

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

LECH LECHA

OCTOBER 27, 2012 11 HESHVAN 5773

**DEDICATIONS:** Mazal Tov Aalon Zev Rose on his upcoming marriage Lindsay Dawn Roseman. Refuah Shelemah to Mr. Bechor Yadgarov ... we miss you as the first to arrive each day and look forward to seeing you again with us each morning as you greet us in Synagogue.

**Friday Night: Candles: 5:41 PM - Minha/Arbith 5:40**

**NEW! Shabbat Mornings 8:30AM Laws of Shabbat for Sephardim with Rabbi Yosef Colish  
Shabbat Shahrith at 9AM – Please say Shemah before 9:19**

**10:30 - 11:30 - Shabbat Morning Kids Program for girls ages 4-8 - Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . . Simultaneous Babysitting downstairs with Leah Colish ages 2-4.**

**Kidush given by Mrs. Phyllis Wagner in honor of the engagement of Dan and Sadie – Mazal Tov**

**Shabbat Afternoon Kids Program 4:00PM until Havdala Ice Cream Party, Tanach Stories, Basketball Lineup, Children's Devar Torah, Hoolahoop, Parsha Quiz, 613 Mitzva Memory Contest, Shabbat Charades, Supervised Play and our weekly Raffles! with Rabbi Colish and Riki Waldman**

**4:15 PM Pirkey Avot with Rav Aharon**

**Minha: 5:00 PM followed by Seudah Shelishi and a Class 5:35 – with David  
Evening Service (Arbith): 6:35 PM - Shabbat Ends:6:40PM**

## Weekday Tefilla Schedule –

**6:30AM Laws of Berahot with Rabbi Yosef Colish  
Followed by Shahrith at 7AM**

**We need help with the minyan. People are into new post holiday schedules. Many are traveling. We need commitments. Please speak with Rabbi Colish to commit to one or two or more days each week.**

**Sunday Shahrith at 8AM**

## Weekday Torah Class Schedule

**Monday Night Class with Rabbi Yenay – 7PM Monday night , followed by Arvit**

**Beginning November we will have additional classes as in the past  
Halacha Class in Depth Halachot Pesah on Tuesday nights with Rabbis Michael and David at 8:30PM**

**And Registration is underway for the continuation of our Kosher Kitchen Class series with Rabbi Yosef. Classes will resume in November. Details to follow . .**

**Baruch Kahn invites everyone to join as he sponsors a get together this Wednesday night, October 31 – 16 Heshvan For Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's yartzheit at 8:00PM in the Synagogue.  
Refreshments. Music. Shlomo Teachings.**

please reply to  
[ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com)

**Take a peek into Kosher Culinary Arts School in Jerusalem with my daughter Mikhayla who is going through a rigorous 6 month program. [bitemebymik.blogspot.com](http://bitemebymik.blogspot.com)**

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100.

## EDITORS NOTES

### What Abraham learned from Noah

After having been introduced to Avraham Avinu at the end of last week's portion, we finally get to meet him this week. The Rabbis teach us that the Torah is not written in historical order and we begin to see that in this portion. For example, the Covenant Between the Halves according to Seder Olam takes place when Abraham is 70. A simple calculation of written dates tells us that the war of the four Kings and the five Kings and the kidnapping of Lot take place when Abraham is 74. At the same time we are told that G-d tells Abraham to leave Charan at the age of 75. This all means that we have to get beyond a simple reading of the verses.

I was amused when googling the story of Abraham to see that many sites tell us that after the death of Terach (see the final verses of last week's portion), Abraham is told to go to Israel. In fact Terach lived until right before the time of the Akeydah (the binding of Isaac). And who knows if perhaps Terach made it to Isaac's birthday party for a visit along with many other world dignitaries?

We are taught again and again that Abraham was the first to discover monotheism in a

polytheistic world. You remember the stories. At three years old he looked at the sun, at the stars at the moon, etc ... But here too we have a problem. Abraham is a tenth generation descendant of Noah and although the commentaries on last week's portion begins by posing a question asking, "had Noah lived in Abraham's generation", making us assume he did not, again a simple calculation tells us that both were alive during the incident of the Tower of Babel, Noah was alive after Abraham miraculously was spared from the fire at Ur Kasdim and undoubtedly heard of the incident not passing from this world until Abraham was 58.

Did the two meet? We don't know. Abraham possibly born in Haran and then settling up north in Ur before returning with his father to Haran may have never visited Noah who possibly lived further North in Babel. We do know that Abraham did meet Noah's son Shem, also known as Malki Sedek.

It appears almost certain that G-d's order to Abraham to go to the land of Canaan does not precede Abraham's first visit to the country. According to Seder Olam he must have been there before. And one of the reasons he may have thought to make the initial exodus was in order to visit the Yeshiva of Shem & Ever in the environs of Jerusalem.

We are taught that Abraham came to the understanding of One G-d on his own, but also realized that he was not alone in his belief. A number of things separate the school of Abraham from the school of Shem & Ever, but we are still taught that Isaac studied there, Rebekah brought her question there and Jacob remained a student of the school for 24 years.

Abraham had a tremendous thirst for knowledge.

As a child, my father often told us that it was important to read biographies. When we read about the lives of others, their trials, failures and successes, they can inspire and teach us. And we can learn something from everyone.

Abraham certainly knew the story of the flood as we know the entire world knew it. We see that the tower of Babel project is in many ways a rebellion against G-d. Man does not rebel against something he does not believe in.

Imagine Abraham coming to Shem. "You survived the flood. You built the ark. You lived in it for a year. You came out into a world where there was no one but you. One third of mankind descends from you and all of mankind descends from your father. Your father spoke with G-d. You are a prophet and high priest of G-d. You teach the Noahide laws."

If I was Abraham I would have asked, "How did you survive? By what merit did you survive?"

We know that Noah is called a Sadik, but there is an obvious disagreement into what the term Sadik which we translate as righteous really means. A better translation may be the word, "just". Or in our days when Sedaka is called charity, a Sadik might be one who does kindness and acts justly towards others. Prior to the flood, we know of no outstanding acts committed by Noah. In fact the Ari tells us that Noah may have fallen into the traps of society around him committing similar sins to those who were condemned to die. A number of Midrashim bring the fact that Noah never prayed from his generation. At the last

moment before the rains fell and even while they are falling, Noah appears to still lack a belief that this will happen. And even while in the ark, the waters sought to destroy him for the sin of stealing. So in what merit did he survive?

The Midrash tells us that for 120 years Noah toiled in building an ark. All the raw materials came from him. He planted the trees for the wood. He cut the wood, dried it, planed it and planned each piece. All the labor was of his hands. He couldn't put an order in at the home depot and while there pick up a dozen workers hanging out outside to help. No subcontractors and no handyman, just Noah and family.

And then for one year, he and his family ran a huge zoo. Did you ever go to the zoo early in the morning before the handlers clean up? Imagine the stink from the waste? And seven days a week, 24 hours a day, running from compartment to compartment – all 900 of them – and feeding animals, caring for animals, cleaning up for animals. One day he is late and the lion mauls him causing permanent damage. What kind of gratitude is that? The raven refuses to follow his instructions. The dove returns with an olive branch as if to say to Noah, better the bitter olive leaf from G-d than being fed by you. How would you react? "Ingrate – without me feeding and caring for you, all of you animals would die! Say thank you."

Didn't they owe Noah a boat load of appreciation?

The Roman Governor, Turnus Rufus, asked Rabbi Akiba: "If, as you maintain, your God loves the poor, why does he not make them rich?" to which Akiba replies: "It is in order to give the rich the means of acquiring merit."

Noah may have thought the animals owed him gratitude and they certainly did. But what Noah might not have realized that it was he who owed the animals gratitude too.

The Rabbis teach us that Sedakah Tasil MiMavet, Charity saves from Death. The animals, the ark, the labor, and the effort were all ways for Noah to earn merit and do Sedakah, do kindness in order to merit being saved from death. Noah may have been a bit better than those around him, but when the fire is burning it takes everyone around it without discrimination. To be saved requires Divine intervention. Noah is saved because he does kindness and charity. He does Sedakah and is thus labeled a Sadik.

Abraham sat with Shem and as Shem completed the story, the light bulb lit in Abraham's brain. Imagine that Noah was saved for doing charity with animals. How much greater is it to do charity with people? Noah never prayed for the generation. Imagine how much greater had he done so?

After the flood, Noah's influence on the world is simply a foot note. He lives to see his own children forget the lessons of history, perverting even the story of the flood. He sees them rebel against G-d, developing a system of strange worship using powers of the dark side to manipulate the world. He sees them turn a planet which was destroyed because of a lack of justice back into a place where might makes right and where there is neither justice nor charity. The Rabbis tell us that when Hashem finally speaks to Abraham, he is as fed up with the world as he was at Noah's time.

It takes Abraham to take the lessons of nature and the lessons of history and use the lessons to

blaze a new path. Sedakah can save the world. Abraham did the hard work, he built the road, he laid the phone lines and he created the connection. We can be like the descendants of Noah who forgot their father, made his story irrelevant and disconnected from Heaven, or we can be the descendants of Abraham, following his path, using his tools and connecting the whole world as is our task and responsibility.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Sorry about missing last week while I was in Israel. I have many stories to tell and hope to do so in the coming months.

#### **When the Arab Jews Fled By LUCETTE LAGNADO**

Fortunée Abadie is still haunted by the day in 1947 when mobs stormed the Jewish Quarter of the ancient Syrian city of Aleppo, shortly after the United Nations vote that laid the groundwork for the creation of Israel.

Aleppo, a city where Jews and Muslims had lived together for centuries, exploded with anti-Jewish violence. Mrs. Abadie, now 88, remembers watching attackers burn prayer books, prayer shawls and other holy objects from the synagogue across the street. She heard the screams of neighbors as their homes were invaded. "We thought we were going to be killed," she says. The family fled to nearby Lebanon. Mrs. Abadie left behind all she had: clothes, furniture, photographs and even a small bottle of French perfume that she still misses, Soir de Paris—Evening in Paris. The Abadie family's story is moving from the recesses of history to a newly prominent place in the debate over the future of the Middle East. Arab leaders

have insisted for decades that Palestinian refugees who fled their homes following Israel's creation should be allowed to return to their former homes. Now Israeli officials are turning the tables, saying the hardships faced by several hundred thousand exiled Arab Jews, many forced from their homes, deserve as much attention as the plight of displaced Palestinians. "We are 64 years late," says Danny Ayalon, Israel's deputy foreign minister. "The refugee problem does not lie only on one side." Mr. Ayalon, whose father is an Algerian Jew, led a U.N. conference last month sponsored by Israel and dubbed "Justice for Jews From Arab Countries." Before the establishment of Israel in 1948, an estimated 850,000 Jews lived in the Arab world. In countries across the Middle East, there were flourishing Jewish communities with their own synagogues, schools and communal institutions. Life changed dramatically by 1948 as Arab governments declared war on the newly created Jewish state—and on the Jews within their own borders. At the U.N., an Egyptian delegate warned that the plan to partition Palestine into two states, one for Jews and one for Palestinians, "might endanger a million Jews living in the Muslim countries." Arab Jewish Life Before - and After - 1948

Jews began fleeing—to Israel, of course, but also to France, England, Canada, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. Yemen was home to more than 55,000 Jews; in Aden, scores were killed in a vicious pogrom in 1947. An airlift dubbed "Operation Magic Carpet" relocated most Yemenite Jews to Israel. In Libya, once home to 38,000 Jews, the community was subjected to many brutal attacks over the years. In June 1967, there were anti-Jewish rampages;

two Jewish families were murdered—one family clubbed to death—and schools and synagogues were destroyed, says Vivienne Roumani, director of the documentary "The Last Jews of Libya." "We were there for centuries, but there is no trace of Jewish life," she says. Among the Jews forced out of their homes was my own Egyptian-Jewish family, departing on a rickety boat in the spring of 1963. Egypt had once been home to 80,000 Jews. My parents, both Cairenes whose stories I chronicled in two memoirs, were especially pained at leaving a country they loved, without being allowed to take money or assets. Within 25 years, the Arab world lost nearly all its Jewish population. Some faced expulsion, while others suffered such economic and social hardships they had no choice but to go. Others left voluntarily because they longed to settle in Israel. Only about 4,300 Jews remain there today, mostly in Morocco and Tunisia, according to Justice for Jews From Arab Countries, a New York-based coalition of groups that also participated in the U.N. conference.

Many of the Palestinians who fled Israel wound up stranded in refugee camps. Multiple U.N. agencies were created to help them, and billions of dollars in aid flowed their way. The Arab Jews, by contrast, were quietly absorbed by their new homes. "The Arab Jews became phantoms" whose stories were "edited out" of Arab consciousness, says Fouad Ajami, a scholar of the Middle East at Stanford's Hoover Institution. "We are talking about the claims of the Palestinians," he says. "Fine, but there were 800,000 Arab Jews, and they have a story to tell." Palestinians bristle at the effort to equate the displacement of Arab

Jews with their own grievances. Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Executive Committee, says Mr. Ayalon "opened up a can of worms for political purposes" with the U.N. conference. She says that Israeli officials are trying to use a "forced and false analogy...to negate or question Palestinian refugee rights." The Palestinians, she says, "have nothing to do with the plight of the Jews or other minorities who left the Arab world." Still, Dr. Ashrawi recently proposed that Arab Jews should also have a "right of return" to the countries they left.

At the U.N. conference, Mr. Ayalon called Dr. Ashrawi's suggestion to have Jews return to Arab countries "totally ridiculous." Mr. Ayalon and the Israeli government are pushing ahead with efforts to raise the profile of Arab Jews. Israel has pledged to establish a national day in honor of Arab Jews and build a museum about their lost cultures. Mr. Ayalon has decided to make the Arab-Jewish refugees part of any negotiations, which has never been the case before. Looking ahead to a settlement, he would like to see both Palestinian and Jewish refugees compensated by an international fund. Meanwhile, the Israeli ambassador to the U.N., Ron Prosor, has called on the U.N. to research the refugees' history.

Mrs. Abadie attended the conference with her son Elie, now a physician and rabbi who leads Congregation Edmond J. Safra, a Manhattan synagogue attended by Lebanese and Syrian Jews. Until 1947, Syria had an estimated 30,000 Jews living in Aleppo and Damascus. But like Mrs. Abadie, many departed in the wake of the violence that left 75 dead and synagogues in ruin. The Abadies were refugees twice. After leaving Aleppo, the family ended up in Beirut, Lebanon. For

a time, life was good in the cosmopolitan city. But by 1970, the climate had turned hostile. Armed militants appeared in the streets. Rabbis, including Elie's father, Abraham, had their pictures posted in the city's mosques, identifying them as "Zionist-Jewish leaders," an act the family took as a death threat. The Abadies decided once again it was time to move. Some Jewish refugees, like Sir Ronald Cohen, find hope in the new initiatives to call attention to Arab Jews. Mr. Cohen, a London-based businessman, was a student at a French Catholic school in Cairo in 1956, friendly with his Muslim and Christian classmates. His father owned an import-export firm that specialized in appliances, and "Ronnie," then 11, loved to visit him and play with the radios. Then in October 1956, Israel, France and England waged war against Egypt over the Suez Canal. Mr. Cohen's parents pulled him out of school after another Jewish boy was injured. His mother, a British citizen, was placed under house arrest. His father's business was "sequestered"—effectively taken from him—and he wasn't welcome at his own office. In May 1957, the family left on a plane bound for Europe. Mr. Cohen still remembers his father crying on the plane. "There is nothing left here," he recalls his mother saying. "It is all over." In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Jews continued to pour out of the Muslim countries. When Desiré Sakkal and his family left Egypt as stateless refugees in 1962, he says, "there were very few Jews left." Stranded in Paris in a hotel, Mr. Sakkal's little brother was diagnosed with cancer, and he still remembers how his parents went to the hospital every day. The brother died a year later in New York, at the age of 10. Mr. Sakkal went on to found the

Historical Society of Jews from Egypt, which seeks to recall the life left behind.

The Six-Day War of June 1967 brought some of the most violent anti-Jewish eruptions. As Arab countries faced defeat by Israel, they turned their rage on their own Jewish residents—what remained of them. In Egypt, Jewish men over 18 were rounded up and sent to prison. Some were kept for a few days. Others, like Philadelphia Rabbi Albert Gabbai, a Cairo native, remained imprisoned for three years. Rabbi Gabbai was only 18 when he was thrown in jail, along with three older brothers. He still remembers the cries of his fellow prisoners—Muslim Brotherhood members who were being tortured—echoing through the jail. He and his brothers feared that they were going to be killed. After three years of "despair," he says, they were driven to the airport and escorted to an Air France flight.

Mr. Cohen, who left Egypt in 1957, grew up to become a pioneer in European venture capital and private equity. In recent years, he has worked to develop the Palestinian private sector. He believes that the focus on Jewish-Arab refugees could spur the Arabs and Israelis toward peace. "There are refugees on both sides, so that evens the scales, and I think that it will be helpful to the process," he says. "It shows that both sides suffered the same fate." Write to Lucette Lagnado [atlucette.lagnado@wsj.com](mailto:atlucette.lagnado@wsj.com) A version of this article appeared October 12, 2012, on page C3 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: When the Arab Jews Fleed.

### **The Beauty of the Jewish People Gutman Locks**

A young man, around 20 years old, came for Shabbos dinner. He told me his family history and I said, "That is so beautiful."

He said, "You are the only one who ever said that. All of the rabbis I've told it to found it pathetic, or even disgusting."

You decide: His father was (or is) an American, Jewish, Rastafarin. The actual Rastas started out in Jamaica in the 1930s. They were worshipers of an Emperor of Ethiopia, saying that he was a yushka incarnate. But the American Rastas were mostly followers of the popular 1960s musician, Bob Marley.

The main distinguishing characteristics of the movement were (are) its love of reggae music, and cannabis (marijuana). For most, it wasn't a religion, but a way of life, rejecting society (except for food stamps, and such) getting stoned, and singing freedom songs.

His mother is a Yemenite Jew. His grandmother was born in Mea Shearim. Mea Sharim is the ultra, ultra 'charedi religious neighborhood of Jerusalem. As a youth, his mother ran away from the restrictive lifestyle, dropped all religion, fled to America, and became a Deadhead. Deadheads were (are) followers of the Grateful Dead (a famous 1960s rock group.) Deadheads would follow the band from concert to concert for years.

As things happen..., Rasta boy meets Deadhead girl, they fall in love and move to Bolinas, California. Bolinas is a small unincorporated coastal community in Marin County, California, 30 miles north of San

Francisco. It has a reputation for being an extremely reclusive artist colony. There are no signs on the highway that point to Bolinas because the residents tear them down. There are less than 700 households in the entire community. What it was back in my day when I lived in Marin, 45 years ago, and seems to have maintained its flavor, was a place where ex or not so ex hippies would land trying to get off the street out of the city and still avoid society.

As things go their way, Rasta man and Deadhead lady have a baby boy who was born in Bolinas. Now comes the beautiful part. The boy grows up, and of all of the crazy things in the world... this outrageous boy decides to become a baal teshuva! Do you know what this means? He becomes a religious Jew, and ends up in a yeshiva in Jerusalem. Totally nuts! I love it!

Look at the nature of our people. By all rights this boy should have become a dope smoking, part time silversmith, fashioning handmade earrings for men, and fancy roach-clips[i] for women. But no...he wants to learn Torah.

This love of Torah is inside every Jew, even those who run away from it. An angel teaches the Jewish soul the entire Torah while the embryo is still in the womb. Then, just before the baby is born, the angel taps it on its lip and the baby forgets almost all that it was taught. So, if the baby forgets it, what was the value of teaching it to him or her in the first place? Because that Torah is still buried within each of us, and whenever we want, it is there ready to surface. But we have to want it. This fulfills the principle of freewill, yet allows us the great hidden desire for G-d.

So, why didn't the rabbis he told his story to see the beauty in it? Those rabbis have been religious all of their lives. Jews who have been religious all of their lives really believe, with all their heart that the resurrection of the dead is going to come. They really believe this. A baal teshuva like me sees that it has already happened.[ Obviously, the actual Resurrection of the Dead will come later, but for the baal teshuva, it seems that his life has started again.]

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Avram is instructed to leave Charan and travel 400 miles to the Land of Canaan. (Charan was 600 miles from Ur Casdim) Upon arriving, they are forced to leave Canaan, due to a local famine, and travel to Mitzrayim in search of food.

2nd Aliya: Avram plans for his encounter with the amorality of Egypt. His and Sarah's confrontation with Pharaoh is detailed. Avram and Sarah return home.

3rd Aliya: Avram separates from his nephew / brother-in-law Lot, due to Lot's defection from the teachings of Avram. Hashem reassures Avram that he will have children, "like the dust of the earth", who will inherit the Land and carry on his work.

4th Aliya: Avram is forced to rescue Lot from captivity. In so doing, he adjusts the balance of power in Canaan and is recognized by the other political leaders for his military and moral strength. His encounter with Malki Tzedek (Shem) is in stark contrast to his confrontation with the King of Sodom.

5th Aliya: Hashem again reassures Avram that he will have

genetic children (not just students) who would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

6th Aliya: The monumental "Covenant Between the Halves" takes place during which the next 430 years of Jewish history is revealed. Avram is 70 years old. Sarai instructs Avram to marry Hagar. The story of her conflict with Sarai, her encounter with an angel, and the birth of Yishmael in 2034 is told. Following the birth of Yishmael Avram's name is changed to Avraham.

7th Aliya: Avraham is presented with the Mitzvah of Circumcision. Sarai's name is changed to Sarah, and Hashem assures Avraham he and Sarah will have a son called Yitzchak. It is the year 2047 and Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael, and his entire household.

This week's Haftorah - Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16 - continues the theme of Hashem's manifest presence within nature and our selection as the Chosen People. The opening verses, taken from the end of Yishaya Chap. 40, directly attribute strength and success to belief in Hashem. "But those who put their hope in Hashem shall renew their vigor...they shall run and not weary..." (40:31)

Hashem's eternity in relation to all generations is established, "...I am first, and with the last ones I am He." (41:4) and it therefore makes sense to trust Hashem. This realization mirrors Avraham's quest for understanding. Nature's inherent consistency and order revealed itself to Avraham as absolute proof of a Creator who cares for His creations. "...he says of the cement, "It is good," and he strengthened it with nails that it should not move." (41:7)

With the conviction of certainty and truth, Avraham embraces G-d as a true servant. Hashem, in return, bestows upon him the singular accolade as the one "who loved me". In all of the Tanach, only Avraham is referred to in this manner. To love Hashem means to trust Hashem, and Avraham trusted Hashem more completely than anyone else. In merit for his devotion, Hashem promises to protect his children from the onslaught of the other nations.

As all things are put into perspective, we realize that our nation's greatness and praise is but a reflection of Hashem's greatness. (41:16)

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN**

**"Hashem said to Abram, 'Go for yourself from your land.'" (Beresheet 12:1)**

Hashem told Abraham to travel and leave his land. Today we do a lot of traveling to far away places. Listen to a true story of a traveler as told by Rabbi David Kaplan.

The dire financial situation in the Baranovitch Yeshivah forced the Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman zt"l, to make an extended fundraising trip to the U.S. There was a wealthy clothing factory owner in Manhattan whom Rav Elchonon had known as a child in Baranovitch. This man had left many years earlier and had done extremely well financially in the land of opportunity.

However, America was also a land that presented the opportunity to abandon the religion and Torah values, which this man had done to the fullest. Rav Elchonon made an appointment to see him in his

Manhattan office, which was situated on the top floor of his clothing factory. "Rabbi Wasserman," the man said after they had exchanged preliminary pleasantries, "what did you come here for?"

Rav Elchonon lifted his jacket toward the man and showed him where a button had fallen off. "I've come to have a button sewn on my jacket," Rav Elchonon said.

The man chuckled. "Really, Rabbi, why have you come?"

Rav Elchonon's expression did not change. "I came to have a button sewn onto my jacket." The man decided to beat Rav Elchonon at his own game. "Excellent. Just come with me and I'll have it taken care of for you." He led Rav Elchonon down into the factory area where hundreds of workers were very busy making clothing. He figured when Rav Elchonon would see how vast his factory was, he'd be overwhelmed and would make an appeal, which was obviously the reason he had come.

"Hey, Pete, could you sew a button on the Rabbi's jacket?" he called to one of his employees. The man took the jacket and quickly did as the boss had requested. "Now, Rabbi Wasserman, you see what I've got going here. Tell me why you've come."

"I've told you, you've done it, thank you." With that Rav Elchonon turned and left, and a waiting car drove him back to his host's home. The next morning the telephone rang early. "Rabbi Wasserman," the man practically shouted into the phone, "you cost me a night's sleep. Why did you come?"

"Please come here and we'll talk," Rav Elchonon responded. The man drove right over. "You find it so hard to believe that I'd come all the way from Baranovitch to the United States to have a button sewn onto a jacket. But your soul came from underneath the throne of Hashem and traveled seven heavens to get here. Did it make that trip just so you could own a factory that sews buttons and makes clothes?"

The man was shaken to the core by the great Rabbi's words and the sincerity with which they had been delivered. He became totally observant and a loyal supporter of the Baranovitch Yeshivah.

We have all traveled from very far away. Make it count. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"Look now toward the heaven and count the stars... so shall your children be." (Beresheet 15:5)**

Hashem told Abram. "Look at the stars and count them, so shall your children be." Did Abram really count the stars - we know it's impossible to count them?

Rabbi Meir Shapiro says that when Abram began to count the stars, Hashem stopped him and told him it's not possible to fully count them. However, He told him, "Just as you attempted to do something impossible because it was my will, so too your descendants will try to do the will of G-d, even when it seems impossible." This is the greatness of the Jewish people. We are not daunted when we are faced with commandments and challenges. Although they may look difficult, we know that Hashem told us to do it. He gives us the strength and ability to

accomplish it. The main thing is not to give up initially just because it seems beyond us. We have seen throughout history how the greatest accomplishments have been achieved, the writing of the greatest books, the building of the finest institutions, etc. We must be like Abram and attempt what we are told; the rest is up to Hashem! Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

## THE TEST OF TIME

Hashem told Abraham, Lech lecha, "Go for yourself, from the land, the artziut, earthliness/materialism represented by the land; mi'moladetecha, from your birthplace, your character which you derive from your birthplace; mi'bet abicha, from your father's home, from your passive reliance on familial support. Go out on your own! Where? To the land which I will show you."

Lech lecha was not a one-time command given to Abraham. It is a never-ending exhortation to every Jew to awaken within himself the upward drive to succeed, to move forward, to pursue Torah and misvot relentlessly, and to grow in them. Each Jew has a G-d-given mission, a Heavenly mandate. Have we achieved our calling; have we fulfilled our duty; have we done enough? A Jew must be lech lecha, constantly moving. There is no rest. There are no vacations. Rest is stagnation. Status quo is death. Are we ever doing enough? No - we can always do more. (Peninim on the Torah)

## INSULT, NO INJURY

One of the more emotionally upsetting situations a person must deal with is being insulted. Somehow, for some reason, someone makes an offensive comment. The subject

– or victim – of the remark may react with anger, a red face, or tears. In all cases, insults hurt – to the point that a bruised ego is perceived as similar to a broken bone or a cut finger. But it doesn't have to be that way.

The pain you feel as a result of an insulting comment is a matter of perspective. It is your attitude towards the barb that will determine its effect. Words are merely sounds, without inherent power over people, but your reaction to them is crucial.

An insult can be perceived as a wake-up call. Perhaps the person is exaggerating; but where there is smoke, there is usually fire. Do a self-evaluation and work on the shortcoming that has been pointed out. Another approach is to accept the criticism, but focus on your strengths rather than dwell on the weakness your adversary so rudely highlighted. Alternatively, you might think of another insult that once hurt you. You will realize that not only was it meaningless in the big picture of your life, but the moment of pain was actually quite short-lived.

An insult can change your day – maybe even your life. But an insult is like any other word; your reaction to it will determine its effect. Defuse the pain and make use of the warning, and an insult can improve your future. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

## **RABBI ELI MANSOUR** **Learning About Marriage From** **Abraham Abinu**

The Torah in Parashat Lech-Lecha writes about Abraham Abinu's experiences after settling in Eretz Yisrael, and we read that when he reached the land, "Va'yet Aholo" – "he pitched his tent" (12:8). The word "Aholo" ("his tent") in this verse is spelled

unusually, with a letter "Heh" at the end, instead of "Vav," as though it says, "Aholah" – "her tent." The Rabbis conclude on the basis of this spelling that Abraham made a point of pitching his wife's tent before pitching his own tent.

The Sifteh Hachamim commentary explains the reason for Abraham's conduct based upon the Gemara's exhortation, famously codified by the Rambam, that a man must treat his wife with greater honor than he gives himself. Abraham, a man of great piety and distinction, recognized and fulfilled his obligation honor his wife more than himself, and this dedication to his wife's honor is expressed in his decision to pitch her tent before his.

The Gemara tells that the sage Rabba once said to his students, "Give honor to your wife so that you will become wealthy." The reward for honoring one's wife, it seems, is wealth. Rabba proves his point by citing a Pasuk later in Parshat Lech-Lecha, where the Torah says that Abraham became wealthy in Egypt "Ba'aburah" – "because of Sara" (12:16) – indicating that he received wealth on her account, because of the respectful way he treated her.

Why would this be the case? What connection is there between honoring one's wife and money?

A wife works hard for her husband and children, and naturally feels a strong desire to be appreciated. When her husband compliments her and treats her with respect, this bolsters her self-esteem and self-worth; she feels valuable and important. And thus the husband is rewarded with "value," with wealth. If he makes a point of ensuring that his wife feels valuable, then he will be blessed



with “value” in the form of financial success.

When we think of Abraham Abinu, we instinctively associate him with his extraordinary acts of piety – jumping into the furnace to avoid worshipping idols, leaving his homeland to settle in a foreign country, and being prepared to sacrifice his only son. Yet, the Torah makes a point of spelling “Aholo” and “Aholah” to tell us about the respect Abraham showed to his wife, because this, too, is an important part of Abraham’s greatness. Besides the “great” things, such as defying Nimrod and Akedat Yishak, what made Abraham a Sadik was also the “little” things, his everyday conduct, such as treating his wife with respect and consideration. This, too, is something we must learn from Abraham Abinu. We are to gain inspiration not just from the “major” events of his life, but also from his standard, day-to-day conduct. And the example he sets for us begins in the home, with the way we speak to and treat our spouses – with respect, sensitivity and consideration.

#### **Rabbi Wein Our Future Lies in Chevron**

Rashi comments that the Lord assured Avraham that leaving his home and family in Aram and heading to a then unknown destination would somehow be to his benefit and ultimate good. Even though this may appear strange to the casual observer – leaving the known and secure and heading out to wander to an unknown destination – the ways of the Lord are inscrutable and often counter-intuitive to human logic.

The purpose of Avraham’s wandering journey is to reach the Land of Israel and to claim it for his descendants. For only in the Land of Israel will Avraham find

personal fulfillment and realize his true spiritual, moral and holy potential. But while in Aram and Charan, Avraham and Sarah did good work, spreading the idea of monotheism and teaching the basic system of morality that is the core of the Torah’s value system. Many people were influenced by them and became followers of monotheism and began to worship only the one true God.

So, why not leave Avraham and Sarah in Aram to continue their good work? Why send them off to the Land of Israel, then inhabited by the fierce and pagan Canaanite nation, to a very uncertain and perilous situation? And in the Land of Israel, the wicked, powerful and influential cities of Sodom are present. Seemingly Avraham and Sarah can accomplish much more by remaining in Aram than by travelling to the Land of Israel. And because of this type of human thinking, Avraham has to rely on the Lord’s counter-intuitive logic, so to speak, and unhesitatingly embark on this dangerous journey that will eventually change all of human history.

What is clear from all of this is that the fulfillment of Jewish destiny and influence, of the holy self-actualization of the Jewish people can only be achieved in the Land of Israel. The obstacles that the Land of Israel itself raises to this self-actualization are many and profound. Nevertheless, the actions of our forbearers remain as the guideposts for all future Jewish generations.

If we look around at the Jewish world today the only significant demographic growth of Jews the world over is in the Land of Israel. The millennia-long exile and the Diaspora generally is shutting down, whether from external

pressures or inner weakness. Only in the Land of Israel will the Jewish people find their soul and destiny.

And, just as in the time of Avraham and Sarah, the Land of Israel is plagued with dangers, problems and fraught with apparent peril. There is still a touch of Sodom present there and the heirs of the Canaanites are in the land. Yet just as the Lord told Avraham many thousands of years ago, only there will you become great and blessed – blessed for yourself and for all of humankind.

The opportunity to live a truly Jewish life and to help build a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is pretty much reserved to those who today live in the Land of Israel. The future of the Jewish people lies today in Chevron and not in Charan.

#### **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables Name Changer**

This week’s parsha begins with Hashem appearing to Avram and commanding him to go to an unspecified land. Hashem promises him, "And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and it shall [for you shall] be a blessing" (Genesis 12-2). A person who does great things becomes a great person. And he is known as such. But is it the name that becomes great? Can Hashem make a name great? Isn't greatness inherent in one's actions? Rashi, indeed, explains the verse almost literally. He says that Hashem actually enlarged Avram's name by adding a letter. Avram's name was later changed to Avraham by adding the letter Hey. Thus the verse reads in its simplest form, I will make your name greater. Is

adding a letter making the name great?

When we were kids, we often wondered what our forefather Avraham's, last name was. Of course, despite the kids who were positive that it was Avinu, we all know that there were no last names at the time, and people were just known, I guess, by who their father was. So how do we identify Avraham? His father, Terach, an idol worshipper and salesman, was surely no paragon of faith and righteousness. I am sure that a name Abraham Terach would not be considered a great name.

**THE STORY:** My dear friend Morris Smith, recently sent me this wonderful little anecdote. Rabbi Meir Soloveitchik, a scion of the revered Soloveitchik family, recently gave the invocation at the Republican National Convention. At his Shabbos Shuva drasha back in KJ in New York, he related the following incident:

When I arrived at the convention in Florida, I was escorted into a room together with all those who would be speaking that day who were gathered along with Congressman, Senators, Governors and other politicians. A woman approached me, stared at me, and then asked "Who are you?" I responded politely, "I am Meir Soloveitchik."  
"Are you from Florida," she asked.

"No," I said, "I am from NY". She looked puzzled and confused, which I found confusing, since I figured most people knew there were a lot of Jews who lived in NY.

Anyway, she smiled and walked away. She then approached me again just a few moments later with her husband. She said to me, "Meir Soloveitchik -- I'd like to introduce you to my husband, Congressman Walker."

The Congressman and I shook hands.

Then the woman asked, "Can you please tell me what city in NY you are the Mayor (Meir) of?"

Rabbi Soloveichik mused as follows... "And that, Ladies and Gentleman, was the first time in my life that a person was more impressed with my first name than my last name!"

**THE MESSAGE:** The Gemara in Berachos comments that "And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will aggrandize your name, and [you shall] be a blessing, refers to the fact that in the Shmoneh Esrei, after blessing Hashem, as Our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, we specify, and label the 'G-d of Avraham', the G-d of Yitzchak and the G-d of Yaakov. Perhaps the greatness of any is its identification with the Creator. When one hears the names of our forbears they hear a name that is forever linked with a dynasty of faith. Indeed, like Rabbi Soloveitchik, to most people, my last name is more famous than my first. But Avram's last name is non-existent. It is his first name, Avraham that says it all; faith, tenacity, perseverance. It is a great name because it is forever linked with the name of Hashem. ©2012

**Sir Jonathan Sacks  
Chief Rabbi of the United  
Hebrew Congregations  
of the Commonwealth**

### **Making Space**

The 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), Terach, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; 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 Terach asked him who had done the damage, he replied, "The largest of the idols took a stick and broke the rest". "Why are you deceiving me?" Terach asked, "Do idols have understanding?" "Let your ears hear what your mouth is saying", replied the child. On this reading, Abraham was an iconoclast, a breaker of images, one who rebelled against his father's faith (Bereishith Rabbah 38: 8).

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 realize 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 Terach. Terach fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot . . . Terach 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 Terach were 205 years, and Terach died in Haran. (Gen 11: 31)

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

How are we to reconcile these two passages? The simplest way, taken by most commentators, is that they are not in chronological sequence. The call to Abraham (in Gen. 12) happened first. Abraham heard the Divine summons, and communicated it to his father. The family set out together, but Terach stopped halfway, in Haran. The passage recording Terach'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. Terach had already made the first tentative move toward monotheism. Children complete what their parents begin.

Significantly, both the Bible and rabbinic tradition understood divine parenthood in this way. They contrasted the description of Noah ("Noah walked with G-d") and that of Abraham ("The G-d before whom I have walked", 24: 40). G-d himself says to Abraham "Walk ahead of Me and be perfect" (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 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" (Halakhic Man, p 107).

This idea finds expression in halakhah, 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. (Hilkhot 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 emphasizes discontinuity. Abraham broke with all that went before. The other emphasizes continuity. Terach, his father, had already begun to wrestle with idolatry. He had set out on the long walk to the land which would eventually become holy, but stopped half way. 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 realize 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.

### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**

“In this manner (idolatry) the world continued to develop until the birth of Abraham, the Pillar of the World” (RAMBAM, Idolatry 1:2).

“When this giant among men was weaned, he began to cast about in his mind by day & by night, wondering: Whence comes the Energy which rotated the celestial bodies? There was no one to instruct him. But his mind could not rest and he continued to gain in understanding until he finally arrived at the truth.” (adapted from RMBM ibid. 1:3).

When Abraham Abinu came on the scene, the Rambam says, he looked at the sun and saw how wonderfully it works. The sun is just big enough to warm us. If it were bigger, we would be burned to a crisp; if it were smaller, we would be frozen. If the sun were a little closer, we would be burned; if it were more distant, we would be frozen. How did it happen that the sun was the exact distance and the exact size? Abraham was studying the happiness of this world, how good

the sun is for us. With that he came to recognize that there is Someone in charge. That is Abraham’s system.

He looked at everything in the world and saw that nothing was accidental. Everything is full of plan and purpose which demonstrates Kindness, Wisdom & Power, and from that he came to recognize the Creator/Bore’ Olam.

Whenever you look into the whole purpose of the universe, there is not a thing that doesn’t demonstrate plan and purpose. Apples turn red when they are ripe and fit to eat. When they are not the right color, they are hard and sour. They are not healthy that way, and you could get a stomachache if you ate them. The fact that apples turn red is enough proof for everyone to know there is a Creator. And peaches turn pink and red, and oranges turn orange and bananas turn yellow and Granny Smith apples turn green.

All of the instructions to produce these fruit are encoded in 1 million bits of information on the DNA of each seed. This includes production of the tree which bears the fruit which has seeds inside them in order to continue reproduction of these fruits for us.

It is as if Hashem signed His name on them, “Hashem is here.” Everything proclaims Hashem’s Presence.

“The World is filled with the Hesed of Hashem” (Tehillim 33)

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