



הַמִּזְרָחִי



# HAMIZRACHI

**SIGN UP TO RECEIVE WEEKLY:  
MIZRACHI.ORG/HAMIZRACHIWEEKLY**

**PARSHA WEEKLY**

## PARSHAT LECH LECHA 5786 • 2025



**ISRAEL AT WAR**  
**755** DAYS  
**13** HOSTAGES\*

### WORLD MIZRACHI Picture of the Week

Fellows from Maslul, Maslul Plus, and Mizrahi Campus — Mizrahi’s three new Young Leadership initiatives — joined Mizrahi professionals at the World Mizrahi Ideological Summit on October 27, 2025, in Yerushalayim.

This week’s edition is dedicated for the merit of the safe and speedy return of Matan Shachar ben Anat, a member of Tzevet Perez tank crew, together with all injured and captured, and dedicated to the memory of Tomer ben Shay hy”d, Itai ben Ruby hy”d, and Daniel Shimon ben Harav Doron Eliezer hy”d.

### INSIDE

#### TORAT MIZRACHI

- Rabbi Doron Perez 2
- Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
- Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
- Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
- Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
- Sivan Rahav Meir 8
- Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9
- Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 9

#### PARSHAT HASHAVUA

- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l 10
- Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit”a 12
- Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit”a 13
- Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein 14
- Rabbi Shalom Rosner 15
- Michal Horowitz 16
- Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 17
- Rabbi Eli Mansour 18

#### INSPIRATION

- Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 19
- Rabbi YY Jacobson 20
- Rabbi Judah Mischel 21
- Mrs. Shira Smiles 22
- Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi 23

#### ISRAEL CONTENT

- Hebrew Language: David Curwin 24



\*At the time of publication



MIZRACHI

www.mizrachi.org  
office@mizrachi.org  
+972 (0)2 620 9000



NASI

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

CO-PRESIDENT

Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Harvey Blitz

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

Rabbi Doron Perez

CEO

Rabbi Danny Mirvis

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

World Mizrachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

HAMIZRACHI  
PARSHA WEEKLY

EDITOR

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Esther Shafier

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Leah Rubin

TYPESETTING

Yocheved Bernstein

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Yaakov Panitch

Zac Winkler

PROOFREADER

Renee Rosenberg

To dedicate an issue of HaMizrachi Parasha Weekly in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a simcha, or for other HaMizrachi enquiries, please email [hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org](mailto:hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org)

To sign up to receive HaMizrachi Parasha Weekly to your email or WhatsApp, visit [mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly](http://mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly)

# Hostages Returning Home

## The Moral Measure of Society



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

### The First Jewish Captive

No sooner had the first Jewish family been established and already one of the members had been taken captive. Avraham's nephew Lot was taken captive as part of the regional war between the four kings against the five. Lot was residing in Sdom amongst the losing kingdoms and the verse clearly records him being taken into captivity:

וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־כָּל־רֶכֶשׁ סְדוֹם וְעִמֹרָה... וַיֵּלְכוּ

[The invaders] seized all the wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions, and went their way.

וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־לוֹט וְאֶת־רֵכְשׁוֹ בְּן־אֲחִי אַבְרָם וַיֵּלְכוּ...

They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, and his possessions, and departed...

Both verses begin and end with the same words ויקחו וילכו – “They captured[ and “they went.” The total disregard for the freedom and rights of others is indicated in the ease and the nonchalant way that people are simply taken from their home as hostages and captives. Incredibly the Midrash notes, that the conquerors of סדום came specifically to look for Lot knowing of his relationship with Avraham. The Midrash even states that they put him in a cage and boasted: “We have captured the nephew of Avraham.” Already then it seemed that the people opposed Avraham's moral and monotheistic beliefs, and were focused specifically on capturing his nephew.

### All for One

Avraham's response was nothing less than remarkable. Without any directive from

Hashem to act in any way, he springs straight into action upon hearing of his nephew's capture:

וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיֵּרָק אֶת־חַנְיָכִיו וַיֵּלֶדְי בְּיָתוֹ... וַיִּרְדֵּף עַד־דָּן

“When Abram heard that his kinsman's [household] had been taken captive, he mustered his retainers, born into his household, numbering three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.”

Indeed the moment he hears, without thinking for a second, he takes all the members of his house and his followers, all 318 of them and immediately pursues the captors. In a daring night mission he attacks the mighty enemy, chases them all the way to Damascus and returns all the property that had been stolen including his nephew Lot. Avraham's actions are truly remarkable. After all Lot was his errant nephew and chose specifically to separate from him and settle amongst the wicked town of סדום. סדום was known for its immorality and its lack of any collective moral company. As evident even today, thousands of years later, the horrific term of sodomy, still exists. Despite Lot going to סדום, and despite being the errant nephew, Avraham sees him as his brother and without thinking springs into action with total disregard for his life and the lives of all of his followers. It is absolutely clear to Avraham that he is willing to sacrifice everything to save even an errant member of his family and people.

### One for All

To my mind this highlights one of the great differences between our beautiful,

moral and spiritual values as opposed to the enemies of Avraham then and the enemies of the Jewish people today. The most basic freedom a person has is the right to pursue life and liberty. The safest place a person has is the precincts of their home which is the intimate sacred space of a family to live in peace and tranquility. From the enemies in the barbaric world of then to the barbaric world of Hamas today, there is a total disregard for the most basic human right and dignity. People are taken and led away to captivity with total disregard to the value of human life.

The diametric opposite is Avraham's response. Avraham has every moral right to not go and save Lot for the reasons mentioned above, yet he doesn't think twice. As the verse stated above, Lot is a brother and to save the life of a brother, one risks everything. Avraham already then lived by the famous aphorism, "all for one and one for all," engaging in battle to do everything possible to save Lot.

### Losing a Moral Right To Exist

Not only is this attitude toward redeeming the captured so central to the Jewish moral code, it is the very cause of the moral decay which caused the entire world to be destroyed by the flood.

Astonishingly, especially in today's context, the word used in the Torah for the robbery and decay of society which caused the flood is indeed the Hebrew word "חמס".

The verse in the beginning of *Parashat Noach* clearly says:

קוץ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי כִי מַלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חֲמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם  
וְהִנְנִי מְשַׁחֲתֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ

"And G-d said to Noach: "The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (*Bereishit* 6:13)

According to the verse, חמס is the reason for the destruction. What does חמס mean? Rashi sites a verse in the book of Yonah which clearly shows that חמס means robbery and stealing. At its core, stealing is a lack of respect for the property of the other, a lack of respect for ownership and for anything that the other possesses. When people have no respect for private space and ownership, society cannot function.

The truth though is that it's much deeper than that. The ancient commentary of Targum Unkelos incredibly translates the word חמס as חטופין, which means taking captives. This is the core of their sin. They were not punished merely because society tolerated the stealing of property but because society tolerated the rampant stealing of human beings. To capture and take hostage another human being is to steal the most basic right to life and liberty and to hold it ransom. When society engaged in such despicable immoral actions that society has lost its צלם אלוקים, its creation in G-d's image, and needs to be destroyed. The flood and deluge swept away an entire world because those who are prepared, not only to tolerate but to actively engage in such perversion have no right to exist. The world has seen the

despicable actions of Hamas, not only of the murder, the maiming, the unspeakable tortures, but also of huge financial incentives to the man on the street to go hijack and kidnap as many hostages as possible.

The regime of a society prepared to engage in such behavior has no moral right to exist. If ever there was a moral right of a country today to dismantle the source of its enemies evil roots and regime, it is Israel's moral and just war to uproot Hamas so that it no longer exists in G-d's world.

We hope and pray for the state of Israel and the Jewish people. We pray that just as Avraham was able to bring back Lot and the captives while every single one of his army of 318 were unscathed, so too should every one of the captured be returned in full health, without one member of the Israeli Defense Forces being harmed.

An unthinkable evil took place which shocked everyone. We hope and pray that an unimaginable miracle of justice and salvation will take place for the sake of G-d, for the sake of His people, and for the sake of all of humanity.

We hope and pray that the remaining 13 hostages - as of the writing of these lines - return immediately for a dignified Jewish burial. Amongst the 13 is Itay Chen from our son Daniel's tank. Itay is one of five combat soldiers, three of whom are officers, who gave their lives two years doing all they could to save others they didn't know. Everyone of the 13 must be returned.

One for All, All for One.



MIZRACHI



SHAGRIRIM BALEV

*Friends Setting Up Friends*

THIS WEEK IN NUMBERS



63

New Ambassadors  
(Shagririm)



68

New Singles  
(Candidates)



186

Started Dating  
This week



Want to join? Want to bring it to your community?

Message: +972 58-532-3242 Email: shagririmbalev@gmail.com Visit: en.shagririm.org.il

PERSONAL GROWTH

# Avodah as Work



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Scan here to join  
Rabbi Taragin's  
daily Divrei Torah  
WhatsApp group



Our last piece studied Shimon HaTzaddik's listing of *avodah* as one of the world's three pillars. Though Shimon HaTzaddik's mention of *avodah* referred to *korbanot* and *tefillah*, work, which is also often referred to as *avodah*, is also important. Shemayah emphasized this importance when he encouraged us to "love work."<sup>1</sup> We should love work because it is an integral part of our lives in this world.<sup>2</sup>

## Torah She'Bichtav

Most *meforshim* explain that this was the "avodah" Hashem expected from Adam HaRishon when He placed him in *Gan Eden* "tovdah u'lshomrah — to work and protect it."<sup>3</sup> Though Hashem created *Gan Eden* with its own "watering system,"<sup>4</sup> He made Adam responsible for developing it to teach him the importance of his work.

This importance explains why Hashem included our responsibility to work within the *mitzvah* to observe *Shabbat*.<sup>5</sup> The commandment begins with the words "*Sheshet yamim ta'aseh melachah*—Six days you shall work" because the *mitzvah* not only prohibits work on the seventh day, but also commands us to work six days.<sup>6</sup> Work is part of our covenant with Hashem.<sup>7</sup>

Rebbe Yishmael<sup>8</sup> understood this to be the point made by the *pasuk* that appears in the second *parshah* of *k'riyat Shema*: "*Vasafeta d'ganecha*—And you shall gather your grain." Rebbe Yishmael explained the *pasuk* as prescriptive: "*Hanheg bahem minhag derech eretz*" — in addition to learning Torah, we are meant to spend time acting "in accordance with the ways of the world." Working the field is so crucial that we spend time we would have devoted to Torah working the fields instead.

Rabban Gamliel (the son of Rebbe) took this idea even further by teaching that a life of Torah learning that is not complemented by work will "end up failing and leading to sin."<sup>9</sup> Work is not just independently valuable. It ensures that our Torah study facilitates a healthy, sustainable, and spiritual life.

## Chazal

### Importance

Chazal emphasized the importance of work in many places. The *midrash*<sup>10</sup> attributes this value to the very first Jew. After Hashem commanded Avraham to leave home without specifying his destination, he visited various countries. When he encountered lands whose people spent their days partying, he said, "I hope that I am not meant to live here." When he arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* and saw people working the land, he declared, "I hope that this is where Hashem intends for me to be." Hashem responded and said, "Indeed, this is the place." Avraham appreciated the importance and positive nature of productive physical labor.

Chazal go even further by asserting that planting takes precedence even over welcoming Mashiach. They taught that a person who hears that Mashiach has arrived while he is planting should finish planting and *only then* go to greet Mashiach.<sup>11</sup> Greeting Mashiach is not our priority; planting is.

Chazal saw work as more than just a value. They saw it as a condition for a serious, mature life. The *mishnah*<sup>12</sup> therefore disqualifies a person who earns his livelihood through gambling from testifying in court. One who does not take life seriously cannot be trusted.

The *gemara* explains that we disqualify such a person's testimony because gamblers are not "*oseik b'yishuvo shel olam* — involved in developing the world." Hashem gifted us the world expecting us to develop it. The Rambam<sup>13</sup> sharpens this idea by describing the gambler as violating the *prohibition* (!) against being involved in meaningless pursuits. He explains that Hashem put us in this world to focus on two things: developing ourselves and developing the world.

Rebbe Akiva learned from the *mitzvah* of *brit milah* and the fact that humans are born with an umbilical cord we need to cut, that we are supposed to work to finish what Hashem created.<sup>14</sup> Hashem began a process of creation He intends us to continue.

The Kotzker Rebbe saw this idea in the Torah's first word — "*Bereishit*". He explained that Hashem created the *reishit* (beginning); the rest He left to us to complete.<sup>15</sup>

### Emulation

Work is not just how we continue Hashem's creation, it is also how we emulate Him. The *midrash*<sup>16</sup> encourages us to follow Hashem's ways by emulating His first actions after He created the land — planting and developing. Rav Kook's appreciation of this idea caused him to tremble while planting a tree at a ceremony celebrating the establishment of *Magdiel*. The organizers gave Rav Kook a hoe to use to dig a hole, but he threw it aside and began digging with his bare hands instead. Suddenly, his entire body seemed to quiver and shake, and his face looked like a burning flame as he placed the sapling in the ground with awe and trepidation.

"What is all this excitement about?" he was asked. "Thank G-d, people plant hundreds of trees every day in *Eretz Yisrael*." Rav Kook replied, "When I held that tender sapling in my hand, I remembered the imperative to emulate G-d and walk in His ways. When I was about to put the sapling in the ground, I remembered these words and felt as if I was clinging to the *Shechinah*. Thus, I was overcome by emotion, fear, and trembling."<sup>17</sup>

### Loving Work

Work is also part of how we realize our true selves. We see this from Shemaya's emphasis on *loving* work. We should not only do work; we should love it.<sup>18</sup>

The *gemara*<sup>19</sup> tells us that Hashem ingrains within each of us a love for the type of work we are supposed to be involved in.<sup>20</sup> Because work is part of the mission Hashem intends for us in this world, He instills this love to guide us to our intended job and inspire us to commit ourselves to it.<sup>21</sup> When we work, we realize part of our divine destiny.

Understandably, Rebbe Tarfon taught that people only die once they find themselves without something constructive to do.<sup>22</sup> *Sefer Iyov* summarized this idea in three

*Continued on page 11*

ALLUSIONS AND ILLUMINATION: INSIGHTS OF THE BA'AL HATURIM

# Lech-Lecha: Sarai and Zion

## From Desolation of Hamas to Destiny of a Nation



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Educational Director, Mizrahi Lapidot and Matan Eshkolot Programs for Educators

Rosh Beit Midrash of Mizrahi-Tzemach David Women's Learning Hub, Mizrahi Lapidot, and Yeshiva University in Israel Women's Torah Studies Program

**A**mong the many treasures embedded in the terse yet profound commentary of the Ba'al HaTurim, his sensitivity to the rare recurrence of a word or phrase across *Tanach* illuminates deep intertextual threads that unite distant biblical scenes and eras. In *Parashat Lech Lecha*, the Ba'al HaTurim notices one such striking connection between **Sarai** and **Zion**, drawn from two *pesukim* that share an exceedingly rare expression: חַמְסִי עָלַיךְ - "My violence [done to me] be upon you."

In *Bereishit* 16:5, Sarai turns to Avram with this anguished cry after Hagar conceives:

”וַתֹּאמֶר שְׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם חַמְסִי עָלַיךְ, אֲנֹכִי נִתְּתִי שְׁפָחָתִי בְּחֵיקְךָ וַתֵּרָא כִי-הָרְתָה וְאֶקַּל בְּעֵינַיִךָ יִשְׁפֹּט ה' בֵּינִי וּבֵינִיךָ”

Centuries later, in *Yirmiyahu* 51:35, the prophet places the same rare word on the lips of the exiled Daughter of Zion:

”חַמְסִי וְשֹׂאֲרֵי עַל-בָּבֶל תֹּאמַר יִשְׁבֹּת צִיּוֹן וְדַמִּי אֶל-יִשְׁבֵּי כַשְׂדִּים תֹּאמַר יְרוּשָׁלַם.”

“Let the violence done to me and to my kin be upon Babylon,” says the inhabitant of Zion; “and my blood upon the Chaldeans,” says Jerusalem.

The **Ba'al HaTurim** observes that these *pesukim* are linked through their shared phrasing, thereby equating *Sarai with Zion*:

”מְקִישׁ שְׂרָה לְצִיּוֹן—נֹאמַר בְּשֵׁרָה כִּי שְׂרָה עִקְרָה וְצִיּוֹן עִקְרָה; וְמָה שְׂרָה הִכְנִיסָה צָרָה, אִף יִשְׂרָאֵל הִעֲכֹרָה”

“Sarai is compared to Zion: it is said of Sarai that she was barren, and of Zion that she was barren. And just as Sarai brought her rival into her home, so too Israel – foreign nations have become her oppressors.”

This delicate yet daring analogy invites profound reflection.

### The Barren Woman and the Desolate City

At first glance, the connection between *Sarai* and *Zion* lies in their shared barrenness – the unfulfilled potential of life and continuity. Sarai, unable to conceive, introduces Hagar into her home, attempting to generate the Divinely promised future through human intervention. Similarly, Yerushalayim – barren and exiled – finds herself surrounded by foreign nations, the very “rivals” she once hosted or allied with, now turned oppressors. Both women – one literal, one metaphoric – suffer the anguish of displacement: Sarai feels supplanted by the Egyptian handmaid she welcomed; Zion, by the Babylonian conquerors she once courted.

Yet, the Ba'al HaTurim's allusion goes beyond the external parallels of barrenness and rivalry. The shared cry of חַמְסִי עָלַיךְ – “my wrong, my violence, is upon you” – expresses a moral and emotional protest that transcends time. Both Sarai and Zion lament the inversion of justice: the victims of betrayal and humiliation call upon Hashem to restore balance.

### “חַמְסִי”: The Cry of the Violated

The word חַמְסִי in *Tanach* carries the connotation of unjust oppression, the kind of moral corruption that triggered the Flood (*Bereishit* 6:11, “וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חַמְסִי”). When Sarai utters חַמְסִי עָלַיךְ, she is not merely blaming Avram; she is voicing the pain of righteousness misunderstood, of loyalty unrewarded. Her suffering is not

just biological but covenantal – Avram has been promised a future that remains withheld from her, and in desperation, she turns to human stratagems that unravel into conflict.

Yirmiyahu's echo of this phrase reawakens Sarai's ancient cry in the voice of Zion: חַמְסִי וְשֹׂאֲרֵי עַל בָּבֶל. The Daughter of Zion laments the violence and estrangement inflicted upon her by the Babylonians, those she once hosted within the sphere of her diplomacy and influence. Like Sarai, she experiences betrayal from within her own historical narrative. And like Sarai, her cry is not just one of despair, but of covenantal protest – a call for divine justice and eventual vindication.

### The Allusion as Illumination

Through his keen observation, the Ba'al HaTurim reveals that Yirmiyahu intentionally recalls Sarai's voice to comfort and strengthen the exiled nation. By placing חַמְסִי עָלַיךְ in the mouth of “the inhabitant of Zion,” the prophet reminds *Am Yisrael* that barrenness is not final, and that divine covenant often unfolds through the paradox of delay and distress. Just as Sarai's suffering gave rise to the nation of Israel, so too Zion's exile will yield future covenantal renewal.

Both Sarai and Zion experience an inward struggle between faith and frustration, agency and dependence, human effort and divine timing. But in both, the ultimate resolution comes not through despair, but through faith refined by *chesed* (as we see exemplified in next week's *parsha*). The pain of חַמְסִי becomes the seed of *chesed* – the violence suffered ultimately becomes the crucible for compassion and covenant.

*Continued on page 12*

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**A small baking tray that is used for dairy and pareve pastries, always covered with aluminum foil or baking paper, was mistakenly used to heat schnitzel (dry), also on aluminum foil. The tray was aino ben yomo (hadn't been used for dairy within the past 24 hours). Can it be koshered? Or is that even necessary, since all uses were with a covering?**

It needs to be *kashered*. However, since 24 hours passed between the dairy and the meat use, its status is more lenient – it is considered *hetera bala* (absorption of permitted food). Therefore, it is sufficient to clean it and place it in the oven for forty minutes at the highest temperature, or at least above 200°C.

**I'm part of the Nachshon team in the Bnei Akiva branch, and a problem has come up. On Shabbatot, we visit elderly people, and sometimes we finish after Shabbat is over, so I miss Ma'ariv. What should I do – leave early so I can catch Ma'ariv with a minyan, or stay with the elderly and bring them joy?**

It's truly inspiring that you do this every Shabbat! While there could be reason to say that you have the status of *osek b'mitzvah* (engaged in a *mitzvah*), and therefore you would be exempt from *Ma'ariv* with a *minyan*, it is proper that the Nachshon youth should arrive early enough to the elderly person so that they don't miss *tefillah b'tzibbur*. It's very important to balance acts of kindness with other *mitzvot*. In exceptional cases, when it's truly unavoidable and you must stay later, then it's permissible to miss the *minyan*. (Even in such cases, perhaps not everyone needs to stay; you could rotate, so each person would only rarely miss communal prayer.)

**A pareve vegetable soup was cooked in a meat pot that was not ben yomo (hadn't been used for meat in the past 24 hours). The soup contained onions and garlic cut with a clean meat knife. A small piece of dairy pizza boureka accidentally fell into the soup. The soup was hot but not yad soledet bo (it could be eaten comfortably without waiting for it to cool). What is the status of the bowl, spoon, and soup?**

Since the soup was not *yad soledet bo*, the bowl and spoon remain *kosher*. As for the soup – since it's considered meaty (because of the onion) and dairy residue from the boureka was present, it would generally need to be discarded. However, if no visible pieces remain, there is room to be lenient and consider it *batel* (nullified).

**I recently moved into a new apartment in the Alon Shvut project and have a question about the laws of Zecher LaMikdash mentioned in Shulchan Aruch. Since the apartment was already fully painted when I received the keys, am I now required to scrape off an amah by amah (a cubit by cubit) section? The halacha speaks of "leaving unplastered," which seems too late now that it is fully built. Would it suffice – or perhaps be preferable – to put up an "Im Eshkachech" plaque instead?**

The *Shulchan Aruch* writes that one who buys a plastered courtyard "is not required to scrape the walls."<sup>1</sup> Why is that? The Mishnah Berurah and Magen Avraham explain that we assume it was done by a non-Jew, who isn't obligated in this *mitzvah*, and therefore the buyer need not scrape. If your painter was a non-Jew, you are exempt. If he was Jewish, you should scrape.

When we built our home, we told the contractor to leave an *amah* by *amah* unpainted, but the non-Jewish painter covered everything. From a strict *halachic* standpoint, there is room to be lenient. However, personally, I couldn't bear the thought of having no *Zecher LaMikdash* in my home. We live in a time of redemption, and remembering the destruction of the Temple is more important than ever. In the past, constant suffering kept the memory alive; today, thank G-d, we live in our own land with our own army – even though we've endured painful times in war – and it's especially meaningful to preserve this reminder.

Practically speaking, if the painter was non-Jewish, you may rely on the leniency. But if I were in your place, I would still scrape off an *amah* by *amah* as a lasting remembrance of the Temple. May you be blessed with success and peace in your new home.

1. שו"ע או"ח תקס"א

● Compiled and Translated by Yaakov Panitch.

# "מי העיר ממזרח צדק"

## הפטרת פרשת לך לך (ישעיהו מ', כז עד מ"א, טז)

**הרבנית שרון רימון**  
Tanach teacher and author



**בהפטרת פרשת לך לך** אנו עוסקים בגאולה מהיבט נוסף - גאולה עם ישראל כנובעת מבחירת ה' באברהם אבינו ובעם ישראל: "ואתה ישך אל עבדי יעקב אשר בחרתיך וזרע אברהם אהבי: אשר בחרתיך מקצות הארץ ומציליה קראתיך ואמר לך עבדי אתה בחרתיך ולא מאסתיה: אל תירא כי עמך אני אל תשתע כי אני אלהיך אמצתיך אף עזרתיך אף תמכתיה בימין צדקי" (ח-ז).

בדברי ישעיהו נבואה זו ניכר היחס האישי האוהב בין עם ישראל לקב"ה. אברהם מכונה "אוהבי", ועם ישראל מכונה "עבדי". ה' מזכיר שוב ושוב את הבחירה בהם, ואת העובדה שלא ימאס בהם, אלא יעזור להם: "בחרתיך ולא מאסתיה... עמך אני... אמצתיך אף עזרתיך אף תמכתיה...". גם כאן, ההחלטה האלקית היא נצחית, וה' לא ימאס בעם ישראל (גם אם הם יעשו הרבה טעויות).

הנביא חוזר ומתאר שוב ושוב את עזרת ה' לישראל במלחמותיהם מול אויביהם, אשר יושפלו ויתביישו, יהפכו לחסרי ערך ("כאין וכאפס" ו"כמוץ" (קש)), ויעלמו מן העולם: "הו' יבשו ויכלמו כל הנחירים בך יהיו כאין ויאבדו אנשי ריבה... יהיו כאין וכאפס אנשי מלחמתך... הנה שמתיך למורג חרוץ חדש בעל פיפיות תדוש הרים ותדק וגבעות פמץ תשים: תזרם ורוח תשאם וסערה תפיץ אותם".

בחירת ה' בעם ישראל תביא לעזרת ה' במלחמתם ולגאולתם, אך יחד עם זאת, מטרתה של הגאולה איננה רק הצלה אנושית ואישית של עם ישראל, אלא מטרתה היא עשיית צדק ושלוש: "מי העיר ממזרח צדק יקראוהו לרגלו... ירדפם ועבור שלום" (ב-ג).

**ישנה תכנית אלקית המכוונת את כל המהלך ההיסטורי של העולם, החל מבחירת אברהם ועד לגאולה האחרונה:** "מי פעל ועשה קרא הדרות מראש אני ה' ראשון ואת אחרנים אני הוא" (ד). בפרשת לך לך ה' "העיר ממזרח צדק", ובחר באברהם אבינו למען ייעוד משמעותי אשר ישפיע על כל העולם. מכאן משתלשלת בחירת עם ישראל, כמוביל של המהלך האלקי הגדול של גאולת העולם בצדק.

דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט" (בראשית י"ח). אברהם הצליח אף להכניע עמים גדולים במלחמתו בהם (בראשית י"ד). בהמשך הנבואה נזכרים אברהם וצאצאיו במפורש: "ואתה ישך אל עבדי יעקב אשר בחרתיך וזרע אברהם אהבי" (ח). פרשנות זו (המופיעה בדברי חז"ל, ובפרושי רש"י ורד"ק), הביאה לבחירת הפרק הזה כהפטרה לפרשת לך לך, המתארת את בחירתו של אברהם אבינו ואת הליכתו לקראת הייעוד הגדול של קריאה בשם ה', ועשיית צדקה ומשפט. המהפכה שחולל אברהם אבינו בעולם ממשיכה להדהד בעולם לכל אורך הדורות, והיא זו אשר נונתנת יעד וכיוון לגאולת העולם.

**האפשרות השניה היא שמדובר בכורש, מלך מדי, אשר כבש את כל עמי האזור מיד הבבלים והפרסים, ואיפשר לכל העמים הכבושים לחזור לעבוד את אלהיהם.** כך הוא איפשר גם לעם ישראל לשוב לארץ ישראל ולבנות את בית המקדש (הצהרת כורש מתוארת בתחילת ספר עזרא). כורש נזכר בנבואת ישעיהו כ"משיח", אשר איפשר את שיבת ציון (ראו בישעיהו מ"ד, כח; מ"ה, א). כך מפרש אבן עזרא: "...ולפי דעתי שהוא רמז על כורש, כי כל הפרשה היא דבקה... והפרשה כולה מפורש שם כורש".

**האפשרות השלישית היא שמדובר במלך המשיח, שיקום בעתיד, באחרית הימים.** ישעיהו מתאר בכמה מקומות את מלך המשיח כעושה משפט וצדקה, וכאן מתואר שהוא יכבוש את העולם בשם הצדק, ויצליח בכיבושיו באופן חריג, כפי שמפרש המלבי"ם: "המלך המשיח שיבא מארץ המזרח... **שבעבור הצדק יכבוש ארצות**" וממשיך המלבי"ם ומסביר שבאופן טבעי הצדק מגביל את הכח ואת האפשרות לנצח, ואילו המלך המשיח יצליח בכיבושיו באופן חריג דווקא בכח הצדק.

בהפטרת פרשת נח קראנו על הבטחת הגאולה מתוקף העקרון של ברית "מי נח" - ההחלטה האלקית שה' רוצה בקיומו של העולם ובגאולתו בכל מקרה, ללא תלות במעשי בני האדם.

הפטרה פותחת בסימן שאלה על התחושות הקשות של עם ישראל: "למה תאמר יעקב ותדבר ישך אל נסתר דרכי מה' ומאלהי משפטי יעבור?!". (מ', כז). עם ישראל הנמצא בגלות מרגיש הסתר פנים וחוסר צדק, ובעקבות זאת הם חשים עייפות וחוסר אונים. הנביא מעודד את העם וטוען שהמצב יכול להשתנות, מכיוון שה' לעולם אינו "מתעייף": "בזרא קצות הארץ לא ייעף ולא יגע אין חקר לתבונתו" (כח). ה' יכול להפוך את המצב מרעה לטובה, מחוסר אונים לתחושת כח: "נתן לייעף כח ולאין אונים עצמה ירבה" (כט). הנביא מזכיר לעם שהשינוי המיוחל יכול לבא בכח התקווה והאמונה של העם בה': "וקו' ה' יחליפו כח יעלו אבר פנשירים ירוצו ולא ייגעו ילכו ולא ייעפו" (לא).

ההפטרה ממשיכה אל הפרק הבא (מ"א), העוסק בסדר עולמי חדש: "החרישו אלי אלים ולאמיים יחליפו כח יגשו אז ידברו יחדו למשפט נקובה". כאן העמים "מחליפים כח", מתחזקים, על מנת לבא לדיון מול הקב"ה. אולם, הדיון והמשפט של הגויים לא יוביל לנצחונם ולהצדקתם אלא להפך. לפי רד"ק, הדיון יהיה על פגיעתם בעם ישראל ועל חילול השם הנובע מכך: "אני והם נקריב למשפט על טענותי וטענותיהם כי הם מחסרים כחי ויכולתי ואומרים שאין בי כח להציל ישראל מידם...".

מלבי"ם טוען שהיכוח יהיה תיאולוגי: "מתוכח עמם להשיבם אל אמונת האחדות ודת האמת...".

**כיצד יתרחש השינוי הדרמטי הזה בעולם?** הפסוקים מתארים אדם מיוחד שיחולל את השינוי:

"מי העיר ממזרח צדק יקראוהו לרגלו יתן לפניו גוים ומלכים ירד יתן פעפר חרב פקש נדף קשתו" (ב). מיהו האדם שמתעורר, קם, ועושה בעולם מהפכת צדק, וכל העמים נכנעים לו?

המפרשים מעלים שלוש אפשרויות:

**האפשרות האחת היא שמדובר באברהם אבינו, שהגיע ממזרח (מאור כשדים), ודרכו היתה וישמרו**

# The Light That Endures



**Sivan Rahav Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholar-in-Residence

The following text was never read aloud. Ditsa Or prepared it carefully and worked on it for a long time, but in the end—overcome by emotion, speeches, and embraces—she did not deliver these words.

Hostage Avinatan Or returned this week to the community of Shiloh, stopping at each station along the route where children and adults waited, overcome with excitement. For two years the Binyamin Regional Council has accompanied dozens of the fallen in silence and tears; standing on the same roadside and seeing someone come back from the abyss felt deeply healing.

Below is part of what Ditsa intended to say at the event:

“My brothers and sisters, ‘For this boy have I prayed,’” Ditsa began. “Just as thousands of years ago Chana prayed here in Shiloh for her son, Shmuel Hanavi, we prayed for this boy together. Our prayers were answered.

“For two years we wondered why we never received a video of Avinush,” she continued. “This week he told us the reason: every time they came to film him, he refused to cooperate, speaking in a low, monotone voice. He refused to be used to broadcast Hamas propaganda and prematurely end the war. We also heard about his desperate escape attempt from captivity—an operation that nearly succeeded. His head was already outside the tunnel, but at the last moment they grabbed his legs.”

These are only a few of the details now coming to light. Each of the twenty living hostages carries an astonishing, unique story of bravery.

“Avinush,” Ditsa continued, “the more isolated you were, the more we embraced you from here. That overflowing goodness reached you and strengthened you.”

It was reported that Avinatan lost three centimeters in height during captivity—his body had simply shrunk and weakened. He needs to regain strength now. By contrast, a neighbor of Ditsa’s told me she feels that Ditsa has added stature, straightening the posture of everyone who accompanied her through this period.

This is not only Ditsa’s story. Our tradition teaches that the Jewish people will be redeemed through righteous women. This week I watched released captive Yelena Trufanov (mother of released captive Sasha Trufanov), address about a thousand women at the community hall in Rehovot, and I heard Varda Ben Baruch, grandmother of released captive Idan Alexander, address some five hundred women at Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem. Without coordination, both women returned to the same sacred, strengthening message: an intense frequency of unity and Jewish identity that only they seem to know and feel compelled to share. Observing from the side, I wondered what you would call this gathering: not a conventional lecture, not a performance—perhaps a ritual after which people leave a little taller. At the end, long lines formed as women waited simply to embrace them.

Near the end of her speech, Ditsa wrote: “We feel sharp pain and a special hardship today because of the families whose loved ones’s killers are now being released home under the deal. We will pursue them until we destroy them.

“And from here on, *od yoter tov*—better and better, until complete redemption.”

■ ■ ■  
Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook wrote a short guiding sentence for each month of the year. This is what he wrote about the new month of *Cheshvan* that began last week:

**“When the soul shines, even skies shrouded in fog radiate a pleasant light.”**

Rav Kook offered this teaching specifically for *Cheshvan* — the onset of winter, the month that follows the spiritual heights of *Tishrei* and suddenly contains no holidays at all. It is a time when darkness settles earlier, the skies grow heavy and gray, and a long routine can bring with it a sense of dullness or gloom. Yet Rav Kook reminds us that if the soul is shining within, its light can transform even the thickest fog. With the power of the soul, even clouded skies can glow.

This insight also captures the reality of the past two years. We have witnessed how, even in a time of deep and overwhelming darkness, the soul of the Jewish people has continued to shine — and that light has shaped the world around us. In these very days, we are hearing the astonishing stories of some of the hostages. After two horrific years in the tunnels of Hamas, they returned with souls that still shone — radiating faith and hope in the face of terror and confusion.

And what is true of our nation is also true on a personal level. Each of us carries inner light. We do not need to rely solely on external circumstances to determine how we feel. When we choose to see the world through the light of the soul, the world reflects that light back to us.



The book *Hayom Yom* teaches that every person should “live with the weekly Torah portion”—not only read it on Shabbat, but carry it with us throughout the week, allowing its messages and insights to influence our daily lives.

Two weeks ago, we began the book of *Bereishit*. It opened with joy—the creation of the world—but ended in sorrow: the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, the expulsion from Eden, and the murder of Hevel by his twin brother Kayin.

The second portion, Noach, began somberly—with a corrupt humanity and the

*Continued on next page*

# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
CEO, World Mizrahi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**T**his is My covenant that you shall keep between Me and you and your offspring after you: circumcise for yourselves every male.” (*Bereishit* 17:10).

The Midrash relates an interesting dispute between Rabbi Akiva and the Roman Governor Turnus Rufus, who questioned the act of circumcision:

“Turnus Rufus said to him (Rabbi Akiva), ‘Since He (Hashem) wants circumcision, why doesn’t he (the child) leave his mother’s womb circumcised?’ Rabbi Akiva said to him, ‘And why does his umbilical cord come out with him? Should his mother not cut his umbilical cord? And why is he not born circumcised? It is because The Holy One Blessed Be He only gave Israel

the commandments in order to refine them (Israel) with them (the commandments).’” (*Midrash Tanchuma*, Tazria 7)

At first glance, Turnus Rufus asked a fair question. If Hashem is the Creator and Master of all, how dare we alter what He created? If He really sees the body as incomplete until circumcision, why does He not create us in a circumcised, complete state? Rabbi Akiva challenged Turnus Rufus’ basic assumption that all natural, divinely created states must inherently be complete. The commandment of circumcision, like all commandments, exists for us to refine ourselves, for nobody is born perfect.

Similarly, in explanation of this commandment, the *Sefer HaChinuch* writes:

“And He (Hashem) wanted the completion to be by man, and He did not create him complete from the womb, in order to hint to him that just as it is up to him to complete the state of his body, so it is up to him to complete the state of his soul in correcting his actions” (*Sefer HaChinuch*, *Mitzva* 2).

According to the *Sefer HaChinuch*, circumcision provides us with a physical reminder that just as we are meant to perfect ourselves physically, we are meant to strive to perfect ourselves spiritually.

Not everything is necessarily perfect in its natural state. It is up to us to follow the Torah and its values, and to uplift ourselves and the world around us.

Shabbat Shalom!

*Continued from previous page*

devastation of the Flood—but concluded with joy: the birth of Avraham Avinu.

This week’s *parashah*, *Lech Lecha*, is known as “the truly joyful week,” for we spend these days in the company of Avraham and Sarah—figures we still call “our father” and “our mother.” Through their

actions, their character, and their unwavering faith, they became Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu, the first father and first mother of our nation.

This week’s portion teaches us about their kindness and their faith; about their remarkable tent, open wide in hospitality;

about their mission to spread belief in G-d; and about their courage to stand against the majority and ultimately influence the world.

All of these qualities, they bequeathed to us. We are their continuation.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**  
Mizrachi Melbourne

I am one of three, but the only one whose nationality is given. Who am I?

See page 24 for the answer to the Parsha Riddle

# Our Children Walk on Ahead



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

**T**he call to Abraham, with which Lech Lecha begins, seems to come from nowhere:

“Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father’s house, and go to a land which I will show you.”

Nothing has prepared us for this radical departure. We have not had a description of Abraham as we had in the case of Noah (“Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with G-d”). Nor have we been given a series of glimpses into his childhood, as in the case of Moses. It is as if Abraham’s call is a sudden break with all that went before. There seems to be no prelude, no context, no background.

Added to this is a curious verse in the last speech delivered by Moses’ successor Joshua:

And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the G-d of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the river (Euphrates), Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nachor; and they served other gods.

Joshua 24:2

The implication seems to be that Abraham’s father was an idolater. Hence the famous *midrashic* tradition that as a child, Abraham broke his father’s idols. When Terah asked him who had done the damage, he replied, “The largest of the idols took a stick and broke the rest.”

“Why are you deceiving me?” Terah asked, “Do idols have understanding?”

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

Bereishit Rabbah 38:8

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

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

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

Laws of Idolatry 1:2

What is common to Maimonides and the *Midrash* is discontinuity. Abraham represents a radical break with all that went before.

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

These are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot . . . Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Gen 11:31

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

How are we to reconcile these two passages? The simplest way, taken by most commentators, is that they are not in chronological sequence. The call to Abraham (in Gen. 12) happened first. Abraham heard the Divine summons, and communicated it to his father. The family set out together, but Terah stopped halfway, in Haran. The passage recording Terah’s death is placed before Abraham’s call, though it happened later, to guard Abraham from the accusation that he failed to honour his father by leaving him in his old age (Rashi, *Midrash*).

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

Significantly, both the Bible and rabbinic tradition understood divine parenthood in this way. They contrasted the description of Noah (“Noah walked with G-d”) and that of Abraham (“The G-d before

whom I have walked,” Gen. 24:40). G-d Himself says to Abraham “Walk ahead of Me and be perfect” (Gen. 17:1). G-d signals the way, then challenges His children to walk on ahead.

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

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

“The Creator of the world diminished the image and stature of creation in order to leave something for man, the

work of His hands, to do, in order to adorn man with the crown of creator and maker.”

*Halachic Man*, p. 107

This idea finds expression in *halachah*, Jewish law. Despite the emphasis in the Torah on honouring and revering parents, Maimonides rules:

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

*Hilchot Mamrim* 6:8

The story of Abraham can be read in two ways, depending on how we reconcile the end of chapter 11 with the beginning of chapter 12. One reading emphasises discontinuity. Abraham broke with all that went before. The others continuity. Terah, his father, had already begun to wrestle with idolatry. He had set out on the long walk to the land which would eventually become holy, but stopped

halfway. Abraham completed the journey his father began.

Perhaps childhood itself has the same ambiguity. There are times, especially in adolescence, when we tell ourselves that we are breaking with our parents, charting a path that is completely new. Only in retrospect, many years later, do we realise how much we owe our parents – how, even at those moments when we felt most strongly that we were setting out on a journey uniquely our own, we were, in fact, living out the ideals and aspirations that we learned from them. And it began with G-d Himself, who left – and continues to leave – space for us, His children, to walk on ahead.

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- What does it take to leave something familiar behind for something unknown?
- What is the difference between courage and rebellion?
- They didn’t always agree with each other, but what lessons do you think Abraham learned from Terah?

*Continued from page 4*

words: “*Adam lamal yulad* — Man was born to work.”<sup>23</sup> When we work, we realize our mission in life; when we are idle, we do not justify our existence.

#### A Necessary Evil?

We all need to work hard to support ourselves. It is important to internalize Shemayah’s message that this work is not a “necessary evil,” but, rather, one of Hashem’s basic expectations from us. Realizing this can help us approach our work in a way that allows us to enjoy and even love it.

May internalizing Shemayah’s words help us develop ourselves as complete *ovdei Hashem* who serve Him in all of our endeavors!

1. Avot 1:10.

2. Rav Yosef Ben Machir (in his sefer Seder Hayom) proves that we are meant to work from the fact that Hashem created us with arms and legs.

3. Bereishit 2:15. See, for example, Ibn Ezra, Rabbeinu Bechayei, Bechor Shor, and Chizkinu. Note that the Torah already mentioned Adam being placed in Gan Eden in Pasuk Chet. It repeats his placement there to emphasize man’s responsibility to work and protect.

4. Bereishit 2:6.

5. Shemot 20:9.

6. See Mechilta D’Rashbi 20:9.

7. Avot D’Rebbi Natan 11:1.

8. Masechet Berachot 35b.

9. Avot 2:2.

10. Bereishit Rabbah 39:8.

11. Avot D’Rebbe Natan 2:31. Avot D’Rebbe Natan 11:1 quotes Rebbe Yehudah Ben Beteira, who directs those without work to actively search for it.

12. Talmud Bavli, Masechet Sanhedrin 24b.

13. Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Gezeilah V’aveidah 6:11. See also Talmud Bavli, Mesechet Ketuvot 59b.

14. Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria 5. One could understand Rebbe Akiva as referring to our spiritual development (see Sefer HaChinuch 2, who explains the lesson of brit milah this way). This having been said, Rebbe

Akiva’s contrast between cookies and wheat refers to our work creating food.

15. See also Bereishit Rabbah 11:6.

16. Vayikra Rabba 25:3. See also the Gemara in Masechet Shabbat (133b) which speaks of other ways to emulate Hashem.

17. An Angel Among Men, pg. 273–274.

18. See Derech Chayim, Masechet Avot 1:10.

19. Talmud Bavli, Masechet Berachot 43b.

20. Based upon this idea, the Chovot Halevavot (Sha’ar Daled [Sha’ar HaBitachon] Perek 3) says that we can figure out the line of work Hashem intends for us by seeing what we enjoy. The fact that Hashem programs us to enjoy our work and feel fulfilled through it is another indication of the value Hashem wants us to attribute to it.

21. This also explains why people become bored and restless when they have nothing to work on. See Ketuvot 59b.

22. Avot D’Rebbi Natan 11:1.

23. Iyov 5:7.



# The Mystery of Aram



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**

Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**T**he Mystery of Aram. What do I mean by that?

As you know, Aramaic is the language of our *Shas Bavli*. It's the language we use in a *Kesubah* and in a *Get*. Somehow, Aram always seems close to *Klal Yisrael* – and yet, it's hard to understand its exact place.

In Lech Lecha, Avraham is told to leave Aram and go to *Eretz Yisrael*. Okay, we understand that. Why did he leave Aram? Because that's where he was at the time. Hashem says: Leave Aram and go to *Eretz Yisrael*. So, he leaves.

But when it comes to *shidduchim*, things shift. Avraham sends Eliezer back to Aram to find a wife for Yitzchak. Later, Yitzchak sends Yaakov back to Aram as well. There's this return – this strange connection.

It was known – even back then. In *Bereishis* 29:17, Rashi explains why Leah's eyes were soft:

“ועיני לאה רכות” – Leah's eyes were soft not because she thought she'd marry Eisav, but because everyone said:

“There are two sons to Rivka and two daughters to Lavan. The older will marry the older, the younger to the younger.”

And Leah cried and cried. She didn't want to marry Eisav. She knew what Aram meant.

So again: we send our Avos back to Aram for *shidduchim* – but we're told not to live there. In *Bereishis* 24:8, Eliezer is told:

“אם לא תאבה האשה ללכת אחריו ונקית משבועתי” – If she won't come with you, you're free from the oath.

In other words, go to Aram for a *shidduch* – but don't settle there. Come back.

So maybe it's just about family – going back to the place where their family was – but still, Aram keeps showing up in a strange way.

In *Gemara Shabbos* 12b (15 lines from the top), we find:

“לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו בלשון ארמי” – A person should not daven in Aramaic.

There's something wrong with Aramaic. It's *not perfect*. On the other hand, in *Sanhedrin* 38b (third wide line), the *Gemara* says something surprising – not very well-known:

“אדם הראשון בלשון ארמי ספר” – that Adam HaRishon spoke Aramaic!

We usually assume Adam spoke *Lashon HaKodesh*. And indeed, there is such a *shittah*. But there's also a man *d'amar* that he spoke Aramaic. So what is Aram? There's this mixture – it's both special and not special. It needs a *bi'ur*.

Interestingly, the first people to attack *Klal Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*, after the death of Yehoshua, were from Aram. Aram has a complex, mixed legacy with us. Again – it needs explanation.

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* says not to daven in Aramaic. Some understand this to mean not to pray in any foreign language. But there are *Rishonim* – I believe the *Rosh* – who say that Aramaic is actually the closest to *Lashon HaKodesh*. It's a *Lashon HaKodesh Mekulkal* – a corrupted form of the holy tongue.

You want to *daven* in English? In another language? That's fine – no issue. But Aramaic? The *Malachei HaShareis* don't like it. Why? Because it's *too close*. It looks like the real thing, but it's not. It's a broken version of what should be pure. It's the cousin that lost its way.

So yes, *Shas* is written in Aramaic. *Kesubos* and *Gittin* are written in Aramaic. Rav Yaakov said that during *Bayis Sheini*, Chazal deliberately chose Aramaic to signal: This is not the *Geulah Ha'asidah*. This isn't it.

Because if you're going to settle for something, let it be the closest thing to the ideal – but never confuse it with the ideal. Don't get caught up. It's close, but it's

still not it. It's *fake*. It's not *real*. It's a *Lashon Mekulkal* – and that distance matters.

So what's the message?

Don't fool yourself. If you want to do the right thing, then do the right thing. Sometimes you have to go with second-best. That's life. But don't do *b'dieved* and pretend it's *lechatchila*.

You want to rely on the second *zman* for *Krias Shema*, or certain leniencies in *halacha*? Okay. If you need to – fine. But don't fool yourself into thinking that's the ideal.

A *Lashon Kodesh Garu'a* – a corrupted holy tongue – is worse in the eyes of the *Malachei HaShareis* than something completely different. Aramaic pretends to be something it's not.

That's the story of Aram.

You need a *shidduch*? You won't find a Jew anywhere else? Fine. Go to Aram. Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were the only Jews in the world. So they went elsewhere – to Aram – the next best option.

But don't live there.

“אל תשב שם” – Don't settle. Don't get comfortable.

When you have the option, come to *Eretz Yisrael*. That's the place of destiny.

With that, I want to wish everyone an absolutely wonderful, delightful, and beautiful *Shabbos Kodesh*. May we hear *besuros tovos* from *Eretz Yisrael* – soon, and quickly. Before the *Yeshuah* comes, *chap arain* – seize your part. With proper davening, *Tehillim*, and real *his'chazkus* – in the *zechus* of *Acheinu Bnei Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*.

*Bifrat* – especially – *ha'omdim al mishmar artzeinu* – those standing guard, our soldiers, in the north and south – *b'chol makom she'heim*. May they have *shemira*, and may we all be *zocheh* to a better, brighter, and peaceful week ahead.

# Courage and Conviction



**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**  
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

**T**he *Midrash* has a discussion about the clashes that took place between Abraham and his father, Terach. Terach believed in the idolatry of his times, and Abraham did not. In fact, according to the *Midrash*, Terach actually had an idols shop and once, when Avraham was left in charge of the shop, he smashed all the idols except one. Terach came in and saw what he had done and asked Abraham, what happened? Abraham placed a stick in the hands of the one remaining idol and told his father that this idol had smashed the others. This was part of his lesson to his father of the ridiculous nature of belief in idols and paganism.

Abraham's courage of his convictions caused Nimrod to begin to pursue him and want to have him and his brother Haran arrested and punished. Terach had three sons – Nachor, Abraham and Haran. Abraham and his brother, Haran, were fugitives from Nimrod. They stuck together and were eventually arrested. According to the *Midrash*, it was their own father, Terach, who turned them in. Terach was so embarrassed and, probably, given the tyranny of the society, so afraid about the consequences for his own survival that he turned in his sons.

According to the *Midrash*, what then happened is very instructive. In the style of a good tyrant, Nimrod set up a fiery furnace for execution. Abraham was brought to the edge of the furnace and was given the choice: are you prepared to renounce your beliefs in G-d and your value system? And if you are not, then you have to be put into the furnace. Abraham was in the front of the queue and Haran was behind him, thinking how he was going to answer this question. According to the *Midrash*, Haran decided that if Abraham said: "I am for G-d" and was then thrown into

the fiery furnace and survived through the miraculous intervention of G-d, then he would also say that he was for G-d. But if Abraham died in the furnace, he would say that he was with Nimrod. Abraham said his allegiance was with G-d and he was put in the fiery furnace, but survived. Haran then said that he was with G-d, and he was put into the fiery furnace and died. The message of this is that while Abraham had the courage of his convictions, Haran was hedging his bets.

Often in life we are hedging our bets. We are not prepared to say: "I know what's right and I know what has to be done." But it requires courage and determination to change and to turn our lives around in certain respects. So we do a little bit of this and a little bit of that without really proceeding with direction, strength or focus. And what happens in the end is that one is caught in-between and one hasn't really committed to one thing or another and that was really the fate of Haran.

Although Terach was a man who believed in idolatry and succumbed to the pressures of tyranny and was a wicked man, he also had conviction. There was Abraham versus Terach – good versus evil. But at least both had conviction in what they believed. Haran didn't have conviction. Haran had a son, Lot. He was Abraham's nephew who journeyed with him. What Lot inherited from his father was the same kind of vacillation and lack of conviction. This very important journey of Abraham is introduced with two words – *lech lecha* – go for yourself. Abraham was commanded by G-d to leave his environment and journey towards the land of Israel in order to continue with his mission and journey of establishing ethical monotheism in the world, and Judaism. Lot and Abraham were obviously very close. But there was a clash between the shepherds of Abraham

and the shepherds of Lot, so they decided to part ways. Lot chose to move to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Five Books describe as a very fertile and prosperous region, in spite of the fact that it was a place filled with evil. Lot had the choice between staying with Abraham and living close to his goodness, or moving to a more spacious, prosperous and easy life, lacking Abraham's moral presence. He chose the easier life, hedging his bets like his father had done.

When the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Lot was saved because he did manage to hold onto his principles, but they were very watered down and, in a sense, he inherited the vacillation of his father, that inability to fully commit and to have the courage of his convictions. This was different from Abraham, who had great courage of his convictions. Abraham is typified by these two words – *lech lecha* – walk, go. That sense of walking, going and moving is about conviction. People often talk about a person who walks with a sense of purpose; that he is going somewhere. Rabbi Hirsch interprets it as go to yourself. Meaning: isolate yourself if necessary, go on your own path, and walk on that path that you have to go on, even if you have to be alone in the world to do the right thing – that is the path on which you have to stay focused. And that is why Abraham was called "the Hebrew." The word "Hebrew" comes from the word *ivri*, which means "the other side" – coming from across the river. Abraham was always the one who came from across the river. Geographically it means that he came from across the Euphrates River, but what it means conceptually is that he stood on the other side. As our sages in the *Talmud* say: Abraham stood on one side of the bank of the river, and the rest of the world stood on the other – worlds

*Continued on next page*

# Recognizing Hashem



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**

Rosh Beit Midrash, Machon Lev International program

ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן (בראשית יב:ה)

And the souls they had acquired in Haran (Bereshit 12:5)

**T**he Rambam in *Hilchot Avoda Zara* (1:3) states that from when Avraham was a child he was curious as to how the world functions. His heart was restless until he grasped the truth. He had no teacher but deduced single handedly that there was a Creator of the world. The Rambam posits that at the age of forty, Avraham recognized G-d. Yet, when is the first time that G-d speaks with Avraham?

G-d first appears to Avraham and tells him: “*Lech Lecha*” – when Avraham is seventy-five years old! Incredible. One would have thought that once Avraham recognizes G-d (at the age of forty), Hashem would respond and speak with Avraham and tell him – great, someone finally recognizes Me as the Creator. You got it – now let us strike a covenant. But nothing! G-d waits thirty-five **years** to communicate with Avraham. Why the gap?

Imagine during those thirty-five years Avraham was challenging those around

him, trying to convince them that there was a G-d who is in charge of creating and managing the world. They likely asked him – really, how do you know? Did He speak with you? Have you had any communication with this G-d? How can you prove He exists? Avraham had to prove G-d’s existence without any help from G-d, but through nature. He could not point to a supernatural miracle. Yet, despite the obstacles, he built a loyal following who shared his religious visions. These were “*the souls they had acquired in Haran.*”

Knowledge entails a dynamic element – the truth cries out and one has a need to share it with others. Often one is inspired by a great *vort* and has to share it with others. Avraham was able to share and convince others of G-d’s existence, despite his lack of any personal communication with G-d.

As Rav Soloveitchik (*Masoret Harav*) explains, modern man has been alienated from G-d for so long. We do not hear from

G-d directly, yet, we have that unequivocal commitment and belief in G-d. Avraham set it into our DNA. Although we cannot see or hear G-d, we know He exists and we feel a close connection to Hashem. It is that unwavering *Emunah* that we transmit to our children and to others around us. We need to recognize G-d through nature as Avraham did. To realize that it is a miracle that the sun rises and sets in a daily pattern. That all the trees and flowers that bloom around us are not just the workings of mother nature – but that mother nature has a father!

Especially during the challenging times that we are experiencing, we need to recognize the hand of Hashem in the open and covert miracles that are transpiring around us. May we be able to strengthen our *emunah* and *bitachon* like Avraham Avinu and transmit it to future generations.

*Continued from previous page*

apart – because he had the courage of his convictions to do what was right and to go on his journey in order to pursue the good and the right. That took great courage because of all of the opposition he faced.

In essence that is what is contained in the words *lech lecha* – walk, move. The instruction from G-d is that we continually improve and become better and stronger people in every part of our lives. We should look for improvement in every

sphere of our lives and in the good deeds that we do, no matter what area of life it may be. We have to keep on walking, moving and changing and becoming better. That’s what it means to really live with focus and conviction.

# The Path of Shalom



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

In *Parshas Lech Licha* we begin to journey with the first of our *Avos* and *Imahos*. When Avraham is seventy-five years old, Hashem appears to him and commands him to leave his land, his birth place, and his father's home and journey to the land of Canaan (Bereishis 12:1). Heeding the call of G-d, Avraham takes his nephew Lot, his wife Sarah, and all their possessions, and they journey to the land of Canaan (12:1-5).

Upon arriving in Canaan, there is a famine in the land, so Avraham, Sarah and Lot journey south, to Egypt, in search of food and provisions, where Avraham says "she is my sister," and Sarah is taken to the palace of Pharaoh, due to her great beauty. The Egyptians shower Avraham with great wealth, but then Hashem afflicts the house of Pharaoh with great plagues, because of the taking of Sarah. When Pharaoh discovers Sarah is Avraham's wife, he returns her to Avraham and commands Avraham and his entourage to leave his land (12:10-20).

Upon ascending from Egypt back to Canaan, both Avraham and Lot are very wealthy with goods such as sheep and cattle, silver and gold (13:2, 5). The land cannot contain both men and their servants and possessions, and the shepherds of Avraham and the shepherds of Lot quarrel amongst themselves.

Immediately, the Torah tells us Avraham's reaction to the quarreling shepherds: *And Avram said to Lot: let there not be a quarrel between me and between you, and between my shepherds and between your shepherds, for we are brothers; behold, the entire land is before you, separate yourself from me, if you go left, I will go right, and if you go right, I will go left* (13:8-9).

The *machlokes*, quarrel and strife, is not even between Avraham and his nephew,

Lot. It is between the shepherds of Avraham and the shepherds of Lot! And yet, even this, for a person of Avraham's kindness, integrity, warmth and love for others, is unacceptable. And so, he proposes to his nephew that they part ways in friendship, to prevent any further contention between their shepherds.

Rabbi Shimon Finkelman writes, "An argument erupted between the shepherds of Avraham and the shepherds of Lot. Lot's shepherds allowed their animals to graze on private property without the permission of the owners. They offered an excuse for why they thought it was allowed. Avraham's shepherds maintained, correctly, that using property without permission is robbery (see Rashi to 13:7).

"Avraham did not want to live near Lot because of the chillul Hashem (desecration of G-d's Name, *keviyachol*) that Lot's shepherds were creating. He also wanted to put an end to the 'war of words' between their shepherds.

"Lot was Avraham's orphaned nephew whom Avraham took with him wherever he traveled. Lot became wealthy only because of his association with Avraham. Avraham had every right to tell Lot, 'Leave this area and don't ever come back here. You are ruining my good name, and I no longer want to have anything to do with you.'

"But Avraham did not do that. Instead, he told Lot, 'Choose the place where you wish to make a home for yourself. I will separate from you, but don't worry. If you ever need my help, I will be ready in an instant to offer a helping hand.' Avraham kept his word when, later in the *parashah* (see Ch.14), Lot was captured in a war. Avraham armed his students, and together they pursued Lot's captors and rescued Lot.

"Avraham told Lot, 'Let there be no quarreling between me and you.' Avraham understood that *machlokes* is terribly destructive and he did everything in his power to maintain *shalom*" (*The Parashah and the Power of Speech*, p.47-48).

These words seem so obvious and true to all, and yet, with their profound simplicity, they obligate us to live by their truth.

It is far easier to write, read and hear about *shalom*, than to put these ideals into practice in life. Due to various unfortunate or challenging situations, we may find ourselves poised on the precipice of *machlokes*. When faced with a choice between becoming embroiled in strife, or choosing the path of *shalom*, one must flee from *machlokes* as one flees from fire, and choose peace, for this is the path of life.

It may often require us to delve deeply into ourselves and harness the *middos* of *vatranus* (giving in), *anivus* (humility), *ahavah* (love), and kindness. But it is the path of *shalom* that will lead to *geula* (redemption). Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, *zt'l*, used to say: "בער הייתי וגם זקנתי ולא ראיתי מותר מפסיד". **I have been a young man, and I have aged, and I have never yet seen someone who gives in to another, lose out as a result.**"

The great *mashpia* in *Eretz Yisrael*, Reb Meilich Biederman, asks: "What is more dangerous - an 18-wheeler barreling down the highway, or *machlokes*?" His answer is powerful and profound. "*Machlokes* (is more dangerous), because a truck has brakes."

Let us emulate G-d, Whose Name is Shalom (*Shabbos* 10b), and ensure that we walk in the path of Avraham Avinu. Let us each say, one Jew to another: "Let there not be quarrel between me and between you, for we are brothers."

# Why was Avraham chosen?



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**  
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

**A**lmost “out of the blue,” at the beginning of *Parshat Lech L'cha*, G-d appears to Avraham, commands him to travel to the “promised land,” blesses him and promises him that he will become a great nation. However, the Torah never tells us WHY he was chosen!

Although one would expect the Torah itself to provide the answer to such a fundamental question, *Sefer Breishit* seems to skirt the issue entirely. In contrast to *Parshat Noach*, which informs us right at the outset of the reason for Noach's distinction – “for he was a righteous man...” (6:9) – *Parshat Lech L'cha* never reveals the reason why G-d singled out Avraham Avinu.

Did Avraham Avinu simply win a “Divine lottery?” In this week's *shiur*, we discuss the Torah's presentation of G-d's choice of Avraham Avinu, in an attempt to understand what this “*bechira*” [choosing] process is all about.

Our approach to the study of *Chumash* is predicated on the assumption that each book of the Bible carries a unique theme; and to identify that theme, one must study the progression of its primary topics.

The story of Creation was followed by the stories of man's sin in *Gan Eden*, followed by Cain killing Hevel, the corruption of the generation of the Flood, and building of the Tower. In each story, the Torah first described each sin, and then explained their respective punishments.

However, towards the end of chapter eleven, a different pattern begins to unfold, as we find the story of how Avraham Avinu was chosen to become the forefather of a great nation. In this sense, the focus of *Chumash* changes from “universalistic” to “particularistic.”

If our presumption regarding the flow of *parshiot* is correct, then it would be safe to assume that the last story of the first section – *Migdal Bavel* (11:1-9) – may contain the reason for G-d's decision to start a special nation!

At first glance, it's difficult to find a specific sin in the Torah's description of their actions: “Everyone on earth had the same language... and they said, ‘Come, let us build a city and a tower... and we will make a name for ourselves, lest we shall be scattered...’” (11:1-4)

Not only don't we find a transgression, one may even be tempted to admire this accomplished group of people: Is not achieving unity a positive goal? Doesn't the use of human ingenuity to develop bricks indicate the positive advancement of society? What could possibly be wrong with building a city or tower? Nevertheless, they are punished. G-d mixes up their languages (11:5-7). What did they do wrong?

*Chazal* focus their criticism on their antagonistic attitude toward G-d (see Rashi 11:1). The critical phrase: “*Na'ase lanu shem*” – we shall make a name for ourselves. Rather than devoting their endeavors to the glorification of G-d's name, this generation emphasized man's dominion and prowess. They instituted an anthropocentric society rather than a theocentric one.

Although more refined than the corrupt generation of the Flood, they united for the unholy purpose of venerating the name of man. G-d could not allow this project to continue. But in contrast to the corrupt generation of the Flood, the builders of the Tower did not deserve destruction, rather “re-direction.” G-d will now choose Avraham to redirect mankind – to channel those same qualities of unity and creativity toward a more altruistic end.

It is from this setting that G-d singles out Avraham and promises to produce from him a special nation: “And I will make you a great nation... and through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (12:1-3) Avraham is chosen for a purpose: to direct mankind back in the proper direction. Toward this goal, he is promised a special land – not as a reward, but as a means to fulfill that purpose.

To become this nation, Avraham's offspring must multiply (*zera*) and then establish their nation in a special land (*aretz*). These two prerequisites not only appear in G-d's opening statement to Avraham upon his arrival in *Eretz Canaan* (12:7), but are repeated each time G-d speaks to the *Avot* (13:14-15, 15:18, 17:8, etc.).

If we trace Avraham's first sojourn through *Eretz Canaan*, the town of Bet-El earns a unique place. After arriving in Canaan and building a *mizbayach* in Shechem, he continues to Bet-El: “...and he built a *mizbayach* there and called out *b'Shem Hashem*.” (12:8) Then again, after his return from Egypt: “...he went to the *mizbayach* in Bet-El... and called out *b'Shem Hashem*.” (13:1-4) This calling out in G-d's Name in Bet-El is a direct contrast to *Migdal Bavel's*: “*Na'ase lanu shem*” – let us make a name for ourselves. Now, Avraham calls out in G-d's Name – “*Va'yikra b'Shem Hashem*.” Ramban explains: “...and Avraham would call out... and make known G-d's existence to all mankind...”

This concept – that *Am Yisrael* is chosen to bring G-d's Name to mankind – emerges as a central theme throughout *Tanach*. In *Sefer Devarim*, *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to establish a religious center: “*Ba'makom asher yivchar Hashem l'shaken shmo sham*” — where G-d will cause His Name to dwell (*Devarim* 12:5). Later, Shlomo's prayer at the *Mikdash* reflects the same theme: “...thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your Name...” (*Melachim I* 8:43) The *Mikdash* becomes the symbol of a theocentric society – the ultimate goal of mankind.

We now return to our original question: Why was Avraham chosen?

Avraham was chosen **for a specific mission** – not as a reward, but as the one best suited to fulfill this eternal purpose. The Torah focuses not on his past accomplishments, but on the mission ahead. The same applies in every generation: G-d's choice of *Am Yisrael* is not about privilege – it's about responsibility.

# The Uniqueness of the Avot



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

Edmond J. Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

**P**arashat *Lech Lecha* begins as G-d commands Avram to leave his home and to go to *Erets Yisrael*. The Commentators ask why the Torah uses the dual-phrase "*Lech Lecha*," and not just "*lech*?"

The Ba'al HaTurim, in his commentary to the Torah, offers two answers.

First, he notes that the numerical equivalent (*gematria*) of *lech lecha* is one hundred. G-d hinted to Avram that he would not see the blessings he was promised until he reaches the age of one hundred. Second, G-d hinted to Avram that he would die in one hundred years, at the age of one hundred and seventy-five.



The rabbis teach us that leaving his birthplace and traveling to an unknown destination was one of the ten tests (*asara niseyonot*) with which G-d tested Avraham. However, we might ask why this is considered to be a test, as G-d promised him that he would receive children, money,

and fame. If so, this doesn't seem to be a very difficult test!?

Among the other tests, the *Midrash* relates that Avraham threw himself into a fiery furnace rather than worship Nimrod. On the one hand, this appears to be the greatest test, as Avraham was willing to sacrifice his life for G-d. However, it appears that leaving his home was greater than the other tests. The Jewish people, throughout history, have succeeded in momentary tests, similar to Avraham's test of faith. However, an open-ended test, day after day, is much harder.

G-d commands Avraham to move to *Erets Yisrael*, where there is a famine, and he must leave for Egypt, where his wife is taken captive. Avraham experiences one problem after another. This test spanned years; it is harder to "live" a sacrifice, than to "die" in sacrifice.

The *Mesilat Yesharim* explains that every day we are tested. These are the day-to-day tests that we confront, and they are difficult. Great people don't only pass

their momentary tests, but they excel day after day.



The Ramban explains that our forefathers were unique in that their actions created templates for the rest of Jewish history. This is known as "*maaseh avot siman lebanim*." For example, he explains that just as Avraham went in to the land of Israel and settled at Hai, years later Yehoshua's first stop when he brings the people into Israel is Hai. Similarly, the Ramban explains that just as Avraham went to Egypt because of a famine, and G-d punishes Pharaoh for taking Sarah, and then Avraham is released and sent away with gifts, years later, the sons of Yaakov go to Egypt due to a famine, and after being enslaved by Pharaoh, they are set free with great wealth. Avraham created the templates for Jewish history. For this reason, it is important to carefully study the lives of the avot, who created these templates for their descendants.

# Holy Brother



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

**T**he *psukim* (*Bereishis* 12:1-2) say, “And Hashem said to Avram, ‘Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you. And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing.’” Rashi explains that this is a reference to the first paragraph in *Shmonah Esrei* in which we thank Hashem for His relationship with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, our *Avos*:

“And I will make you a great nation,” refers to that which we say, “the G-d of Avraham.” “And I will bless you,” refers to that which we say, “the G-d of Yitzchak.” “And make your name great,” refers to that which we say, “the G-d of Yaakov.” You might think that [the first blessing in *Shmonah Esrei*] would conclude [by referencing] all [of the *Avos*]. The *pasuk* therefore says, “And you shall be a blessing,” meaning “We conclude [the blessing] with a reference to you.”

The question is why Hashem tells Avraham that every Jew throughout the generations will conclude the first blessing of *Shmonah Esrei* with a reference only to him, instead of to Yaakov Avinu, who was the final one of the three *Avos*. That fact alone might indicate that we should conclude with a reference to Yaakov. In addition, the *Midrash* (*Bereishis Raba* 76:1) calls Yaakov, “the choicest of the *Avos*” and says about him (*ibid.* at 68:12), “And his image is carved on the Throne of Glory.” Why does the blessing thanking Hashem for His relationship with the *Avos* conclude only with Avraham and not Yaakov?

The episode in which Avraham descends into Egypt with Sarah because of the famine in *Eretz Yisroel* is also very difficult understand. When Avraham realizes that the Egyptians will kill him if they

learn that he is Sarah’s husband, he says to her (*Bereishis* 12:13), “Please say that you are my sister so that it will go well for me on your account and my soul will live because of you.” How can we understand Avraham’s decision to endanger Sarah for his own financial gain and to save his own life?

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Avraham and Yitzchak both repeated this same strategy among the *Plishtim*. The Ramban even says that Avraham committed “a great sin, unintentionally,” by endangering Sarah. The *Ksav V’hakabal*, *Zohar*, and many others go to great lengths to defend and explain Avraham Avinu’s decision. But this simply underscores the difficulty in understanding how a *tzadik* like Avraham could tell Sarah to lie by saying that she is his sister.

We can, however, understand Avraham’s strategy in Egypt and his and Yitzchak’s strategy among the *Plishtim* in light of a teaching of the Biala Rebbe, *zy”a*, in his *sefer Divrei Bina*. The Rebbe’s comments are based on how Avraham explains his deception to Avimelech, king of the *Plishtim* (*Bereishis* 20:13): “And when G-d caused me to wander from my father’s house [when I went into exile], I said to her, ‘This is your kindness which you will do with me, wherever we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’” The Biala Rebbe explains as follows:

It is known that the experiences of the children [the Jewish people] mirror the experiences of the *Avos*. And with their experiences, they teach us how the Jewish people can survive among the nations in their exile. That is why [Avraham] said: “And when G-d caused me to wander from my father’s house,” meaning: when the Jewish people will go into exile. “This is your kindness,” meaning that we ask the holy Divine

Presence to perform acts of kindness for Hashem’s nation of Israel. But how will this kindness reach us? It is through: “wherever we go” in our exile, “say of me, he is my brother.” This means that we must treat one another in a way of brotherhood, friendship, and unity. And through this, we will merit kindness from Above for the Jewish people.

The Torah can be understood on the levels of its simple meaning, hint, homiletical meaning, and secrets of Torah. The Biala Rebbe’s teaching is a hint or homiletical teaching, and is not intended to be the simple meaning or comport with the strict rules of grammar. The Rebbe is teaching us that the key to our survival in exile and to drawing down blessings from above is that every Jew must say to one another, “You are my brother,” “You are my sister.”

Hashem told Avraham, “We conclude with you.” We need Avraham’s exile strategy now, at the “conclusion” of our exile, more than ever. With all of the social media and 24-hour connectivity, so many of us feel isolated. We long and thirst for a good, caring word from another person, to know that someone truly cares about us. We want to hear someone call us “Brother!” “Sister!” A person can give life to another with a kind word. Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, *zy”a*, teaches that the *pasuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 1:7), “Tell me, you whom my soul loves,” means, on a deeper level, that each Jew is secretly crying out to the other: “Tell me that you love me with all of your soul!”<sup>1</sup>

None of us are mind readers. We cannot rely on those we love to know that we love them in our hearts if we say nothing. We must tell them. A wife must hear from her husband that he loves her. There are men who are shocked when they hear that

*Continued on page 22*

# A Palace in Flames



Rabbi YY Jacobson  
TheYeshiva.net

**H**ow did the Jewish faith, the father of all monotheistic faiths, begin? The *Midrash* (in this week's Torah portion) describes the birth of Judaism with the following cryptic parable:

*G-d said to Abraham, "Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father's house." To what may this be compared? To a man who was traveling from place to place when he saw a palace in flames. He wondered, "Is it possible that the palace has no owner?" The owner of the palace looked out and said, "I am the owner of the palace."*

*So Abraham our father said, "Is it possible that the world lacks a ruler?" G-d looked out and said to him, "I am the ruler, the Sovereign of the universe."*

Abraham is the first Jew. His bewilderment is clear. This perceptive and sensitive human being gazes at a brilliantly structured universe, an extraordinary piece of art. He is stirred by the grandeur of sunset and by the miracle of childbirth. He is in awe of the respiratory system and of the bee dance when returning to the beehive from lunch. He marvels at the roaring ocean waves and at the silent, steady heartbeat of the human heart. Observing the ecosystem, and the structure of the brain, he grows ecstatic. The world is a palace.

But the palace is in flames. The world is full of violence, bloodshed, injustice, and strife. Liars, thugs, abusers, rapists, terrorists, and killers are continuously demolishing the palace and its royal inhabitants. Innocent people are hurt; dissidents are tortured. Human life, in many regions, has no value.

What happened to the owner of the palace? Abraham cries. Why does G-d allow man to destroy His majestic world? Why does He permit such a beautiful universe to go up in flames? Can G-d have made a world only to abandon it? Would anybody build a palace and then desert it?

Some resort to easy answers. Some suggest that the palace has no owner. The entire palace is a product of random mutations. Others deny the reality of evil. It is all a delusion. In the next world, all will be good.

But the first Jew rejected both of these perspectives. Abraham knows this world is a brilliant palace, and he is perturbed to his core by the evil he encounters.

So "The owner of the palace looked out and said, 'I am the owner of the palace.' G-d looked out and said to Abraham, 'I am the ruler, the Sovereign of the universe,'" the *Midrash* records G-d's reply. Britain's former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks presented this compelling interpretation of G-d's response:

Note that the owner of the palace does not make an attempt to get out of the burning building or to extinguish the flames; he is merely stating that he is the owner of the palace going up in smoke. Why did he not leave the mansion? It is as if, instead of racing out, the owner was calling for help. G-d made the palace, man set it on fire, and only man can put out the flames. Abraham asks G-d, "Where are you?" G-d replies, "I am here, where are you?" Man asks G-d, "Why did You abandon the world?" G-d asks man, "Why did you abandon Me?"

Thus begins the revolution of Judaism—humanity's courageous venture to extinguish the flames of oppression and violence and restore the world to the harmonious palace it was intended to be. Abraham's encounter with G-d in the presence of a burning palace gave birth to the mission statement of Judaism: *to be obsessed with good and horrified by evil.*

G-d created an imperfect world, one vulnerable to natural disasters, viruses, diseases, and, of course, man's destructive choices. This, too, is part of our mission: To do what we can to preserve life, protect the weak, and bring healing to the ill and protection to all. Never allow political

correctness, arrogance, or misplaced compassion to cause harm to the innocent.

For too long, many have succumbed to the lure of the popular notion that there is no such thing as absolute evil behavior. "Thou shall not judge," became our cherished motto. We have been taught, instead, to probe and understand the underlying frustrations compelling the aggressor to follow his extremist route.

This sophisticated and open-minded point of view allowed to us sustain our ethos of boundless tolerance, accepting all forms of behavior, since, at the core of every mean act lies a crying heart.

Few ideas have been rejected in the Torah with so much passion. Because Judaism placed as its highest ideal the creation of a good and ethical world, and the refusal to take a stand on what is wrong results in its victory. A non-judgmental view of someone who beheads a woman in France, for example, may appeal to our sophistication, yet in reality, it is a display of extreme cruelty to the innocent victims who will die at the hands of frustrated militants.

Judaism, in its obsessive attempt to turn the world into an exquisite palace, created absolute universal standards for good and evil defined by the Creator of the universe, articulated in His manual for human living, the Torah. Taking the life of an innocent person is evil. No ifs, buts, or why's. The killer may be badly hurting, but that never, ever justifies the evil of murdering an innocent human being.

Yet, tragically, we have become numb to our mission statement. For many years leaders across the world and in the Jewish State displayed tolerance toward terrorists, neglecting our most cherished doctrine that the preservation of human life reigns supreme over every other consideration. The results of our moral confusion were devastating: Thousands of innocent Jews and Arabs died, and terrorists the world over learned that they could

*Continued on page 23*

# Lech L'cha: A Lichtigeh Velt



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

**A**n anecdote: Professor Eli Weisel, zy'a, was once "speaking in learning" with one of his teachers, the brilliant Professor, Rabbi Saul Lieberman, discussing whom they considered to be the most tragic figure in the Torah. Weisel suggested it was *Adam HaRishon*, who was the "only man," the lonely man who experienced the pain of the first failure, tasted the bitterness of the first exile and shouldered the guilt of the Cheit for eternity. Lieberman disagreed: "I think it is G-d Himself, who looks toward the world that He created and says, 'I have given you such a beautiful world; what have you done with it? What are you doing with it?'"



And another: When Reb Shlomo Freifeld, *zt'l*, would hear of people getting caught up in pettiness he would often remark, "Aza a *lichtigeh velt*... It's such a glorious world! Why do they seek to make it small and narrow?"



וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אַנִּי ה' אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כַּשְׂדִּים

"And He said to him: 'I am Hashem who took you out of Ur Kasdim...'" (*Bereishis*, 15:7).

Rabbi Yitzchak said: This can be compared to a man who was traveling from place to place and saw a *birah dolekes* (a palace that was "lit up," or "burning"). He said: "Could it be that this palace has no owner?" The owner of the palace looked out at him and said: "I am the master of the palace." So too, since Avraham Avinu said: "Could it be that this world has no master?" Hashem looked out at him and said: "I am the Master of the world." (*Bereishis Rabbah*, 39:1)

The *midrash* is often understood as the moment Avraham "discovers" Hashem; he looks curiously at the world, reflects

deeply, and realizes that there must be a *Borei Olam*, a Creator and Sustainer behind it all. Furthermore, Avraham Avinu's encounter seems to be an insight about the state of the world and of our own state, as well. Most commentaries understand and translate *dolekes* as "ablaze." The *birah dolekes* is a "burning tower;" the world is on fire, in a desperate state of destruction and chaos. Avraham asked: "Still, how can such a world even exist without someone in charge?" The *Ribbono Shel Olam* looked out of a window (so to speak), smiled at Avraham and calmly answered: "I am the Master." This affirms that despite the dire suffering, violence and disorder of this world, it – and we – are not alone. The Divine Presence, the Source of Peace, is right here, unharmed, even amid fearful flames.

The phrase *birah dolekes* can also mean an illuminated palace. This is a metaphor for a beautiful, orderly, sacred world, lit up with candles, that clearly points to its Designer. In this version of the story, Avraham sees the world as filled with bright harmony and balance, and due to this, he realizes that there is obviously a Creator and Owner of such a magnificent construct.

These two interpretations are two paths, perspectives and possibilities. We can find G-d at the root of everything when we see our surroundings as burning with existential and philosophical crises, pettiness, narrowness and neglect. We can also find G-d when we see our surroundings as glowing with sacred, serene light, such as after the candles of Shabbos have been lit and a delightful peace envelops and suffuses our hearts and the world.

At the *birah dolekes*, Avraham Avinu encounters this dialectic, experiencing the deep paradoxes of this world. There is suffering and there is great beauty; there is awful cruelty and also awesome

kindness. He refused to look away from these incongruities. He demands an answer, and Hashem reveals Himself: "I am the Master of paradoxes!"

Avraham Avinu's courage is not only in discovering Hashem in a world aflame, but also in teaching us how to respond to the flames around us. "My children, if you see a world filled with brokenness, ablaze with painful, unanswerable questions – do not look away. You will find our Omnipresent Master, who has taken us out and redeemed us from Ur Kasdim."

Ur can be interpreted to mean "Fiery Furnace" (*Targum Yonasan*). It is in fact, according to the *Midrash*, the city where Nimrod threw Avraham into a fiery furnace, and where our forefather sat, unharmed, in a state of calm self-mastery and uncompromising *emunah* in the Divine Presence (Rashi, 11:28).

When our *emunah* grows to the point that we can see the spark of the *Ribbono shel Olam* within the flames of this world, we can, like Avraham Avinu, begin to empower the world itself to cry out: "There is a Master of this palace!" Our own "discovery" of the Owner of this world becomes a charge to appreciate, amplify and ennoble the beauty and light that surrounds us. We live life to the fullest, to experience the *lichtigkeit* in all that Hashem has created.

May our children inherit a *lichtigeh velt*, a sublime palace of harmony, beauty, peace and redemption, with the continuing unfolding of *geulah* and the undeniable revelation of Hashem's Presence. May we continue to experience the triumphant return of *Klal Yisrael* to *Eretz HaKodesh* – as Hashem promised to Avraham, "I am Hashem who took you out of Ur Kasdim... to give you this Land, to take possession of it," *Amen*.

# Derech Hashem

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

After Avraham hosts the delegation of angels, they rise to leave and gaze across the plains of Sodom. He escorts them on their way. The Torah then shares Hashem's description of Avraham Avinu's stellar feature, "*VeAvraham hayo yehiyeh le'goy gadol... ki yidativ lema'an asher yetzaveh et banav ve'et beito acharav veshamru derech Hashem la'asot tzedakah u'mishpat* – Avraham is about to become a great and mighty nation... because I know that he will command his children and his household after him and they will keep Hashem's way doing charity and justice." (*Bereisheet* 18:18-19) What do these verses teach us about Avraham Avinu and how does it apply to us in a practical way?

The Chafetz Chaim, *zt"l*, explains the uniqueness of Avraham Avinu's approach. He spread the word of Hashem to others and encouraged others to develop their relationship with Hashem. Shem, Ever, and other scholars at the time favored the personal service of Hashem for themselves and others. Avraham Avinu's innovation came from his understanding that the key to a dynamic relationship with Hashem is to share one's knowledge with others.

Rav Chasman, *zt"l*, notes that when one inspires others to do the Will of Hashem, it is as if he becomes Hashem's partner in the creation of the world. Rabbi Pinchas Friedman shares in *Shevilei Pinchas* that we find an allusion to this concept when Hashem created man, "*Na'aseh Adam* – Let us make man." The plural form indicates a directive to "make man," to teach and inspire people to follow in Hashem's ways. Indeed, the Torah tells us, "*hanefesh asher asu b'Charan* – the souls that [Avraham and Sarah] made in Charan" refers to those who were influenced by Avraham Avinu's and Sarah Imeinu's teachings.

The Meshech Chochmah maintains that these verses specifically are the Biblical source for *chinuch*, Torah education. Aside from educating our children to do specific *mitzvot*, a parent is obligated to teach his child the "*derech Hashem*," the way to think and act as a member of the Jewish people.

Rav Matityahu Salomon, *zt"l*, in *Hearts Full of Love*, learns from here that the *mitzvah* of *chinuch* falls under the broader category of the *mitzvah* of *Ahavat Hashem*, loving Hashem. If one truly loves Hashem, then he will guide his children to love Hashem as well, by telling them of His wonders

and inspiring them to love Hashem. Therefore, *chinuch* can't be exclusively about the dos and don'ts of the Torah, rather it is predicated on a loving relationship with Hashem.

A fundamental aspect of *chinuch* is found in the words "*derech Hashem*." The Novominsker Rebbe, *zt"l*, explains that this expression directs us to act with kindness, not because it is the socially correct expectation, but rather, it is about emulating and coming closer to Him. Indeed, when one does an act of *chesed*, one not only fulfills the *mitzvah* of loving one's fellow man, but one also fulfills the *mitzvah* of "*vehalachta bedrachav*," following in the ways of Hashem. This is one of the reasons that *Masechet Avot* begins with the *mishnah* describing the transmission of Torah from one leader to the next. *Avot*, which is filled with ethical dictums, must be understood within the context of Torah, of emulating Hashem, and not simply as social mores. Like Avraham Avinu, we must teach "*derech Hashem*" and not only "*derech eretz*," that which is considered acceptable and expected by society.

*Continued from page 19*

their wives have no idea whether they are loved or not. But their wives want to call out to them, "Tell me that you love me! I know in a general sense that you love me but at any given moment, I do not know whether those feelings are still there. Let me hear you say, 'I love you so much!'" A child must hear from his or her parents, "I love you more than anything!"

Unity is so powerful that the *pasuk* says about the generation of the dispersion (*Bereishis* 11:1), "the entire earth was one

language and uniform words." People understood one another. Hashem said about them (*ibid.* at 6), "And now it shall not be withheld from them everything that they plan to do." Most commentaries read this as a rhetorical question: "Shall I not withhold from [stop] them from doing everything that they plan to do!?" But it can also be read as a statement: Because they live together in a state of brotherhood and mutual understanding, I shall not withhold from them anything which

they plan to do. I will give them everything they require.

This teaching from Avraham Avinu is the key to thriving in the midst of this conclusion to our exile: the open expression of love, friendship, and brotherhood between Jews that draws down tremendous protection and blessing from Above.

1. This teaching is quoted in the *sefer*, *Tiferes Uziel*, in the section entitled "*Rimzei Shir Hashirim*."

# “For This Is What Is Done for the Weary of War”



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

On Saturday night, the 11th of Cheshvan, we mark the passing of the sister, the wife, and the mother – **Rachel**. She has stood for thousands of years at the crossroads, reminding us that she never made it home – not even on her wedding night – so that “my sister will not be shamed.”

**Shame** is the feeling of delay and failure in the face of someone else’s success. We can assume that Leah had felt shame for many years, as the elder sister who had not yet married. And if we weep over Rachel’s seven-year delay, all the more should we have wept for the elder sister’s long delay! But Leah’s shame becomes painfully present on the night of her younger sister’s wedding. Then Rachel decides that the shame is unbearable – and so she steps back and gives Leah the secret signs. “So that my sister will not be shamed.”

Many people have suffered greatly during these two years of war – but now comes something else: **shame**. Precisely now, when there are great celebrations, celebrations of miracles, celebrations of sons returning to their borders – we must also remember those who feel shamed.

Those who, for two long years, lived in a state of “Go forth from your work, from your wife, from your home,” and now return from war quietly. There will be no cheering crowds by the roadside for their return, no interviews asking how it was, no loyal teams waiting for them in the “Returning Soldiers” ward.

Among the shamed will also be those who were wounded, those who disappeared, those who lost loved ones – and the **children of Rachel**: those who were not brought to burial where they should have been laid to rest.

Joseph mourned his mother all his life, because she was not brought to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah. But her shame deepens when his father Jacob asks him: “Do not bury me in Egypt.” And our sages bring Jacob’s moving words to his son Joseph: “I know, my son, that you hold it against me – that I buried her by the roadside. But it was by Divine command, so that she would be a help to her children on their way.”

This, the sages learn from the words “And I, when I came from Paddan-Aram, Rachel died upon me...” They interpret: What is the meaning of ‘And I’? That I, too, wished to bring her to the Cave of Machpelah – but by Divine command I buried her there.”

We, as Rachel’s children, are now commanded to look upon the **weary of war**: “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel... they made war... and they took Lot... And Abram heard that his brother was captured... and he divided his forces by night... and he brought back all the goods, and also brought back the women and the people. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and he blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram of G-d Most High... and blessed be G-d Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

And Rashi writes: “Bread and wine – because this is what is done for the weary of war.”

Is that all? Is that what is done for the weary of war – for those who have come through all of this? The *Siftei Chachamim* explains: “It cannot be said that it was merely an act of honor, for he should have brought him into his home and refreshed him with meat and livestock! But since it says ‘he brought out,’ it implies because of the weariness of war. And this was the sin of the Moabites – ‘because they did not greet you with bread and water on your way out of Egypt.’” And the Ra’em adds: “Why was bread not enough? Because wine, too, is needed for the weary of war.”

Wow.

Now Rachel will demand of us – to go out and meet those who did everything so that we could live as a people in peace and security; to go out and meet those who brought back the sons; to go out and meet those whose sons did not return – to stand by the roadside with **bread and wine**: To remember the routine waiting for them – the daily bread – and also to soothe the pain – the wine.

Whoever did not see **Avishag Liebman** this week, standing beside **Efrat Mor** in Kiryat Arba-Hebron, has never seen our mother Rachel so proud. One rejoices fully in the other’s joy, and the other salutes her companion’s struggle – with bread and wine.

Only when I saw these two mothers did I understand why Abraham came precisely to this city to purchase the field of Machpelah; to this city Rachel yearned all her days and said: “May my portion be with the women of this city.”

A city of giants – A city of sisters.

*Continued from page 20*

continue their despicable work without serious consequences.

In recent years, the tide began to shift. We learned the hard way that, as Churchill put it, an appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.” Good people of the world are waiting to

be inspired by our four-millennium-long heritage of standing up to evil and banishing it from G-d’s palace.

Abraham would ask us to reflect on the most critical questions facing us: How do we create a world filled with kindness, goodness, and justice? How do

we construct a society based on moral responsibility to man and to G-d?

Abraham, I would imagine, would say one more thing: Do not get petty and do not allow arrogance and fear to rule you. Do what you must do to the best of your ability and trust the Creator to do the rest.

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

balashon.com

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

In *Parashat Lech Lecha*, two nearby verses use the same Hebrew root with very different meanings, forming a linguistic contrast that parallels the moral difference between two kings Abram encounters after his victory in battle.

וּבְרוּךְ קַל עָלֶיךָ אֱשֶׁר־מָגַרְתָּ אֶת־אֲבִירֶיךָ בְּיָדְךָ וַיִּתְּנֵם לְךָ מַעֲשֶׂר

“And blessed be G-d Most High, Who has delivered your foes into your hand. And [Abram] gave him a tenth of everything.” (*Bereshit* 14:20)

אִם־מְחוּט וְעַד שְׂרוּף־נֶעַל וְאִם־אָקַח מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הִעֲשִׂיתִי אֶת־אֲבִירֶיךָ

“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 Abram rich.” (*Bereshit* 14:23)

In the first verse, Abram gives *מעשר*, a tenth, to the priest Malki-Tzedek. In the second, he refuses wealth from the king of Sedom, using the verb *העשיתי*, “to make rich.” The two verbs share the consonants ע-ש-ר but differ in sound and meaning: one denotes ten or tithe, the other wealth or prosperity.

The noun *עָשָׂר* (ten) derives from the root עשר, whose original meaning, according to some linguists, was “gathering” or “collection.” Related Arabic terms preserve this older sense of forming a group or community. From that base, Hebrew developed the idea of “ten” as a complete set. Rav Hirsch (on *Bereshit* 14:20) follows this explanation and compares it to similar-sounding roots such as *עָצָר*, *עָצָר*, *עָצָר*, *עָצָר*, and *עָצָר*, each carrying a sense of joining or containing.

Other scholars propose a different origin. They connect *עָשָׂר* to *עָצָר*, “to stop,” suggesting that *עָשָׂר* refers to the limit of counting on two hands, a natural stopping point. In this reading, “ten” expresses closure or completion rather than collection.

Some older sources take another path, linking *עָשָׂר* to *עָשָׂר* (“riches”) and interpreting the base meaning as “to accumulate.” Yet the apparent similarity between those roots is misleading. The former is spelled with *ש* (*sin*), the latter with *שׁ* (*shin*), and the distinction is supported by Aramaic evidence: “ten” in Aramaic is *עֶסַר*, while “rich” is *עֵתִיר* – unrelated roots. This

suggests that the two Hebrew roots are distinct in origin, even if they look similar. That association, however, was not lost on the Sages, who used it for moral and rhetorical play.

In *Shir HaShirim Rabbah*, the adage says:

אִם זָכִיתָם תַּעֲשִׂינָהּ וְאִם לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ  
“If you merit, you make her rich; if not, you reduce her to one-tenth.”

Here the similarity in sound serves to express opposition: the same root can imply increase or decrease.

By contrast, *Shabbat* 119a and *Taanit* 9a use the same wordplay in the opposite direction:

עֶשֶׂר בְּשִׁבְלֵי שְׂחַתְעֵשֶׂר  
“Give tithes so that you may become rich.”

Here, the two meanings are aligned rather than opposed. The act of giving *מעשר* becomes the source of *עָשָׂר*.

Both rabbinic uses turn on the same shared form: two similar roots with different origins. In *Lech Lecha*, the pairing *מעשר* and *העשיתי* does the same: the shared root connects the two scenes, but contrasts their meanings, giving versus taking.

## Answer to the Parsha Riddle (from page 9)

Of the three brothers, Mamre, Eshkol, and Aner who are described as the *בְּעָלֵי בְרִית־אֲבִרָם* – allies of Avraham, the only one whose nationality is stated is Mamrei the Amorite.

They appear in the following verse (14:14):

וַיָּבֵא הַפְּלִיט וַיִּגְדַּל לְאֲבִירָם הָעֵבְרִי וְהוּא שְׂכֵן בְּאֶרְצוֹ מִמְרָא הָאֱמֹרִי אֲחִי אֲשֶׁלֶל וְאֲחִי עֵבֶר וְהֵם בְּעָלֵי בְרִית־אֲבִרָם

“The one who had escaped came and told Avram the Ivri, who was living in the plains of Mamre the Emorite, the brother of Eshkol and Aner. They were Avram’s allies.”

Rabbenu Bechaye gives the following reason for the nationality being given only in the case of Mamre.

Whilst all three allies of Avram were indeed Amorites, only Mamre is called “*הָאֱמֹרִי* – the Amorite,” and only here in this verse. This is because the verse mentions the word *בְּרִית*, an allusion to the *Brit Milah*. One might have, therefore, thought that all three allies advised Avram about the *Brit*. To dispel this notion, the Torah mentions the nationality of “*הָאֱמֹרִי* – the Amorite” only with regard to Mamre, to indicate that Mamre was the only one who gave advice to Avram regarding his *Brit Milah*. This is hinted to by the name *הָאֱמֹרִי* which has the root letters of *אמר* – he said.

*Chazal* say that Mamre gave encouragement to Avram to do the *Brit Milah*, telling him that Hashem has already saved him in the war against

the *מַלְכִים* – kings, from *רעב* – famine, from *אור כשדים* – Ur Kasdim (fire of Nimrod), and that He will certainly protect and save him in the *mitzvah* of *מילה* – *Brit Mila*.

Rabbenu Bechaye then adds, an interesting hint to these four tests, in the name of *מִמְרָא* as follows:

א	ר	מ	מ
אש	רעבון	מילה	מלכים

He adds further that according to *Chazal*, when David HaMelech rejoiced over his *Brit Milah*, he composed the verse *שֵׁשׁ אֲנֹכִי עַל־אֲמֶרְתְּךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שְׁלָל רַב רַב* (*Tehillim* 119:162) referring to the *Brit Milah* as *אֲמֶרְתְּךָ* which also has the root letters of *אמר* – he said, again, hinting to the role of Mamre in the *Brit Milah* of Avram.



# HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY

## OUR PARTNERS

Department of Education of the  
World Zionist Organization

**ARGENTINA**  
Comunidad La Casa

**AUSTRALIA**  
Mizrachi Australia

**MELBOURNE**  
Blake Street Hebrew Congregation  
Elsternwick Jewish Community  
Mizrachi Melbourne

**SYDNEY**  
Mizrachi Bondi

**PERTH**  
Dianella Shule – Mizrachi Perth

**AUSTRIA**  
**VIENNA**  
Misrachi Österreich

**BELGIUM**  
**ANTWERP**  
Mizrachi Antwerp

**BRASIL**  
**RIO DE JANEIRO**  
Mizrachi Rio de Janeiro

**SAO PAULO**  
Mizrachi Sao Paulo

**BULGARIA**  
**SOFIA**  
Jewish Community

**CANADA**  
**MONTREAL**  
ADATH Congregation  
Hebrew Academy

**HAMPSTEAD**  
The ADATH

**TORONTO**  
Beit Tzion Congregation  
Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto  
Shaarei Tefillah Congregation

**CHILE**  
Mizrachi Chile  
Escuela Maimonides

**COSTA RICA**  
**SAN JOSE**  
Sharai Zion

**CROATIA**  
**ZAGREB**  
Bet Israel Jewish Community of Croatia

**CZECHIA**  
**PRAGUE**  
Jewish Community of Prague

**ECUADOR**  
Equador Jewish Community

**FINLAND**  
**HELSINKI**  
Jewish Community of Helsinki

**GERMANY**  
**KOLN**  
Jewish Community

**GUATEMALA**  
Guatemala City Jewish Community

**HOLLAND**  
**AMSTERDAM**  
AMOS Amsterdam Modern Orthodox Sjoel

**HONG KONG**  
Chabad HK  
Jewish Women's Association (JWA)  
Kehilat Zion – Hechal Ezra  
Ohel Leah Synagogue  
The Jewish Community Centre  
United Jewish Congregation (UJC)

**HUNGARY**  
**BUDAPEST**  
Orach Chaim Kyiv

**ISRAEL**  
**JERUSALEM**  
Amudim Beit Midrash for Women  
Baer Miriam  
Hashiveinu  
Jacques Sueke Foundation  
Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY)  
Midreshet Emunah v'Omanut  
Midreshet Eshel  
Midreshet HaRova  
Midreshet Rachel vChaya  
Neve Hagiva'a  
Shapell's/Darche Noam  
Torat Reva Yerushalayim  
Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi

Yeshivat Hakotel  
Yeshivat Orayta

**BEIT SHEMESH**  
Tiferet Midrasha  
Kehillat Nofei Hashemesh  
Yeshivat Ashreinu  
Yeshivat Hesder Lev HaTorah

**HERZLIYA**  
Mizrachi OU-JLIC Herzliya

**MEVASERET ZION**  
Yeshivat Mevaseret

**RAMAT GAN**  
Israel XP at Bar Ilan University

**THE NEGEV**  
Mechinat Ruach HaNegev

**LATVIA**  
**JURMALA**  
Jewrmala - the Jurmala Jewish Community

**MALTA**  
Jewish Community

**MEXICO**  
Mizrachi México

**NORTH MACEDONIA**  
**SCOPIA**  
Jewish Community

**PANAMA**  
Centro comunitario BETH EL

**POLAND**  
Chief Rabbinate of Poland

**PORTUGAL**  
**PORTO**  
Rabbi Daniel Litvak

**SCOTLAND**  
**EDINBURGH**  
Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation

**SERBIA**  
**BELGRADE**  
Rav Isak Asiel

**SOUTH AFRICA**  
**JOHANNESBURG**  
Mizrachi Glenhazel Shul

## SWEDEN

The Jewish Community of Stockholm  
Kehilat Adat Yeshurun  
Kehiliat Adat Yisrael

## SWITZERLAND

### BERN

Jüdische Gemeinde Bern

### ZURICH

HaKehila HaYehudit Zurich  
HaKehila HaYehudit Lausanne  
Mizrachi  
Wollishofen

## TANZANIA

### ARUSHA

Bayit Kneset Shalem Al Shabazi

## UNITED KINGDOM

Mizrachi UK

## UNITED STATES

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kol Hatorah Kulah  
National Council of Young Israel  
RZA-Mizrachi USA

### CALIFORNIA

Beth Jacob Congregation  
Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy  
West Coast Torah Center  
Young Israel of North Beverly Hills  
YULA High School  
Young Israel of Century City

### COLORADO

DAT Minyan  
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue  
The Denver Kehillah

### CONNECTICUT

Beth David Synagogue  
Congregation Agudath Sholom  
Young Israel of West Hartford

### FLORIDA

Beth Israel Congregation  
Hebrew Academy RASG  
PlayHard PrayHard  
Congregation Torah Ohr  
Sha'arei Bina Torah Academy for Girls  
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale

### GEORGIA

Congregation Beth Jacob  
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

### HAWAII

Kehilat Olam Ejad Ganim

### ILLINOIS

Mizrachi-Religious Zionists of Chicago

### MARYLAND

Kemp Mill Synagogue  
Pikesville Jewish Congregation

Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

## MASSACHUSETTS

Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe  
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah  
Young Israel of Brookline

## MICHIGAN

Young Israel of Oak Park  
Young Israel of Southfield  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

## MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

## MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach  
Hari B'nai Zion Congregation  
Young Israel of St. Louis

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

## NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim  
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County  
Congregation AABJ&D  
Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC  
National Council of Young Israel  
Congregation Ahavat Achim  
Congregation Ahavath Torah  
Congregation Brothers of Israel  
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston  
Congregation Israel of Springfield  
Congregation Ohr Torah  
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill  
Kehilat Keshet  
Ma Tov Day Camp  
Ohav Emeth  
Pal Foundation  
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn  
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center  
Yavneh Academy  
National Council of Young Israel  
Young Israel of Teaneck

## NEW YORK

Beis Community  
Congregation Anshei Shalom  
Congregation B'nai Tzedek  
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere  
Congregation Beth Sholom  
Ramaz  
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls  
MTA – Yeshiva University High School for Boys  
Young Israel of Merrick  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Kew Gardens Hills  
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun  
Congregation Ohav Zedek  
Great Neck Synagogue  
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth Hadassah Synagogue  
Irving Place Minyan

Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach  
Kehilath Jershurun  
Kingsway Jewish Center  
Lincoln Square Synagogue  
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park  
North Shore Hebrew Academy  
Young Israel of Merrick  
NYC Department of Correction  
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University  
OU-JLIC at Cornell University  
Queens Jewish Center  
Stars of Israel Academy  
The Jewish Center  
The Riverdale Minyan  
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha  
West Side Institutional Synagogue  
Yeshiva University High School for Girls  
Young Israel of Hillcrest  
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates  
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst  
Young Israel of Long Beach  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of North Woodmere  
Young Israel of Oceanside  
Young Israel of Scarsdale  
Young Israel of Woodmere

## OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla  
Congregation Sha'arei Torah  
Congregation Torat Emet  
Green Road Synagogue  
Fuchs Mizrachi School  
Heights Jewish Center

## PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel  
Congregation Dor Tikvah

## TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

## TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue  
Robert M. Beren Academy  
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

## VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

## WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath  
Northwest Yeshiva High School  
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

## URUGUAY

Comunidad Yavne Uruguay

## VENEZUELA

CARACAS  
Ashkenazi Kehilla  
Mizrachi Venezuela



To sign up to receive HaMizrachi  
Parasha Weekly for free:  
[mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly](http://mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly)



To sign up your organization  
as a partner for free:  
[mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweeklyorgs](http://mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweeklyorgs)