Meir had conveyed to a close confidant:

"There is no completeness and no certainty in what we build in the Diaspora. I didn't start building in the land of Israel because I didn't properly assess the mood of the Jewish nation. People are more likely to contribute to a yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael. Now I have gained experience and I hope to establish a yeshivah in Jerusalem whose buildings will outshine the buildings of 'the university' (Rav Meir was clearly bothered by the fact that the campus of Hebrew University in Jerusalem was grander than any of the yeshivahs in the land of Israel)."

But it took a mighty and continuous effort to keep procuring the necessary funding. To the world outside, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin appeared to be thriving. Rav Meir was intent on hiding the yeshivah's financial struggles, fearing that even a whisper of his distress might

disrupt the serene atmosphere that was so conducive to the students' learning. However, when the local council cut off the yeshivah's water supply, the secret was no longer.

Rav Meir lamented in a poignant letter from that period, "I am at a loss for words. We are ensnared in a quagmire of challenges; the predicament is dire. Our yeshivah is on the brink, teetering between continuation and closure, with no respite. Our heart yearns to welcome more students, but reality ties our hands. Our foremost hope is to provide for those seeking Torah within our walls."

At that time, Prudential, the American insurance conglomerate, expanded its operations into Poland. Eager to ingratiate themselves with the local populace, they reached out to prominent figures, offering them life insurance policies. In a shrewd move to win Rav Meir's patronage, they presented an enticing proposition: in return for him securing a life insurance policy with them, they would extend a loan to clear all the yeshivah's debts. Seeing the lifeline it offered to the institution he cherished, Rav Meir assented.

There were moments, steeped in desolation, when Rav Meir mused, "It seems the yeshivah's salvation hinges on my very demise." This somber sentiment would, tragically, echo with prophetic resonance. When pressed on how he intended to settle the substantial loan, Rav Meir's response was chilling. Drawing from the mystical depths of the Zohar HaKadosh, he intoned, "Some discharge their debts with coins, while others do so with their very essence."

Yet even the Prudential loan was insufficient to keep the yeshivah going long-term. When the yeshivah closed for the annual Pesach holidays on Rosh Chodesh Nissan of 1933, it was unable to reopen for another three months due to a lack of funds. Rav Meir and his wife Malka had donated every dollar they had (including a $30,000 inheritance) to build the yeshivah so they had little left even for their own basic needs.

When the Chofetz Chaim was *niftar* in Elul of 1933, Rav Meir did not attend the *levayah* because he lacked the funds to travel to Radin. Instead, he gathered the entire yeshivah and delivered a masterful *hesped*. Rav Meir drew analogies between the Chofetz Chaim and the role of the Kohein Gadol as described in Chazal (as well as drawing a comparison to the personality of the Chasam Sofer). He also recounted for the audience a moving conversation he witnessed between the Chofetz Chaim and Polish Prime Minister Kazimierz Władysław Bartel (1882–1941). Rav Meir concluded the event by insisting that the entire assembly join him for ten minutes of *aveilus* by sitting on the ground.

The new year did not bring better news, and the hard times continued for the yeshivah. A student related that when the rebbetzin discovered that there were no funds for a succah large enough to host several hundred *talmidim*, she sold her diamond ring. Their destitution reached the point that the rebbetzin would have to receive her meals from the yeshivah kitchen.



Photo from Rav Meir's levayah

Taking Leave

Salvation, though, came from an unanticipated source. The burgeoning industrial city of Lodz approached Rav Meir and offered him a post as rav. In exchange, it offered to fund the yeshivah to the point where Rav Meir could cease fundraising activities. As rav of Lodz, he would still spend one week a month in Lublin, returning to Lodz for the other three.

Ultimately, Rav Meir accepted the position because it would allow him to save the yeshivah from financial ruin. His conditions were that the Lodz kehillah underwrite the yeshivah's deficit, and he be allowed to split his time equally between Lodz and Lublin. The Lodz community agreed to donate 50,000 zloty to be paid in monthly installments of 5,000 to 8,000 zloty and that he could spend two weeks of every month in Lublin, with the remaining time being spent in Lodz.

On Monday, 3 Cheshvan of 1933, a messenger arrived from Lodz to deliver the official Ksav Harabbanus to Rav Meir. But Rav Meir was ill, likely with diphtheria; he received the document while propped up in bed. That exchange ultimately became a portent of tragedy.



On Tuesday morning he was transferred to the hospital down the street from the yeshivah. As the week went on, Rav Meir's illness grew worse. On Thursday, he asked the students attending to him for a change of clothing and a fresh *tallis katan*. His wife, who wore the burden of his years of suffering on her face, noticed a change in his countenance, and began weeping emotionally. Rav Meir did his best to calm her, as he wrote the message, "Now the true simchah begins." What followed was an otherworldly scene of leave-taking against a backdrop of elevated song.

Rabbi Yehoshua Baumol described the tragic scene:

In a broken, barely legible scrawl he wrote, "*Trinkt alleh l'chayim* — All of you, drink l'chayim!" Some liquor was poured out into tiny glasses, and all who were there drank and wished him l'chayim, "to life!" Then he shook hands with them all, one by one, holding each one's hand in his for a long time.

And now he gave his [next] instruction: "*Macht rikkud'l* — dance — to the words, *becha batchu avoseinu* —In You our fathers trusted; they trusted, and You rescued them" (Tehillim 22:5).

His wishes were obeyed: they joined hands and lifted their feet in rhythm as they sang the holy words to the melody they knew so well — the melody (was one of the many) that he himself had composed.

How many times had they sung it in the past, when the lovely, inspired niggun could bring its cheer to their hearts. Now they glanced at him as they danced by, joined in their circle, and they saw how dim his eyes were, the light gone out of them; how sallow his complexion; how the tears kept falling and falling without stop….

And yet they had to dance. The Rav had ordered them…. Where are the words to describe the infinite tragedy in that scene?… the rhythmic motions of life and… death… the last chassidic dance that he would see on this earth?

It was clear that the end was approaching. Into the great shul, the Hall of Prayer, the young scholars came streaming now to say Tehillim, to invoke Heaven's mercy for him. In the corridors the voice of a *talmid* could be heard rousing everyone with two simple words that he chanted over and over to a soft haunting melody: "*Rachamim gedolim*: much compassion, much compassion!"

The *talmidim* were woken. The sounds in the air hurtled them from their beds and sent them rushing through the corridors, unable yet to realize just how terribly fateful the present moments were.

And in the great shul there was only stormy agitation: a heartrending tempest of attempts to tear through the Heavens and bring down pure Divine mercy. Here and there young people were beating their heads against the wall. There were outcries of "*oy na lanu ki chatanu* — woe to us that we have sinned! (Eichah 5:16). It's all, all on account of our sins!"

One individual after another began crying out a donation of years, to be deducted from his allotted lifespan and given to the Rav, so that he could go on living. "I give five years," one voice called out; "I give ten," exclaimed another, and so on. And a short while later, one mighty declaration sounded and echoed from the beis medrash: "We give away all our remaining years to the Rav!"

A sense of terrible destruction and devastation saturated the air. And the frightful wailing and lamentation reached his ears…. Clearly and distinctly, he pronounced two words: "*Nohr b'simchah* — only with joy." Then he snapped his fingers — and expired.

Chapter VIII: The Yeshivah Carries On - An Orphaned Era

As the product of the vision and initiative of Rav Meir Shapiro, the great edifice and institution of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin is intertwined with the biography of its illustrious founder. But although his shadow loomed over the entirety of the yeshivah's short history, he presided over it for less than three years. The yeshivah lasted only nine years, but two-thirds of that time was after the

untimely passing of its founder. What was Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin like in the years following his passing? Which Torah personalities stood at its helm? How did it maintain the legacy of Rav Meir Shapiro and continue to grow in his absence?



In 1958, thanks to the efforts of his brother Reb Avraham, Rav Meir's remains were transferred to Har Hamenuchos, where an ohel was erected above his grave. When Reb Avraham was niftar in 1972, he was buried alongside him in the ohel

Rav Meir Shapiro passed away early Friday morning, 7 Cheshvan, 1933, the 93rd daf in Daf HaYomi's second cycle learning Masechta Kesubos. It was decided to postpone the *levayah* until Sunday to allow the throngs who wished to participate to arrive in time. During that interval, an emergency meeting was held in Lublin to ensure the yeshivah's financial future.

Participants in this emergency ad hoc assembly included rabbinic personalities, communal activists from across Poland, students and alumni of the yeshivah. The president of the Warsaw Jewish community and Agudah leader Eliyahu Mazur led the assembly. He later served as president of the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin administrative council.

He called upon the assembled to support the yeshivah during this challenging time. "We must safeguard this yeshivah, to make sure it does not crumble, Heaven forbid; to make sure this hallowed building never falls into non-Jewish hands. Dear brethren, by freeing the yeshivah from its burden of debts and ongoing expenses, let us try to atone and find forgiveness for the enormous crime we committed against the Rav and his sacred yeshivah [by not supporting it sufficiently until now]."

At the *levayah* itself, following the stirring *hesped* of Rav Menachem Ziemba (1883–1943), a representative of the student body chosen as their spokesman took an oath in front of the coffin. "Brothers, companions, let us cling together closer, and standing now before the sacred bier of our holy Rebbe, let us take a fervent oath that we will never abandon and reject the walls of this yeshivah. And you, holy Rebbe: do not forget us and lose sight of your loyal, devoted pupils. Remain our eternal head of the yeshivah, ever our guiding leader. Infuse into us the influence of your holy spirit."



In the months that followed, an emergency campaign was undertaken by alumni and students of the yeshivah. They traversed Poland in what they referred to as the "*kofer nefesh*" campaign, encouraging the rank and file of an impoverished Polish Jewry to participate in

preserving the legacy of the beloved Rav Meir Shapiro by saving his yeshivah from financial ruin. This campaign, coupled with the life insurance payout, staved off enough of the debt so that a more sustainable long-term solution for the yeshivah to maintain solvency could now be developed.

Rav Meir Shapiro had once expressed his wish that the alumni maintain their relationship with the yeshivah. Shortly after his passing an alumni association was established. Rav Meir Shapiro had referred to the yeshivah by its acronym Yachal, and the alumni association named itself Achai — Agudas Chanichei Yachal.

The essential purpose of this new body was to form a strong organized force out of his students to live by his teachings and his guidance. By linking firmly together, they could seek and find ways to realize, through the yeshivah, his timeless ideals. Through Achai, the alumni could also be ready to assist the yeshivah as needed and gather material support. The number of students grew to about 300.



The second Siyum Hashas at Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin in 1938 (L-R): Rav Menachem Ziemba (standing); the Rebbe Rav Dovid of Sochotchov; Rebbe Moshenyu of Boyan; the Rebbe Rav Avraham Yaakov of Boyan-Ivov; the Sadigura Rebbe; Rav Meir Mauser; the Modzitzer Rebbe. The Tchebiner Rav is seated behind (partially blocked)

Now the administration looked forward to an improved situation. The yeshivah's burden of debt was eased considerably. Payments at the national bank were made on a regular basis.

At the start of the summer of 1936, the yeshivah was even able to begin construction work on the interior of the building's sixth floor, which had been left untouched all the years for lack of funds. On completion, it would enable the yeshivah to accommodate still more students. And in fact, the yeshivah was flooded with hundreds of applications.

Hiding in Plain Sight

It had hundreds of students, it has a magnificent building, it had devoted supporters — but Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin had no rosh yeshivah.

The Achai alumni association appointed a "*shilton haruchani*," a spiritual governing board to oversee the educational and rabbinical elements of the yeshivah's continued functioning and excellence. Among them were some of the greatest rabbinical leaders from across Poland, including Rav Shlomo Eiger, Rav Menachem Ziemba, the Tchebiner Rav, and Rav Avraham Weinberg of Warsaw. It was headed by the Boyaner Rebbe of Krakow, Rav Moshenyu Friedman, who took personal responsibility for the yeshivah's spiritual leadership.

The *shilton haruchani* undertook the task of seeking out a successor as rosh yeshivah. For a full year following the Lubliner Rav's passing, candidates were considered for the position of rosh yeshivah. The *Lubliner Tagblatt* provided coverage of the situation.

Rav Shlomo Eiger, who had been close to Rav Meir and vigorously supported the yeshivah, was first to be considered. Rav Shlomo was a bibliophile and possessed one of the most extensive seforim collections in all of Poland. As the most prominent local rebbe in Lublin, students from Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin would frequent his menorah lighting on Chanukah, where he would share Torah remarks.

But he turned down the day-to-day responsibility of running the yeshivah and received more of an honorific role as president.

Offers were made to Rav Yosef Rozin, the Rogatchover Gaon (whom Rav Meir had pursued since the inception of the yeshivah), the Tchebiner Rav (1881–1965), and Rav Menachem Ziemba. Rav Dovid Moshe Rabinowitz, son-in-law of the Radomsker Rebbe and the rosh yeshivah of the Kesser Torah network, was another candidate.

Candidates were brought in from as far away (both literally and ideologically) as Lithuania, including Rav Dovid Povarsky (1902–1999) and Rav Yosef Begun (1901–1942), who delivered *shiurim* for a week at Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin before returning home.

From Vilna, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky (1863-1940) recommended a budding *maggid shiur* in Kletzk named Rav Elazar Menachem Shach (1899–2001) for the position. Upon receiving the offer, Rav Shach journeyed to Lublin, where he delivered a *shiur* on the subject of *mechubar b'get*, concerning the laws of divorce. Soon afterward he traveled to Vilna to consult with Rav Chaim Ozer on the visit and hear his thoughts about him taking on the new position. After questioning him for some time, Rav Chaim Ozer advised him to turn down the offer.

Rav Chaim Ozer's answer pained Rav Shach, who could hardly feed his family. Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, unlike the yeshivos of Lithuania, was known as a wealthy yeshivah, and Rav Shach felt he was turning down potential "riches." Rav Chaim Ozer instructed him not to worry, telling him "*sof hakavod lavo*, it will turn out for the best." Of course, his prophecy would prove correct.

The writer Dovid (Weisbrod) Halachmi (1912–2007), a prominent student since the yeshivah's inception, writes about the visit of Rav Yosef Zusmanowitz (1895–1941), a son-in-law of Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein (known as "the Yerushalmi" for having grown up in Yerushalayim), who came to Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin for a trial period and gave enthusiastic lectures. Naturally, his innovations

were in the Lithuanian style — logical inquiries and clarifications on the subject matter — and this made a strong impression on the students.

Unlike the other Lithuanian candidates, he arrived dressed in chassidic attire, intending to blend in among the students. Halachmi points out that "indicative of his vast Torah knowledge is the fact that during the few weeks he taught there, he managed to study and know all parts of *Avnei Nezer*, the sefer of the Admor of Sochatchov, with which he'd been previously unfamiliar. However, he did not adapt to the chassidic atmosphere and after a few weeks, he returned to his previous position."

Several other candidates were given chances until finally, the committee concluded that the solution had hiding in plain sight.

A Successor Is Found

Rav Meir Shapiro had a close relationship with Rav Aryeh Tzvi Fromer (1884–1943), known as the Kozhiglover Gaon and author of the sefer *Eretz Tzvi* (published in 1939), and had asked him to join the faculty of the yeshivah early on. The Kozhiglover would regularly make the trip to the yeshivah from Sosnowiec, where he was then serving as rav. Now he was formally appointed rosh yeshivah.

As one of the closest *talmidim* (and, ultimately, successor as rosh yeshivah) of the Avnei Nezer, Rav Aryeh Tzvi had subsequently served as a rabbi and rosh yeshivah in several towns for decades and now emerged as the beloved rosh yeshivah in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. As he stood at its helm for the majority of the yeshivah's nine-year existence, most alumni of Yachal were actually students of the Kozhiglover, with whom they enjoyed a close relationship.

One of his more ambitious communal projects was the addition of the *mishnah yomi* to the *daf yomi* cycle instituted by Rav Meir Shapiro. The idea was to incorporate the Mishnayos that didn't have corresponding *masechtos* of Gemara, as well as to make the daily learning regimen accessible to those who weren't capable of studying

Gemara. The new rosh yeshivah disseminated the idea via the religious Yiddish press, and he himself delivered a *mishnah yomi shiur* in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.

Later on, Rav Aryeh Leib Landau (1895-1943), who served as rav of Kolbiel, was named a rosh yeshivah alongside the Kozhiglover, with a focus on instructing the younger students.

The intermediate level was taught by one of the yeshivah's top students, Rav Moshe Okonovsky, who began teaching a small group during the lifetime of Rav Meir Shapiro as a 20-year-old. Little is known about his past, but it seems that he was recruited by Rav Meir from Yeshivas Toras Chaim in Warsaw, a Lithuanian-style yeshivah founded by Rav Hirsch Glickson, the son-in-law of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. Even though he was a rosh yeshivah by title, he insisted on conducting himself as a student, continuing to live in the dormitory until marriage and eating meals together with the students. He was loved by students and faculty alike.

After Rav Shimele left his position as mashgiach, Rav Dovid Minzberg (1903-1942) from Ostrov took on the role. Despite his new appointment, he remained an extremely humble individual and chose not to wear the conventional rabbinical coat. Additionally, he declined to be addressed by the formal title "Rav," opting instead to be called Reb Dovid, in the manner one would address a fellow chassid.

As the yeshivah continued to grow and develop, the alumni association undertook the burden of the long-term fundraising for the operating costs of the yeshivah in order for it to function within a reasonable budget. Its members also planned and executed a significant milestone in the yeshivah's history. On 27 Sivan 1938, the second *siyum* of the *daf yomi* cycle was celebrated across Poland. The primary venue for the festivities was the yeshivah building, absent its founder and the visionary who conceived of the *daf yomi*. His successor, the Kozhiglover, presided over the event, which included a *hachnassas sefer Torah* in memory of Rav Meir Shapiro.

The event also served as a second *chanukas habayis*, as the sixth floor was finally complete, and now the yeshivah edifice was finally fully built. It also coincided with the eighth anniversary of the yeshivah's opening, and the throngs who gathered in Lublin celebrated the twin pillars of the Torah legacy of Rav Meir Shapiro.



A group of talmidim (above) fled to Vilna and set up the yeshivah in the Koidanover Beis Medrash there. Under the stewardship of Rav Chaim Ozer's Vaad Hayeshivos and the leadership of Rav Menachem Tzvi Eisenstadt (1901-1966) of Krakow, the makeshift yeshivah was run day-to-day by a group of elite students, which included: Rav Pinchas Hirschprung, Rav Avraham Mordechai Hershberg, Rav Avraham Dovid Gelbfish, Rav Mordechai Yehudah Lubart, and Rav Moshe Rotenberg

Even in the Ghetto

Shortly following the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, the great Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin officially closed, and the students scattered. The Kozhiglover escaped to Warsaw, where he was ultimately incarcerated in the Warsaw Ghetto with the rest of Warsaw Jewry. With the encouragement of his rebbe the Chasdei Dovid of Sochatchov (1876–1942) — who was also in the ghetto — he and his close friend Rav Avraham Weinberg set about a seemingly

insurmountable task: establishing a yeshivah in the midst of the ghetto horrors.

Rav Yehoshua Moshe Aharanson and Shmuel Rotshtein both recalled in their memoirs that tens of bochurim studied in a room in 14 Mila Street. As Rotshtein writes poignantly, "Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin continues within the ghetto walls."



Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin under Nazi control in 1940. The vast majority of its students and alumni were murdered in Majdanek, Belzec, and other Nazi killing sites during the Holocaust. This article is dedicated to the memory of these holy kedoshim Hy"d, whose Torah legacy lives on for eternity

The overwhelming majority of the *talmidim*, alumni, and faculty of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin fell victim to the Nazis' Final Solution. These included the Kozhiglover himself, who was caught by the Nazis during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in April 1943, and transported to Majdanek, where he was promptly sent to the gas chambers on 27 Nissan.

There were some important exceptions, however. A contingent of students was able to make it to Vilna in the early months of the war. There, they reestablished the yeshivah under the leadership of senior *talmidim* and the guidance of Rav Chaim Ozer. They eventually

obtained the famous Sugihara visas and spent the war years in Shanghai, China. Though much smaller than its more famous Mirrer Yeshivah counterpart, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin (along with a branch of Tomchei Temimim of Lubavitch) flourished in Shanghai under the guidance of the Amshinover Rebbe, Rav Shimon Shalom Kalish.

In 1942, Rabbi Moshe Rotenberg (who would go on to become the rosh yeshivah of Ger in New York) founded Chachmei Lublin in Detroit. It was that yeshivah's illustrious name that made it the ideal host for the bittersweet third Siyum HaShas, held in 1945. Another namesake yeshivah was established in Bnei Brak by Rav Shmuel Wosner (1913–2015). Rav Wosner served as rav in the Zichron Meir neighborhood, named for his rebbi, and the yeshivah remains there until this very day.

In 1958, Rav Meir's remains were reinterred on Har Hamenuchos in Yerushalayim. Tens of thousands attended this second *levayah*, where *hespedim* were delivered by leading rabbanim and roshei yeshivah, along with several prominent Yachal students who had survived the Holocaust.

A quarter-century after his passing, the twin legacies of Rav Meir — the visionary builder with no flesh-and-blood children — had endured beyond anyone's expectations. His first child, the *daf yomi* program, was experiencing a vibrant resurgence in the postwar era and become a vital and respected cornerstone in so many Jews' Torah learning. His second child, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, was no longer, but its underlying goals had persevered and helped shape the contours and priorities of the postwar yeshivah world.

Rav Mendel Geldwerth, a renowned Vienna-born *talmid chacham*, recounted a vintage *derashah* that Rav Meir once delivered. Rav Meir recalled how during the early stages of his revolutionary project, detractors arose with all sorts of questions with regards to the "necessity" of such a yeshivah, and he addressed them "*kurtz un scharf*" — short and pointedly:

"*Oyf mir iz doh tzu fregen toizend kashes,* when it comes to me, there are a thousand questions one can ask. *Farvos macht mehn a yeshivah gedolah in a groiz shtuht,* why are you departing from tradition and opening a yeshivah in a large, metropolitan center like Lublin, instead of small towns like in the past? *Un vie azoi macht men shlufshtiber anshtat essen teg,* and since when do we have dormitories, and so on.

"*Oyf eich iz nur tzu fregen ein kasha*, but when it comes to you there is just one question to ask: *Farvos tuht ihr gornisht,* why do you all do absolutely nothing?"

Back when he was just a youngster, Meir from Shatz had vowed to effect real change in the perception and status of yeshivah students. He aimed not just to erase the degradation and utter shame heaped on yeshivah students, but rather to elevate an entire generation's respect for Torah and those who studied it. With his vision for Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, he hoped to restore the *lomdei Torah* to their rightful position as our nation's true aristocracy. We are all the beneficiaries of his tireless efforts.

In the introduction to his magnum opus *Ohr Hameir*, Rav Meir outlined his vision for building Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. He begins by citing a Yerushalmi in *Demai* regarding the purification process of the Parah Adumah, in which Rav Yehoshua ben Kavsai cites the transformative understanding he learned from the "Otzar [vault] of Yavneh": one pure individual has the limitless capability to sprinkle the purifying waters on an infinite number of impure individuals.

Rav Meir Shapiro understands this "Otzar of Yavneh" to refer to the famous yeshivah that was spared from the destruction of the Churban by the Roman general Vespasian, thanks to the personal appeal of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. Because of the protection of "*Yavneh v'chachamehah*" that he extracted from the Romans, the yeshivah blossomed into the post-Churban era's epicentre of Torah learning.

From the story of Yavneh, Rav Meir learned that the ratio of *ohr* to *choshech* does not have to be quid pro quo. The small bit of light that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai preserved ultimately overpowered immense darkness. This was Rav Meir's hope for Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin — that it would serve as the Yavneh of his generation, which was marred by so much spiritual darkness.



Rav Meir laid out this vision in an editorial in the *Yiddishe Togblatt*, claiming that the names of their yeshivos shared a similarity, too: Yavneh V'Chachmehah and Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. He even used Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai's legendary wording as he pleaded, "*Tein li Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, v'chachamehah.*"

Rav Meir's perception of his yeshivah as a lighthouse for an entire generation is likely why he felt so strongly that America's Jews should share in the burden of sustaining this vision. In his heart, he believed that he was doing them a tremendous service by garnering their support.

A report in *Der Amerikaner* cites a *derashah* delivered by Rav Meir at Boston's Beis Hamedrash Hagodol on Shabbos Mevarchim Adar Alef of 1927, before Mussaf. Playing on the timeless words just recited by the congregation, he noted that Poland offered "*chayim*

shel ahavas Torah v'yiras Shamayim," whereas America provided "*chayim shel osher v'kavod*." Rav Meir hoped to address this imbalance by enabling America to utilize its financial resources to support its spiritual institutions.

In some ways, Rav Meir Shapiro's efforts are somewhat incongruous: in creating the Daf Yomi program, he was looking out for the layman. But he was simultaneously building an elite yeshivah, designed for the most brilliant and talented young men in Europe.

The common thread running through both of these very different endeavors stretches back to Rav Meir's understanding of Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai's mission. He did not intend for Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin to be a secluded haven whose influence would be limited to the best and brightest. Rav Meir envisioned the yeshivah as a blazing beacon of light amid the spiritual darkness encroaching on Poland, Eastern Europe, and even the greater Jewish world.

It is no coincidence that Daf Yomi and Chachmei Lublin were introduced simultaneously. Rav Meir understood that in order for the Daf Yomi movement to be successful, you almost *needed* a Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. You needed that lighthouse of Torah and *chassidus* to shine forth from the heart of Poland so that the *pashute Yid* would have the capacity to sit down, open up a Gemara, and learn the *daf* at the end of a long, draining workday.

Rav Yehuda Meir Abramowicz (1914–2007), a student at Chachmei Lublin (who would go on to become the chairman of World Agudah and an influential representative of the party in the Knesset), recalled that one night Rav Meir gathered a group of his elite students and instructed them to head out into the local shuls and initiate Daf Yomi *shiurim*. Rav Yehuda Meir was assigned the ancient *kloiz* of the Chozeh of Lublin. "I admit that when I entered the shul for the first time, I was alarmed and frightened," he said. "The study hall was empty and abandoned. Behind the stove crowded a few indigent peddlers, merchants, and tired wagon-drivers who came to the study hall to warm up a bit. And that was it."

But as a faithful *talmid*, he obeyed his rebbi's command. "Slowly, slowly, these simple and downcast Jews were drawn into the *shiur*…. Each night, fifty to sixty men would gather, and they were surprisingly diligent in their learning… the desolate and abandoned study hall was once more filled with the life of Torah. So it was in all the study halls in Lublin, and many other Jewish communities in Poland."

In the essence of Rav Meir Shapiro's lifework lies a profound understanding of the timeless interplay between *ohr* (light) and *choshech* (darkness). Drawing inspiration from Yavneh's storied past, Rav Meir saw beyond the superficial dichotomies of his age, recognizing the indispensable role both Torah scholars and the layman played in the sustenance and proliferation of Torah.

Only a visionary of his calibre could even dream of bridging these gaps through the twin pillars of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin and the Daf Yomi movement. Through Daf Yomi *shiurim* and his very own "Yavneh," Rav Meir was responsible for not just restoring the Torah crown to its past glory in Lublin, but also for rekindling the spirit of Torah learning among the masses, cementing his legacy as a visionary leader who recognized and harnessed the boundless potential of every Jew, transcending both time and place in accomplishing the impossible.

"If someone knows Torah but doesn't have yiras shamayim, it is like a talis kattan without tzitzis attached to it." ~ R' Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch zt'l

"When you think you can conquer the yetzer hara, you will. But when you are afraid that you won't succeed, you probably won't." ~ R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita.

From our Sages

וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־אָחִיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכָשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן – ***'Abram took with him his wife, Sarai . . . and the souls which they had made in Charan.'*** *(12:5)*

Abraham would invite people into his home, give them to eat and to drink, show them love, and bring them close to G-d, convert them and bring them under the wings of the Divine Presence.

This is to teach us that whoever brings a person under the wings of the Divine Presence, it is considered as if he has created him, formed him and developed him. ~ (**Sifri, Va'etchanan**)

וְשַׂמְתִּי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ ***'I will make your progeny like the dust of the earth.'*** *(13:16)*

Just as the dust of the earth is from one end of the world to the other, so too will your children be scattered from one end of the world to the other. Just as the dust of the earth is made fertile only with water, so too the people of Israel are blessed only in the merit of the Torah, which is analogous to water. Just as dust erodes all metal utensils while it itself lasts forever, so is it with Israel: all idolatrous nations disintegrate, while they persist. Just as dust is trodden upon, so too your children are destined to be trodden upon by the nations. ~ (**Midrash Rabbah**)

"Instead of complaining about someone's behaviour towards you, it is more constructive to work on your behaviour towards him. Even if you have to force yourself, act with kindness and love towards all your relatives and acquaintances. Do it consistently and you will see major improvements in other people's behaviour towards you." ~ R' Zelig Pliskin..

When Abraham's guests wished to bless him for his generosity, he would say to them: "Has the food you have eaten been provided by me? You should thank, praise and bless He who spoke the world into being!"

If they refused, Abraham would demand payment for the food they had eaten. "How much do I owe you?" they would ask. "A jug of wine is one *folarin*," Abraham would say; "a pound of meat, one *folarin;* a loaf of bread, one *folarin*."

When the guest would protest these exorbitant prices, Abraham would counter: "Who supplies you with wine in the middle of the desert? Who supplies you with meat in the desert? Who supplies you with bread in the desert?"

When the guest would realize the predicament he was in, he would relent and proclaim: "Blessed be the G-d of the world, from whose providence we have eaten."

(Midrash Rabbah; Tosefot Shantz, Sotah 10a)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● Why did Hashem not command Avrohom to go?

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ (12,1) "***And Hashem said to Avrom: Go forth 'lecha' from your land…***"

The word 'lecha' seems to be superfluous. Rashi paid attention to this and explained that it means "for your benefit and for your good", but to my mind we can explain it according to how Rashi explained the same superfluous word in parshas Shelach Lecha, that it means according to your mind. That is, Hashem was saying to

Moshe: I am not commanding you (to send spies), but if you wish, you may send. Here also, the meaning is that Hashem is saying to Avrohom to forth according to his mind.

The explanation of this is that we hold that reward is not given for mitzvos in this world, but I have already written elsewhere that this refers specifically to someone who does a mitzvah that he has been commanded to do. But someone who voluntarily does a mitzvah does receive reward in this world. Therefore, here also Hashem said to Avrohom that He is not commanding him to go, but rather He is advising him to do so. Because if He commands him it would not be possible to reward him in this world. Therefore, He told him to go according to his will, that is, voluntarily, and then it would be possible for him to receive reward for this.

This is what the posuk means: "lech lecha", go according to your mind, not as an obligation, so that I can reward you for this in this world and "make you a great nation". But if I would command you then I would be able to give you this reward in this world.

And it is possible to say that this was also the intention of Rashi when he explained that it meant "for your benefit and for your good", according to what the Maharsha wrote on the gemora Sotah on that which is written there "R. Simlai taught: Why did Moshe desire to enter Eretz Yisrael?", because only someone who has been commanded in a mitzvah is forbidden to do it in order to receive a reward, but someone who voluntarily performs a mitzvah can do so with the intention that he should receive a reward.

Therefore, here also Hashem said to Avrohom: Go, according to your mind, because I am not commanding you, but if you wish, you may go. And the reason why I am not specifically commanding you, is because I want you to do it voluntarily so that you will be able to intend it to be "for your benefit and for your good", as Rashi explained.

● **What additional message did Hashem impart to Avrohom?**

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ (12,1) "***And Hashem said to Avrom: Go forth 'lecha' from your land…***"

Behold, if a person decides to go to a certain place, even though he has not yet set out, people say about him that he going to such-and-such place, because he has decided to travel there, and is preparing everything he needs for the journey. But this is only if he makes known his plans to travel. However, if he hides his intention and doesn't tell anybody, then he would be called going only from the actual time that he goes, and not before.

Now, it is the way of the world that if an only child, or an extremely important member of a family, wants to uproot his dwelling to go to some far-off place, then his family and relatives will try very hard to prevent him from leaving. So what should a person do when he desires to leave but he is very afraid that he will not be able to withstand the great pressure of his family? He has no choice but to conceal the matter from them and not tell them that he is going.

Here too, Hashem was concerned that Avrohom would be afraid of the pressure from his family and his father's house, and therefore wish for his going to be concealed so that it will not be made known to them. But Hashem wanted to publicise his going for several reasons. One reason is in order that Lot will go with him, and this is according to the opinion in the Midrash that Hashem was angry with Avrohom for separating himself from Lot, from which we see that Hashem wanted that Lot should be with him. Another reason we can say is since this going was a trial for Avrohom in order to increase his reward, if he would go covertly it would not be so much of a trial. But if he publicises it and they pressure him not to go and nevertheless Avrohom does not listen to them and goes, then the trial would be much greater, and he would have more reward.

This is what the posuk says "Go forth from your land" - whilst you are still in your land, from there go forth "to the land which I will

show you", "and from your birth place and from your father's house", whilst you are still there you should ponder your travel plans, in order that you will clearly publicise your going.

With this we can better understand what is written afterwards "and Avrom went as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him…and Avrom took his wife, Sarai and Lot, his brother's son…and they went to go to the land of Canaan". There seems to be unnecessary repetition here - after it already said that "Avrom went" why did it repeat again "and Avrom took…and they went"? But according to what I wrote above it is clear, because the first posuk is saying that Avrohom listened to Hashem, and that even when he was still in his home he 'went' to the land by publicising his going, and this is "and Avrom went as Hashem had spoken to him". And as a consequence of this publicity "Lot went with him", that is, Lot went with him since he was aware of his going. And the later posuk, "Avrom took his wife, Sarai…and they went", refers to their actual going to the land of Canaan.

● **Where do we see that Avrohom did not become arrogant because of all the greatness that Hashem promised him?**

וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו ה' וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט (12,4) "***And Avrohom went as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him***…"

What does the phrase "as Hashem had spoken to him" come to teach us? It should have said simply that Avrohom went, and we would know automatically that he went as Hashem had spoken to him. Also, why did the Torah choose the word "spoken"? Since earlier it wrote "and Hashem said to Avrohom", it should have used the same expression here and write "as Hashem had said to him".

But it seems that the explanation is that I might have thought that since Avrohom had heard everything which Hashem had promised to do for him - "and I will make you a great nation…" perhaps as a result he might become arrogant, G-d forbid. And if he became arrogant,

he might, G-d forbid, come to other sins - as Chazal said, "one sin leads to another sin". But in truth Avrohom did not become arrogant at all, but rather he fulfilled the mitzvos of Hashem as before.

This is what the posuk is saying, that even though Avrohom had heard all the great reward which Hashem was prepared to give him he didn't change his ways, but rather "Avrom went" in the way of the Torah "as Hashem had spoken to him" already, and did not change at all from what he had been. Not only that, but "Lot went with him" - Lot also went in the way of the Torah, and as long as he remained with Avrohom he was righteous.



TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

I met a boy in shul who had just completed his very first day in Yeshiva. I said, "How did your first day go?"

He said, "It was lousy!"

I said, "What happened?"

He said, "The Menahel of the yeshiva walked over to me and said, "This Yarmulka is forbidden in this yeshiva. Go to the dorm, change your yarmulka and come back."

So, I said OK, but what bothered you so much? Did you not know about the dress code?"

He says, "No, but the Menahel didn't even say 'Hi' – it's the first day of yeshiva!"

So, I was speaking to a group of educators, and I would say, "You know, if I was the manager of an office, the first day (and not just the first day, but everyday), what's the first thing that you do in the morning when your employees turn up?

You say, 'good morning, how are you. It's so nice to see you. How's your family? How is life? How's the weather? – Whatever you talk about.'

You're dealing with neshamos that are so fragile. A bochur comes to yeshiva on the first day, give him a hug, greet him warmly. – 'It's so nice to see you.' – Tell them how happy you are to have them be in your presence.

We've become stingy with our words. We've become stingy with our emotions, not realizing that words and gestures and an expression of real friendship, camaraderie and empathy for some people is so vital. – It literally makes the difference between a successful life, or *challilah* the opposite!

Parsha Pearls - Seventy-Four men

It is cited in Masechet Sofrim (Perek 21) that 'the great man among the giants' refers to Avraham Avinu, who ate and drank as much as seventy-four men.

The G'ro connects this with the Pasuk in Mishpatim (24:9) which records how Moshe and Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and the seventy elders ascended Har Sinai, and which ***concludes "and they saw G-d and they ate and drank".***

So, there you have seventy-four men who reached the highest level of understanding of G-d, which the Pasuk describes as 'eating and drinking' (see Targum Unlkus).

What Chazal therefore mean here is that the level of understanding of Avraham (his 'eating and drinking') was equivalent to that of the seventy-four elders on Har Sinai.

The Alter Gerer Rebbe on the other hand, cites the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos, which states that all ten generations from the time of No'ach angered Hashem with their deeds, until Avraham came and received the reward for all them.

The Torah in Parshas No'ach lists seventy-four names that these ten generations incorporate (see Ma'ayanah shel Torah here). And the statement that Avraham ate and drank as much as seventy-four men is merely the Masechet Sofrim's way of saying that he received the reward of all of those men.



Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport

Q. When approaching Egypt, Avrohom asked Sorah to pretend to be his sister so that the Egyptians won't kill him in order to marry her (12:12-13). Of what assistance would this plan have been, as it would have served to spare Avrohom's life, but it would have resulted in the married Sorah engaging in forbidden relations?

A. Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg cites the Rambam (Hilchos Ishus 1:1), who explains that before the Torah was given, divorce did not require a legal procedure, and when a couple separated with the intention of no longer being married, they were legally divorced.

As such, he suggests that in asking Sorah to say that she was his sister, Avrohom was telling her to mentally declare that she was like his sister and was no longer his wife, in which case she would not be engaging in forbidden relations.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky explains that Avrohom was relying on the fact that if any Egyptian wished to marry Sorah, he could insist on such a large amount of gifts that nobody would be able to meet his demands, and there was no practical concern that she would be forced into forbidden relations. He could only do this if the Egyptians viewed him as Sorah's brother, because if they knew that he was her husband, they would realize that the only way to marry Sorah was to kill him.

He adds that Avrohom's mistake was that it did not occur to him that Pharaoh himself, who could meet Avrohom's monetary demands, may be interested her, thereby negating his entire plan. The Mishmeres Ariel cites the Gemora in Nedorim (91b) that teaches that a person's evil inclination has a stronger desire for a married woman, who is forbidden to him, than for a single woman. By claiming to be siblings instead of spouses, Avrohom was hoping that the Egyptians would no longer be as interested in Sorah if they believed that she was unmarried.

Michael Winner <dvartorah@frum.org>



One of the most famous questions out there is thus: We all know that Avraham challenged Nimrod and his belief of the Divine. Nimrod thought that he was "All Mighty," and the world followed him, and Avraham comes around and openly challenges this belief. His reward? He's thrown into a furnace. And to everybody's surprise, he comes out alive.

Fast forward a couple of thousand years, you have Chananyah, Mishoel, and Azaria who were similarly tossed into a furnace because they refused to bow to the idol Nevuchanezer built. And they too were spared.

So, the big question is: Why were they mentioned in the Torah (Daniel 3), while Avraham was not? We only know this story through the Medresh, not the Written Torah!

Good question, no? (That's because I thought of it.)

Finally, I found an answer thanks to the sefer "Yeshuos Malko."

The Gemara (Pesachim 118a) writes regarding the episode with Avraham, that when the angel Gavriel saw what was about to happen, he begged Hashem permission to go down and save Avraham. Hashem replied, "Just as he [Avraham] is alone, it is proper that I, who am also alone, should save him."

Regarding Chananyah, Mishoel, and Azaria, however, their rescue was not done by Hashem, rather by angels.

Says the "Yeshuos Malko," the Torah was given to us for all generations. It is the blueprint of our lives and it is to teach us how to interact with this world. What Chananyah, Mishoel, and Azaria did, they did according to the Torah. When given the choice to bow to an idol or to give up their lives, they followed halacha. They chose death. This is Torah and therefore is mentioned in the Torah.

What Avraham did, on the other hand, was something completely different. He openly challenged and waged a war against idolatry. He wasn't given a choice, bow or die. He actually picked a fight! And THIS is not Torah for the generations. It's not anti-Torah, but it's not what is expected of us, and that's why it's not mentioned in the Torah at all. We have no mitzvah to start up against the world and its forms of idol worship. However, Avraham went above and beyond this and did so anyway. Therefore, he is called "alone" and was deserved to be saved by Hashem who also is alone.

So, this not only answers an "age-old question," but also teaches us a small lesson as well. When we go beyond what is expected of us, even if it goes against the trends of the time, if we have proper and true intentions, perhaps we will be worthy of receiving extra help from Hashem, directly.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Seeing Stars

It says in this week's Parasha...

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ - *"And He said: 'Look now toward heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them'; and He said to him: 'So shall your offspring.'"* (15:5)

QUESTION: In what ways are the Jewish people like stars?

ANSWER 1: From earth, the stars appear very small. However, the stars are actually immense. Hashem assured Avram that although on earth the nations of the world consider the Jewish people "very small" (of minor significance), in reality, up in heaven, they are of primary importance. – **Divrei Shaul**

ANSWER 2: The stars twinkle in the high heavens. By their light, even one who walks in the darkness of night will not blunder. Every Jew, man or woman, possesses enough moral and spiritual light to influence friends and acquaintances and to bring them out of the "darkness" into the "light." – **Hayom Yom, 5 Heshvan**

ANSWER 3: When one stands on the ground and looks up to the sky, the stars appear to be minute specks. In reality the stars are larger than the earth. As we approach them, we can begin to appreciate their size and beauty.

The same is true of a Jew. Superficially, one may appear to be insignificant. However, as one comes closer and gets to know more about him, one can perceive the great and beautiful "Pintele Yid" that is in him. – **Baal Shem Tov**

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

In this Parsha (15:5), Hashem tells Avraham to look at the stars. Hashem informs Avraham, "So too will be your offspring." What does this promise mean that the Jewish people will be like stars?

The Baal Shem Tov says that the Jewish descendants of Avraham are like stars. When one looks at a star from a great distance, the stars appear to be mere tiny specks. However, as we all know, in space these stars are gigantic. So, too, in this world, says the Baal Shem Tov, many people look very small. But every person – no matter how small or insignificant he may look, has huge greatness!

It is vital for us to realize that each and every person that we encounter is a constellation! Every single person is a galaxy! Every person is a universe! When you look at another person, realize that he is like a star. He might seem small to you. He might not appear as having accomplished very much. One must gain an awareness of the great potential of each person. One must view each person as an entire world, an enormous cosmic being! This can give someone the encouragement he needs to live up to his potential greatness.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l and Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l stood outside a car discussing who would sit next to the driver and who would sit in the back seat. Rav Yaakov took the front seat and Rav Moshe sat in the back. After Rav Moshe exited the car, Rav Yaakov explained to the driver, "We were clarifying who would be getting off first. That person, we decided, would sit in the back. If he would sit in the front, the longer-riding passenger would be in the back leaving you alone at the wheel, making you look like a chauffeur. That's not the case. We appreciate your importance, and we didn't want to compromise your dignity! Rav Yaakov and Rav Moshe did this just to make the man feel special! (Rav Zelig Pliskin)

...לך-לך מארצך – *"Go forth from your land..."* (12:1)

There is a tremendous anomaly in the first Pasuk in this week's Parsha. It contains six final Chof letters (ך), almost in succession. - What is the deeper message?

I heard from Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlit"a that the gematria (numerical value) of a Chof is 20. The total value of the six Chof letters is 120. The pasuk is instructing Avram to leave behind all negative influences, and foreign ideologies, and find himself spiritually. - Perhaps the six successive Chof letters are teaching us that a Jew's entire life, all 120 years that we aspire to, is about Lech Lecha, finding ourselves, our strengths, capabilities, talents, and unique abilities that Hashem granted us.

...ואברכה מברכיך – *"I will bless those who bless you, and he who curses you, I will curse...."* (12:3)

When Hashem tells Avraham that He will bless "those who bless you," it refers not only to someone who blesses Avraham himself but also to someone who blesses one of his descendants (Chullin 49).

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l cites this pasuk in a letter he wrote to show that blessing one's friend is a very worthwhile action. When you bless another person, you are offering a few short words, in return for which the Almighty gives you His bountiful blessings. When one greets a fellow Jew with a hearty "Shalom aleichem" or "Good morning," you are blessing him, and as a result, Hashem will bless you.

For this reason, it is fitting to give a blessing for success to one who embarks on a business venture or undertakes a new job. For, in essence, you are not only helping to add to your friend's success; you are, in fact, helping yourself, as well.



◣ Always On The Go - Sefas Emes

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ - "***Hashem said to Avram, 'Go for yourself…'***" (12:1)

This teaches us that one should always be "on the go," constantly striving to reach greater heights.

◣ Credited In Advance - Kli Yakar

וַאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרֲכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר - "***I will bless those who bless you, and he who curses you, I will curse…***" (12:3)

Why doesn't the text read: "I will curse he who curses you" in the same way that it says, "I will bless those who bless you"?

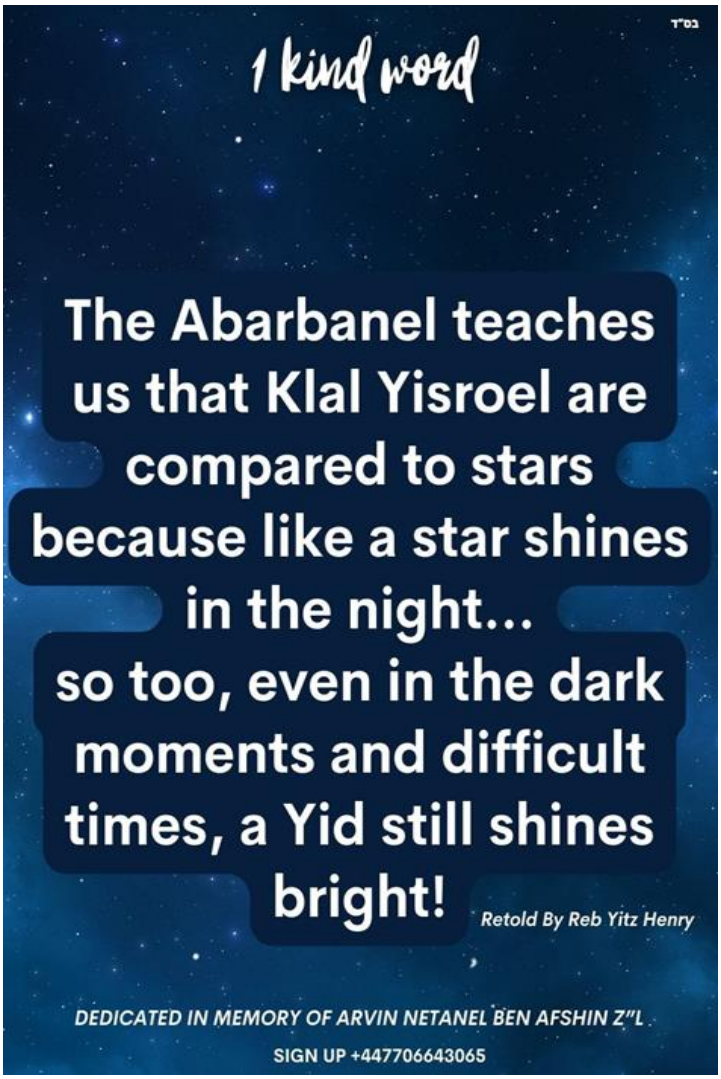
To show that while "G-d regards a good thought as equal to the deed," He "does not regard an evil thought as equal to an evil deed." Those who bless Avraham will be blessed for their good intention even before they demonstrate their friendship, but those who wish to curse him will be cursed only after they have put their evil desire into action, and not before.

"The greatest service you can offer Hashem is to treat His creations with love and compassion." ~ Baal Shem Tov.

◣ Conflict Spreads - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־לוֹט אַל־נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין רֹעַי וּבֵין רֹעֶיךָ כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנָחְנוּ - "*Avram said to Lot: 'Let there be no strife, I pray you, between me and you.*'" (13:8)

The quarrel, Avraham implied, had begun among the herdsmen, but if it were to be allowed to continue it would eventually drive a wedge "between me and you." - This is the way of all quarrels. They begin among the followers but eventually involve the leaders.



◣ Never Impossible - Rabbi Meir Shapiro

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ - "*[G-d told Avraham,] "Gaze, now, toward the Heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them!' And He said to him, 'So shall be your descendants.*'" (15:5)

When Hashem told Avraham to count the stars, he began to count them. If anyone other than Avraham would have been given this task, their immediate response would have been, "That's impossible! There are too many stars to count!" but not Avraham. To this, Hashem responded, "So shall be your children."

The Jewish people are divinely blessed to achieve the impossible. They will never give up.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



Lot Follows Avraham Into Dangerous Territory

In Parshas Lech L'cha we read about the greatness of Lot, the nephew of Avraham Avinu. You'll remember that when Avraham was told by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to forsake his home to go to Eretz Canaan, that Lot was willing to undertake that long journey with him. Now, that was an exceptional thing that Lot did. Lot didn't have to go with him; he could have stayed back in Charan with his family.

You know, what he did was a big sacrifice in ancient times because it entailed very great ordeals. In those days, a man had only family rights, and a stranger in a new land could be misused and abused at will. It was only the extended family, the tribe, that afforded protection. And therefore for Lot to become a ger, a stranger, in a foreign country, when he had his own extended family in Charan, was a great sacrifice. But he made this sacrifice because of his loyalty to his teacher. "Where my rebbi goes, that's where I'm going to go as well." Lot the loyal disciple wouldn't forsake his rebbi even under the most difficult of circumstances. It was a tremendous thing; don't think it was a small thing.

And we know that Lot became a great man. Contrary to what some people think, Lot became an exceptionally great man under Avraham. Lot wasn't like some people think, a mere nobody, a shikker. He was

a somebody – a somebody with a big S. You should know that Lot was chosen to be the zeidah of Moshiach, on the mother's side. Don't downplay the greatness of Lot. He listened carefully to the teachings of Avraham for many years, and he could repeat all of the lectures, all his shiurim. Like even today in some places, in some yeshivos, after the Rosh Yeshiva finishes the shiur, so the outstanding disciple speaks out the whole shiur again to the other talmidim, the iberzuger it was called. That was Lot; he listened carefully and made sure to always be close to his rebbe.

And because he needed Avraham to guide him, he was moser nefesh, he was willing to go to the greatest extremes, to remain close to his rebbe. And it was just because of that, just because of his virtue, that he was soon to make the biggest mistake of his life. - He mislead himself into thinking that he was able to be on his own; he began to think that he didn't need his rebbe anymore.

Saying Goodbye To Hashem

But no matter how great Lot was, by forsaking his rebbe, by parting ways with the critical eye of Avraham, he had forsaken Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Because when Lot left his great teacher, he lost the opportunity to realize the potentialities within him. The true greatness that a man has can only be brought to the fore, his hidden perfection can only be achieved by being in the company of tzadikim and talmidei chachomim. And that's why when Lot consented to forsake his Master, the Torah hints: **ויסע לוט מקדם** – When Lot went away from the east, he forsook also the **קדמונו של עולם**, he forsook Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And that was a great tragedy.

And this tragedy is repeated again and again, all the time, by us, by the best of our people. People being ruined because they're not under anybody's jurisdiction. People think, "It's good enough that I'm an Orthodox Jew." They think that's already enough. "I volunteer," he thinks. "I'm a frum person. I keep everything! You mean to say I'm going to have somebody tell me what to do? What am I a little child?!" And the answer is, yes, absolutely. I don't care how old you

are. How can you make progress if you don't know what's wrong with you? If you don't have somebody to set you straight you'll be a failure. Not you'll be – you are a failure!

We Must Learn From Lot's Mistake

Now those people who listen to the tapes – if you have nothing better – so that's my humble contribution. Listen to them again. And again and again. Let them sink in, let the criticisms permeate your mind, and they'll become part of your way of thinking. Now, if you find someone better, so go there. But whoever it is, you have to find somebody. Somebody who will stand by you and help you achieve the shleimus that Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought you into this world for.

And that's what we are expected to learn from the mistake of Lot. He was a great man, but he gave up the benefit of having a mashgiach watching over him. And this means that he gave up the great opportunity of becoming better and better. All of us have faults; all of us have rough edges, flaws and imperfections that must be dealt with. And the only opportunity that you will have to work on them, is while you are still breathing in this world. And so, Avraham, the quintessential servant of Hashem, went on to his destiny, to reach greater and greater heights, and to become the progenitor of the Chosen People. And Lot, by forsaking the sharp eyes and supervision of Avraham, went on to his destiny. He spiraled downwards and went on to lose his family in Sedom, and the remnants that remained are the two forbidden nations, the two despised nations of Amon and Moav. Lot forever remained in the background of history, acting as scenery for the main actors on the world stage, the Am Yisroel. And so too, anyone who follows the example of Lot, and avoids the great achievement afforded by supervision and criticism in this world, will forever suffer the consequences by being relegated to acting as mere scenery to the main actors on the eternal stage in the Next World.

The Great War

When Avrohom Avinu went to war in order to rescue his nephew, Lot, we can be sure it was a most remarkable military campaign. With a small force of only a few hundred men he went out to battle against an alliance of four powerful kings who had invaded Eretz Canaan and were vanquishing one city after the next, and he was victorious!

People don't know this but there's no question that Avrohom Avinu was a great general. He didn't have a large army but he was a brave and wise military strategist and he led his little band of soldiers many miles pursuing the enemy from the south up to Dan in the north of Eretz Canaan; he even chased them into Syria near Damesek routing them at every turn.

And so we can only imagine the mood in the land of Canaan when they heard that Avrohom was coming back. I'm much older than you – I remember when General Pershing came back from France. It's a long time now but I can't forget the excitement that was in the air. People lined the streets and showered him with flowers as he passed by; they were so excited they didn't know what to do for him.

The Great Tzaddik

And so we can picture the scene now: Avrohom and his handful of people have whipped the powerful enemy and they're bringing home all the captives – all of the fathers and brothers and sons – and they're bringing back their wealth too; all the booty that the kings had taken. I don't know if they were throwing flowers but certainly there must have been wild excitement all along the entire route as the people came out to greet Avrohom. Here comes our savior, the hero of the day!

Now, the Torah doesn't tell us all the details because they are unimportant; we don't have to know that Avrohom Avinu was a war hero who was adored by the public. But there's one incident that occurred along the route that the Torah does tell us and that's because it was an event that changed the course of history. וּמַלְכִּי

צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וָיָיִן וְהוּא כֹהֵן לְאֵ-ל עֶלְיוֹן. Among those who came out to greet Avrohom was Malkitzedek; that's Sheim, the great great grandfather of Avrohom.

Now, Sheim was a great tzaddik, one of the noblest men who ever lived. He was so great that the gemara (Nedarim 32b) tells us that בִּקֵּשׁ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְהוֹצִיא כְּהֻנָּה מִשֵּׁם – Hakodosh Boruch Hu's intention had been to produce the Nation of Kohanim from Sheim. We know now, in retrospect, that only the Bnei Yisroel were chosen to be the mamleches Kohanim, but the gemara is telling us here that the original plan was that the nation of ovdei Hashem was to include all of Sheim's descendants.

The Master Race

And that's what we see in the chumash when Noach gave his prophetic blessing to his sons after the Mabul; Yefes too will be great, said Noach: יַפְתְּ אֱלֹקִים לְיֶפֶת – The Almighty will give Yefes wide dominion; his descendants will spread out everywhere. Yefes, we know, spread all over Europe, all over India. Even today it's the Caucasian race that is the forefront of mankind. It was from Yefes, from the Greeks, that all the achievements of technology and science and literature have come. The march forward towards progress and power in this world has been in their hands up to today.

So Yefes would conquer the world, that's true; however that was only the consolation prize. Because when Noach turned to his most important son, Sheim, he foretold that from this son would come forth the chosen people of all Mankind. יַפְתְּ אֱלֹקִים לְיֶפֶת– Yes, Elokim will make Yefes succeed in this world, but וְיִשְׁכֹּן — Where will Elokim make His Presence dwell? Where will the Shechina be? וְיִשְׁכֹּן בְּאָהֳלֵי שֵׁם – He'll dwell only in the tents of Sheim.

City of Perfection

And you have to know that as soon as Sheim came out of the teivah after the Mabul and received that prophetic blessing he got busy because he knew that he had to make himself as fit as possible for

it to come true. Sheim was a remarkably energetic man and he was filled with zeal to build a new kind of civilization; instead of **מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס**, a land filled with injustice between man and man, he wanted to rebuild a civilization of justice between man and man and perfection of character.

And so he got busy making **אָהֳלֵי שֵׁם**, tents of Sheim; it means ohalei Torah, places of study. And although we don't hear much about him – we'll see soon why not – he accomplished some very great things. That's how Shaleim, the original Yerushalayim, came into existence.

One of Sheim's greatest achievements was that he built a city founded on righteousness, a city that he hoped would become the ideal city-state; a model for the rest of Mankind. And he named his town Shaleim because shaleim means perfection and it was a place that was dedicated to teaching the ideals of shleimus.

He Lost It

Sheim was the father of that city – it was a family city; it was his progeny that increased there – so he was called Malkitzedek, the King of Righteousness. It was a holy community of ovdei Hashem because that was the life work of Malkitzedek – to create a city where everybody would live on a very high level of tzedek and yashrus and yiras Hashem, and thereby bring to fruition the prophecy of his father Noach.

So now we understand at least a little bit who it was who came out to greet Avrohom. You know, when he came out to greet Avrohom he's described as the **כֹּהֵן לְאֵ-ל עֶלְיוֹן**, the kohen who served the Almighty One. The Torah gives him smicha with those three words – it's Hashem's stamp of approval so you understand already that he was a remarkable personality.

And yet the gemara (Nedarim 32b) makes an interesting remark on that Torah-given title: Malkitzedek came out to greet Avrohom, **וְהוּא כֹּהֵן לְאֵ-ל עֶלְיוֹן** – And He was a priest who served the Almighty One; it means only him. Hu kohein v'ein zar'o kohanim – Yes, he's a

servant of Hashem but only hu, only him; his zera on the other hand, his descendants, won't be kohanim. The word hu is a sign that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was taking something away from him. Hu v'lo zar'o – your seed cannot be the nation chosen to serve Hashem. At that moment when Malkitzedek came out to greet Avrohom, the family of Sheim lost their privilege forever.

Beautiful Blessings

What happened on that fateful day in Emek Shavei, in that valley outside of the city of Sedom? What went wrong? So listen to the story: When Malkitzedek, Avrohom's old ancestor, came out to greet the victorious Avrohom, he brought with him offerings of bread and wine. And as everyone looked on, this old patriarch raised his hand and intoned a blessing; and it was this blessing that ruined him.

Here's what he said. He said, **בָּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵ-ל עֶלְיוֹן קֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ** – "Blessed is Avrohom to the most High G-d who created heaven and earth." A beautiful blessing! To this day we imitate these words. Keil Elyon – The Powerful One Who Is Most High. We adopted that phrase from Malkitzedek – as far as we know he was the first one who said these words. And Konei shamayim va'aretz – The one who created and owns everything. We say these words too; we repeat them always; beautiful words! And yet, it was with these words that Malkitzedek lost out.

What happened? Malkitzedek blessed Avrohom and then he continued with another possuk: **בָּרוּךְ אֵ-ל עֶלְיוֹן אֲשֶׁר מִגֵּן צָרֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ** – Blessed is the Keil Elyon who handed over your enemies into your hands; and Chazal tell us that these two pesukim were his undoing. Now it could be that you're underwhelmed by such a statement; you don't see what's the terrible sin here – the truth is we don't see any sin at all! But we're learning now that it was such a big misstep that it caused Malkitzedek to lose the privilege of being the father of the Kohanim l'Keil Elyon.

Don't Forget!

What happened that was so terrible? Malkitzedek was so overwhelmed by the gigantic personality of Avrohom Avinu, that he lost himself. He blessed Avrohom before he blessed Hashem! Boruch Avrohom, and then boruch Keil Elyon.

Now he didn't actually lose himself because even even when he blessed Avrohom, he mentioned the Almighty. He said, "Blessed is Avrohom to the Most High." He mentioned the Most High! But he blessed Avrohom first! It's true, he he caught himself right away and said, "**וּבָרוּךְ אֵ-ל עֶלְיוֹן** – Blessed is the most high as well." But no matter — it was too late. A man who forgets about the Keil Elyon, the Uppermost Power, even if it's just for a moment, defaults his privilege to be the progenitor of the Am Hashem! The Chosen People must have Hakodosh Boruch Hu uppermost in their thoughts always.

It means that even when you're talking to the biggest tzaddik; let's say you're going out to welcome the greatest rosh yeshiva and you're dancing around him and singing, if for a moment you forget about whom you're really dancing and you think you're dancing about this tzaddik, then you lose out! If you become bribed by his personality, if you become bewitched by this great man and for a moment you forget about Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it means that something is wrong.

And that was the error that Malkitzedek made on that day; for a moment he lost himself and he put Avrohom first. It was only for a moment – he caught himself right away, but for the one who wants to be the father of the Am Hashem, it's not good enough.

A Loyal Mind

Now, Avrohom, on the other hand, is a symbol of the nation that never forgets Hashem; Avrohom didn't forget for a second! That's what the gemara there says; Avrohom is pictured there as saying the following – I prefer to think that he thought it, that he didn't say it, but we'll leave it up to you. **וְכִי מַקְדִּימִין בִּרְכַּת עֶבֶד לִבְרְכַּת קוֹנוֹ** – "Is it proper to first say a bracha to me, and only afterwards to give a bracha to Keil Elyon?!" Avrohom didn't let that pass; he couldn't!

"Is that proper – to bless a basar v'dam, to give a blessing to a human being before blessing the Almighty?"

You have to know that this was the greatness of Avrohom; he never was masiach daas from Hashem! You know, if someone would ask us "What's the greatness of Avrohom Avinu?", so we think we know. We'd say, "Well look, the asarah nisyonos. He passed ten great ordeals! There were heroic things that Avrohom did!"

And the fact is, that it's true – no question they were great things. Avrohom went through terrible ordeals, **וּמָצָאתָ אֶת לְבָבוֹ נֶאֱמָן לְפָנֶיךָ** – Hashem found his mind to be loyal. Very good! Excellent!

Whatever Avrohom was doing; whether he was raising livestock or doing business, whether he was making deals or making war, whatever he did, he never forgot about Hakodosh Boruch Hu!

The Great Test

That's the great nisayon of this world – to not get lost; to never forget that Hakodosh Boruch Hu belongs in the forefront of our minds in everything we do and not to forget about Him no matter what! That's one of the most important tests of living in Olam Hazeh.

And we begin to see now that Hakodosh Boruch Hu had this in mind – that was part of the whole plan; the milchama with the kings of the north, and Avrohom's triumphant return and the kabolas panim when they all came out to greet him – everything that transpired was to test Malkitzedek and Avrohom.

Of course there are many other things Hashem had in mind, but the overall purpose was to be a test – would Malkitzedek lose himself in the greatness of a human being? And would Avrohom be sensitive to that mistake and make things right? Because that's the primary test of anyone who wants to be great in this world – will you get lost in the presence of others, in the presence of the distractions, and forget that Hashem always comes first?



In this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us how Avraham Avinu's nephew Lot was captured as a prisoner of war by four powerful kings of that region. When Avraham heard of this, without hesitation he waged a war between himself and the four kings who were so dominant in their region, that they had previously been successful in overpowering the five ruling kings of that area. After Avraham's successful military victory despite being incredibly outnumbered, the king of Sedom, (one of the previously defeated kings) "generously" tells Avraham that in terms of the booty of war, Avraham was welcome to "help himself", and that he didn't want any of it except for all the human captives. Avraham responds by taking an oath that he would partake of nothing from the spoils, from a string to a shoelace, lest anybody say that it was the king of Sedom who enriched Avraham.

The Gemorah in Sotah (17) says that in the merit that Avraham didn't want to take a string, his children merited to receive the Mitzvah of Tzitzis which contained a string of Techeiles, and in the merit of his not wanting to partake in shoelaces, they received the Mitzvah of Tefilin.

What does Avraham's refusal to take strings and straps from the booty have anything to do with Tefilin and Tzitzis? Is the sole connection that they are both made of strings? Secondly, why does the Gemorah quote the verse which states that the Tefilin will generate fear and awe in the non-Jews? Is this the most remarkable quality of Tefilin? And finally, why indeed did Avraham refuse to partake of the spoils of war which were rightfully his?

I once heard a brilliant explanation from **R' Elchonon Wasserman** which fields all of these difficulties beautifully. R' Elchonon begins by laying down a premise that Avraham's sole desire in this world was to sanctify Hashem's name and bring honor to that name in any way he could. Even his wealth, or lack thereof, was only a function of Avraham's desire to glorify Hashem's name.

With this explanation, we can easily understand Avraham's refusal to accept the king's "generous" offer. Avraham knew that the king would try to take credit for his wealth, and this kind of money would detract from Hashem's glory, so Avraham completely rejected this offer. Similarly, we can now understand why he merited the Mitzvah of Tzitzis and Tefilin, and why the verse for Tefilin was the one which indicated that all the nations of the world would now recognize Hashem. Just like Avraham's sole desire was to publicize the grandeur of Hashem's name, similarly he merited two commandments whose primary goal is to do just that – Tefilin to publicize Hashem's presence on this earth to all the nations around us like the Gemorah said, and Tzitizis which has the string of Techelies which also reminds us of Hashem.

It comes out that all of Avraham's personal possessions, and even his physical and emotional talents were recruited for the service of Hashem. We too, must learn from our great forefather, who paved the way for us and taught us how to act, that we must use all of our emotional and financial resources solely for the service of Hashem. To the extent that we do this, we can transform every aspect of our "mundane" life into holiness as Avraham Avinu did.

May we merit to serve and glorify Hashem's name in all that we do!

"The yetzer hara will try to convince you that you are worthless. That alone proves just how crucial you truly are." ~ Rabbi Elyah Lopian (1876-1970).



Lot Was Corrupted by Wealth

Towards the beginning of the parsha, the pasuk says: *"So Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him; Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran."* [Bereishis 12:4].

We tend to overlook this. We make a big deal about the sacrifice of Avram leaving his home and his birthplace. However, the fact that *"Lot went with him"* is forgotten in the shuffle.

Why did Lot go with Avram? He had no explicit or even implicit command to accompany his uncle. He went along because he wanted to be with Avram Avinu. He knew that Avram was his spiritual lifeline. Lot is also deserving of our admiration and accolades for the mesiras nefesh he demonstrated in following Avram on this spiritual mission.

However, what happens a mere chapter later? Like Avram, he prospered in the Land of Canaan. He made it big. He accumulated much sheep, cattle, and tents. At that point things started getting uncomfortable. Avram and Lot could not live together any longer. Battles broke out between their shepherds. Lot decided he must part company with Avram. Where of all places in the world does he decide to go? Sodom.

This same Lot who demonstrated such righteousness just one chapter earlier by following his uncle to an unknown destination now throws his lot in with the most decadent society in the world! What happened to Lot between Bereishis 12:4 and Bereishis 13:5?

Rav Elya Meir Bloch explains that what happened to Lot was very simple. He made money. Money is the great corrupter. Money does strange things to people. Wealth is one of the great tests of

mankind. The same person who was totally righteous becomes a different person after he earns a few dollars. The great Lot who left everything to follow Avram, is now willing to give up Avram for a few hundred head of cattle.

Travelling a Circuitous Route before "Tying the Knot"

A couple of years ago, we said a shiur on the week of Parshas Lech Lecha about tying shoes. The Halacha proscribes an appropriate sequence for putting on and tying shoes based on the laws of putting on hand *tefillin* (which we put on the left hand and tie with the right hand). Usually, we give the right side precedence. Therefore, we first put on our right shoes and then our left shoes. However, by **tying**, we tie the left shoe first, just as we tie *tefillin* on our left arms.

The connection between shoes and *tefillin* is learned from this week's parsha where Avraham comments that he would not take from the King of Sodom "neither a thread nor a shoelace" (so that the king not later claim that he was responsible for Avraham's wealth). The *gemara* in Chullin comments that because of this statement of Avraham, his descendants merited receiving the mitzvoth of *techeiles* [the blue thread on the *tzitzis* fringes] and *tefillin* (represented by the "shoelace"). Since the Talmud makes a connection between *tefillin* and shoelaces, the tying of shoes is supposed to correspond with the tying of *tefillin* (where the left side has precedence).

Yosef Golding told me the following amazing story, which he heard from a person who was present in a mourner's house, when the subject told the story: Dr. Joseph Kamenetsky was one of the prime leaders of the Day School movement in America. He was a student of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelovitz. All the Day Schools that were in the "hinterlands" were the result of Dr. Joseph Kamenetsky's work. He passed away several years ago. His daughter was sitting Shiva in

Eretz Yisrael. A fellow came in to be *menachem avel,* to offer consolation to the mourners. All of the family members began whispering with each other to try to figure out his identity. No one knew him. The fellow explained why he came:



I am here because I want to show appreciation to your father and grandfather, Dr. Joseph Kamenetsky. I come from a small town in America. My parents were not religious. They sent me to a Day School. My father really was not into religion, but he sent me to a Day School. One day, he wanted to take me somewhere and called up to my room and said, "Hurry up! We are late. You need to come down already so we can go!" I told him "Sorry, Daddy, I have to retie my shoes." My father was incredulous. "You have to retie your shoes? What's the problem?"

I told him that after tying my shoes I remembered that I did it wrong. Instead of tying the left shoe first and then the right shoe, I tied the right shoe and then the left shoe. So now I must untie the shoes and then retie the left followed by the right. My father said "Are you out of your mind? Where did you get this craziness from?" I told him "That is what they taught me in school!" My father said, "That is what they teach you in school? Are they crazy? I am taking you out of that school!"

His father pulled him out of Day School and put him into Public School. The son went "the way of all flesh" and grew up an irreligious Jew to the extent that years later he became engaged to a non-Jewish woman.

Now comes the incredible part.

On the day of his marriage, he bent down to tie his shoe. He bent down to tie his shoe and he tied his left shoe first. Why? Because that's what he learned in school! He said to himself: "I am going to throw this away? I am going to completely abandon Judaism?" He called up his bride—on what was to be their wedding day—and told her "I cannot go through with it."

What happened? He went to *Eretz Yisrael*. He became a *baal teshuva* [newly observant]. He learned in Yeshiva. He was getting older and he had not yet found a *shidduch* [matrimonial match]. One day, his *Rosh Yeshiva* told him, "I have a girl for you. She is a nice religious girl. However, you should know that she is a convert." The "hero of the story," who was getting older by now, said, "I don't care!" He called up the girl to make the date. Lo and behold—it was the bride he abandoned on the day of their scheduled wedding!"

After that traumatic experience of her groom cancelling her wedding on the day of the wedding, she said to herself, "If someone is willing to give up his love for his bride for a thing called Judaism, I need to see for myself what it is all about!" She investigated *Yiddishkeit*. She wound up in *Eretz Yisrael*. She went to a *ba'alas teshuva* institution. She converted and became observant.

He married this very girl to whom he was once engaged and almost married!

Avram Lifted Up His Hand…So That You Not Say 'I Made Avram Wealthy'

Parshas Lech Lecha contains an account of what truly may be called the "First World War." During this battle, Lot, the nephew of Avram, was captured and was subsequently rescued by Avram. The King of Sodom went out to greet Avram. As a gesture of gratitude for bringing about his rescue, the king told him "please leave me the people and take all the booty for yourself." Avram takes an oath ("I lift up my hand to Hashem, the G-d on High, who created Heaven and

Earth") that he would not take even as much as a thread or a shoelace from the spoils of war so that the King of Sodom will not ever be able to say, 'I made Avram wealthy'.

The Ramban interprets the "lifting of the hand to Hashem the G-d on High…" as more than just an oath (which is Rashi's interpretation). The Ramban explains that Avram was sanctifying any property that he might take to be "Hekdesh" (donated to G-d).

The Medrash writes that in the merit of Avram's not taking anything from the spoils of war, G-d granted his children the mitzvah of Tzitzis [corresponding to the string he did not take] and granted them the mitzvah of Yevamah [involving the taking off the shoe, corresponding to the lace of the shoe which Avraham did not take]. A second suggestion in the Medrash is that the Mishkan and the "Chut haSikra" surrounding the Mizbayach were given to Avram's descendants as rewards for this statement of his.

What was so significant about Avram's refusal to take part of the bounty that merited all these various rewards?

The Meshech Chochmah writes that Avram underwent a tremendous test here. He was waging war against the most powerful nations in the world. These were the nations that were just victorious in the epic battle of the "First World War." He was taking on the most powerful nations in the world with a very small force of soldiers (and according to the Medrash, virtually single handedly). When emerging victorious from such a war, the natural reaction is to feel pretty good about oneself. It is all so tempting and easy to fall into the trap of saying "My might and the power of my hand has accomplished for me this great victory." (We are stronger, we are mightier, we are smarter, we have better tactics, etc.) It is almost impossible not to fall into that trap. If you examine the great battles of world history, that is the typical reaction when an army is victorious.

This unfortunately happened in Eretz Yisrael after the Six Day War. Everyone was amazed at the military prowess of the Israeli

army and the Israeli air force. The mentality quickly took hold that כֹּחִי וְעֹצֶם יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת־הַחַיִל הַזֶּה –"My might and the power of my hand accomplished for me this great victory." [Devorim 8:17]

Avram needed to do something dramatic to ensure that he would not fall into this trap. The Meshech Chochmah interprets the trust of Avram's statement to mean "It is not my booty because it was not my war, and it was not my victory! G-d won the war, so – as the Ramban interprets – it is He who should get the spoils."

As an addendum to the Meshech Chochmah, I saw I beautiful thought in the name of the Gerer Rebbe – the Beis Yisrael. The simple reading of the pasuk is that Avram refuses to take the thread or the shoelace so that "You – King of Sodom – will not be able to say 'I made Avram rich'." The Beis Yisrael interprets differently. Avram lifted up his fingers and speaking to his own hand said: "You will not say 'I made Avram rich'!" He was not trying to negate a future claim by the King of Sodom, he was trying to negate the tempting claim of "My strength and the power of my hand, made for me this great wealth."

Whenever we are successful in life, it is so easy to fall into this trap. We need to lift up our hands and addressing the accomplishments of those very hands, say: "Don't get carried away and think that it was I who 'made Avram wealthy'."

Chumras and Hidurim Were Luxuries That Avram Could Not Afford in Mitzrayim

There is an interesting Medrash that teaches us a very important lesson. On the pasuk, "And he proceeded on his journeys…" (Bereshis 13:3), the Medrash Tanchuma notes that when Avram returned from *Mitzrayim* back to *Eretz Canaan*, he went to all the places that he visited on the way down to *Mitzrayim*, in order to pay his bills. Apparently, on the way down to *Mitzrayim*, Avram did not have money and he needed to borrow money to pay for his lodging and

expenses. It was only on the way back from *Mitzrayim* that Avram had money to repay the debts that he had accumulated on the trip to *Mitzrayim*.

We derive two important lessons from this Medrash:

1. When people lend you money, pay them back. This may seem like an obvious statement, but unfortunately, this is not always done.

2. Do not be a tzadik on someone else's account. This means that it is fine to be righteous and have personal chumras (stringencies) and hidurim (ritual beautifications) if these chumras and hidurim only effect you. But if someone wants to practice exceptionally righteous religious behavior then he had better be certain that his personal piety is not causing the people to whom he is in debt to go unpaid. A person's fiscal responsibilities come first. Chumras and hidurim can only be built upon that baseline of integrity.

I can give a couple of examples of this principle of "Don't be a *tzadik* on someone else's *cheshbon*":

Rav Dovid Kronglas, zt"l, (1908-1972), the Mashgiach of Yeshivas Ner Israel, had a "*chumrah*" in *shechitah*, such that he did not eat beef. He thus had chicken for supper virtually every night. (There are fewer *halachic* issues with the ritual slaughter of birds than with animals). However, this is not a stringency that he imposed on his wife and children. His family ate meat. He was not going to restrict the members of his family from meatballs, hamburgers, roast, or steak because he accepted certain *halachic* stringencies upon himself.

Another example of not imposing personal *chumras* on others is evident in a story told over by the Tolner Rebbe. A young Kollel student came to Rav Schach, zt"l, and complained to him that his Rosh Kollel told him that he should not learn so late at night. Rav Schach told the young student to have his Rosh Kollel come see him. The Rosh Kollel came to visit Rav Schach, who asked him about the instructions he gave to his young Kollel student.

The Rosh Kollel said, "This young man has recently been looking worried and perturbed about something. I asked him what was wrong. He explained that his wife got a new job, for which she needs to leave the house very early. She needs to to make the children's lunches and get them off to school. She is not getting enough sleep because she needs to get up so early. She is therefore not in a very good mood, and it is affecting their *shalom bayis*.

The Rosh Kollel asked his student, "So why don't you get up early and help make the lunches and get the children off to school?" The student gave as an excuse the fact that he stayed up learning late at night. The Rosh Kollel advised him: Don't learn so late at night, go to sleep earlier, and get up earlier so you can help your wife make the lunches and get the children off to school. That was "the story behind the story."

Rav Schach then called the young man back in and told him "Your Rosh Kollel is 100% correct. If you want to learn late at night, that is all fine and good. But if that negatively affects your wife, you cannot do that. You are a *baal chov* (in debt) to her. When you gave your wife her *kesuvah*, you pledged to **support her** in the custom of all Jewish men. She is **supporting you**! For that, she gets a great blessing. But you owe her. You can't be a *tzadik* on her *cheshbon*. If you are learning so late that it prevents you from getting up early to help your wife, then don't stay up so late! You have a primary obligation, and that primary obligation is to help your wife.

A man once stood before Hashem, his heart breaking from the pain and injustice in the world. -"Dear G-d," he cried out, "look at all the suffering, the anguish and distress in your world. Why don't you send help?"

Hashem responded, "I did send help. I sent you!" ~ Rabbi Dovid Wolpe.

Kiruv Success "On the Road," But Not at Home

In enumerating those who accompanied Avram on his journey from Charan, the Torah mentions that he took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, the property that they acquired, and "**the souls they made in Charan**" (Bereshis 12:5). Chazal say that "the souls made in Charan" were individuals that Avram "brought under the Wings of the *Shechinah*." In other words, these were people whom he introduced to monotheism, and whom he influenced to reject *Avodah Zarah*.

Rav Shlomo Glasner, a grandson of the Chasam Sofer, notes that Avram was not originally from Charan. Avram originally grew up in Ur Kasdim. The Medrash describes how Avram began his lifelong battle against*Avodah Zarah* in Ur Kasdim. He was challenged by Nimrod, the ruling power, who worshipped the god of fire. Nimrod threw Avram into a fiery pit to "see if your G-d can save you from the power of my god." The Medrash says that Avram was miraculously saved from the fiery furnace.

The question must be asked, why was Avram apparently only successful in bringing people "under the Wings of the Shechina" in Charan? What happened in Ur Kasdim? Why was he not successful in drawing people to the concept of monotheism in his hometown of Ur Kasdim? We would imagine that after having witnessed Avram miraculously escape from Nimrod's attempt to kill him, the people in Ur Kasdim would have certainly been ready to listen to Avram's message of One G-d and follow him! And yet, it appears that Avram only succeeded in his '*kiruv*' efforts in Charan. Why was that?

Rav Shlomo Glasner gives an interesting answer. Imagine the scene: All the town people were gathered. Nimrod challenged Avram. The people are sitting in the bleachers watching. Avram jumps into the fiery furnace and emerges unscathed. One fellow says to the person next to him, "Look at that! That is amazing. This person must have a real G-d!" The person next to him says "Wait a minute. Not so quick.

If this Avram fellow is for real, then why is his father still in the *Avodah Zarah* business?" If Avram had a true religion, wouldn't he first have an effect on his own family members? And yet, his father rejected it. People murmured, "There must be something fishy here." Avram must have worn a fire-retardant suit or something.

Therefore, Avram did not have the same effect "at home" in Ur Kasdim that he later had in Charan, because there were sceptics in Ur Kasdim who tried to debunk the miracle, based on the fact that Avram's immediate family appeared unimpressed.

A Kri U'Kesiv Teaches Avram's Sensitivity to His Wife's Privacy

"From there he relocated to the mountain east of Beth-el and pitched his tent (*va'yet ahalo*)…" (Bereshis 12:8). The word '*ahalo*' in the expression "He pitched his tent (*ahalo*)" is spelled *aleph hay lamed hay*. Thus, the *kesiv* (the way it is written) is actually "**her** tent" rather than the *k'ri* (the way it is read) which is "**his** tent." Rashi comments on this, saying that Avram first pitched his wife's tent, and only afterwards pitched his own tent.

Why did he do that? The Levush Ha'Orah, one of Rashi's super-commentaries, explains that Avram did this to protect the *tznius* of Sora. She should have a tent to move into immediately and not need to wait out in the open while he first pitched his tent. One of the outstanding character traits of Sora was her modesty. *Chazal* say that Avram didn't even know what she looked like until they arrived in Mitzrayim. Her privacy and comfort drove Avram to prioritize the setting up of her living quarters above setting up his own tent.

How long does it take to pitch a tent? We are not talking about hours or days! And yet, the Levush HaOrah explains that this is what Rashi is saying. The sensitivity of Avram for his wife's privacy was such that by employing this *kri u'ksiv*, the pasuk is alluding to the fact that he pitched her tent before his tent.

Every year, we mention that Sefer Bereshis is about the maxim *Ma'aseh Avos siman l'Banim* (the actions of the forefathers foreshadow the actions of the children). This lesson is also *Ma'aseh Avos siman l'Banim*. A Jewish husband must be sensitive to the feelings and sensitivities of his wife.

This dovetails with a Gemara in Bava Metzia 59a. Rav Chelbo says that a person must always be careful about the honor of his wife because blessing resides in a person's home only by virtue of his wife. He brings another *pasuk* as a proof from this week's parsha: "And Avram benefited because of her" (Bereshis 12:16). This means that a person's honoring his wife is a *segulah* for *parnassah*. That is what the Gemara says!

This is ironic because everybody under the sun wants a "segulah for parnassah".The Gemara gives an explicit segulah for parnassah—a person should honor his wife! Come and see how particular Avram was for the honor of Sora—he pitched her tent first so she did not need to stand there for an extra ten minutes out in the open.

I saw an interesting observation in the sefer Darash Mordechai from Rav Mordechai Druk: Why is a person's honoring his wife a *segulah* for *parnassah*? How does that work? He explains that when Chava ate from the *Etz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge) and then gave it to Adam, they were both cursed. Her curse was that "…your desire shall be to your husband and he shall rule over you" (Bereshis 3:16). Her honor was thus impacted because her husband would now dominate her. - So, if a person honors his wife and tries to lighten that curse then, measure for measure, his own curse will be lessened.

What is the curse that Adam received? "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread…" (Bereshis 3:19) In other words, you need to *shvitz* for *parnassah*. If a man honors his wife and makes her curse lighter, his own curse will be lightened, and his livelihood will come easier.

The Lech Lecha Test Rates Higher Than The Ur Kasdim Test

The Mishna tells us [Avos 5:3] that Avraham Avinu was tested 10 times and that he passed all 10 tests. There are varying opinions as to exactly what the 10 tests were. However virtually all commentaries enumerate the command to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father's home to go off to the Land he would be shown by G-d ("Lech lecha m'artzecha…") as one of the ten tests. According to many commentaries, however, this was not the first test.

According to this approach, the first test Avraham faced was the test of "Ur Kasdim". Rashi points out that the name Ur Kasdim alludes to the miraculous salvation of Avram when thrown into a fiery pit for refusal to pay homage to the prevailing idols of his society. The pasuk alludes to this when it says, "And He said to him: I am the L-rd who took you out from Ur Kasdim…" [Bereishis 15:7]

Avram was an iconoclast. Despite the deep-seated beliefs of the civilization in which he grew up, he broke their idols and even broke his father's idols. The entire society of Ur Kasdim shunted him to the extent that they gave him the choice of worshipping their idols or being thrown into a fire together with his monotheistic beliefs. He chose the latter and miraculously emerged unharmed. The Torah alludes to this story when it mentions that "G-d took Avram out from Ur Kasdim".

The commentaries are troubled by the fact that the miracle of Ur Kasdim is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. The test of "Lech Lecha m'artzecha…" — which on the face of it does not seem as great as the test to leave his childhood home with the promise that things will work out for his benefit — is spelled out in detail. Why does the Torah omit the miracle of Ur Kasdim?

Over the years, we have discussed this question many times. We once quoted an answer from Rav Weinberg, zt"l, who said that Ur

Kasdim was something Avram did out of his own convictions; it was not a response to a Divine Command. Lech Lecha — leaving his home — was a Divine Command and hence the fact that Avram obeyed this Command was of greater significance than the fact that he was prepared to act under his own convictions. In the eyes of the Torah, obeying the Master of the Universe is really the greatest test. This is articulated by our Rabbis in the comment "Greater is one who is commanded and does, more so than one who is not commanded and does" [Kidushin 31a]. Doing something that you are supposed to do is greater than doing something that you want to do. Therefore, the test of Ur Kasdim is not as great as the test of Lech Lecha.

On this occasion, I would like to present a different answer to this question from Rav Simcha Zissel Brody, in his volume Sam Derech. Rav Brody says that people face two types of tests in their lifetimes. One type is those things that may be categorized as "glamorous tests" — defining moments in a person's lifetime. At such times, when a person is well aware that he is at a junction in his lifetime when he must make a crucial decision — even one involving great self-sacrifice — he may be able to muster the courage and determination to make the proper decision.

However, there are other tests in life — the daily type of challenges that come our way, day in, day out — that each and every one of us face. These tests are not glamorous. They are not exciting. They are very run of the mill, but they are challenges nonetheless.

The test of "Ur Kasdim" was one of those glamorous defining-moment types of tests. The test of "Lech Lecha" is typical of the "daily grind" type of test. People sometimes have a capacity to rise above what they really are and to achieve spiritual levels above their normal capacities, but that is not who they really are.

Ur Kasdim moments are fleeting. They do not necessarily represent the real person who emerges heroically from such situations. Lech Lecha is the ordinary test of "do I get up tomorrow for minyan?" Lech Lecha is do I come home from work at night and learn with my

child and help him do his homework or do I say "do it yourself and let me read the paper." Nobody thinks about the challenge of "should I learn with my child right now or not?" as being a defining moment in life! No one considers such actions to be the essence of heroism. Lech Lecha moments are moments when we face financial difficulties and we do not question G-d's Providence. Lech Lecha moments are facing all the trials and tribulations that life sends us — health issues, financial issues, children issues. They are daily grind issues: same old, same old. This is "Lech Lecha".

This is what Avram did. He went to Eretz Yisrael. G-d promised him things would be great, but they were tough. There was a famine in the land. Where is the greatness? This is life. Avram Avinu did not question, did not challenge, and did not lose faith. There is nothing glamorous or exciting here, just the day in day out routine of life.

Rav Simcha Zissel explains that the Torah only alludes to Ur Kasdim. Such heroism is great. It is admirable. However, in the eyes of the Torah, the day in, day out, tests, represented by "Lech Lecha," are what really count. Everyone can rise to the occasion occasionally. However, to do what you are supposed to do every day — day in, and day out — without questioning, this is a real test.

That is why the test of Lech Lecha "rates" as the greater of the two tests.

There's No Place Like Away From Home to Learn How to be a Good Host

The very first Rashi in our parsha [Bereishis 12:1] interprets the words "Go for yourself" (Lech-Lecha) to mean "for your own benefit and welfare". The Imrei Shammai cites an incident involving Reb Nachum of Chernobyl (1730-1787) which elucidates this Rashi.

Reb Nachum was once imprisoned. It did not take much in the Ukraine for a Jew — a Rabbi especially — to wind up in jail. An old

Jew came to visit Reb Nachum and told him that he could explain a particular reason why Reb Nachum was sitting in jail.

Reb Nachum used to devote much effort to the mitzvah of redeeming Jews from captivity (pidyon shevuyim). At a time when Jews were arbitrarily and capriciously thrown into jail, he felt obligated to do whatever he could to work for their release. The old Jew told him that G-d put Reb Nachum himself in jail so that he would be able to appreciate what a great mitzvah he was doing when working for the release of Jewish prisoners. Now that he was sitting in jail, he would be better at empathizing with the prisoners who he helped. The next time he would go out to raise money for pidyon shevuyim, it would be a different experience. He would have more appreciation for the wonderful mitzvah that he was doing.

Here too, Avraham was destined to be the prototype of kindness toward his fellow man. He was destined to be the prototype of welcoming in wayfarers. G-d wanted to show him what a great mitzvah it is to be a host to guests who need a place to stay. The best way to learn how to be a host is to first be a traveler.

Anyone who needs to go away for a Shabbos experiences what it is like to be away from his family, away from his own bed, and away from his surroundings. Especially when a person is a wandering traveler for an extended period of time — he really learns to appreciate the great kindness provided by those who warmly extend hospitality. This experience is the best training course for becoming a better host.

Therefore, Avraham was directed "Lech Lecha". Be a traveler. It will be for your own benefit and welfare because knowing what it means to be a traveler will help you, and you will be a much better host as a result.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

A Fireman's Kaddish

Rav Janach is the rav of Givat Olga in Hadera. Fourteen years ago, in an effort to unite his congregation, he proposed that they all join for an uplifting Shabbaton in the Park Hotel for Shabbos Hagadol. Aside from the spiritual and social benefits, the getaway would spare them the effort of preparing for Shabbos on the last days before Pesach and keeping an eagle eye for crumbs.

The congregation members were delighted, and the shul arranged for an inspiring program, celebrated speakers, and delicious Shabbos fare by a gourmet cook.

As in all hotels, the management strictly prohibited lighting a fire in any of the rooms. Instead, the caterer arranged a long buffet table with dozens of tea lights for the female guests to bentch licht in the hotel lobby.

When Rav Janach entered the hotel shul for Kabbalas Shabbos, he was delighted by the remarkable turnout. However, he noticed that there weren't nearly enough chairs in the room. Turning to one of his close congregants, Rav Janach quietly requested that he inquire at the reception desk where they could get more chairs. The man hurried to the front desk, and the receptionist directed him to a storage room down the hall. Recruiting several friends for the job, they began schlepping tall piles of chairs down to the shul.

Carrying a heavy stack of chairs, one person accidentally knocked into the buffet table with the candles, overturning it. The tablecloth immediately caught fire, and a moment later, the table was on fire as well. The fire spread quickly, and someone called the fire department, which rushed to the scene. Hotel guests panicked upon smelling the acrid smoke, but luckily the fire wasn't very large, and the firefighters extinguished it immediately.

After the commotion had settled, a firefighter turned to one of the guests and asked, "Can I ask where you folks are praying this Shabbat?" The guest replied that there was a shul on the premises, and to his surprise, the firefighter asked to join the minyan. "Of course! It's our honor and pleasure!" the guest replied. "Baruch haba!"

Thanking him bashfully, the firefighter slipped into a seat in the far back of the room and joined the minyan. Out of the corner of his eye, Rav Janach noticed that the man seemed to be praying from the depths of his heart, and tears were coursing down his cheeks.

After an elevated Kabbalas Shabbos and Ma'ariv, Rav Janach approached him and said gently, "It is Shabbos today. Why are you crying? Is everything all right?"

Replied the firefighter, "I am a traditional Jew, Rabbi, but I don't usually go to shul. This week, however, it is my father's yahrtzeit. I had wanted to say Kaddish, but since I was on duty tonight, and there is no minyan in the station, I didn't think it would be possible. I actually arranged a substitute to fill in for me so I could go to shul, but at the last minute, my buddy cancelled on me.

"I entered the station tonight feeling downcast, and I whispered to G-d, G-d, I so badly want to say Kaddish for Abba. Never in my life have I missed a Kaddish, but now, I'm duty bound to remain at the station. What can I do?'

"And then, I received the dispatch to the Park Hotel and jumped into the truck to put out the flames. When it was all over, I suddenly noticed your whole group of religious folks standing outside on the street – way more than a minyan! I asked my buddies in the truck if they could wait a few minutes while I prayed, and they told me, 'No problem."

With a smile, the firefighter concluded. "How wondrous are G-d's ways! He brought your entire group all the way from Hadera and

orchestrated this fire on Shabbos so I- who so rarely prays in a beit knesset- would be able to say Kaddish for my father.

You see how valuable every single Kaddish is to Him?"

The story doesn't end there...

Several weeks later, a familiar face entered Rav Janach's shul in Hadera. Blinking in surprise, he recognized none other than the firefighter, who embraced him in a bear hug.

"Rabbi, you're not going to believe this! I have to tell you about the miracle that saved your whole congregation..."

An Arab kitchen worker in the Park Hotel had collaborated with a terrorist group to carry out an attack in the hotel on the night of Shabbos Hagadol. The terrorists had already departed from Jenin with their weapons and were only minutes away from the hotel when the fire broke out, and the street was suddenly flooded with police, the fire department, and MDA. - Panicking, the collaborator called his cronies and warned them to abort the operation and return to Jenin.
(The terrorists carried out their planned attack several days later, on Seder night, in what became known as the Passover Massacre of 2002, the deadliest attack against Israelis during the Second Intifada, which left thirty civilians dead and one hundred forty injured, Hashem yikom damam.) (Rav Goel Elkarif)

The Kiruv Technique That Works

Rashi tells us that Avraham and Sarah brought people close to Hashem as Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women. Let us compare this to Noach. It took him 120 years to build the **תיבה** so that people should inquire. He would say to them that in the future Hashem will bring a Mabul. Through this maybe they will be influenced to do Teshuva. We don't find that anyone did Teshuva

because of this. This leads to the question why was Avraham successful whereas Noach was not?

When one truly believes in something, others follow along with him. We can hear two speakers give a Torah talk. One may say that Torah is the sweetest thing whereas the other speaker lives it. He truly believes it. It is the second speaker that has more influence.

Avraham was a firm believer in Hashem as it says **והאמן בה'**; he trusted Hashem. Chazal say **הכיר אברהם את בוראו** - Avraham recognized the existence of his creator. As a result, he was able to bring people close to Hashem. Noach, on the other hand, was **מקטני אמנה** ; one of little faith.

We know of various Kiruv techniques that work. One that is not recommended is to relate that which is fearful. An example is telling one he will go to Gehinom if he doesn't perform a Mitzva. On the contrary, being inviting, nice and helpful can have a much more productive outcome.



In his younger years when he earned a living as a merchant, **R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa** (1767-1827) would travel to Danzig for the fair. Many non-observant Jews would come and spend the evenings drinking and playing games. What did R' Simcha Bunim do? He would reach out to these Jews by inviting them to join in a game of chess.

Through this he would gently draw them closer to Judaism. He pointed out that chess teaches us to be extremely mindful in all our ways, to carefully evaluate every step.

In light of this we can understand why Noach wasn't successful in bringing the people to do Teshuva since his tactic was based on fear- in the future Hashem will bring a Mabul.

Avaraham, on the other hand, possessed the trait of אהבה. He was a man of חסד; kindness, as is demonstrated in the episode on the third day of his Bris that he was pained since he didn't have guests. Consequently, Hashem sent him three Malachim in the guise of men. How does he treat them? Lavishly- with three bulls, three tongues in mustard- a delicacy! This is the kind of person and the type of method people are drawn to.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt -The Salvation Is a Tefilla Away



A person came to the **Kotzker Rebbe** and told him about his many problems. The Rebbe asked him why he doesn't daven for Hashem to help him. The man replied he doesn't have the peace of mind to daven as he couldn't think properly due to all his troubles. The Rebbe responded, "Being unable to daven is your greatest problem! You should have told me this problem first."

A holocaust survivor named R' Kornreich was the only one of his family to survive. Determined to rebuild his life after the war, he got married but had no children although they were married for 8 years. After consulting with a doctor, it turned out that the Nazis had given her something that ruined her reproductive faculties. The doctor informed them that it wasn't possible for her to conceive.

Rising above despair, they davened again and again. Soon after, miraculously, his wife conceived. Today, this man has over 100 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Returning the Favour

When one gives, he may feel that he won't receive anything in return. However, the truth is that what you give, you get back.

Let's illustrate this idea with some stories:

Rina and Yacov Kaufman dedicated an ambu-cycle years ago in honour of Rina's brother, Leon Lebor, who was killed on September 11th in the Twin Towers. The couple knew that the donation would go towards saving lives in Israel, but they never imagined that the donation would one day help Yacov's own father.

During a wedding that took place in Israel on the 23rd of Elul, the Hebrew date of September 11th attack in 2001, and consequently the Yartzheit of Leon, President and Founder of United Hatzalah Eli Beer was approached by Rina and Yacov's son, Yair Kaufman, who wished to relay a special story.

Yair told Eli that his grandfather, Yacov's father, had suffered a heart attack earlier in the day. Concerned family members called emergency services for help and the first person to arrive was United Hatzalah volunteer EMT and ambu-cycle rider Dov Bash who rides the very ambu-cycle that Rina and Yacov had donated. Dov happened to be riding his ambu-cycle nearby when the call went out

and he arrived at the address within 20 seconds of receiving the alert.

Bash initiated CPR and attached a defibrillator which provided a shock to Rina's father-in-law and then Bash was joined by other first responders and the team carried on CPR for close to an hour and finally managed to bring the man's pulse back. He was taken to the hospital where he stayed alive for another two hours, long enough for his family to gather by his side and say goodbye.

The Steipler in his younger years in Europe really wanted the Sefer Imrei Moshe. Since he was unable to afford it, he wrote a letter to the author if he could have a discount. The author decided to give it to him for free. The Steipler eventually moved to Eretz Yisrael, and the Holocaust came to Europe.

After the Holocaust, the students of the Imrei Moshe who survived wanted to reprint the Sefer but there wasn't even one left—except for the Steipler's. From his Sefer, they reprinted the Imrei Moshe. As a result, people still learn this Sefer today.

Not too long ago, Hatzalah founder and director Eli beer was visited by two Muslim Arabs living in east Jerusalem. One of them, Mohammed Asli, explained that a week earlier, his middle-aged father had suffered cardiac arrest and died while waiting 55 minutes for the ambulance to arrive.

Mohammed told Eli: "Nobody was there to help my father. He died right in front of my eyes. Let us form Hatzalah in east Jerusalem, and we promise to protect anyone who needs help." Seeing this as a unique opportunity to foster good relations in Yerushalayim—as well as saving lives—Hatzalah trained 30 Arab volunteers, many with prior medical experience.

One year later, Eli's father suffered a heart attack on Shabbos. He describes: "I heard the call on the radio. I was two buildings away and immediately ran over. Yet when I saw my father lying there,

unconscious, I started crying like a child. I have saved many lives with my own hands, but at that moment I simply froze."

One minute later, another Hatzalah volunteer arrived and began administering CPR. Then 20 seconds after that, another volunteer arrived with a much-needed defibrillator. Eli's father regained his breathing and woke up. That medic with the defibrillator was none other than Mohammed Asli, the same Arab who originally asked to join Hatzalah.



The Secret to Wealth

There is a principle that according to the amount of money we give is how much we earn. If we earn 10,000$ and give 1,000$ to Maaser, the next year Hashem may give us 15,000$. If we then give 1,700$ to Tzedaka, we may now receive 17,000$. However, if we cut back and now give 1,700$ (proportionately less), then Hashem may do the same to us.

This is in accordance with **מדה כנגד מדה**. It could turn out the amount of Maaser one originally gave (1,000$) is now his salary. This is one explanation in **- ואיש את קדשיו לו יהיו** the amount of money that he gave to Maaser (**קדשיו**) may now be his salary (**יהיה לו**). The Pasuk states **עשר תעשר** You shall tithe. **עשר תעשר** literally translates into Tithe (**עשר**) the letters of **תעשר** .

What do we get when we do this? The numerical value of **ת** is 400. 1/10 of that is 40 which is equivalent to the letter **מ**. Next is **ע** which is 70. 1/10 of 70 is 7, which is the numerical value of **ז**. Following that is **ש** which is 300. 1/10 of 300 is 30, the Gematria of **ל**. Lastly, **ר** is 200. 1/10 is 20, the same as **כ**. So, our result is the word **מזלך**; Your Mazel. This hints to that the amount of money you give is how much you will receive in return. Looking at the word **נתן**; to give, we notice it is a palindrome (whether it is spelled forwards or backwards, it spells **נתן**).

This alludes to that what you give to Tzedaka you receive in return. Another hint to this is found in the word **ממון**; money, as the hidden letters are the same as the revealed letters. That is to say, **מ** spelled out is **ממ**. **ו** is **וו** and **נ** is **נן** .

The Geat Haran

The Sefas Emes is bothered why **לוט** merited to be with Avraham as well as having Dovid Hamelech and Moshiach descend from him?



Rashi tells us that Nimrod threw Avraham into the **האש כבשן**, fiery pit after he smashed his father's idols. Haran—who was there—said to himself if Avraham is victorious then I am of his supporters whereas if Nimrod is victorious then I am on his side. When Avraham was saved, they asked Haran whose side he is on. He answered Avraham's. They then threw him into the pit and he was burned.

Although it seems that Haran's act wasn't so righteous, let us see the view of some commentators. The Sefas Emes remarks **לוט** merited what he did in the merit of his father Haran who was Moser Nefesh himself by the **כבשן האש** although it wasn't a fully altruistic act like Avraham's. This is still included in being burned for the sanctification of Hashem's name. We are taught that **לוט** was saved from Sodom where the smoke of the earth arose like the smoke of a lime pit- **כקיטר הכבשן**

The Gemara tells a story that the daughter of Nechunya dug cisterns along the roads for rainwater so that there would be abundant water for those who made the pilgrimage to Yerushalayim for Yom Tov and fell into a large cistern. She emerged safely from the pit since **דבר שהצדיק מתעסק בו יכשל בו זרעו** that which a Tzadik—Nechunya—occupied himself with, his child won't stumble upon.

The Chassam Sofer applies this idea here as Avraham knew that **לוט** would be saved since his father Haran honoured Hashem by the **כבשן האש** thereby making it impossible that his son would suffer from the **כבשן** by Sodom. So, **לוט** was saved in the merit of his father.

The Chassam Sofer comments elsewhere that Haran was a big Tzadik (but not like Avraham) as he was Moser Nefesh by the **כבשן האש**. As a result, the women of the Jewish people come from him. Haran had three children—**מלכה , יסכה**, and **לוט**. **יסכה** is Sarah. Milka was the grandmother of Rivka and the great-grandmother of Rachel and Leah.

So, the Jewish people come from Haran. There were also another two holy women not included in this who were also from Haran. Rus and Naama, as they were from Amon and Moav who descended from Lot. This is where Moshiach comes from.

Unconditional love

We need to realize that no matter what we do Hashem loves us and as we say **אוהב עמו ישראל**. That is, Hashem always loves us, as the word **אוהב** is in present tense. We are called **בני בכרי ישראל**; *my firstborn son, the Jews*. This was said when we were in Mitzrayim, on the lowest of levels. So, Hashem calls us **בנים** no matter what level we are on.

When someone has a bad odour, people keep a distance from him. However, when it is one's own baby such as a bad odour from a dirty

nappy, the parents don't have any revulsion. Not only that, but they will continue playing with the child while showing signs of love. It is almost like they don't even smell the bad odour because of their love for their child.

Similarly, we are Hashem's children even if we smell badly from sins as it says **הבן יקר לי אפרים אם ילד שעשעים...רחם ארחמנו** *my favourite son or delightful child…I will surely take pity on him.*

The Wondrous Jews



Looking at Jewish history, we notice that the Jewish existence is not in accordance with nature. We have been in exile, persecution, (pogroms, Spanish inquisition, Holocaust, blood libels, terrorists, mass murders and so on) oppression, forced conversions, assimilations, intermarriage, scattered throughout the world, few in number and so on. Nevertheless, we continue to exist while those nations who once ruled the world such as the Babylonians, Romans and ancient Egyptians are long gone.

Indeed, **R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch** remarked that in truth we should say Hallel everyday just for the miracle of Jewish existence.

Frederick the great King of Prussia, once conducted a debate with the French prince John Bathis de Baya saying can you give me proof of the existence of G-d? The prince answered 'the Jews.'

R' Yaakov Emden writes that the eternity of the Jewish nation with exile and persecutions over the years is a bigger miracle than

Yetzias Mitzrayim and Krias Yam Suf. In the words of the Aruch Hashulchan: **אין לך אות ומופת גדול מזה**; there is no wonder greater than this. We see this idea in the beginning of the Torah.

1) Avraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 when Yitzchak was born. This is in contrast to Yishmael that was born to Hagar when she was young. Sarah didn't even have a womb and still had a child. The first child of the Jewish people was born in a miraculous fashion.

2) Avraham takes Yitzchak to the **עקידה** where it appears to be the end of his life (and consequently the end of the Jewish nation). He then arose, got married and began the Jewish existence. Is it any surprise that the name **יצחק** consists of the same letters as **קץ חי**; what seemed like the end was just the beginning. To take this a step further, the numerical value of **יצחק** is 208. This is the same as 26 (**י- ה- ו- ה**) multiplied by 8 (supernatural).

3) The number 7 represents the natural world whereas the number 8 symbolizes transcendence. A Bris is performed on the 8th day, since the Bris is on the part of the body where the future progeny of the Jewish people come from. Avraham who had the first Bris begot Yitzchak and Yishmael. However, only **יצחק** was born after **אברהם** had his Bris.

Additionally, Yitzchak is the first one to have a Bris on the 8th day. Moreover, Yishmael had his Bris at 13 when he possessed understanding (**בר דעת**) whereas Yitzchak had it performed at 8 days old when he didn't possess any knowledge. It was beyond intellect and transcends nature. This is signifying our supernatural existence.

4) It comes as no surprise that possession of Eretz Yisrael depends on the Bris as we say in Birchas Hamazon in - **ועל בריתך ברכת הארץ שחתמת בבשרנו**; the covenant which you sealed in our flesh, since the Bris represents our supernatural existence and Eretz Yisrael is the land where there were constant miracles. Yishmael also had a Bris. However, since his Bris was empty as there was no **פריעה**, he has possession of Eretz Yisrael (Arabs) when it is empty; barren.

We are an eternal nation as it says **לא כליתם ואתם בני יעקב** ; *the descendants of Yaakov won't perish*. With this we can grasp **יעקב אבינו לא מת**; Yaakov didn't die, as we are from Yaakov as we say **כל זרע יעקב**. Consequently, we are eternal. Even non-Jews such as Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, Nikolai Alexandrovich and John Adams marvelled at Jewish survival. This is also considering that we didn't share a common land, history or language.

There was an officer in the Israeli army- who had 300 soldiers under his authority- that attended a seminar in west point about military victories in the 20th century. Being that the professor didn't mention the miraculous 6-day war in 1967 or the Yom Kippur war, he questioned the professor as to why he didn't make reference to it? The response: "all military analysts of the wars of the 20th century can't learn anything from those because military analysis has nothing to learn from miracles."

We are a people who live beyond nature as Hashem told Avraham **ויוצא אותו החוצה**. Hashem took Avraham out of the realm of nature. In this way, **the Chidushai Harim** explains **כה יהיה זרעך** - *we will live beyond nature*.

It is obviously not by chance that this is in the same Parsha as Bris Mila, which symbolizes our supernatural existence! Let us all appreciate and be proud to be part of such a nation.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

ויעתק משם ההרה מקדם 12:8

After Hashem commanded Avrohom to leave his homeland, Avrohom took his family and travelled to the land of Canaan, where Hashem appeared to him and promised to give the entire land to his descendants. The Torah records that Avrohom then relocated to a mountain east of Beis-El and pitched his tent there, with Beis-El to the west and Ai to the east.

Rav Yehuda Leib Fein, the Rav of Slonim who was murdered by the Nazis in 1941, points out that the Torah's geographical description seems counter-intuitive. The Torah begins by recording the location of Avrohom's tent as a mountain east of Beis-El, which seems appropriate, as the heretofore anonymous mountain could not be used as a geographical landmark, and it was therefore logical to describe its location relative to the well-known city of Beis-El.

However, the verse proceeds to record that Avrohom pitched his tent with Beis-El to the west and Ai to the east, which seems difficult to understand. How is it possible to describe the locations of established cities in relation to a mountain whose precise whereabouts are unknown?



Rav Fein explains based on a story that occurred when he was travelling on a train. He overheard one Jew asking another, "Where is the city of Lida?" The second Jew responded, "It's near Radin." As Rav Fein listened to their conversation, he was astonished. Lida was one of the largest and most populous cities in the region, whereas Radin was a tiny little town that could easily be overlooked on a map. How was it possible to describe the well-known Lida based

on its proximity to the forgettable village of Radin, which would be comparable to describing Manhattan as being located across the river from Hoboken?

Rav Fein explains that although Radin was physically small and undeveloped, it was well-known for a different reason: It was the home of the **Chofetz Chaim**, the most renowned Rabbi in his generation. As a result, the otherwise unremarkable town of Radin had become transformed into a major landmark, to the point that it eclipsed the significance of its much larger neighbor Lida, and it was now appropriate to express the location of Lida based on its proximity to the much-smaller Radin of the Chofetz Chaim.

Similarly, Rav Fein continues and explains that when Avrohom initially came to set up his tent on a mountain, the mountain was undistinguished and could not be used to identify Avrohom's location, which was therefore described as being to the east of Beis-El. However, the moment that the great and righteous Avrohom established his home on the mountain, it was immediately transformed into a central landmark, far more noteworthy than the city of Beis-El, and the Torah conveys this by telling us that as soon as Avrohom pitched his tent on the mountain, it outshone the more established cities of Beis-El and Ai around it, and they were now described based on their proximity to Avrohom's mountain.

Rav Fein shared this thought at a ceremony that was held to celebrate the opening of **Rav Aharon Kotler's** yeshiva in the city of Kletzk. He added that until that time, the small town of Kletzk was relatively unknown, but now that the brilliant Rav Aharon Kotler was establishing a yeshiva there with such well-respected and learned students, it would experience a similar elevation, and the time would soon come when locals would describe much larger cities in its environs based on their proximity to Rav Aharon's Kletzk.

Although the yeshiva in Kletzk is sadly no longer in existence, Rav Aharon survived the war and went on to establish the largest yeshiva

in the world outside of Israel in the town of Lakewood, New Jersey, and one can now proudly tell visitors to the region that Manhattan is approximately 60 miles north of Lakewood.

Do You Hear Me?



Hashem talks to us in many different ways. This speech can manifest itself in wars, attacks, natural disasters and events in our personal lives. We are therefore commanded **האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי** - listen to the messages that Hashem sends us through the events that happen.

Similarly, it says **ופצתה האדמה את פיה** - the ground opens its mouth as it is communicating a message from Hashem to us. In this way, we can interpret **מלאה הארץ קנינך** (the world is filled with your possessions)- the world is filled with ways to acquire Hashem.

The incredible story is told of a boy named Dave that returned to America after learning in Aish HaTorah in Yerushalayim. After spending six weeks there, he was losing his grasp on maintaining a Shomer Shabbos lifestyle as he was near his non-religious family and community. It happened that on a Friday night, he said to Hashem- 'I'm going to give you until 12:00 for a sign and if nothing happens, I will turn on the television.' The clock strikes 12, with nothing happening. He then says I'll give you until 12:15. 12:15 hits and still nothing. He then proceeds to turn the television on to a show called "the David Letterman show" in which David Letterman is interviewing an actor- Tom Hanks who recently visited Israel. He asked- Tom did you pick up any Hebrew. He responds that on Friday night in Israel, there is something called the Shabbos and they greet each other

with Shabbat Shalom. So Shabbat Shalom Dave! Dave from Aish was astonished and surely got the message. Today Dave is a Rebbe in Los Angeles. This is an example of someone who got the message that Hashem sent him.

The unbelievable story is told of one collecting Tzedaka (known as a Meshulach) that came to the twin towers in New York to collect money from a wealthy person who worked on one of the upper floors. Although the wealthy man expressed that he needed another 15 minutes, the Meshulach had to go and was insistent to receive the money immediately. After agreeing, the collector made a seemingly audacious request and asked the wealthy man to come down the many flights to give him the money since the collector was afraid of heights. Although the wealthy man was appalled by the request, he came down. This occurred on September 11th, 2001. It was at that moment that the 1st of the twin towers, where he worked, was hit.

Although Hashem called to everyone, only Avraham heard and is therefore the only one who was recorded. This explains the opening Pasuk of our Parsha- **ויאמר ה' אל אברם** - he heard Hashem's messages unlike others. We should merit to hear and internalize the messages Hashem sends us.

Parsha Points to Ponder

In Parashas Lech Lecha (17:12), Hashem gives Avraham the mitzvah of bris milah. When somebody is making a bris, it is customary not to directly invite people, but merely to notify them, lest they be punished if they do not attend a seudas mitzvah to which they were invited. Why do we not have the custom to refrain from inviting people to a wedding for the same reason?

Harav Moshe Sternbuch, zt"l, posits that the Gemara's (Pesachim 113b) threat of punishment for not attending a seudas mitzvah only applies to somebody who refuses to attend because he feels that it

is beneath his dignity and pride. However, if he is concerned about spending time there that could otherwise be utilized to learn Torah, he need not attend. Consequently, a bris, which is relatively short, should be attended, and it is therefore customary not to directly invite people, lest they be punished if they decline the invitation.

A wedding, on the other hand, involves much more time, and because there are legitimate grounds not to participate, there is no issue with inviting people.

"Men Who Are Like Brothers", by Rav Yissochor Frand



Toward the beginning of Parshas Lech Lecha, Lot and Avraham were occupying the same land and their shepherds were grazing their flocks in close proximity to one another. This led to arguments and fights between the two camps. Finally, Avraham suggested to his nephew: *"Please, let there be no strife between me and you and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are men who are brothers."* [Bereshis 13:8]

Rashi notes that the simple interpretation of the phrase "we are men who are brothers" is simply that the two were close relatives. However, Rashi cites a Medrash Aggadah that Avraham's concern went beyond their blood relationship: Their facial appearance resembled one another. They could pass as twin brothers. Why should that resemblance necessitate their separation?

The Shemen Tov references the Rashi in the previous pasuk [verse], which elaborates on the cause of the fights between Lot's shepherds and Avraham's shepherds. Lot's shepherds were wicked and allowed their sheep to graze on the private property of others. Avraham's shepherds saw them doing this and chastised them for thievery. The basic issue was that Lot's shepherds stole and Avraham's shepherds did not. But how would one tell the difference between Lot and Avraham? If they looked alike and one of them was out in the field with his shepherds, the bystander would not know if it was Lot or Avraham. The bottom line is that people would not know if it was Lot or Avraham who was stealing. Avraham therefore explained the necessity for their separation. "We look alike, and I have to avoid even the smallest suspicion of thievery on my part. Think of the desecration of the Name of G-d that would occur if people thought that I or my shepherds were stealing!"

Avraham was the representative on earth of the Master of the Universe. It would be a great Chilul Hashem if he were believed to be a thief.

Small Deeds, Great Rewards



When the kings of Mesopotamia overran Sodom and Amorrah, the Torah tells us (*Bereishit* 14:13) that "the refugee came and reported to Avram" that his nephew Lot and his family had been taken captive. Avram quickly marshaled his forces, gave chase and liberated the captives.

Who was this mysterious escapee? Our Sages identify him as Og, king of the Bashan, who escaped death during the Flood by holding on to Noach's ark. His timely report from the battlefield enabled Avram to rescue his captive nephew.

Many years later, when the Jewish people prepared to launch the conquest of Canaan, Og's kingdom stood in the way. The Torah tells us (*Bereishit* 21:34), "And G-d said to Moshe, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hands.'" From this, we can infer that Moshe was afraid. Why was he afraid? The Talmud explains (*Nidah* 61a) that Moshe was afraid that the merit of saving Lot's life would protect Og against the invading Jewish people.

But let us dig a little deeper. Why did Og bring the battlefield report to Avram? What were his motives? Was he concerned for Lot's safety and welfare? Hardly. Rashi explains that he was hoping Avram would rush into battle with the Mesopotamia kings, as he actually did, and that he would perish on the battlefield. This would leave Sarah a widow, and he, Og, would marry her.

Not very noble motives. Og was certainly not thinking of *chessed*, of performing an act of kindness. And yet, despite the glaring lack of altruism, the act itself was considered such a powerful merit for Og that Moshe was afraid to engage him in battle so many years later without specific Divine reassurance.

Rav Leib Chasman points out that this shows us the incredible power and reward of a mitzvah, no matter how small and imperfect.

A similar story took place during the Holocaust, where a relatively minor good deed was, according to the Bluzhever Rebbe, repaid with immense reward. *A Jewish family by the name of Hiller - a husband, wife and a 6-year-old boy named Shachne - were living in the Krakow ghetto in 1942. Prospects for survival were extremely dim. People were being deported to Auschwitz almost daily. Only those capable of working for the German war effort had any hope of survival. A little boy didn't stand a chance.*

As time passed, the situation grew ever more desperate. The Hillers despaired of keeping little Shachne alive in the ghetto. There was only one chance. The Hillers were friends with a Polish couple named Jakovicz, who had no children of their own. They felt that these people were trustworthy and that they would take good care of little Shachne until the war was over.

On the night of November 15, 1942, Mrs. Hiller and little Shachne, at the risk of being shot on sight, slipped past the guard posts of the ghetto and into the city. Hearts pounding, they ran through the streets under cover of darkness, two shadows in the misty night, until they reached the Jakovicz house. "Who knows if we will ever survive this horrible war?" Mrs. Hiller told her Polish friend. "If my husband and I survive, or even one of us, we will come back for our precious Shachne. But if we do not survive, Heaven forbid, I am relying on you to deliver him to our relatives."

She slipped her hand into her pocket and brought out two envelopes addressed in a spidery handwriting. The ink was smudged as if by falling tears. "Here are two letters. One is to our relatives in Montreal, the other to our relatives in Washington. Either of them will take him and raise him as a Jew. Even if we die, at least Shachne will carry on as a Jew. I am relying on you, my dear friend, to see this through. G-d bless you, my friend."

Unfortunately, the Hillers' trust in the Jakovicz family was misplaced. The Hillers perished in the Holocaust, but they had not left their precious Shachne in good hands. Mrs. Jakovicz, a devout Catholic, loved the boy, and he loved her in return. She took him to mass regularly and taught him all the Catholic hymns and prayers. Within a few years, he was just like a Christian child.

In 1946, when it became clear that Shachne's parents were not coming back for him, Mrs. Jakovicz approached the young parish priest to discuss having the boy baptized as a Christian. During their discussion, the priest discerned that the boy in question was already

10 years old, so he asked Mrs. Jakovicz why he had not been brought for baptism in all the preceding years. Mrs. Jakovicz was evasive, and the priest grew more curious. Finally, she told him the entire story.

The young priest urged Mrs. Jakovicz to fulfil her promise to the boy's dead parents and honour their wishes for their son. Mrs. Jakovicz relented and sent off the letters to the relatives in America. In June 1949, through the efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress, fourteen Jewish orphans from Poland, Shachne among them, were allowed into Canada. In February 1951, by a special act of Congress signed by President Truman, Shachne was allowed into the United States, and he went to live with his family in Washington.

Shachne grew up as a religious Jew in the United States unaware of his close call with baptism. He was successful in the business world, rising to the level of vice president of an important corporation. Throughout the years, he retained close bonds of love and gratitude with Mrs. Jakovicz. He kept in touch with her and sent her letters, gifts and money. She never mentioned that she had almost had him baptized.

Finally, in 1978, Mrs. Jakovicz felt she had to clear her conscience. She wrote a letter to Shachne in which she admitted the entire story to him. She wrote about the parish priest who had urged her to do the right thing. His name was Karol Wojtyla, better known to the world as Pope John Paul II.

"Who can know why Hashem does what He does?" observed the Bluzhever Rebbe. "But it seems reasonable to me that for that one word of good advice the young priest gave this Polish woman he was rewarded with the greatest award possible for a priest. He became the pope."

Count The Stars



What are you supposed to do when you are asked to do the impossible? Most people would simply shrug their shoulders and forget about it. After all, doing the impossible is impossible, isn't it? Not necessarily. The Torah tells us that Hashem promised Avram that he would have children (*Bereishit* 15:3-5). "And Avram said, 'O my Master, L-rd, what can you give me if I am childless?' ... And He brought him outside, and He said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars, can you count them?' And he said to him, 'So shall your children be.'"

Rav Meir Shapiro asks what a person would do if he were told to count the stars. One look at the myriad stars in the heavens would tell what an impossible task this was, and he would not even bother to attempt it. But that is not what Avram did. When Hashem told him to "look up at the sky and count the stars," that is exactly what he did. He began to count the stars even though doing so appeared to be impossible.

"*Koh yihyeh zarecha*," Hashem responded. "So shall your children be." Avram's extraordinary trait of eternal optimism, his refusal to acknowledge the impossibility of any task, will characterize his descendants. This will be the hallmark of the Jewish people. No matter how difficult a task may seem, the Jew will not despair. He will try and try and try again. And when we try, amazing things often happen. Even if we think something is entirely beyond our meager

abilities, when we try persistently, we discover strengths and abilities that we never knew we possessed. We find in ourselves new reservoirs of capability, new potential that we never knew existed. We learn we can go beyond all the limits and restrictions that we had considered impenetrable boundaries.

A blind Jew once brought a volume of his Torah insights to **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer**. He asked Rav Isser Zalman to take a look at one particular piece. "That piece," he remarked, "was the last piece I wrote, and then I went blind."

"What happened?"

"I worked on my *sefer* for many years," the man explained. "I toiled over the Gemara and Rishonim and Poskim with every fibre of my being, and my labours were blessed with some success. Some of the pieces are really very good. But they took so much effort, and I was getting older.

One day, after finishing work on a *chiddush*, I decided that I had had enough. I just didn't have the strength to keep this up. From now on, I decided, I would continue to learn, but I would not put in the effort necessary to come up with *chiddushei Torah*, novel Torah insights. I wrote down my *chiddush*, and there and then," he paused and took a deep breath, "I became blind!"

"Did you go to doctors?" asked Rav Isser Zalman. "Of course I went to doctors," the man replied. "And you know what they told me? They said that based on the condition of my eyes I should have been blind ten years earlier. They simply could not understand why I hadn't gone blind before."

For ten years, this man had done the impossible. He had studied and written *chiddushei Torah*, using eyes that should not have been functioning. But "so shall your children be." Jewish people, the descendants of Avraham, can accomplish the impossible.

Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan -Praying for Whom?



I vividly remember the day. I was a young boy in second grade and recess was just beginning, when my close friend, Jesse Sutton, came over to me. "Duvi," he said, "we are not going to recess today." I looked at him with a strange stare. Recess was the highlight of my day. "Huh?" I muttered. "What do you mean? I want to play ball! What else is so important to do?" "My mother was rushed to the hospital today as I left to come here to school." My demeanour immediately changed. "I'm very sorry to hear that," I solemnly said. "Is everything okay?" "Yeah, yeah," Jesse said. "My mother went to give birth." Now what had seemed to be bad news turned into good news. "Oh wow, Mazel Tov! That's great!" But now I was confused. "So what's the problem?" I asked. "Duvi," he said, getting a little antsy. "Don't you get it? I have five sisters. We need to pray that this one is a boy! We can't go to recess today but need to stay inside and say Tehillim!"

As soon as I understood what Jesse was referring to, I knew what I needed to do. "If that is the way you put it," I told him, "then this is a code red." And so, as the other boys filed out of the room to play football and basketball, I stayed behind with Jesse and pulled out my Sefer Tehillim. And then I began praying, "Hashem, you need to give my friend a baby brother! Please, please….!" We continued praying our hearts out, until our Rebbe re-entered the classroom and confusedly looked at the two of us heavily swaying.

"What are you both doing here?" he asked. "Rebbe," I said, "this is an emergency. Jesse's mother went to the hospital this morning to give birth." "Oh, Mazel Tov!" he exclaimed. It was clear that he had

not yet caught on to the urgency of this matter. "Rebbe, don't you get it? Jesse has five sisters… we are praying that he will have a baby brother!"

Our Rebbe simply smiled at the "emergency" we were taking care of and allowed us to carry on. When recess was eventually over, everyone returned to class and took their seats. Just about an hour later, the door opened. It was Jesse's father, and he was back from the hospital with news.

By now, the entire class had learned of what Jesse and I had done, and as well hoped that we would receive "good news" that it was a boy. Jesse's father, quickly catching on that we are all waiting for the news, said, "It was… a girl!"

The whole class immediately let out a gruntled sigh. "What?" I said, standing up to my full height. "What do you mean! I gave up my recess and prayed my heart out! Why didn't Hashem listen to me?" But the reality was the reality. That day, Jesse gained another little sister, to make it six in total.

Years went by for me, Jesse and his new sister, who they named Naomi. But today, her name is no longer Naomi Sutton, but Naomi Bensoussan- my wife!

Could you imagine if it would have been a boy? Hashem knows exactly what do with every prayer uttered. Little did I know that in that classroom that day, my prayers were not going to lead to the birth of a new baby brother for Jesse, but the birth of my bashert. Such are the amazing ways of Hashem.



A wise man would say: ***"It's less important to have lots of friends, and more important to have real ones."***



A Short Message from Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss



וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ. My grandfather z"l, who was particularly knowledgeable and well-versed with many nuances in gematria (Hebrew numerical value), noted that the word אַרְאֶךָּ ("I will show you") in the verse, "*Hashem said to Avram, 'Go for yourself… to the land that I will show you.*" (*Bereishis* 12:1) uniquely stands out. When each letter of the word *er'eka* is spelled out in full (*aleph, lamed, pei – reish, yud, shin – aleph, lamed, pei – chaf, pei*) it is exactly the gematria of the words Eretz Yisrael. Essentially, although not explicitly mentioned, embedded in the Torah is the allusion to the land which Hashem was leading Avraham Avinu.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the only Pasuk in the Torah which equals the gematria of Eretz Yisrael is that of, "Hashem is a man of war; Hashem is His name" (*Shemos* 15:1-19) mentioned in *Az Yashir*, sung by the Jews after crossing the Red Sea. The message is clear. Although it may seem that we as a national army are the source of our security and success, in truth, it is all the doing of Hashem.

This concept is further seen, observed **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l**, in the formation of the Jewish symbol of the Magen David. The six-sided star, which originally found its place on the shields of Dovid Hamelech's army, points to all four directions and up and down to indicate that it is not man's strength which wages and wins wars, but rather Hashem.

Rabbi Eliyahu Bergstein -The Songbird's Secret



While everyone imagined the king's greatest treasury to be his large estate and vast wealth, in truth, his most beloved and precious commodity was a beautiful songbird. It was capable of singing the most melodious of tunes and enthralling anyone who heard its pitch. Any observer would have reasonably concluded that the songbird enjoyed the greatest life possible. All except the songbird itself. Although enclosed in a golden cage, it wished to roam unfettered in the wild and fly and sing without restraint. And so, it one day came up with a plan. Reaching out to the other birds living outside the palace, the songbird called for help. "If you could please do me a favour," the songbird said, "my sister lives in the nearby forest. She is very smart, and I know she would be able to devise a way for me to escape the palace. Please go consult with her and report back to me." Without delay, the birds got to work, scouting out the location of the songbird's sister.

After finally reaching her, they relayed the news of the songbird and awaited a response. But before they knew it, the sister bird froze still in position, closed her eyes and fell to the ground. The other birds were shocked. Rushing back to the songbird, they conveyed what they had just witnessed. "She must have had a heart attack and died," the birds sadly confirmed. "As soon as she heard about your situation, she just keeled over and fell down headfirst."

For the next few days, the songbird did not sing or sleep or eat. It simply laid in its cage motionless for hours. The palace's workers

tried changing the water and rearranging the cage, but it didn't help. They even brought in an expert veterinarian, but he couldn't detect anything wrong either. And so, after days of seeing the songbird lifeless with its eyes closed, it was confirmed that it had sadly passed away.

What need did the king now have for a dead bird? The servants proceeded to pick up the cage, haul it to the window and shake it out. The songbird began freefalling straight down, until right before it hit the ground… it opened its eyes, flapped its wings and began soaring away, singing the most jovial and spectacular song it had ever sung.

The other birds who had gone to the songbird's sister just a few days ago were surprised to see the songbird out and about, flying freely around. And then they realized. The songbird's sister had not died; it had simply been sending its brother a message. She had been nonverbally communicating the precise method which would free the songbird from its caged life. What was it to do? Play dead. If it would give the impression that it was no longer alive, within a short period, it would be tossed out of the king's palace and be on its way towards a new, unrestrained life.

The same is true, writes the **Ben Ish Chai**, of Shabbos. Throughout an entire week, we live within a confined framework. We engage in our many responsibilities which come along with being human. Our lives become subsumed with daily and demanding tasks and chores. Yet then comes Shabbos, a day when we can experience freedom and unfetter ourselves from such confines which we experience throughout the week. Yet how exactly do we achieve such freedom?

We, so to speak, play dead. We disconnect from the fast-paced, physical world we know and enter an entirely different, spiritual world. We make no trips to the supermarket or bank or answer any phone calls. We detach ourselves from our weekday load and open ourselves to the sublime experience of… Shabbos.

Every week, we are gifted one day which contains unsurpassed potential for spiritual growth and connection to our Creator. And how do we achieve it? Simple. Tune out everything else in your life and allow yourself to connect to a day so pristine and holy. Disconnect to connect. Tune out to tune in and play dead to truly be alive. And that indeed is the secret of the songbird.



Torah Tavlin

14:14 וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיָּרֶק אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו

The Tzaddik, **R' Menachem Nachum Twerski zt"l**, would give his life to the mitzvah of Pidyon Shvuyim (redeeming captives). It happened that R' Menachem Nachum was once arrested at night in the city of Zhitomir and was placed in prison. His close disciple, **R' Zev Wolf of Zhitomir zt"l** requested to remain with him.

One day there appeared before them a woman whose head was concealed with a silk kerchief, and she asked R' Menachem Nachum in wonder, "Such is Torah, and such is the reward?" He looked at her and answered calmly, "Yes. Such is Torah, and such is its reward." And then, as quickly as she came, the woman suddenly vanished and R' Zev Wolf gathered up his courage and asked his Rebbe, "Who was this woman and what was the meaning of her words?"

R' Menachem Nachum answered, "This righteous woman was Sara Imeinu a"h, and she asked me: Do you not engage constantly in the mitzvah of redeeming captives? If so, how is it possible that you are rewarded by being placed under arrest here in this dungeon? How can this be the reward for your efforts?

I answered her, it is fitting for me to be under arrest, so that I should know and experience first-hand the great pain of captives. In this way I shall make even greater efforts to redeem captives that are languishing in prison."

Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that when Avraham heard that "his brother" Lot was captured, he immediately took action. Lot was not

his brother, but his nephew, so why does the posuk call him a brother?

The Torah wrote it in this way in order to show us the virtue of brotherliness which Avraham Avinu extended even to a nephew like Lot who had chosen to live as a neighbour of the wicked people of Sodom. Nothing at all mattered to Avraham Avinu, with regard to redeeming the captives. He had not allowed considerations of the strife which had previously occurred between them to influence his judgment concerning his nephew, the son of his brother.

The Torah wants us to know that Avraham risked his life on Lot's behalf just as if he were a biological brother.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein -What is Yiddishkeit?



Some time ago, a girl from a religious, Orthodox family, who had received a strong Jewish education throughout elementary, middle and high school came to me. She had just returned from seminary yet was clearly upset and disturbed. Something was clearly bothering her.

"I don't want this anymore," she said. "I am done. I don't want to be religious!" I was startled and shaken up to hear such a confident and bold statement. Here was a girl who had gone through many years of a sound Jewish education and been immersed in a world of Torah and mitzvos, yet now wished to discard it all. What happened?

But before she continued, I had one question to ask. "Before you tell me why you don't want this anymore, tell me what exactly you don't

want. You say that you don't want to be religious, but what does 'religious' mean to you?" "I can't take all these rules," she said. "There are just too many of them. I cannot live with all these rules!"

I paused. "But Judaism is not rules," I replied. She didn't understand. "What do you mean? Judaism has 613 rules. And then there are Rabbinic rules too, and even more rules added on in addition to those. There are a lot of rules!" "Let me answer you with a story," I said. She leaned back in her seat, eager to hear what I had to say.

"When my daughter turned sixteen, she wanted to get her permit. Of course, before you can go to the DMV and wait in line for hours upon hours to take your actual driving test, you must study a book which details all the rules of driving. After my daughter got a hold of the book and began studying, I curiously took a look at it one day. And there I saw dozens of pages enumerating rule after rule relating to driving: If your blinker doesn't work, stick your hand out the window to signal; begin signalling one hundred feet before making a turn; be cognizant of incoming traffic; be familiar with signs for railroad crossing, flooding, yielding etc. etc.'

As I perused through the countless rules, I could not help but wonder why everyone is willing to drive if there are so many rules? At this point, I turned to the girl and posed the question to her. "What do you think? What is driving about? What does it mean to drive?" She was a smart girl and knew what to respond. "Driving is about getting from point A to point B." I paused, allowing her to hear her own words.

"Exactly!" I exclaimed. "So tell me, if I would fill up an entire room of teenagers and ask them to translate the word 'driving,' why would no one respond, 'Driving means yield, stop sign, red light, green light etc.'? No one would say that because that is not what driving is about. Driving is about travelling from one destination to another. And that is why, even though there are hundreds of driving rules, no

one ever says, "I don't want to drive because there are so many rules! I can't handle needing to always keep to a speed limit, put my seat belt on, look at my side mirror and rear-view mirror…" No one ever says that because that does not define driving. Furthermore, even when kids fail their driving test at one site, they go elsewhere to take it again and find an easier instructor. They'll go from place to place to place, until they find that one instructor who can barely see and will say when they back up and actually hit the car behind them, 'Good parking! Good parking!' What happened? Why all of sudden, despite the difficulty and numerous rules involved, no one gives up driving? Why doesn't anyone associate driving with all these rules?" Good question.

"Let's take a similar example," I continued. You get on a plane and land on the other side of the country. After you deplane, your friend approaches you and asks, 'How was your flight?' 'It was great!' you say. 'If I may ask,' your friend continues, 'what is flying about?" Well, it is about getting from point A to point B by means of travelling in the air.

'Now imagine the conversation progressing a slightly different way. 'How was your flight?' 'Well, let me tell you. Flying is about rules – seatbelt, oxygen mask, luggage etc." This is not the way people view driving or flying. While both modes of travel require rules and guidelines, ultimately, the rules are only there for one's safety. They do not define the essence of driving or flying.

"Judaism is the same way," I explained. "It is about getting from one point to another. From the minute a person's soul enters this world until it returns to Heaven, it is on a trip. Yet in order for the soul's journey to be safe, it needs 613 safety regulations. But Yiddishkeit is not the rules. It is life itself. It is about our travel in this world.

"So," I finished telling the girl, "when you say that you want to give up religion, you don't mean Yiddishkeit. You mean the rules. But Yiddishkeit is not rules. It is life."

She liked the answer. But she had a question. "Rabbi, I get that. But I still don't understand one thing. The rules for driving and flying make sense. It is understandable to require a driver to slow down when approaching an intersection and for a passenger to wear a seatbelt on a plane. But how does the Jewish law of putting on your right shoe before your left shoe make any sense? And what is so important about not wearing wool and linen together? There are many 'rules' in Judaism which make no sense!" "That's a good question," I said. "But now, let me tell you another story.

Nechama always dreamed of going to seminary. As a little girl growing up, she had heard of the fabulous and uplifting time so many girls had while spending a year learning in Israel. And then finally, the time arrived. Nechama was soon to graduate high school, and she would have the opportunity of going to seminary herself. But, as the only daughter in the family, her father was of course very attached to her. He loved her dearly and the idea of not seeing his daughter for an entire year was something he knew would be difficult. Aside from this, it was financially challenging to send her away. But Nechama only begged and begged her father to provide her with the opportunity of a lifetime.



Finally, he gave in. "I will let you go," the father told Nechama, "but only on one condition. Every night before you go to sleep, I want you to light a tealight and say my name."

Nechama stood still, her eyebrows furrowing in confusion. "Dad, is everything okay?" "Don't ask," replied her father. "If you will agree to do this, I will gladly allow you to go." Nechama agreed, not knowing how exactly such a nightly regimen would work out. By the time Nechama

landed, her mind had drifted to other, more immediate matters. But it wasn't long before she opened her suitcase and saw over two hundred tealights nicely arranged. The other girls in the room couldn't help but wonder why she needed so many lights, though they didn't inquire any further. For the next few days, Nechama went about lighting a tealight every night and reciting her father's name. Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night…

Finally, her roommates could no longer bear the curiosity. "Nechama," they all asked, gathering around together, "could we ask why you light a candle every night?" "To be honest," Nechama replied, "I don't know. My father said that if I wanted to attend seminary, I needed to do so, and I am just following his instructions."

The year continued with Nechama carrying out her special practice every night without fail. Whether she spent the time in her room in seminary, or attended a guest's home for Shabbos, her tealights accompanied her everywhere. It of course aroused the curiosity of those who observed her, but she managed her special routine with as much stride as she could. As the year came to a close and Nechama returned home, she approached her father. "Dad," she said, "I really appreciate you allowing me to attend seminary this year. It was wonderful. If I may ask, though, what was the story behind the tealights? Why did you want me to light them every night? People often thought something was wrong with both you and me!"

"I will tell you," her father said. "I know you very well, and I know how busy you would get while in seminary. I realized that if I would ask you to call me every day, you would say, 'Of course!' and then arrive there and forget to do so. You would become absorbed in your learning and involved in your trips. And I respect that, and I wanted you to enjoy yourself and learn and grow. But I told myself, I am not willing to go for an entire year and not have you think about me. So I came up with an idea. You would light a tealight every night and say my name, and in that way you would remember me every single day.

Cleaning out last night's candle and preparing a new one would force you to think about me. And that is all I wanted. I just wanted you to remember me."

"This is all Hashem desires from us, His children," I explained to the girl. "He knows full well that we have busy lives. We have our families to take care of and health and jobs to worry about. If Hashem would tell us, 'My children, I want you to think of me every day,' we would certainly give our word that we would do so. But then two days would go by, and we would unexpectedly realize that we hadn't thought of Him. So Hashem came up with a plan. "I am not going to take you away from your day and ask you to think of Me. Rather, in your day and a part of your work, I am going to provide you with ways of remembering me. When you get dressed, before and after you eat, and as you work in the field and office, I am going to incorporate mitzvos which will remind you of Me. Whenever you get dressed, and place your right shoe on first or ensure your jacket is checked for shaatnez and does not contain wool and linen, you will remember Me."

Hashem came up with 613 tealights encompassing every facet of our lives. Built into our daily schedule, we are constantly able to connect to Him. And as it relates to some of these tealights, there are those we don't fully understand. As I finished with my story, I clarified what the answer was to the girl. "Putting on your right shoe or not wearing shaatnez is not something we understand; so why are there such commandments? Because when you think about this while getting dressed, you are connected to Hashem and your tealight is on. You will need to spend a moment remembering Him, and that is all He wants. G-d did not tell us to remember Him by fasting for forty days. He tells us to connect to Him during our very busy day of gathering in our crop from the field, preparing our food and before and after eating our meal. And although some things we know the reason behind and some things we don't, at the very root of it all, all Hashem asks of us is to think about Him and stay connected to Him."

The girl walked away from the conversation a changed person. She had learned the lesson she had missed out on for so many years. Yiddishkeit is not simply rules; it is life. And even more so, the many mitzvos we have, some of which don't make sense, are there because they are our tealights. And when we light our tealight and remember our Father in Heaven, we connect to Him in the most intimate of ways. He sends us down to earth with 613 features and guidelines which are there to benefit our travel on earth and keep us safe, and all He wishes is that we remember Him during our travel. And when we in fact adhere to these beneficial guidelines and keep our beloved Father in mind, we will one day arrive home, happily and fully accomplished and truly appreciative of our beautiful and wonderful trip we so immensely enjoyed.



17:13 הִמָּוֹל יִמּוֹל יְלִיד בֵּיתְךָ וּמִקְנַת כַּסְפֶּךָ וְהָיְתָה בְרִיתִי בִּבְשַׂרְכֶם לִבְרִית עוֹלָם

A number of years ago, Rabbi Hertzel Borochov, a Lubavitcher chasid from Rechovot, in the Central District of Israel, visited an auto body shop near his home to have his car serviced. The owner of the shop was a man by the name of Tziyon Kedoshim, a Sephardic Jew, who was nominally observant. He put on Tefillin every day and davened, but not much more than that.

When Rabbi Borochov entered his shop, he casually inquired how the man's family is doing and suddenly, Mr. and Mrs. Kedoshim became uncomfortable. They looked at one another, eyes filling with tears, and she finally mumbled, "Um, not so good," under her breath. It took a bit of coaxing, but the Rabbi finally got them to talk. Their fifteen-year-old son has issues: since he is five, he has not grown an inch. He was quite simply ... tiny! At first the doctors thought that perhaps he was just a late developer, but the years passed, and nothing has changed. The doctors took tests and prescribed various treatments and hormones but the boy remains under four feet tall. Soon he would be sixteen and it was driving them all crazy. He was

becoming introverted and depressed. He had no friends, no self-confidence and no hope for the future.

Rabbi Borochov had an idea. He asked them to write a detailed letter about their problem and he would insert the letter into one of the 25 volumes of Igros Kodesh from the **Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l** (the Rebbe received and answered more mail than almost any man in the world, including the president of the U.S.). This is a common practice among Chabad Chassidim, and at the exact place where the letter is randomly inserted, that is the message to help alleviate their problem.

The Kedoshims wrote the letter and that evening when he arrived home, the first thing he did was go the bookcase, randomly pick one of the 25 volumes, pray a short prayer, and insert the letter between two of the pages. Then he opened it to that place and read what was written. It was a detailed explanation of different aspects of the mitzvah of ... Bris Milah! What does Bris Milah have to do with being short? How could circumcision help?

The next day Rabbi Borochov returned to the body shop and gave the Kedoshims the news. They had no idea - as far as they knew, their son had already been circumcised! "By a proper Mohel?" the Rabbi asked, grasping for straws. Suddenly, Mrs. Kedoshim began to stammer, "Well ... sort of. I'm not really sure." Her husband interrupted, "Rabbi, what's the big deal? When our son was born our friends convinced us that it was primitive to have a rabbi do it. So we had a doctor in the hospital make the circumcision under anaesthetic. But what does that have to do with his height? Excuse me Rabbi, thanks for your help but I think maybe we should forget about it."

But Rabbi Borochov stood firm. "It probably wouldn't require any more than a pin-sized cut to make one drop of blood and maybe it might help. It has to be done anyway according to the Torah. It won't cost money. A lot of older people are doing it ...." After a half-hour

they finally agreed. At first, their son was horrified, but after a few weeks, he came around. If it could help him, he might as well try. The Rabbi even set up an appointment with Rabbi Yaron Amit who runs the "Brit Yosef Yitzchak Center" in Jerusalem, a large, modern, medical facility, and the circumcision came off without a hitch.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Borochov became so involved in other things that he completely forgot about the entire incident. It was four years later that he happened to be walking in a shopping mall and heard someone call his name. "Rabbi Borochov!" He turned around and there was Mr. Kedoshim, with a big smile on his face. "Good to see you Rabbi!" "Hello! Mr. Kedoshim, right?" Rabbi Borochov answered. "How are you? How is your wife? Hey! Tell me, whatever happened with your son? Did he have the Bris Milah?"

"Yes, of course!" Mr. Kedoshim lifted his open hands to heaven and exclaimed. "Boruch Hashem! Rabbi, you won't believe it. He had the Bris and a few months later, our son began to grow. But I mean really grow! Now he is huge! Taller than you, Rabbi! He is in the engineering corps in the army, a real fighter! We are all religious now, too!" Rabbi Borochov was invited to their son's graduation party and he could not believe his eyes: the "boy" was fifty pounds heavier and a full head taller than him! The Bris Milah actually affected the boy's physical body and made him grow!

R' Avraham Elkanah Kahana-Shapira ZT"L (Imrei Shefer) would say: "Many have asked: Since Avraham Avinu kept the whole Torah before it was given, why did he not circumcise himself before he was commanded to do so? Because the essence of the mitzvah of circumcision is not the surgical procedure; it is forming a covenant with Hashem. Hence, it is called, "Bris Milah." And it takes two to form a covenant. That is not something that Avraham could have done on his own, even if he had performed the act of circumcision."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

12;20 וַיְצַו עָלָיו פַּרְעֹה אֲנָשִׁים וַיְשַׁלְּחוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ



After Pharaoh abducted Sarai, the wife of Avram, and was divinely punished with plagues, **Targum Onkelos** tells us that Pharaoh released Sarai and escorted her and Avram out of his palace. The Gemara (Sotah 46b) writes that because of the four steps that Pharaoh walked while escorting Avram and Sarai, he was permitted to enslave the Jewish people in Egypt for 400 years - one hundred years for each step - which Hashem in His great mercy later shortened to 210 years.

Nevuchadnezzar, King of Bavel, once wrote a letter which said, "To the Jewish people and their G-d." After realizing that it was inappropriate to write in this order, he walked four amos to retrieve the letter. This showed great honour and respect to Hashem and the Jewish people remained in exile under his rule for 70 years.

One might wonder: Why did Pharaoh get "rewarded" with 210 years for his steps while the King of Bavel only received 70 years?

R' Yonasan Eibeschutz zt"l explains that the average step a person takes is 1/3 of his height. A normal person is three amos (cubits) tall so every step that he takes is the length of one amah. Pharaoh, however, was very short, only one amah tall, one-third the size of a normal person. In order for him to walk 4 amos it took three times the effort of Nevuchadnezzar.

Thus, Nevuchadnezzar exiled the Jews for 70 years while Pharaoh had them for three times as long! What a great lesson to be learned

from this! Hashem rewards a person for his effort, not necessarily for his actions!

Both kings walked the same distance, but Pharaoh received three times as much! How much more does this apply when we work long and hard to accomplish something positive? Remember, it is not the outcome that counts - it is the effort!

The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Simcha Bunim Alter zt"l (Lev Simcha) would say: וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־סְדֹם אֶל־אַבְרָם תֶּן־לִי הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהָרְכֻשׁ קַח־לָךְ - ***And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the souls, and the possessions take for yourself."*** 14:21

The Yetzer Hara is always looking for ways to infiltrate one's heart and mind and cause him to go astray. The worst thing one can do is sell his soul to the Satan. We must learn from Avraham Avinu to withstand this challenge.

When the King of Sodom told him, 'Give me your soul' - it is precisely what the Satan wants. He wants our souls. In exchange, he will offer, 'the possessions take for yourself.' Avraham refused and we must too! We cannot 'sell out' for the sake of money, for then the Satan will own our souls!"

אַל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם אָנֹכִי מָגֵן לָךְ שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד - *'And Hashem said to Avraham...your reward is exceedingly great.'* (15:1)

According to logic, the reward for doing a mitzvah should be finite and limited to the amount of effort which a person expends on its behalf. From here we see that Hashem, in His infinite greatness, is capable and willing to increase the reward beyond the boundaries of time and place." ~ **Chacham Rabbeinu Yosef Albo**. (Sefer Haikarim)

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

12:2 וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ֙ לְגֹ֣וי גָּד֔וֹל וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ֖ וַאֲגַדְּלָ֣ה שְׁמֶ֑ךָ וֶֽהְיֵ֖ה בְּרָכָֽה

Rashi quotes the Gemara in Pesachim (117b) that this posuk refers to the birchas Avos, the first beracha in Shemona Esrai. The Gemara continues: you might think the beracha "**מגן אברהם**" should conclude with all three names of the Avos; therefore, the posuk says "**והיה ברכה**" - Hashem says, "**בך חותמין**" - this beracha will end with you, Avraham; not Yitzchok or Yaakov. What is the reason for this?

My machshava here is as follows: We do not conclude with the mention of all three Avos in order to dispell the mistaken notion that we have three distinct branches of Yiddishkeit. Avraham Avinu embodied the essence of chessed, Yitzchak contained the enormous power of tefillah/avodah, while Yaakov was the pillar of truth represented by his prolific Torah study. One might mistakenly think that each individual middah is independent of the others and one can devote his life to any one of the three, disregarding the other two, thinking that he is no less of a G-d-fearing, upstanding Jew.

Thus, Chazal stress that Yitzchok Avinu did not have his own independent manner of divine service and neither did Yaakov. Both were a continuation of the spirit of Avraham Avinu. This is the meaning of the words **מגן אברהם** at the conclusion of the birchas Avos: in other words, all manner of Avodas Hashem is an outgrowth of the divine service which Avraham Avinu began.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l offers a different explanation. Moshiach will come in the merit of Klal Yisroel upholding the middah of chessed as embodied by Avraham Avinu, and even if parts of the other two middos may be lost by the majority of the people, the middah of chessed will live on and continue to be strong. We clearly see this today whereby tzedakah and chessed have become inborn traits which characterize the spiritual makeup of a Jew. Thus, the Gemara says: **בך חותמין** - with you, Avraham, I will conclude this long golus, in the merit of your chessed and tzedaka. We say "Tziyon" should be

redeemed through justice but Moshiach will come only through the middah of chessed and tzedaka. May it be soon and in our lifetime.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אלקים בַּמֶּה אֵדַע כִּי אִירָשֶׁנָּה 15:8

If there was ever a man known for his extreme patience and tolerance in responding to all sorts of questions that were posed to him, it was the great Posek Hador, **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l**.



His Rebbetzin related that one night, after midnight, a man came to the Elyashiv home and pounded on the door quite loudly. Although he did not sleep much, R' Elyashiv instantly awoke and ran to answer the door. The man apologized for waking the Rav but he had a very important shaila to ask which could not wait.

R' Elyashiv invited him in and sat down to listen to his query. The man needed to know: what name should he give his newborn son? R' Elyashiv understood from the tone of the question that the man was probably making a bris the next morning and was conflicted about the baby's name. He listened as the man told him the various angles to the question, what his wife felt, and what the family custom has always been. R' Elyashiv asked a few pointed questions and then, together, they came up with a name that would be appropriate.

Smiling broadly, the man stood up and thanked the Rav for taking the time to answer his question. R' Elyashiv saw him to the door and as he walked out, he turned and asked one more question: "***But if my***

wife has a girl what should we name her?" Although Chazal tell us that Avraham Avinu improperly asked, **בַּמָּה אֵדַע כִּי אִירָשֶׁנָּה** - "How will I know that I will inherit it?" Hashem did not get angry with him and reprove him on the spot. Instead, he made a "Bris" - a covenant, whereby He swore that Avraham's descendants will inherit the Land of Israel.

Gedolim and Tzaddikim understand the importance of tolerating others, even when they are wrong and sinful, and we too must learn from the middos of the Almighty - and emulate Him - by treating other Jews with the utmost respect, dignity, patience and love that we would expect from others.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וּלְאַבְרָם הֵיטִיב בַּעֲבוּרָהּ *And he benefited Abram for her sake* *12:16*



The Gemara (B.M 59a) quotes Rav Chelbo who learns from our posuk that a man should be careful with the kavod of his wife since all blessings come to the home due to the woman. Rava even told the people of Mechuza: "Give honour to your wives because in that merit you will become rich." **R' Avraham Chaim Feuer shlit'a** (Lahavos Aish) quotes **R' Avraham Pam zt"l** who asks: in the Kesuba document that a man gives to his wife under the chupa, there are four words that are used to express his obligation to his wife. - ***I will work,*** - ***I will honour,*** - ***I will nourish,*** - ***I will support***. It seems that the word OKIR - I will honour, is an emotional obligation, while the other three are financial. What is it doing here?

Rav Pam answers that in fact the first TWO words describe a man's emotional obligations toward his wife, and the second two describe his financial obligations. EFLACH - I will work, is referring to Avodas Hamiddos, working hard to respect and honour one's wife. A man must work on himself not to be demanding or harsh with his spouse; he must put in great effort to appreciate and accept her in all situations, never cause her pain or criticize her, try to ignore her faults and downplay her mistakes.

In order to merit much blessing in his home, a man must truly WORK ON HIMSELF - "Eflach" - in order to respect his wife - "Okir." The second two words IZON and AFARNES are referring to a man's financial obligations to his wife. R' Feuer adds that nowadays, when many young husbands are learning in Kollel, how can they promise financial support to a wife?

The answer is that the last two words in the kesuba are conditional on the first two. "Happy Wife, Happy Life." If a man works hard to show his wife the kavod she deserves, then he is promised that his parnassa will come with much blessing!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ 15:5

I have always wondered why when Avraham Avinu was promised that he will have as many children as the dust of the earth – **כעפר הארץ** - he was not satisfied and told the Ribono shel Olam, "Behold, I was not given offspring." But when Hashem told Avraham that he will have descendants like the stars of the sky, the posuk says " **והאמין בה**" - Avraham Avinu believed Him.

I have a machshava on this. Avraham wasn't looking to have many children; he wished for special and unique children who will follow in his footsteps and continue to do kindness, for which Avraham Avinu

was renowned for. Thus, he told the Ribono shel Olam "**הן לי לא נתתה זרע**", as Rashi explains, what good is there in everything You promised me if You have not promised me (**לי**) a son who will carry on my mission in life?



To this, the Ribono shel Olam answered, "Not only will you have children in quantity, but also in quality, they will be like stars!" This appeased Avraham and made him happy. When Hashem created the sun, moon and stars, the posuk states, "**ואת הכוכבים**". Rashi denotes that Hashem created the stars later, as an afterthought, in order to appease the moon who was broken-hearted after becoming smaller than the sun.

Interestingly, this same promise of "**כוכבים**" - was what appeased Avraham that his children will continue his legacy. In davening, we say every day, **הרופא לישבורי לב ומחבש לעצבותם מונה מספר לכוכבים** - "***Who heals the broken-hearted and binds their wounds. He counts the number of the stars...***"

Did you ever stop to wonder about the connection between these two posukim? With the above thought, that the stars were created to appease the moon, and henceforth, it appeased Avraham Avinu as well, the connection is crystal clear.

What did Hashem create to appease broken-hearted people as they go through hardships in life? He gives them wonderful and special children - "**כוכבים**" - (SUPER)STARS, who will be Baalei Torah, Yirah and "**גומלי חסדים**" and who will merit to bring Mashiach Tzidkeinu speedily and in our times!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וּלְאַבְרָם הֵיטִיב בַּעֲבוּרָהּ וַיְהִי־לוֹ צֹאן־וּבָקָר וַחֲמֹרִים וַעֲבָדִים וּשְׁפָחֹת וַאֲתֹנֹת וּגְמַלִּים ***And he benefited Abram for her sake, and he had flocks and cattle and he donkeys and men servants and maid servants, and she donkeys and camels.*** *12:16*



When Avraham Avinu and his wife Sarah reached the Land of Canaan, he chose a spot and pitched his tent. The posuk states: "**ויט אהלה**" with the letter "**ה**" at the end instead of a "**ו**" as if to stress that Avraham pitched "her tent."

Rashi brings down a Medrash that he did indeed pitch Sarah's tent before his own. **The Sifsei Chachamim** explains that Rashi bases this on a Gemara **יבמות סב:** "*A man must love his wife like himself and honour her more than himself.*"

My machshava here is that the Torah wants to teach us not only the *trials* of Avraham, but also a lesson in how to honour your wife more than yourself. The Gemara in Bava Metzia tells us that Rabba would tell Bnei Mechuza: "Honora your wife so that you will become wealthy." He quotes the posuk in Lech Lecha saying, "**ולאברם היטיב בעבורה**" - "*Avraham became wealthy because of Sarah.*" We learn from this that Avraham became wealthy because of the respect he gave Sarah.

What connection is there between honouring a wife and becoming rich? A wife works hard for her husband and children and feels a strong desire to be appreciated. When a husband compliments his wife and treats her with respect, this bolsters her self-esteem and makes her feel valuable and important. The Ribono shel Olam

rewards the husband that he too will be blessed with - monetary value - namely financial success.

Avraham Avinu is renowned for the miracles and nisyonos - the fire, wars, Akeidas Yitzchok - however here, the Torah makes a point of spelling the word "**אהלה** " to demonstrate the degree of respect Avraham showed to his wife. We must not focus only on the great things that Avraham Avinu did, but also on the seemingly "little things" in life, like the proper way to treat a wife and how to honour her more than himself.

If we follow the example he set for us, which begins at home and how we talk and treat our spouse with respect, sensitivity and consideration, B'ezras Hashem, we will be rewarded with a life of shalom bayis and nachas - and yes, financial success!



וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ
12:1

Hashem tests Avraham by commanding him to leave his homeland. The usual method of testing is a progressive process from easy to more difficult. What we see here is different. Seemingly, Avraham is now being tested in a milder fashion than before. The mesiras nefesh, of facing certain death when he was thrown into a fiery furnace in Ur Kasdim, was a test on a grand scale. Nevertheless, Avraham Avinu withstood that trial, and with his success publicly brought honour to Hashem's name.

Now, Hashem commands Avraham Avinu to leave his homeland. How do we understand the underlying reason for this test? If the test was essentially easier than the previous test of Ur Kasdim, there would be no apparent purpose to it.

R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg zt"l explains that Hashem tested Avraham Avinu first with death and then with life. The test of life is much greater in its potential for success, but also in its chance of

failure. Avraham was saved alive, untouched by the blazing fires of Ur Kasdim. Then came the test of change. "Lech Lecha" means to remove oneself from the past and familiar. He was now challenged to change and grow completely on his own, this time without the help of miracles. Hakadosh Baruch Hu demanded that Avraham leave the familiar surroundings of his home. Hashem's plan was for Avraham to wander among strangers in foreign lands. These tests would bring out even deeper levels of service.

Because of the difficulty of this test, our forefather grew in stature and became a great Tzaddik. We all must seek out the situations that will actualize our latent potential. And when the inevitable ordeals of life are thrust upon us, we must rise to the occasion each time. This is the meaning of success.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם 15:5 **וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ**



Hashem appears to Avraham and tells him that he will have children! Not only that, but Hashem takes him outside and commands him to look up at the stars and count them. Rashi tells us that the Almighty lifted Avraham out of the universe! He literally took him into space and showed him the stars from above, informing him, "So shall be your children."

Why was this necessary? Couldn't Hashem have shown him the stars from earth and told him that his children will be as numerous as

these? The answer that Rashi provides shows a deeper insight into the nature of the Jewish people and our position and potential in the world. Hashem was showing Avraham that his progeny - Am Yisroel - is the only nation that is not bound by nature. We are ABOVE the world which means we have no set fate. No zodiac sign or horoscope can determine our destiny because we are "out of this world" - not bound by any laws of nature. This means that we control our own Mazel - Fate!

Every person in the world has a set course which is his fate. There are astrologers who can look into the stars and tell us what will transpire in the world. But a Jew can change all of that with repentance, prayer and good deeds. He can change his fate by changing his place or changing his name which is his essence. A Jew can always change!

This is probably one of the most empowering messages that we all need to comprehend! Sometimes in life we feel stuck! We feel powerless to extricate ourselves from painful or harmful situations. We tell ourselves "It is what it is!" - but that is not so! If you are a Jew, a descendant of Avraham Avinu, then "It is not what it is, it is what you make it!"

Hashem gives us an incredible gift - the gift of life - and along with it an incredible opportunity! We can and we must raise ourselves up and beyond the natural. Nothing is beyond the power of a Jew!



Living Jewish

שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד ***Your reward will be exceedingly great*** (15:1)

The reward a Jew receives for doing mitzvot is vastly out of proportion to the deed itself: a finite and limited action is rewarded with an eternal and everlasting dividend. (**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**)



12:11 וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֶל־שָׂרַ֗י אִשְׁתּוֹ֙ הִנֵּה־נָ֣א יָדַ֔עְתִּי כִּ֥י אִשָּׁ֛ה יְפַת־מַרְאֶ֖ה אָֽתְּ

R' Boruch Teoumim Frankel zt"l (Marganisa D'Rav) would say: - Rashi tells us that Avraham Avinu did not know how beautiful his wife Sarah was because he never looked at her. How is this possible? If Avraham kept all the mitzvos in the Torah, how could he marry a woman without seeing her first?

The reason why a man must see his future wife before marrying her is so that he should not find anything displeasing and come to despise her. But Avraham Avinu only had love in his heart. He couldn't despise her - or anyone else for that matter - if he tried! Thus, there really was no need for him to even look!"

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

13:7 וַיְהִי־רִ֗יב בֵּין֙ רֹעֵ֣י מִקְנֵה־אַבְרָ֔ם וּבֵ֖ין רֹעֵ֣י מִקְנֵה־לֽוֹט

"An argument arose between the shepherds of Avraham and the shepherds of Lot." Three times daily, we conclude the Shemona Esrai with the words: "**עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו**" - but before we do, we take three steps backwards.

This is to remind us that when a machlokes seems to be brewing and an argument is about to break out, we would do well to take three steps back and thereby diffuse the situation and cause shalom - peace. If we distance ourselves from machlokes, peace and harmony will reign in our homes.

We learn this concept from Avraham Avinu and his nephew Lot, who were both wealthy men who loved each other. A disagreement started when Lot's shepherds allowed their sheep to graze in the fields of others while the shepherds of Avraham refused to allow this because of **גזילה** - stealing. Avraham told Lot: "*Let there not be an argument (**מריבה**) between me and you, between my shepherds*

and your shepherds." He referred to the argument as a "**מריבה**" using the feminine form, instead of "**ריב**" which is the masculine form.

This was to denote that just as a woman has the ability to give birth and produce offspring, so too, a machlokes can ultimately "give birth" to even greater strife, running rampant and producing many more fights.

Avraham Avinu was telling his nephew that a fight between their shepherds will eventually blow up into an argument between themselves as well - "**בינו ובינך**". The only way to stop this from happening was for them to separate from one another.

He taught us: - "If there is no peace, there is nothing."

וַיָּבֹא הַפָּלִיט וַיַּגֶּד לְאַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי וְהוּא שֹׁכֵן בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא 14:13



Rashi quotes the Medrash who maintains that the "**פָּלִיט**" - "Refugee" who escaped and came to inform Avraham of Lot's capture, was the giant Og, "who escaped from the Generation of the Flood (by hanging onto the top of Noach's ark).... And he (Og) intended that Avraham should be killed (while in battle) and he would marry Sarah."

It is amazing to note the contradiction that is Og. On the one hand, he appears to make an extraordinary effort to do chessed with his dear friend, Avraham Avinu, by travelling a great distance, through a war zone, in the midst of conflict, at tremendous risk and sacrifice to himself, to inform Avraham of his relative's capture. And yet,

once we know the true intent behind his monumental efforts to rescue Lot - to get Avraham killed so he can take Sarah for himself - we realize that Og was no more righteous or virtuous than the kings who captured Lot in the first place. So who is he? Will the real Og please stand up?

Indeed, Og the Giant, was an individual who knew and recognized chessed when he saw it, however, he never internalized the concept and was totally removed from performing acts of kindness.

R' Tzvi Hirsch Marinover Shlit'a explains that this is what Rashi is coming to tell us. Og was a refugee who cheated death during the Mabul by hanging onto the outside of the ark. He could look inside and see how for one full year, Noach and his family were fully absorbed with acts of chessed. Day and night, caring for and feeding the animals, Noach spent every waking moment doing kindness and the inside of the ark was transformed into a virtual floating fortress of chessed. But Og was on the outside looking in. He saw chessed, but he never absorbed chessed into his being. He knew what it was, but it wasn't a part of him, like Noach and his sons. Thus, he could make an act look like true kindness and mercy, but in reality, his ulterior motives were far less altruistic.

R' Yaakov Yitzchok of Pshischa ZT"L (Yehudi Hakadosh) would say:

"Everything can be tested to see if it is good or bad. For example, if one wanted to determine whether one is a good or bad Jew, what is the test? It is his love for his fellow Jew. For if a Jew feels that his love for his fellow Jew is increasing greatly from day to day, it is a sure sign that in fact his Yiras Shamayim - Fear of Heaven, is likewise increasing every single day of his life."

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ׃ 15:5



If someone would tell you to go outside and count the stars, unless you had a particular interest in astronomy and the like, you would simply not bother. Obviously, you cannot count the stars in the sky. Yet, Chazal tell us that Avraham actually started to count them!

This is symbolic, says **R' Meir Shapiro ZT"L**, of one of the characteristics that would be a feature of Klal Yisroel, Avraham's descendants: when something looks impossible, beyond the reach of human ability, a Jew will try to do it anyway.

We think that many of the challenges and trials with which we are faced are beyond us, yet once we put in our own effort, we are given help from above to complete the task.

A certain blind Jew once came to a Rav and handed him two volumes of Chiddushei Torah (novellae) he had written before he became blind. The blind man told him to turn to a certain page where he will find the very last insight he had written before he became blind. The Rav asked him what he meant by his "last insight," and the man replied that he had been working on these volumes for years until he finished this particular insight and said to himself, "I've been working on this for too long. I'm too old, it's time for a break."

Within a very short time, his eyes totally dimmed and he became blind. He went to a doctor, who examined him and said, "You should

have been blind ten years ago! Your eyes are terrible! I cannot understand how this didn't happen sooner."

While it may have baffled the doctor, R' Meir Shapiro explained that as long as this Yid wrote down his thoughts, Hashem gave him the gift of vision for another day. When he said, "Enough is enough," he lost this strength.

Counting the stars is symbolic of the power that Avraham's descendants would have, to take the initiative even where it seems impossible. As the Navi writes (ישעיה מ:לא): *"He gives strength to the weary, and abundant might to the weak...but those whose hope is in Hashem will have renewed strength."*

A hunter was once setting traps in the forest. He employed various mechanisms to catch different types of animals. He spent many hours on each trap, constructing it, placing it in the just the right spot and concealing it for maximum effectiveness. One trap he placed in an overgrown thicket, another next to a large tree, while a third he laid on the ground and covered it over with leaves and brush. A person observed him and asked why it was necessary to prepare so many traps in so many different places. The hunter responded, "With each separate trap, I hope to catch a 'velvele' (wolf) here, a 'berele' (bear) here and a 'hershele' (deer) here. I need many different snares to catch each one."

The Chofetz Chaim, who was famous for continuously traveling from town to town selling his seforim and teaching the laws of Lashon Hara, said, "Just like the hunter, I, too, run from place to place selling my seforim. My goal is to likewise chap a Reb 'Velvel' in this city, a Reb 'Berel' in that town and perhaps a Reb 'Hershel' in another village. Each individual Jew is special, and it is my fervent hope to 'catch' each one and bring him closer to Torah and mitzvos."

At the ripe old age of 75, Avraham Avinu was told by Hashem to go to the Holy Land, and thus began a series of travels that would take him across the length and breadth of the land. But far from sightseeing, Avraham moved from place to place with a clear intention in mind: his purpose in life was to spread the word about the Omnipresent G-d that controlled the world. And he succeeded to an amazing degree. Wherever he went, he added "souls" who learned to recognize the greatness of Hashem. He was the consummate "traveling salesman." What was it that he was selling? G-d.



One of the benchmarks of a true Tzaddik, a gauge that separates the "the men from the boys" is ... money. Just as Avraham Avinu refused to accept a "shoestring" from the king of Sodom, an **איש אמת** is one who is not influenced, excited, nor does he take advantage of situations where there is potential for financial gain. An even higher level is when the gains to be had are so miniscule, so small that it would not even register on an average person's radar as an ill-gotten gain, yet for a Tzaddik, the fear of financially benefiting from his position and stature, or through "nisht glatt" (not straight) ways, no matter how diminutive, is something he distances himself from.

This concept can be highlighted by the famous story of the **Chofetz Chaim ZT"L**, who after finding someone willing to deliver a letter in a distant city, would reach into his desk, remove a stamp, and rip it into pieces, because he did not want the government to lose out on the cost of a stamp.

The following is a story that left a powerful impression on a young sixteen-year-old bochur learning in the renowned Yeshivah Gedola of Montreal. Due to Quebec's laws on the resale of alcohol (it is sold only through government-owned retailers, with a limited kosher selection), many Rebbeim in the yeshiva would ask their out-of-town

talmidim to buy them wine and bring it from the United States upon their return from bein hazmanim (vacation).



The Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Mottel Weinberg ZT"L**, asked the young bochur, Heshy Weinberger, if he could please bring him two bottles of wine (the legal limit one may bring across the Canadian border), and he would pay him back when the new zman begins. Heshy was more than happy to oblige. In fact, his father worked in the kosher wine industry, and his parents often showed their appreciation by presenting his Rebbeim with gifts of this nature throughout the years. He knew this would be a perfect opportunity, albeit small, to offer a token of their gratitude to R' Mottel, as they had absolutely no intention of taking money for it.

The day before Heshy was scheduled to go back to Montreal after the Sukkos vacation, his father gave him two bottles of wine, and reiterated that under no circumstances should Heshy take money from the Rosh Yeshivah, "no matter how hard he tries to give it to you." Heshy assured his father that he would remain steadfast in his refusal.

When Heshy was welcomed into the Rosh Yeshivah's office on the first day of the new zman, he cheerfully placed the two bottles on the desk in front of him. R' Mottel smiled and thanked him, inquiring how much they cost. Heshy shyly mumbled that his father "works in wine" (not that it mattered) and as a small token of appreciation, he wanted his son to give these bottles to the Rosh Yeshivah. R' Mottel

replied that he had asked for a simple favour, and this was not to be a gift.

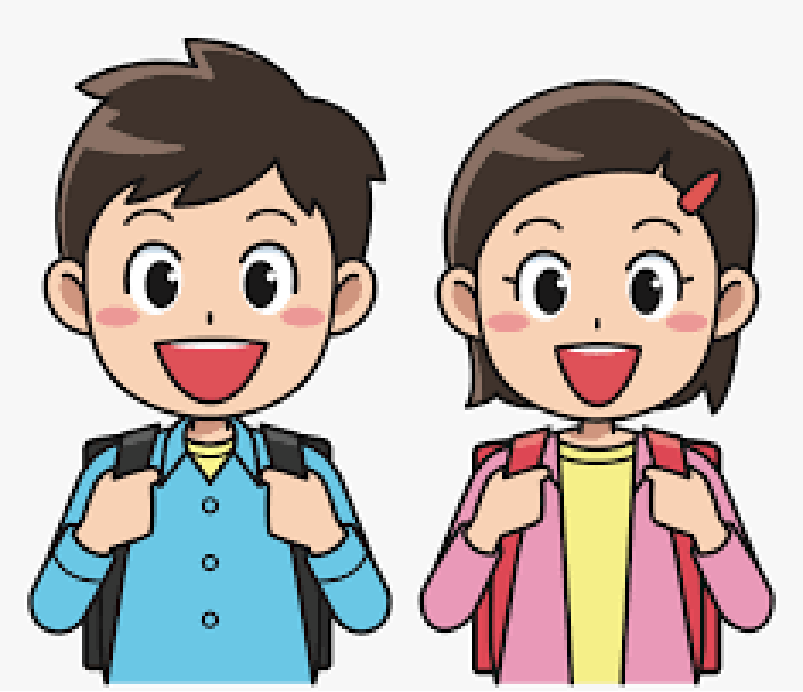
"Rebbe, it really isn't much, they don't cost a lot," Heshy answered, thinking that he would convince this Gadol, whose convictions he would soon find out, were unwavering. "It makes no difference what they cost," R' Mottel answered patiently, "I was the one who approached you, and my intention is to pay you for this favour. You cannot turn this into a gift!"

"But my father gets it for cost price," Heshy argued, but to no avail. They "quarrelled" a bit longer, and Heshy saw that he wasn't going to win. Finally, he said he will take money, thinking that at the very least, he will undercharge. "It cost $3 a bottle," he announced.

With his famous fiery voice, R' Mottel exclaimed, "You know, last week, Schwartz's Plumbing did a job in my house. He installed new toilets and sinks. I asked him to send me a bill, which he did. You know what he charged me? $120 ! Could you believe it? $120! People think I don't know prices! I let him know that he can't charge me so little!" He looked at the wine, and then looked Heshy squarely in the eyes, "People think I don't know prices ...." The very next morning, right before davening, as Heshy was sitting in the Beis Medrash with his Tefillin on, the Rosh Yeshivah walked in. As he made his way to his seat up front, he detoured left to where Heshy was sitting and as he approached, extended his hand to shake Heshy's, to which the boy confusingly complied. He then felt paper material transferring from R' Mottel's palm into his.

"Rabbeinu Tam writes that a person davens with much better kavanah with money in his pocket," he said, and walked away. Heshy looked in his hand and found money for the full retail value of the two bottles of wine.

אִמְרִי־נָ֣א אֲחֹ֣תִי אָ֔תְּ לְמַ֕עַן יִֽיטַב־לִ֥י בַעֲבוּרֵ֖ךְ וְחָיְתָ֥ה נַפְשִׁ֖י בִּגְלָלֵֽךְ׃ 12:13



Avraham said of Sarah his wife, "she is my sister." It is very surprising that Avraham, and later Yitzchok, asked their wives to be deceptive by calling themselves sisters, when they were not. However, Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men, said in Mishlei (7:4): "*Say to wisdom you are my sister.*" Wisdom here refers to the wisdom of the Torah in its many forms. Prophecy is a form of wisdom and prophets are known as "wise men." Thus, when Avraham asked Sarah to call herself his "sister," he was thinking of her status as a prophetess, as Chazal tell us that Sarah surpassed Avraham in prophetic ability. In this manner, Avraham was able to save himself through employing a term with a dual understanding.

It is told, that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the Russian Czar ordered Jewish schools in Russia to incorporate secular studies into their curriculum, an emergency conference of rabbinic leaders was convened in St. Petersburg to discuss ways to avert the evil decree.

R' Yisroel Meir Kagan ZT"L was not yet world-famous as the author of Sefer **Chofetz Chaim** and had not been invited to attend the conference. However, he came anyway, to the surprise of some of the attendees, including the renowned Gaon, **R' Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk ZT"L**. When R' Meir Simcha asked what had brought him to St. Petersburg and to the meeting, the Chofetz Chaim responded he was in town because his sister was undergoing surgery. R' Meir Simcha took his words literally and began inquiring

about the sister's illness, the name of the surgeon, and if he could be of any assistance in the matter.

R' Yisroel Meir shook his head and responded, "I do not mean an actual sister. I mean the holy Torah, which is called a sister. I was terribly upset to hear that the government is planning to perform 'surgery' on the Torah so I came to be nearby and see what I could do on her behalf!"

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל־אַבְרָם הִנֵּה־נָּא עֲצָרַנִי ה' מִלֶּדֶת בֹּא־נָא אֶל־שִׁפְחָתִי אוּלַי אִבָּנֶה מִמֶּנָּה וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרָי: 16:2

In a most emotional episode, childless and at an old age, Sarah Imeinu selflessly suggests that her husband take her maidservant Hagar as a wife. She tells Avraham Avinu: *"Hashem has prevented me from bearing a child."* However, it is her fervent hope that through this selfless act of allowing her husband to bear progeny from a different wife, she herself will be rewarded with a child in the near future.

How difficult this situation must have been for Sarah! Can we possibly put ourselves in her place and feel her deep pain? Can we understand the depth of emotion that an elderly woman, who lived her entire life until the age of seventy-five without a child, was feeling? How heartbreaking!

The Chid'a, Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L sheds light on our Matriarch Sarah's outlook and how she forged on with great faith even in her distressing situation. When Sarah tells Avraham that Hashem has prevented her from bearing a child, she explicitly uses the Name of Hashem which denotes the Middas HaRachamim - Attribute of Mercy. By consciously using this name, she is sending a clear and powerful message of: - "*Everything that the Merciful One does is for the good.*"

Sarah clearly recognized that Hakadosh Boruch Hu was preventing her from bearing children - and yet, she knew that even this was for the good, her good! Why? Because although Hashem had prevented her from bearing children right now, she understood that this was only a temporary situation which can change. "I have full faith," Sarah said, "that in the future, when the time is right, I will give birth."

Unfortunately, there are many amongst the Jewish people who suffer from similar situations on a regular basis. What an inspiring lesson Sarah Imeinu implores each and every one of us to carry within ourselves. In the most hopeless and desperate situations, in the darkest moments, never forget: Everything Hashem does, He does for our own good.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ 12:1



There are two instances in the Torah where we find the words לֶךְ־לְךָ used, here and by the Akeidah. Two very difficult and very different nisyonos (tests, tribulations) were given to Avraham with these words.

The Nesivos Sholom explains that from these two tests we can understand a great deal about the trials we face in all of our lives. Some tests are like לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ- in other words, go out of your comfort zone.

Often in life, we are tested with seemingly small and inconsequential notions that cause us to change in some way. Whether it means

replacing the way we view another person and/or judging him or her favourably or exchanging how we normally handle a situation and becoming more patient, calm and understanding.

It is in these "small" trials that we choose to grow and change, or remain in the same place or mind-set we were in before. The second kind of test is (22:2) לֶךְ־לְךָ֙ אֶל־אֶ֣רֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּ֔ה - which refers to the extremely difficult test of Akeidas Yitzchok, when Avraham Avinu is told to sacrifice his beloved son.

This is the kind of nisayon that comes once in a lifetime and is unusually overpowering. To overcome such a trial, one needs much siyata dishmaya and strength of character to hold firm and get through the pain and hardship he finds himself in. These two "Lech Lechas" contain within them the two types of trials that all people go through in life. But the most important thing we must remember to get us through the difficult times, is that all nisyonos are **להנאתך ולטובתך** - as Rashi tells us, "***For your ultimate pleasure and good.***" All tests in life are hard but they are sent by Hashem with love - for us to grow. With this in mind, may we all be strengthened to pass all the tests in our lives.

The Courteous Rabbi

Not long ago, a teacher who works with wayward and immigrant youths, by the name of Elishai, found himself on a bus in Jerusalem. He was sitting next to an older man who wore clothing that clearly identified him as a religious Jewish rabbi , with a long coat and black hat.

The rabbi was friendly and engaged Elishai in Torah learning during the ride. As the bus approached their destination, the older man turned to Elishai and asked him about his work. Elishai told him about his young students and noted how difficult they were; many of them feel far from Torah and religion.

He began to tell Elishai a story. "I'm going to take early retirement from the Beit Din where I have worked as a dayan for the past twenty-five years. But you should know that I didn't always look like this. These clothes, this beard ... it's not something I learned at home. My parents were older Holocaust survivors, and they didn't have the emotional stability to give me the attention I needed. I spent much of my youth in the streets, and before my bar mitzvah, I was already known in the streets as a malfeasant."



By age 15, the older man explained, his antics had earned him the inglorious title of "the criminal" of his local community. He and his friends often spent Shabbat playing soccer near a local Sephardic synagogue, and the ball would often fly into the synagogue courtyard. One week, he recalled, "I kicked the ball very hard. It flew out of the field and toward the synagogue just as the rabbi came out. The ball hit his black hat and knocked it to the ground.

My friends and I fell down laughing and we didn't even care when the rabbi walked over to us. 'Shabbat Shalom,' I said to the bearded man, mockingly. 'Would his honour like to make Kiddush, or join our game?' Incredibly, he was not upset. He looked at me and asked, 'Where are your parents?' and I answered, still mocking, 'My parents are dead.' The rabbi said, 'Well, why don't you come with me then?' and since it amused me, I decided to play along and go with him.

We reached his house. He made Kiddush and gave me some wine to drink. Then he asked, 'Are you hungry?' "'Starving,' I replied, and I really was. The rabbi gestured to his wife, and they set the table and gave me food. I ate like someone who hadn't eaten in a week. The

rabbi ate just a little, and mostly looked at me and talked. I later realized that I had eaten his share, too. When I finished eating, he asked, 'Are you tired?' I answered that I was exhausted, and he offered me a bed. I went to sleep and slept there the entire day. When I woke up it was Saturday night, Shabbat was over.

The rabbi asked me, 'What would you like to do?' I told him I wanted to go to the cinema and see a movie. "'How much does it cost?' he asked, and he gave me the money and sent me on my way. Before I left though, he told me, 'Please come again tomorrow.' And I did! "I came again and again. I ate, and slept, and got money to do what I wanted, day after day. Over time I discovered that there were 12 kids like me, from off the street, who came to this rabbi's house. I couldn't be ungrateful - I really loved him.

"With time, he slowly started to teach me about mitzvot and Torah. He bought me Tefillin. He would sit patiently and teach me. Thanks to him, I eventually went to a yeshivah and became a rabbi. I excelled in my studies and ultimately became a judge on a Beit Din. He married me off, came to my children's weddings, and was sandek at my grandsons' brit milahs." The old man looked at Elishai and said, "Do not despair of your students. You see me as I am today, a judge in a Beit Din, but once I was just like them. Just love them. Love them like they were your own children and they will respond."

As the two began to descend from the bus, Elishai asked the man, "What was the rabbi's name?" The man responded, "What do you mean, was? He's very old, 92, but thank G-d, he is still alive. His name is Rav Ovadia Yosef!"

This week we mourn the passing of the great Gaon and Tzaddik, **Chacham Ovadia Yosef ZT"L**. His brilliance in learning, his phenomenal memory and his many scholarly works were equalled only by his great kindness and righteousness. May his merits serve as an everlasting protection on behalf of all of us at this difficult time.

17:5 וְלֹא־יִקָּרֵא עוֹד אֶת־שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אַב־הֲמוֹן גּוֹיִם נְתַתִּיךָ

The gemara **ברכות יג.** explains that the name "**אברם**" is a contraction of "**אב לארם**" - "Father of Aram." Aram was Avraham's homeland. His original name indicates that he acted as a father to the people of Aram. He influenced this nation and showed the people the truth of monotheism.

The name "**אברהם**" is a contraction of the phrase "**אב המון גוים**" - "Father of a multitude of nations." This name means that Avraham is to be the father of all the nations of the earth. His influence will extend beyond his homeland. All peoples will be affected by his teachings. The bestowal of the name Avraham implies that Hashem will assist Avraham to communicate his message to all of civilization. As a result, Chazal teach us, with the granting of this name, the previous name, Avram, is inappropriate and forbidden. The old name represents a limitation to Avraham's influence, which was removed when his name was changed. A new message is now communicated.

Furthermore, writes **R' Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer ZT"L**, the name change had an effect, not only on his influence regarding the nations of the world, but on his own family existence as well. As long as his name was "Avram" he was unable to bear children, for he had a responsibility to teach the world of the existence of the One True G-d and raising his own children would have impeded his ability to do so. However, once his name was changed, Hashem showed Avraham that his mission was succeeding and that he has indeed created a wellspring of faith and belief in the Almighty, that will continue to flourish and eventually light up the world. Since it was to his credit that this new ideology had taken wings, he was worthy of the moniker "*Father of a multitude of nations*." Likewise, with his mission well on its way, he was now prepared and worthy to populate the world himself, with his own offspring, and indeed his descendants - Bnei Yisroel - carry his banner for all time.

17:10 זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ הִמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר

Aside from the horrendous loss of life the second world war dealt our people, another disastrous effect of the Holocaust was, for a large portion of survivors, their loss of faith. After what they had been through, they became disenchanted and threw off any semblance of their Jewish past and their lineage. One such man survived the second world war in body; but not in spirit. He was "angry" with G-d and vowed to shake off anything to do with religion.

He boarded a ship that brought him to New York and he resettled in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. He soon married a similarly disenchanted woman and started a family. They had a son who was the apple of their eye, but they were careful to raise him without anything resembling Yahadus; no Bris Milah; no Shabbos; no Torah! The child grew up with only the slightest awareness of his religion. As it happened, he married a Jewish woman, but there was absolutely nothing even remotely religious about their existence.

Just as his father had done to him, he carefully and intentionally instilled a dislike for religion in his children. It worked for all of his sons - except one. To his displeasure and chagrin, he failed with one child; the boy became a Baal Teshuvah! The repentant son remained close to his non-religious father and other than religion there really was nothing that separated them. And so, when the young man called his dad to inform him of the happy news that he was engaged to be married and he wanted his father to attend his "chasuna," he was shocked by his father's very hostile reaction. "I have no interest in your religious ceremony! In fact, it pains me. My son, I love you and would do anything you ask of me, but I cannot attend your religious 'chasuna' - it simply conflicts with everything I stand for!"

The son took a few moments to digest this information. But then he seized the moment. "Okay, Dad, so don't come to my chasuna, if it bothers you so much. But when you say you will do anything else I ask of you ... do you really mean it?" "Yes, anything. If I can physically

do it - leave out the religious mumbo jumbo - I will do it for you. I give you my word." The son didn't hesitate. "Okay, Dad. If that's the case, then the one thing I ask of you is that you have a circumcision!" A circumcision! The father was shocked. A bris milah was something he always avoided for it was the quintessential sign of a Jew, the one thing he disliked most. On the other hand, he had given his word to his son to physically perform anything he asked.

At first he said no, but after quite a bit of arguing back and forth, in the end, he agreed and underwent the procedure. It seemed that the bris had an immediate effect on his psyche for a few days later, while still recuperating from the difficult surgery, he began to reconsider his decision not to attend his son's religious ceremony. He would come for a short time, he told himself, definitely not long enough to be influenced by those religious fanatics. Sure enough, at the wedding, the father was so impressed by the enthusiasm of his son's friends, that he found himself dancing up a storm and just couldn't pull himself away!



At one point, a man who turned out to be the caterer, approached the father and said, "Sir, I am so inspired by your simcha and countenance that I wish to present you with a gift, something which is very precious; a dollar bill blessed by the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson ZT"L**." The father looked at the man and then at the bill, and suddenly, he turned white! A moment later, he fell down to the floor in a dead faint! When he came to, the first words he uttered were, "THAT'S MY BILL!" And then, he fainted again. When he was fully revived, he explained. "As a teenager growing up in Crown Heights, I once went with a few of my public school buddies on a Sunday morning to an old man who just gives out dollar bills. We stood in line giddily watching

as the bearded man handed out dollar after dollar. When my turn arrived, he handed me a bill which I greedily took and moved on. But suddenly, he called me back and asked me if I had a circumcision. I told him no, and upon hearing my answer, he proceeded to take back my dollar.

Cryptically he proclaimed, 'When you have your bris, I will give you back your dollar.'" The father shook his head in wonder. "Well, I just had my bris last week, and now all these years later, I see that the rabbi sure did keep his word!"

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָגָר וַתַּהַר וַתֵּרֶא כִּי הָרָתָה וַתֵּקַל גְּבִרְתָּהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ 16:4

It is difficult to imagine that Sarah Imenu could have possibly caused pain to Hagar! What exactly did Sarah do to her? Could Sarah have been jealous of her maidservant who conceived immediately while she was still barren after many years? No, Sarah was not the problem. In fact, she did not change any aspect of her behaviour vis-a-vis Hagar. It was Hagar who viewed Sarah differently.

In her mind, she believed that Sarah was not as righteous as she appeared and lost a measure of respect for her. As a result, when Hagar "looked down" on her mistress, she perceived everything that Sarah told her as a slight to her own honour. What she was perfectly happy to do for Sarah in the past, was now disdainful and even painful for her! It wasn't Sarah who changed her behaviour; it was Hagar's perception of Sarah that caused her to feel slighted.



This is true of all people, says the **Chasam Sofer ZT"L**. When one looks down on others, he cannot maintain an unbiased

relationship with that person. For example, if one supports Torah, but does not respect those who are learning Torah, he will not give his money wholeheartedly or honourably. Similarly, it is important to always speak highly of our children's Rebbeim and Moros, for even the slightest disparaging word about educators, the rabbi of a shul or even relatives, will cause children to look down on the very people they need to look up to.

Much of the chutzpah we experience today among our youth is a result of the negative and disparaging remarks they hear from their elders. Children respect those who respect others. Let us take the lesson of Hagar to heart and never allow ourselves to view others in a disdainful manner.

R' Moshe Sherer Z"L would say: '*Those that bless you, I will bless and those that curse you, I will curse*.' With respect to those who bless Avraham, Hashem uses the same verb **אברכה** to describe the blessing that He will provide them. But with respect to those who curse Avraham **ומקללך** the verb form does not remain constant. Instead of **אקלל**, which would have been the parallel verb, the Torah chooses another verb for cursing: **אאר**.



This word is based on the same Hebrew root as light (**אור**), and can be read, '*I will enlighten them: I will illuminate their eyes to see the real you*.' Orthodox Jews must fulfil the role of enlightening their fellow Jews who are 'uninformed.' Let them see our ahavas Yisroel, our Daf Yomi Torah learning and good middos; let them see our yeshivos and chassidic courts. Let them see what we are really like."

וַיֵּ֥ט אָהֳלֹ֖ה.... 12:8

The chessed of Avraham Avinu was evident early on in his life. The moment he recognized the One True G-d in Heaven at the young age of three, he immediately began to espouse these views to everyone around him. When he was older, he did this by inviting people into his tent - a tent with openings on all sides to facilitate weary travellers -and he "created new souls" by bringing them under the canopy of Monotheism. It didn't matter to Avraham who these people were; when they were ready to believe, he made them believe!

One fine day, the Vaad Hachnosas Orchim in the city of Slonim held a meeting and came to the conclusion that all their work and effort in the area of Hachnosas Orchim was primarily aimed at the lowly class of homeless and hopeless derelicts. A true "guest" always managed to find a place to stay, a kind family would always take him in and see to his needs. So who was left for them to care for? The drunkards, the dispossessed, the "rough and tumble" destitutes who never thanked them, and never had any intention of ever leaving. For these insolvents, they should expend so much time, effort and especially money? What was the purpose?

Immediately, **R' Shabsi Yogel ZT"L, the Slonimer Rosh Yeshivah**, stood up and announced, "No, this is wrong! Chazal teach us: **על שלשה דברים העולם עומד.. על התורה על העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים** (*The world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah and Chessed.*) The first two - Torah and Avodah - are listed with the letter **ה** before it. This is the **ה הידיעה** - the special letter which signifies that Torah is unique for it comes from Heaven, and Avodah is unique for it serves Hashem.

However, continued R' Shabsi passionately, "Gemilas Chessed has no **ה** before it. You know why? Because chessed is not unique; chessed is done for every single person regardless of his stature or prominence!"

וְהֶאֱמַן בַּה׳ וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לּוֹ צְדָקָה 15:6

In the years preceding the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, many Russian citizens were exiled to Siberia for supporting the Bolshevik cause. After the revolution, the Siberian labour camps were briefly closed down. However, when Josef Stalin came to power, he reopened and expanded them. The network of labour camps was named GULAG (an acronym in Russian meaning Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei, or Main Camp Administration.)

It is estimated that about 1.2 million prisoners were exiled to Siberia under the Czars. Another 18-20 million people were imprisoned in Soviet Gulags during the thirty years that the prison system was in existence, and it is estimated that about 1.6 million people perished there. During the Communist era, openly practicing the Jewish religion became a crime, and a Jew could be arrested for owning tefillin or teaching Torah.



In 1928, **R' Yechezkel Abramsky ZT"L** was surprisingly granted permission by the Soviet authorities to publish a Torah journal entitled "Yagdil Torah." However, in typical Soviet fashion, in 1930 the authorities suddenly did an about face and convicted him of being a "counter-revolutionary," who slandered the communist government. He was sentenced to five years of hard labour in a Siberian prison camp. What was the Gulag like for R' Yechezkel? Well, the typical winter morning in Siberia saw temperatures reaching 40 degrees centigrade below zero. His compulsory morning exercise routine was brutal: a brisk run, while barefoot, over the frost-covered ground. Like the others, he had no choice but to run across the frozen field.

Unlike some of the others, though, he never allowed himself to drop to the earth, too cold, sick, and exhausted to go on.

Day after day, he put his head down and just began to run, somehow surviving the ordeal. This is how he started his day in the Soviet labour camp. The camp commanders did not like the fact that they couldn't "break" him and decided to make an example out of this Jewish rabbi. His daily work assignment was to enter the thick forest and chop tree trunks into smaller logs of wood. The problem was that R' Chatzkel was no lumberjack and he could not work fast enough. The commanders knew what to do with such "lazy" workers.

As a punishment, they sent R' Chatzkel to string frozen fish on a metal wire. This work is more delicate. In fact, it's so delicate that one cannot wear gloves while handling the metal wire. Yet, how can a human being grasp frozen fish with his bare hands in sub-zero temperatures, for hour after hour after hour? Welcome to the world of the Gulag.

Eventually, R' Yechezkel was switched to another job. Now he was required to slice loaves of bread for all the prisoners. His hands were no longer bleeding and frozen; sounds like an easy job. Yet, he faced another danger. Gulag prisoners are tough. They have to be in order to survive. If they see that the man slicing the bread gives them a slightly smaller piece of bread than another prisoner, even if it's unintentional, the bread-cutter better watch out for his own life! Faced with such cruel conditions and companions and unable to perform mitzvos of any kind, R' Yechezkel admittedly reached his wits end. His mind and body threatened to succumb to despair. What is the point of going on, he wondered, as he contemplated the words of the "Modeh Ani" on yet another bitter morning. Should he thank Hashem for another day of painful work in the freezing cold? Should he be grateful that yet another day will pass where he will be unable to learn Torah or do mitzvos? What reason does he have to thank Hashem for returning his neshamah to him for one more day?

Then he remembered the final words of the prayer: "Raba Emunasecha" - "Great is Your faith." Emunah! That was something that the Gulag hadn't been able to take away from him. He still had his faith in Hashem. "As long as I am able to hold on to my Emunah," he resolutely told himself, "I have something to be thankful for. My Emunah will sustain me. I will be able to bear all the pain and the suffering. And my life will have meaning, because every moment that I live with Emunah in Hashem is a moment that is worth living."

Strengthened by these thoughts, R' Yechezkel stood up and reported for his morning barefoot run across the frozen field. Thanks to his Emunah, and with Hashem's help, he bore the pain and suffering. Eventually he was granted permission to leave the Soviet "paradise" and begin a new life in England. *[Rosh Hayeshiva Slabodka -later senior Dayan of London Beis Din]*



The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Avraham Mordechai Alter ZT"L (Imrei Emes) would say:

"The Torah tells us that there was dispute between the shepherds of Avram's cattle and the shepherds of Lot's cattle, and the posuk ends with the words: - '*And the Canaanim and Prizim were then living in the land.*' Why was it necessary to mention these last words and how do they connect to the beginning of the posuk?

The answer is to teach us, that it is the presence of strangers during a dispute that causes a Chilul Hashem, a terrible desecration of the Almighty's Divine Name."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

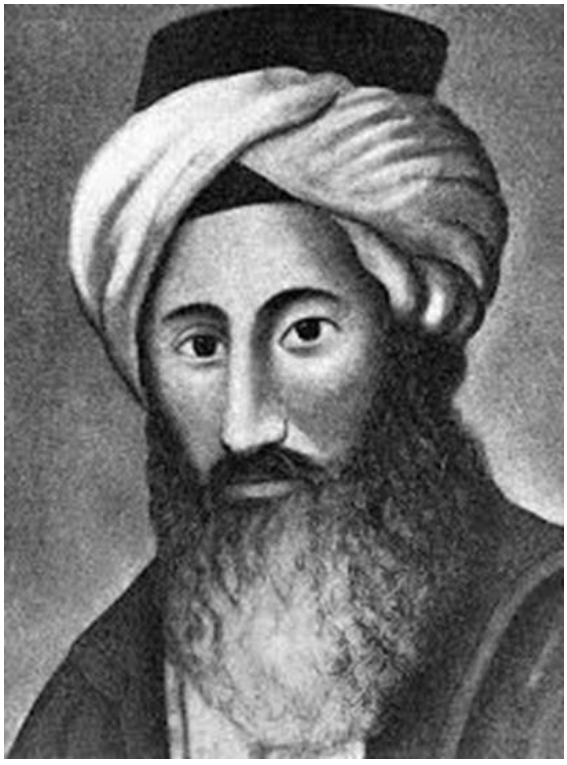
וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ 15:5

Hashem tells Avraham Avinu to go outside and "look up to the Heavens and count the stars ... so shall be your offspring."



The Baal Shem Tov ZT"L explains that Hashem was implying to Avraham that all his descendants will be like stars. Just as stars seem like tiny little specks in the sky, yet in reality, they are giant orbiting spheres, so too, every single Jew is not small and insignificant, but rather of tremendous value and importance. In fact, it would have been worth creating the entire universe just for each individual yid!

Our problem is that we do not recognize, the great value inherent in every Jew. We tend to judge others superficially; how influential they are; how much money they possess etc. In essence, these outer trappings are not the value of a human being, and even a penniless, unknown, quiet and humble Jew, may be more beloved in the eyes of Hashem, than these people. It is a person's neshama which gives him value. Since every living being possesses a neshama, every person is exceptionally valuable and deserving of respect. There is something great and beautiful in every single person and if we can just see past the surface of their beauty or profession, we will discover the "shining star" that is every Jew. We would certainly treat each other with love, kindness and respect if we would only recognize the greatness of our fellow Jews, and of course, the greatness in ourselves! By doing so, we will surely shine and radiate goodness, truly illuminating the darkest times - like the stars in the sky!



Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L[Chida] (Nachal Kedumim) would say: "Chazal teach that Avraham Avinu fulfilled the mitzvah of Bris Milah on the day of Yom Kippur, and indeed the numerical value of the words **בעצם היום הזה נימול** - *'In the midst of that day (Avraham was) circumcised,'* is equal to that of **יום הכפורים**.

Therefore, in the merit of this important mitzvah, on the day of Yom Kippur each year, the blood of Avraham's milah manifests itself before Hashem like the blood of the korbonos and atones for the sins of Klal Yisroel."

וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו 14:14

There was an alliance of nine kings in and around the Land of Canaan who all served one king, the mighty Kedarlaomer. After twelve years of such an arrangement, five of them rebelled against his authority. Finally, after one year of putting up with the rebellion, a coalition of the remaining four kings went out to crush the rebellion, once and for all. They rampaged across the land, and even captured Lot, Avram's nephew, in the process. Avram took an army of three hundred and eighteen men and miraculously, they defeated the four kings, rescued Lot, returned all the spoils and rid the world of this terror.

The question is: why would Avram put his life in danger to rescue Lot? Not only had he just banished Lot because of his wickedness, but Lot had chosen to live in Sodom of all places! For such a person, he should risk his life?

R' Yosef Zundel Salant ZT"L (Be'er Yosef) explains that before they separated, Avram had given Lot his word that he would always come to his rescue, wherever he lived. Avram, his renowned uncle, pledged that he would never forsake a family member, no matter where, what or when.



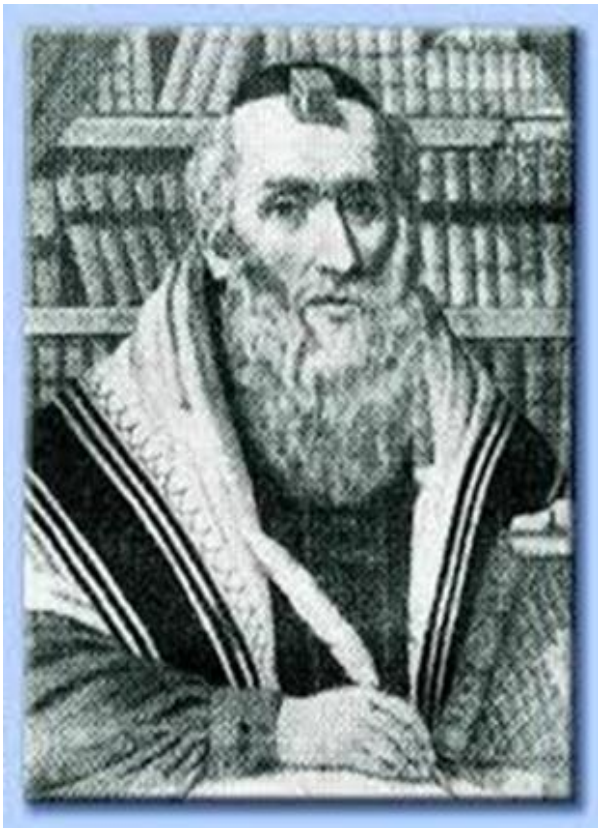
Now that Lot had been abducted, he felt duty-bound to keep his word, even at great risk to himself, as failing to do so would cause a desecration of Hashem's Name. With this idea we can also understand why this war was listed as one of Avram's trials. With the other tests, such as Nimrod throwing him into the furnace, or his wife Sarai being abducted, he was in a situation beyond his control. Similarly, by Akeidas Yitzchok he was directly commanded by Hashem and fulfilled the commandment. With this test, however, Avram went of his own accord. The test was to see if he would risk his life for the honour of Hashem, and by keeping his word he sanctified Hashem's Name.

R' Yitzchok of Vorka ZT"L would say:

"An innkeeper who is solicitous of his guest's every need and goes out of his way to make him happy and comfortable is one who fulfils the mitzvah of Hachnosas Orchim correctly. The fact that he gets paid for this service does not detract from his accomplishment for in truth he treats every guest this way. The only reason why he takes money is so that he will be able to invite and attract other guests to come to his inn in the future."

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר אֱלֹקִים֙ אֶל־אַבְרָהָ֔ם שָׂרַ֥י אִשְׁתְּךָ֖ לֹא־תִקְרָ֣א אֶת־שְׁמָ֑הּ שָׂרָ֖י כִּ֥י שָׂרָ֛ה שְׁמָֽהּ
17:15

Our Sages tell us that the name of an individual reflects his inner character and essence. It is what connects him to his spiritual nature, serving as the conduit which provides sustenance and nourishment to his soul. Therefore, the naming of a baby is a serious undertaking which involves great responsibility.



The Ari Hakadosh, Rabbeinu Yitzchok Luria ZT"L writes that when a father names his child for the first time, the Holy One Blessed be He puts the particular name required for that soul into his mouth. Thus, a name is much more than merely a title whereby others may refer to him by; it is a reflection of that person's very essence - and a person must take great heed before altering his essence. There was once a family from France that made Aliya to the Land of Israel, and moved to a city near the Israeli heartland. The family was deeply observant and took great pride in their Jewish heritage. The father was careful to pray three times a day with a minyan and the mother covered her hair and kept her kitchen to the strictest standards of kashrus. They sent their sons to excellent yeshivos and their daughters to a prominent Bais Yaakov. Their oldest daughter was a girl by the name of Jaquelyn. She was sent to a seminary in Bnei Brak to study; however, since the school had no dormitory facilities, she found it necessary to board by one of the seminary teachers.

It was shortly after the girl had moved into the home, when the teacher confronted her and asked, "I don't understand something, Jaquelyn. We are taught that one of the reasons why Hashem

delivered the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, was because they did not alter their Jewish identities, particularly their Jewish names. Indeed, throughout history, Jews have always taken pride in their Jewish names. Yet, you are called by a non-Jewish name: Jaquelyn. Don't you realize that you stand out from all the other girls in the class because of your name? Don't you have a real Jewish name?"

The young girl was taken aback by the direct nature of the question and immediately went on the defensive. She explained that she had moved here from France and it is not uncommon for people there to be called by their French names. It is not a reflection of her Jewishness, she said, and she had no intention of changing it, but the teacher wouldn't hear of it.



"Perhaps I cannot change your mind," began the teacher, "but I'm sure if we spoke to Daas Torah (a rabbinic authority with true Torah understanding), he will set you straight. Come, let us go together to the Rav and he will tell you what your true Jewish name is!" In a flash, the teacher was out the door, followed by a reluctant Jaquelyn, as they both made their way to the home of the great Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Elazar Menachem Mann Shach ZT"L**.

When they came before the Rosh Yeshivah, the teacher described the entire situation in great detail. R' Shach noticed the discomfort on the part of the young girl and smiled warmly. Then he said, "So tell me, what is your name?" The girl sheepishly responded, "Jaquelyn." R' Shach contined smiling disarmingly. "Okay. And what do your parents call you?" "Jaquelyn," she again replied.

"And have they always called you by this name?" he inquired softly. She nodded affirmatively, less apprehensively. "What about you?" R' Shach continued. "Do you like this name? Do you like when they call you by this name?" By now, Jaquelyn was feeling a bit more confident and answered enthusiastically, "Yes! Very much so!" R' Shach sat back in his chair and smiled broadly.

"If so, that is wonderful! It is perfectly fine for you to retain your name; there is no need whatsoever to change it!" He then blessed her with success, and they took their leave. Teacher and student walked down the steps in silence, until the teacher perceived that Jaquelyn was crying.

When she looked closer, she realized that these were tears of happiness; it was as if a heavy weight had been lifted off her soul. Only the insight of true Daas Torah could perceive how much her name meant to her, how much it was a part of her.



R' Moshe Teitelbaum ZT"L (Yismach Moshe) would say: "Before Hashem guaranteed Avrohom children, his legendary hospitality might have seemed unremarkable. After all, with no one to inherit his wealth, he may as well have lavished it on others. Once he received this promised and believed it completely, his generosity became truly outstanding for he could have saved his riches for his son, and yet, he continued to share them with others. This is the meaning of the posuk: **והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה** - By believing in Hashem, it proves that Avrohom's 'Tzedakah' - charity and kindness - was much more considerable."

וְשַׂמְתִּי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אִם־יוּכַל אִישׁ לִמְנוֹת אֶת־עֲפַר הָאָרֶץ גַּם־זַרְעֲךָ יִמָּנֶה 13:16



A strapping young man once came to the home of the famed **Rav of Kempen, R' Meir Leibush Malbim ZT"L**, with an unusual request. "Rabbi, I just completed my mandatory term in the gymnasium (secular high school), and now I would like to go on to study at the big university. However, everyone knows that it is extremely difficult for a Jew to be accepted there and anti-Semitism is rampant." He paused for a moment, as if to find the right words. "I guess my question is: Is it permissible for me to convert out of my religion just to gain admission? After all, will the few drops of water that the priest sprinkles on my head, have a real effect on me? In my heart I will remain the same loyal Jew as before."

Incredibly, the boy was serious! "My son," replied the Malbim thoughtfully, "the Jewish people are compared to the dust of the earth. Hashem told our forefather, Avraham, as much when he said, 'I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth.' The only problem is, that as we all know, when one pours a bit of water on dust, it turns into mud ....." The personification of an unclean, unhealthy and toxic mixture is mud. Ask any housewife and she'll cringe at the mere mention of it. So too, when the Jewish People mingle with the gentile culture and their unholy way of life, it creates a lethal and toxic blend. We must always keep our heads above the water - so that we don't fall into the mud!

16:2 וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל־אַבְרָם הִנֵּה־נָ֣א עֲצָרַ֤נִי ה׳ מִלֶּדֶת



The whole of Yerushalayim was in an uproar! A well-known man, a Belzer Chasid, and his wife had just given birth to their first child - a boy - after being childless for twenty-eight years! The sholom zachor that Friday night was the event of the year. Well over a thousand people came by to wish Mazel Tov to the proud and exhausted father. The food supply ran out in short order as did the drinks, but no one seemed to mind. At the height of the celebration, the crowd quieted down as the father indicated that he would like to say a few words.

"Moreh V'Rabbosai," he began in a loud voice, "thank you all for coming and sharing in the simcha. Although I have no more food to offer, let me at least tell over a story which I'm sure you'll appreciate." The ecstatic new father composed himself and continued.

"When I was a bochur learning in the Belzer Yeshiva, there was a cleaning lady who would come by every day to tidy up and scrub the Beis Medrash and adjoining rooms. She was a fixture in the yeshiva and devoted her life to maintaining the yeshiva building. She was, however, not a wealthy person by any stretch and as her own family grew, she was at a loss of options as far as taking care of her children. She decided to bring her kids with her to work, and as she cleaned and mopped in one area of the building, the young children would run amuck, screaming, crying and generally causing quite a commotion, in the rest of the yeshiva.

At first, we put up with it, we even thought it was cute for a time. But after a while, the kids really began to 'shter' us in our learning

and davening. Try as we might to control them, they wouldn't listen and continued on in their childish games and noise.

A number of younger bochurim asked me, as one of the oldest in the chaburah, to ask her not to bring her children anymore to the yeshiva. "I agreed to talk to her, and I brazenly walked up to her and told her that her kids were disturbing everyone in yeshiva and she should find some sort of alternative method of child-care for them. I'll never forget how she looked at me with tired eyes and said, 'Bochur, you should never have **צער גידול בנים** (the pain and anguish that one goes through when raising children.)

The crowd gasped. "As many of you know," continued the father, "my wife and I have been to countless doctors who've recommended every sort of treatment. We moved abroad for a while to be near an 'expert' which proved to be fruitless. One last, extreme treatment was offered and after trying that, it too, turned out to be just a fantasy; we felt doomed to a life without the pleasure of raising a yiddishe family. "After that last attempt, as we walked back into the apartment that we lived in for the past twenty-eight years, our entire sad situation hit us full force, like a ton of bricks. Together, we broke down crying and davening for hours on end, begging Hashem to have mercy on us.

It was just then, that I remembered this cleaning lady - Sima is her name - and what she said to me. I made up right then and there, to locate her and ask for forgiveness. I spent hours on the phone until I came up with an address, which I ran over to immediately. She did not recognize me, but when I told her over the story, a spark flickered in her eyes. I tearfully apologized for my harsh words, and she graciously forgave me with her whole heart." Beaming from ear to ear, the father announced, "Rabbosai, that took place exactly nine months ago!"

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ
12:1



Rashi comments that it was for Avram's own benefit that Hashem commanded him to pick up and leave his land. In Haran, Hashem told him, he would not merit the many blessings Hashem planned to bestow on him. If so, why was leaving Haran listed among the ten trials with which Avram was tested?

It is common for people to relocate for economic reasons, even though they have no assurance that they will be successful in their new locations. Why should we think that Avram, who had a Divine promise of success for himself and future generations, would hesitate to comply with Hashem's command to move?

R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L (Darash Moshe) explains that Avram's trial was whether he would have second thoughts about obeying a command whose logic he could not see. While he certainly had no doubt that Hashem would fulfil His promise, there was room for him to wonder why he had to go to the great trouble of moving with his family to a distant land, when Hashem could just as easily have granted the same blessings there in Haran.

Even the simplest demand can be difficult to fulfil if one does not understand the reason for it; how much more difficult is it when the demand involves uprooting one's whole life to move to a strange and distance place. By refusing to entertain any of these thoughts and simply trusting that Hashem had good reason to do as He did, Avram passed this test.



Bitachon, writes **R' Joseph Breuer ZT"L**, means answering the לֶךְ־לְךָ that Hashem, our G-d, commands us throughout our days on this earth, for in such a life only with Bitachon will we triumph. This is the example our forefather Avram set for us; it dares us to wander in the darkness where no light beckons because trust in Hashem - the support granted by our Creator - does not fail us even there.

The gemara ברכות ז: quotes the famous words of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: "*From the day that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, there was no man that ever called Hashem* **אדון** - 'Master' until Avrom came along and called Him Adon." What is the significance of the Divine appellation **אדון**?



Rabbi Dr. Joseph Ber Soloveitchik ZT"L comments that all sinning emanates from a denial of the **אדנות** (*mastery or ownership of the world*) of Hashem, and His right to restrict a human being from doing what he wants.

Modern man, in particular, insists that he is free, that all restrictions are repressions of the human spirit. **אדנות** however, insists that man be humbled before the Lord, that he recognize the Master who bestows all gifts.

When Avrom Avinu asked Hakadosh Boruch Hu for a child and the assurance of a land that his descendants will be able to call their

own, he understood that such gifts can only be bestowed by the Almighty. They are not to be taken freely; one must mightily beseech for them. It was Avrom, therefore, who introduced the name **א-ד-נ-י** and thereby proclaimed the basic Jewish tenet of Hashem as our **אדון**.



Someone once asked the holy **Vilna Gaon ZT"L** for a letter of approbation for a commentary he wrote on the Siddur. The Gaon read the opening page and found an explanation as to why the order of the Shachris prayer begins with "Adon Olam."

It read: "Since we know that Avrohom initiated Tefillas Shachris, it is fitting and proper that this service be opened with the Divine designation **אדון**, which Avrohom was the first to use." The Vilna Gaon was so taken with these words that he proclaimed that the publication of the Siddur would be worthwhile if only for this one commentary!

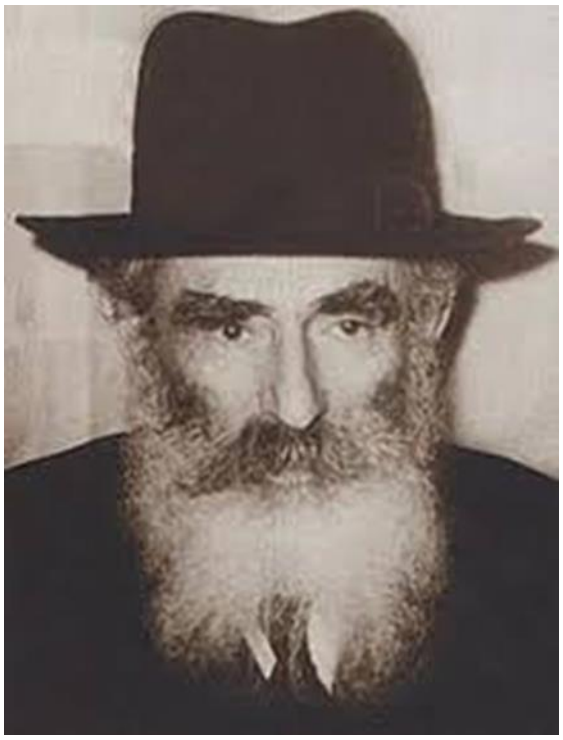


Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Rabbi Zelig of Shransk became blind in his old age. He once sighed and said, "Of what benefit is my blindness if I can still see – Myself?!

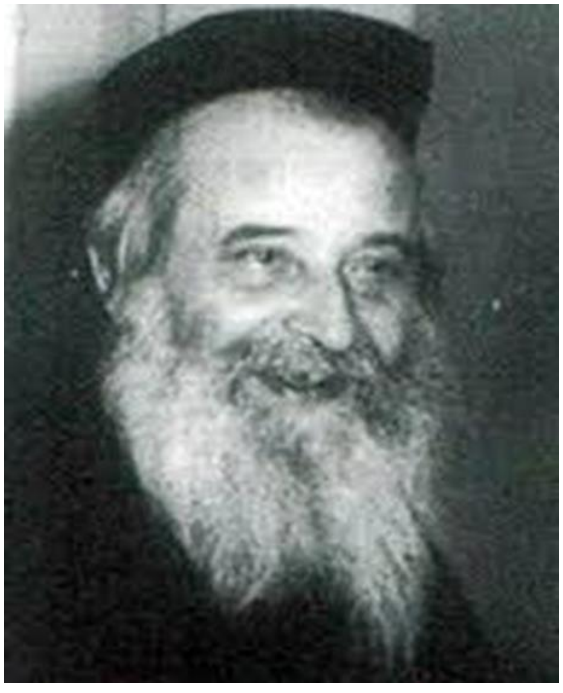
וַאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרַכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה 12:3 .

When Hashem tells Avrohom that He will bless "*those who bless you,*" it refers not only to someone who blesses Avrohom himself, but also to someone who blesses one of his descendants. Chulin 49a)



R' Yechezkel Levenstein ZT"L cites this posuk in a letter he wrote to show that blessing one's friend is a very worthwhile action. When you bless another person, you are offering a few short words, in return for which the Almighty gives you His bountiful blessings. When one greets a fellow Jew with a hearty "Sholom Aleichem" or "Good Morning," you are blessing him, and as a result, Hashem will bless you.

For this reason, it is fitting to give a blessing for success to one who embarks on a business venture or undertakes a new job. For in essence, you are not only helping to add to your friend's success, but you are in fact, helping yourself, as well.



Although he was ill and very weak, **R' Chatzkel Sarna ZT"L**, Rosh Hayeshivah of Chevron, exerted himself one Motzei Shabbos, a few weeks before his death, to go to the yeshivah to daven Maariv. As he was walking up the steps, he and the person accompanying him realized that the students had just finished praying.

The other man paused unsure if the Rosh Yeshivah wanted to go straight

home, but R' Chatzkel continued up the steps. "Why are you troubling yourself?" asked his companion.

"They have already finished davening." "Praying with the congregation is the fulfilment of a rabbinical obligation," said the Rosh Yeshivah. "But blessing the students to have a good week is the fulfilment of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך** - 'Love your fellow man,' which is a Torah commandment."

R' Shmuel of Volozhin ZT"L would say:



"If a person is a learned talmid chacham but nevertheless feels slighted if he is not called to a seat of honour at public gatherings, tell him that the sacred mezuzah is always left hanging by the door and it doesn't feel insulted!"

"There are two ways to live. You can live as if nothing is a miracle. You can live as if everything is a miracle."

"The purely righteous do not complain about evil, rather they add justice. They do not complain about heresy, rather they add faith. They do not complain about ignorance, rather they add wisdom. " ~~ Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



Someone, who suffered great hardships, complained to his rebbe that he cannot endure the tests any longer. The rebbe told him, "Take three pots, and fill them with water in one pot, place a raw potato, in the second, a raw egg, and in the third, put coffee, sugar and milk, and put them on the stove." An hour later the rebbe showed him that the soft (raw) egg became hard, the hard potato got soft, and the boiling water turned into a sweet coffee. The rebbe explained, "The boiling water represents life's tests. Tests change people. It toughens the soft people, softens the tough, and it can make someone sweet, like a sweet cup of coffee." All tests of life can change us. They are opportunities for growth, for becoming a better person. People do not grow from the easy experiences of life. They grow from the hardships, which they overcome.

Hashem's Army Needs YOU! - Written by D Fine

Avraham?! Who is Avraham?!? That is the **Ramban's** question at the start of parshas lech lecha when suddenly, without any introduction to who Avraham is (unlike re Noach) it says 'And HaShem said to Avraham 'lech lecha…' Why did he merit this calling from HaShem?

Answers the **Sfas Emes,** 'HaShem was calling to everyone. It was Avraham though who decided to listen to the call. …And how many times is HaShem calling out to us today and we do not bother to listen?

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ (15:5) "Hashem took Avraham outdoors and said to him, '*Look at the heaven and count the stars, if you are able to…Like them, shall be your children.*'" What is the parallel between the stars and the Jewish people?

The Abarbanel explains that stars shine when it is dark. The Jewish people also shine during times of hardship, because of their unwavering devotion to Hashem.



Reb Meir Shapiro of Lublin explained this passuk in the following manner: Hashem told Avraham to count the stars "If you are able to," and Avraham began to count them. But it was an impossible task; no one can possibly count all the stars. Hashem said, "so shall be your children." Hashem asks a lot from Klal Yisrael, and it is literally impossible for them to do everything. Yet they start, and do what they can, and this is their praise.

וּלְאַבְרָם הֵיטִיב בַּעֲבוּרָהּ 12:16 ***And he benefitted Abram for her sake***

A person should always be careful with the honour of one's wife, since a blessing occurs in one's house only for the sake of the wife.

This is the intention of the above verse about the blessing from HaShem. even though the verse appears to be referring to the benefit from Pharoh, Chazal explain otherwise.



Reb Simchah Kaplan zt"l related that when he was learning in Mir, Poland, his room and board (which was then called, essen teg) was by a couple, who had one son. One Friday morning, the man of the home needed to go out to the marketplace. His wife said, "It is erev Shabbos. Make sure to come back quickly." Reb Simchah also left the home and went to yeshiva to study. He returned around noontime, and he noticed that the woman of the household very anxious. "It is getting late," she said, "and my husband isn't back yet." Reb Simcha told her, It is only slightly after noon. There is plenty of time until Shabbos." She said, "Since you asked, I'll tell you, and then you will understand.

We only have one child. We waited several years until he was born. But he wasn't developing regularly so we brought him to a doctor in Krakow, where we lived. The doctor told us that our son has heart failure. He advised us to go to the greatest doctor of our times, in Vilna.

"After checking the child, this famous doctor in Vilna confirmed that our child has severe heart problems. 'I can give you medications, but you child only has three months to live, so what's it worth?' When I heard this prognosis, I broke down and cried. Our only child, born after years of waiting, had only three months to live. "We returned to our achsanya (lodging place) in Vilna to pack our bags and to return to our home in Krakow, but our host said, 'Since you've anyway came all the way to Vilna, why not plan your trip back via Radin, so you can get a brachah and counsel from the Chofetz Chaim.'



"**The Chofetz Chaim** was already frail and old, and he wasn't accepting visitors. Fortunately, we met the Chofetz Chaim's grandson in Radin. This young man used to be our guest, so he went out of his way to help us. "He brought us in to the Chofetz Chaim.

The Chofetz Chaim was lying in bed, studying Navi Ezra. I told the Chofetz Chaim what the doctor said. The Chofetz Chaim answered, 'So what can I do?' At that moment, I cried once more. "The grandson spoke up for us, 'Zeide!' he said, 'do you understand? This is her only child, born after years of waiting, and now the doctor says that he will not live.'

"The Chofetz Chaim said that we should accept upon ourselves tosefes Shabbos and we immediately accepted on ourselves to do so. When we returned to Krakow, we saw that our child was already better. A week later, we went to the doctor, and he was shocked by the change. He figured that the doctor in Vilna performed a miracle, but we told him that 'It is the merit of Shabbos which saved our son' I told him.

"The Krakow doctor said that he wants us to return to Vilna, to show the doctor what happened. We returned to Vilna. When we came to the doctor in Vilna, the doctor was stunned. At first he thought it was a different child, but I told him, 'I wish I had another child. This is my only son.' "The doctor said, 'We can heal hearts that have an ailment, but your son's heart was totally ruined. What happened is simply miraculous.'

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

A very wealthy man who was not religious came to **the Chofetz Chaim** and donated a large amount of money to his Yeshivah in Radin. The Chofetz Chaim took hold of the man's hand very tightly and said, "I thank you greatly for your contribution, but what a pity that you don't keep Shabbos."

As he kept holding tight to the man's hand, he started crying. The man was so moved that he pledged to the Chofetz Chaim that he would observe Shabbos from then on. He said, "Rebbe, I will start to keep Shabbos, but I have one request. I need some time to arrange that I stay closed for Shabbos. I just need to work this one Shabbos, and from then on, I will stop doing so. Can you allow me to do that?"

The Chofetz Chaim answered, "If Shabbos were mine to give, I could consider something like that. However, the commandment to keep Shabbos comes from Hashem, and I don't have any such power or right." When the man heard the sincere and heartfelt comment from the Chofetz Chaim, the man agreed, and said he would keep even that first Shabbos!

Benefit

לֶךְ־לְךָ֙ מֵאַרְצְךָ֜ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ֗ וּמִבֵּ֙ית אָבִ֔יךָ אֶל־הָאָ֖רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֥ר אַרְאֶֽךָּ

Go out from your country, and from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you (12:1)

According to **Rashi**, the command implied "for your own benefit and to your own advantage." Yet despite the fact that Abraham knew this, he obeyed G-d simply because he had been so commanded, rather than out of any personal advantage it would bring him. (***Der Torah Kval***)

Pearls of Wisdom…



There was once a king who had a Jewish advisor. He asked him to explain to him the difference between a Jew and a gentile. The Jewish advisor organized a celebration with the tables set with all kinds of delicacies. The only people invited were the king's gentile officers and advisors, they were told that they could sit at the tables but not eat anything until they were instructed to do so.

They all filed in and took their seats and awaited instructions from the king. Finally, the king told them they may eat whatever is on the table to their hearts delight, but there was one condition: they may not touch the food with their hands.

The only way for them to eat was to use the utensils that were provided for them on the tables. It was then that they noticed the huge, over-sized, and long forks and spoons that were set on the table. They began trying to use these utensils but found that they couldn't manipulate them to put the food in their mouths. After much hard work and effort, they gave up and left the ballroom.

Next, the Jewish advisor had the room set up for the king's Jewish officers and advisors, and had the tables set up laden with special kosher food and delicacies, and with the same huge kosher utensils. They were given the same instructions. The Jews, however, seeing that they couldn't eat with those utensils, realized immediately what to do.

Each one picked up a huge portion with the utensil and extended it across the table so that his friend who was opposite him could eat from it!

The Jewish advisor said to the king, "This is the difference between a Jew and a gentile. Jews perform Chesed, kindness for others. A Jew will do favours for another and will be considerate and mindful to the needs of others. A gentile only thinks about himself.

When the gentile saw that he couldn't eat the food himself, it didn't occur to him that maybe he could try to feed someone else. The Jew, however, understands that he's not the only one, and that if he can't eat, he thinks, 'Maybe at least I can help someone else!'



Rabbi Hanoch Teller

relates a story about how special it is to be a Jew. A Jewish man was once in his car riding down the highway, when he noticed a stalled car on the side of the road, with a man wearing a Yarmulka standing near the car. By nature, the man felt compassion for another Jew, and he stopped his car and pulled over to the side of the road to help his fellow Jew. After looking at the broken down car, he was able to see what was wrong and fix the problem, but it was then that he noticed something in the car that shocked him. Right there on the dashboard, there was a cross that was prominently displayed, and this is not at all something that is a Jewish symbol!

The Jew started a conversation with this fellow and asked him tactfully if he was Jewish. The man sheepishly admitted that he wasn't. He explained, "I always noticed that whenever I saw a Jew stranded on the road, another Jew would always stop to help him, whether to give him a ride, or to help him with his problem. This type of thing doesn't happen by the gentiles. Therefore, I decided to

always carry a Yarmulka in my glove compartment and put it on whenever I was having car trouble and I was stranded on the road. So far it hasn't ever failed me! Some kind-hearted Jew has always stopped to help!"

Parsha Pages - Twenty-Five Years Hence

בראשית טו,ה: וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט-נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם-תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ



The *Baal haTurim* points out that Gematriyah of **כֹּה** is twenty-five. G-d was hinting to Avroham that Yitzchak would be born in twenty-five years time. Avraham was seventy-five years at the B'ris bein ha'Besarim (where this Pasuk was said), and Sarah gave birth to Yitzchak when he was a hundred. Moreover, the Gematriyah of **יִהְיֶה** is thirty, a hint that in every generation there will be thirty Tzadikim of the caliber of Avroham Avinu that would sustain the world. The Gemara (Chullin 92a) additional states that there will always be 30 righteous non-Jews whose merits will sustain the non-Jewish nations of the world. This is understandable since Avroham was the father of nations, Jewish and non-Jewish.

"Don't use the chutzpa of a beggar as an excuse for not helping him." ~~ Rabbi Shmelke of Nickelsburg

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



When Avraham left Mitzrayim to go back to Eretz Yisrael, the Torah tells us, **וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמַסָּעָיו** (Breishis 13:3). Rashi writes, **בחזרתו פרע הקפותיו** "He paid up his debts." Which debts did Avraham have? Did he borrow money from people?

The Chasam Sofer explains that he didn't owe people money; he owed them an answer. There were people mocking Avraham. Avraham said that Hashem told him to come to Eretz Yisrael. When Avraham left because of the hunger, they asked him, "If you really spoke with Hashem and He actually told you to come to Eretz Yisrael, why must you leave it so soon after you came?"

They questioned Avraham and his emunah. But when Avraham returned from Egypt with immense wealth, as it says, **וַיַּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרַיִם.. וְאַבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בַּמִּקְנֶה בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב** they understood that Avraham and his emunah was genuine.

Hashem's Help

A person can have a table set with food before him, but he should still pray for food. Because a set table doesn't necessarily mean that he can eat from it. Something may prevent him from eating. Tzaddikim said, "With Hashem's help, one can cross the sea. Without Hashem's help, one can't even cross the threshold." Therefore, the **Zohar** teaches that even when one has bread before him, he should

pray for food and parnassah, and this arouses the bounty to come down from heaven.

We say daily in Shacharis, "*Hashem desires those who fear Him; those who aspire and yearn for His kindness.*" The Zohar teaches: Who are the people who are waiting for Hashem's kindness? Those are the people who pray for parnassah.



Rebbe Mendel of Riminov zt'l studied Torah and chassidus by the **Noam Elimelech (Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk zt'l)** for about a year. During that time, he was supported by the Rebbe. He didn't have to worry about money. One day, Rebbe Mendel of Riminov thought, "Why should I daven for parnassah? The Rebbe is anyway supporting me." That day, he didn't daven for parnassah. Later that day, when lunch was served to the scholars of Rebbe Elimelech's beis medresh, Rebbe Mendel couldn't eat anything because he didn't have a fork. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk said, "You see, even if you are being supported, you must daven for your livelihood, or you won't have."

A similar story happened by one of the students of the Apter Rav. **The Apter Rav (Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heshcel of Apt, zt'l,** the Ohev Yisrael) also supported the scholars of his beis medresh. Every month, the students would line up, and he would give them their monthly stipend.

One of the students thought that he doesn't have to daven for parnassah since anyway the Rebbe was supporting him. That month, he was in the back of the line when the Rebbe was handing out the stipends. When his turn came, the Rebbe apologized, there wasn't

any money left for him. The Rebbe told him, "I always receive enough money for all the students. What happened this time that you didn't receive? Perhaps you didn't daven for parnassah?" The student admitted that he didn't daven.

Living Jewish- Chabad of Cardo- The Wrong Hoshia



There were two tea merchants, both named Hoshia. One was known as "Big Hoshia and the other, "Little Hoshia." Big Hoshia was a wealthy man, with a large, respectable establishment. Little Hoshia was a small-time operator.

One day a message arrived that one of Little Hoshia's tea shipments had been confiscated at the border by customs officials. For the poor man, this spelled utter ruin. Not only would he lose everything, he would be left with crushing debts. When they broke the news to Reb Hoshia he was in Lubavitch at the time and the unfortunate man collapsed in a dead faint; time and again they revived him, but as soon as he remembered what had occurred, he would pass out once more.

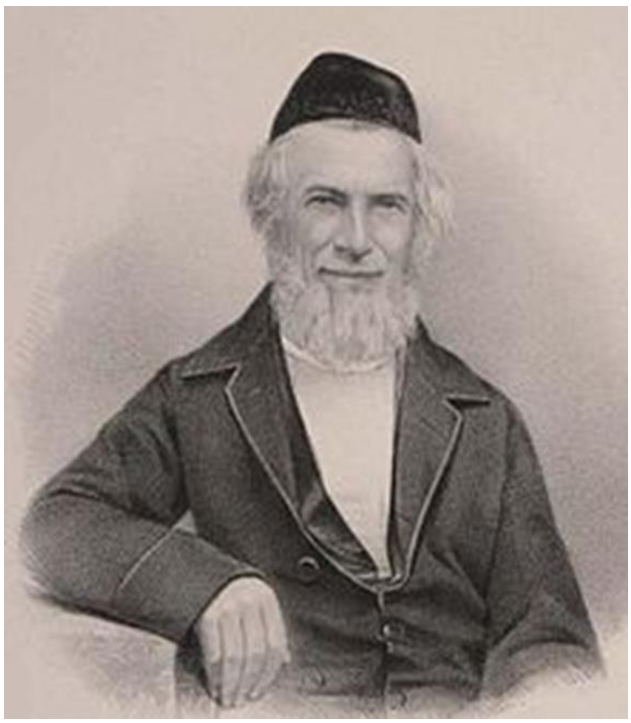
The Tzemach Tzedek, upon hearing of the man's condition, instructed that when Reb Hoshia is again revived, he should be told that the messenger is mistaken. Shortly thereafter, the matter was indeed clarified. It turned out that the confiscated shipment belonged to the other Hoshia, the tea merchant, Big Hoshia. The Tzemach Tzedek explained, "There was nothing miraculous about my prediction. You see, our Sages tell us that whenever the Almighty causes a person to undergo a challenge or trial in his life, He always

provides him with the capacity and fortitude to bear it and to learn from the experience. So, when I saw a calamity which Reb Hoshia was not equipped to deal with, I understood that it was not meant for him. Obviously, there must have been some misunderstanding..."

Make it Count

The giant Og lived a very long time and was present at many events throughout history. In this week's Parsha we learn the secret to his longevity.

Og Informs Avraham of Lot being kidnapped. When the pasuk introduces Og, he is called the Palit. The gemara in Nidah writes that this Palit is really Og. Tosfos writes that Avraham was baking matzos (which are called ugot) when Og came to inform him about Lot's capture. Therefore, he is called Og after the fact that he came when Avraham was baking ugot.



The Aruch L'ner asks how it could be that a person gets his name from such an unimportant event. Rashi explains that Og really had one (bad) intention when telling Avraham about Lot. He wanted Avraham to try to save Lot and get killed in his attempt, which would enable Og to marry Sarah. The name Og therefore, actually represents an important event where we see a person who did a good deed with bad intentions who is rewarded handsomely with a long life. How much more so will a person who does a good deed with good intentions are greatly rewarded. Every time we mention Og we are reminded of this concept.

The Rebbe Reb Pinchas, author of the Ponim Yofos on the Torah, points out that by refraining from work on Shabbos, one is granted success in all his endeavours. Indeed, a person receives the necessary brocho so that he can complete his labours during the week. In a similar vein, **the Chofetz Chayim** writes that in the merit of observing Shabbos, a person's livelihood is blessed with abundance. These views only emphasise the obvious point that it is vital that we study the Laws of Shabbos as this is the only way in which we will be able to observe it properly.

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Avram was given the Mitzvah of Bris Milah at the age of ninety-nine (17:1). The Medrash Rabbah (46:2) explains that this was to enable every person to have hope that no matter how old they are they can still change their ways.


הגה"צ רבי לייב'לע אייגער זצ"ל
לובלינער רבי

Rav Leibele Eiger (Toras Emes) adds, we do not have any details regarding the time and date of Avraham's Bris, and this is to teach us that every instant is opportune. We can choose any moment we like to enact change and enhance our lives. Similarly, we have no definitive time and date for receiving the Torah, as Shavuos does not have a date in the Torah, and it is only based on counting from the second day of Pesach.

This shows that Torah learning is not restricted to particular days. One can choose to start learning and 'receive' the Torah any day and any time!



Rabbi Berel Wein recounts the time he visited a wealthy businessman to raise funds for a needy individual. Knowing the man to be quite well-off, Rabbi Wein was expecting a sizable amount. However, the fellow gave him a cheque that was much smaller than anticipated, and Rabbi Wein questioned it. "Come on," he said. "This is a very important cause. We need more than this." "Relax, Rabbi," replied the man. "Have bitachon. I'm sure HaShem will make you successful in raising what you need." "Listen," answered R' Berel. "I'm the rabbi. Telling people to have faith is MY job, not yours. Your job is to write the big cheques. Let's stick to doing what we're each supposed to do." He got the money.

Rabbi Y Richtman- Make it Count

The Gemara in Brachos states that anyone who calls Avraham- Avram- has transgressed a positive commandment, as the pasuk (17: 5) clearly states that *"no longer will you be called Avram, it should be your name is Avraham."*

The name Avram- **אברם** is a mnemonic for the words **רַבּות מַחשבות בַּלב אַיש** .**The Shelah** writes that if one wants to work on bitachon on a daily basis, he should infuse every action with Faith. If one would think before he does anything that "the success or lack

thereof is completely dependent on Hashem, it's all **אם ירצה השם** this would infuse Hashem into everything we do.

This idea sheds light onto the addition of the letter **ה** into Avraham's name. At first it was **אברם - רַבּות מַחשבות בַלב אַיש** - but then Hashem added a **ה** spelled out is the letters **האי** which is a mnemonic for **אם ירצה ה'**.

Rabbi Y Richtman

The gemara in Brachos (7b) states that Avraham was the first person to call Hashem "Adon" my master.



R'Shimon Schwab, in his sefer on the siddur, asks why the great people before Avraham (Sheis, Noach, Mesushlach) didn't call Hashem by this name.

He explains that there is a difference between a master and a king. A master has a closer relationship with his servant, and the servant knows how his master wants to be served. A king has many officers under him and numerous servants that tend to his needs. Avraham was the first to recognize this type of relationship between us and Hashem. This is how we should approach our relationship with Hashem that he is our Master and, if we will serve him with the proper commitment and devotion, then hopefully he will give us the title servant. This is the greatest praise we can hope for, as we see from the way Hashem describes Moshe at the end of his life.

Complaints

When Pharaoh becomes aware that Sarah is not just your ordinary lady, he approaches Avraham with two complaints. 'Firstly, why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Secondly, why did you tell me she was your sister?'



R'Shlomo Ganzfried, author of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, asks why Pharaoh raised two complaints.

The main problem was that Avraham should have told Pharaoh that she was his wife, it is completely irrelevant that she is or isn't his sister. He notes that there is another instance where we have a woman hide her lineage. Esther was instructed by Mordechai not to reveal her nation or birth place. The reason for this was to make Achashverosh think that she was embarrassed to say where she came from and thereby he would refuse to take her as a queen.

Similar to our situation, If Avraham tells Pharaoh that 'she isn't my wife', then Pharaoh might say 'I won't take her since she probably comes from a lowly family. It would be beneath me to take her'. However, once Avraham says she is my sister this, in fact, gives Pharaoh more of a reason to take her since he knows that she comes from good family. This is why Pharaoh complains to Avraham, "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife, and why did you tell me that she was your sister".

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

הנה נא ידעתי כי אשה יפת מראה את 11:12 - חתם סופר

Kiddushin 41a – It is not permitted for one to marry until he sees the woman. We know that Avrohom Avinu was Mekayeim the entire Torah, as it says in the end of Meseches Kiddushin, and he must have fulfilled this Chazal, and seen Sarah before he married her. Avrohom saw her before he married her and did not look at any other women. For all he knew, they were all as beautiful as Sarah. However, when he approached the land of Mitzrayim, he saw other women.

Being that Mitzrayim was a land of Zenus, they had the women wear all sorts of jewellery and decorations, so that men would notice them. It was then that Avrohom realized that Sarah was more beautiful than them, and was then concerned that the Mitzriyim would want her.

הנה נא ידעתי כי אשה יפת מראה את 11:12 - כתב סופר

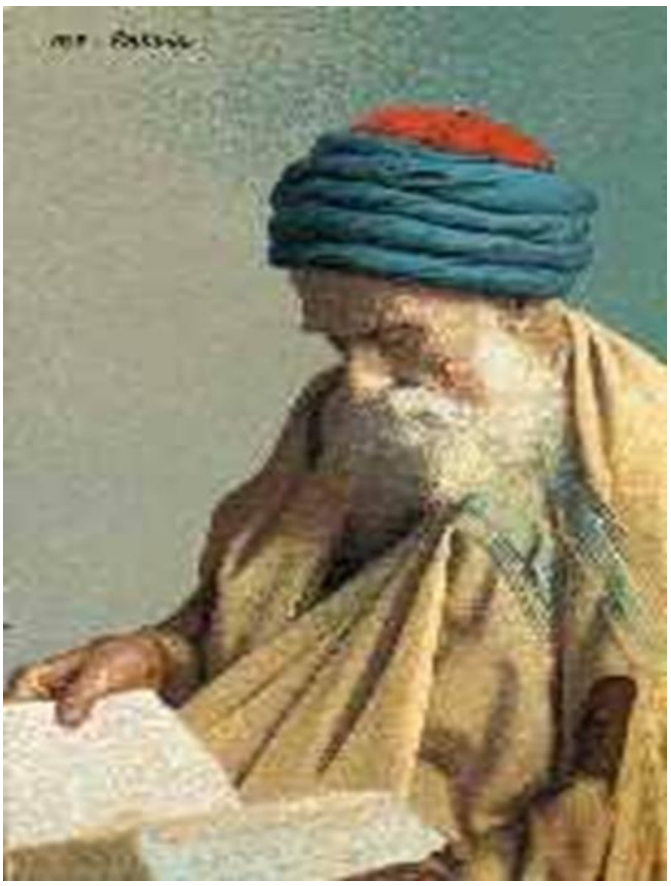


We know that there are ways to make people look unappealing, as we know in Parshas Devorim, when the Torah discusses women who are taken captive. They shave off her hair, let her nails grow long, remove any nice clothing, etc… By doing these things, the woman becomes repulsive in the eyes of men. When Avrohom first set out for Mitzrayim, he assumed that he would have Sarah wear clothing that was not attractive and do other things that would make her unsightly, and then there would be no

need to fear the Mitzriyim wanting her. However after Avrohom saw that despite their travelling, her beauty was not diminished at all, he began to fear that because she was so beautiful, even doing things that would generally help to make women unattractive, would not work for Sarah.

Parsha Pages

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לָמָּה זֶּה צָחֲקָה שָׂרָה "Then G-d said to Avraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh?...." 18:13



The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that Sarah's laughing did not indicate that she was sceptical as other commentators explain, but rather it means that she was joyous. However, the claim against her was why did she first need to experience a rejuvenation within her physicality by regaining her youth before rejoicing. She should have rejoiced immediately after hearing the angel's good tidings to Avraham. The words of the angel only because a reality when she saw her physical rejuvenation. This was the claim against Sarah. Sarah, definitely was a full believer; however, what was demanded of her was that her belief should have been internalized immediately as a reality.

"The highest form of wisdom is kindness." —Talmud, Brachot 17a

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Machlokes



The passuk compares machlokes to water gushing through an opening, "*Like water gushing through an opening, is the beginning of a dispute*" (Mishlei 17:14). Rashi (Sanhedrin 7.) writes, "*When a river swells, it sometimes flows to the fields along the banks [and the water flows] into narrow furrows and channels. If the flow isn't stopped immediately it will get stronger and stronger and wider and wider until it can't be stopped. This is how a dispute works…*" If one doesn't stop it at the onset, it becomes larger and overpowering.

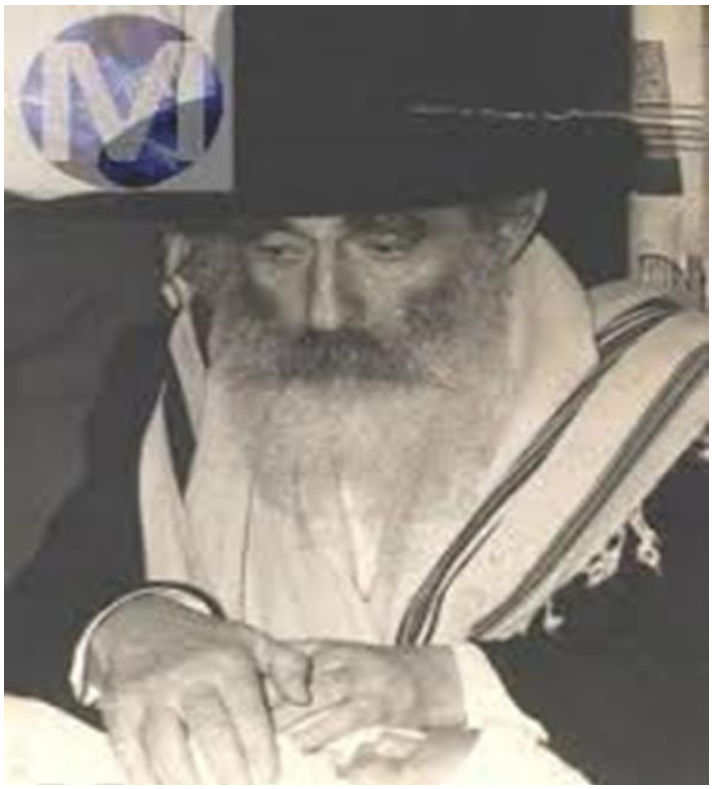
The Shlah said that this is alluded to in the word **מחלקת**. The **מ** has a tiny opening, which represents a still small and narrow machlokes. The opening of the **ח** is wider and represents that the argument has become greater. **ל** is the tallest letter, going upwards, and **ק** is long downwards. This suggests that if the machlokes isn't controlled, it grows and in all directions. And then finally, **ת**, it stands firmly and securely on its own two legs. However all of this could be avoided, if you stop the machlokes at the very beginning, when it's still merely a small opening in the **מ**.

"An intelligent man is like a robust oak - he rides over his misfortune." ~~ Yehuda Leib Gordon

"In spirituality, the searching is the finding, and the pursuit is the achievement." —Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

The Ramban teaches that when Avraham was in Eretz Canaan, he feared that he and Sarah would die of hunger so he went down to Egypt. In Egypt he was afraid for his life once again, because he thought that people may assassinate him to marry Sarah. That's why he asked Sarah to say that she's his sister.

The Ramban (12:1) writes, "Know that Avraham Avinu committed a great sin accidentally. He put his wife in jeopardy of sin because of his fear that he may be assassinated. He should have trusted in Hashem that he, his wife, and everything he owned, would be protected. It was also a sin when Avraham left the land that Hashem obligated him to go to because of the hunger. Hashem could save him from death by hunger. Because of this error it was decreed that his descendants be exiled in Egypt…"



Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l says that when Avraham went to Mitzrayim, he wasn't lacking emunah. He believed without doubt that Hashem could support him in Eretz Canaan, and give him, Sarah, his entire household and all his followers all the food they needed. That would require a miracle, as there was a famine, but Avraham believed in miracles. So why did Avraham go down to Mitzrayim? It was because he didn't want to get parnassah through miracles, because then it would be easy for him to believe in Hashem. There wouldn't be a challenge. Avraham wanted to go to Mitzrayim, earn parnassah by what would appear to be a totally naturally means, and yet believe with a complete heart that it's all a gift from Hashem.

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ Hashem blessed Avram that his children will be like the stars (15:5).

Rabbeinu Bachya explains this comparison to stars. Just like stars are different, some are brighter than others, some shine less, some have a greater glow, and some have less. So too, Hashem was telling Avraham that life and its challenges are not pass or fail. Each person has their challenges and will be judged on his abilities and efforts when faced with his life's situations.

Reb Shimon is an elderly Yid who lives in Yerushalayim. When he was young, before the Holocaust, he lived in Lublin.



Rav Meir Shapiro, zt"l, once in a while would come to his Cheder to test the boys, and he would sometimes give out gifts or sweets to the children. One time, Rav Meir Shapiro didn't have anything to give them, and he said, "Instead of a gift, I will tell you a wonderful Segulah, and if you will follow my advice, you will be always be successful and lead a peaceful life!" He then told them about the wonders that happen to people who say Birchas HaMazon properly, and he urged them to always use a Bentcher and not say it by heart. Rav Meir Shapiro concluded, "This is my present to you."

Reb Shimon took the lesson very seriously. He decided right then that he would be careful with Bentching for the rest of his life. It

didn't matter to him that his friends would Bentch quickly and go out to play, while he stayed behind in order to Bentch properly. It was challenging, but he didn't want to abandon the wonderful gift that Rav Meir Shapiro gave him.

A few years later, the Nazis invaded Poland, and Reb Shimon found himself standing in line for a 'selection'. People who were considered tall, were sent to the right, and were allowed to live, while those who were short were sent to the left for execution. Reb Shimon Davened that he should be saved from any "wrath and destruction" in the merit of Birchas HaMazon. When it was his turn, he stood as tall as he could to appear higher, and the Nazi signalled for him to go the right.

He attributed his life being saved in the merit of Bentching. Soon afterwards, Reb Shimon was standing in line again. This time, each person had to tell the Nazi in charge what his skills were, and Reb Shimon didn't know what he could say, as he was only a teenager. As he waited in line he Davened, "In the merit of Birchas HaMazon, which is a Segulah for Parnasah, Hashem, please support me…" Suddenly, the person in line behind him tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Tell them that you are a cook and that you are my assistant. I will show you everything you need to know." Reb Shimon said this and they were both sent to work in the kitchen, where he always had enough food to eat. Again, he attributed this Brachah to his being careful with Birchas HaMazon. Reb Shimon continued to be extremely careful with Bentching, and if he knew that he wouldn't have enough time to Bentch properly, then he wouldn't eat bread.

Once, on a freezing cold winter day, a Nazi saw Shimon working in the kitchen and he wasn't pleased that he had such a 'good' position, surrounded with food. The Nazi ordered Reb Shimon to go outside and showed him a stony area, outside the kitchen, and barked at him, "Dig a two-meter ditch here. You have two hours to finish, or else you will be buried in it," and he handed him a spoon and said that was all he could use, and then he left.

The task was absolutely impossible. The ground was covered with heavy stones, frozen solid, and all he had to use was a small spoon, all to be done in two hours. Reb Shimon raised his eyes to Hashem and said, "I am careful to only say Birchas HaMazon with Kavanah. Please save me again in this merit."

A few moments later a German jeep drove by, filled with Nazis, and they saw this young lad trying to dig a ditch with a spoon. To tease him, they threw potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables at him. Reb Shimon just collected them into a pile and continued his work.

Shortly afterwards a jeep with Russian workers drove up. When they saw all the vegetables around Shimon, they stopped and asked for them. They were hungry, because they were hardly fed by the Nazis. Reb Shimon told the Russians, "If you help me dig a pit that measures exactly two meters deep here, I will give you all the vegetables."

The Russians jumped at the offer, and they all got right to work digging, and as workers, they had exactly the right tools they needed. They all worked together and in just a few minutes they were able to finish the job. They took the vegetables and Reb Shimon went back into the kitchen, far earlier than his deadline.

The Nazi was happy to see him, knowing that he certainly failed in his mission, but his happiness ended when Reb Shimon told him the hole was finished. The Nazi ordered him back outside so he could inspect it, and when he saw that it was indeed complete, he said "I always knew that your G-d takes care of you. I just didn't realize to what extent," and he never bothered Reb Shimon again.

Reb Shimon was saved once again, and he attributed it to the merit of Bentching. When he came to Eretz Yisroel after the war was over, he continued to enjoy many Brachos of abundance, and he was able to resume saying Birchas HaMazon as he had his entire life!

Due to the famine in Eretz Yisrael, Avraham and Sarah headed southward, towards Mitzrayim. The trip lasted several days. They stopped at various inns at night. Avraham was poor at the time and couldn't pay for their stay but promised the proprietors that he would return to pay up his debts. The innkeepers trusted Avraham and let Avraham and Sarah stay in their inns. Indeed, in Mitzrayim, Avraham became wealthy, and he returned to the inns to pay up his debts (see *Rashi* 13:3).



As a child, the **Pnei Menachem *zt'l*** asked his father, the **Imrei Emes *zt'l*,** "How did Avraham borrow money when he didn't know how he would pay it all back? Isn't it forbidden to borrow money when you don't have a logical plan of how to pay up?" The Imrei Emes replied,"Hakadosh Baruch Hu promised Avraham that he would make him wealthy (see *Rashi* 12:1). Avraham believed in this promise, so he knew he could borrow money on that account." The Pnei Menachem asked, "But why did the innkeepers trust Avraham? How did they know that Avraham would soon be wealthy?"

The Imrei Emes replied, "Avraham Avinu's ***Emunah* and *bitachon*** was so strong, it influenced everyone he spoke to. When Avraham told them about Hashem's promise, they too believed that Hashem would soon give wealth to Avraham." *We study the lives of the Avos so we can learn how to act. From this story, we learn to have bitachon, to trust in Hashem that He will help us in times of need.*

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

והוא יהיה פרא אדם ידו בכל ויד כל בו 12:16



The Beis HaLevi was once involved in an important meeting in his home when a neighbour burst through the door and announced that the Rav's young son, Chaim, was tormenting the other children who were outside playing near him. The Beis HaLevi, slightly embarrassed, called for his son to come inside. Upon entering, the Rav cryptically asked his son, "The first half or the second half?" The young Chaim looked at his father and immediately answered, "The second half." Satisfied, his father smiled and gestured that he may leave and return to his outdoor recreation.

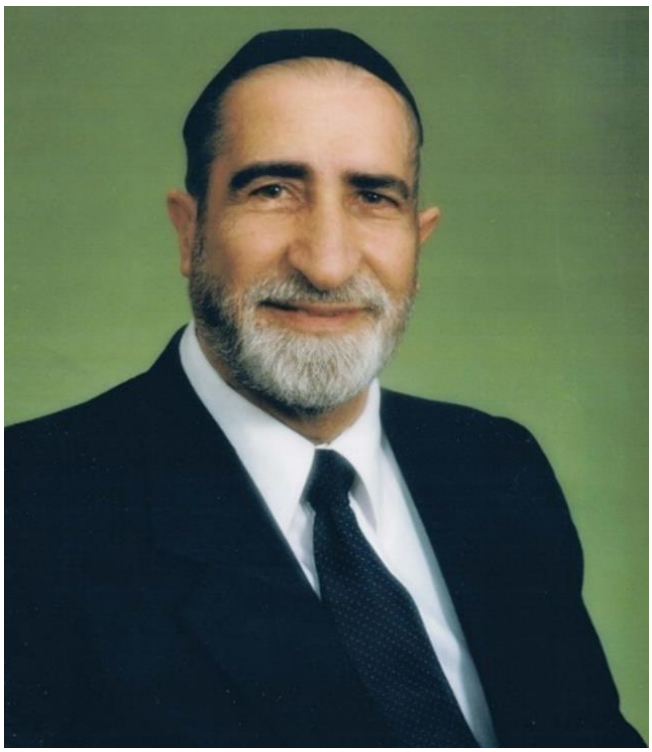
The only thing more baffling to those present than the Rav's original question was Chaim's answer and the Rav's acceptance of it. Garnering their courage, they asked the Rav to explain the perplexing sequence of events.

The Beis HaLevi smiled and answered them that in informing Hagar that she would conceive and give birth to a son, the angel added that the son would be quite wild, prophesying that **ידו בכל ויד כל בו** – His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him. The Beis HaLevi's neighbour had informed him that his son was causing trouble, but the Rav understood that although Chaim may have been the instigator, he may also have been an innocent victim acting out of self-defence, which would cast his actions in a completely different light. Calling his son in, he attempted to clarify which scenario was correct by asking whether it had been as

described by the first half of our verse – his hand against everyone – or the second half – the hands of the other kids against him.

When Chaim understood the reference and replied that it had been as described in the second half of the verse, his father understood that he had been protecting himself and quickly dismissed him, an explanation which young Chaim corroborated when questioned about it.

Hacham Baruch Ben Hayim



The Sephardic Syrian community of Brooklyn was very concerned. Their beloved Rabbi, **Hacham Baruch Ben Hayim** lay unconscious after suffering from a heart attack.

The attack had not been caused by a problem in the heart itself, rather by an issue in his lungs. There was only one doctor who knew how to deal with this specific case, but due to his very busy schedule and his living a great distance away, the doctor refused to come. Rabbi David Yosef was in America at the time and upon hearing about the plight of his father, Hacham Ovadiah Yosef's childhood friend, Hacham Baruch, tried to get involved and convince the doctor to take on the case.

"Do you know **Hacham Ovadiah Yosef?**" He asked the doctor. The doctor replied that indeed he was familiar with Hacham Ovadiah. "Well this is a good friend of Hacham Ovadiah, one that he has been friends with since childhood." That being the case the doctor

immediately agreed to see Hacham Baruch and with Hashem's help was able to successfully treat him.

When the family attempted to pay the doctor for his services, he refused to accept anything from them. "I didn't treat him for payment," he explained, "I treated him because he's Hacham Ovadiah' s friend.

Years ago I was in Israel with my son who was injured by a bomb in a terrorist attack. He was rushed to Hadassah hospital in critical condition. I visited many rabbis who prayed for my son's recovery, but when I went to Hacham Ovadiah that wasn't enough for him. He asked that his driver take him to the hospital and he stayed at my son's bedside for about fifteen minutes reciting tehilim with tears streaming down his cheeks. A little while after he left, my son miraculously recovered. If the great Hacham Ovadiah could take time and travel to visit my son, I surely could take of my time to travel and treat his friend".



Rabbi Eli Meyer Smith

The Me'or Vashemesh and Ohev Yisroel state that the general way of Avrohom Avinu was that he did not do Hashem's mitzvos out of desire for the rewards he was promised. His only desire was to fulfil His command.

We pray that we should serve Hashem purely out of a desire to serve Him, and not for a desire for personal gain. There is good reason why Avrohom declared (18:27): "*I am dust and ashes.*" He truly considered himself like nothing before the will of Hashem. He annulled himself completely before Him.

A story is related about the time when the **Baal Shem Tov** wanted to move to Eretz Yisroel. During his travels, he stopped for Pesach in Istanbul, Turkey, where he was hosted by a very wealthy. His host treated him like a king and served him royally. To show his gratitude,

the Baal Shem tov gave his host, who had no children, a "havtacha", guaranteed blessing, that he should bear a son in the merit of treating him so well.

Immediately, he heard a Heavenly voice proclaiming that he had just forfeited his share in Olam Haba because the host and his wife were naturally barren, and the laws of nature would have to be broken because the guarantee of the tzadik has to be fulfilled.

The Baal Shem Tov heard this and exclaimed, "Boruch Hashem! I can now serve Hashem purely for His sake, with no hope for personal gain!" A second Heavenly voice then rung out, saying that his portion in the World to Come had been returned because he accepted to serve Hashem with no personal gain.

Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l *(Teguvos Hamussar, Chelek Aleph, page 303)* would say that even if a person would receive Gehenim as reward for a mitzvah and Gan Eden for an aveirah, he should still run after mitzvos. Not only should one be willing to do a mitzvah for no reward, he should desire to do a mitzvah even if he would be punished for it. Why? Because we are obligated to serve Hashem purely out of a desire to serve Him, even if we would have no benefit in doing so.



Why?

Reb Yehudah Diner Shlita, rav of beis medresh Divrei Shir, Bnei Brak, expressed that when people are worried or upset, they ask **למה**, "Why did it occur?" or **מה יהיה**, "What will be?"

The gematriya of **למה** is 75, and the gematriya of **מה יהיה** is also 75.

The solution is **בטחון**, which is also gematriya 75!



Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה

וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה 12:3

Avrohom is told that when people give brochos, it will be all about you. They will say, "*You should be like Avrohom*". Rashi says that a person will say to his son, "*you should be like Avrohom.*" **וזהו פשוטו אדם אומר לבנו תהא כאברהם**. Why does this refer especially to his son, why not anyone else? A father may say to his son, " I want you to learn and daven hard and be good and do the Rotzon Hashem, like Avrohom Avinu". The son answers back, "What's wrong with just being like you father?" The father answers that, "I want you to be like Avrohom, because Avrohom's father was Terach. Avrohom was better and greater than his father, and this is what I want from you, to be better than me."

It is every father's wish that his son be not only as good as him, but better than him, just like Avrohom was.

Once, the **Bardichover Rav *zt'l*** was ill and his students were in the next room saying *Tehillim*, praying that he live and be well. Suddenly, the students heard a crashing sound, and they rushed into the Bardichever's room to find out what happened. They found him on the floor. Apparently, he fell out of his bed. They helped him back in his bed, and they went back to their *Tehillim*. Soon afterwards, the Bardichever asked his students for tea. That was a good sign. Soon, the Bardichever Rav was standing up, healed and well. He told them, "As I lay in bed, somewhere between life and death, the *pasuk*, **הבוטח בה׳ חסד יסובבנו** , *'The one who trusts in Hashem, will be enveloped in kindness,'* popped into my mind, and I understood that this was a message from heaven.



I remembered that I heard from my Rebbe, the **Magid of Mezritz *zt'l***, that *bitachon* isn't a *segulah*, not even something super-natural. The Magid of Mezritz said that Hashem planted into the rules of nature that when one trusts in Him, Hashem will help him. So, I began focusing on *bitachon*. I trusted that Hashem will give me a *refuah sheleimah*. I tried getting out of bed, but I fell to the ground. I realized that my *bitachon* wasn't yet perfect. I focused on *bitachon* some more until I felt better. And now, as you see, I'm up and about."

R'Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings Emunah Peshutah



Hashem told Avraham **לך לך** - that he should leave his country, friends, and family and go, **אל הארץ אשר אראך** "to the land that I will show you."

The Bas Ayin writes, "It was certainly very difficult for Avraham to leave his homeland, his father's home where he was raised and all he was accustomed to and go to a foreign land. Additionally, he didn't even know where he was going! But he placed his trust in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, knowing that His kindness is forever with him.

He had ***bitachon*** [and he trusted that if Hashem is sending him, that is what's best for him]. This is what gave him the strength to pass this difficult test. As it states, **ואברם בן חמש ושבעים שנה בצאתו מחרן** 'Avraham was 75 years old when he left Charan.' 75 is the same *gematriya* as **בטחון**.

The *pasuk* is hinting that Avraham had *bitachon*. This is how he had the courage to leave his family and homeland and to travel as Hashem commanded him. Because with *Emunah* and *bitachon* in the Creator of all worlds that everything He does is for the good, one has the strength to keep the mitzvos and to pass the most difficult tests."

V'Chol Maaminim



Avraham Instilled Amen for Generations **ויוצא אתו החוצה ויאמר הבט נא השמימה וספר הכוכבים את תוכל לספר אתם ויאמר ויחשבה לו כה יהיה זרעך והאמין בה' לו צדקה"** (טו ה-ו). Why specifically is this emunah considered a tzedakah on Avraham Avinu's part? Would anyone think that it was possible that Avraham would not believe a promise he received directly from Hashem?

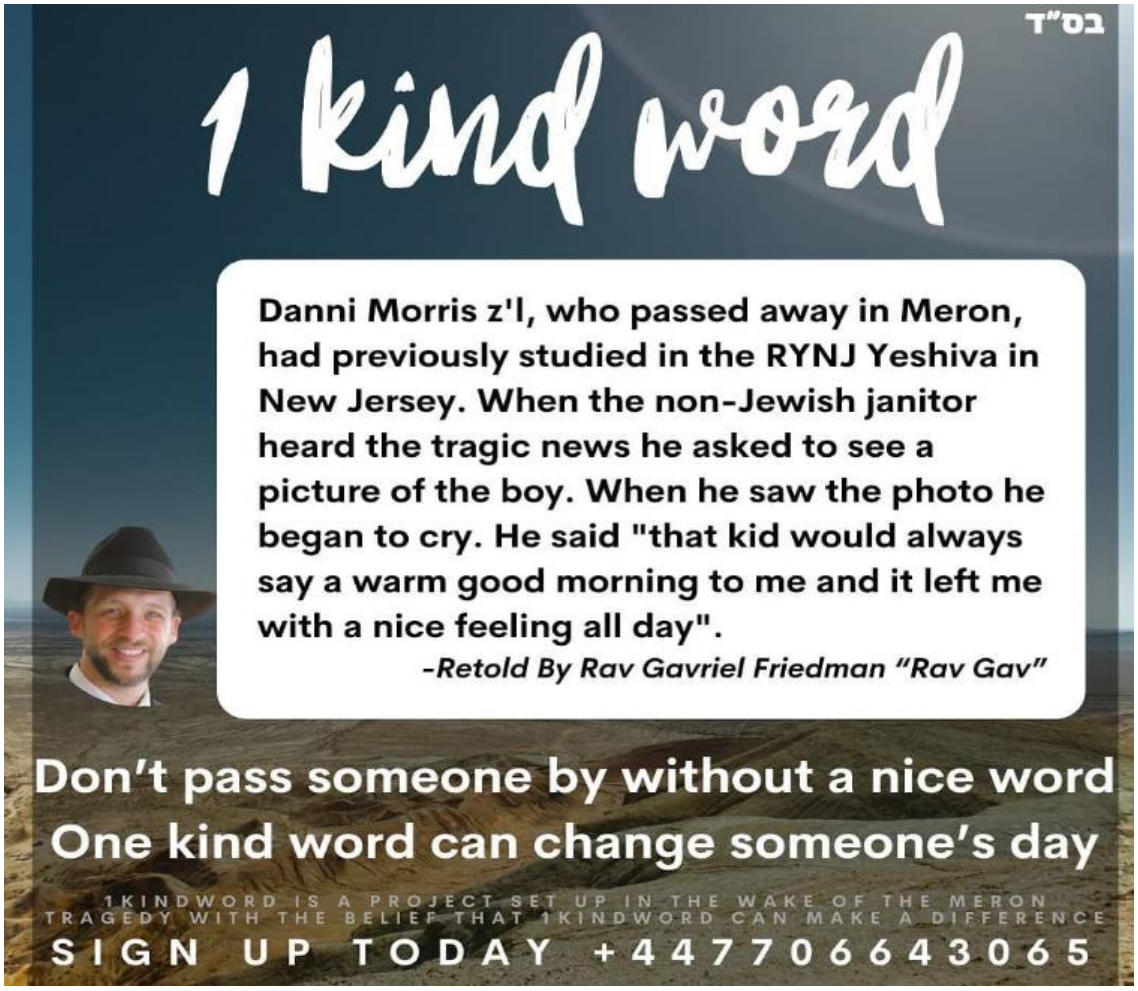
Harav Avraham Yosef Kreiswirth, Hy"d, the Rav of Vaunitch, explained: The words of Hashem, "Ko yihiyeh zaracha" were not said as a promise, but rather as a brachah. Avraham answered amen to this brachah, and this was considered a tzedakah on his part, because by doing so, he established the mitzvah of answering amen to brachos for all the generations of his progeny. This is alluded to in the word "vehe'emin"

[which is the 'hif'il' form of dikduk], meaning that he caused all those who came after him to also be strict about answering amen. HaKadosh Baruch Hu considered this chain of the mitzvah of answering amen for generations as a tzedakah. [*Bais Avraham]*

אך צדיקים יודו לשמך [תהלים קמ:יד]

Harav Yaakov Yehoshua Fruman of Lodz explained: The holy Zohar explains that the word "tzedakah" alludes to the quota of four holy things that a person is obligated to do each day: צ amens, ד Kedushos, ק brachos, ה Chumshei Torah.

The Torah alludes to this in our parashah: **והאמן בה** – Avraham Avinu was careful to answer 90 amens, "veyachsheveha lo litzedakah" – and thus he fulfilled the obligation alluded to in the word "tzedakah."



Rachel Protects Her Children





The 11th of Cheshvan is the Yahrzeit of Rahel Imeinu . Here is an amazing story in her honour: This story took place at the end of Chanukah.

Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Tz'l left the hospital for the first time. The Rav would leave the hospital every day for a few hours and then return at night for more treatment until he was completely released from the hospital.

For the last three days he was in the hospital, he would ask to go to the burial place of Rahel Imeinu when he left the hospital. He would pray there and then return to the hospital. We did not know why, but this is what he requested and so this is what we did.

Towards the end of Chanukah Operation Cast Lead began and towards the end of the operation, we started hearing news that the soldiers say a woman in different places that would guide them not to enter booby trapped placed. When they asked her who she is, she said that she is Rahel Imeinu. This sounded very imaginary. Rahel Imeinu who died thousands of years ago, suddenly appears?! So we decided to investigate these hearsays and we found the people behind them. Not one and not two. These weren't dreamy people who would mistake imaginary things for reality. These were responsible

soldiers who were fighting and who knew how to differentiate between imaginary things and reality.

The commander told us to enter one of the buildings in order to clean it out. We knew that there could be terrorists hiding there. The terrorists prepared a long time before we came by creating traps for us. Their main goal was to catch a soldier alive and turn him into Gilad Shalit #2. We went forward slowly, but surely. We were careful to stay away from the places that we thought terrorists would be waiting to ambush us. We entered the houses with security.

We got orders to enter one of the abandoned houses. We went through our routine. We knocked on the door and got ready to break in. But suddenly, a woman appeared behind us and said to us in Hebrew, "Don't go in! It's booby trapped". We didn't know who she was, but we got a good feeling from her. Then she said, "Don't go in from here", and points to the door were about to break down. She tells us, "Go around". We don't know why we listened to her, but we did as she said.

The house was empty, but booby trapped. If we had gone through the front door, we would have gotten injured or even killed. Who is this woman? Maybe she is married to a collaborator. We continued on, going from house to house and again we see her pointing out to us, "Don't enter from here! Go the other way". This time, we were careful to listen to what she said, but we didn't miss the opportunity. We asked her, "Who are you"? She answered, "I'm Rahel Imeinu", with a smile. "Don't worry. I'm always with you", she said. She turned around and disappeared.

When they asked Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Tz"l if this story could be true, he answered for sure. He added, "I was at the grave of Rahel a few days ago praying and I said to her your children are going now to fight in a war. Go help them; they are your children. And so it was.



In 1994, when Rav Ovadiah's wife passed away, **Rav Elazar Abuchatzeira Zt"l** asked **Rav Ovadiah Yosef Ztk"l** , "Your honour, tell me, how did you merit that all his sons are Torah scholars and righteous? It is known that there are no gifts in the world. What did you invest in, that Hashem gave you this. In exchange for what, did you merit this"? Rav Ovadiah tried to avoid answering and instead said, "Hashem gave it to me". Rabbi Elazar told him, "No! There is no such thing, it is for sure in exchange for something. Is it because the rav toiled in Torah? We know a lot of people who toil in Torah. Is it because you brang merit to the masses. A lot of people brought merit to the masses and did not merit this. "Again, the Rav answered Hashem just gave it to me". Rav Elazar continued to pressure him and said, "Your honour, the Rabbi, I am not going to move from here until you reveal to me your secret". Until finally, Rav Ovadiah revealed his secret.

He said, "You know, years and years ago, I was a judge in the Rabbinical court in Petach Tikvah and couples would come there to get divorced. Most of the couples were from non-religious backgrounds and a lot of the women would come there immodestly dressed. We, as judges, had to investigate and ask questions in order to try to make peace between the couples. This is not so simple"!

Rav Ovadiah revealed, "not once did I raise my eyes, to see who I was speaking with. I spoke but my eyes looked at the floor beneath me. In exchange for keeping my eyes holy, Hashem knows how to repay.

"Now I understand".

Lech Lecha Avraham Leaves… What's The Big Test?? - Benjamin A Rose



The first Posuk in this weeks sedra starts with Hashem telling Avraham avinu to leave his homeland his neighbours and his father's house. Hashem then says "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name famous, and be a blessing." I have to ask.. what is the big test??…

If Hashem came to you and said leave Manchester leave Broughton Park and leave your home and go to Israel and I will make you wealthy and famous worldwide, would you not go??

The meforshim say that the test was whether or not Avraham would go for the reward or go because Hashem wanted him to.

That is why it such a great test. With all that reward staring you in the face its extremely hard to go just because Hashem told you to and not think about the reward.

Similarly, we know that some of the mitzvos we do, carry with them a reward. Every morning we say in Birchas Hatorah that there are certain mitzvos that guarantee Olam Haba if we perform them, Kibud Av v'Em and Talmud Torah etc.

It is up to us to see beyond the reward and do them because G-d wants us to instead of doing them because we know the reward!!

"The highest form of wisdom is kindness" – Talmud

Avraham Cares About Every Little Detail… by D Fine

הֲלֹא כָל־הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֶיךָ הִפָּרֶד נָא מֵעָלָי אִם־הַשְּׂמֹאל וְאֵימִנָה וְאִם־הַיָּמִין וְאַשְׂמְאִילָה
When the time comes for Avraham to separate from Lot, Avraham poses the following deal to Lot: 'the entire land is in front of you – if you go left I'll go right, and if you go right I'll go left' (13:9).

The Netziv asks an interesting question here. Why does Avraham need to move here; let Lot go left/right and Avraham should stay where he is? Why do they both need to move in opposite directions in order to be apart?

The Netziv answers that Avraham wanted to show that he cared for Lot and his feelings.

In order that Lot should not feel troubled and bothered for having to move, Avraham said that he would also undergo the ordeal of moving all his possessions away. Just like you, Lot, move one way, I, Avraham will move the other way – that way we'll both have the same exertion. is the way of a tzaddik; he cares for even the smallest of things when it comes to others' feelings.

Facebuker Shabbos Table Talk

In life, there's nothing past perfection – except one thing. In this week's Parsha, Avraham is given the mitzvah of bris milah, the circumcision covenant performed on a baby boy on the eighth day after birth. The procedure becomes the indelible mark of a Jew. When giving this commandment to ninety-nine year old Avraham, G-d said, "Go before me and be 'tamim,' perfect in a multiplicity of ways. How can you get more perfect than perfect?

The Talmud relates a discussion between Rabbi Akiva and a Roman nobleman. The nobleman asked whose deeds are better, those of G-d or those of man. He expected Rabbi Akiva to say that of course the deeds of G-d are better, and then he would be able to attack

the mitzvah of circumcision. Instead, Rabbi Akiva showed him a stalk of wheat and a loaf of bread and said, "You tell me. The stalk is G-d's work, the bread is man's." His answer was that G-d gave us the materials to work with so that we might elevate the world to a higher, more developed level of perfection.

One way of doing that is the bris milah, the covenant that we seal into the flesh of our infants and hope that they will imprint on theirs as well. We are showing that physicality is not an end unto itself. Though the baby may have been born perfectly complete, within that perfection lies an imperfection. What the body needs is the mark of the soul. It needs intervention to uplift the physical to the realm of the spiritual.

Though to our human sensibilities it is wrong to mutilate the body, G-d conveyed to Avraham that it is not a mutilation but a step to even greater perfection, like grinding the wheat into flour for bread. Bris Milah declares that we bow to G-d's wisdom and that we believe in life beyond our current selves. It says that we understand that we can constantly improve and grow, subjugating our animalistic tendencies and lifting ourselves up. That is Tamim, even more perfect than perfect; embracing G-d's perfection.



"ואגדלה שמך" ***"I will enlarge your name."*** **(12:2)**

Rashi explains that "I will enlarge your name" is a reference to that which they say in *Shemoneh Esreih*, "*Elokei Yaakov*" — "G-d of Yaakov." How does Avram's name become enlarged if we say "*Elokei Yaakov?*"

Yaakov also had the name "Yisrael," which was given to him by the angel and considered a greater name. Why, then, don't we say "*Elokei Yisrael*" instead of "*Elokei Yaakov?*"

The reason is that the words **אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, ואלקי יעקב** have a total of 26 letters, which is the numerical value of the

Tetragramaton: **5 = ה, 6 = ו, 5 = ה, 10 = י**. By saying *Elokei Yisrael* we would be saying a phrase of 27 letters which would not add up to the name of Hashem. The only way we could say "Yisrael" so that it would still add up to 26 letters would be to say Avram instead of Avraham.

Therefore, Hashem told him, "I will enlarge your name by adding a letter to Avram making it Avraham, and in order that the Jews should be able to say your enlarged name in *Shemoneh Esreih,* they will say *'Elokei Yaakov'* and not *'Elokei Yisrael.'*"

(ר׳ שמשון מאסטראפאלי זצ״ל)

"ואברכה מברכיך ומקללך אאר" "*And I will bless those who bless you and those who curse you, I will curse.*" (12:3)

Why doesn't the Torah write both in the same order, i.e., "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you?"

The *Gemara (Kiddushin* 40a) says that Hashem gives credit to one who plans to perform a *mitzvah*, even if circumstances prevent the realization of the plan. However, for a transgression *(aveirah),* one is punished for plans *only* when they are carried out.

When a person blesses or curses, he first thinks about it and then expresses verbally what he has in mind. Therefore, Hashem is saying to Avram, "I will bless those who bless you as soon as they *plan* to bless you, even if they have not yet blessed you. However, those who curse you will be cursed only *after* they actually curse you, but not merely for thinking about the curse." **(כלי יקר)**

"A man who marries a decent woman is as though he fulfilled all the Torah's behests." ~~ Yalkut Ruth.

ויקחו את כל רכש סדום ועמורה ואת כל אכלם וילכו ... וישב את כל הרכש
***"And they took all the wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food and they departed.... And he brought back all the wealth."* (14:11, 16)**



In the course of the war, the four kings took away the wealth *and* food from Sodom. Why did Avram only return the wealth and not the food?

Avram went to battle during the night of the fifteenth of *Nissan*, which is *Pesach* night. During the first half of that night Hashem miraculously helped Avram to defeat the four kings. The second half of that night was reserved for the slaying of the first born in Egypt and the liberation of the Jewish people (Rashi, 14:15).

Whatever Avram managed to take from the enemies became his personal property. He instructed his army to be careful to dispose of any food taken from the enemies because it is forbidden for a Jew to have *chameitz* in his possession during *Pesach*. (**שפתי צדיק**)

ויאמר אברם אל לוט אל נא תהי מריבה ביני ובינך...כי אנשים אחים אנחנו
***"Avram said to Lot, 'Please let there not be any strife between me and you ... for we are brothers (relatives).'"* (13:8)**

Why did Avram emphasize his kinship with Lot?

A story is told that a piece of wood once asked a piece of steel, "Why is it that when you are hammered you make such loud noises, and when they chop me the noise is not so loud?" The steel answered, "I am hammered with a hammer made of steel, which is my brother. I scream because it hurts when your own brother hits you."

Avram told Lot, "People should always avoid conflicts, especially with relatives and good friends." (**עיטורי תורה**)

אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל ואם אקח מכל אשר לך
***"If so much as a thread to a shoe strap; or if I shall take anything of yours."* (14:23)** The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 17a) says that because Avram refused to take from the King of Sodom even a thread or a shoe strap, his children (the Jewish people) merited to receive two *mitzvot* from Hashem: the *mitzvah* of putting a thread of *techeilet* in the *tzitzit* and the *mitzvah* of putting retzu'ot (straps) in the tefillin.

Why are the *tallit* and *tefillin* worn specifically during *shacharit* prayers?



According to the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 26b) Avraham originated the concept of *davening* to Hashem each morning. (*shacharit*). Therefore, during his *tefillah* we don the *tallis* and wrap the straps of the *tefillin* around the arm and head.

When Avram spoke to the King of Sodom, he first mentioned the thread and afterwards the shoe strap; thus, we first don the *tallit,* which has in it the thread of *techeilet,* and afterwards the *tefillin,* which have the leather straps.

(**עטרת זקנים סי' כ"ה**)

ויאמר הבט נא השמימה וספר הכוכבים אם תוכל לספר אתם ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך ***"And He said: 'Look now toward heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them'; and He said to him: 'So shall your offspring.'"*** **(15:5)**

In what ways are the Jewish people like stars?

From earth, the stars appear very small. However, the stars are actually immense. Hashem assured Avram that although on earth the nations of the world consider the Jewish people "very small" (of minor significance), in reality, up in heaven, they are of primary importance. (**דברי שאול**)

When one stands on the ground and looks up to the sky, the stars appear to be minute specks. The stars are larger than the earth. As we approach them, we can begin to appreciate their size and beauty. The same is true of a Jew. Superficially, one may appear to be insignificant. However, as one comes closer and gets to know more about him, one can perceive the great and beautiful "*Pintele Yid*" that is in him. (**בעש"ט**)

"ועבדום וענו אתם ארבע מאות שנה" ***"They shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years."*** **(15:13)**

Because Avram asked, **בַּמָּה אֵדַע כִּי אִירָשֶׁנָּה** "How (*bamah*) can I know that [my children] will be worthy to have it?" (15:8) Hashem told Avram there would be an Egyptian exile for four hundred years (see *Nedarim* 32a). Why particularly 400?

In Hebrew, in addition to the regular *alef-beis* there is an *alef-beis* known as "**א-ת, ב-ש**" in which the "**א**" interchanges with the "**ת**", the "**ב**" with the "**ש**", etc.

Accordingly, the "**ה**" interchanges with the "**צ**" and the "**מ**" interchanges with the "**י**". Thus, the letters of the word "*bamah*" (**במה**), which Avram used to inquire about the

worthiness of his children to inherit *Eretz Yisrael*, interchange with the letters "**ש-י-צ**" The total numerical value of the letters "**ש- י- צ**" is exactly 400. (**שפתי כהן**)

"וגם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול"
***"And also that nation, that they shall serve, I shall judge; and afterwards they shall leave with great wealth."* (15:14)**

In *halachah* there is a rule: "**קם ליה בדרבה מיניה**" — When one is due two punishments (e.g. death and a fine), we do not inflict both, but mete out the severest penalty. Why were the Egyptians punished with losing their lives as well as their money?



This rule applies only when the two punishments are for the same act, e.g. stabbing someone to death on *Shabbat* and damaging his clothes in the process. In such a case, the murderer is put to death but does not have to pay for the clothing he damaged.

However, the Egyptians received punishments for separate acts. They deserved the ten plagues as punishment for torturing the Jews (*avodat perech*), and they deserved to drown as punishment for drowning the Jewish children. They lost their wealth due to their failure to compensate the enslaved Jewish people for the work they performed for them. Thus, it is not considered a case of double jeopardy when punishments are given for separate crimes.

Alternatively, the rule of "**קם ליה בדרבה מיניה**" does not apply when heavenly judgment is rendered (Rambam, *Hilchot Na'arah* 1:14). Hashem reserves the right to punish individuals as He

sees fit. Therefore, Hashem emphasized "*Dan Anochi*" — "*I* personally will judge and punish them." Hence, they will justifiably both pay and suffer for their iniquity. (**שארית מנחם**)

Beneath the Surface -R' Shmuel Winzelberg

(יב:ב) ואגדלה שמך ***…and I will make your name great.*** (12:2)

The *sefer Sifsei Kohen* explains that with this *brachah*, Avraham *Avinu* was blessed that Moshe *Rabbeinu* would descend from him. As it says regarding Moshe *Rabbeinu*, **שמות יא:ג גם האיש משה גדול מאד** *…moreover the man Moshe was very great* (*Shemos* 11:3).

The *sefer Birchas Yitzchak* adds on to this a nice *remez*. The *brachah* to Avraham could have been shortened to **ואגדלך** , ***and I will make you great***, which would have the same meaning. This would leave the letter **ה** from **ואגדלה** as extra and the letters **ש** and **מ** from the word **שמך** extra as well. These three letters when rearranged spell the word **משה** , hinting that the great *brachah* that Avraham received was that Moshe would descend from him.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

The *Gaon*, Rav Meir Shapiro, *z"tl*, the Rav of Lublin, once told a childhood story about his mother, and it was because of this that he attributed his great accomplishments in learning. "When I was a boy, my family was forced to move several times, from house to house, and from city to city. The constant moving did not disturb or break my mother's drive and positive outlook. There was only one thing would bother her— my *bitul Torah*!

On one occasion, as we were again preparing to move, my mother had an idea. She contacted the *melamed* of the town to which we were moving, the one who would become my new *Rebbe*, and arranged that he should meet us by the gate of the city. This way he would be able

to learn with me immediately when we arrived at the town, and as little time as possible would be wasted from learning. When we finally reached our destination and arrived at the gates of the city, we searched and searched, but the *melamed* was not to be found!

My mother sat down next to the wagon and cried for a long time. I tried to calm her down by saying, 'Mommy, why are you crying? I'll learn tomorrow!' My mother answered, 'Meir'l! You don't yet appreciate the meaning of just one day of learning Torah! It can never be replaced!

Her tears moved me to strive for greatness in learning, and to never waste any of my time."

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos



Challah is the special bread eaten on Shabbos. It is named after the portion of dough that is removed from the batch and burned in the fire. The mitzvah of *challah* reminds us of when the *Kohanim* served in the *Bais HaMikdash* and received the piece of *challah* as a gift.

How special is the mitzvah of *Hafrashas Challah*, separating *challah*? ***The mitzvah of Hafrashas Challah is so special, that the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 1:4) says that the entire world and all that is in it was created only in the zechus of this mitzvah!***

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*



In this week's *parshah* (12:1), Hashem tells Avram to leave his homeland. With this *pasuk*, **the *Sfas Emes*** teaches an important lesson for Jewish living. A Jew's life must be in constant motion and stagnation is not an option.

We must always strive to grow, develop, and achieve higher goals, since staying at the same level is not acceptable. Along the same lines, if one is not going up, the only other direction for one to go in is down— there is no cruising.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

When **Rav Aharon Kotler, *zt"l***, would go around to raise funds, many businessmen would help him, but many would not. However, he never got insulted or took it personally because he knew that supporting Torah is a privilege, and not everyone understands that or is worthy of it.

Wherever he went, he would always carry with him a volume of the *Mishnah Brurah*. When asked why, he explained that he wanted the merit of the ***Chofetz Chaim*** to be with him.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos



Why does a woman cover her eyes when she lights the Shabbos candles? The *Rama* explains (*Orach Chaim* 263:5) that it's not proper to enjoy something without saying a *brachah* over it first. Therefore, one shouldn't benefit from the Shabbos lights without first saying a *brachah* over them.

The problem is that if the *brachah* would be said first, the wife would not be able to light the candles because it will already be Shabbos for her!

The solution to this would be that after lighting, the eyes are covered, to block herself from seeing the flames. This is so there would not be any enjoyment from the lights prior to saying the *brachah*. The *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Orach Chaim* 263:13) says that since it is difficult to block all the candles with her hands, it is better for the wife to cover her eyes. That way she will be sure not to see them.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Shortly before Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, passed away, he gave advice to a young family member.

He said: *"Learn well. Eat well. Sleep well. And always smile!"*

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*



The *Mishnah* (*Avos* 5:3) teaches us that Avraham *Avinu* underwent ten trials in his closeness to Hashem. Some opinions count the first trial as Avraham allowing himself to be put into a furnace by Nimrod as an expression of his dedication to Hashem.

Why is this only mentioned by a brief inference (11:31, 15:7) as *'Ur Kasdim'*? This is the only one of Avraham's ten trials that is not spoken out explicitly.

Rav Leib Chasman in *Ohr Yahel* offers a profound insight and explains that: ***for one to be willing to die for Hashem isn't as great of a sacrifice as to <u>live</u> for Hashem!***

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

Late every Thursday night, the **Rav of Piltz** would *daven* a special *tefilah*: "Master of the Universe! Please let all the food that the *Rebbetzin* is cooking for Shabbos come out tasting delicious for Shabbos! Please let Shabbos come and fill me, my family, and my entire house with *Shabbos Kedushah*. Please, Hashem, let the food for all three Shabbos meals be filled with holiness as well! Please give the food the special flavour of Shabbos!"

Every week the *Rav* of Piltz would *daven* this special *tefilah*, and every week the Shabbos food would always come out delicious! (*Sipurei Chassidim*, p. 193)

L'Maaseh

Rabbi Boruch Brull writes a great story: "As R' Avrahom Dovid Sauer stood at the entrance of Baltimore's Kosher Bite Restaurant, he was overcome with a feeling of relief and joy. Before him stood Rabbi Ervin Preis. Rabbi of Suburban Orthodox Congregation, appearing healthy and in good spirits. Rabbi Preis had been in failing health with a terminal illness, so R' Avrahom Dovid couldn't believe Rabbi Preis was actually out and about as if everything were perfectly fine.

Although R' Avrahom Dovid was neither a congregant in Rabbi Preis' Shul nor a personal acquaintance, he, along with the entire Baltimore community, was davening for Rabbi Preis' recovery.

Hesitantly, R' Avrahom Dovid approached Rabbi Preis to wish him Shalom Aleichem. Rabbi Preis shook his hand warmly, and R' Avrahom Dovid asked Rabbi Preis how he was feeling. With his characteristically congenial style, Rabbi Preis answered, "Baruch Hashem, I am doing much better." He added apologetically, "Please forgive me. You look familiar, but I can't remember your name."

R' Avrahom Dovid told Rabbi Preis his name and, without missing a beat, Rabbi Preis continued, "Of course, I should have recognized you! You are Avrahom Dovid, ben Chanah Machlah. How is the rest of your family: your father, Moshe ben Adele, your mother, Chanah Machlah bas Sorah Miriam, and your five siblings?"

With incredible accuracy, Rabbi Preis mentioned each of R' Avrahom Dovid's siblings by name. "How do you know the Hebrew names of all the members of my family? You even know all of my grandparents' names!" exclaimed R' Avrahom Dovid in amazement. "Yes, I actually do know your entire family by name, but probably not by face. There's an easy explanation for this.

About thirteen years ago, I called your father, the owner of Security Unlimited, to install an alarm system in our home. Your father spent many hours installing the system. When he was ready

to leave late at night, he handed me the bill, which was clearly far lower than I knew it should have been.

When I questioned him, your father's response was that he was giving me a discount because I am a Rabbi. I told him I felt uncomfortable receiving the discount, and your father replied, "Well, then, I'll make a deal with you. In return for this discount, I ask that you have my family in mind in your Tefilos. Please ask Hashem to watch over us."

"I accepted your father's condition," continued Rabbi Preis. "Every day for the past thirteen years, I have remembered each member of your family in my Tefilos. I am just keeping my end of the bargain." Unfortunately, only a few months later, Rabbi Preis was niftar.

This conversation remained etched clearly in R' Avrahom Dovid's mind. When doing business himself, R' Avrahom Dovid remembers the lesson Rabbi Preis taught him about keeping one's end of a deal.

Without a doubt, Rabbi Preis is still appealing to the Kisei HaKavod for the welfare of the Sauer family, and for the entire Jewish nation. After all, a deal is a deal!"

L'Maaseh

Rav Elya Lopian, *zt"l*, once spent *Shabbos* with the holy ***Chofetz Chaim, zt"l***, who told him the following, amazing insight: "As we know, *Shabbos* is equal to the entire *Torah*. Therefore, any *Mitzvah* that we do on *Shabbos* has a reward value as if all of the 613 *Mitzvos* were fulfilled.

According to the ***Vilna Gaon, zt"l***, every word of *Torah* that is learned is considered a separate *Mitzvah*. Therefore, if one learns *Torah* on *Shabbos*, each and every word is worth 613 times as much as when learning *Torah* on any other day!

With this, it becomes clear that learning *Torah* on *Shabbos* leads to an almost infinite amount of reward in *Olam Haba*, because there is no end to the *Mitzvos* one can accumulate in their lifetime!"

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The *Manchester Rosh Yeshivah*, Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, *zt"l*, when he was already an elderly man, once visited a certain community. He had visitors all day and well into the night, and by 10 PM his host insisted that he stop seeing the people and finally take a break and eat something.

As he was being taken to where he would be staying, he noticed a van of *Yeshivah* students pulling out of the driveway. Rav Yehuda Zev said to his host, "Did you send them away?" The host replied, "Yes, I know how hard a day the *Rav* had." The *Rosh Yeshivah* said to his host, "Tell me, if it was a millionaire coming to give a nice donation to the *Yeshivah*, would you send him away and say it's been a long day? Probably not.

These *Bachurim* learn *Torah* all day. They are millionaires to the Jewish people!" Rav Yehuda Zev then ran after the van calling, "Millionaires! Millionaires! Come back!"

He ended up meeting with the *Yeshivah* boys for well over an hour and gave honour to the young *Talmidei Chachamim*!

"We must always hold the reins of the animal within us." ~~ The Chofetz Chaim

"A man must bless Hashem for the bad, just as he blesses Him for the good." ~~ Berachos 9:5

Torah Wellsprings- Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Do the Best You Can



The Beis Aharon writes, "Be very happy. Everything you do in Avodas Hashem should be very precious to you. Think: 'I won't sell this merit for all the money in the world!' Even if it is merely just one good word, thought, or deed. Nothing will be lost; great things will come from it, for you and perhaps for the entire Jewish nation. Do whatever you can – be it big or small. As people say, 'Whatever you grab in the market is worthwhile.'"

There's a tale about the Golem of Prague who was sent to the sea with a bag over his shoulders and was told to return when the bag is filled with fish. Many hours passed, and the golem didn't return, so people went to see what happened to him. They found him standing up to his knees in the water, trying to catch fish with his hands. Half of his sack was already filled.

"Come home," they called to him. The golem showed them that his bag wasn't yet full. They said, "We don't need any more fish."

The golem heard that they didn't need fish, so he turned the sack over and freed the fish. This story shows the foolishness of those who think that it's either everything or nothing. We must cherish whatever we accomplish, even if it is a little.

Hashem told Avraham **הבט השמימה וספור הכוכבים אם תוכל לספור אותם ויאמר כה יהיה זרעך** 15:5 , "'Look up at the heaven and count the stars if you can.' Hashem said, 'This is how your children will be.'"

Reb Meir Shapiro of Lublin *zt'l* explained that it is impossible to count the stars. But Hashem told Avraham to count them, so Avraham tried, and he began counting. Hashem said, **כה יהיה זרעך**, "This is how your children will be," meaning that when they are given a commandment, they don't say it's impossible. They try, and they do whatever they can.

Hashem told Avraham, **לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך**

The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* explains that if Avraham would sit and contemplate about his origins, about his father the avid idol worshiper, he would be discouraged, and he would say, "How can a person like me serve Hashem? What *yichus* do I have?"

Similarly, if Avraham would think about his own history, the days of his youth when he worshipped idols (as the Rambam tells us), he would feel unworthy of serving Hashem.

Therefore, Hashem tells him, **לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך**, don't think about your past. Go away from those depressing thoughts, and then you will be able to serve Hashem.

A Maggid Shiur's Trip to Antwerp Miraculously Saves Lives in Jerusalem By Rav Menashe Yisroel Reisman

The Sfas Emes says that Avraham Avinu's approach of demonstrating how all of the world's events are under the direction of Divine Providence was a response to Nimrod's worldview.

Nimrod attempted to explain even supernatural events such as the Mabul according to the rules of nature and, thereby deny Hashem's hand in the world. In response to this, Avraham sought to show people that, not only are supernatural events guided by hashgachah, but that the everyday events that seem to be part of the course of nature are also under Hashem's expressed direction.

Last week, there was a terrible event here in Yerushalayim, when a terrorist killed Rabbi Yeshayuhu Krishevsky, Hy"d.

The security cameras across the street from our beis medrash showed the terrorist who murdered Reb Yeshayahu was staking out this spot. He saw that when our shiur ends at 10:10, a large crowd would typically come out and it seemed that he had found an opportune location to carry out his horrific plans. However, as we know, no such attack occurred here. What happened?

A few months ago, I received a call from Antwerp asking me to deliver divrei chizuk there in the beginning of Elul. However, I told them that I did not see why I should leave my shiurim here in order to say one there and declined the offer. However, they were persistent and asked if I would agree to speak Erev Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan. I said no again but eventually conceded to go to Antwerp and deliver a shiur, the next day on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, the day of the attack.

"I cannot explain, even to myself, why I suddenly agreed. I have gotten many such offers in America and London and always said no. There was no mitigating circumstance that should have made my decision any different, but for some reason, I said yes and the arrangements were made.

I called them back shortly after and said that I had changed my mind and wanted to cancel. But the organizers there said that they had already advertised the event and that it was too late to change the plans.

Accepting that the trip was now going to happen, I tried to arrange for a substitute to deliver the shiur, but nothing could be worked out. The shiur was canceled for the day.

The security cameras show that the terrorist arrived here on the day of the attack, as he had on the days before, shortly before the shiur would have let out. However, as 10:10 came and went, no one

emerged from the building. Frustrated, he got into his car and searched for a bus stop with more people. He did not find one and then drove to Malchei Yisrael where he killed Rav Yeshaya Krishevsky, Hy"d.

The second person who the terrorist attacked, Rabbi Pesach Krishevsky, was brutally chopped at with an ax, and he not only survived, but is recovering and is supposed to get out of the hospital soon. That is also not in the normal order of things that somebody should recover and go home a week after such an attack.

That is an amazing demonstration of hashgachah pratis. A shiur is cancelled for no understandable reason and everybody who attends it was saved.

Counting Teeth by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

One of the most encouraging signs of spiritual revival in our generation is the growing number of Jews regularly studying the laws of *lashon hara* and guarding their tongue against speaking gossip and slander. The laws they study were compiled by the saintly sage **Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaCohen**. He is known as the **"Chafetz Chaim"** because that is the title of his seminal work on this important subject.



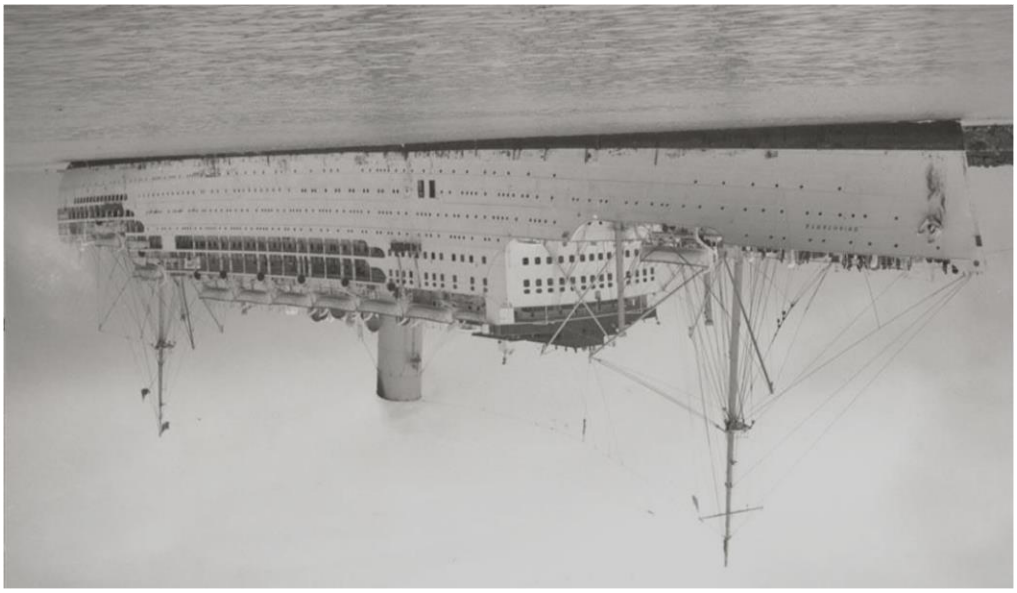
The story is told of a Torah scholar who paid a visit to this sage in his home in the Polish town of Radin. Despite his frail condition in the middle eighties of his life, the Chafetz Chaim was in a particularly good mood as he asked the visitor to come close to him and open his, the sage's, mouth. There was an understandable hesitation to comply with this request but the sage insisted.

Surprise followed surprise as the sage insisted that his teeth be counted! unable to refuse a repeated order to do so, the guest indeed counted the sage's teeth and was amazed to find that he had all the teeth a person could ever have and that they were in prime condition despite his advanced age.

Then came the following explanation of this phenomenon from a saintly Jew who had alerted generations to the responsibility of exercising extreme caution in regard to what they spoke:

"I guarded what came out of my mouth and G-d guarded my mouth in return."

The Photo in The Newspaper - *Torah Wellsprings Rabbi Elimelech Biderman*



Reb Yankel Galinsky zt'l tells that when he was a child, the women of his neighbourhood would gather in his home, because his mother knew how to read, and she would read to the neighbours the Jewish newspaper.

Once, Mrs. Galinsky was in the kitchen, peeling potatoes, and a woman, waiting for Mrs. Galinsky to read the paper, began flipping through the pages, to look at the pictures.

Panicking, she rushed to the kitchen and said to Mrs. Galinsky, "How can you be so passive, peeling potatoes when a ship has sunk!"

She showed Mrs. Galinsky the paper, and a picture of the capsized ship. Mrs. Galinsky turned the paper right side up, and said, "Since you don't know how to read, you didn't realize that you were holding the paper upside down."

With the paper in upright position, it didn't look like the ship was sinking. Mrs. Galinsky said, "This article is about a luxury ship that's being built in England. It didn't sink, chalilah."

Reb Yankel Galinsky learned the following lesson from their conversation: "If you don't know how to look at the picture, you might think that terrible things are happening. But if you know how to look at the picture, you see that everything is exactly as it should be.

In the story, a luxury ship was being built. Similarly, those matters you thought were tragedies were really the construction of very great things. - You just have to know how to read the picture.

The Best Reward - Rabbi Jonathan Rietti



Rav Dessler Zt'l offers a fascinating metaphor to show how we cannot define infinity. Imagine a bird comes once every thousand years, picks up one grain of sand from the beaches, and drops it into the ocean. This is repeated every thousand years. How long will it take for this bird to finish taking all the sand off all the beaches in the entire world, and return them into the ocean? Forever?

No, that's not accurate as there are actually a finite number of grains of sand, and eventually there will be a time when the task is completed. Fascinating!

How about the power of one moment of silence?

Let's ask ourselves, why did Lot deserve to be saved at the time of the destruction of Sodom?

The answer is because of his one moment of silence! He sealed his mouth so as not to say who Avraham Avinu really was – not brother and sister, but he was really married. Pharoah would have disposed of Avraham, and Lot who loved money, would have been the heir to Avraham. And yet he kept silent.



Says Rav Dessler, Lot was zoche to have his life saved. But it wasn't only his own life that he saved by staying silent. His daughter's lives were also saved. They gave birth to Ammon and Moav. Rus came from Moav. Dovid Hamelech was descended from Rus. Mochiach who will be descended from Rus will arrive soon IYH. – All because of one moment of silence!

Lot was zoche to immeasurable rewards including playing a major role in the coming of Moshiach. That's incredible! – it is inestimable!

The Vilna Gaon brings a medrash that says : **על כל רגע ורגע שאדם חוסם פיו - זוכה לאור הגנוז שאין כל מלאך ובריה יכולים לשער**

For every moment that a person keeps silent, he is zoche to an Ohr Haganuz that no malach or creature can estimate.

This is the power of one moment of silence from lashon horah!

Short Vort by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיָּרֶק אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ שְׁמֹנָה עָשָׂר וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת – *And Avram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, and he armed his trained men, those born in his house, three hundred and eighteen.*

In order to save lot, who had been captured by the four kings, Avraham prepared 318 of his household for war. The Medrash explains that it was in fact Eliezer alone who went with Avraham, and the number 318 is only meant as an allusion to Eliezer, whose numerical gematria is 318.

Since the Torah must be understood on a simple level, why would the verse say that Avraham armed 318 of his household if he only brought Eliezer? What happened to everyone else?

Rabbeinu Bachya answers that Avraham did originally arm his entire household of 318 men, but after warning them of the Torah's strict parameter regarding who should be going out to war and who must return home, only Eliezer remained because Eliezer remained with Avraham, explains; **Daas Zekeinim M'baalei Tosefos**, Hashem granted him the strength equivalent to everyone else who returned home, 318 men!

Yet, this explanation leads to an even greater dilemma: with just Eliezer by his side, how did Avraham think that he could possibly defeat four mighty armies?

Rav Tzadok HaKohen answers that Avraham was absolutely confident of success in facing the four kings because he knew that the will of Hashem always prevails; even when the odds seem impossible, he knew that he could achieve anything as long as he was fulfilling Hashem's will.

But if so, yet another question arises: why did Avraham need to take Eliezer at all?

The answer, explains Rav Tzaddok, is that Avraham specifically brought Eliezer with him as a proclamation that he would never give in to **יאוש** - despair, which has the numerical gematria of 317. The reason why we are told that Eliezer's numerical gematria is 318 is because it is one above **יאוש** a declaration that despite the enormity of the challenge, Avraham knew that he was acting in accordance with Hashem's will, and as such, even in the face of impossible odds, he would never despair.

We too should learn from Avraham and understand that as long as we are doing what is right, there is no need to despair. We too should always be above **יאוש**.

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Chizuk – Inspiration



In his later years, **Rabbi Manis Mandel ZT'L** visited the doctor where he was to undergo a surgical procedure for the painful nerve condition from which he was suffering. The secretary handed him several pages of standard forms that he had signed on other occasions for him to read and sign.

His son, Rabbi Yaakov Mandel, observed as his father lifted his eyeglasses as he strained to read the fine print. Reb Manis was reading every line slowly and carefully. His son did not understand what was there to read - these

were standard forms which most people signed in a matter of seconds. Further, the longer it took him to read them, the later they would be admitted to see the doctor.

Reb Yaakov wondered if perhaps his father was worried about the procedure itself which was causing his father to be so cautious.

"Tatte," he asked, "Di hust moira (Are you afraid)? "Yoh, ich hob moira (Yes, I am afraid)," Reb Manis replied. "But Tatte, you have had this procedure a few times already with positive results. And this doctor performs this procedure around 10 times a day. Why are you worried?"

Reb Manis responded, "I am not afraid of the procedure; I am afraid of the Ribono shel Olam." Reb Manis pointed to the bottom of the last page of the documents to be signed. Above the line for his signature it read, "I hereby affirm that I have read and understand all of the above." Reb Manis said, "You want me to sign that I have read the above when in fact I did not read it? How can I do such a thing?"

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וַיְהִי־רִיב בֵּין רֹעֵי מִקְנֵה־אַבְרָם וּבֵין רֹעֵי מִקְנֵה־לוֹט "***And there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Avram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock"*** (13:7)

Rashi comments, "[They quarreled] because Lot's shepherds were wicked and would graze their cattle in the fields of others, and Avraham's shepherds would rebuke them over the theft."

The Chofetz Chaim took great measures to avoid any action that could be considered theft. For example, when it rained in Radin, the Chofetz Chaim's town, people would place wooden boards on the muddy roads so that others would not soil their clothing.



The Chofetz Chaim however, never walked on these boards. Perhaps, he thought, "If these boards belong to somebody and were taken without permission, to use them would be stealing!"

Positivity

"Being happy doesn't mean everything is perfect. It means that you have decided to look beyond the imperfections."



Get this: People who focus on positivity have less stress (YAY!), better relationships (DOUBLE YAY!), and stay healthier (BIGGEST YAY OF ALL!). That's three amazing reasons to try to be a more positive person. People are not always born with a strong "positive gene," but it's a trait that can absolutely be learned and developed, and it's so worth it!

Positive thinking doesn't mean you ignore the less-than-positive things that come up in life. It means that you learn to "reframe the picture" and try not to dwell on the negativity.

Even if you understand that something negative is happening, body language - smiling, a relaxed posture, and slow, even breathing — can really help you stay in a positive frame of mind.

Feeling Grateful for things is a fantastic "First cousin" to positivity, and for us it's actually simple, because it's built into our day!

Pause when you say Modeh Ani, and thank Hashem for your life. When you get to modim in Shemoneh Esreh, stop and mentally list things you're grateful for.

Finally, thank Hashem for one thing every single night when you go to bed.

These tips will automatically make us into positive people.



L' Maaseh

When Rav David Abuchatzeira was a young rav in the city of Naharia, the community hosted **Rav Ovadiah Yosef z"l** at some official gathering. As the two sat together at the dais, a local man approached the young R' David to ask him for a beracha.

With tears in his eyes, he explained that his wife had just been diagnosed with a serious life-threatening illness, and the doctors gave her less than a very short time to live.

Although R' David was quick to offer his tefilos and berachos, the man wasn't satisfied and instead demanded a promise that his wife could recover. At first, R' David apologized that he couldn't possibly do more than daven and offer heartfelt berachos, the man was adamant and the young rav acquiesced. Satisfied, the woman's husband took leave and R' Ovadiah turned to R' David and rebukingly asked what right he had to promise something which he couldn't possibly guarantee?

A Jew should always avoid promising to do anything with certainty, especially things that are not within his power or control.

"You are right" explained R' David, "but I looked into the man's eyes and knew that if I didn't promise him, he and his whole family what

just give up and not do any normal amount of hishtadlus to help the woman. She would die, and they would blame themselves, and be all-the-more broken because of it. And so, I was willing to take the gehinom I would suffer for making false promises, rather than put them through more gehinom."

When R' Ovadiah heard his explanation, he almost prophetically exclaimed "I am certain then, you will become a gadol b'Yisroel!"

The Jewish Weekly

The Decorative Sefer Found in the Chinese Cosmetic Store by Rabbi Shimon Freundlich



In spring 2021, I and my wife arrived in Chengdu from Beijing. We were very warmly received by the local shluchim (emissaries of the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**], Rabbi Dovi and Sara Henig. They were celebrating the Opshernish [traditional first haircut and 'peyot-leaving'] of their three-year-old son Mendel the next day, and we had come to spend this special occasion with them.

In the afternoon, both of our families went to the famous and gigantic New Century Global Mall in the city, which has an Intercontinental Hotel and indoor beach along with a water park and many other different entertainment facilities for kids.

While walking in the mall, Rabbi Dovi mentioned to me that there is a French cosmetic store that has a single volume of Shulchan Aruch

- "The Code of Jewish Law" authored by Rabbi Yosef Karo in Hebrew and French - as part of their display design since the mall opened in July 1, 2013. He further told me that he had tried a number of times to persuade them to give it to him but was unsuccessful. They very politely and respectfully told him that they have a retailer franchise from the international Kiehl's Cosmetics conglomerate and the store's display is sent to them from the main office in France, including the book.

Hearing this, I said to Dovi, "Please take me to the store. I would like to try." We all entered the store and saw an extensive display with multiple books on Jewish literature (not holy books) and then the lonesome volume of Shulchan Aruch.

My heart sank as I saw this holy book lying under a porcelain bowl of dried slices of lemons. As I stared at the Shulchan Aruch, the woman at the counter walked over. I asked her in Chinese if she had a business card (thinking I would contact the boss to ask if I could have the book). She responded, "We don't have a business card but if you want I can give you our story WeChat."

After scanning my code, she sent me a message in Chinese asking what I wanted. I explained that I am Jewish and the Rabbi of the Beijing Jewish community. "This book is one of our holiest books and it is very hard for me to see it as a display piece and unused," I wrote. I added that I would be willing to pay for it.

She looked at me and said, "If I give it to you, what will you do with it?" "I will learn and teach from it." "Is it for you?" she asked. "No, it is for the Jewish community in Beijing." She then removed the sefer (book) from under the bowl and handed it to me. "How much do you want for it?"

"Nothing," she replied, "it is a gift for your community." I thanked her profusely and then suggested to my wife that we should buy something as a show of appreciation. The items were pricey, but it

was worth it. I think this is the most I ever "paid" for a single sefer, and it will be one of my enduring favourites.

After leaving the store I turned around to Rabbi Dovi and exclaimed, "What Hasgacha Pratit!" He looked puzzled and asked me what I was referring to.

I said that I had just remembered what happened on this date in Jewish history. In 1509, Emperor Maximilian of Germany ordered that all Jewish books in the city of Cologne and Frankfurt-am-Main be destroyed, as a result of a claim by Pfefferkorn, a baptized Jew, that Jewish literature was insulting to Christianity. The Jews appealed to the Emperor to reconsider this edict, and Maximilian agreed to investigate the matter.

Appointed to conduct the investigation was Johann Reuchlin, a famed and highly respected German scholar. His report was very positive. He demonstrated that the books openly insulting to Christianity were very few and anyway viewed as worthless by most Jews themselves. The other books were needed for Jewish worship and contained much value in the areas of theology and science.

The Emperor rescinded his edict on the 14th of the Jewish month of Sivan, 1510. From Tzfat (where the code of Jewish law was written), to France (where this volume was printed), to Chengdu (where it was sent as a display piece), the Shulchan Aruch was redeemed on the 14th of Sivan 5781 (2021: 511 years later), and found a home in Beijing, where it will be studied reverently.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

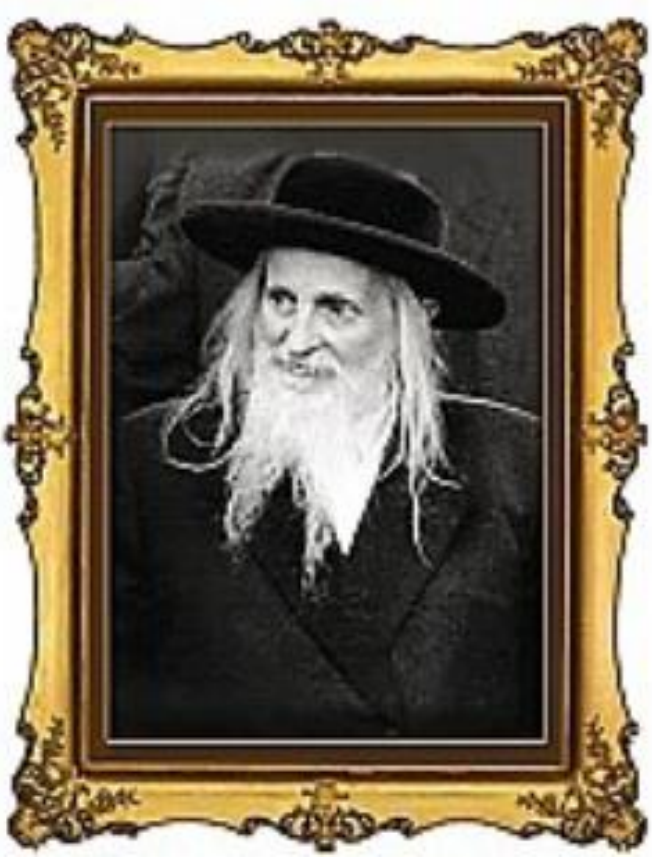
How fortunate am I that Hashem did not command us to be arrogant – How could someone as insignificant as I am have the ability to muster pride!? [HaRav Rafael of Bershad]

Fascinating Insights - Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

Tears that Tear

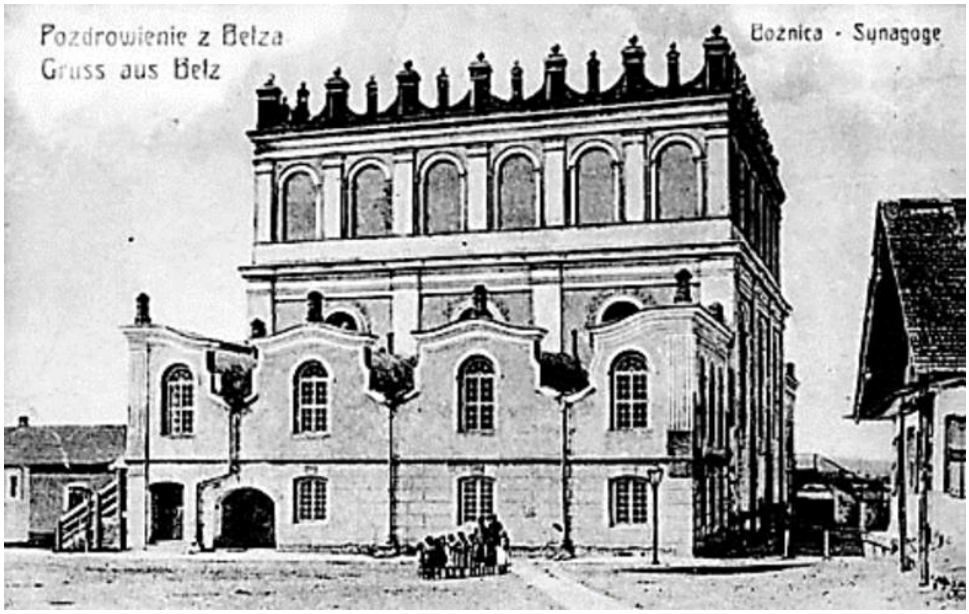
We are taught that tefila stands at the pinnacle of the world (**עומדים ברומו של עולם**) but people treat it lightly. Why is the term **עומדים** used? What does it mean that tefila stands at the height of the world?

The Gemara (Brachos 32b} says that from the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the heavenly gates of tefila were locked but the gates of tears weren't locked.



The Divrei Yoel explains that when a Jew cries when davening, the gates are opened and the tefilos of all those that are standing at the height of the world enter. This is why it says **עומדים ברומו של עולם** because tefilos stand and wait to enter, waiting until the tears of a person opens the gates. This can be compared to a door of a public building that is locked where when someone opens it with the key, everyone that was waiting there now can enter.

When the construction of the men's section of the Belzer Beis Midrash in Europe in the 1800s was completed, R' Shalom Belzer did not allow for tefilos to take place there until the women's section was completed as well. He explained that since it is only "the gates of tears are not locked," how will their tefilos ascend. They need the tefilos of the women because they have a proclivity for tears. Their tears will open the gates for everyone's tefilla to enter.



R' Shalom Belzer, the first Belzer Rebbe, personally helped build this big shul. Dedicated in 1843, the building resembled an ancient fortress, with 3-foot-thick walls, a castellated roof, and battlements adorned with gilded gold balls. It could seat 5,000 people, and had superb acoustics. It stood until the Nazis invaded Belz in late 1939. Though the Germans attempted to destroy the shul, first by fire, and then by dynamite, they were unsuccessful. Finally, they conscripted Jewish men in forced labour to take the building apart, brick by brick.



The Belz Beis Midrash in Yerushalayim today is an enlarged replica of the structure of this Beis Midrash of R' Shalom Belzer. Like the original shul, which took 15 years to complete, the Belz shul in Yerushalayim also took 15 years to construct. It was dedicated in the year 2000.

You never know when a moment and a few sincere words can have an impact on a life.

A Helping Hand by R' Yaakov Mizrahi



The Chofetz Chaim Zt'l had a grandson that learned in Lakewood. Unfortunately, the grandson would often come late to Shacharis. The Mashgiach felt a little bit embarrassed for the Chofetz Chaim, that the grandson of the godol hador was an habitual latecomer for davening.

They found it uncomfortable to approach him, but they wanted to resolve the problem.

So one day, the Mashgiach goes over to the grandson, and he says, "I'm sorry to ask you, but you obviously know that your grandfather is a very big tzaddik, and it is embarrassing, is there any reason why you keep coming late?"

He says, "I will tell you the truth. I really do plan on coming on time every morning, and I actually leave my house early enough."

"So what happens?"

"Well, every morning as I leave the house, I hear a lady screaming for help. I stop and think, 'hey, this is unbelievable. There is a lady that needs help. Riboino Shel Olam, I have to help her.'"

"Inside the house, there are kids that are crying. They need attention. This one needs a bath. This one lost his shoe. The other one can't find his cappel. This one can't find his tzitzis. This one can't find her blouse. Everyone needs something else!"

'I feel so bad for this lady. I go into the house, and I decide that I want to help them and see them off to school. That's why unfortunately I am late for Shacharis.'

The Mashgiach was taken aback. He said, "Wow, that's such a beautiful reason to be late. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be דָּן לְכַף חוֹבָה. I apologise, that is such an amazing mitzvah that you do. Is everything ok? Did she lose her husband? Is she a widow? Are they divorced? Maybe I can also help?"

He says, "No, no, no, G-d forbid Rabbi – ***That's my wife!*** I'm the one who helps my wife every morning, before my kids go to school! She needs my help, so that's why I am often late."

For some reason, it seems to be easier to help when it is someone else. However, the Chofetz Chaim's grandson reminds us, how important it is to remember that **חסד** begins at home – in your own house! Realise, that when we have **שלום** – peace **-איש אל רעהו** , that is one of the greatest ways to bring Bracha.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



A Story is told of a very poor man that decides he has had enough of life. He decides to end it all. He goes to the top of a building, and he's about to commit the act, when he realises that he is hungry, and he has in his pocket some beans. He said, "I may as well eat them."

He takes the beans out of his pocket, and he starts peeling them. He eats the beans and throws the peels off the edge of the building.

He looks down, and he sees a man picking up all the peels! The man is smiling and very excited. He shouts up, "Thank you, I've been (no pun intended) davening to Hashem for anything to eat, and finally He has sent me something."

This man thinks, "Whoah, do you mean to say that there is someone poorer than me? He is happy with even the peels?"

We must remember that we have so much bracha in our lives.

Yes, we sometimes ask for more. Yes, we want more. We may even need more. But we have to ultimately remember that The Riboino Shel Olam gives us exactly what we need, at exactly the time that we need it.

And we have to acknowledge that to Hashem. Because the more that we acknowledge to Hashem what He has given us, the more He will want to give us in our lives.

I want to wish everyone a wonderful, beautiful day!

Etz HaChaim - R' C.T. Blau



Harav Shloima Levenstein שליט"א brings the following incredible story that was told over by Harav Eliyahu Brunner שליט"א as follows:

"One of the times that I took **Rebbetzin Kanievsky** to visit her father **Hagaon Rav Elyashiv** זצוק"ל , Rav Avrohom Elyashiv told me, "On this floor tile the Rebbetzin stood in her single years and every single night without fail she would recite the entire Tehillim, cover to cover!"

When we drove back to **בני ברק**, I gathered the courage and I asked the Rebbetzin, "What caused the Rebbetzin to recite the entire Tehillim every night without fail?" At first she tried to refuse to answer, but in the end she agreed to tell

me. "In my father's house there was no money. My mother ע״ה did not desire anything. Her only desire and goal was that my father's learning should be able to be without any disturbances. This was her life's work.

I was the oldest daughter, and at that stage I already understood how to manage parnassah, so I found a job and went to work in order to help support my family. However, since naturally the atmosphere of the workplace practically had no Torah atmosphere, therefore, I decided to wake up very early every morning to stand and say the entire Tehillim in order that I should merit that the coming day should pass by with complete goodness and joy, and with faithfulness to Hashem, in the way I was מחונך in my father's home. And that I should not ח״ו be influenced by any negative surroundings that I may face in the working world.""

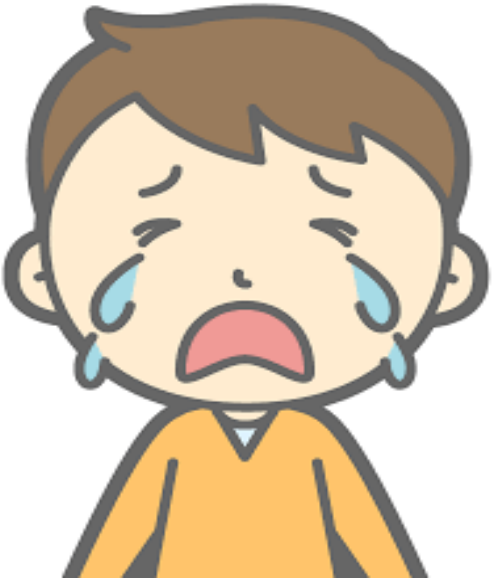
We are at the beginning of a new winter Zman and now is the time that we can choose who we want to hang out with and who we choose to stick around will have an everlasting impact for the rest of our life. It is just as well our responsibility to be the positive influence to our roomates in yeshiva, our spouses in our homes our families and the people we interact with on a daily basis. Wishing all of you ah Gezunteh Vinter bruchnios Ubigashmios. - ***Have a great Shabbos!***

The Gates of Tears Never Close – R' Eli Meyer Smith

Yonason Eibeshutz Zt'l in sefer Ye'aros Devash (1:4) expounds on the fact that prayer is the only way our nation has to serve Hashem while in exile. Therefore, one must pray with especially strong fervour and concentration, and with a broken heart and tears. Such prayers will never go unanswered.

He also writes that may prayers are "hanging in the air", unable to ascend to heaven because they were not recited with proper devotion.

When one prays with full devotion and fervour, these prayers can finally ascend upwards together with his prayers.



Rav The Gemara in Bava Metziah (59a) writes: "Rebbe Eliezar said: Since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh, the gates of prayer are locked, for it is written, '***Also when I cry out, He shuts out my prayer***.' Yet although the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears are not, for it is written, '***Hear my prayer Hashem and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears***.'"

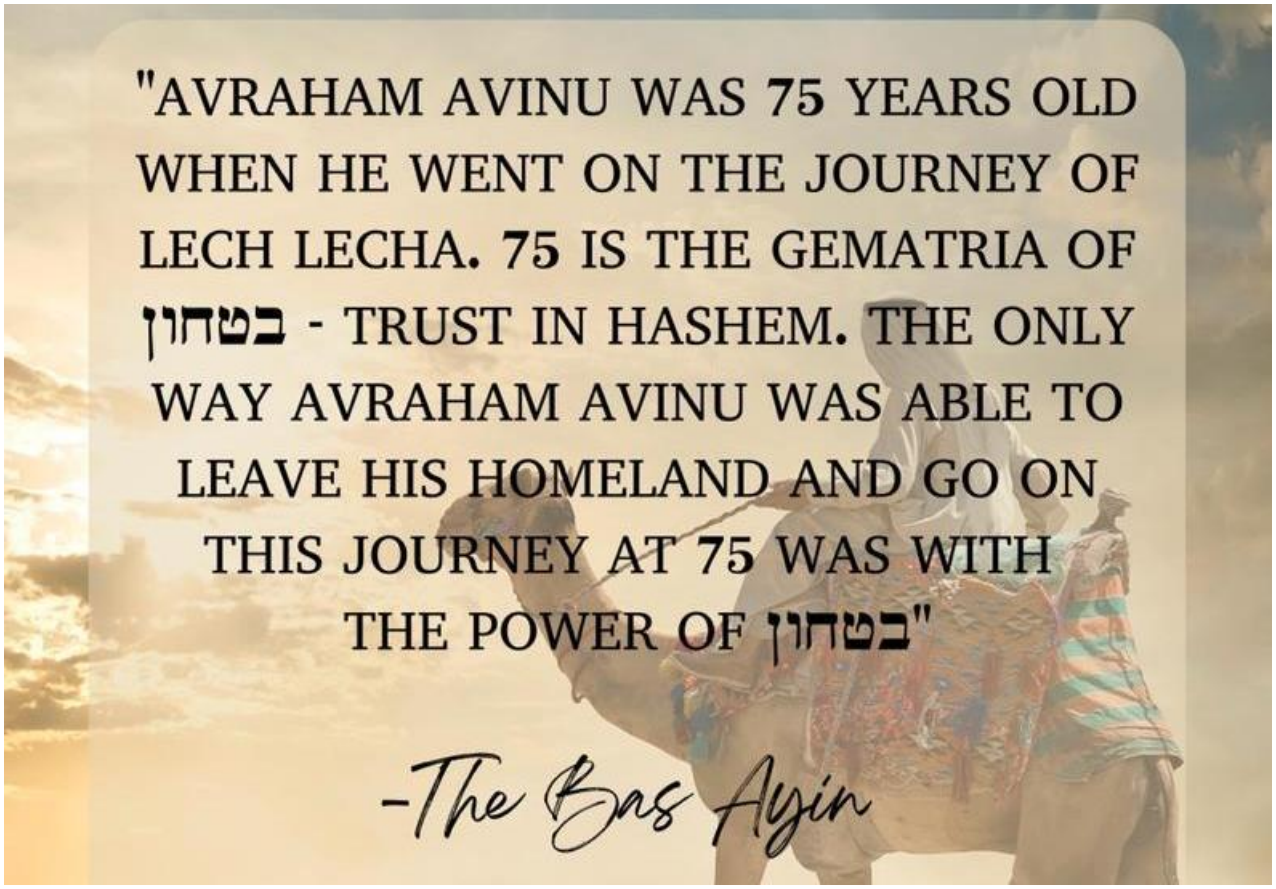
Rashi explains that we believe that Hashem will not remain silent to our prayers and will not silence us from praying.

Tosfos writes that we believe that the gates of tears are never closed. The reason this gate is always open is because when one sheds tears, it shows his prayers were uttered with devotion and a broken heart.

This is as we can see (Malachim II 20:2) that King Chizkiyahu turned to the wall and prayed with tears – and his prayers were answered immediately. So too, we see that Chana prayed with tears (Shmuel I 1:10) and was immediately answered.

R' Baruch Ber Leibowitz once received a slap from his father. In the middle of his crying, he went to daven Mincha. When his father asked him why he went to daven amidst his tears, R' Baruch Ber answered, "since I am crying now anyway, I may as well use the tears for davening."

The Rabeinu bechaya (Beraishis 1:18) writes that tears shed during prayer are akin to the nisach hamayim that was offered together with the sacrifices and is thus readily accepted.



Impossible? - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Torah Wellsprings Cheshvan 7 - Yahrtzeit of Rav Meir Shapiro zt"l

When Hashem told Avraham Avinu to count the stars, he began to count them. Hashem said **כה יהיה זרעך** - "this is how your children will be."

Rav Meir Shapiro zt'l explained that if anyone other than Avraham, would have been given the task to count the stars, their immediate response would have been, "That's impossible! There are too many stars to count!" But when Hashem told Avraham to count the stars, he began counting them.

Hashem said **כה יהיה זרעך** this is how your children will be. They will never say that a task is impossible. They will always try to do what they can.

Peninim On The Torah

לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ ***Hashem said to Avram, "Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house."*** *(12:1)*



This is our introduction to Avraham *Avinu*: no biography; no family lineage; no prior history. Whatever we know about the first Patriarch is from *Chazal*. Even Moshe *Rabbeinu's* birth and genealogy are recorded. Why not that of the father of our nation?

Avraham's father was Terach, an idolater, who was so committed to his pagan beliefs that he informed on his son to the evil Nimrod. Had Hashem not provided a miracle for Avraham, he would have been immolated in a fiery cauldron.

Avraham's wife, Sarah *Imeinu*, was Terach's grand-daughter, whom he had raised after the untimely death of her father, Haran. Avraham and Sarah grew up in the same home and were raised by an idolater, who for all intents and purposes, is the person from whom the Jewish nation hails – very little to be proud of.

Veritably, Terach probably saw the error of his ways, which resulted in his decision to pack up his family and leave Uhr Kasdim, with Canaan as his intended destination. He was going to move his base of operations to the Holy Land. He did not make it.

Terach followed the pattern of so many who have noble intentions, but are unable to see them through to fruition. Thus, Avraham *Avinu* represents a new page (actually, the first page) in Jewish history.

To record his birth and upbringing would mean to connect him to Terach and his past.

Hashem did not immediately designate Avraham for the Abrahamitic mission of promoting monotheism. He did not give him any support. Avraham had within him a grain of truth which did not permit him to fall prey to the falsehoods espoused by the idolaters. This seed germinated within him as he sought answers to his many questions. He overcame emotional and ideological obstacles as he weaved his way to higher spiritual levels. When he emerged triumphant from his battles to strengthen his conviction, Hashem appeared to him and informed him that a great nation would descend from him and that his name would be a blessing. Avraham was now ready to pass the *Asarah Nisyonos*, Ten Trials, which would temper his spiritual fortitude and render him a light unto the nations.

Bitachon



One of the greatest praises one can give a person is to say that he is a *baal bitachon*.

We say in Shemonah Esrei, **מלך עוזר, ומושיע ומגן** "[Hashem is] a king who helps, saves and protects."

Reb Avraham, the son of the **Vilna Gaon zt'l** explains that when one says Hashem is **עוזר**, helps, this implies that one does his hishtadlus, but he has bitachon that Hashem will *help* him and his hishtadlus will bear fruit, and he will succeed.

מושיע refers to a person who doesn't even do hishtadlus. He trusts that Hashem will save him and grant him his needs.

מגן, protect, is when, for Hashem's honour, one places himself in jeopardy. For Hashem's sake, he does something dangerous, and he trusts that even then, Hashem will protect him.

We conclude this brachah with **מגן אברהם** because Avraham's level of bitachon was on the level of **מגן**, protection. Avraham went almost alone to battle with four powerful kings, and he allowed himself to be thrown in the furnace at Ur Kasdim rather than bow down to idols. He had a high level of bitachon, and he trusted that Hashem would protect him and save him.

Hashem told Avraham (Bereishis 15:1) **אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך** - "Do not fear, Avram, I will protect you."

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explained that **אנכי מגן לך** (and the brachah **מגן אברהם** in Shemonah Esrei) means that Hashem will always protect the pintele Yid, the spark of Judaism, that is in every Yid. Even if one committed many severe aveiros, rachmana litzlan, there remains a part of the Yid's soul that is pure and holy. Hashem protects that spark that it should never be extinguished.

The Gemara (Succah 29.) says that the Jewish nation is compared to the moon. **The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt'l** noted that the moon is always there, only sometimes we don't see it. Similarly, the spark of a Yid is always present, only sometimes it is covered over, and we don't recognize it. But the holiness is there, his spark can be ignited, and then he will return with teshuvah sheleimah.

There is no one happier than someone who trusts in Hashem, as we say (Tehillim 84:13) **אשרי אדם בוטח בך** "***Fortunate is the man who trusts in You***." He lives a life without worry and fear, and Hashem bestows His kindness on him, as it states (Tehillim 32:10), **חסד הבוטח בה' יסובבנו** - "For the one who trusts in Hashem, kindness will surround him."

Mesirus Nefesh

The two thousand millennia of Torah began when Avraham Avinu was 52 years old. Why don't the two thousand years start from the time Avraham recognized Hashem (which is at the age of 3, 40, or 48,)?

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* answered that when Avraham was 52, Nimrod threw him into the fiery furnace at Ur Kasdim because he refused to worship idols. The value of Torah is when it's kept with *mesirus nefesh*. Avraham believed in Hashem earlier, but when he was 52 years old, he kept the Torah with *mesirus nefesh*. That's the beginning of the two thousand years of Torah.



During the Communist regime, it was difficult to find a *mohel* in Russia. One Russian family somehow contacted a *mohel* from Eretz Yisrael and requested that he come and make a *bris milah* for their child. The *mohel* agreed. When he arrived, he discovered that the "baby" was a six-year-old boy. The *mohel* wasn't prepared to make a *milah* on a six-year-old child, but the parents pleaded with the *mohel* to do it.

"How can I?" the *mohel* asked. "The child will move around. It's dangerous." - The child said, "Tie me down with ropes if you have to. I want a *bris milah*. I want to be a Yid."

After the *bris*, the mother kissed her child. She said, "For the past six years, I never kissed you because I didn't want to kiss a goy. Now, I can kiss you."

Think about the *mesirus nefesh* this mother had. For six years, she wouldn't kiss her own son because he didn't have *milah*. And think of the mesirus nefesh of this young child and let this be a reminder that Torah is kept with *mesirus nefesh*.

No Yeush

Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen (Divrei Sofrim 16) teaches that the Jewish nation never needs to lose hope. Hashem saves them even in seemingly impossible situations.

The Gemara (Succah 31.) relates that an old woman came shouting to Rav Nachman that the slaves of the reish galusa stole her lumber and built a succah with it. She said, "All the rabbanim of the reish galusa are sitting in a stolen succah!"

Rav Nachman ignored her shouts. Annoyed, she exclaimed, "A woman whose father had 318 slaves shouts before you, and you ignore her?"



Rav Nachman turned to his students and said, "She is a shouter, and her only right is to get money."

What did this woman mean when she said her father had 318 slaves?

Some explain that she was saying that she comes from a wealthy family and therefore deserved respect and to be listened to.

Rashi explains that she was saying that she is a descendant of Avraham Avinu, who had 318 slaves (see 14:14).

Why did she describe Avraham Avinu as 'my father who had 318 slaves"? She could have said that she is a descendant of Avraham Avinu. Why did she speak in riddles?

Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen zt'l explains that she was saying that she is a descendant of Avraham who taught his descendants never to lose hope, and she, too, never gave up hope on recovering her wood. Had she given up, she would have lost her right to the wood and would only be entitled to money. But she claimed she didn't lose hope, so

she should get the wood, too. She called Avraham "My father who had 318 slaves" because this number hints to Avraham Avinu's attribute of never giving up, as we will explain:

The Torah (14:14) tells us that Avraham with his 318 slaves battled against four powerful kings in order to rescue his relative Lot. It seemed impossible to win this war, most people had lost hope (see Rashi 14:9). But not Avraham. He went out to war and won.

When Avraham rescued the king of Sedom, he told Avraham (14:21) **והרכוש קח לך**, that Avraham can keep the spoils of the war. Why?

Because the king of Sedom, and everyone else, had lost hope of ever seeing their money again, so he told Avraham that he could rightfully keep everything.

The only person who didn't lose hope was Avraham Avinu. He trusted in Hashem, fought and won the war against the four kings, and saved Lot.

The old woman referenced Avraham's 318 slaves who joined Avraham in this war because it was through this war that Avraham Avinu taught to us never to lose hope.

Chazal (see Rashi 14:14) say that 318 is the gematriya of **אליעזר**, the name of Avraham's slave. According to this view, Avraham went to war solely with his slave Eliezer (not with 318 slaves). The name **אליעזר** reminds us not to lose hope. So, this is another indication from the number 318 that one should never lose hope.

The gematriya of **יאוש** is 317, so 318 means to go beyond yeush and to believe that Hashem will help.

We quote the words of Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen, who elaborates on this important lesson:

"A Yid must never lose hope. Chazal (Brachos 10:) say, 'Even if a sword is on one's neck, one shouldn't lose hope from Hashem's compassion.'



This also applies to ruchniyus. Even if one fell to very low levels, chas v'shalom, and even if he committed the aveiros that the Zohar (vol.1 p.219:) says teshuvah doesn't help, or that it is very difficult for him to do teshuvah, he shouldn't lose hope, and he shouldn't say that he can't change his habits. For Yidden, there is no yeush. In all situations, Hashem yisbarach can help. Hashem can always help because there is nothing Hashem can't do. Remember never to lose hope because yeush doesn't apply to the Jewish nation.

It Feels incredible – Rabbi Joey Haber



As gossip feels to nourishing you for real, that's how real lifting up somebody else is, it nourishes you for real. There is no greater feeling on the planet then lifting up somebody else's spirit. There is nothing more enjoyable then genuinely helping somebody.

So, when somebody else has a problem or failure, help in a genuine way. If it is horrible to relish in somebodies' pain, then you will understand that technically, we are all the same. Then, when you help somebody else, you are helping because we are all in the same boat. – And that feels incredible, to lift somebody else up.



Meaningful Minute

Recently at the supermarket, there was a woman who was trying to check out. Unfortunately, her credit card was declined.The clerk tried over and over again, but each time it didn't work.

Without hesitation, the shopper behind her handed her three $20 bills to cover the cost of the groceries. She said, "No, I can't accept that from you."

The man said, " actually, you have to. You see my mother is in hospital with cancer and I visit her every day, and I bring her flowers. This morning I went, and she got upset with me for spending my money on more flowers. She demanded that I use my money instead for where it is really needed. So please accept this – it's my mother's flowers!"

Giving to others is one of the greatest privileges that we have in life, and our acts of kindness impact the world in ways that we can never imagine!

Not to Embarrass By R' Paysach Krohn

There is a family in Har Nof Yerushalayim they have seven children, and they are not well to do, but they are very organised.

Every year, the parents take these seven kids on a vacation. They must rent a minivan as they can't afford their own car. They make an itinerary so that all the kids can see it, and that they shouldn't ask to go to different places. But they also give them a certain amount of spending money.

The mother prepares all the food and snacks. They could not afford to go into any of the eateries en route.

The first day, they go up north to Natanya. The scenery is gorgeous, so they get out and have their lunch on a picnic bench. When they had finished lunch, the 8-year-old boy tells his father that he needs the toilet. They didn't know where to go, as they were in a public area near the beach with no toilet facilities. But he sees in the distance a kosher restaurant. But he feels uncomfortable just going in to use the facilities, but his son was desperate.

So, the father sends everybody back to the minivan, and he takes his son to the restaurant. They come into the restaurant, where they find a waitress waiting to serve customers. He says, "Ma'am, I'm so sorry, we have no intention of buying anything, as the prices are too steep for me, but my son is desperate for the toilet, please, would it be ok to quickly use the facilities?"

She looks around the whole restaurant, and says, "Ok, but just make it quick."

The boy goes to be excused, and after as he meets his father halfway, and as they are about to walk out, the restaurant owner comes running over to them and shouts, "What do you guys think you are doing? What do you think that this is a public lavatory? These facilities are for patrons only! Why are all you religious people all the same?"

The father sees that at the side, the waitress that gave them permission was standing in the corner terrified and quaking in her shoes. If he would say that she allowed them in, she would be severely reprimanded and could even lose her job.

He must think quickly. He had a Rebbe called ***Rav Avrohom Genechovsky Zt'l.*** *(Rosh Yeshiva at the Tchebin Yeshiva in Yerushalayim and was renowned for his popular shiurim and his unending chessed). What would my Rebbe do here?*

He turns round to the restaurant owner, and he says, "Sir, you are yelling for no reason. We are all coming in to eat! I have got a whole

family here, while they were organising themselves, we just needed to use the facilities."

The owner said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't realise that- how many people are you?"

The father said, "Nine."

"Nine people? Ok, we will set the tables."



The father tells his son to go outside and tell everyone to come inside the restaurant to eat!

The family can't believe it and think that he is kidding. 'No, Abba said that we should all come in to eat.'

They all sit down. The kids have never seen such a menu like this in all their lives. They never saw prices like this. They never saw food like this.

The mother said, "Every child can have one dish and one drink."

They eat. When they had almost finished, they noticed that there was a lot of activity going on in the preparation area. They look up and there are six waiters coming towards them. They were all carrying platters of ice cream, desserts and cakes! The whole restaurant looks over to see what's going on.

The father says, "Wait a second, we didn't order any desserts."

The owner of the restaurant sat down next to him and said, "Sir, let me explain something to you. You see, when you told us that all the children should come in and sit down, the waitress came into the

kitchen and burst out crying to me. And I asked her what's going on? What's the matter?

She said to me, "That man did something for me that nobody in my life has ever done anything like that for me. I knew that that father wasn't going to have a meal with his whole family. He already told me that it was beyond his budget. He saw that I would have been embarrassed and possibly lose my job, as he could have easily said that I was the one who gave him permission to use the facilities."

"I was blown away by your kindness and thoughtfulness. So, we decided that for special people like you, we've got to do something special in return. That's why we brought you dessert."

The family tucked into the magnificent desserts. Finally when they had finished, the father said to the waitress, "Could you please bring me the bill?"

They bring him the bill. When he unfolded it, it read… 'The next time that you come and eat here, there is 50% off everything.'

He says to the waitress, "Ok, thank you, this is for the next time, but what about for all the food that we have just had? What do I pay now?"

The owner of the restaurant comes over to him (I try not to cry when I say this) and said, "***We have a policy in this restaurant – we only charge people, we don't charge malachim!***"

Heilige Yidden, we should all aspire to become malachim and care and do chesed for each other.

Try to look at your weakness and convert it into your strength. That's success.

Standing Alone - Michael Winner



We see in this week's parsha (Bereishis 14:13) that Avraham is called "Avraham HaIvri." וַיָּבֹא הַפָּלִיט וַיַּגֶּד לְאַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי.The Midrash explains that he is called this because the entire world was on one side (ever) and Avraham stood on the other side alone.

Rav Pinkus once told over the Midrash about Rebbe Shimon Ben Chalafta. One erev Shabbos, he realized that he had no food or money to buy food. So, he left the city and davened to Hashem. As he finished davening, a beautiful jewel came down from Heaven, which he would be able to use to buy food.

When he returned home, his wife questioned where he received this jewel. When he told her what happened, she refused to allow him to sell it or use it. She knew that this jewel was part of his reward that he was to receive in the next world, and if he used it here, he would be lacking "later."

Rebbe Shimon went to Rebbe Yehudah HaNasi and explained the situation. Rebbe Yehudah HaNasi told him to tell his wife not to worry; anything that Rebbe Shimon is lacking in the World to Come, Rebbe will give from his share.

When Rebbe Shimon returned to his wife and told her what Rebbe Yehudah HaNasi said, she still refused, saying, "Is it not true that in the next world, each Tzaddik is in his own world with Hashem and doesn't share it with others. If so, Rebbe Yehudah HaNasi can't give over any of his share!"

At that point, Rebbe Shimon conceded to his wife's wisdom and returned the jewel.

Rav Pinkus said that we learn from this that in the next world, when Hashem gives over reward to each individual, He will give it over only according to what that person did in this world, but not according to what others did .

This is what Rebbe Shimon's wife was saying to Rebbe Shimon: The only reward that you will receive will be based not on what others do, but what YOU do.

Even though the Torah puts a lot of emphasis on the community, in the end, a person stands alone. His life in the next world is based solely on what HE does in this world.

Sometimes the community gets … distracted about things in the world that it shouldn't get distracted about. In America, it could be local sports. In Israel, local elections. And when those in the yeshivah or the beis medresh are busying themselves in such conversations, and you decide to sit and learn, you are emulating Avraham HaIvri.

When levels of modesty in the community are going down, and certain women decide not to follow suit, despite the looks they might receive from others, they too are emulating Avraham HaIvri.

Standing alone in this world can be difficult, since you are not only standing alone against the non-Jewish world, which is hard enough, but sometimes you need to stand alone against the Jewish world. But in the end, just as you stood alone, you will be rewarded alone.

"Think good and it will be good" – Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel

Beneath the Surface -R' Shmuel Winzelberg



אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל יד:כג
If so much as a thread or a shoe strap (14:23)

The Gemara (Chullin 89a) states that because Avraham Avinu said to the king of Sodom, "If so much as a thread or a shoestrap," which Rashi explains, that Avraham did not want to benefit from stolen goods, he was rewarded that his descendants would merit two Mitzvos: the thread of Techeiles, meaning the Mitzvah of Tzitzis, and the strap of Tefilin.

Ha'gaon Rebbe Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his Sefer Meshech Chachmah, explains that this must be the reason why all of Israel wraps themselves in a Tallis and puts on Tefilin before Davening Shachris, which according to Chazal (Brachos 26b) was established in the merit of Avraham Avinu. (Parperaos LaTorah)

Working on our Middos

In 1977, the Agudas Yisroel party joined Menachem Begin's Likud party to form a government. Surprisingly, when discussions were held regarding monetary distributions for Yeshivos, which until then had been very insignificant at best, Begin announced that Torah institutions would receive 100% of their budget from the government, like the other educational institutions.

Understandably, this news brought much rejoicing, and was conveyed to the Moetzes Gedolei Yisroel, who were meeting at this time. Amid the smiles and Brachos that were going around, **Rav Elazar Shach, zt"l**, stood up and said, "I have a policy from the Chofetz Chaim, that under no circumstances can we agree to this. First, the privilege of

supporting Torah belongs to all Jews, and no one should take it away from them.



Second, Chazal warn us not to become too close to governmental authorities, who cannot be trusted, as their interests change from day to day.

Third, what will happen when a future government decides to reduce the budget or its support? The Yeshivos will have grown accustomed to all their needs being met, donors will have committed their donations elsewhere, and it will be difficult to begin fundraising again. At most, we may accept 60% of the budget, and no more."

The Moetzes members were shocked to hear this, but they had to agree to the Gadol HaDor!

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



In this week's Parshah, after Hagar becomes an expectant mother (16:5), Sarai says to Avram, **וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל־אַבְרָם חֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ** - ***my outcry is on you***.

Rashi explains that her claim of Chamasi is rooted in the word Chamas - robbery.

Rav Shach, zt"l, explains that her claim was, "Avram, you have the ability to do more for me, and you are withholding."

Rav Shach understands from this that whenever one has the ability to do kindness for someone else, and he holds back, he is considered, to an extent, to be a robber!

The Siddur Speaks

When the Satmar Beis HaMidrash in Boro Park was being constructed in the 1960's, a groundbreaking event was held, and the Satmar Rebbe, **Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, zt"l**, spoke at the event. He asked a simple question. - "Boro Park has so many Shuls in which to Daven. Why was it necessary to build another one?"



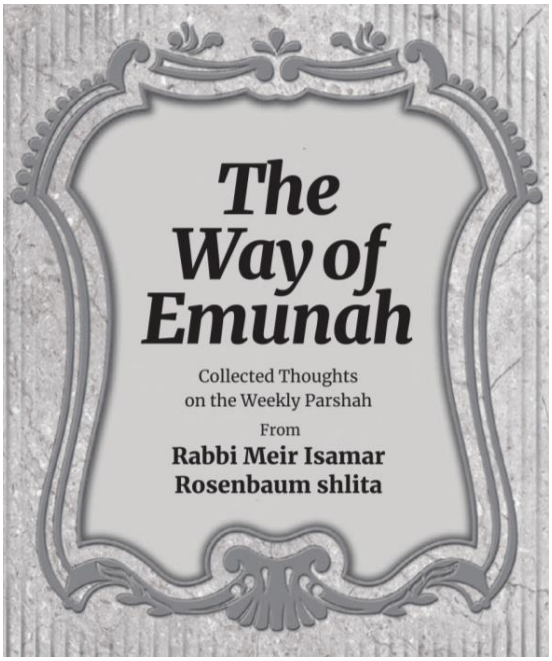
The Rebbe cited the Gemara in Kiddushin (30b), which says that if you 'meet' the Yetzer Hara on the street, drag him into the Beis Medrash. The protection provided by Davening and learning Torah in the Beis Medrash helps one to defeat the Yetzer Hara. "

With this insightful logic," the Rebbe continued, "There are many Shuls and Batei Midrash where a person ends up for various reasons, because the Yetzer Hara is able to drag him there. The hope for this new Beis Medrash is that it will be a Shul where one can drag the Yetzer Hara to it, and find the protection needed to defeat him!"

The essence of your prayers is the faith you have in them that they will be answered. It is not the length of the prayer, but it is about the faith behind the prayer. ~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.

"You don't have to pray loudly; just direct your heart to heaven." ~~ Rabbi Chia

A Person Should Only Look at Himself, Not at Others



וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ ***And Hashem said to Avrohom: Go out for yourself from your land and from your birthplace and from the house of your father to a land that I will show you.*** (12:1)

Rashi states: ***"Lech Lecha. Go out for yourself. For your pleasure and for your benefit."***

The **Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a** would often repeat the important rule that a person should never look outside his own "daled amos". He would explain that every person is his own "property", and he should only be concerned about whether he is doing the will of Hashem and acting properly. He should not be looking at what others are doing and worrying about them.

This rule is actually for a person's own benefit. It is known that if someone is constantly looking at others and seeing their success in parnassah and other matters, he will come to envy them and even to hate them. This will cause a person to feel tremendous pain, as he will always be upset that he isn't as successful as his friends. He won't be able to enjoy life because he is so jealous of others.

If a person only looks at himself, he will be happy with his lot. He will thank Hashem for whatever he has, and he will be satisfied and content.

This is hinted to in the pasuk. It says that a person should be "for himself." He should only worry about himself and not about others. If one does this, it will be "for his own pleasure and for his own benefit." He will have a good and happy life because he won't care if others have more than him.

It is famously said in the name of the **Baal Shem Tov zy"a** that there is an important rule in life that one should not look away from himself and one should not look into others.

Rav Meir of Premishlan zy"a would say in the name of his father, **Rav Aron Leib zy"a**, an explanation on the pasuk in Tehillim (104:23): "Man goes out to his work, to his labour until evening." He explained this to mean that a person must, first and foremost, go out to do his avodah and make sure he is serving Hashem properly. Once one does this, he can do "his labour" – meaning he can work to help others – until the evening.

Since all Jews are responsible for each other, one should help his friend. But he should only do this after he took care of himself and made sure that he was behaving properly.

Other People's Gashmius Was His Ruchnius

Regarding the concept that one should greet guests with a smile and feed them sufficiently, it is related that one of the chasidim of the **Kotzker Rebbe zy"a** was very wealthy but was also very stingy. He would not permit any guests to enter his house.

The Rebbe once asked the man why he didn't fulfil the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim and he said, "Doesn't the Rebbe often tell us that we need to break our taivos? Aren't we taught to refrain from earthly pleasures? If so, how can I bring guests into my home and cause them to enjoy good food? If I did that, I would be guilty of turning them into baalei taivoh!"

The Rebbe replied, "***Other people's gashmius is your ruchnius. If you give people earthly food to eat, it will positively affect your spiritual stature***."

Avrohom's Face Shone and Lot's Face Was Blackened

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־לוֹט אַל־נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין רֹעַי וּבֵין רֹעֶיךָ כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנָחְנוּ - ***And Avrohom said to Lot: Please do not let there be a dispute between you and me and between my shepherds and your shepherds because we are men who are brothers***. (13:8)

The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 41:6) states: "Were they brothers? Rather, their faces looked alike."

Sefer M'Zekeinim Esbonen quotes **Rav Yisroel Shimon Kastelonitz zt"l** as relating that when **Rav Motka Lider zt"l** was in Slonim learning under the **Yesod Ha'avodah zy"a**, there was an elderly man in the city who was a misnaged. This old man once came into the bais medrash in the middle of tish. When he saw how bright and luminous the Rebbe's face was, he said, "He must have drunk a lot of whiskey and that is why his face is so bright and red!"

Rav Motka told him, "You have helped me to understand what Chazal meant when they said that Lot's face looked like Avrohom's.



This is hard to comprehend. How could the shining face of Avrohom Avinu look like Lot's face? I now understand that although Avrohom's face was bright and shiny with holiness from his great enthusiasm to serve Hashem and Lot's face was red and shiny because he drank so much alcohol, the people of that generation were unable to differentiate between the two. To the people of that time, the two looked the same."

The same sefer adds that **Rav Mordechai Chaim of Slonim zy"a** related that when **Rav Shmuel of Kaminka zy"a** was very sick, his face was bright like the face of a healthy person. The doctors were

amazed that he wasn't pale at all. How could a sick person look so healthy?

When the Kaminka Rebbe was told about this, he said, "What's the big deal? Has this doctor ever davened Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh? Does he know anything about Yiddishkeit!?"

Eating With The Guests

אָנֹכִי מָגֵן לָךְ שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד -I am your Shield; your reward is exceedingly great. (15:1)



My grandfather, **Rav Mordchele of Nadvorna zy"a** (Sefer Maamar Mordechai) explained light-heartedly that Avrohom Avinu fulfilled the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim in the most optimal way. He definitely ate a lot together with each guest so that the guest wouldn't be embarrassed to eat.

However, he was worried that he would get stomach aches from eating too much, so Hashem promised him that He would protect him and ensure that he didn't get sick.

Thus, Hashem said that He would be his shield to protect his stomach, as the word "magen", shields, refers to the stomach (which is called "magen" in Yiddish).

It's not what you've got, it's what you use that makes a difference.

He Gave Away His Money and Did Not Leave it For His Children

וְהֶאֱמִן בַּה' וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לּוֹ צְדָקָה ***And he believed in Hashem, and He accounted it to him as righteousness***. (15:6)



Rav Hillel of Kolomaya zy"a explained that although Avrohom Avinu excelled in the mitzvah of hachansas orchim, there were people who belittled his action and said that he only was spending all of his money on guests because he had no children.

They claimed that if he would have children, he would save his money for them. However, after Hashem promised him that he would bear sons who would be his heirs, and he still continued to spend his money on his guests, everyone had to admit that his actions were truly righteous.

Thus, the pasuk is saying that Avrohom believed in the promise Hashem had given him that he would merit a son, but he still continued to give tzedakah; therefore, everyone considered it as a righteousness on his part. They all could see that he wasn't saving money for his children. Rather, he continued to give it away to the poor and needy.

"When one feels deeply that Hashem alone controls everything- that no other power exists-and fully trusts and submits to Him. Hashem removes all danger and cancels every harsh decree. A wondrous segulah for protection." ~ Nefesh Hachaim.

Living Jewish - It's About the Departure



Lech Lecha begins with Hashem telling Avraham, לֶךְ־לְךָ֙ מֵאַרְצְךָ֣ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ֔ וּמִבֵּ֖ית אָבִ֑יךָ אֶל־הָאָ֕רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֥ר אַרְאֶֽךָּ "***Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.***"

Aren't the details about the place that Avraham will be leaving superfluous? A journey to any new land automatically requires leaving your current location, and obviously your home and place of birth, so why mention them? Moreover, some details about where he would be relocating would surely have helped Avraham plan and prepare for the journey, yet Avraham was told only about his point of departure but given no details at all about his destination!

With this command, however, G-d mapped out the steps a Jew must take to reach his destination in his Divine service. It is a journey requiring that one transcend all his personal constraints and motives, to make the fulfilment of Hashem's will the defining feature of his life. These steps are hinted at in G-d's command to Avraham.

"Go forth from your land": land represents nature. This first command means: abandon the preferences that you naturally gravitate towards. "Your birthplace": your environment shapes your habits and lifestyle.

This second step demands you transcend the trends and influences of your surroundings.

"Your father's house": your father's house alludes to your education, provided by the parents who raised you. This command

tells you that in order to reach the "Promised Land", your devotion to G-d must supersede your academic sophistication and intellectual achievement.

"To the land that I will show you": to a person who devotes himself unconditionally to G-d, surrendering any personal preferences, calculations, or biases—the specific destination is irrelevant. His readiness to fulfil whatever G-d wills is always the same, regardless of the particulars. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Sefer Hasichot 5750)

Reward



שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד ***Your reward will be exceedingly great*** (15:1)

The reward a Jew receives for doing mitzvot is vastly out of proportion to the deed itself:

A finite and limited action is rewarded with an eternal and everlasting dividend. (The Rebbe)

Vechol Maaminim - Birchas Kohanim with Two

וַאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרֲכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה

From the words of the passuk "***and I will bless those who bless you***," Chazal learn (Sotah 38b) that the Kohanim who bless Am Yisrael – are also blessed.

An allusion to this is brought by the **Baal Haturim** from the fact that the words "וַאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרֲכֶיךָ" are numerically equivalent to **כהנים המברכים בניך** . He added that according to those who hold that from the Torah, the obligation of Birchas Kohanim is only practiced when there are at least two Kohanim in shul (see Tur Ohr Hachaim 128),

it is clear why the passuk wrote "mevorachecha" in the plural, while "mekalellcha", the one who curses you, is in the singular.

Harav Yaakov Kaminetzky added: One who peruses closely will notice that the numerical value of **המברכים בניך** - 524 - **כהנים** [is two less than the value of **ואברכה מברכיך** -526. But if we add the two Kohanim who make the blessing, then the values are equal. [Emes L'Yaakov]

Migdal Ohr - R' J. Gewirtz – Now You Know!

Though normally Lot is called Avraham's nephew, when Avram was told that Lot was captured, it says, **וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיָּרֶק אֶת־חֲנִיכָיו** "***And Avram heard that his brother was captured, and he armed his household***…" 14:14



The Malbim points out that we see here how important family is. Though Avraham had at most a few hundred people, the love of his family gave him the courage to take on massive armies in order to save Lot.

As Jews, who share one Father, we are all brothers, and we should be ready to put ourselves on the line for each other. We should be strengthened by our principles and not fear, for the G-d of Avraham comes to our aid.

In a similar vein, the **Tzror HaMor** comments that Avram realized Lot was captured out of malice and ill-will towards Avram and his beliefs. In fact, they thought Lot was Avram's brother, not his nephew.

Therefore, when he went to save Lot, Avram would only take those who had grown up in his home and been well trained in Mitzvos.

Why? Because when it is Avodas Hashem which is being attacked, only those who truly appreciate it can defend it properly. Those who merely follow through for ulterior motives or as lip service cannot properly defend Torah.

TORAH sweets

The Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L, in his *Sefer Ahavas Chesed*, writes a beautiful story about the power of Chesed.



A man once came to a Tzaddik and said that he had unfortunately lost a number of children and asked for advice on how to have children that would live. The Tzaddik recommended that he start a gemach, a free loan fund, and that Hashem would reward him for the Chesed that he would then be doing. The man took the advice and opened a gemach in town for all who needed to borrow money. In addition, every three years he made a huge event in honour of the gemach, to which many people came and helped support.

During the week of the first of these fundraising events, a healthy baby boy was born to him! Everyone realized that Hashem was paying him back for the Chesed he did for others. And so it went: he kept up the gemach and he had numerous more healthy children. After several years, tired of all the work that went into running the

gemach, he asked the Tzaddik to find someone else to run it. The Tzaddik urged him to continue his wonderful work, but he badgered the Tzaddik until he was finally replaced as Treasurer of the gemach.

The next morning, he came running back to the Tzaddik. In tears, he asked to be able to take back his position, as that morning his young son had choked to death! He now realized that everything he had was payback from Hashem for the Chesed that he accomplished with his gemach. After the Chofetz Chaim died, it became known that the Chofetz Chaim was that "Tzaddik!"

Comment: The Ramban writes that Sefer Bereishis is called Sefer HaChesed in recognition of Avraham Avinu and all the Chesed that he accomplished. Avraham made it his life's mission to inform the world via his acts of Chesed that there was just one Hashem who created the world.

The 'Vekker'



In years gone by, every town in the "alter heim" had a vekker, someone whose job it was to go around early each morning and wake everyone up for davening. Every vekker had his own method and style in the way he did his job. Some would bang on the wooden window shutters. Others would knock loudly on front doors. Some vekkers claimed that the most effective method was to just walk down the street and sing out loudly "Yidden! It's time to wake up to go to shul and daven!"

When **R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel zt"l** moved to Apt to assume the position of Rav, the community provided him with a comfortable home within a cluster of other Jewish houses arranged around a spacious courtyard. His first morning in the city, he woke up with a start to the loud clanging of metal. It took only a few moments for him to realize that it was the town vekker waking everybody up for davening with his own unique method. He would walk into each courtyard and instead of banging on each door separately, he would bang with his hammer on the metal cover of the well in the centre of the courtyard. That tremendous clatter alone was enough to wake up every family in the courtyard.

The Oheiv Yisroel, as the Apter Rov came to be known, began to feel a surge of energy each morning when he would hear the banging of the vekker. He would sense within himself a strong feeling of devotion to Hashem and a heightened desire to come closer to Him.

After some time, the Oheiv Yisroel began to perceive that these special feelings must have something to do with the vekker himself. "He must be a hidden tzaddik and that is why I feel the desire to come closer to Hashem when he does the vekking," thought the Apter Rov.

He asked the vekker to tell him about himself, hoping that he would discover what it was that made him so special. The man did and the Rav didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel persisted because he just knew that there was something different, something special, about this vekker.

He asked him to describe his daily schedule, but again, he didn't hear anything special or extraordinary about the vekker. Convinced that the man wasn't revealing everything to him, the Apter Rov told him, "As the Rav of this town, you must reveal to me what special mitzvah, kindness, or action you do that makes you so extraordinary."

The flustered vekker said he did not know - "Rebbe, I am just a plain old vekker. That's all!"

The Rebbe was perplexed. He tried one more time. "Okay, tell me," he asked gently, "What exactly do you do in the morning when you make your rounds waking everybody up for shacharis." The vekker once again began to describe what he did from the moment he woke up in the morning until he left his house. The Rav listened carefully as the vekker went through his daily routine and how he would wake up the townspeople in the morning.

"I enter each courtyard and bang on the well three times, no more and no less, and then I leave the courtyard to go to the next one."

"Why are you so careful to bang only three times? What if you see they aren't waking up, you wouldn't bang a fourth time?" "No," he replied. "Absolutely not."

The Apter Rov asked him why, what is so special about three times?

"Rebbe, I am a vekker, my father was a vekker, and his father was a vekker, and the tradition goes back quite a few generations. I wake everybody up the way my father did, the way he learned from his father, who learned from his father, all the way back. My father taught me to lift up my hammer and bang on the metal cover of the well. By the first bang I should say, 'In the merit of Avraham Avinu everyone should wake up.' By the second bang, I should say, 'In the merit of Yitzchok Avinu everyone should wake up,' and by the third bang, I should say, 'In the merit of Yaakov Avinu everyone should wake up.'

Believe me, Rebbe, that is all. I don't do anything different than what my father and grandfather did!"

"Finally!" the Oheiv Yisroel exulted, "now I understand the special spiritual feelings I experience every morning. My dear vekker, when you bang your hammer to wake up the Yidden of Apt, you invoke the zechus of our Avos, making them a big part of our day, so of course there is a special kedusha in waking up to such sounds!"

Etz HaChayim - Chinnuch Creation



Hagaon Harav Avraham Gurvitz שליט"א once attended a Seudas Preida for a bochur learning in the Gateshead Yeshiva. At the seuda the bochur related the following incredible story:

"When I came to the Yeshiva a few years ago, a few bochurim where *cheppering* with me. I escaped away from them and ran into the **אוצר הספרים** in Yeshiva. In the **אוצר** I put something heavy to block the door from opening and waited.

A few minutes passed and I heard a gentle knock on the door. "Who is it?!" I screamed! I heard a soft voice on the other side of the door answering, "It's Rabbi Gurvitz. I just want to get a certain **ספר**"

"You're a liar!" I yelled. "You just want me to open the door, get away from here and stop pretending!" A few minutes passed, and again I heard the same soft knock. This time I was nervous, maybe it really was the Rosh Yeshiva.

I was extremely embarrassed. I knew if this was the Rosh Yeshiva I was packing bags and leaving the Yeshiva because of utter shame. I cautiously opened the door realizing I was about to face the most humiliating moment of my life. But what I witnessed at that moment changed my life forever. The Rosh Yeshiva had his frock lifted up covering his face and he said to me, "You can run away, I am not looking to see who you are!"

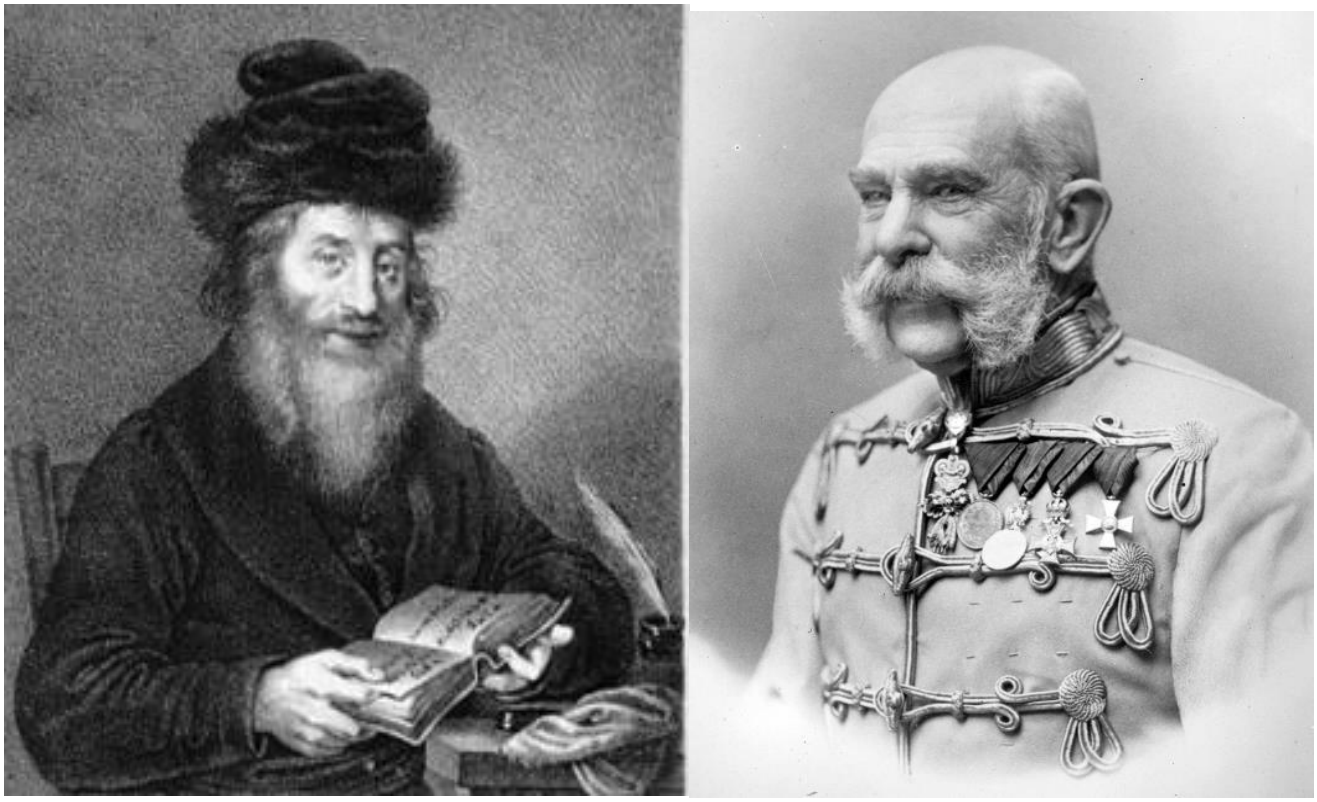
I was awe struck! I was in utter shock. " Here, I had made up my mind that the embarrassment would be too much to bear, and I would pack my bags and leave Yeshiva forever.

At that moment all that changed. It was the heart of the Rosh Yeshiva! The sensitivity the Rosh Yeshiva gave to my feelings. The caring heart that the Rosh Yeshiva showed me on that day is what saved my life.

I made up my mind to stay in the Yeshiva and here I am today saying over the story that until today the Rosh Yeshiva never knew it was me. I want to thank the Rosh Yeshiva for showing the sensitivity and warmth on that day".

The Meeting of Kaiser Franz Josef and the "Five" Angels by Yehuda Z. Klitnick

The Reform movement was formed in the year 1810. There was great friction between the Reform and the Orthodox as both sects davened in the same Shul and basically shared the same community.



The Chasam Sofer and Kaiser Franz Josef of Austria-Hungarian Empire

In Germany, it was **Reb Shamshon Refoel Hirsch z"tzal** who was the staunch opposer to them. In Hungary, it was the **Gaon the**

Chasam Sofer - Reb Moshe Sofer z''tzal - who was one of the strongest of the opposers to the reform movement and he decided that because of the changes brought about by the Reform movement, Orthodox Jews must create separate communities for themselves in Hungary, in order not to assimilate with the Reform Jews.

This was known in Yiddish as "the Upteilung".The Reform movement had very close ties with the Government, and in order to achieve "the Upteilung" it was now necessary to receive the royal approval for this. Therefore, the Rabbonim met and decided upon to choose five of the most famous Rabbonim and Tzaddikim of Hungary to send them as a a delegation to the Kaiser Franz Josef, who was known to be a rational person.

Among the delegation were **Reb Yehuda Assad**, the famous author of Teshuvas Yehuda Ya'aleh and Chidushei Maharia on theTorah, **Reb Akiva Yosef Shlezinger** the Lev Haivri and many more seforim, and his father-in-law, **Reb Hillel Lichtenstein** of Kolomyia author of Eis Laasos and Maskil El Dal and many more.

Reb Akiva Yosef, in his sefer Bris Olam, relates that the night before their meeting with the Kaiser, he was lodging with his father-in-law Reb Hillel. In the middle of the night, he was awakened by Reb Hillel, who asked him,"Are you asleep?"

Reb Akiva Yosef replied that he was awake.

"Do you see anything?" asked Reb Hillel of his son-in-law.

"No," came the answer.

After a while Reb Hillel asked again, "Do you see anything?"

Again, Reb Akiva Yosef replied, "No, I don't see anything."

After that, Reb Hillel woke him once again with the same question, and once again Reb Akiva Yosef gave the same reply.

Reb Hillel politely explained, "I just saw my Rebbe the Chasam Sofer in a dream and he told me, "You have davened well. Go to the Kaiser, and your mission will be successful."

"I told the Chasam Sofer that the guards would never allow us an audience with the king! The Rebbe answered Hashem will have you seen as angels and the guards will not notice you!

The next morning the entire delegation went to the Kaiser's palace. They found all the gates open, with no guard or anyone else to stop them or ask them questions. So, they walked right into the palace grounds.

The Kaiser was taking his morning stroll, was not notified of the sudden guests, was only wearing a simple house robe. When the Kaiser saw them, he exclaimed, "Five angels!"

The members of the delegation had removed their hats, as is customary when standing before a king. Reb Yehuda Assad approached the king and said, "If His Majesty will allow it, I would like to put on my hat so that I can recite the blessing we say when we see a king."

The Kaiser graciously answered, "Of course, but please wait a minute. I too would like to cover my head."

Then the Kaiser went into the palace and put on his crown, and afterwards Reb Assad and the others recited the Bracha as is the Halacha in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 224:8: **ברוך שנתן מכבודו לבשר ודם** "***Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, Who has imparted of His honor to flesh and blood***."

Afterwards the Kaiser asked them what the purpose of their visit was. The Rabbonim had originally chosen one of the Rabbanim, a talmid of the Chasam Sofer, since he was an eloquent orator and fluent in the language that he would present their request; but now he found himself unable to open his mouth.

The Kaiser realized that the young man was overcome with awe before him and therefore could not speak. He said, "Instead of speaking, just put your request in writing, and whatever you wish, I will grant."

They immediately wrote their request that the Kaiser give them the necessary recognition so that they could function as a separate community with due legal authority. The Kaiser took their request and, without even reading its contents, folded it. This was the royal sign that the request had been granted.

The Kaiser was about to take leave of his five guests, but first he asked for a blessing from Reb Yehuda Assad, who appeared to him as handsome as an angel. Reb Assad blessed him with a long life and a long and successful reign. It is known that the blessing was fulfilled, for the Kaiser was still king at the age of eighty-four.

When they left the Kaiser, they met the palace director, who was astonished to discover that five strangers had entered the palace without any hindrance. He asked them, "How did you enter without permission?"

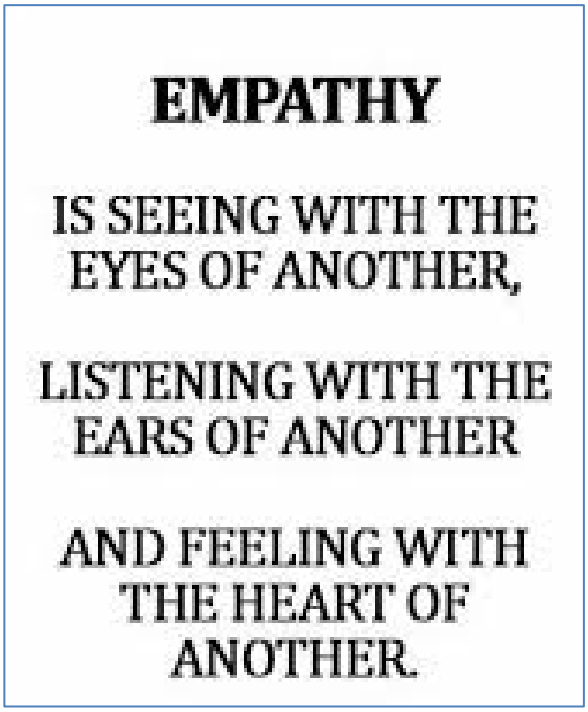
They answered, "No, we are not entering. We are leaving." Upon hearing this he was so astonished that he simply walked away.

This miracle was performed from the Holy Chasam Sofer in order to allow the separation of the communities and the continuation of the Orthodox Jews in Hungary and eventually throughout the world. The Rabbanim were not swayed by the masses. They went with the Emes, and Leshaim Sh'mayim.

"The only thing that can truly make a person happy is the knowledge that there is a Creator who loves you." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler.

Limudey Moshe – Moshe Harris

There's No Place Like Away From Home to Learn How to be a Good Host



The very first Rashi in this week's parsha (Bereishis 12:1) interprets the words: **לך לך - *Go for yourself;*** to mean "for your own benefit and welfare".

The Imrei Shammai cites an incident involving Reb Nachum of Chernobyl which elucidates this Rashi. Reb Nachum was once imprisoned. It did not take much in the Ukraine for a Jew — a Rabbi especially — to wind up in jail. An old Jew came to visit Reb Nachum and told him that he could explain a particular reason why Reb Nachum was sitting in jail.

Reb Nachum used to devote much effort to the mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim [redeeming Jews from captivity]. At a time when Jews were arbitrarily and capriciously thrown into jail, he felt obligated to do whatever he could to work for their release.

The old Jew told him that Hashem put Reb Nachum himself in jail so that he would be able to appreciate what a great mitzvah he was doing when working for the release of Jewish prisoners. Now that he was sitting in jail, he would be better at empathizing with the prisoners who he helped. The next time he would go out to raise money for pidyon shevuyim, it would be a different experience. He would have more appreciation for the wonderful mitzvah that he was doing.

Here too, Avrohom was destined to be the prototype of kindness toward his fellow man. He was destined to be the prototype of

welcoming in wayfarers. Hashem wanted to show him what a great mitzvah it is to be a host to guests who need a place to stay. The best way to learn how to be a host is to first be a traveller.

Anyone who needs to go away for a Shabbos experiences what it is like to be away from his family, away from his own bed, and away from his surroundings. Especially when a person is a wandering traveler for an extended period of time — he really learns to appreciate the great kindness provided by those who warmly extend hospitality. This experience is the best training course for becoming a better host. Therefore, Avrohom was directed "Lech Lecha". Be a traveler. It will be for your own benefit and welfare because knowing what it means to be a traveler will help you so much more when you want to become a host. (R' Frand)

Rochel Imeinu - The Untold Story -R' Nesanel Gantz



Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, besides for being a big talmid chacham and baal mussar, he was also known as a big baal regesh whose tefillos were known to be incredibly powerful. Many people gave names for him to daven for as it was well known that his tefilos were able to pull off incredible yeshuos.

One day, Reb Chaim told one of his talmidim that he wants to visit the kever of Rochel Imeinu. As they were leaving Yerushalyim on the way to the kever, Reb Chaim burst into tears as he was reading the long list of names on his list that needed help. As they arrived at the kever, he got out of the car and composed himself as he walked into the kever.

However he couldn't restrain himself, and he burst into tears and said, "Mammy, Chaimkie is dor – Mummy, Chaim is here!" And then he went and proceeded to daven. And in the midst of his davening, he said these famous words, "Mamma, I know Hashem said to you not to cry,* but I your son Chaim am telling you *Vein Mamma Vein* , please don't stop crying, and daven for all the people in Klal Yisrael." And with that, he burst into tears and davened for all the people that needed yeshuos.

It is said that all the people that were on Reb Chaim's list that day, were helped with a yeshua!

This is the famous part of the story which was made into a song. The second part of the story is not so well known.

On the way back in the car, one of Reb Chaim's talmidim asked him the question that many people were thinking: "Rosh Yeshiva, with all due respect, if Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself said to Rochel Imeinu to stop crying, how were you able to request of her to cry and daven?"



Reb Chaim answered like this, "The Riboino Shel Olam can of course ask Rochel Imeinu not to cry, because a father can demand of his child, his daughter not to cry, but I as a child, can certainly tell my mother to cry and daven and care for her children!"

To Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, Rochel Imeinu was not just some abstract figure who lived thousands of years ago, but she was his mammy, his

mother. Someone who he could speak to one on one and ask her to daven to Hashem in a most powerful way.

The kever of Rochel Imeinu is a place of holiness, where all of Klal Yisrael for thousands of years have come to daven.

Just like Reb Chaim felt that Rochel Imeinu was not just an abstract figure, but was tangible and real, somebody you could speak to, similarly we can have our relationship with The Riboino Shel Olam, and converse with Him. We say 'Avinu Malkeinu'- He is our Father. He is not abstract. He is our Tatty. You can talk to your Tatty.

-*See Yirmiyahu 31:14-16 **כֹּה אָמַר ה׳ קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נְהִי בְּכִי תַמְרוּרִים רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל־בָּנֶיהָ... כֹּה אָמַר ה׳ מִנְעִי קוֹלֵךְ מִבֶּכִי וְעֵינַיִךְ מִדְּמָעָה כִּי יֵשׁ שָׂכָר לִפְעֻלָּתֵךְ... וְיֵשׁ־תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרִיתֵךְ**



The great day of Rochel Imeinu's yartzeit is approaching. As the Pasuk says **רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל־בָּנֶיהָ מֵאֲנָה לְהִנָּחֵם עַל־בָּנֶיהָ** – "***Rochel is weeping for her children, she refuses to be comforted.***" Yirmiyahu 31:14 Hashem promises that her children will return home.

Only Rochel earned such a promise. Why didn't Avraham Avinu who offered to sacrifice his only son, earn it? Or Yitzchok Avinu who let himself be placed on the altar?

Rochel Imeinu, for giving over the signs to Leah, immediately merited the promise. Why?

Even more – Rochel Imeinu's claim was that she allowed her sister to marry Yaakov instead of her. Yitzchok however was lying on the altar and wouldn't ever have got married! - Why is that less of a merit?

There is a powerful vort which offers an explanation.



It says in the Pasuk וְעֵינֵי לֵאָה רַכּוֹת 29:17 "***The eyes of Leah were tender***." She cried because she didn't want to fall into Esav's lot. Chazal say that Rochel wiped away Leah's tears, and told her "Don't cry my dear sister, I will give you the signs."

Rochel Imeinu dried Leah's tears, knowing that she was going to pay a heavy price for it! By giving over the signs, she would remain excluded from marriage completely, or end up marrying Esav!

One who wipes another's tears and pain at their own expense, Hashem won't allow them to remain crying!

Therefore, The Torah says. מְנָעֵי קוֹלֵךְ מִבֶּכִי -"Don't Cry."

Rav S. F. Zimmerman

The Pasuk says הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ "***Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So will be your seed***."

This is simply a bracha for the multitude of descendants of Avraham Avinu.

When **Rav Meir Shapiro Zt'l**, the Rav and Rosh Yeshiva of Lublin set forth all his plans for the future yeshiva building and campus, he was told, "What you are planning- It's impossible!"

Rav Shapiro retorted, "So what! I learn from the above Pasuk as follows:" הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים – '***Go outside and count the stars***' אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם – '***Is it possible to count them?***' 'No, it's

impossible! - וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ - '***So too will be your descendants***.' – They will be able to achieve the impossible!

'Possible' and 'Impossible' are within the human realm of limitations. However, if we do things for Kvod Shamayim, and L'shem Shamayim, then our abilities are limitless!

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l- A Lifetime for G-d



The story of Avraham Avinu jumping into a fiery furnace is well known. However, it is not known from the Torah itself, but from the Midrash. The fact that the Torah refers to the location as Ur Kasdim, the Fire of Kasdim, alludes to an incident involving fire. This was the episode with Avraham Avinu. But the Torah makes no explicit mention of the story.

The Torah does tell us, however, about Avraham Avinu's departure from Charan. He is asked by Hashem to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's house. It then goes into detail of what the promise entails to him and his children. This, we know, is included as one of Avraham Avinu's ten tests.

But how can this be the case? How can the test of jumping into a fire not be counted as one of ten tests while leaving where he grew up be counted? It should be exactly the opposite. Moreover, why

does the Torah hide the story of Ur Kasdim and it's only included in the Midrash?

I once asked this to a rabbi, who offered me a fantastic answer.

To give up your life for Hashem takes a second, but to live your life for Hashem takes a lifetime. It's much harder to live for G-d than to die for G-d. To put on Tefillin every day, pray every day, watch what you say to others every day, be careful what you look at every day. That is hard. Dying for Hashem is extraordinarily noble and the greatest Kiddush Hashem that can be made. However, it is something else to live for G-d every single minute of every single day.

We don't subscribe to the belief that we are to commit suicide for the sake of G-d.. That is what other religions believe. That takes a second. We believe in living for G-d. That takes a lifetime.

Living for G-d, that is what Hashem wants written in the Torah. That takes a full lifetime of work. But dying for G-d, that is not spoken about explicitly in the Torah. That finds it way into the Midrash.

Lech Lecha is the test of living for G-d. We need to leave our surrounding culture that influences us in ways that don't support Yiddishkeit. Avraham needed to leave all of that. And that was a test. Dying for G-d is one moment of bravery; living for G-d is an entire life of bravery.

That is what Avraham Avinu was about, and we should too.

Chesed is not something to do only when it comes our way, but we need to seek out opportunities to do chesed, hoping for a chance to help another Yid. Just as one must make sure to learn Torah every day, he must also make sure to perform an act of chesed every day. ~ The Chofetz Chaim.

To Live or to Die By R' Eliyahu Maksumov

What's greater, the fact that Avraham Avinu left his home, or the fact that that he jumped into a furnace of fire to sanctify Hashem's Name? - The Torah makes no mention specifically that Avrahom jumped into the fire - we learn this fact from the Medrash (Ur Kasdim)! Why not mention it specifically in the Chumash?

For Hashem, to die for Him, is a kiddush Hashem, and is great and praiseworthy, and you will be rewarded greatly for it. To die for Hashem, only takes a moment, but to live your life for Hashem takes a whole lifetime. It is a Kiddush Hashem every step of the way and is greater in His eyes.

For us, it's all about utilising every moment, and living for Hashem.



Although he tried to hide it, ר' אַבְרָהָם גְּנְחוֹבְסְקִי זצ״ל's greatness was noticed by all who came in contact with him. ר' יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂרָאֵל קַנְיֶבְסְקִי זצ״ל, the Steipler Gaon, would stand up in his honor whenever ר' אַבְרָהָם entered the room. The רֹאשׁ יְשִׁיבָה of Slabodka, R' Dov Landau שליט״א described ר' אַבְרָהָם as a complete לַמְדָן. He explained, "ר' אַבְרָהָם was not only a לַמְדָן in תּוֹרָה, but he was also a לַמְדָן in מִדּוֹת, *fine character*, and יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם, fear of ד'.



Gedolim Be'Masayhem

Rav Nachman Likutei Moharan (Tishrei 18)

For Whom the Bell Tolls

The Maharsha served as the Rav of a small congregation in Ostrog. The local cathedral and its bells lay directly in the path that the Chevra Kaddisha had to take in order to bury the Jews who had died. There was no other way to go. The church bells mysteriously caused whoever passed them to be seized by madness and renounce his faith and convert.

Before the Maharsha passed away, he ordered the Chevra Kaddisha to place his sefer that he had written on his coffin and pass in front of the cathedral. The Chevra Kaddisha did so.

As the funeral procession passed, the priests gathered and began to toll the bells. Those carrying the bier of the Maharsha ran away and watched from afar as the Maharsha sat up and began to leaf through the pages of his sefer. With each turn of a page, the cathedral and the priests in it began to sink deeper and deeper into the ground until only the steeple stuck out of the ground!

Until this very day, there remains a sign at the spot where they sank and the Maharsha is buried not far from there.

The Maharsha's Successor

When the Jews built the shul in Ostrog, they needed to raise a substantial amount of money to cover the costs. Therefore, the groundbreaking ceremony and the cornerstone laying were done with great pomp and a lavish ceremony. A great crowd was invited and there was much fanfare.

They sold the honour of laying the cornerstone to a wealthy Jew for a bag of gold coins. The latter honoured the Maharsha with the

laying of the cornerstone. The Maharsha turned to him and asked what he could grant him in return. The rich man asked for a son who would be as great as the Maharsha.

"This is very difficult. Ask for something else," said the Rav. However, the rich man would not change his mind and he stubbornly insisted on this and nothing else.

"If so," said the Maharsha, "I can grant it, but you will die when your wife conceives, and she will die in childbirth. I will adopt and raise the child for you. Only in this way can I fulfil your wish."

The couple agreed – and so it was. The Maharsha raised the orphan and he seemed ordinary in every respect; his greatness was hidden. Before the Maharsha passed away, he ordered the orphan whom he had raised to be his successor.

The Weekly Vort

Cheshvan Teaches Us To Walk

After the Yomim Noraim one year, a *talmid* approached **R' Shach** and asked how to hold onto the spiritual inspiration of Tishrei during the "empty" days of Cheshvan, when there are no *yomim tovim*.

R' Shach smiled and said: "***Cheshvan is not empty at all. Tishrei gives us wings — but Cheshvan teaches us to walk***."

He explained that Hashem doesn't want us to live only on inspiration. The true test of a person's greatness is how he continues serving Hashem in the *regular, quiet days* — doing the same *mitzvos*, the same *tefillos*, with consistency. "That's the *avodah* of Cheshvan," R' Shach said. "To take the *kedusha* we felt in Tishrei and weave it into our ordinary Tuesdays."

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



The Baal Haturim comments on the pasuk - לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ... אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ The word **אראך** has the same gematriah (222) as the word **בעננים** – 'with the clouds'.

The simple meaning of this is that Hashem would direct Avram which way to travel by way of the clouds. However, we can also explain it that when you are going through a 'cloudy', difficult time, that is precisely when Hashem is there – showing you the way! – When it's cloudy and dark, through the fog and confusion, know that Hashem is with you, leading you every step of the way!

Fixing the Level of "Going"

Why does it state לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ- "go from your land..." The word לֶךְ in Hebrew means to go towards a place or goal. The Hebrew word **צא** – "go out" is used to indicate going from – leaving a place. Didn't Avraham have to go out and leave his environment completely, before he could go towards the Holy Land? It should, therefore, have rather stated **צא מֵאַרְצְךָ** – "go out from (leave) your land, your birthplace and your father's house," and only then **לך אל הארץ**– "go to the land".

Rav Tzaddok brings us an amazing chidush from the Zohar. Avraham was commanded to fix the level of going. In Judaism it is not so much where you are that matters, but the direction that you are going. Two people could be on the same spiritual level momentarily, but one who came from a very holy background is "going off the derech," while the other is returning to the path of spiritual heights from an impure environment.

Avraham received the ability to go forward with even greater strength, not despite but specifically because of his lowly background. By means of distancing himself and detaching completely from his father, Terach – an idol-worshipper of the first calibre, as well as from everything else in his environment and culture, both spiritually and physically, Avraham was able to fix the level of going.



◣ It is striking that Avraham chose to risk his life to save his nephew Lot, waging war against a powerful alliance of four kingdoms that had already defeated five kingdoms. - Why would he do this, knowing that he was so outnumbered?

The *Ramban* (19:29) explains that Avraham felt deep gratitude to Lot for accompanying him on his journeys. Travelling alone can be very unsettling, yet Lot accompanied Avraham wherever he went. Due to his heartfelt appreciation, he waged war with these mighty armies, to try and save him. The power of gratitude!

◣ Avraham's life was filled with immense challenges — he was told to leave his home, his wife and nephew were abducted, and for many years he remained childless. Finally, after being blessed with a son, he was asked to sacrifice him. These are among the ten great trials that he endured. What gave him the strength to withstand them?

The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh)* teaches it was his *simchah* — his deep joy in serving Hashem. We must never underestimate the strength that comes from serving Hashem with happiness, and how it has the power to carry us through even the hardest times.

בס"ד

למודי משה

One time someone came to **R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l*** and said that he married off his daughter and promised to give a large amount of money for the *shidduch* (400,000 *shekel*). However, after the *chasunah* it turns out that the *bochur* wasn't as good as he thought, he had *yiras Shomayim,* but his learning wasn't better than average [and perhaps the *shidduch* was a *mekech tous,* bad sale].

R' Chaim asked him: Does he wear *tefillin*? The father said: Yes, certainly. R' Chaim said: If so, he is worth much more! (*Minchas Todah,* pg. 477).

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

After being married to Avrohom for ten years without bearing any children, Sorah suggested that he marry her maidservant Hagar and try to have children with her. After Avrohom married Hagar and she successfully conceived, Sorah became upset with Avrohom. Rashi explains that she argued that Avrohom had not prayed on her behalf. When he beseeched Hashem for a child to inherit his spiritual legacy, he prayed only that **he** should merit offspring but did not include **her** in his petitions.

As the Gemora in Yevamos (64b) teaches that Sorah was not physically capable of conceiving a child, it is difficult to understand Sorah's claim. Of what benefit could Avrohom's prayers have been, and for what reason did she hold him responsible for not asking Hashem for something that was impossible according to the laws of nature?

Rav Nosson Wachtfogel answers that we ask this question only because we do not understand the tremendous power of true

heartfelt prayer. While it is true that Hashem normally runs the world based on the physical laws of nature, prayer is a supernatural instrument that allows a person to bypass scientific obstacles. As an example of this concept, he recounts the following powerful story.

When the **Ksav Sofer** was a mere six years old, he became so ill that the doctors despaired of his life. Based on their diagnosis of his ailment, they despondently said that there was nothing they could humanly do to save him. His illustrious father, the **Chasam Sofer**, requested that everybody present leave the room in which his son was resting.

The Chasam Sofer entered the room, locked the door, and prayed as he had never prayed before. He emerged and confidently announced that he had successfully attained a yovel (50 years) on his son's behalf. To the amazement of all but his father, the child had a miraculous recovery and went on to lead a prolific and productive life, one that was cut short at the tender age of 56.

Sadly, the Gemora in Berachos (6b) teaches that while prayer has the potential to reach the greatest heights imaginable, people do not recognize this power and disrespectfully take it for granted. The Gemora in Yevamos (64a) teaches that the infertility of the Avos and Imahos was due to Hashem's desire for their intense prayers.

Sorah understood this lesson and therefore was not the slightest bit fazed by the apparent obstacle presented by her incapability, instead focusing her frustration on the *real* impediment to her pregnancy – Avrohom's lack of prayers on her behalf.

Many times in life, we face seemingly insurmountable challenges. At such times, we can take inspiration and comfort from the recognition that there is no hurdle big enough to stand in the way of our heartfelt prayers.



Inspired by Time - Why Hide the Destination? – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

Let us reflect on the very first test with which the parsha begins. The Torah states: **לֶךְ־לְךָ֙ מֵאַרְצְךָ֣ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ֔ וּמִבֵּ֖ית אָבִ֑יךָ אֶל־הָאָ֕רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֥ר אַרְאֶֽךָּ**- *Hashem said to Avraham: 'Go for yourself, from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you'."*

A striking question arises. Why did Hashem not tell Avraham where He was sending him? Would it not have been easier for Avraham to follow the command if he knew the destination? To leave behind everything one knows — family, home, culture, and comfort — is already an enormous test. Why make it even harder by concealing the goal?

Rashi reveals the first layer of understanding. Hashem purposely withheld the destination, "**כְּדֵי לְחַבְּבָהּ בְּעֵינָיו**" — in order to make the land more beloved in Avraham's eyes. But the Medrash adds something amazing: '*Hashem withheld the name of the land so that Avraham would receive reward for every single step he took*.'

Each p'siah, each stride, was counted before Heaven as a separate act of avodah. It was not the arrival, not the destination that mattered most, but the walk itself — the courage to keep moving when the end was hidden.

Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz zt"l, explained the profundity of this Medrash. Had Hashem told Avraham exactly where to go — had He given him a defined goal — then the mitzvah of Lech Lecha would have been completed only upon reaching that destination. The travel along the way would have been merely a hechsher mitzvah, a preparation for the mitzvah's fulfillment. True, there would have been reward for effort, but the mitzvah itself would have been

accomplished only at the endpoint. But because Hashem did not reveal where he was going, every step Avraham took became an act of fulfillment in its own right. Each footstep was a separate kiyum of ratzon Hashem. The walking was not a means toward the goal — it was the goal itself. Every act of trust, every step into the unknown was a complete mitzvah.

How deeply this speaks to each of us. We live in a world that values achievement, results, and endpoints. We tend to measure success by what we have accomplished. But the Torah is teaching us a different measure — Hashem's yardstick. In His eyes, the journey itself is holy. Every moment of striving, every ounce of effort, every struggle to keep moving forward in avodas Hashem is precious. Even when we have not yet reached our goal, even when we feel that we are "still on the road," Hashem treasures each step.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory



When Avram had to go to Egypt because of the famine in Canaan, he feared that Sarai's beauty would be a stumbling block for them. The people would notice her and possibly wish to kill Avraham to take her as a wife. Therefore, he asked that she tell people she was his sister.

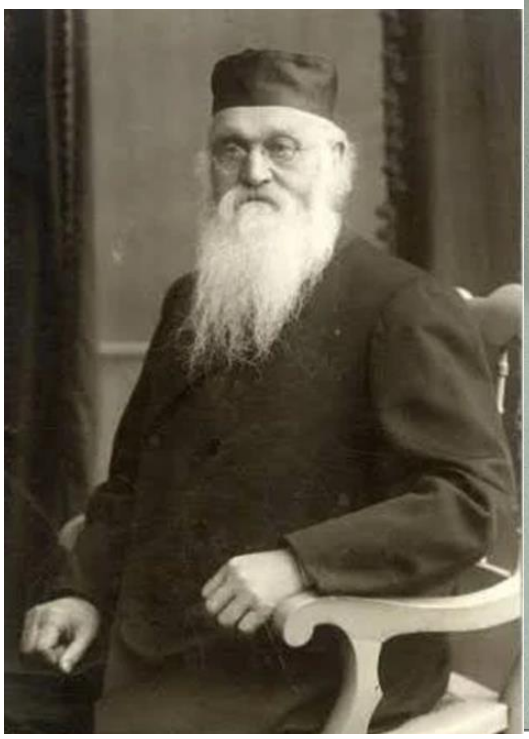
But he took other measures too. The Midrash tells us that Avraham hid Sarai in a box. However, someone opened it and got a small glimpse of her radiance, and she was found out.

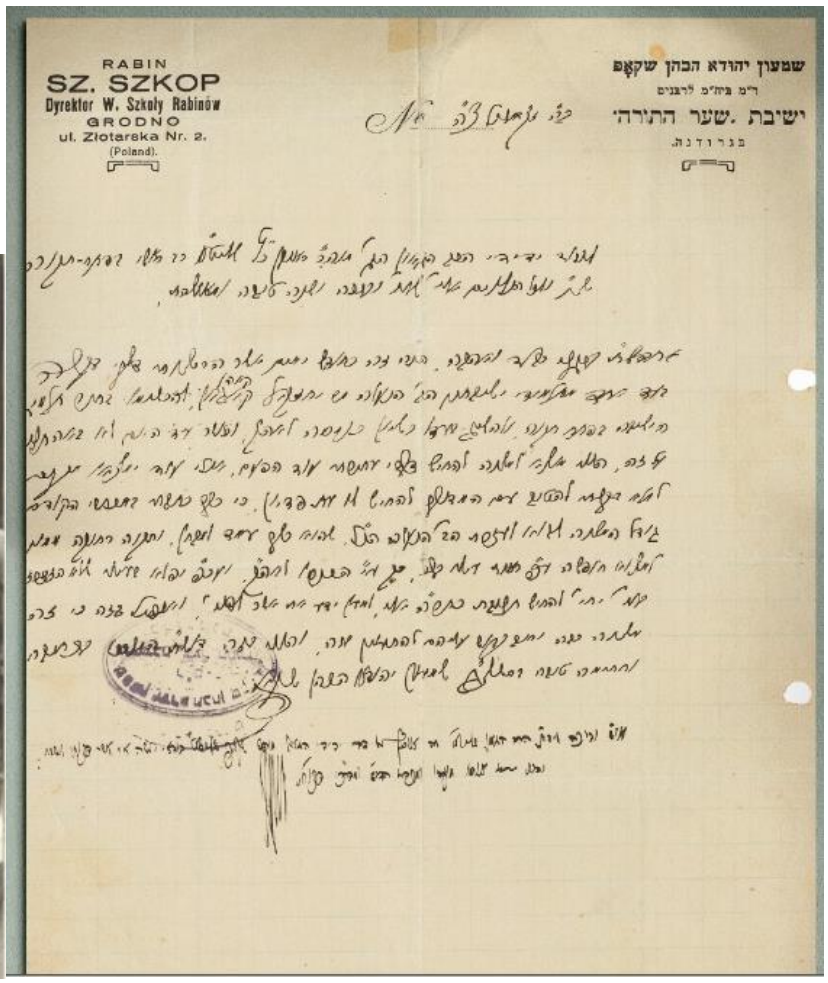
But how did Avram convince Sarai to get into the box???

He said to her, "I see how beautiful you are…" In other words, he complimented her and said nice things.

When you want people to do something, especially if it's uncomfortable for them, a great way to start is by speaking nicely and positively to them. If they understand how much you admire them, then when you ask them to go outside their comfort zone, they will be more likely to oblige.

📖 The Guardians – bringing Jewish history to life!




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שמעון יהודא הכהן שקאפ
ר"מ בחו"מ לרבנים
ישיבת שער התורה
בגרודנא.

🕯️ In Honor of the Yahrtzeit of Rabbi Shimon Yehuda HaKohen Shkop

One of the greatest Rosh Yeshivas of prewar Europe, Rabbi Shimon Shkop zt"l, head of the Grodno Yeshiva, was a towering thinker whose deep lomdus still shapes the world of Torah study today.

He passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5700 (1939), at the age of 80, just as World War II began, before the horrors of the Holocaust unfolded. That same year saw the passing of two other giants - Rabbi

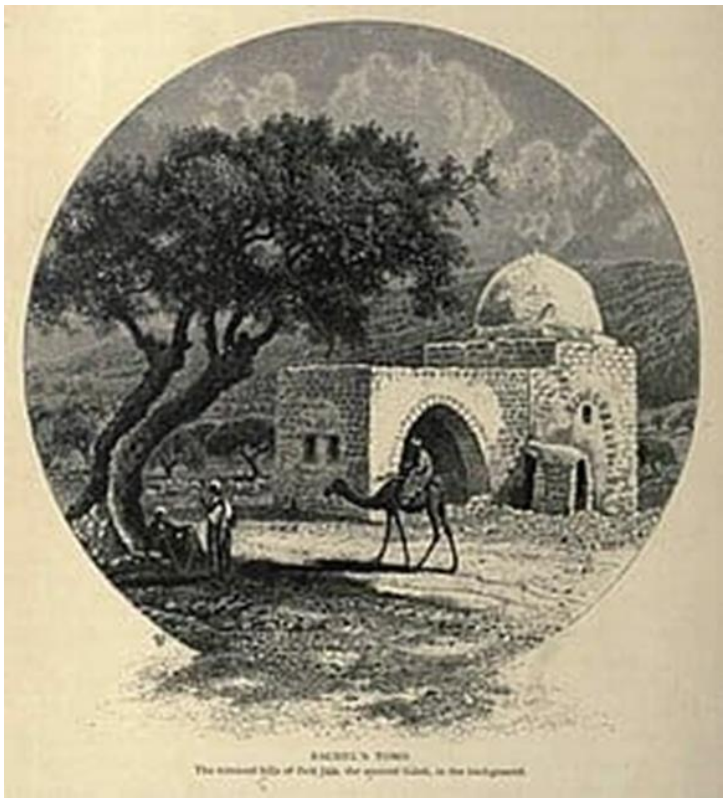
Chaim Ozer Grodzinski of Vilna and Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz of Kaminetz.

The Chazon Ish later said that as long as these tzaddikim were alive, the forces of evil could not prevail, their Torah protected the Jewish people. Only after their passing did the world grow darker.

📜 In this rare historical document, Rabbi Shkop's signature appears alongside that of Rabbi Chaim Ozer, a joint letter requesting a certificate of immigration to Eretz Yisrael for a young yeshiva student.

That certificate, sent in time, ultimately saved the student's life.

Kever Rachel



Kever Rachel stands in Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem. For centuries it sat by a quiet road, yet Am Yisrael kept coming to daven to Ima Rachel, who weeps for her children as recorded by Yirmiyahu Hanavi, and to ask for the promise of geulah.

Chazal teach that Yaakov Avinu foresaw that his descendants would pass this place on their way to galut. He therefore buried Rachel "on the road" so she would see them and pray for mercy, rather than taking her into the city or to the Cave of Machpelah. He and his sons set a marker so the jews would know to pray where Rachel pleads for them.

The Talmud preserves Rachel's tefillah. "Ribono shel Olam," she pleads, "remember what I did for my sister Leah. All of Yaakov's

labor was so he could marry me, yet when the time came they brought my sister in my place. I kept silent and even gave her the secret sign that Yaakov and I had arranged. So too, if Your children have brought a rival into Your house, be silent." Hashem's mercy was aroused and He answered, "For your sake, Rachel, I will return Yisrael to its place."

From the fifth century of the common era until the mid-nineteenth century, the tomb was marked by a small dome supported by four pillars. In 1841, Sir Moses Montefiore and his wife, who like Rachel were without children, added walls to the dome and a long room where visitors could find shelter, rest, or eat. The familiar image of Kever Rachel in art and photographs is of this structure.

In 1948, Jordan took control of the area and Jews were no longer permitted to pray there. Until then the kever had stood in an open field by the road, but an Arab cemetery was built around it and Bethlehem expanded until the kever stood in the middle of the city.

After Israel's victory in the Six Day War in 1967, the kever reopened to Rachel's children. For the next thirty years, Jews visited and made the short trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to pray. A popular song from that era sang, "Your children have returned to you, Mother Rachel, led by Binyamin and Yosef. We will never leave again, Rachel."

Later the situation changed. After the violence of the First Intifada, Bethlehem was designated Area A while Israel retained control of the site itself. In 1996, facing ongoing attacks, the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs built a protective compound around the small building, with two guard towers, concrete walls one and a half meters thick, and barbed wire. Construction was carried out under assault by rioters and gunmen.

Today the site is a short drive from Jerusalem. It is fully enclosed, and only bulletproof buses and vans pass through four and a half meter concrete barriers that lead to the kever. Every few hours a

bulletproof Egged bus reaches the checkpoint at the entrance to Bethlehem and receives a military escort. Two minutes later it enters the compound and releases its passengers inside to daven that Hashem will at last fulfill His promise to Rachel.



Building A Marker: Sir Moses Montefiore was a British philanthropist and financier, legendary in Israel for his many works rebuilding and preserving Jewish monuments. He restored and expanded the Tomb Of Rachel building. His own wife was childless, as was Rachel Imeinu for many years, and he built a replica of the Tomb as a mausoleum over her grave. He himself was eventually interred in it as well. The tomb and marker can still be seen in Ramsgate in the UK.

Reserved Mitzvos

We know that the mitzvos of tzitzis and tefillin are applicable the entire day. This leads us to the question as to why we wear them particularly only during shacharis.

The Meshech Chochma (Breishis 14:23) cites the gemara (Chullin 88b-89) that in the merit of Avraham saying **אִם־מִחוּט וְעַד שְׂרוֹךְ־נַעַל וְאִם־אֶקַּח מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ** that he would refrain from taking the spoils of Sedom, his children were merited the mitzvos of tzitzis and tefillin.

Now, the gemara elsewhere (Brachos 26b) tells us that Avraham instituted shacharis. Consequently, since shacharis is Avraham's tefilla, and because tzitzis and tefillin are in his merit, we have the practice to specifically wear them during shacharis.



Rabbi Shlomo Landau - The Yahrzeit of Chacham Ovadia Yosef 3 MarCheshvan

One time, a particular rav happened to pass by the Beis Hamedrah in Yerushalayim where Chacham Ovadiah Yosef was giving a shiur. He heard gales of laughter coming out from the shul. A few minutes later, there was another massive outburst of laughter. He asked someone, "What's going on inside there?"

He said, "Chacham Ovadiah is giving a shiur and is telling great jokes and awesome stories. The people are laughing."

It really bothered this rav…. 'Chacham Ovadiah, probably the greatest talmid chacham in Klal Yisrael at that time, cheapening himself by telling jokes and stories?' He couldn't get his head around it. It really upset him.

That night he went to Chacham Ovadiah and said to him, "Kevod Harav – with the greatest of respect and reverence, I need to ask you something. How is it possible that a man of your stature should be telling jokes and stories?"

Chacham Ovadiah said, "Those jokes and stories are for the people that don't understand the shiur. It's not for them – it's for their children! I want those people to come to the shiur every single week, so that when they have to make a decision as to which school they want to send their children to, they will send their children to a Torah school. Those jokes and stories are for the future of Klal Yisrael."



Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה

Right, good evening. Welcome back to the winter series of the Thursday night **שיעור**. Let's begin with **פרשת לך לך**.

The **רמב״ן** in his **הקדמה** to the **תורה** teaches that the **תורה** is not a storybook. Many famous stories—such as **אברהם אבינו** being thrown into the furnace—are omitted entirely, mentioned only through hints like "**אור כשדים**." When the **תורה** *does* choose a story, it is deliberate, and its sequence carries meaning.

אברהם and **נמרוד** — **The Furnace**

The **מדרש** describes **תרח** leaving **אברהם** in charge of the idol shop. **אברהם** smashed the idols and staged the axe-holding idol as the culprit. **תרח** brought him to **נמרוד**, who claimed to be a god and demanded **אברהם** worship the god of fire. **אברהם** cleverly argued that water is stronger than fire, clouds stronger than water, wind stronger than clouds—until finally declaring that the Creator of wind is the true G-d. Furious, **נמרוד** threw him into the furnace, from which **אברהם** emerged alive, humiliating **נמרוד**.

The Mountain Near בית א-ל

When **אברהם** arrives in **ארץ ישראל**, the **פסוק** says he went "to the mountain east of **בית א-ל**," yet then says "**בית א-ל** was west." Before **אברהם** arrived, **בית א-ל** was the landmark. Once **אברהם** settled there, *he* became the landmark—just as Radin became famous only once the **חפץ חיים** lived there.

נמרוד Lodges with אברהם

The **מדרש** says **אברהם**'s **הכנסת אורחים** was legendary: food, drink, lodging, all free. **נמרוד** came for a month to exploit him. When leaving, **אברהם** demanded payment. **נמרוד** protested—no one pays. **אברהם**

replied: "I tell everyone G-d pays. *You* claim to be a god—so pay." Unable, **נמרוד** wrote a **שטר** admitting he was not a god. **אברהם** publicized it, destroying **נמרוד**'s image.

מצרים and Paying Back Debts

נמרוד mocked **אברהם** for not paying his lodging bills. After **שרה**'s abduction, **פרעה** was plagued and compensated **אברהם** with great wealth. **אברהם** returned to every place he had stayed and paid back every debt, showing that **הקדוש ברוך הוא** provides. Again **נמרוד**'s claim—"gods don't pay"—collapsed.

לוט and the War of the Kings

The shepherds of **לוט** and **אברהם** quarreled. **רש"י** explains " **אנשים אחים**" means **קרובים**, and also that they looked identical—so if **לוט**'s shepherds stole, people would think **אברהם**'s household was dishonest, exactly what **נמרוד** wanted.

Political leaders whose ratings fall often start wars. **נמרוד** did the same: the four kings against the five. His plan was to capture **לוט**—who looked like **אברהם**—and parade him as "**אברהם**," restoring his own prestige. Therefore **אברהם** fought with **מסירת נפש** against millions, because if he died, there would be a **לויה** proving he was dead; and if he won, it would be a tremendous **קידוש השם**.

מלך סדום and Not Taking Wealth

מלך סדום offered **אברהם** wealth if he returned the people. **אברהם** refused: " **הרימתי ידי אל ה'... אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל... ולא תאמר אני העשרתי את אברם**." Even after miraculous victory, he refused to claim **כחי ועוצם ידי**.

The Vizhnitzer Rebbe and the Operation

The **מונקאטשער רבי**'s daughter fell ill in a resort before **שבת**. Doctors said she needed an operation. The **רבעצין** asked the **ויזניצר רבי**. He said to proceed—but *not* to send word to her husband, because he would worry all **שבת** with no ability to act. "We will **דאוון**

here." The operation succeeded. When thanked, the **ויזניצר** said: "It was nothing to do with me. It is the **רבונו של עולם**."

He explained: "**מי שיש לו חולה בביתו ילך אצל חכם ויתפלל עליו**"—a **חכם**, not just a **צדיק**, because a **חכם** never attributes success to himself.

ונברכו בך — A Father's ברכה

רש"י says **ונברכו בך** means a father blesses his son: "Be like **אברהם**." Why specifically a son? Because when a father tells his son to be a **צדיק**, the son may answer: "What's wrong with being like you?" So the father says: "Be like **אברהם**—whose father was **תרח**." Every parent wants their child to rise higher.

TORAH TAVLIN

STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

וספר הכוכבים אם תוכל לספר אותם ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך וגו' (טו-ה)

A famous Moshul - parable, is brought down on this Posuk in the Medrash Hagadol. A man walked in the heat of the desert, faint from thirst and hunger. He found a tree with soothing shade and sweet fruit, growing under a spring of water. He ate, drank and sat in the shade, renewing his strength. - As he stood up to continue on his way, he spoke to the tree: "How shall I bless you? Shall I say, 'Let your fruit be sweet'? - they are already sweet. Shall I say, 'Let your shade be pleasant'? - it is already pleasant. Shall I say, 'Let there be a spring of water beneath you'? - a spring already runs beneath you. I bless you, therefore, that any roots from your tree that are planted elsewhere, shall be as blessed as you are."

Hashem said to Avrohom, "How shall I bless you? I have already blessed you with all of life's blessings. I will bless you, therefore, that your sons, and your son's son's until the end of time, will follow in your footsteps of kindness and righteousness - **כה יהיה זרעך**."

אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל .... ולא תאמר אני העשרתי את אברם וגו' (יד-כג)

The gemara teaches that in the merit of Avrom's refusal to receive any gifts from the king of Sodom, not even a string nor a leather shoe strap, his descendants merited the strings of *tzitzis*, and the leather straps of *tefillin*.

This, however, seems to contradict another *chazal* from last weeks *parsha*. Noach, after coming out of the ark, drank wine and became drunk. As he was lying uncovered in his tent, two of his sons, Shem and Yefes came to cover him. Each received reward, with Shem's being the covering of *tzitzis* that his children would wear. Did we merit the *tzitzis* because of the act of Shem or because of the act of Avrom?

R' Chaim Shmulevitz ZT"L explains that in truth, the seed was planted by the act of Shem but it only reached fruition due to the act of Avrom. Shem's act created the potential that was actualized through Avrom.

Each of us are comprised of these seeds planted by the **אבות ואמהות** - *Patriarchs and Matriarchs*, our parents, our teachers and our friends. If we're feeling frustrated by our trying to help others and not seeing immediate results, we must realize that none of our efforts go to waste. We are planting seeds, some may sprout quickly, others may lay dormant for a while, but all have their influence. We must recognize and actualize the abilities that we have, and help others to realize what they can accomplish.

R' Yisroel Salanter ZT"L would say:

"I cannot say that I was fortunate to learn under my Rebbe, R' Zundel ZT"L of Salant. The most I can say is that I was fortunate enough to have seen him!"

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

In 1917, during World War I, a Jewish American soldier from Duluth, Minnesota, Alex Lurye, found himself in a small German town called Seldes, on Friday night. The lone soldier felt out of place as America was at war with Germany. However, he was greeted by a kind German Jew by the name of Herr Rosenau who brought him to the synagogue.

After *davening*, Herr Rosenau invited the serviceman to his house for the Friday night meal and served him a delicious, kosher, home-cooked meal, complete with wine and the traditional *Shabbos* songs.

The soldier was unable to come back again to see this kind family, but the impression that he had received, the experience of the *Shabbos* in a warm and caring Jewish home did not leave him. It meant so much to this young soldier that when he finally returned to Duluth, he took time out to sit down and write a letter to the German Jew who had touched his life with such kindness.

In 1938, as the situation became unbearable for the German Jews and anti-Jewish proclamations were being contrived and enforced on a continually regular basis, Herr Rosenau's grandson, rummaging through his grandfather's desk, found an envelope with a foreign postage stamp from America. The letter was still inside. He removed the letter and read it. It was the thank you letter from the American serviceman, from twenty one years ago. His mother remembered the young man. "Let's write to him! Maybe he will remember and sponsor us, enabling us to immigrate to America." Not having a proper address, they simply wrote the letter, and addressed it only as: **Alex Lurye, Duluth, Minnesota.**

Alex had become a wealthy businessman living in Duluth, a town of over a hundred thousand people. When Alex received the letter, after a lapse of twenty-one years, he quickly sent a return letter acknowledging his receipt and pledging to help bring the family to

Duluth. Alex kept his promise. The entire Rosennau family was rescued and arrived in 1938.

In Duluth, Minnesota, as in Seldes, Germany, the family made sure that *Shabbos* would be joyously honored. Unfortunately, the rest of German Jewry was destroyed. Yet, the kindness that Herr Rosenau had given to a stranger twenty-one years earlier had come full circle.

By emulating their forefather, Avrohom Avinu, in the *middah* of **חסד** - kindness, without any thought of personal gain, Herr Rosenau and his family were spared from the horrible fate of their fellow German Jews.



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

Late one winter night a small group of scholarly visitors arrived in the town of Viedislav. It was cold and blustery and the group had not had time to arrange for a place to sleep. Instead, they all made their way to the home of the Rov of Viedislav to pay their respects and request lodging for the night.

As usual, the lights were still burning late at night at the home of the Rov and when they knocked, he welcomed them in heartily and bade them to feel comfortable. Immediately, a warm meal was prepared and placed in front of the thankful scholars, who were too tired to even resist the overwhelming efforts of the esteemed Rov.

While they were enjoying their meal, the rabbi called to his little son. "Come, Simcha Bunim, I would like you to go and prepare for us an interesting and unusual interpretation of the laws of **הכנסת אורחים** - Hospitality, worthy of even Avrohom Avinu!" The scholars paused for a moment from their meal to watch the young boy go. The child took to his heels and quickly disappeared.

The Rov engaged the group in a discussion of Torah and, together with the warm meal that they were served, the group felt extremely appreciative and thankful. After a short time had passed, the boy reappeared.

"Well, my son, what surprise have you prepared for us?" asked the Rov, the hint of a smile crossing his lips. All the men were aware of who this child was. He already had a reputation as a genius, a prodigy, and the

distinguished guests were anxiously awaiting the new Torah delights they were sure were about to come.

The boy beckoned with his hand and began to walk down the narrow hall. They all rose and followed the young boy. Expecting no less than to walk into the tent of Avrohom Avinu, their surprise was quite evident when they entered the next room and saw a truly novel interpretation of the laws in question:

There, neatly arranged was a bed, complete with clean linen and a fluffed up pillow for each guest! The little boy, who grew up to be none other than the great Rebbe, **R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischah ZT"L**, understood even at that young age, that sometimes it's the little things that tend to get overlooked that can be considered novel and unusual, even when they really are so simple!

מאן דיהיב חיי יהיב מזוני - *"The One who gives us life, gives us our livelihood"*

The Chida writes that the gematria of נשמה (soul) is 395, which is the same gematria as פרנסה (livelihood) because the One who gave us our soul and continues to give us life is the One who gave us our livelihood and continues to do so. We should never make the mistake of thinking that our livelihood comes from our own efforts because it all comes from one source: Hashem.

Torah Gems

The *Medrash* recounts the story of how and why Avrom left the city of *Ur Casdim* to come to *Charan*. When King Nimrod, heard that Avrom had destroyed his father's idols, he had him thrown into a fiery furnace, from which he was miraculously saved.

His brother, Haran, was not firm in his belief of *Hashem* as the one true G-d and he waited to see what would happen to his brother. After seeing Avrom's salvation, he declared his allegiance to *Hashem* and he, too, was thrown into the furnace. Unfortunately, he was not saved.

However, contrary to our understanding that he was burnt to a crisp within the furnace, he did not die immediately in the fire. Rather, the *Medrash* tells us that his stomach and intestines were burned up and after some time, he emerged from the fire and died in the face of his father, Terach.

Why did Haran have to die in such a manner?

When Avrom emerged from the fire unscathed, explains **R' Moshe Silverberg**, it was clear that he was whole in his belief and maintained it publicly both inside and out. Haran, on the other hand, might have portrayed to the outside world the appearance of a recognition in the oneness of *Hashem* on this world. Yet, on the inside, he was rather indecisive. He wasn't so sure and was not willing to risk his life on this supposition unless he had reason to.

Thus, *Hashem* showed the world his true inner feelings by burning only his innards while his skin and outer body remained intact. His lack of *emunah* was on the inside and he burned and died from the inside.

Who is the cleverest man in the Torah? – Avraham, because he knew a Lot!

Torah Gems

ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך וגו' (יב-א)

When Avrohom Avinu received the command to leave his home and to set out on his journey to Eretz Canaan he was accompanied by his wife, Sarah, his nephew Lot, and a large entourage of disciples and servants. However, there was one prominent member of his family who was not among them. - His father, Terach, who was then one hundred and forty-five years old, was left behind in Charan.

But how could Avrohom abandon his elderly father? Who was to care for him? Why did he ignore the all-important *mitzva* of *Kibbud Av*, the *mitzva* to care for a parent?

R' Moshe Wolfson says: The *Medrash* explains that *Hashem* told Avrohom, "*You are exempt from the mitzva of honoring your father. No one else in the world is exempt from this mitzva.*"

Avrohom was unique in this respect. The *mitzva* of *Kibbud Av* did not apply to him. Why was this so? The reason was because *Avrohom Avinu* was the first member of a new species. A species derived of a pure *Emunah* - (complete) faith, in *Hashem*. His heart was charged with this belief, and it was this legacy that he imbued to his offspring. The defining characteristic of this new species was *Emunah*, a hereditary knowledge of *Hashem*.

Thus, Avrohom was not a continuation, or even an improvement, of what Terach was. He was not obligated to show *Kibbud Av* for Terach because in the deepest sense Terach was not his father. Avrohom was the first link of a new chain, a new beginning, and that was also why Avrohom was commanded to travel to *Eretz Canaan*.

"A person should not look at what he lacks, but at what he has been given." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk ZT"L (Meshech Chochma) would say:

וַאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר - "Why are those who bless Avrohom referred to in the plural, and those who curse him in the singular? Because when people will see that those who bless the Jews are themselves blessed, and those who curse the Jews are themselves cursed, there will naturally be a surplus of well-wishers and very few cursers!"

The Weekly Vort

■ **בעצם היום הזה נימול אברהם וישמעאל בנו. וכל אנשי ביתו... נמלו אתו** - ***In the middle of that day Avrohom and his son, Yishma'el, were circumcised, and all the men of the household… were circumcised with him*** (17:26).

The rule of "the diligent hasten to do *mitzvos*" (Pesachim 4a) demands that a *bris* take place as early in the day as possible. If so, why did Avrohom wait until midday?

The Imrei Emes explains that Avrohom was commanded to circumcise himself and all 318 male members of his household. Avrohom realized that if he were to circumcise himself first, he would not have the strength to circumcise the members of his household. Thus, he circumcised them first, a task which took until midday. Only then did Avrohom circumcise himself. (A Gut Vort)

R' Yaakov Yitzchak Halevi Ruderman ZT"L would say:

"Chazal teach that every person should believe, "The whole world was created for me." This obligates each of us to believe that his prayers can make a difference."

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Believe In Your Bracha - The Story behind Rav Yitzchak Abuchatzeira's open door policy.

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת לך לך**.

רבי יצחק אבוחצירא, who was known as the **בבא חאקי**, he lived in **רמלה** in **ארץ ישראל** after he moved from Morocco, had an interesting practice of always keeping his door open. There was a total open-door policy. Anyone could come any hour of the day or of the night to get his advice, to get his **ברכה**.

At one point, some of his children said, "**אבא**, all the **רבנים** have what's called **קבלת קהל**, reception hours, where people know that they can come and get **ברכות**, and nobody else has this policy of just anytime, anywhere. Why do you do that?"

He said, "When I lived back in Morocco, in **תפילאלת**, so my father, **רבי מסעוד אבוחציר**א, was often approached for **ברכות** and for help. Once, I was at home, and a woman came in. She had a sick child, and she wanted to ask my father for a **ברכה**.

He wasn't home, I told her. She said, 'I have to get back to my child, I have no time. You're the son of the **צדיק**, give me the **ברכה**.' I felt that I couldn't do it. I was adamant. I said, 'I cannot take the place of my father. I cannot step into the footsteps of the **צדיק**.' Disappointed, the woman left.

Later that night," he said he had a dream in which he was told **מן השמים** that what he did was not correct, that his **ברכה** could have helped her, and he should have given his **ברכה**. However, since his intentions were good, to honor his father, he wouldn't be punished, but he had to accept upon himself that whenever any Jew wanted his **ברכה**, required his **ברכה**, that he would give it with no boundaries.

אברהם אבינו was told, "**והיה ברכה**." You will be **ברכה**. The destiny of our people is to be people of **ברכה**, who bring **ברכה**, who give **ברכה**. If

times are troubled, and in all times, but especially in troubled times, it's important to remember that power that each of us have. You don't have to be a famous **צדיק**.

אברהם אבינו was told, **ואברכה מברכיך** that I will bless those who bless you, **והיה ברכה**, and you yourself will be **ברכה**.

We should try to use that to strengthen each other, to protect each other, and to bring up each other's spirits, to give as many **ברכות** as we can. And hopefully, if we are people of **ברכה** - **השם** will shower us with **ברכה**, and bring **השם יברך את עמו בשלום**, bring the **ברכה** of **שלום** to the entire world. - Have a wonderful **שבת**.



Zera Shimshon - Parashat Lech Lecha - R' Asher Vaknin

This week we have the four kings that went against the five kings. The first World War happened in this week's *parashah*.

The first World War happened over 4,000 years ago, when the four kings arranged a war against the whole entire world and they won. And during the war that they won, they took Lot and his money. And the *pasuk* said that they took **לוט ואת רכושו**.

Lot is the nephew of Avraham Avinu. And they took him with his money. And then Avraham Avinu went and arranged a war, and he took Lot back.

The Zera Shimshon asks a brilliant question: I understand that Avraham Avinu cared for Lot, but why did the Torah have to mention that they took his money? So what, if they didn't take the money, Avraham Avinu would never go to save him? What, Avraham Avinu wake up and say wow, I have to go to save the money? Why the Torah mention money?

By us, it's very simple, because we always running after money, so he said, you know, I'm going to go to save him and then I'm going to get 50% of the money, 80% of the money. But Avraham Avinu, one of

the righteous human beings in the world history, the father of Judaism, why did the Torah mention?

Listen to this deep explanation.

The Zera Shimshon writes: No, no, no, no, it's not about the money. When we say money, when Hashem told the Jewish nation you're going to leave Egypt and you're going to come with endless wealth, only we explain endless wealth, what's the meaning? The money of Egypt. Every Jewish child said, when we left Egypt, after 210 years, we came out with endless money. How can Hashem tell you endless money? Do you know what's the questions? Tell me, if Bill Gates is telling you this guy is rich, how much money you have to be you have to own in order that Bill Gates will tell you that you're rich? How much? Much more.

If Elon Musk tell you, the richest man in the world, you're rich, what, this guy is lord? How much money you have to have? Endless wealth!

You know what the Kabbalah write? You know what the Gemara write? Endless money doesn't talk about money, it's refering to the Torah. When you're going to leave Egypt, you're going to receive the Torah. And Torah is **רכוש גדול**. When they kidnap Lot, they didn't kidnap Lot for the money. They already took all the money. You know which money we talking? We talking about Ruth HaMoaviah! We talking about David HaMelech! We talking about Rava! We talking about Mashiach! They want to kill the money, the treasure that come from Lot, not the physical money!

Now you understand why Avraham Avinu went to arrange a war. He said, 'No, no, no, no, I'm not going to tell you I'm not going to give you the right to kill Mashiach.'

Wow. This is so our message to all of us is: money has a lot of spiritual assets in it. But don't just make money. Make money spirituality.

Execute On Your Decisions - The Chofetz Chaim's Amazing Observation on the Contrast Between Avraham & Terach - R' Daniel Glatstein

Okay, to be *zocheh* to hear this Chafetz Chaim, your grandmother must have wept when she lit **נרות שבת**, maybe over 100 years ago, that you should be *zocheh* to hear this Chafetz Chaim. This is a Chafetz Chaim that's *noge'a* literally every single day throughout the day, and *davka* in our time like it was never *noge'a* before.

Okay, this is classic Chafetz Chaim observation, simple *pasuk*:

ויצאו ללכת ארצה כנען Avrohom set out to go to land of Canaan **ויבואו ארצה כנען**, and he went there.

What? Avraham Avinu set out to go to Canaan, and he went to Canaan. There are a lot of extra words here. Either say he went to Canaan, or say he set out to go to Canaan. Why do you need to say he set out to go to Canaan and he went there? Obviously, if he set out to go there, he went there.

Says the Chafetz Chaim, **אברהם אבינו עליו השלום, מכיוון שהיה בדעתו ללכת ארצה כנען, אברהם אבינו בא כנען**, since it was in his mind to go to **לארצה כנען**, he went there! As opposed to a man by the name of Terach.

ואצל תרח כתיב, at the end of Noach, **ויצאו אתם מאור כשדים**, Terach left Ur Kasdim with **אברהם ללכת ארצה כנען, ויבואו עד חרן**, he came to **חרן, וישבו שם**. Terach had in mind to set out to go to Canaan, he got distracted and he went to Charan, which was on the way, and once already he took out his phone to do something else, he got caught up in that, and he never accomplished what he set out to do. Avraham Avinu set out to go to Canaan, and he went to Canaan.

Terach set out to go to Canaan, he stopped off in Charan, and he never went further. **וזה ללמדך שעל האדם ללכת בדרכי אברהם אבינו**, namely, **ואם מקבל על עצמו ללכת ארצה כנען**, if you decide to go to **כנען**,

מוכרח לבוא לשם, you need to go! If once you decide to do something, you need to do it!

ולא לשנות מהלכו, don't change your path, **או להישאר באמצע הדרך**, or to remain in the middle of the road.

The way I understand this Chafetz Chaim is that if you if you set out to do something, don't just say, first I'm going to just check this, then I'm going to go check that, then I'm going to open up the fridge, then and then I'm going to do what I decided to do. No, once you decide to do something, go do it, and don't settle, and don't rest, and don't do anything else until you accomplish what you set out to do, because if you don't if you don't take the reins and go do what you've decided to do, you will never do it.

This is what it means **מתי יגיעו מעשי למעשי אבותי אברהם**. Avraham Avinu was decisive. He decided to do something and he executed. Do not pause between decision and execution.

Terach, he's still in Charan. By the way, it's 3,000 years later, Terach is still in Charan. He hasn't moved. He just he went to Haran, he was checking his phone, he was checking one more news outlet, he was just he was just he was just, and he never accomplished what he needed to do.

Avraham Avinu set out to Canaan and he went there, and the rest is history. Have a great day, everyone. *Bracha vehatzlacha.*

Every Day A New Jew

They say that the Yid HaKodosh of Peshis'cha was called by this name, the "Holy Jew", because he rose to such spiritual heights that every day of his life, it was as if he had transformed himself from the level of a non-Jew to that of a Jew. (Sfas Emes, Bamidbar)

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – Burst of Inspiration

ויבא הפליט ויגד לאברם העברי. There's been the battle of the four kings against the five kings, the four kings have been victorious, and now the refugee comes along and says, "Quickly, Avram, the four kings have captured your nephew Lot, come and save him."

We refer to him here as **אברם העברי**. We are very familiar with that name, but he actually appears only once in the whole Torah referred to as **אברם העברי**.

And the question is, why here? Why, just after the battle of the four kings and of the five kings, and that his nephew has been captured, **ויבא הפליט ויגד לאברם העברי**, why here is he referred to as Avram HaIvri?

There is an amazing **כתב והקבלה**. The **כתב והקבלה** says that there is a Midrash. Why is Avram called **אברם העברי**? Says the Midrash, one of three reasons: Number one, he's a descendant of **עבר**, and therefore he's known as **אברם העברי**. Reason number two, because he comes from **עבר הנהר**, and that's a reference to the other side, **עבר הנהר**, therefore he's called **אברם העברי**.

The third reason, perhaps the most best known is, **כל העולם כולו מעבר אחד והוא מעבר אחד**. The whole world are on one side, he's on the other. He is fighting a theological battle. He's trying to introduce monotheism into the world. The whole world doesn't recognize that.

כל העולם כולו מעבר אחד והוא מעבר אחד. Third reason why he's called **אברם העברי**. Says the **כתב והקבלה**: This is a theological battle.

One of the four kings is Amraphel who is Nimrod, who denies G-d's existence. So to encourage Avram to come along and save Lot, the **פליט, ויבא הפליט** wants to encourage Avram to come.

How does he do it? He says, "Avram HaIvri, this is an opportunity to express your very essence, your very nature, that all the world are denying G-d's existence, and you are fighting on the other side. Come on, Avram, you can go and be victorious over Nimrod, who is

one of the four kings. And this theological battle, if you win it, you can use it as an opportunity to spread monotheism in the world. This is your 'raison d'être', this is who you are." Therefore, this time, and this time only, he is called **אברם העברי**, says the **כתב והקבלה**, because it was this name which was one of the reasons to encourage Avram, Avram as he was then, to save his nephew Lot, because of the reason of **כל העולם כולו מעבר אחד והוא מעבר אחד**.



Rav Menachem Mendel Hager Ahavas Sholom (Cheshvan 17 5586 / 1825 - 201st Yahrzeit)

Rav Menachem Mendel Hager of Kossov was the founder of the Vizhnitz and Kossov dynasties and author of *Ahavas Sholom*. The son of Rav Yaakov Koppel Chassid, Rav Menachem Mendel was a student of Rav Moshe Leib of Sassov, Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Nadvorna, and Rav Zev Wolf of Tcharne-Ostra. His grandson was Rav Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz.

A Rebbishe Clock

The *Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz told how the ***Ahavas Shalom*** used to daven so loudly that his voice carried very far, so much so that the shepherds in the mountains of Kosov knew what time of day it was based on the *Ahavas Shalom's tefillos*.

For example, when he recited **הָאַדֶּרֶת וְהָאֱמוּנָה לְחֵי הָעוֹלָמִים** – the shepherds would turn to one another and say in Russian, "*Panyeh Rebi chai olamim* – the *Rebbe* has reached *chai haolamim*," and they knew what time of day it was.





Q Whose face was painted in this week's *parsha*?

A The *Tiferes Yehonasan* of Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz reveals a fascinating custom practised by earlier generations. - He writes that when men went out to war, they would often bring their wives with them. To prevent others from gazing at the women, their faces would be covered with a dark substance so that their beauty would not attract attention. Upon returning home, the coating would be removed.

Avraham Avinu followed this practice when travelling to Mitzrayim. Aware of Sarah's exceptional beauty, he sought to conceal her appearance and shield her from unwanted attention.

However, Sarah Imeinu was no ordinary woman. Possessed of extraordinary spiritual greatness and blessed with *Ruach HaKodesh*, her beauty could not be hidden. Even beneath the dark covering, her radiance remained evident.

This, explains the *Tiferes Yehonasan*, is the meaning of the *pasuk*: "וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שָׂרֵי פַרְעֹה וַיְהַלְלוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה" – "Pharaoh's ministers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh" (*Bereishis* 12:15).

The ministers of Pharaoh were astonished that even with her face concealed, Sarah's beauty still shone forth. Realising that such an extraordinary woman belonged in Pharaoh's palace, they reported her to Pharaoh, who subsequently had her brought to his house.

So, the answer to our question is Sarah Imeinu.

Q In this week's *Parshah*, the *pasuk* states, "וַיֵּט אָהֳלָה" (12:8), describing how Avraham pitched his tent near Beis El. Rashi brings from *Chazal* that the word אָהֳלָה is written with a feminine suffix, to teach that Avraham first pitched Sarah's tent and only then did he pitch his own.

A question arises: since Avraham and Sarah were husband and wife, why did they require separate tents?

A **i)** The *Tiferes Tzion*, in his commentary to *Medrash Rabbah*, explains that Avraham maintained a separate tent in order to engage in *hisbodedus* and personal *Avodas* Hashem. This private space enabled him to devote himself to contemplation, *tefillah*, and spiritual growth without distraction.

ii) Another explanation is that Avraham and Sarah each played a unique role in spreading awareness of Hashem. Avraham taught and inspired the men, while Sarah influenced and guided the women. As their tents frequently welcomed visitors, maintaining separate quarters was necessary for reasons of *tznius* and propriety, allowing each of them to fulfil their respective missions with dignity and modesty.

Q Who served as the *sandak* at Avraham Avinu's *bris*? Is there a source that a *sandak* should present a gift to the family? And what gift was given at Avraham's *bris*?

A The *Moshav Zekeinim*, citing a *Medrash*, teaches that HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself served as the *sandak* for Avraham Avinu.

Furthermore, HaKadosh Baruch Hu presented Avraham with a remarkable gift: the Land of Canaan and the inheritance of its seven nations. This is alluded to in the *pasuk*:

וְכָרוֹת עִמּוֹ הַבְּרִית לָתֵת אֶת אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי -"He made a covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanite."

The *Moshav Zekeinim* concludes that this *Medrash* serves as a source for the custom that a *sandak* should present a gift to the *baal ha'bris*. Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the *sandak* of Avraham Avinu, bestowed a gift upon him, so too it is fitting for a *sandak* to honour the occasion with a meaningful present.



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Malbim asks a question on this week's parsha. What happened after the **מלחמת המלכים**, the War of the Kings?

After Avraham Avinu defeated the kings and rescued the captives, the king of Sedom offered Avraham the spoils of war, asking only that he return the people.

Avraham responded: **וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־מֶלֶךְ סְדֹם הֲרִמֹתִי יָדִי אֶל ה' קל עֶלְיוֹן קֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אִם־מִחוּט וְעַד שְׂרוֹךְ־נַעַל וְאִם־אֶקַּח מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשַׁרְתִּי אֶת־אַבְרָם** (14:22-23). Avraham declared that he would not take anything belonging to the king of Sedom, not even a thread or a shoelace, so that the king could never claim, "I made Avraham wealthy."

The Malbim asks: What is the meaning of **וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשַׁרְתִּי אֶת אַבְרָם**— "so that you should not say, 'I made Avraham wealthy'"?

Why would the king of Sedom make such a claim in the first place? Everyone knew that Avraham had won the war. The king of Sedom had been defeated, and Avraham was the victor who had rescued the captives. Surely, the spoils of war rightfully belonged to Avraham. What would be so surprising if the king of Sedom claimed, "I made Avraham wealthy"? Who would believe him?

The Malbim explains that Avraham Avinu was teaching us a fundamental lesson.

Avraham was saying: The victory was not the result of my own strength. When I say **הֲרִמֹתִי יָדִי**— "I have raised my hand" — I am

acknowledging that my hand was merely an instrument in the hands of Hashem. The real victor was the Ribbono Shel Olam. It was Hashem who fought the war and brought about the victory.

Consequently, the spoils did not truly belong to Avraham, because he was not the one who had won the war through his own power. He was merely Hashem's messenger.

But now, says the Malbim, we can understand the deeper meaning of **וְלֹא תֹאמַר**.

Avraham was not merely telling the king of Sedom what he should not say. He was declaring that his own hand should never make the claim, **אֲנִי הֶעֱשַׁרְתִּי אֶת אַבְרָם**— "I made Avraham wealthy."

In other words, Avraham was determined never to allow his own hand to become a source of heresy, as though his personal strength or achievements were responsible for his success.

Had Avraham considered himself the victor, he could rightfully have claimed the spoils. But **הֲרִמֹתִי יָדִי**— he raised his hand in recognition that the hand itself was not the source of the victory. Hashem was.

Therefore, Avraham refused to take anything, lest it appear that his wealth came through his own accomplishments rather than through the hand of Hashem.

This is a lesson that applies to every area of life. We may work hard, use our talents and make great efforts, but we must never forget where our success truly comes from.

Our hands are only the **כלי**— the instruments. The real source of all our achievements, our wealth and our success is the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם**

Always try to be the kind of person who leaves others feeling a little bit better than they did before they crossed paths with you. ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953).

Parsha Points to Ponder

Q Hashem told Avrohom (Bereishis 12:3), "All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you." Rashi explains that Avrohom became the prototype for all berachos, and when a father wants to bless his son, he says, "You should grow up to be like Avrohom."

Why does the father need to identify a specific individual when blessing his child instead of stating more generally, "You should grow up to be a big tzaddik?"

A **Rav Shlomo Wolbe** derives from Hashem's promise the importance of having a role model to look up to. Simply telling a child to become a big tzaddik is vague and does not give him clear direction. By identifying a specific person, he should aim to emulate, gives him a concrete goal of the level to which he should aspire.

וַיָּבֹא הַפָּלִיט וַיַּגֶּד לְאַבְרָם הָעִבְרִי – ***"The fugitive came and told Avram, the Ivri."*** (14:13)

Midrashim offer several reasons why Avraham was called "the Ivri."

- He was a descendant of Ever (see Bereishit ch.11);
- Figuratively, the whole world stood on one side ("Ever"), and he stood on the other side ("Ever"); and…
- Literally, he came from the other side ("Ever") of the river, and his language was Ivrit.

R' Eliyahu Dessler shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani in the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; not to be confused with his namesake and relative, the "**Michtav M'Eliyahu" z"l**) writes: All of these interpretations suggest one thing–that Avraham was not influenced by his surroundings.

The whole world stood on one side, and he stood on the other side. Alone among Ever's descendants, Avraham followed in that Tzaddik's

ways. And, despite living among idolators, he stood apart, not even changing his language.

There is another connotation to the appellation ***"Ivri,"*** to being on the "other side," R' Dessler writes: The whole world lives under the laws of nature. Avraham, however, lived under a different set of "laws," as demonstrated by the fact that he emerged unscathed from Nimrod's furnace, as the well-known Midrash relates.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



When Lot was taken captive, Og informed Avram of this (14:13) with the hope that Avram would get killed, and he would take Sarai as his wife (Bereishis Rabbah 42:8).

Why do we assume that this was his intention if there is no clear indication of this?

Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l, answers based on the Pasuk in Iyov, וְעַיִר פֶּרֶא אָדָם יִוָּלֵד - *'Man is born as a donkey'* (11:12).

If we work on enhancing ourselves, we can develop as human beings. But if we don't work on ourselves, then we will live with our animalistic wants and desires.

There is no indication that Og worked on his moral standing, thus, we can assume that he remained with his base desires.

We have to constantly work on ourselves to step further away from the donkey within us, and to become moral human beings.

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Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlita

Countering Yishmael

"*And Yishmael, his son, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised of the flesh of his foreskin*" (17:25).

Rav Chaim Vital writes in *Eitz Hada'as Tov* that the most difficult exile at the end of days will be the one under the descendants of Yishmael, and only through heartfelt prayer can we be saved from them and accelerate the coming of *Moshiach*.

In *Parashas Ha'azinu*, the **Vilna Gaon** says that the *B'nei Yishmael* seek to destroy us, and we can only annul the decree by prayer. This is also hinted at by Yishmael's name, meaning 'Hashem will hear.' He will hear our prayers and save us from Yishmael when we put our trust solely and exclusively in Him and turn to Him in prayer, in the conviction that no other power can save us.

The Chofetz Chaim said that since the Torah testifies that Yishmael is a *pereh adam* (a rebellious creature), this description will apply for all time; however much one might try to acculturate his descendants, they will not change their essence. He concluded with a prophetic sigh, "Oy, who knows how much suffering this *pereh adam* is likely to cause the Jewish nation at the end of days!"

Since their temporary power stems from the *bris milah*, we are also able to counteract their influence and accelerate their downfall by observing our own *bris*—guarding our eyes and keeping away from printed or electronic media, which purvey immorality. Strengthening the sanctity of the *os bris* provides us with the ability to weaken the power of Yishmael's descendants, and even if other nations join them to wage war against us, we will be in a position to defeat them. May the redemption happen speedily in our days.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Rambam writes that we need to reflect deeply on what made Avraham Avinu into the great Avraham Avinu whom we know and revere.

Why did he become so great? It was not simply because he fulfilled the entire Torah, even before the Torah was given. In fact, before his greatness became known, people hardly knew his name. What, then, made him into Avraham Avinu?

The answer is that **עשרה ניסיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו**— Avraham Avinu was tested with ten difficult trials, and he stood firm through every one of them. It was through these ten tests that he attained his greatness.

This is a fundamental lesson we must learn from Parshas Lech Lecha: every person has to face his own *nisyonos*, his own tests and challenges in life. These are not merely obstacles to overcome; they are the very things through which a person can achieve greatness.

The Mesillas Yesharim, towards the end of the sefer, brings the words of the holy **Ramchal** in *Derech Eitz Chaim*. He writes that he considers this to be one of the greatest remedies against the yetzer hara:

פעולתו קלה ופריו רב— The effort is small, but the results are tremendous.

What is this powerful remedy?

He advises a person to set aside **שעה אחת פנוי מכל המחשבות**— an hour free from all other thoughts — and devote that time to reflecting on one subject: **What did the great Avos accomplish that made them so beloved by Hashem?**

Think about Avraham Avinu. What made him so beloved by the Ribono Shel Olam? He was flesh and blood, just like us. What did he achieve that earned him such a unique place in Klal Yisrael?

Even today, we begin our tefillos by declaring, **אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב**. Why do we mention the Avos in this way? What was it that elevated them to such greatness?

The answer is that they endured difficult *nisyonos*. They faced challenges, struggled through them, and remained steadfast in their devotion to Hashem. **That is what made them great.**

The Ramchal teaches us that if we take the time to contemplate this, we can weaken the power of the yetzer hara. As he says, **פעולתו קלה ופריו רב**— it requires relatively little effort, yet the benefits are enormous.

He recommends setting aside time each day, even if only for a few minutes, to think about what made the Avos so beloved to Hashem.

The same question can be asked about Moshe Rabbeinu. What made him so beloved by the Ribono Shel Olam? What elevated him to his extraordinary level?

It was his willingness to face difficult challenges and remain faithful to Hashem.

The lesson is clear: our nisyonos are not merely difficulties we must endure. They are opportunities through which we can become the people Hashem wants us to be.

A Perfectly Designed World - Rabbi Dovid Horowitz

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch raises a profound question in his commentary on Chumash. If Hashem is perfect and His creation reflects infinite wisdom, why is life filled with suffering and adversity? Why must we experience setbacks and challenges rather than inhabit a world of uninterrupted comfort and tranquillity?

Rav Hirsch explains that precisely because Hashem is perfect, His world is perfectly suited to its Divine purpose. What appears imperfect to us is essential to our spiritual development. As the life

of Avraham Avinu demonstrates, every *nisayon* presents an opportunity to express our profound love for the Ribbono Shel Olam. Through adversity, we demonstrate our faith and devotion, while Hashem expresses His love by providing opportunities to discover our inner strength and draw closer to Him. Life's challenges are therefore not imperfections in creation, but opportunities for spiritual elevation within Hashem's perfectly designed world.



Destinations in the Spiritual Journey – Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff

Rabbosai, this week, in Parshas Lech Lecha, we are reintroduced to **מעשי אבותינו**. We begin to retrace the steps of **אברהם, שרה, יצחק, רבקה, יעקב** and the rest of our forefathers, who lived their lives as a **דרך** for us to follow. Through their trials and tribulations, their search for **הקדוש ברוך הוא**, their **עבודה** and their **חסד**, they laid the foundations for our own avodas Hashem.

I'd like to share one short message from the beginning of the **פרשה**.

The **פסוק** tells us that **הקדוש ברוך הוא** instructed **אברהם אבינו**:

לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך.

According to some **ראשונים**, this was the first of **אברהם**'s **עשרה נסיונות**. He was told to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's home and travel to a destination that **הקדוש ברוך הוא** would show him.

רש"י points out that **הקדוש ברוך הוא** did not reveal the destination, explaining that this was **ליתן לו שכר**— to give him reward. The **מדרש** expresses it even more famously:

ליתן לו שכר על כל פסיעה ופסיעה— to reward him for every single step.

Many **מפרשים** ask a simple question: why should **אברהם** receive more **שכר** for every step simply because he wasn't told his destination? Surely, he would have taken exactly the same number of steps had **הקדוש ברוך הוא** told him where he was going from the outset!

What, then, does **חז״ל** mean by **שכר על כל פסיעה ופסיעה**?

The **מפרשים** explain that the **נסיון** of **לך לך** was not merely a physical journey, moving from one country to another. Nowadays, people move to **ארץ ישראל**, and although it may involve considerable effort and inconvenience, the physical move itself is not necessarily such a great **נסיון**.



Rather, this was an ideological journey. **אברהם אבינו** was being asked to distance himself from the **עבודה זרה**, the culture, the beliefs, the habits and the influences of the society in which he had grown up. He had to change his outlook, his interests and his way of life, and dedicate himself entirely to **עבודת השם** and **דביקות בהקב״ה**.

The **מפרשים** find a hint to this in the order of the **פסוק**:

מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך. Logically, the order should have been the reverse. A person first leaves his home, then his hometown, and finally his country. Why does the **תורה** list them in the opposite order?

The explanation is that the **פסוק** is describing more than a physical departure. It is describing a gradual process of distancing oneself from one's influences. A person is influenced by the broader society in which he lives, even more closely by his hometown and community, and most deeply by the home and family in which he was raised.

אברהם אבינו was being challenged to break away from all these influences and establish an entirely new **דרך** — a **דרך** of **עבודת השם**.

With this understanding, perhaps we can suggest an answer to our original question.

Why did **הקדוש ברוך הוא** conceal the destination? Why was **אברהם** rewarded for **כל פסיעה ופסיעה**?

Perhaps the message is that, when it comes to **רוחניות**, **we don't measure success by the destination; we measure it by the steps we take to get there.**

In the commercial world, success is generally measured by results. You make a successful business deal, you earn the money, you win the competition — you have succeeded. If you fail to achieve the desired result, you are considered unsuccessful. The effort you invested may be admirable, but the final result is what ultimately counts.

In **עבודת השם**, however, the measure of success is entirely different. What matters is how much effort a person invests in trying to achieve his goal.

Imagine two people learning a **סוגיא** in **גמרא**. One person struggles for hours, applying all his strength and concentration, and eventually reaches a certain level of understanding. Another person has a sharper mind and reaches a much higher level with far less effort.

In terms of the intellectual achievement, the second person may have accomplished more. But in terms of **עבודת השם**, the first person may have achieved far more, because he invested so much of himself in the process.

The achievement in רוחניות is not simply what you accomplish, but how much you put into accomplishing it.

הקדוש ברוך הוא did not reveal the destination because, in **רוחניות**, the destination is not the primary measure of success. Every step taken towards **הקדוש ברוך הוא** has value in its own right.

Every effort to overcome the **יצר הרע**, every attempt to improve our character, every struggle to learn more **תורה**, to perform a **מצוה** with greater care, or to become a better person — each one of these is an achievement in itself.

The steps are not merely the means of reaching the destination. In עבודת השם, the steps themselves are the achievement.

That was the message of **לך לך. אברהם אבינו** was embarking on a new **דרך**, one that demanded enormous effort and a willingness to change his background, his nature and his entire outlook on life.

He succeeded, and his example teaches us that we, too, can change and grow. We may not know exactly where our efforts will ultimately lead us, but we can be certain that every step we take towards **הקדוש ברוך הוא** has value.

As we reconnect with the **דרך אבותינו** in this week's **פרשה**, let us remember that success is not measured only by how far we have travelled, but by the effort we invest in every step of the journey.

May we be **זוכה** to follow in the footsteps of our **אבות**, and may their **זכות** stand for us, bringing us **הצלחה** and **ברכה**.

Good Shabbos, and בשורות טובות to everybody.