

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Lech Lecha

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Effective Teaching

Yair Manas

At the beginning of Parshat Lech Lecha, the Torah tells us that Avraham took "the souls that *they* created in Charan," and brought those people to the land of Canaan (Bereishit 12:5). Targum Onkelos (as explained by Radak) explains that Avraham convinced these people to believe in G-d, and not to believe in their idols.

Rashi, quoting a midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 39:14), explains that *they* refers to Avraham and Sarah; Avraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women. Why do the Sages emphasize that Avraham converted the men, and Sarah converted the women?

A second question: At the end of Parshat Lech Lecha, G-d commands Avraham to perform a brit milah. Midrash Tanchuma (Vayeira 3) tells us that after G-d told Avraham to perform a brit milah, Avraham went to ask his friends, Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre, for advice. Aner and Eshkol told Avraham not to undergo the brit milah. Mamre told Avraham to undergo the brit milah, because G-d had commanded Avraham to do so.

This story is surprising. Why did Avraham ask his friends for advice about performing a brit milah? After all, if G-d commanded him to undergo

a brit milah, what does Avraham need advice about? And if Mamre had not endorsed performing the brit milah, would Avraham not have circumcised himself?

Further, another midrashic passage seems to contradict this midrash. Bereishit Rabbah (58:4) tells us that Kiryat Arba was named as such because of the four righteous people who lived there: Aner, Eshkol, Mamrei, and Avraham, all of whom circumcised themselves in Kiryat Arba. If Aner and Eshkol told Avraham to not undergo a brit milah, why did they undergo a brit milah? Further, if Aner and Eshkol told Avraham to violate the will of G-d, why does this passage refer to Aner and Eshkol as righteous people?

The Shem MiShmuel, R' Shmuel Borenstein, quotes an answer from his father, R' Avraham Borenstein, the Avnei Nezer. Avraham devoted his life to helping others develop their relationships with G-d. To do so, Avraham needed to have a relationship with these people. If the people could not relate to Avraham, then Avraham would not have been able to help them to recognize their Creator.

When G-d commanded Avraham to perform a brit milah, Avraham undoubtedly planned to do so. However, Avraham thought that other

people would not be able to relate to him because they would view him as being on a completely different spiritual plateau. Consequently, Avraham was concerned that he would not be able to spread the idea of G-d to others.

Avraham approached Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre, and inquired whether performing a circumcision would prevent others from relating to him. By answering in the affirmative, Aner and Eshkol indicated that a common person would not be able to relate to Avraham's willingness to perform a brit milah on himself. Mamre's answer, on the other hand, indicated to Avraham that some people would understand the idea of circumcision, and they would be able to relate to him. Further, despite Aner and Eshkol's difficulty in understanding the concept of brit milah, they were ready and willing to be circumcised. Thus, the midrash calls them righteous.

Perhaps now we can better understand why Avraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women. Avraham and Sarah needed to have a relationship with each person in order to effectively bring the person closer to G-d. Avraham converted the men because a man, on a deeply rooted, gender-specific level, could relate better to Avraham than he could to Sarah. Sarah converted the women because a woman could relate better to Sarah than she could to Avraham.

All of us are teachers in some way. We teach our family, friends, students, and neighbours. To be effective teachers, we need to make sure that the people we teach can relate to us, ensuring that that we will continue to be effective teachers.

Parshah Questions

R' Mordechai Torczyner

(Answers appear on the back page)

- Where was Avraham living when HaShem commanded, "Leave your land"? (Rashi Bereishit 12:2; Ramban Bereishit 12:1; Ibn Ezra Bereishit 12:1)
- Which laws and customs of blessings are taught in relation to Malki Tzedek's blessing? (Nedarim 32b; Baal haTurim Bereishit 14:19)
- Why did HaShem grant Hagar descendants who would become powerful to the point of harming Yitzchak's descendants? (Onkelos Bereishit 16:11; Ramban Bereishit 16:6)
- *For Children:* What miracle did the king of Sodom experience? (Rashi Bereishit 14:10)

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Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality Witnessing Miracles R' Dovid Zirkind

We recall no event from our history as often as *Yetziat Mitzraim*, the Exodus from Egypt. We are reminded of the story in the final chapter of Shema every evening and morning; the strong hand with which G-d took us out is symbolized in our tefillin; Shabbat is also *zecher l'yetziat mitzraim* – a reference to the Exodus. While the impact and importance of the events in Egypt are undeniable, the frequency with which we reference them is surprising.

A miracle can inspire even the most skeptical of people, as a clear consequence of divine action. The Ramban suggests (Shemot 13:16) that we refer to *Yetziat Mitzraim* so often because miracles of that magnitude and clarity are few and far between. We live in a world of nature, one that can easily be seen as lacking anything Divine at all – but if we live a mitzvah-oriented life we are reminded in one mitzvah after the next that there is more to this world than meets the eye. Just as G-d preformed miracles centuries before our time, He continues to support and guide us in the same manner, every day.

In this context, it is Avraham Avinu our patriarch who comes to mind as the paradigm of a spiritually perceptive individual. While many have tried to explain religion in the most complex of ways, Avraham was a man who saw G-d in the basic elements of the physical world. As R' Yitzchak put it (Midrash Rabbah 39:1) "This may be compared to one who was travelling from place to place, when he saw a burning mansion. He said: Is it possible that this mansion is without someone responsible? The owner of the mansion looked out at him and said: I am the owner of the mansion." With Avraham came the birth of Judaism, not because he revealed things that were hard to see, but because he contemplated what was right in front of him.

Witnessing a rare miracle has the potential to propel us to do great things, but if we want our passion to be truly unwavering we have to find the miracles that are right in front of us each and every day.

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התנערתי מהחול וקמתי להמשיך לצעוד לעבר המחנה, כשאני ממלמל שוב ושוב את מילות התפילה השגרתית, שכל כך הרבה פעמים חזרתי עליה, מבלי להרגיש שאני לא מבין את המילים האחרונות: "מודה אני לפניך מלך חי וקים, שהחזרת בי נשמתך בחמלה רבה אמונתך".

מה זה יכול להיות "רבה אמונתך"? - האמונה של מי? - ניסיתי להבין. לפתע אורו עיני: הרי זה כל כך פשוט! "ריבונו של עולם, אם אתה החלטת לחמול עלי ולהחזיר לי את נשמתך, לאחר שהיא פרח ממני, כנראה שרבה אמונתך. כנראה שהאמונה שלך בי היא רבה מאד. כנראה שעדיין לא מילאתי את השליחות שלי בעולם. ואתה מוכן לתת לי ציאנס.

אם כן, ריבונו של עולם. אם אתה כל כך מאמין בי אשתדל לא לאכזב אותך".

נבין עתה את גודל ההודאה שאנו חייבים לה' בכל בוקר ובוקר. לא רק שה' מחזיר את נשמתנו לגופנו ובכך מאפשר את חיותנו הגשמית. האמונה של ה' בנו היא בעצם הנותנת חיות רוחנית לאדם. כביכול ה' אומר לכל אחד מאיתנו באופן פרטי: "אני מאמין בך, יש בך את הכוח להשתמש ביום נוסף שניתן לך!"

דבריו של דוד בן-יוסף צריכים להדהד בתוך ראשו וליבנו כצו רוחני מתמשך. אשרינו שזכינו לקבל כל יום מחדש הצהרת אמון מהקב"ה בה הוא אומר לנו כי יש לנו עוד מה לפעול ולעשות בעולמו. אם ה' הוא שמאמין בנו כל יום מחדש ונותן בנו אמון שכזה, מי אנו שנמעל באמונו!

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כל בוקר אומרים אנו בתפילה "מודה אני לפניך מלך חי וקים שהחזרת בי נשמתך בחמלה רבה אמונתך". ננסה לבאר: מדוע פותחת התפילה דווקא באמירה זו?

במהלך התפילה עומדים אנו לפני ה' ומבקשים ממנו בקשות שונות, שאנו צריכים בשביל שגרת יומנו. לדוגמא: "חננו מאתך", "סלח לנו", "רפאנו" וכו'. כתוצאה מכך יכולה להיווצר התחושה כי כל הקשר בינינו לבין רבונו של עולם הוא של תועלת בלבד בו אנו דורשים ודורשים. על מנת למנוע מצב זה תוקנה תפילת "מודה אני". בכל לילה כאשר האדם שוכב לישון הוא אינו יודע האם ישוב לחיות בבוקר שלמחרת ולכן כאשר האדם מתעורר בבוקר הוא חש חובה להודות לקב"ה על השבת הנשמה ועל הזכות לחיות יום נוסף. תפילת "מודה אני" מבטאת הכרת תודה אמיתית להקב"ה ומזכירה כי כל התפילה והבקשות שיאמרו במהלכה מגיעות ממקום של הודאה, מקום של הכרה בכוחו של ה' ושל הכרת הטוב.

אולם לפי זה ישנו דבר לא מובן שהרי היינו צריכים להגיד רבה אמונתך, האמונה שלי בה', שהחזיר אליי את נשמת הבוקר. אם כן מדוע אנחנו אומרים "רבה אמונתך"?

ננסה אולי להסביר זאת על ידי קטע שכתב דוד בן-יוסף בסיפרו "האם יש סיכוי לאהבה". דוד שירת כחובש בתחנה לאיסוף פצועים בחזית המצרית במלחמת ששת הימים. הוא מתאר בסיפרו כיצד בעודו עומד לבדו נסע לעברו טנק מצרי ולו אין אפילו נשק בידו. בעודו קורא בקול "שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אחד" ומתכוון למותו, נפקחו עיניו והוא ראה רכב משוריין נטוש בצד הדרך. הוא נכנס לתוכו וירה לכיוון הטנק שהסתובב וברח. דוד מתאר את התחושות שעברו במוחו לאחר המעשה:

613 Mitzvot: Mitzvah 111

Benefiting from an idolatrous offering

R' Mordechai Torczyner

We might think we'd never come across mitzvah #111 – but a short while ago many Jews discovered that they might be unintentionally violating this law, which prohibits benefit from an item that has been brought as an offering for an idol. It seems that hair used in human-hair wigs might come from Hindu hair-cutting ceremonies.

In order to determine whether this hair is forbidden, we need to clarify certain details. Aside from the

question of whether wig hair truly comes from such ceremonies, we must also ascertain whether the hair-cutting ceremony would render the hair an 'offering for an idol' at all. An item only becomes an offering if it is intended as a gift; if the act of removing the hair is for another reason, such as demonstrating submission to the idol, then the hair is not considered an offering.

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**Torah in Translation
A Proper Education****Rabbi Yair Bachrach****Chavot Yair 124****Translated by R' Ezra Goldschmiedt**

Since you've made known to me that [your son] spoke beautifully at his Bar Mitzvah, I assume he's already learned matters of aggada such as Midrash Rabbah and Ein Yaakov that, in truth, are good for young men, like appetizers before the main course. They will also be glorious and beautiful in the ears of those who hear [from him] a particular peshat or derash, or when he hears a talk from a great [scholar] he will loudly interject and make known his knowledge and grasp [of the subject], by which he [himself] will become known as a distinguished scholar. After all that, perhaps he will find a wife and find goodness, wealth and riches.

However, this would be neither the proper path nor the proper city, nor is it the definition of a true scholar who has acquired wisdom, and grown to the point that we would hope he would be able to render good and just rulings in Israel, who is filled with the meat and wine of the [more] substantial matters of Torah.

Concerning the [management of the] stages [of your son's learning], this is a difficult matter for an individual – even one who is wealthy and distinguished – to manage for his son. [And this would be the case as well] even if one were to find a distinguished scholar who would teach for the sake of heaven, without deception and for whom personal gain and reward is not all they have in mind. This already is uncommon, and it may not even exist, but even if you were to look and find [you would face another difficulty].

All who have children who go to school adopt a manner of learning that is not proper – so what could one local [teacher] do, to go against his colleagues and change [this system] and adopt a proper approach against his peers? And even if one's father would hire a teacher for him [alone], is not the greatest need in study the bond with friends, as it is written (Taanit 7a) “[I have learned] more from my friends than my teachers”? There is no solution for this, unless one were to gather together five or six heads of household and hire a teacher for their sons, on condition that none could be added. They would provide [for the teacher] as befits him, as though he had double the students. Then, Divine counsel will be effective through this system of learning.

Unappreciated in his own day, Rav Yair Chaim Bachrach (1638-1702) was one of the greatest Torah scholars of his generation.

Rav Bachrach grew up in Worms, Germany, being raised by his father Samson (who was the local Rav) as well as his grandmother, Chava, who passed away on an attempted journey to Israel. Chava was the granddaughter of the famed Maharal of Prague, and was known for her own vast knowledge of Torah; it is said that Rav Isaiah Horowitz, the Shelah HaKadosh, asked for her hand in marriage but was refused. Rav Bachrach is known most for his responsa, the Chavot Yair, which were named after his grandmother Chava.

A major authority in Jewish law, Rav Bachrach also wrote Mekor Chaim, a running commentary on the Orach Chaim section of Shulchan Aruch. However, after finding that printers were beginning to include the commentaries of the Taz and Magen Avraham alongside the Shulchan Aruch, he humbly withdrew from having his work published. (In 1982, this valuable work was finally produced by Mechon Yerushalayim.)

Besides possessing a vast knowledge of Torah, Rav Bachrach was also well-educated in the arts and sciences.

Rav Bachrach served briefly as the Rav of Koblenz, Trier (Germany), before his position was denied renewal by the German authorities. Moving back to Worms, the community refused to hire him as Rav to succeed his father Samson. Though he was more than qualified, the community felt it inappropriate to hire Rav Bachrach, who had grown up alongside them.

The epitaph on Rav Bachrach's headstone begins “A great and dark horror befalls us from the hiding of the light of our Rabbi...” It was too late when the community of Worms realized whom they had lost.

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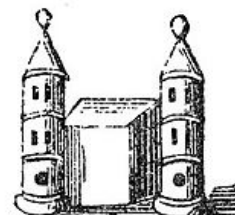
**Ha'Aretz
Shechem****R' Mordechai Torczyner**

The biblical city of Shechem was located north of Yerushalayim, marginally east of the city identified today as Shechem (Nablus). Ancient Shechem witnessed great upheaval; archeological research indicates that it was destroyed approximately twenty times before being utterly leveled in the third century of the common era.

Shechem may be best-known as the site of Dinah's rape and subsequent rescue, but it was also the first site in the future land of Israel where Avraham and Sarah camped and built an altar. It was the site of the sale of Yosef, the burial of Yosef, and Yehoshua's national conclave at which the Jews pledged to adhere to the Torah. Wicked Avimelech was crowned as a shofet at Shechem, Yeravam publicly split the Jews into a northern and southern kingdom at Shechem and declared the site his first capital, and Shechem was the city where the Shomronim (Samaritans) built their own Beit haMikdash atop Mount Gerizim. Roman Emperor Hadrian built a temple to Jupiter on Mount Gerizim, and in the fifth century a church was built on the site.

Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai stood in Shechem until it was destroyed by Arab rioters in 2000. Since then, Jewish worshippers have been blocked from the site, returning for monthly visits only in the last few years, under the protection of the IDF. On Chol haMoed Pesach of this year, 25-year old Ben-Joseph Livnat was shot and killed and three others were wounded at the site by Palestinian officers. For more on this event, see <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4060187,00.html>.

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Kever Yosef in Shechem, as drawn by Rav Uri of Biel, 1564

(Wikipedia)

Where was Avraham living when HaShem commanded, "Leave your land"? (Rashi Bereishit 12:2; Ramban Bereishit 12:1; Ibn Ezra Bereishit 12:1)

- Ibn Ezra was troubled by the Divine command (Bereishit 12:1) to "leave your land," because Avraham and his family had already left their land, Ur Kasdim, to travel to Charan (Bereishit 11:31). Ibn Ezra explained that the command was recorded late, in Bereishit 12, but it had actually occurred earlier, before the family's departure from Ur Kasdim.
- Rashi was also bothered by this problem, but he maintained the Torah's order, arguing that Avraham was indeed in Charan when he was instructed to travel. G-d was simply telling him to distance himself even further from his land, and to depart from his father's newly Charan-based household.
- Ramban rejected the above approaches on textual grounds, and instead applied an idea he had developed first in his comments to Bereishit 11:28. Building on evidence from pesukim as well as midrash, Ramban contended that Avraham was actually born in Charan, and that the family had moved to Ur Kasdim before the birth of Haran, Avraham's brother. Later, as recorded at the end of Parshat

Noach, the family moved back to its original home: Charan. Thus, the instruction to leave his land, the land of his birth, was appropriate for the city of Charan.

Which laws and customs of blessings are taught in relation to Malki Tzedek's blessing? (Talmud, Nedarim 32b; Baal haTurim Bereishit 14:19)

- The Talmud (Nedarim 32b) noted with disapproval that Malki Tzedek blessed Avraham before blessing G-d, and explains that he lost the right to serve G-d as Kohen because of this error. Authorities cite this as a basis for blessing our children on Friday night only after reciting Kiddush (Pele Yoetz citing Zohar I 227), and for reciting a berachah on special foods on Rosh haShanah night (and then eating) before reciting the relevant Yehi Ratzon blessings for our new year (Yechaveh Daat 1:51). This is also a reason for the popular practice of first reciting a berachah on a drink, and then drinking, before toasting, "L'Chayim!"
- Baal haTurim included Malki Tzedek's blessing to G-d within seven biblical passages in which G-d is blessed. These passages parallel the seven blessings of the Shabbat and Yom Tov amidah, and the 100 words which compose these sentences parallel the prescribed 100 blessings

we are to recite daily (Menachot 43b).

Why did HaShem grant Hagar descendants who would become powerful to the point of harming Yitzchak's descendants? (Onkelos Bereishit 16:11; Ramban Bereishit 16:6)

- The Torah says that G-d told Hagar He had heard *onyeich*, which is often rendered as "your suffering." Onkelos, though, rendered the word as *tzloteich*, "your prayer," understanding *oni* as it is used in Devarim 26:5 *v'anita v'amarta* and in other biblical passages. Hagar prayed to G-d, and was rewarded with this son.
- Ramban contended that G-d punished Sarah for her treatment of Hagar, and Avraham for his complicity, by granting Yishmael to Hagar.

For Children: What miracle did the king of Sodom experience? (Rashi Bereishit 14:10)

Rashi cites a midrash that HaShem saved the king of Sodom from a clay pit, in order to demonstrate that G-d is capable of miraculously saving people from situations which should be fatal. This helped people believe that G-d had saved Avraham from a fiery furnace.

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Schedule for November 5-11, 8-14 Marcheshvan

Shabbat November 5

- 7:45 AM** Yair Manas, Parshah, Or Chaim
10:30 AM Yair Manas, Parshah, Clanton Park
1 hour before minchah Yair Manas, Gemara Sukkah, Mizrachi Bayit
45 minutes before minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi, BAYT
After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gem. Avodah Zarah: Voluntary Martyrdom, BAYT

Sunday, November 6

- 8:45 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Halachah: Data Entry on Shabbat, BAYT (\$5 for **CME credit**)
9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, **Hebrew**, Zichron Yisroel
11:50 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam: Hilchot Melachim, Or Chaim, *collegiates*
6:45 PM R' Dovid Zirkind, Gemara Bava Kama, Shaarei Shomayim
After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic issues in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

Monday, November 7

- 8:30 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Siddur: In-depth, Clanton Park, *men series begins November 14*

Tuesday, November 8

- 1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Zecharyah: Alexander and Bucephalus, for Mekorot, Shaarei Shomayim
7:15 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Ramban on Parshah, BAYT
8:00 PM Mrs. Elyssa Goldschmiedt, Malbim on Chumash, TCS, *women*
8:00 PM Yair Manas: Minchat Chinuch, Clanton Park, *men*

Wednesday, November 9

- 10:00 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Dramas of Jewish History: Jewish Monarchy, BEBY, with Melton
12:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Business Lunch and Learn at Zeifman's, Week 2 of 3: Tzedakah: What's Deductible?
8:00 PM R' Dovid Zirkind, Gemara Beitzah chaburah, Shaarei Shomayim
8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam: Hilchot Melachim, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*
9:00 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Ethical Questions for Superheroes, Week 1 of 6, BAYT

Thursday, November 10

- 9:15 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural vs. Superstition, 36 Theodore in Thornhill, *women, with free babysitting*

Friday, November 11

- 8:00 AM** R' Dovid Zirkind, Friday Parsha Preview, Village Shul