

ב"ה

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1537

י"ג מרחשון תשפ"ד • OCT. 28 2023

פרשת לך לך
PARSHAT LECH LECHA

OU Israel Is Here For You



May We Have Continued
Strength and Deep Emunah
in Hashem. Prayers for
Safety and Peace.



Heroic Faith
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski
Page 46

Words of Chizuk from the
Director of OU Israel's
L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Coping With the Crisis
Dr. Ethan Eisen
Page 52

כי את-כל-הארץ אשר-אתה ראה
לך אתגנה ולזרעך עד-עולם בראשית י"ג:ט"ז

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT LECH LECHA ZMANIM
CANDLES 5:19 PM • HAVDALA 6:31 PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:11 PM



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Menucha Lustig // Raphael Roshwalb

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See TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles
for Divei Torah by **Rabbi Moshe Hauer**,
Rabbi Nachman Winkler and **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

HELPFUL REMINDERS



We move the clock back an hour on
Sun Oct. 29th at 2am (Motzei Shabbat)



Last time to say Kiddush Levana:
Motzei Shabbat Oct. 28

THIS WEEK'S COVER IMAGE!

I live in Ramat Beit Shemesh. My
parents made aliyah but I was
born here. I took this picture on
Zikim beach. This reminds me
of the promises promised to
Avraham Avinu.
~ Yaakov Adler



CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



	LECH LECHA		VAYEIRA	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:19	6:31	4:13	5:25
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:37	6:34	4:31	5:28
Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:37	6:32	4:31	5:26
Alon Shvut	5:35	6:32	4:28	5:26
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	5:35	6:32	4:29	5:26
Modiin / Chashmonaim	5:35	6:32	4:28	5:26
Netanya	5:35	6:32	4:28	5:26
Be'er Sheva	5:36	6:33	4:30	5:28
Rehovot	5:36	6:33	4:29	5:27
Petach Tikva	5:19	6:32	4:13	5:26
Ginot Shomron	5:34	6:31	4:28	5:25
Haifa / Zichron	5:24	6:31	4:17	5:25
Gush Shiloh	5:33	6:31	4:27	5:25
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	5:36	6:33	4:29	5:27
Givat Zeev	5:38	6:31	4:32	5:25
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:35	6:32	4:29	5:26
Ashkelon	5:37	6:34	4:31	5:28
Yad Binyamin	5:36	6:33	4:29	5:27
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	5:27	6:29	4:20	5:23
Golan	5:31	6:29	4:25	5:23
Nahariya/Maalot	5:33	6:31	4:26	5:25
Afula	5:32	6:30	4:26	5:24

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 7:11 PM • Next Week - 6:05 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

*** Note: We move the clock back an hour on Sun. Oct. 29th at 2am**

Daf Yomi: Kidushin 76



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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat

Oct 25 - Nov 4 / 10 - 20 Cheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:58 - 5:05**

Sunrise **6:49 - 5:57**

Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:36 - 8:40**

Magen Avraham **8:59 - 8:03**

Sof Zman Tefila **10:31 - 9:34**

(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)

Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **12:23 - 11:22**

Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **12:53 - 11:52**

Plag Mincha **4:46 - 3:39**

Sunset (Including Elevation) **6:01 - 4:52**



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

A few months ago, my son Dvir asked if he could come with a friend and work at the OU Israel Center over the summer. At the time, we did have some areas on the outside of the building that needed a good cleanup, especially during the summertime when we run events outside. I gave him and his friend this task, agreed on a salary to give them both (which I paid out of my own pocket), and they did a fantastic job.

Fast forward to last week. Many schools in Israel have not yet opened. Dvir is still home, and last week he turned to me and said, “Maybe there’s something I can do at the OU. I would love to help out.” I immediately said yes.

For the past week, my son and my nephew Yinon have come to the OU Center with me early in the morning and have been working nonstop to help with all the amazing volunteering opportunities at the OU. They, alongside many other volunteers, helped prepare more than 3,000 resilience packages (which include first aid supplies sent from the OU in NY, *Tehillim*, an Israeli flag and letter of *chizuk*) for families who have been severely impacted by the war. They helped package games for families from the south and north who have been evacuated from their homes.

One of the many hotels in Yerushalayim that is housing displaced families from the south is the Ramada hotel. Last Thursday, NCSY Israel

staff and teens organized a carnival for the families from down south, with hundreds of people in attendance. It was particularly heartwarming to know that our English-Speaking *olim* teens were running this program, and that so many of the kids and families who benefited from it belong to our Makom Baleyv Youth Center family in Sderot. This is one of

numerous examples of collaboration in which the various departments of the OU have been working together to help in any way possible.

Dvir joined me at the hotel and was helping distribute packages and toys to the families. I asked him to stand by the entrance



with the packages while I took care of a few logistical things. When I returned to him he had a look of shock on his face. “Abba,” he said, “you won’t believe it. Every minute, someone new has come through these doors in order to help out.” He described all these wonderful groups. A group of people came to bring cookies and cakes to the families. A caterer just came through to bring in fresh food. People came to take bags of laundry from the families to bring home and do the laundry for them, returning the clothes back dry and folded. Tons of clothes were dropped off for adults and for children. Manicurists, hair stylists, and barbers set up areas in the hotel to provide their services for free. It was unbelievable how much was

happening. Dvir was amazed. I was too.

This past Shabbat, we were sitting at the Shabbat table, and I asked Dvir what he thought about everything he did this week. I also mentioned my surprise that he had never asked to be paid for his incredibly hard work over the last few days since when he came to the OU with me over the summer it was for a summer job. He answered me in such a beautiful way. He said, “Abba, you *are* paying me. You are giving me the gift of feeling part of this movement of *chesed*, of what everyone in Israel is doing. There is no amount you could pay me to replace that feeling.”

What my son expressed in that conversation is exactly what is going through the minds of so many people right now. Everyone, from all across Israel and from all walks of life, are helping each other, are there for each other, showing love for one another. Every day you hear of a new initiative to get army supplies here or food there, to help these families and give more for those groups. The funerals attended by hundreds of thousands. Shiva houses so packed that people are standing outside the door. This is a beautiful grass-roots effort to make *Klal Yisrael* stronger and united. The overwhelming feeling is that we are all in this together. There is an atmosphere of *chesed*, of giving, and we all want to be a part of it.

The OU has stepped up in so many amazing ways. As part of the OU-JLIC program in Israel, students from our six OU-JLIC campuses here have mobilized and volunteered in every way possible - providing meals, visiting the

injured in hospitals, bringing dogs to evacuee locations to put smiles on the faces of children who have PTSD, and so much more. NSCY started an initiative working with Yeshivot for gap-year students to tie camouflaged *tzitzit* for our brave *chayalim*. Yachad Israel members spent hours writing cards and recording video messages of encouragement for their advisors who were called up to serve in the IDF. The atmosphere in Israel is electric with an atmosphere of giving.

I encourage every one of you to find something to contribute, to be part of this collective movement. Perhaps you haven't had the time or the emotional space, until now, to volunteer. Yet, this is such a beautiful time of *achdut* (unity). You won't want to look back after this challenging time has passed and ask yourself,

“Where was I?” The only way to stop that from happening is to continue to be a nation of doers. Ask the questions, “What can I do?”, “How can I help?”.

This week, I had the *zechut* of visiting my good friend Rav Doron Peretz (Executive Chairman of the Mizrahi World Movement) with OU Executive Vice President Rabbi Moshe Hauer and OU President Mitch Aeder who came to show their support for what is happening here in Israel and learn how the OU can best utilize its resources to help. Rav Doron's son Daniel is a tank officer who is missing, and last week Rav Doron and his *eishet chayil* Shelley married off their son Yonatan, who was injured in battle. Rav Doron told us how his entire community



rallied around his family to make sure the wedding happened. He shared the incredible giving taking place to ensure that the light dispels darkness, that joy overtakes hate. This is all part of the atmosphere we are feeling and experiencing now. I want to wish the Perez family a *mazal tov* and to pray that Daniel Shimon ben Sharon, along with all of the captives of Israel, will come home safely very soon.

When sitting with my staff this week with Rabbi Hauer and Mitch, I heard a story that moved me to the core. Talya Gefen (Director of Program Development at the Zula) described how her husband Yosef had been called up to the northern border, and she was left at home with their five young children. While dealing with her own worries and stress, she received a call from Oren Asulin (Director of the Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center). After checking how she is doing, he asked if she could figure out a way to come to the Zula since there are thousands of teens who – now more than ever - need to be supported by her and her staff of advisors.

At first, she was ready to yell, “How dare you!” and slam down the phone, but a second later she reconsidered. “You know what? Maybe this is exactly what I need.” She made arrangements for her kids and was at the Zula until the wee hours of the night. She shared, “Once I got back to helping, to being part of this bigger picture, I realized that the best way to overcome this difficult time is by giving to others.”

Don't miss out on this moment to help. There are so many opportunities. Volunteer at the OU or at *shul* and community events around you, *daven*, learn Torah, reach out to family, friends and neighbors. If you're reading this outside of Israel, there are plenty of ways you can

help too. I encourage you to learn more Torah, to pray and fast, to protect Israel on social media, to donate, to call friends in Israel and show your love and support, to attend rallies supporting Israel. Start filling out Aliyah documents. Everyone can take a part. Not only does it help others, but, like Talya, Dvir and Yinon, it helps ourselves as well.

Let us not forget that this is the fourth Shabbat that many families are home without a father, spouse, children and other family members who have been called up to protect *Am Yisrael*. Let's think about them, reach out to them, increase our *tefillot* and our kindness. *Bezrat Hashem*, we will fight and we will win.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel





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Emunah Bet Sabah Elazraki Children's Home is deeply saddened by the loss of our beloved dear friend,

Jenny Shay ז"ל

May her memories and legacy forever be held in our hearts.
We extend our sincere condolences to Jenny's husband,
Dr. Mel Shay and all the family.
May the Omnipresent comfort you
and the rest of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

With sympathy,
Yehuda & Riki Kohn, the staff and children

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calls to program participants to offer support.



3,000

resilience packages (first aid supplies, Tehillim, Israeli flag, letter of Chizuk) to families severely impacted by the war.



45

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250

much needed first aid supplies and packages delivered to OU Israel alumni and staff serving in the IDF.



2,100

games delivered to families evacuated from their homes.



7,250

meals for families in need.



91

funerals and Shiva homes attended to offer Chizuk this week.



Davening for the safety and security of every Jew.

For more information and Chizuk visit www.ouisrael.org/chizuk.

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT LECH LECHA

The parsha introduces the Jewish people. Avraham journeys to the Land of Israel, is promised the Land, spends time in Egypt due to a famine, separates from Lot due to their great wealth, and rescues Lot when he is taken captive in war. Avraham is promised the Land, though told his descendants will spend 400 years in Egypt. Sarah has no child, Hagar bears Yishmael, Avraham is promised that Sarah will bear a child. He is given the mitzvah of mila, circumcision, as a sign of the covenant.



1ST ALIYA (12:1-13)

Avram (while we refer to him as Avraham his name begins as Avram and is only changed later) is told to journey to the land he will be shown. There he will achieve family, fortune and fame. The family journeys with Shechem as their first stop. G-d appears to Avraham and promises him the Land. He builds an altar. A famine forces the family to seek relief in Egypt.

Avraham is the first to be told to journey to a place, not away from a place. Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden, Cain sent away to wander the earth, Tower of Babel the people dispersed. Avraham reverses this trend: he is not sent away from G-d but pulled near to Him.

The story of the Torah is the story of promises. Avraham is given 3 personal

promises and one national one. He is told he will have family, have fortune and have fame. And his people will inherit the Land. G-d makes promises to man. Unsolicited, perhaps undeserved. Though we come to know Avraham as a great man, the Torah is mum on any background to receiving these promises. For it is a story of G-d's desire for a people – it is His reach to us.



2ND ALIYA (12:14-13:4)

The family goes to Egypt fleeing famine. Paro sees Sarah and she is taken to his palace. Avraham is lavished with wealth because of her. Paro sends them away. The family returns to where they began, laden with wealth, to call in the name of G-d.

Avraham's 3 promises, family, fortune and fame, will be fulfilled one by one. First fortune. Promise fulfilled – Avraham returns to the Land from Egypt laden with wealth. The Ramban points out the

May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
לע"נ and in loving memory of

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foreshadowing of the Exodus from Egypt – just as here Avraham journeys to Egypt because of famine, Paro suffers a plague, Jews leave with great wealth, so too this story repeats with the entire Jewish nation in the exodus from Egypt.

What does it mean that Avraham called in the name of G-d? Ibn Ezra says either he prayed. Or he called people to embrace G-d. Avraham engages the people of the land in knowledge of one G-d, a pursuit that exposes him to the people, eventually bringing him fame.



3RD ALIYA (13:5-18)

The herds of Avraham and Lot are so numerous that their shepherds quarrel. They need to separate. Avraham allows Lot to choose – you go left, I right. You go right, I left. Lot chooses the lush area he sees around Sodom and Gemora. Avraham is told by G-d to look over the Land for he will have it all forever. And his children will be as numerous as the sand of the earth. He moves to Hevron and builds an altar.

The promise of fortune has been granted. But his only family, Lot, moves away. This is followed by a reiteration that Avraham's children will inherit the Land – except, he has no children. He only has Lot. And Lot's judgment is suspect.

Eyes have been a bit of a problem in the Torah so far. Eve looked at the fruit and it was beautiful. Before the flood, the men looked at the women and chose wives. Lot looks at the Jordan Valley and it looks like the lushness of Egypt. Looks deceive; for while beautiful, each of these failed to consider more than the looks. Looking will be replaced for the Jew by hearing, Shema,

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listening to the Divine Command. Seeing beauty will be usurped by hearing the Command.



4TH ALIYA (14:1-20)

4 Kings make war with 5 Kings.

Lot is taken captive. Avraham rescues him, returning all the spoils and captives. The King of Sodom comes out to greet Avraham, as does Malchizedek the King and Priest of Shalem. Malchizedek blesses Avraham to G-d and blesses G-d for protecting Avraham.

The promise of fame has been achieved. After the heroic rescue of Lot, Avraham finds the company of Kings. And of note, is the religious language of Malchizedek, blessing Avraham with G-d's name. Avraham's reputation, his fame, is that of a man of faith, a man of G-d.

2 of the 3 promises he received, those of fame and of fortune have been achieved. The remaining 2 – of children and of inheriting this Land are tougher. And lest we think that G-d promised a deserted Land to Avraham, this pitched battle of 9 kings belies that. Not only has Avraham been promised that his children will inherit the Land while he has no children, he has been told he will inherit a hotly contested Land. While man could, on his own, achieve fortune and fame, a childless elderly couple cannot achieve children and the Land without Divine intervention.



5TH ALIYA (14:21-15:6)

The King of Sodom offers Avraham the spoils; Avraham demurs. G-d promises Avraham that he need not fear, for He will be his shield (magen). Avraham protests – I have no children. G-d promises that his children

will inherit his promises. He shows him the stars and promises that his children will be as those. Avraham believes Him.

G-d promises to be Avraham's shield, his "magen"; Malchizedek used the same expression, that G-d was Avraham's "magen". Hence the description we use in tefilla of Magen Avraham.

As a conversation starter, G-d says to Avraham, "Do not fear". Who said Avraham is afraid? What is he afraid of? Rashi comments that Avraham is worried that he has been showered with so much from G-d already that perhaps he does not deserve to have the remaining promises granted. The remaining 2 promises are big ones; children and the Land of Israel. Perhaps I no longer deserve those. Some promises are conditional – you deserve it, you will get it. Perhaps he has used up all his merit and deserves no more. G-d tells him to not fear for his merit is great.



6TH ALIYA (15:7-17:6)

After promising Avraham that he will have children, G-d again promises to him that He will give him the Land of Israel. Avraham queries as to how he will know this for certain. In a dramatic ceremony of cut birds and a deep sleep, Avraham is told his children will be strangers and afflicted in a foreign land for 400 years. Avraham will die in peace. G-d makes a covenant to give the Land to Avraham's offspring. Sarah has no child. She gives Hagar to Avraham and Hagar becomes pregnant. Sarah sends Hagar away. An angel tells her that her offspring will be many. Her child will be cantankerous but powerful. Avraham is 86 when Yishmael is born. At age 99 Avraham is told

to walk before G-d. His name is changed to Avraham.

Avraham was given 3 personal promises and one national one. He was promised fame and fortune, which he received. He is assured he will have children, which he believes. But those are promises to him. He wonders now about the promise that his descendants will inherit the Land of Israel – what if they don't deserve it? G-d puts him to sleep, a *tardema* – the same word used when Adam went to sleep and Eve was formed – a deep, historic, epic sleep. And G-d tells him that these promises will be kept.

The Torah continues the startling story of G-d's unconditional promises to man. Still no demands have been made of Avraham. But the Torah also teaches us a lesson about promises: patience. The promise that the Jewish people will have the land of Israel is going to take 400 years to happen. Avraham will not see that one fulfilled. Nor, in fact, will Moshe. The Torah will end with that one not yet fulfilled. Man lives patiently with promises yet fulfilled.



7TH ALIYA (17:7-27)

Avraham is told to circumcise his family as a sign of the covenant between him and G-d. He is startled at the promise that Sarah will have a child at age 90, he 99. He suggests that Yishmael could be the next generation of the Jewish people. No, while Yishmael will be great, Yitzchak will be the next generation.

Avraham is reluctant to give up on Yishmael as the heir to the Jewish people. Perhaps this is Avraham's persistent kindness – he sees good, even greatness in Yishmael. But that type of greatness is not sufficient:

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greatness comes in different shapes and sizes. Yishmael is great in his way: Yitzchak will be great in a different way. There is greatness amongst the nations of the world: but Jewish greatness is different. ■

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STATS

3rd sedra of 54; 3rd of 12 in Bereshit.
Written on 208 lines, ranks 23.
7 Parshiyot; 3 open, 4 closed.
126 pesukim - ranks 13th.
1686 words - ranks 18th.
6336 letters - ranks 19th.

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Starting Over from *Bereshit*

There are moments in life when we must start all over, when we have no choice but to begin again.

Such moments seem to typically follow tragic events. Sudden loss, especially the loss of those closest to us, forces us to begin again. Our only other options are lifelong despair and depression.

There are times when even good fortune demands that we begin again. Acceptance into a new professional career, or a move to a new community, or marriage, all require a new response, and often an entirely new way of life.

I write these words little more than a week after one of the most horrible catastrophes in recent Jewish history, Hamas' invasion into Israel's homeland and its consequent massacre, torture, and kidnapping of well over a thousand civilians and soldiers.

I leave it to those who have the expertise to describe and record details of the terror. I am not sufficiently astute to even speculate upon the military decisions that lie ahead, nor am I remotely qualified to suggest political responses to this complex predicament.

What I can do and will do is to ask that you consider, if not immediately then as the way forward becomes clearer, that we

now have a responsibility to begin again. As individuals, as communities, and as a Jewish nation, we must start over. We must reconsider old habits, past strategies, former relationships, and long held ideologies and beliefs.

In short, borrowing from an old Yiddish adage which Naomi Shemer used as the title of one of her poems, we are all now challenged to "begin anew from *Bereshit*."

Ironically, the day that Hamas struck, the Shabbat that shall live in infamy, was *Simchat Torah* in Israel. The core ritual of this sacred day is to read the final passages of the *Chumash* from one Torah scroll, and then open another Torah scroll to "begin again from *Bereshit*."

How apt it is that this column is dedicated to *Parshat Lech Lecha* (Genesis 12:1-17:27). This *parsha* begins with the Lord's instruction to Abram to begin again, to

May the learning
from this Torah Tidbits
be an עילוי נשמה
for my beloved husband
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start all over. We know almost nothing about Abram's life until this point. We know his father's name, his brothers' names, and his nephew's name. We know that his father took some of his family on the journey from the land of Canaan, but never quite made it there until the father died. All that was recorded in last week's *parsha*.

This week's *parsha* begins: "The Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your native land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you...'. Abram went forth as the Lord had commanded him..."

Abram began anew. He started over. He readied himself to face the various challenges, *nisyonot*, that lay ahead. Beginning again was just the first of these challenges.

We, the Jewish people, are all descendants of Abraham. Even converts to the Jewish faith typically adopt the name Abraham for themselves or refer to themselves as *ben Avraham*, a son of Abraham. Like our forefather, we all are called upon, at critical moments in our long history, to begin again, to start anew.

I am not sufficiently arrogant, however, to offer direction to an entire nation or even to any one specific community. I will instead confine myself in this column to guidance for those interested in, resorting to a psychological terminology that I picked up in graduate school, the "developmental task" of lifelong Torah study. This is a task incumbent upon us all.

In the future, however, I will endeavor to bring to your attention themes from future *parshiot* which detail ways in which the Jewish nation as a whole must "begin anew.



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For now, let me introduce you to a wise old rabbi whom I was privileged to learn from in his later years. His name was Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, of blessed memory. He was born and educated in pre-Holocaust Lithuania and spent the last decades of his life as the head of the Torah Vodaath yeshiva in Brooklyn, New York. Toward the end of his life, he lived with family in Baltimore, where I then resided. From time to time, I was invited to keep him company, and I used that opportunity to interview him on subjects of interest to me, especially Torah education.

Once he initiated our conversation by exclaiming in Yiddish, "*Menn darf vaksen in lernen Torah*," "One must grow in one's Torah study." He went on to portray just how comic it would be for a 30-year-old to cling to the Torah lessons he was taught in kindergarten.

“As a five-year-old,” he would explain, “he was excited to learn what the world calls ‘bible stories.’ As he matures, so must his understanding of Torah so that those stories become the basis of profound lessons of theology, Jewish history, ethics, and morality.”

He continued with a delightful tale about his childhood friend, Asher, with whom he grew up in the old *shtetl* in Lithuania. Their paths diverged when Asher, then no more than eight years old, emigrated with his family to the United States.

Seventy years later, their paths again crossed. It was the day before Yom Kippur and, as is the custom, Rabbi Kamenetsky went to the *mikvah*, the ritual bath house, to “cleanse” himself before the Day of Awe.

How surprised he was to encounter Asher there! They joyously reunited, trying to catch up with all that had transpired in their long lives. Then, in the dressing room, Rabbi Kamenetsky donned his *arba kanfot*, his undergarment with ritual fringes, or *tzitzit*. His garment extended from his neck down to his knees, in accordance with Jewish custom.

He was stunned to observe that Asher too had donned a similar garment. But his merely extended from his neck to his chest. As the Rabbi explained to me, “it was like a baby’s bib!”.

When the Rabbi asked Asher to explain why he wore such an inadequate garment, Asher responded: “You must remember my old *Zaidi*, my grandfather. He did not accompany us to the United States. He felt that our religious observance would be compromised there. But he did call me over to him and pointing to my *arba kanfot*—I was then only eight years

old—instructed me to always wear this garment. And so, although I am now 6 feet tall, I continue to wear the same size garment that I wore then.”

Rabbi Kamenetsky then drove home his point to me. Just as a grown man cannot wear a child’s clothing, so must a grown person’s understanding of Torah grow as he matures.

The Rabbi’s pedagogical lesson was cogent and forceful and remains so. A ten-year-old must be taught Torah at his or her level. So must the twenty-year-old and thirty-year-old and fifty-year-old and eighty-year-old approach Torah anew as he or she advances through life’s stages.

Each year of our lives requires us to return to the beginning. To return to *Bereshit* again. To readjust our understanding to conform with the lessons we have learned earlier in our lives.

At this tragic juncture in the history of our people, we must be prepared to begin anew to ascertain where we have gone wrong in all aspects of our behavior, in our faith, in our prayers, in our understanding of what the Almighty expects of us, and especially in our relationships with others.

Pray for true and total peace. *Shabbat SHALOM!* ■

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On Being a Jewish Parent

The most influential man who ever lived does not appear on any list I have seen of the hundred most influential men who ever lived. He ruled no empire, commanded no army, engaged in no spectacular acts of heroism on the battlefield, performed no miracles, proclaimed no prophecy, led no vast throng of followers, and had no disciples other than his own child. Yet today more than half of the billions of people alive on the face of the planet identify themselves as his heirs.

His name, of course, is Abraham, held as the founder of faith by the three great monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He fits no conventional stereotype. He is not described as unique in his generation, as in the case of Noah. The Torah tells us no tales of his childhood, as it does in the case of Moses. We know next to nothing about his early life. When God calls on him, as He does at the beginning of this week's *parsha*, to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father's house, we have no idea why he was singled out.

Yet never was a promise more richly

fulfilled than the words of God to him when He changed his name from Abram to Abraham:

"For I have made you father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5).

There are today 56 Islamic nations, more than 80 Christian ones, and the Jewish state. Truly Abraham became the father of these many nations. But who and what was Abraham? Why was he chosen for this exemplary role?

There are three famous portraits of Abraham. The first is the Midrash we learned as children. Abraham, left alone with his father's idols, breaks them with a hammer, which he leaves in the hand of the biggest of the idols. His father Terah comes in, sees the devastation, asks who has caused it, and the young Abraham replies, "Can you not see? The hammer is in the hands of the largest idol. It must have been him." Terah replies, "But an idol is mere of wood and stone." Abraham replies, "Then, father, how can you worship them?"¹

1. Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 38:13

This is Abraham the iconoclast, the breaker of images, the man who while still young rebelled against the pagan, polytheistic world of demigods and demons, superstition and magic.

The second is more haunting and is enigmatic. Abraham, says the Midrash, is like a man travelling on a journey when he sees a palace in flames.

He wondered, "Is it possible that the palace lacks an 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?" God looked out and said to him, "I am the Ruler, the Sovereign of the universe" (Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 38:13).

This is an extraordinary passage. Abraham sees the order of nature, the elegant design of the universe. It's like a palace. It must have been made by someone, for someone. But the palace is on fire. How can this be? Surely the owner should be putting out the flames. You don't leave a palace empty and unguarded. Yet the owner of the palace calls out to him, as God called to Abraham, asking him to help fight the fire.

God needs us to fight the destructive instinct in the human heart. This is Abraham, the fighter against injustice, the man who sees the beauty of the natural universe being disfigured by the sufferings inflicted by man on man.

Finally comes a third image, this time by Moses Maimonides:

After he was weaned, while still an infant, Abraham's mind began to reflect. Day and night, he thought and wondered, "How is it possible that this celestial sphere



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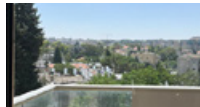
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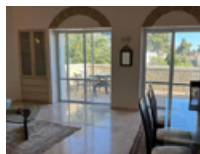
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should continuously be guiding the world and have no one to guide it and cause it to turn, for it cannot be that it turns itself?" He had no teacher, no one to instruct him in anything. He was surrounded, in Ur of the Chaldees, by foolish idolaters. His father and mother and the entire population worshipped idols, and he worshipped with them. But his mind was constantly active and reflective, until he had attained the way of truth, found the correct line of thought, and knew that there is one God, He that guides the celestial spheres and created everything, and that among all that exists, there is no God beside Him. (Maimonides, Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:3)

This is Abraham the philosopher, anticipating Aristotle, using metaphysical argument to prove the existence of God.

Three images of Abraham; three versions, perhaps, of what it is to be a Jew. The first sees Jews as iconoclasts, challenging the idols of the age. Even secular Jews who had cut themselves adrift from Judaism were among the most revolutionary modern thinkers, most famously Spinoza, Marx, and Freud. Thorstein Veblen said in an essay on "the intellectual pre-eminence of Jews," that the Jew becomes "a disturber of the intellectual peace . . . a wanderer in the intellectuals' no-man's-land, seeking another place to rest, farther along the road, somewhere over the horizon."

The second sees Jewish identity in terms of *tzedek umishpat*, a commitment to the just society. Albert Einstein spoke of the "almost fanatical love of justice" as one of "the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my stars that I belong to it."

The third reminds us that the Greek

thinkers Theophrastus and Clearchus, disciples of Aristotle, speak of the Jews as a nation of philosophers.

So these views are all true and profound. They share only one shortcoming. There is no direct evidence for them whatsoever in the Torah. Joshua speaks of Abraham's father Terah as an idolater (Josh. 24:2), but this is not mentioned in Bereishit.

The story of the palace in flames is perhaps based on Abraham's challenge to God about the proposed destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain: "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" As for Abraham-as-Aristotle, that is based on an ancient tradition that the Greek philosophers (especially Pythagoras) derived their wisdom from the Jews, but this too is nowhere hinted in the Torah.

What then does the Torah say about Abraham? The answer is unexpected and very moving. Abraham was chosen simply to be a father. The "Av" in Avram/Avraham means "father". In the only verse in which the Torah explains the choice of Abraham, it says:

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him" (Gen. 18:19).

The great scenes in Abraham's life – waiting for a child, the birth of Ishmael, the tension between Sarah and Hagar, the birth of Isaac, and the binding – are all about his role as a father (next week I will write about the troubling episode of the binding).

Judaism, more than any other faith,

sees parenthood as the highest challenge of all. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah – the anniversary of Creation – we read of two mothers, Sarah and Hannah, and the births of their sons, as if to say: Every life is a universe. Therefore if you wish to understand the creation of the universe, think about the birth of a child.

Abraham, the hero of faith, is simply a father. Stephen Hawking famously wrote at the end of *A Brief History of Time* that if we had a Unified Field Theory, a scientific “theory of everything”, we would “know the mind of God.” We believe otherwise. To know the mind of God we do not need theoretical physics. We simply need to know what it is to be a parent. The miracle of childbirth is as close as we come to understanding the love that brings new life into the world that is God’s creativity.

There is a fascinating passage in Yossi Klein Halevi’s book on Christians and Muslims in the land of Israel, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden*. Visiting a convent, he is told by a nun, Maria Teresa:

“I watch the families who visit here on weekends. How the parents behave toward their children, speaking to them with patience and encouraging them to ask intelligent questions. It’s an example to the whole world. The strength of this people is the love of parents for their children. Not just the mothers but also the fathers. A Jewish child has two mothers.”

Judaism takes what is natural and sanctifies it; what is physical and invests it with spirituality; what is elsewhere considered normal and sees it as a miracle. What Darwin saw as the urge to reproduce, what Richard Dawkins calls “the selfish gene”,

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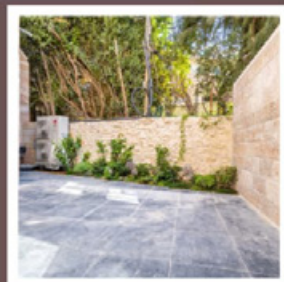
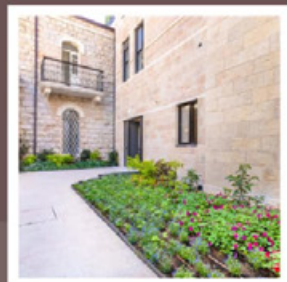
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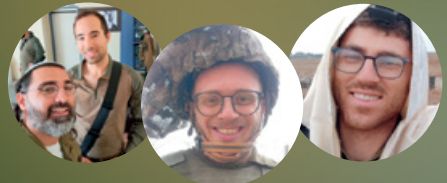


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בְּרַכָּה (בראשית יב:ב)

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. (Bereshit 12:2).

In the *amida* (*shmona esre*) we bow on four occasions. At the end of the *amida* we bow as we recite מודים אנחנו לך (**modim anachenu lach**) as well as during the bracha of להודות נאה (Hatov Shimcha uLecha na'eh **I'hodot**). Both relate to **hoda'ah**.

We also bow twice at the beginning of the *amida*. When we recite the opening bracha of אלוקי אברהם, אלוקי יצחק ואלוקי יעקב as well as at the end of that bracha when we recite אברהם מגן.

Given that we are expressing our appreciation or admission (הודאה) to Hashem when we bow at the end of the *shmona esre*, it makes sense to bow.¹ **However, why**

1. As we mentioned in the past, the word להודות – can be interpreted in two ways. It can refer to an expression of gratitude, or to an admission. Rav Hutner explains that in order to thank someone, one needs to admit that they cannot manage alone. Given that the word has two meanings, how can you know which meaning of “*modeh*” is being referred to in a given context? Rav Hutner explains that the answer depends on the preposition that follows “*modeh*.” If one is “*modeh al*,” then he offers thanks **for** something. If he is “*modeh she-*,”

do we bow twice at the beginning of the amida? Rav Shwab (Ma'ayan Beit Hasho-eva) offers an intriguing explanation.

The gemara in Pesachim 117b citing a pasuk from our parsha states as follows: ואעשך לגוי גדול זהו שאומרים אלהי אברהם, ואברכך זהו שאומרים אלהי יצחק, ואגדלך שמוך זהו שאומרים אלהי יעקב. יכול יהו חותמין בכולן? ת"ל והיה ברכה, כך חותמין ואין חותמין בכולן.

“And I will make of you a great nation”; this is why we say: God of Abraham. “And I will bless you”; this is fulfilled when we say: God of Isaac. “And I will make your name great”; this is fulfilled when we say: God of Jacob. One might have thought that we ought to conclude with all the forefathers; yet the verse states: “And you will be a blessing” i.e., with you, Avraham, we will conclude the blessing, rather than mention all of the forefathers.”

The opening paragraph of the *shmona esre* contains two parts. First we mention the God of each of our *avot* – highlighting the *masoret* (tradition) that is passed on from generation to generation. Without

then he admits to something. In *Shmona Esre*, the bracha of *hoda'a* (“*Modim*”) contains both meanings. First, we say “*Modim anachnu lach sha'ata...*” – we “admit to” God’s omnipotence. Later, we say: “*nodeh lecha...al hayeinu*,” – “thanking” Hashem **for** our lives.

the transmission of Torah through the generations, we would not know how to worship Hashem. Yet, we conclude the blessing with a reference to Avraham alone - מִן אַבְרָהָם. Each of us is to serve Hashem like Avraham. Someone who had no role model to follow. Avraham had to establish a personal relationship with Hashem. Although we have the privilege of receiving our tradition from past generations, each of us needs to develop an intimate relationship with Hashem.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik expressed a similar idea when explaining the text of וְהָיָה אֲבִיכֶם וְאִמְתְּכֶם - קִלְיָם וְאִנְוָהוּ אֵלֶיכֶם - Although our tradition is passed to us from our forefathers, we ought to develop our own unique bond with Hashem.

That is why we bow twice at the beginning of the *shmona esre*. First to highlight that we appreciate the tradition that we have received from our ancestors. Then we bow again when we include the bracha with reference only to Avraham, to reflect that we value our personal connection to Hashem, similar in nature to Avraham who was able to deduce on his own the existence of Hashem.

When we recite the *amida*, may we keep in mind how we value our tradition, as well as our unique personal relationship with Hashem. This intimate connection is established through the study of Torah and tefilla. Perhaps that is why the brachot in *shmona esre* do not include the term מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם which is prevalent in most other brachot that we recite throughout the day. *Shmona esre* is a more intimate prayer, where we are not relating to God as a distant “king” (מֶלֶךְ), but rather as a close family member אֲבִירָה אֵלֶיכֶם

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– the father of our forefathers. May we build upon our direct and unique relationship with our Creator! ■



Seeing Spiritual

We have in our *parashah* the sweeping promise that has resonated throughout our generations ever since with eternal messages for each of us. “*Raise your eyes and from the place where you are now [standing] look to the north to the south to the east and to the west. For all the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever... Rise, walk the land, through its length and breadth, for I will give it [all] to you.*” (*Bereisheet 13:14-17*) Hashem directs Avraham Avinu to do two things, to see the land and to traverse its expanse. Why are both charges necessary and how do they apply to us today?

The *Kli Yakar* offers a stunning interpretation of these verses. He notes that there are two aspects of the land, the spiritual and the physical. As the place of the earthly Temple mirrors the heavenly Temple, the *Kli Yakar* explains that it is the repository of spirituality, connecting us with Hashem forever. Further, when one looks at this holy place, he is immediately infused with a spirit of holiness and purity. Not only does he perceive the Divine, but he is seen by Hashem, enveloped in a halo of grace and transcendence. This experience is not limited to the time that our holy Temple

stood, rather, it exists in every generation until the end of time. The spiritual legacy given to Avraham and his descendants is unconditional, acquired by way of his **seeing** the land. How fortunate we are that we can take advantage of this spiritual well-spring and gain *chizuk* in difficult times, feel strengthened and bolstered by the closeness to Hashem.

The promise of the physical land, continues the *Kli Yakar*, was actualized by way of Avraham Avinu journeying through the land. Whereas the spiritual inheritance was given, “*lecha...u’lezar-acha ad olam*,” to Avraham and his offspring forever, their possession of the physical land depended upon adhering to Torah and mitzvot.

In his *sefer Menachem Tzion*, Rav Zaks emphasizes the importance of **looking** at Eretz Yisrael with positivity and optimism. One must focus on the beauty of the land, on its good aspects and qualities. The *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Eichah* recounts how Yaakov Avinu asked Hashem “where are my children?” to which Hashem responded, “an *ayin ra’ah* took control of them and they were exiled from the land.” Their inability to focus on all the good in our land led to the exile and most tragically, extends the exile until today.

Rav Zaks tells a story about one of the Gerrer Rebbes who visited Israel shortly before WWII. In one of his letters, he makes reference to the “holy city of Tel Aviv.” At the time, Tel Aviv had no yeshivot or any

other definitive marks of holiness. The Rebbe, however, explained that it was a city filled with Jews, no churches or mosques, and Sunday was a regular weekday. Focusing on the positive elements, he found the holiness within.

At this time, when so many lives are at the forefront as they proudly protect our land, it is imperative that we show Hashem how much we cherish it, how we choose to focus on the positive and draw from its spiritual resources. Thus, may all Jews throughout the world merit to make Eretz Yisrael their permanent home, sooner than we can ever imagine. ■

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Lech Lecha: *Ivri*

In 1978, Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky was sentenced on trumped-up charges for treason and espionage by the Russian court. Facing the threat of execution or long-term imprisonment, Sharansky refused to bend. His defiant, final statement in the Soviet court was a message of resistance and faith, addressed to his wife Avital and the world: “I am happy that I lived honorably, at peace with my conscience. I never compromised my soul, even under the threat of death... To the court I have nothing to say. To my wife and the Jewish people I say, *Next year in Jerusalem.*”

After nine years isolated and alone in prison, on an icy winter day in 1986, Sharansky was released in a prisoner exchange at Berlin’s Glienicke Bridge. Sharansky slowly climbed out of the car, closed the door behind him and began to walk.

Suddenly, he began to stagger; he zigged a step or two to the left before starting forward again. A few more steps and he zagged back toward the right. Left, right, zig, zag....

The American officials waiting to receive him on the other side watched with concern and disbelief. Was Sharansky drugged, injured or too traumatized to walk normally?

When he reached the western bank of

the river, Sharansky smiled and assured the American officers that he was fine, and explained: his KGB tormentors had instructed him to get out of the car and “walk straight across”, directly to the other side of the bridge. After so many long and painful years, in his first steps toward freedom, zig-zagging across the bridge was his last act of holy defiance. There was no way he was going to start following their orders now!

Our sedra chronicles the revolutionary journey undertaken by our great-grandparents, Avraham and Sarah. Every step of the way provides insight and moral instruction for us:

וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמַסְעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד־בֵּית־אֵל עַד־הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה שָׁם אָהֳלָה בְּתוּחָה...
 ...

“And he went on his journeys, from the south and until Beit El, until the place where his tent had been previously...”(13:3)

Rashi tells us that when Avraham returned to Eretz Canaan from Egypt, he lodged in the same *achsanya*, inn, that he had stayed at when traveling down to Egypt. This, Rashi explains — based on the Gemara (*Arachin*, 16b) — is to לְמַדָּךְ אֲרָץ, “teach us the appropriate way to act.” For שְׁלֹא יִשְׁנֶה אָדָם מֵאֲכַסְנֵיָא שְׁלוֹ, “Despite the fact that Avraham Avinu came on his return trip a wealthier and more

influential man than he was on the first part of the journey, he showed respect for those who provided for him before he achieved fame and success along the way.

וילך למסעיו, “Avraham went on *his* journeys”...via the same routes he had taken before. This seemingly mundane detail is *limedcha*, “to teach us” how to conduct ourselves, how to treat others, how to behave in a Jewish way. Reb Nosson Breslover explains that this is an example of מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, “the actions of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are models for their children,” for every one of us must go through all the ten trials of Avraham Avinu and walk the paths of our *Avos* and *Imahos* before us (*Likutei Halachos*, Onah 3:1). Indeed, all of the journeys, travails, tests and experiences detailed in Torah are for the purpose of *limedcha*, “to teach us”.

Yechezkel haNavi recalls the extensive and extraordinary accomplishments of Avraham Avinu, accentuated by the fact that אחד היה אברהם, “Avraham was *echad*, one man” (33:24). Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (*Likutei Mohara*”ח, *hashmata*) explains why Avraham is called *echad*: he served God without being concerned for other people’s opinions. Unfazed by cultural norms and those who opposed his

way of life, Avraham was *echad*, a *yachid*, ‘individual’, a nonconformist who did not compare himself to others. He served God without ‘looking over his shoulder’. Furthermore, raised in an idolatrous home, Avraham Avinu did not follow their orders, rather he confidently blazed an original path in service of Hashem. Nor was he held back by doubts, demons or negative memories from his past.

According to the *Midrash*, our Zeidy is called אברהם העברי, Avraham *haIvri*, meaning ‘the one who is on the other side’, or ‘who stands opposite’: “The whole world stood on one side and he stood on the other.” This is the essence not only of Avraham Avinu, but also of us, heirs to his spiritual legacy. On one side, the world goes in its *derech*, and we, on the other side, if need be, walk in ours.

The image of Natan Sharansky, the released prisoner of conscience, criss-crossing the bridge dividing East from West is one of the enduring, iconic moments marking the eventual fall of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War. It is also a quintessentially Jewish moment, a reminder, לימדך, to teach us to zig-zag across the bridge toward a life of freedom, to blaze our own path, to forging an authentic identity as modern day *Ivri*. May we move forward with faith, joy, confidence and defiance... And no matter what the world may think, may we affirm, “Next year in Yerushalayim.” ■



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Parshat Lech Lecha begins with the instruction to *Avram* to leave behind all that is familiar to him and go to the Land that *Hashem* will show him. The expression *Lech Lecha-You shall go, you-seems* at first glance to be redundant.

Rashi, in a well known comment explains this seeming redundancy- *lech lecha- you shall go for yourself- lehanatcha uletovatcha* -for your own satisfaction and good. It is there that you will become a great nation, here you will not merit to have children, and only there will your true nature become revealed in the world.

In explaining *Rashi's* words, the **Tiferet Shlomo, the Rebbe of Radomsk zy'a** posits: Seemingly *Avraham* already had wealth and material success, so what exactly is *Rashi* pointing out for us? What does it mean that he must leave behind all that is familiar to him in order to go to the Land, which will ultimately be for his own benefit and good?

The Rebbe explains that even beyond having his own biological children which he will merit only upon entering *Eretz Yisrael*, *Avraham Avinu's* nature and essence is to do *chesed*, to show compassion and consideration for others. In his own birthplace, surrounded by the culture of *Avoda Zara*, his ability to spread his legacy of kindness and love, would be limited by the push back of the idolatrous ways of those around him. However, upon entering the

Land of Israel, his legacy of kindness, and ability to connect with and transform others would begin to blossom and spread.

Rabbi Yaakov Friedman, zy'a, the Rebbe of Hosiyyatin, made aliya to Tel Aviv in the late 1930's and lived through the formative years of the establishment of the State of Israel, during the turbulent times of both the days leading up to the Declaration of Independence, the subsequent war, and the earliest days of our fledgling state. The Rebbe became a powerful advocate for the importance and significance of the return of the Jewish People to the Land that was promised to *Avraham Avinu*. In a powerful teaching about *Teshuva*, and how the *Torah* promises that the Jewish people will always have the opportunity to renew our connection to *Hashem* and his *Torah*, the Rebbe points to our *Rashi* as well. The Rebbe wrote that the promised renewal and transformation will not come from within America, from England, or from any other country(the Rebbe's words!) Rather, just as *Hashem* promised to *Avraham Avinu*, that when he will come to this Land he will indeed become a progenitor of a great nation, that he will indeed prosper and be able to truly grow to his full potential and impact the entire world, so too the Jewish People, as we return to *Eretz Yisrael* will also begin to make manifest our full potential and impact the entire world.

Baruch Hashem, today more than seventy years since the Rebbe first uttered these words, we see our small State as a global leader in many fields. Indeed the Start-up Nation continues to impact, protect, and transform the entire world.

Yehi Ratzon, that we may continue to merit to lead the entire world to an era of unity, tranquility and spiritual clarity, *bimheira b'yameinu, amen*. ■

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In these difficult days, we mourn the lives we lost and pray for the return of our loved ones. We support the IDF and hope for more peaceful times. Together we'll defeat this evil. Stay safe and we are here to help in any way we can.



GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN
Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Addressing the War Today

Religion Yes, But Not The Land of Israel

Though the revealed word of Torah had yet to be delivered, Avraham was still able to discover Hashem. Chazal compare his discovery to a person who witnesses a radiant city of light, thereby inferring that there must be an architect to this metropolis. Noticing that someone had finally discerned His creative presence, the Architect, or Hashem called Avraham to His Land.

MORAL SPIRIT

Evidently, Avraham did not discover Hashem through the wonders of nature or through the calculus of science. He saw Hashem in a *city of light* and a *city of life*. Studying our world, Avraham detected an inner moral spirit which had engineered it and continued to govern it. He observed a world delicately balanced to support life and reasoned that, evidently, the Creator of this finely tuned system desired human well-being. Planet Earth is located in what is known as the “Goldilocks zone”: 5 miles closer to the sun or 5 miles further from it and our planet would be almost uninhabitable. Discerning this delicate calibration of life, or a *city of light and life*, Avraham concluded that there must be a Creator with moral spirit. He saw the world through moral lenses and not through cold

spectacles of science.

Having detected a moral spirit “behind” the city of life, Avraham yearned to model himself after that moral Being. Sensing a compassionate and merciful G-d, he craved to, himself, become an agent of moral delivery. His philanthropy and altruism weren’t *incidental* to his religious awakening. He didn’t wear two hats, one as a philosopher and one as a humanitarian. His entire theology was predicated upon simulating the kindness and morality he sensed in Hashem. Without serving as an agent for moral welfare his philosophical treatise would be deficient.

Avraham’s revolution constituted a dramatic break with past religious thinking. For the first two thousand years of history, Man had incorrectly assumed that Hashem was angry and vengeful. After all, they had suffered successive waves of divine punishment: first humanity was expelled from Eden, subsequently Kayin’s descendants were condemned to roam the land as nomads. These struggles culminated in a great flood which wiped out the human race. Finally rebuilding after the flood, large populations were scattered across the planet. Humanity assumed, and for good

reason, that gods were angry and spiteful and that they toyed with human playthings for entertainment.

As the first human being to comprehend that Hashem is kind and compassionate, Avraham revolutionized religious thought. Though Hashem desires human welfare, there are consequences for criminal behavior.

THE TRADITION OF MORAL MONOTHEISM

Through his discovery, Avraham launched the great monotheistic tradition. Hashem is merciful and compassionate and craves human prosperity. The highest form of human welfare is to live by the will of Hashem and in His presence. Any improvement to the human condition, whether spiritual or material, is consistent with His will. For Avraham's descendants, the march of science and progress is driven by a divine impulse. Those who have adopted this approach of compassionate monotheism- the Judeo-Christian world in particular- have evolved into progressive and advanced societies, enjoying advanced education, sophisticated medical treatment, enlightened forms of government and equitable economic systems. Those who have not adopted this tradition have remained backward and regressive, stuck in the ancient quagmire of paganism and in the confused world of gods who care little about human welfare.

Sadly, Islamic fundamentalism, once part of the monotheistic tradition, has lost its course. By basing religion upon militantism and the capture and conversion of others, it disfigured the image of G-d. G-d was now imagined as Himself angry and militant, vengeful and capricious. Islamic fundamentalists, though they masquerade



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as religious people, are, essentially, atheists. Though they speak in the name of religion they describe a G-d who does not exist. There is no joy in Heaven when innocents suffer. They have vandalized the face of Hashem in our world and have abandoned the legacy of Avraham.

SURGING POPULARITY

Avraham's religious revolution began to gather steam. Slowly but surely, this unknown itinerant, who had relocated from a distant land, received widespread accreditation. In particular, his popularity surged after his successful intervention and triumph in a bloody war which had plagued the region for a quarter of a century. Those he saved from the vicious axis of five evil emperors gathered in an area known as the "valley of kings " עמק המלך or to celebrate Avraham's courageous intervention.

The monarch of Sedom offers him financial reward and population transfer, each of which Avraham politely refuses. Even Malki Tzedek, a legendary religious leader ruling a community in the ancient city of Shalem, or proto-Yerushalayim, journeys to meet Avraham and to pay him due homage.

The entire world witnessed the potential of Avraham's new religious doctrine. Serving a G-d of peace and welfare, Avraham himself became an agent of peace and welfare.

AVRAHAM'S CONCERN

Yet despite his surging popularity, Avraham is extraordinarily concerned. Though he receives reassurances from Hashem about his own security, he is still anxious. He wonders how he and his descendants will inherit the land. Despite his popularity and the acceptance of his new moral monotheism, and despite repeated divine promises about receiving the land of Israel, Avraham remains deeply worried.

Though the world eagerly embraced his ideological revolution they were less excited about the idea of granting him the land of G-d, and Avraham knew this. The locals would obviously oppose any Jewish presence in Israel. Even those who resided elsewhere would not easily grant Avraham's new nation a place under G-d's eye. Subconsciously, humanity realizes that Israel is the land where humanity was born and where history will end. Jewish presence in this land resonates with historical inevitability, and, for this reason, they opposed Avraham, and they continually battle us. This battle will only end when history ends and not a moment sooner. Avraham had good reason to worry.

Addressing Avraham's fears, Hashem

formed an eternal *brit*, delivering us full license to His land. As promising as the *brit* was it was also conducted under ominous conditions. As the *brit* was finalized a dark and great fear fell upon Avraham - אימה . חשיכה גדולה נפלה עליו . The process of settling the land of history would not be easy for the people of history. For thousands of years Avraham's children would wander this planet, unable to return home because of past religious breakdowns. When we finally did return home, we would face violent opposition by the dark forces of humanity. Amidst all this darkness, a billowing oven and a blazing torch appeared, assuring Avraham that, despite the darkness, the *brit* formed between himself and Hashem was inalienable and that enemies of G-d, who oppose our people would be consumed.

We are living through a dark period of modern Jewish history. Don't forget the *brit*. It hovers above history, and it will shape its trajectory.

KORBANOT

The *brit* was formed by selecting an assortment of animals which would, one day, be offered in the Beit Hamikdash as *korbanot* sacrifices. Hashem notified Avraham that his children would merit the land based on their ritual sacrifices in the Mikdash and the moral and religious lives which would underpin those sacrifices.

Sadly, on the dark day, three weeks ago Hashem took many sacrifices from our people. We don't know why. We ask Hashem to quickly redeem our people, restore our Mikdash, so that we can offer him the *korbanot* He desires. ■

(Written Sun Oct 22)



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Finding Strength

YESHAYAHU 40:29

תֵּן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ וּלְאִין אֹנִים עֲצָמָה יִרְבֶּה

He gives strength to the weary and to the powerless, He increases strength.

If you examine the morning blessings closely, a discernible thematic structure emerges, unfolding in a coherent sequence. One bracha that stands out as an anomaly is the “הַנּוֹתֵן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ,” He who gives strength to the weary. Interestingly, this particular bracha is not found in the Gemara and was introduced by the Savoraim, a group of rabbis who lived between the periods of the Amoraim and Geonim, around 500-600 CE.

The core message of this bracha is to acknowledge Hashem as the restorer of strength to the weary. It is a valuable and practical message as we are fortunate to be created with bodies which have the capacity to replenish their strength with sleep. However, the placement of this blessing seems incongruous. The preceding two blessings focus on the strength and glory of the Jewish people, offering a broader perspective on our collective destiny. In contrast, this bracha lacks a direct reference to the Jewish people. On a personal level, we have already acknowledged our ability to see, stand, walk, and get dressed, making it seem somewhat out of place to address weariness at this point. So,

why do we recite this blessing now?

The source of this bracha lies in a verse from this week's Haftorah, “נָתַן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ וּלְאִין אֹנִים עֲצָמָה, יִרְבֶּה” which translates to “He gives strength to the weary, and to the powerless, He increases strength” (Yeshayahu 40:29). The commentaries explain that it is the Jewish people who are the subject of this verse, referring to those who have endured weariness and oppression throughout centuries of exile. Notably, the use of the term “יָעֵף” (weary) rather than “עָיֵף” (tired) in the verse underscores the profound exhaustion that is being described, as observed by Rav Schwab.

While the placement of the bracha of הַנּוֹתֵן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ, “He who gives strength to the weary,” may seem out of order with the progressive, thematic flow of the other Birkot HaShachar, when we delve deeper into its origins and purpose, we discover a profound lesson in faith and resilience. This bracha's unique position invites us to ponder the extraordinary strength that is bestowed upon us, not only physically but also spiritually, especially when we, the Jewish people, have faced times of weariness and adversity throughout our history. As we recite this bracha each morning during these most challenging times, we are reminded of our enduring spirit and the Divine fortitude that has sustained us through the ages. In essence, it is a powerful testament to our unwavering faith and the remarkable ability to find strength even in the most trying of circumstances, reaffirming our connection with הקדוש ברוך הוא who continually restores our resolve. ■

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TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel

L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Divrei Chizuk

Heroic Faith

The Shabbos I experienced two weeks ago is one I will never forget. My neighbors, Rav Achiya and Idit Eliyahu, were in the middle of sitting shiva for their 19 year old son Ariel H"yd. Ariel had been stationed at the border near Kibbutz Beeri from before Simchat Torah, and he and the soldiers in his tank were the first line of defense when hundreds of terrorists broke through the fence. They managed to kill off many of them but after five hours of fighting, Ariel was eventually killed.

The Eliyahus decided that the Shabbos in the middle of their mourning was going to be a Shabbos of chizuk. Ariel's fellow students from Yeshivat Yerucham had been planning a class reunion for that Shabbos and once they found out that their dear friend had been killed, they decided to move their Shabbaton to our Yishuv in order to be *mechazeik* themselves and the Eliyahu family. The family asked everyone to join them at shul for a beautiful Carlebach Kabbalat Shabat *l'iluy nishmat* their son. When I arrived at shul, I saw a scene I'd never seen there before. The men's side was completely packed with its regular congregants, Ariel's yeshiva friends, and the students from the local yeshiva who came to join as well. But what shocked me the most was the women's section. The

same women's section which typically gets 5-10 women on a regular Friday night, was full beyond capacity. Women, girls, and teenagers of all stripes, many of whom I had never seen in shul before, streamed into shul. Smack in the middle of it all was Idit Eliyahu, with a huge smile on her face as she sang the words of קבלת שבת. The emotions that filled the room were palpable – a mixture of sadness, fear, hope, and unity. The words of Lecha Dodi suddenly took on new meaning:

קומי צאי מתוך ההפכה... רב לך שבת העמק
הבכה... התנערי מעפר קומי... התעוררי התעוררי כי
בא אורח... לא תבושי ולא תכלמי... ובננתה העיר על
תילה... והיו למשיסה שאסין ורחקו כל מבעליך

Arise, go out from amidst the turmoil... in the valley of tears too long you have dwelt... Arise, now, shake off the dust... Wake up, wake up, your light has come.... Be not ashamed, nor confounded... The city will be rebuilt on its former mound... Your plunderers will be plundered and those who swallow you will be distanced...

In the midst of tragedy, Shabbos was giving us all that chizuk and that we so badly needed.

The next morning, I brought my younger daughters to תפילת ילדים. We go to תפילת ילדים on a weekly basis, but this week was not like every week. Idit had initiated this

program around five years ago and she runs it on a weekly basis. At the shiva on Friday, Idit had said to me – “Tomorrow we are going to all go to תפילת ילדים, and we’re not going to cry. We are going to sing and daven with the children, with smiles on our faces.” And so it was, Idit was there front and center. In the middle of mourning for her own child, she was there to encourage and inspire the rest of our children. Throughout the Tefilla, my mind just kept flashbacking back to the week before, Shabbat Simchat Torah. We had all just heard the news that something terrible was happening, though we didn’t really know what. It was time for תפילת ילדים and Idit took the children into the Sukkah and davened with the kids, and explained to them on a pre-school level what was going on. Little did she realize that as she was being *mechazeik* the children, her own son was at the battlefield, fighting a deadly battle. And yet, here she was the next week, in the same place, doing the same thing, with a gaping hole in her heart, but yet she continued on. She told the children about her brave son Ariel and how much he loved children and was so happy that his mother was running Tefillat Yeladim, and how proud she was of him for protecting Am Yisrael. She sang with the children תפילה לשלום המדינה encouraging them to daven for the chayalim to come home safely and had them sing יבנה המקדש over and over again. I had to wipe away the tears from my eyes many times over, because after all, Idit had requested that there be no tears. And I put on a smile because this is עם ישראל - We grieve and we mourn, but in the midst of the sorrow, we have hope, we rise up, and we continue on.

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS

To the Land of Promise

The parsha opens with the celebrated two words: *Lech Lecha*.

Rashi interpreted *lecha*, “for yourself,” to mean that the journey would be for Avraham’s own benefit. “There I will make you a great nation; here, you will not merit children.” The Talmud explicitly states that the special merit of the Holy Land benefited Avraham. But why did Avraham need to be in the Land to receive this blessing?

The seminal medieval philosopher and poet Rabbi Yehudah Halevi explained in his *Kuzari* that the Land of Israel is uniquely suited for the encounter between God and man, given its special metaphysical properties. In his famous dirge “Tziyon Ha-lo Tishali,” Halevi wrote: “The air of your land is the breath of life for our souls,” and many other medieval rabbinic figures adopted this line of thinking about the land’s holiness.

In his eulogy for Rabbi Wolf (Ze’ev) Gold, a leading figure in Religious Zionism and a signatory of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, Rabbi Soloveitchik said:

“I will never forget the evening in 5695 [1935] when I visited Rabbi Gold in Ramat Gan in Eretz Yisrael. He took me out to

the orange groves near his house. It was a beautiful night, the sky was a perfect blue and there were endless stars. The bright moon of Eretz Yisrael shone all over the enchanted beauty. From afar we could see the lights of the new all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv glistening in the dark. The lights were telling us the thrilling and intoxicating news of the rebuilding of the Holy Land. Overwhelmed with emotion, Rabbi Gold



gazed toward the horizon and then turned to me and said: “Whoever does not feel the presence of God in Eretz Yisrael on this beautiful night while looking at the magnificent moon and at these beckoning stars, breathing the clear and pure air filled with the fragrance of blossoming growth, and above all when looking at the glistening lights of the city that was built entirely by Jews, is simply blind.”

Rabbi Gold continued, “Rav Yehudah Halevi was right when he said that prophecy flows unhindered in Eretz Yisrael and we need only a proper vessel to receive its message.”

As we stood there, Rabbi Gold picked up a small pebble and kissed it, to fulfill Rav Abba’s dictum in the Talmud that he would

kiss the rocks of Akko. That night, I thought to myself how insignificant I was compared to this special Jew who was able to experience the glory of God through the grandeur of the landscape of the Land of Israel."

The atmosphere of the Land of Israel is redolent of and with God.

A NATURAL DIVINING ROD

This explains why God said "to the Land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1), usually understood to mean that Avraham was not informed of his destination. Rashi said its identity was withheld "to make it beloved in his eyes." The Ramban explored this a bit more deeply. He theorized that Avraham was not told where to go and wandered until he settled on Canaan, "not knowing that this was the land about which he was commanded." Rabbi Soloveitchik elaborated that the journey was not linear, so that Avraham explored many countries, wondering if he had found the place that God had intended. At that point, God confirmed that he had found it by promising him, "I shall give this land to your offspring" (Genesis 12:7).

The Rav pointed to a strikingly similar scenario later in Avraham's life. When God commanded Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak, He said to do so "on one of the mountains which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:2). Apparently, Avraham would need to identify it intuitively.

What is the significance of Avraham locating these holy sites on his own? The Rav thinks the notion that kedushah, holiness, is an attracting force might be "the greatest discovery made by Avraham." The fact that Avraham could find his way to the holy sites without guidance suggests

that "the Almighty has implanted in the Jew a sensitivity to kedushah, to the holy." In other words, the Jew naturally yearns for holiness and seeks to uncover and recognize it even when on the surface it is not apparent. This further indicates that knowledge of God is not merely abstract and intellectual but passionate and experiential.

This explains why Jews have a special place in their hearts for the Land of Israel and leave reason at the door in all that concerns it. It is our special place, a place where Avraham would go to birth our nation. The Rav explained:

"Our relationship to Eretz Yisrael is that of segulah. Whenever segulah comes to the forefront, to the foreground, ratiocination resigns. You cannot rationalize events which revolve around segulah. There is an element of diminuendos, of the frighteningly strange, and of the hidden ineffable in the segulah's charisma." ■

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book 'Torah United' (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.



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Halachic Principles of *Pikuach Nefesh*

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Introduction: Over the past few weeks, we have on our minds the precious need to save lives, including by “pushing off” Shabbat to enable this. We will now present some of the halachic and practical underpinnings of the laws that *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life) takes precedence over almost all of the Torah’s *mitzvot* and prohibitions.

Principles: While the *gemara* (Yoma 85a-b) cites several possible derivations that *pikuach nefesh* supersedes Shabbat and by extension other prohibitions, the most accepted one is general: the statutes of the Torah are “to live with them” (Vayikra 18:5) and not to die due to them. The nature of the derivation makes the *halacha* broad, conceptually and practically, including when the need or chance of saving is not definite (*ibid.*; see Be’ur Halacha to OC 329:4).

The most important thing needed to make a determination of when *pikuach nefesh* allowances apply is expertise in evaluating the danger. Special weight is given to people whose expertise is professionally recognized, e.g., doctors (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 328:10). However, many times a rabbi,

parent, or bystander will have to make a determination; knowledge and wisdom are helpful, but it is better that he err on the side of concern for life.

There are not clear statistical guidelines as to what counts as danger. Rabbi Akiva Eiger (Shut I:60) mentions in passing that a one thousandth chance of death is not halachic danger. Rav Neuwirth (Shemirat Shabbat K’hilchata 32:2) presents an appealing approach in the name of Rav Auerbach. Danger is not measured actuarially. Rather, just as regarding when one is permitted to enter danger, what society considers dangerous is impactful (see Yevamot 72a), so too *pikuach nefesh* applies to situations that normal people consider life-threatening. This approach explains a limitation important *Acharonim* (see Pitchei Teshuva, Yoreh Deah 363:5; Chazon Ish, Ohalot 22:32) put on life-saving needs – danger must be one that is felt in the short-term (there are likely exceptions). The logic is that it is not normal to look well into the future, and therefore it is not justifiable to violate prohibitions over things that people usually ignore.

A major question involves steps one should take to lessen prohibitions, which we find regarding eating on Yom Kippur (Shulchan Aruch, OC 618:7), eating

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non-kosher foods (ibid. 9) and *melacha* on Shabbat (ibid. 32:15-16). The Kiryat Sefer (Ma'achalot Assurot 14) posits that the requirement to minimize violations is only Rabbinic. Many, not all, agree (see Yechaveh Da'at IV:30; Minchat Shlomo I:7). In any case, the *gemara* (Yoma 84b) limits efforts to minimize violations, saying that saving lives on Shabbat should be carried out by adult Jews, as opposed to having a non-Jew do it. (The latter option is often used when there is great but not life-saving need (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 328:17).) *Rishonim* present two reasons for this exceptional *halacha* (see Beit Yosef, OC 328): 1. Perhaps the non-Jew will not be diligent enough, thus increasing danger. 2. If people get used to looking for a non-Jew, if one is not readily available, they may miss the opportunity to save time. Despite the *gemara*, the Rama (OC 328:12) cites an opinion that we prefer a non-Jew who will do the job well. The Taz (ad loc. 5) disagrees due to the *gemara*, and the Mishna Berura (328:37) is inconclusive.

Practice (in places such as Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital) is that a Jewish doctor will take overall responsibility for orchestrating and doing the saving, but when there is time for a non-Jew to do simple actions, e.g., turning on lights, that is preferred. The Rama (ibid.) likewise adds that one should try to do what he can *b'shinuy* (in an unusual way), to lessen Shabbat violation. On this point, there is less

opposition, which makes sense according to our distinction between the macro and the micro of the efforts to save. The ability to violate Shabbat with a *shinuy* is valuable for encouraging a G-d-fearer who is reticent to violate Shabbat when **he** is not convinced of its pressing nature. ■

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Coping With the Crisis

My original column focused on ways that parents can help their children at home in managing with the wartime stress, especially as it seems that this war may go on for some time. These strategies include four related and sometimes overlapping categories, which, of course, depend on the age of the children and family-specific considerations.

1. Limit exposure to information or content.
2. Encourage children to engage in activities that are some combination of distracting, social, active, and meaningful.
3. Use strategies to help manage your levels of stress, and help your child implement age-appropriate stress-management strategies as well.
4. Offer your child an open ear, so that if or when s/he wants to talk or ask questions, you are a safe and trusted address.

Each of these points deserve their own elaboration, and I encourage any reader to find resources from trusted sources that provide more details.

However, in recent days, I have heard different parenting conversations, and I believe there is value in raising some of the challenges even if solutions to these challenges are more difficult to identify. Over the past several weeks, many families have seen a child, parent, or both leave the home to serve in the war efforts,

and conversations seem to relate to three types of concerns. One prominent issue is how parents can be most supportive to their child who is called up to serve. This question is relevant both before the child departs, such as whether there are specific messages that a parent should offer the child; when the child is granted leave to return home for a few days, such as whether the parent should try to encourage the child to discuss their experiences, or instead be a place where the child can relax and be distracted; and, ultimately, when the child returns home after fulfilling his duties.

In other instances, it is the parent or an older sibling who has been called up, which raises a number of challenges. First, how do the parents speak to their child about the reality that a parent will be out of the house and potentially in harm's way? Second, how does the parent who remains home with the children manage her own stress and be an effective parent for the children whose home life experienced such disruption so abruptly? And third, how should the parent at home answer the children's questions about the safety of their father or sibling who is serving?

A third issue relates to parents who are struggling with their own experience in the war, and they are not able to be there for their children in the way that they want

to be. In some instances, this challenge may be related to the general stress that everyone is under right now. In others, parents may have very unique sources of pressure, such as direct connection to one of the fallen or missing, economic strain due to loss of income, or involvement in ZAKA or other services that are emotionally charged. In such cases, it can be difficult to be present in the home with their children in the way that they would like.

From my perspective, addressing these vast and varied issues requires support on many different levels, for which a full elaboration is well beyond what can be articulated in this column. In this ongoing war, these evolving challenges touch on individual issues—how the parent manages her/his own anxiety; relationship issues—how the parent communicates with the spouse and child; community issues—how do those who are able to support others best provide this support; spiritual issues—how to our Rabbanim, rebbetzins, and other spiritual leaders best create social infrastructures to support these families, and how can they offer direct support to individuals who are struggling?

I recognize that there are likely some issues that are not mentioned here, and that this column does not offer solutions. I would like to ask readers, if they are willing, to share their experiences with us here at parenting@ouisrael.org—both in terms of the challenges, as well as what has worked for you in managing during these times. Your experiences can help others who may be going through something similar.

May Hashem protect all of us, and bring home to safety all of our soldiers and captives. ■

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With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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INSIGHTS INTO THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

DR. ARIELLA AGATSTEIN

The Root of Emunah

OU Israel's Torah Tidbits is honored to welcome Dr. Ariella Agatstein as a new monthly columnist. Dr. Agatstein will be sharing insights concerning the uniqueness of the Hebrew language and the inspiration that we can find in speaking Hebrew and appreciating its profound depth and true beauty.

The great Viktor Frankl, the famous Holocaust survivor who witnessed the horrors of Auschwitz, Dachau and Terezin, wrote famously about man's ability to keep his spirit intact even in the harshest and cruelest environments: "Between the stimulus and response, there is a space. And in that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." Frankl stressed the idea that we have the capability of deciding *how* we want to respond to a given situation, and the great human power which exists in that choice. Our Rabbis attest to this power. In almost every facet of life, Chazal wanted us to maximize our unique ability to choose. They wanted us to have intention and purpose, כוונה, in all of our efforts to serve G-d. "Who is strong?" - "אִיזוֹהוּ גִבּוֹר הַכּוֹשֵׁב אֶת יָצְרוֹ" - "Who is strong? He who conquers his inclination" (Avot

4:1). Rather than simply being impetuous and impulsive, Chazal understood that Hashem wants us to proactively select *how* and *what* our *best* response should be.

In this week's Parsha, we are introduced intimately to a man named Avram. In many ways, Avram, and later Avraham, is the archetype of a בעל בחירה, a human being who mastered his use of choice.

"עשרה נסיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו עליו השלום, ועמד בכולם, להודיע כמה חבתו של אברהם אבינו..."

"Avraham was tested with ten tests and he passed each of them, to show his love [for G-d]..." (Avot 5:3) At each difficult juncture, at each challenge, Avraham worked against his instinct to refine his ability to understand what G-d wanted of him and to respond accordingly. Despite the fear of going to an unknown and foreign place, Avram picked up his family and traveled when Hashem said "לך לך מארצך" - "Go for yourself from your land..." At each turn, when fear could have consumed him- fear of the unknown, fear of being alone, fear of an enemy, fear of a family member, fear for his wife, fear of losing his only son with Sarah, Avraham asked himself only one question: "What does G-d want from me?" -and that is what he chose to do. That is why Avraham was called אברהם "Avram the Hebrew". Rabbi Yehuda

explains that he was called as such because he was עבר, across the river. While he stood on one side of the river, the entire rest of the world was on the other (Beraishit Rabba 42:8). Our Rabbis understood this river to be not just a geographic location, but also symbolic of how Avraham related to the world around him. Physically and spiritually, much like the Jewish people later in history, Avraham was alone. Despite this isolation, Avraham would become אב המון גוים “A father of a multitude of nations”. He would end up leading mankind towards belief in G-d.

Where did he get the strength to make his choices? How did Avraham push past his natural inclination?

In this week's Parsha, we get a glimpse into the answer. Despite his lacking children, yet due to his super-human spiritual choices, Hashem promises him many descendants.

In Beraishit 15: 5-6, Hashem takes Avraham Avinu outside and shows him the night sky and tells him:

הַבֶּטָּה נָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְסַפֵּר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכֵל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זֶרְעֶךָ

“Look toward the Heavens and count the stars if you can count them. And He said to him: So will be your children” In the very next pasuk, the Torah says:

וַהֲאֵמֵן בָּהּ...

“And he believed in Hashem...”

What does it mean to believe in G-d? The root of the word אמונה, belief, is אמנ. Rav Hirsch, in his brilliant commentary on the Torah explains however that to define אמונה, as “belief” is to oversimplify our understanding of the word. He points out that the pasuk does not say “והאמין לו” - as would be written when one humbles his thoughts to those of

another, but rather “והאמין בו” which translates as “and He relied **upon** G-d” in thought and in practice. There are no coincidences in Lashon HaKodesh, in G-d's language. The root of the word אמונה is also the root of the word אומן which translates as an “artist” and also the word for “educator”. Rav Hirsch explains that having אמונה in G-d means surrendering ourselves to G-d being our shaper, the ultimate “Artist” of history. It means yielding to our belief that even when we do not understand, that G-d is our “Teacher” shaping us much like a teacher shapes the minds of his or her students.

When the pasuk says וַהֲאֵמֵן בָּהּ, it means in thought and action, every part of Avraham surrendered himself to G-d's plan and relied upon Him. And like a cycle, the merit of THAT אמונה also effected the outcome. It made Avraham even more worthy of the blessing which G-d wanted to bestow upon him. The Gemara in Shabbat צז. states that the Jewish nation are 'מאמינים בני מאמינים' - “believers and the sons of believers” and quotes Avraham's belief from this Parsha as proof that in our spiritual DNA, we are the sons of those that surrender all to Hashem.

We find ourselves today at one of the most difficult times in Modern Jewish history. We feel traumatized learning of the atrocities which were committed on שמחת תורה in southern Israel. We are trembling and vulnerable and feel weak to the knees. The seemingly impossible has happened. Soldiers and civilians have been murdered, young and old, women and children. In Frankl's language, the “stimulus” has occurred, and now, this space, is the time when we **choose** how to respond to that

stimulus. On a physical level, looking at the Jewish world, it is so incredibly moving, how much we have come together. Secular and religious, young and old, Jews from across the globe have united in ways which has perhaps never been seen in our history. We have channeled our millennia long spirit of survival into crying out “here I am”, marching heroically into war, helping victims, displaces families, soldiers, families of soldiers, raising our voices for those who have been kidnapped. We have taken this “space” of choice and have chosen to sanctify it.

Despite the deep darkness, we have chosen to act much like stars - bringing individual and collective light into the world. And yet, in those moments when fear creeps in, when the magnitude of it all seems too scary, at those moments, we are to follow in Avraham’s footsteps. ‘האמן בה - The Parsha is speaking to us. We are meant to rely on Hashem, to have faith in G-d’s process, even when we don’t yet understand. We are meant to know with clarity that He has, does and always will fight for us. We are meant to know, we are NOT alone. As a nation, by any measure, we should have been annihilated ages ago, but Hashem is our מגן אברהם - Hashem his our ultimate shield of protection. In addition to all of our necessary efforts both on the battlefield and at home, our steadfast belief in Him, WILL further make us even more worthy of his protection and salvation- something our ancestors always knew to be true. When we say אמן after a Bracha, we need remind ourselves we do so as a declaration of faith in Him. “G-d is our Trustworthy King”. We declare that Hashem is whom

we rely upon. We are בני מאמינים – believers and the sons of believers - and specifically when the world has turned its backs on us, and when we feel alone much as Avraham felt on the other side of the “river”, that is the time to remember, G-d is with us and we will prevail. ■

Dr. Ariella Agatstein has been involved in Jewish educational leadership for over 20 years. She received her Doctorate in Jewish Educational Leadership from Azrieli Graduate School, focusing her thesis on the religious development of Modern Orthodox high school students. Dr. Agatstein has taught Limudei Kodesh in various schools throughout the United States and was the Assistant Principal of Girls Judaic Studies in Yeshivat Yavneh of Los Angeles. She subsequently moved with her family and children to Jerusalem where she became an Eshkolot Fellow at the Matan-Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies. Dr. Agatstein continues to lecture all over Israel on topics related to Torah and pedagogy and she remains very passionate about bringing her knowledge and experience to the field of Jewish education in Israel. She is currently the Director of the Bellows Eshkolot Professional Development Fellowship in Matan.

As our prayers and efforts extend on behalf of our valiant soldiers - and the missing, abducted, and wounded - please remember those on the home front who stand alone.



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On the Frontline: EMT Recounts Harrowing Journey From Saving Lives to Surviving a Direct Rocket Attack

Moshe Weitzman from Ashdod was one of the first EMTs to respond to the Hamas massacres in southern Israel on October 7th and drove one of the first civilian ambulances into the then Hamas-controlled areas. On Thursday, October 12th, he was injured when a rocket exploded right next to him. From his hospital bed, Weitzman who serves as a volunteer EMT with United Hatzalah, recounted the incredible life-saving rescues and efforts he had been part of in the past week and a half.

"Although I live in Ashdod, I was at my parents' house in Bnei Brak for the holiday of Simchat Torah when the war began. Early in the morning, there was a rocket siren in Bnei Brak. I understood this was a serious escalation and called dispatch to see what was needed. They told me to go to Petah Tikvah to take an ambulance and start driving south."

Weitzman left immediately and was one of the first EMS personnel to arrive in the Gaza Periphery. "By 8:30 A.M. I was at the entrance to Sderot. While I was driving a civilian motioned for me to stop. He told me 'There is a high-ranking officer here who was shot in the leg'. I took out a bed from the ambulance, put a tourniquet on him, and started transporting him to Barzilai Hospital."

"The sheer quantity of injured people was just something I had never been exposed to. In one instance, I had three patients in the ambulance, one with gunshot injuries in the head who was lying on the bed, and two others who had sustained gunshot wounds in the legs who were sitting on the bench of the ambulance. While I was driving, the second volunteer staffing the ambulance cared for the seriously injured patient, and the other patients had to help as well."

"On the way to the hospital, we saw two intensive care ambulances waiting at the Netivot intersection, their teams were afraid to go further south. We handed off the patients to them and prepared to go back to transport additional patients from the war zone. The other ambulance teams told me 'There are active shooters and gunfire there, don't go in'. I answered 'I know, but I'm going in. I'm saving lives and Jewish tradition teaches us that people who are busy with a positive commandment (mitzvah) do not get hurt. I'm going in.'"

Later on near the Shaar HaNegev intersection, a Yamam fighter signaled to the ambulance team to move away to the side of the road. "I immediately did so and after a second I received a burst of gunfire right over my head. I approached the Yamam fighters, they had two casualties each with shrapnel in their stomachs. Seeing their conditions, I said to the Yamam paramedic, 'Listen,

we're in a war zone, there's no pulse, no breathing, there's not much we can do, they should be pronounced dead.' He said 'I can't do it', so I said 'I understand, it's your friends, I'll do it in your place.' I called dispatch and received a medical consultation to officially pronounce and as I did so, the fighters burst into tears while continuing to shoot at terrorists."

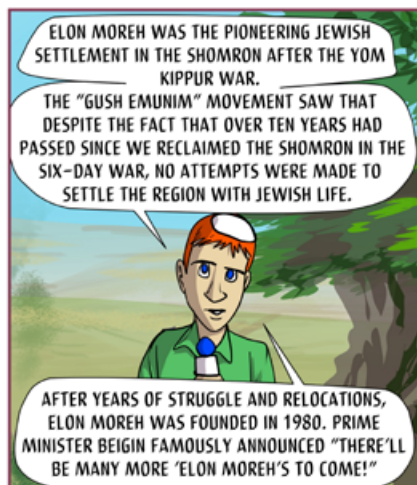
Later on, the volunteers were sent to Kibbutz Beeri where there were reports of numerous injuries. "When I arrived there I connected with the IDF medical teams. The medical officer told me 'I need dozens of ambulances' so I updated the dispatch. There were fighters from all of the elite units. A bit later the medical officer updated me about 5 wounded soldiers that were being brought to the ambulances. One was in critical condition and needed to be evacuated by a 669 helicopter. Altogether, until Sunday at 6:30 P.M. in the evening when the medical officer told me there were no more terrorists in the kibbutz, over 80 wounded IDF fighters passed through my hands with various degrees of injury including some who had to be pronounced dead."

The story didn't end there for Weitzman. After a few days respite from doing ambulance shifts in the Gaza Periphery, Weitzman went back to Sderot, this time to help a family member. He would come back via ambulance, but this time as a patient.

"On Thursday morning I went to help a family member in Sderot and there was a siren," Weitzman recounted. "I had no time to reach a shelter and lay on the ground while I shielded myself with my hands on my head. A missile fell a meter and a half away from me and I was struck by shrapnel. I had shrapnel in my leg and in my shoulder. I was transported by ambulance back to Barzilai Hospital and I underwent surgery. I have to undergo a second operation at a later date, but for now, I am stable. I was told that I would need six months of rehabilitation to get back to having the full range of motion in my limbs. But with the help of everyone's prayers, I will be okay be'ezrat Hashem."









Menucha Lustig
Ra'anana
Chapter Madricha

There is Hope

וקוי ה' יחליפו כח יעלו אבר כנשרים ירצו ולא יגעו ילכו ולא יעפו

"But those who put their hope in the Lord shall renew [their] vigor, they shall raise wings as eagles; they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not tire."

This is a quote from Yeshayahu (40:31), the Haftarah of this week's parsha.

The past few weeks our nation saw an incredible uptick in "hope." The strength and hope from those on the front lines, and in return, the communities giving and fueling them with strength and hope.

יש תקווה - There is hope.

The definition in the dictionary of "Hope" is "a feeling of trust."

What defines our Jewish soul, is knowing we will win, knowing we are Hashem's chosen nation, knowing there is One Hashem, our loving Father.

Esther, a Holocaust survivor, was living in Brooklyn, NY when her granddaughter invited her to join her school's March of the Living trip. That began Esther's career as a participant of numerous trips to Poland. On all her trips, the coordinators knew Esther never cried.

But one trip was different. It was on her

sixth trip to Auschwitz and while addressing the crowd, Esther began to cry. Shocked by her emotional reaction, the coordinators inquired what had caused Esther to cry. She explained that out of the corner of her eye she saw a group of IDF soldiers in uniform. "I never thought I would see green uniforms in the place where my nightmares of gray SS uniforms took place. What we hoped for all along came true."

Hashem promises Avraham in this week's parsha:

כי את-כל-הארץ אשר-אתה ראה לך אתננה ולזרעך עד-עולם

This is our Land. This Land is my Land. This Land is your Land. This Land will always be ours-forever. As children of Avraham Avinu, we will do whatever we can to protect it, and those who dwell in it, both physically and spirituality. And most of all, we will never stop hoping.



Raphael Roshwalb
Ra'anana
12th Grade

Emunah & Resilience: Dust as a Symbol of Perseverance

“ושמתי את זרעך כעפר הארץ”

"And I will make your children as the dust of the earth." (13:16)

How are the Jewish people like the dust of the earth and why, out of the many things Hashem could have blessed us with, why did He choose dust?

One symbolism between the Jewish people

and dust is that everyone walks upon the dust of the earth, and similarly, many nations “step upon” the Jewish people. They kill us in masses and exile us in droves. However, the dust outlasts the people who trod on it, and Hashem blesses us that the Jewish people, too, will prevail over their oppressors.

So many times throughout history people have tried to break us. All of us, especially teens, will come across people who will oppose us and crush us. But throughout all this hardship, we must always remember: “Do not become frightened and abandon your mission,” said Hashem, “because even those people who openly curse and oppose you will envy you in their hearts and pray that their children should be like you when they grow up.”

How we react to difficult situations helps

define who we are as people and what our ultimate priorities are. As we reflect upon this week’s Parsha and the enduring metaphor of dust, let us be reminded that just as dust persists despite being trampled upon, so too shall the Jewish people endure the trials and tribulations that history may bring.

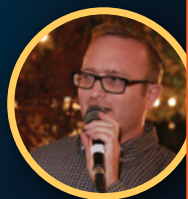
Our strength lies not only in resilience but in how we respond to adversity, rooted in unwavering emunah. Let this be a lesson to all, for in the face of challenges, we can choose unity, compassion, and unwavering commitment to our shared mission, guided by our deep emunah. Together, we can overcome, just as dust rises above those who tread upon it, so too will *Am Yisrael*, fortified by emunah, triumph over those who seek to oppress. Let us carry this message forward, inspiring the world with our unwavering emunah and resilience. ■



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UNITED WE STAND



Dear OU Israel Family,



OU Israel joins *Klal Yisrael* in davening for the welfare of our brave chayalim, those injured and in captivity, and all of our brothers and sisters. **We want to take this opportunity to let you know that we are here for each and every one of you and your families.**

OU Israel continues to monitor the security situation which remains fluid. As such, our adjusted schedule is in progress and subject to change. We are providing ongoing *chizuk* programming which you can access via our website and social media channels.

**To view the updated schedule of all OU Israel Virtual Programs,
and view recordings of previous sessions, please visit**

<https://www.ouisrael.org/program/chizuk/>

In addition to a series of one-time special virtual events, we are offering two daily *chizuk* Zoom sessions. These daily opportunities to come together virtually feature words of *chizuk* and perspective from OU Israel faculty members as well as the opportunity to recite *Tehilim* together virtually.



1. DAILY MORNING CHIZUK ZOOM SESSIONS

SUN.-THURS. @ 10:30 AM

Zoom details for morning sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85274549527?pwd=d1RwTkhwbnJsY1RQUdVhUVpDWjJVZz09>



2. DAILY AFTERNOON CHIZUK ZOOM SESSIONS

SUN. -THURS. @ 5:00 PM

Zoom details for morning sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89573584421?pwd=dmRNck80eStMSEereUxsV3YvbjlIZz09>

Meeting ID: 895 7358 4421, Passcode: 403535

*May HaKadosh Baruch Hu watch over and protect our chayalim,
all those in harm's way, and all of Am Yisrael.*

STUART HERSHKOWITZ

President, OU Israel

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel

RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

@THEOISRUEL

