



Parshas Lech Lecha

פרשת לך לך

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The Yichus Of Avraham

Avi Rothwachs ('16)

In honor of Shema Koleinu's 25th anniversary, we are proud to present articles throughout the year from past editors of the publication. This week's article comes from Avi Rothwachs, who served as editor in chief of Shema Koleinu in the 2015-2016 schoolyear.

The first two *parshiyos* of the *Torah* progress rather quickly through history. In the span of eleven *perakim*, we jump all the way from creation to around the year 2023 (according to Rashi, Avraham was 75 years old when he went to *Eretz Cana'an*, and we know Avraham was born in the year 1948). During these first *perakim*, the *Torah* tells us a few important stories and the listing of all twenty generations from Adam through Avraham. Finally, we come to a relative stop at the beginning of *Parshas Lech Lecha*, where the *Torah* stops its surge through history to tell us that *Hashem* spoke to Avraham and told him to leave his homeland and travel to *Eretz Cana'an*. There are two questions that must be addressed: What is the purpose of the *Torah* meticulously going through each generation between Adam and Avraham, and what was so special about Avraham that *Hashem* specifically selected him?

Ever since we were children, we have been told of the famous *Medrash* that when Avraham was a little boy, he was watching over his father's shop of idols, when young Avraham suddenly had an epiphany and destroyed all the idols. When his father came back and realized what had occurred, Avraham wittingly blamed all the damage on the biggest idol, claiming that it got upset and destroyed the other idols in its rampage. In this oversimplification of the story, Av-

raham is made out to be the hero who destroyed *avodah zarah*, while his father Terach is portrayed as the villain who makes his living off their sales. However, is this an accurate view of Terach? Obviously, Avraham is the protagonist in the story, but should Terach be regarded as the antagonist?

Terach was an *oved avodah zarah*, an idol worshipper, but there are sources in Chazal which indicate that Terach did *teshuvah*. At the beginning of *Parshas Noach*, the *Medrash* asks why the *Torah* says Noach's name twice, when it writes "And these are the descendants of Noach, Noach was a *tzaddik*.". The *Medrash* answers that repeating one's name twice is a sign of *tzidkus*, righteousness. The *Medrash* questions this idea, because the *Torah* also uses this literary technique at the end of the *parsha* in reference to Terach, as the *possuk* says "And these are the generations of Terach, Terach bore...". But was Terach a *tzaddik*? The *Medrash* answers that yes, Terach was a *tzaddik*, because he did *teshuvah*, and was therefore *zocheh* to have his name written in this doubled way. Rashi quotes this *Medrash* in this week's *parsha* (15:15) to explain why *Hashem* commanded Avraham to bury his father.

But it is very possible that Terach did more than just *teshuvah*. Rav Ari Kahn points out that at the end of *Parshas Noach*, we are told that Terach leaves Ur Kasdim to travel to *Eretz Canaan*, but he falls short and settles in Charan. Why does Terach want to travel to *Eretz Yisroel*? It seems that he was drawn to the inherent holiness of the land, and wanted to experience closeness to *Hashem*. Unfortunately, Terach was not physically strong enough to make the whole

journey but we see that the desire was burning within him.

This is why *Hashem* picked Avraham. Besides Avraham's inherent personality traits and other qualities that made him a born leader, Avraham had Terach as a father. Terach had two qualities that made him, from *Hashem's* perspective, the ideal role model for Avraham that would give him the best chance to succeed. Terach's ability to do *teshuvah* and begin the trip to *Eretz Yisroel* showed that Avraham had in his genes the ability to go against the societal norms that would allow him to break free of the chains of polytheism. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Terach had immense respect for his roots. As Rav Kahn points out, this can be intuited from the fact that Terach was the first person in history to name his son after his father. The ability to be able to recognize the good in one's ancestors is an important aspect of Judaism. Unlike in the secular world, we clearly believe in *yeridas hadoros*, the spiritual decline of generations, and that our parents, grandparents, and so forth, had an advantage in the realm of religious practice

With this explanation of why Avraham was selected to begin a new nation, it becomes clear why the *Torah* had to tell us the generations from Adam to Avraham. Without belittling Avraham's personal greatness, we should be able to say that Avram became Avraham *Avinu* because he had the ability to learn from his father the two important qualities of *teshuvah* and respect for one's roots; it is with this background in mind that one can begin to read the story of Avraham *Avinu*

A SHORT VORT

Akiva Kra (21)

In this week's *parsha*, the *possuk* says:

ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך

"And Hashem said to Avram, 'Go for yourself.'" (*Bereishis* 12:1)

Some *chasidic* and mystical commentaries explain that with these words, *Hashem* was commanding Avram to introspect and look deeper into himself. It is noteworthy that Avram was told to look at himself for inspiration to grow, and not to others, as we might expect. What did **Hashem** want from Avram?

Reb Zushia is cited as having said, "When I arrive in *Olam Haba*, if they ask me, 'Zusha, why did you not attain the spiritual level of the *Baal Shem Tov*?' I will not be frightened, for I am not in the same "league" as the *Baal Shem*. And if they say to me, 'Zusha, why were you not like the *Mezeritcher Maggid*?' I will also not be concerned because how can they expect anyone to be as great as the *Mezeritcher*? What frightens me is when they will ask me, 'Zusha, why weren't you Zusha? Why didn't you become what you could've been?'"

Hashem commanded Avram to go "to himself", to live up to the person that he had the potential to be. For this, Avram needed only to look at himself, to do honest self-reflection and gauge where he was at spiritually. May we all be able to successfully change ourselves for the better, and become the best person we can be.

and appreciate it to its fullness.

A Journey For Life

Avraham Maneritz (23)

The first phrase of *Parshas Lech Lecha* goes:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבְּיַת אָבִיךָ
אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹמְרָא:

“And Hashem said to Avram: go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, from the house of your father, to the land which I will show you” (Bereishis 12:1)

The question is, why does *Hashem* tell Avraham about where he already is? When giving directions, you only need to tell the person where to go, not where they are coming from! But here, it's the exact opposite: *Hashem* says where Avraham is, and doesn't even tell him where he should go. And, why does *Hashem* talk about where Avraham is in three ways: “your land”, “your birthplace”, and “the house of your father”? Why all this focus about where Avraham was leaving from?

The *Torah* is not just a story of events that happened years ago; it is a blueprint for how we should live every single day. “*Lech Lecha*” is a journey, just like our lives. Throughout our lives we try to reach goals to get to a certain point; whether it be physically, psychologically, emotionally, or spiritually, we all have goals. Unfortunately, sometimes, we set a goal and then seem trapped where we are. Tons of people buy gym memberships at New Year's, but the amount of people that actually show up and put in the hours is a lot less. People gravitate back to their old patterns. If we take God's commandment to Avraham and recognize it as speaking to each one of us, then we could avoid these problems. The secret to true movement in life is about how we should travel, If you're stuck, don't always look at the destination. You should look at your baggage holding you back, and untie the shackles of your past. *Hashem* is telling Avram, and each and every one of us, that if we want to find ourselves and go places, we must first relinquish those things which trap us. This is why *Hashem* focuses on Avram's home; *Hashem* was telling him that in order to move, he had to make sure to leave the negative parts of his old life behind.

Specifically, we must let go of three forces that halt us from growing, represented by the three names *Hashem* used for Avram's home. Firstly, we are biased towards ourselves, which may not sound like such a bad thing, but if you only think that you're doing everything right, then you will never grow! We need to understand that we aren't perfect, and that there are things in our lives which can be improved. So, *Hashem* tells Avram to leave “his birthplace”, to be willing to grow and change. Secondly, we are influenced by our parents and our homes. This seems obvious, but we need to understand just how much we can be affected by our environment. *Hashem*

5 Minute Lomdus

Shimi Kaufman (21)

וְנִמְלַתֶם אֶת בְּשַׁר עֲרֻלְתְּכֶם וְהָיָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם:

“And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall act as a sign between Me and you.” (Bereishis 17:11)

Q. The *Gemara* (*Avodah Zarah* 27a) brings that even according to the opinion which maintains that a woman may not perform *milah*, nevertheless, if a woman began the process of *milah*, and a man finished it, the *milah* would be *kosher*. One of the proofs brought for this is from the story of Tziporah, Moshe *Rabbeinu's* wife, who began to do the *milah* on her son and then had Moshe finish it. This is codified as a general rule in the *Teshuvos Beis Ya'akov* (104, as brought by the *Piskei Teshuvos* to *Yoreh De'ah* 264:3), that if someone who is invalid to perform *milah* began to do the *milah*, and someone else finished it, the *milah* is *kosher*. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* elsewhere (*Yoreh De'ah* 2:10) rules that regarding *shechitah* for an animal, if the process was begun by someone who is deemed invalid to perform *shechitah*, such as a non-Jew, and completed by someone who was permitted to *shecht*, the *shechitah* is invalid. Why is it that by *milah*, it is considered acceptable for the *mitzvah* to be begun by someone invalid and completed by someone else, whereas by *shechitah*, this is not acceptable?

A. In regards to *milah*, the main purpose of the *mitzvah* is that the person who is receiving the *milah* should be in a circumcised state; that is to say, that he no longer has an *orlah* (foreskin). While the act of cutting must be performed by someone who is *kosher* for the *mitzvah*, as long as the final cut which actually removes the *orlah* was performed by someone *kosher*, it is irrelevant who began the process, since the main part is the removing of the *orlah*. Regarding *shechitah*, however, while the final intention is that the animal should be in a “*shechted*” state and be permissible to eat, there is still a *mitzvah* that someone who is *kosher* must perform the whole procedure. Thus, the whole *shechitah* from beginning to end must be done by someone who is *kosher*.

therefore tells Avram to leave “the house of his father”, to let go of the influences which he had growing up. The third influence is that of societal pressure. We all want to feel normal and fit in, but that can sometimes lead to us doing things which aren’t so great. *Hashem* therefore tells Avram to leave “his land”; to get out of the societal pressures which led him to do bad things. *Hashem* tells Avraham to leave the shadow of these three forces, and just trust Him. Whether it’s a lifelong journey or just day to day challenges, we should let go of the things holding us back and trust in *Hashem’s* plan.

The True Greatness of Avraham

Moshe Leiberman (24)

In this week’s *parsha*, *Parshas Lech Lecha*, *Hashem* commands Avraham, saying, “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.” (*Bereishis* 12:1). *Hashem* also says, “I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (*Bereishis* 12:2).

What was unique about Avraham that he was selected to be our ‘forefather’? Many other special people came before him (Adam, Noach, etc.). Why was Avraham chosen to specifically be the ‘first Jew’?

We know that there were two areas of *avodas Hashem* which Avraham excelled in. One is the belief in one God (monotheism), and the other is his outstanding level of kindness towards others (*chessed*), specifically when it came to inviting guests (*hachnosas orchim*). So, one reason that Avraham was different from others that came before him was that he was the first person in the world to bring in the idea of monotheism in the face of rampant idolatry. Also, Avraham’s tent was always wide open for *hachnosas orchim*, because he was always so enthusiastic about doing *chessed*. We see that Avraham’s kindness was so essential to who he was and to who our nation is, that the Rambam even describes that someone who doesn’t express the trait of kindness, might not be considered a Jew. Perhaps Avraham was chosen because he was the first one to display this trait of kindness.

Is there a connection between these two areas, or is it just a coincidence that these are the two things that Avraham brought to the world?

When a person develops *emunah* in *Hashem*, they quickly learn that they are not the most important thing in the world, and that they can’t always prioritize themselves over *Hashem*. For example, when *Hashem* commanded Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak, Av-

raham complied, and trusted in *Hashem* that everything would work out. Similarly, with *chessed*, we prioritize the guest or the person we are doing *chessed* for before ourselves. We can learn this from Avraham, who treated three seemingly ordinary people with incredible kindness when they came to his tent, even though he didn’t know that they were really angels. Although that story of Avraham is an extreme case of *chessed*, which made him specifically unique, we can also apply this to our lives, by always trying to live life in the way that *Hashem* wants, and by constantly looking to see how we can help others.

In The Words of Hashem

Issac Cohen (23)

Parshas Lech Lecha is an action packed *parsha*. We are introduced to so many new people, and on top of that, we learn about them through various important events. One event that stands out in particular is the *Bris Bein Habesarim*.

The *Bris Bein Habesarim* can be considered one of the most important events in Jewish history. *Hashem* tells Avraham how his descendants will gain the land of *Eretz Yisroel* after their enslavement in Mitzrayim, as the *possuk* states:

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְזָרְעוֹךָ נִתְּנָה
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִן־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדוֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת:

“On that day, the Lord formed a covenant with Avram, saying, “To your seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt until the great river, the Euphrates river” (*Bereishis* 15:18).

Upon further inspection of the *possuk*, we see that *Hashem* says “I have given” in past tense. At this point in Jewish history, Avraham had no Jewish descendants at all, much less ones that already inherited *Eretz Yisroel*. If this is so, why does *Hashem* say “I have given this land to your descendants” in the past tense?

Rashi answers that we learn from this that when *Hashem* promises anything, instead of being just words, they are turned into actions. Therefore, when *Hashem* says “I will”, it is considered as if it already happened, and it is correct to place it in the past tense.

The *Ohr Hachayim* gives a different approach. Earlier,

Hashem tells Avraham “Up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you”(Bereishis 13:17). According to the laws of *chazakah*, by Avraham performing this action, he legally ‘acquired’ *Eretz Yisroel*. Therefore, *Hashem* told this to Avraham in the past tense, because Avraham had already acquired the land.

Let's take a step back and reanalyze the *possuk*. *Hashem* promises Avraham that his descendants will inherit *Eretz Yisroel*. However, in the *pesukim*, Avraham says to *Hashem* "Behold, You have given me no seed, and behold, one of my household will inherit me"(Bereishis 15:3). *Hagaon* Rav Moshe Feinstein asks why Avraham made this request, if *Hashem* already told him multiple times that he would have children. Why would Avraham ask again if *Hashem* already promised to make him into a great nation? In addition, later on (Bereishis 17:3), when Avraham hears he will be blessed to have a child, he rejoices again. Why was it at that time Avraham did not rejoice, but suddenly now he does?

Avraham always believed in *Hashem*. When Avraham built a *mizbeiach* in Beis El and Eli, Rashi (Bereishis 12:8) tells us that he prayed to *Hashem* because he prophesied that his descendants will have trouble there due to the sin of Achan. From this we see that Avraham knew he would have children. If Avraham knew he would have long-lasting descendants, our question becomes even stronger - why did he continue to petition *Hashem* if he knew his request had already been granted?

Avraham learned the mistakes of Noach. Noach's children had become the *dor haflagah*, the “generation of dispute”. Avraham didn't know how his children would turn out, and didn't want them to be like Noach's. Therefore, Avraham prayed that his children would have his characteristics, and even the ones who would not be so good would have the mark of a Jew. Before the prayers of Avraham, his seed is compared to the dust of the earth, but afterwards, his children were compared to the stars in heaven. Avraham was *davening* not only that he should have children, but that they should be chosen by *Hashem* just like he was. It is our job as *talmidim* at MTA to demonstrate the prayers of Avraham, and show everyone what the mark of a Jew is.

Avraham The Ivri
Aryeh Klein (22)

In this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Lech Lecha*, God famously speaks to Avraham (at this point Avram), saying “Go forth from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.” This verse is the first *possuk* in the *parsha*, and what God commands Avraham is no small matter. Avraham must leave his family, his friends, and everything he's ever known to go to an unknown land. In addition to this, Avraham knows next to nothing about this land that he will be traveling to. Rambam on *Pirkei Avos* notes that this was the first of ten tests Avraham would be given. All Avraham had was his full belief in *Hashem* when he left. Why was God asking so much of Avraham, and how was Avraham able to have this level of *emunah* (trust) in *Hashem*?

Avraham is referred to as an *Ivri* (Hebrew), from the word *eiver* (,which means “other side”). Taken literally, this refers to how Avraham made his journey to Cana'an from the other side of the Euphrates River. However, Chazal derive something else from this language of *Ivri*. Chazal explain that Avraham was different from everyone else; that the whole world was on one side, with Avraham on the other. Avraham's belief in *Hashem* was different from everyone else around him, that even when all others around him were enveloped in sin, Avraham was able to keep his *emunah*. In fact, in many *midrashim*, Avraham is said to have been studying the world and thinking about God, even as everyone around him worshipped idols. This again shows how Avraham was different from others. Avraham forged his own path, making him a true “*Ivri*”.

To strengthen this idea, Rashi comments on the first *possuk* of *Lech Lecha*, that the word “*lecha*” means “for your benefit”. What Rashi is explaining here is that God wanted Avraham to leave, as it would benefit Avraham himself. This command of leaving his father's house was not only physical but also spiritual, as Avraham was leaving those who didn't believe in God behind.

Avraham's incredible belief in *Hashem*, his passion for being good even when others were not, and his journey teach us some beautiful lessons. Although we rarely know what it is, God always has a plan for us, and just like Avraham trusted that God had his best intentions at heart, we should have faith that *Hashem* is watching us and preparing our path. In addition to that, we see from Avraham's immense strength and courage in being different that even if those around us are sinning, we cannot let ourselves be influenced. Finally, we learn that when others are trying to do better in their *mitzvos* and leave their metaphorical

CHUMASH B'YUN

Sarah and Hagar – Diversity of Opinions

Rabbi Mayer Schiller

The *possuk* tells us that Sarai punished Hagar with forcing her to engage in “difficult work” (*Bereishis* 16:6). In *Bereishis Rabbah* there are two explanations of what this work was. R. Berachyah maintains that she struck Hagar with her shoe, while R. Abba bar Kahana sees it as forcing her to carry Sarai's pails of hot water and bathing equipment to the bath house. The latter was, according to the commentators on the *Midrash*, work given to the lowliest slaves.

Rashi leaves out the specifics of what Sarai did, but the *Masiach Ilmim* adds that “no torture was involved, as this would have violate Sarai's saintliness.” Following Rashi's general approach on the matter, Sarai was justified in her behavior. He cites the *Midrash* that Hagar told people that Sarai was not as righteous as she seemed, since “she was not found worthy of pregnancy for all those years, while I conceived from the first relations.” (Rashi on 16:4)

Sarai's complaints were not limited to Hagar. She also prayed that Avram be punished, at least according to the *Nachlas Yaakov* on Rashi (16:5). Her complaints to Avram were two fold, both offered in Rashi from *Bereishis Rabbah* (45:5). First, because Avram only prayed that he have children and not Sarai. Secondly because he unjustly withheld his words from her, for “you heard her being disgraced by Hagar, yet you are silent.” (Rashi 16:5).

To this, Avram gives in, and tells Sarai “your maidservant is in your hand, do to her as you see fit.” This leads to Sarai affecting Hagar, as mentioned above, and Hagar's running away.

Following this approach, we find Sarai seemingly ignoring originally the fact that Avram did not pray for her and nonetheless giving her slave to Avram in order to “perhaps build myself through her.” (ibid 16: 2) According to Rashi (ibid), Sarai hoped to receive merit “because I gave my maidservant to my husband.”

It is only after Hagar begins to publicly mock her that Sarai turns her complaints on Avram. Avram accepts this argument, and gives Sarai free reign over Hagar's future. Once Hagar flees, angels appear to her and urge that she return to “your mistress and submit yourself to her domination.” (ibid 16:9)

There is no indication in this approach of Rashi that Sarai was anything but correct, and this seems verified by Avram's agreement.

However, the Ramban adopts a very different understanding of the banishment of Hagar. He states quite clearly, “Our matriarch Sarah sinned in this oppression of Hagar, as did Avraham for allowing her to do so. God therefore heard her prayer and gave her a son who would be a ' wild ass of a man' (16:12), to oppress the descendants of Avraham and Sarah with all sorts of oppression.”

Following the Ramban, we can understand Avroham's reluctance to later send Hagar and Yishmael away (*Bereishis* 21: 8 – 13). Although there we find that Yishmael committed serious offenses, according to Rashi even including idolatry and murder or, according to the Ramban, slave rebellion, Avraham requires God's explicit assurance that sending Hagar and Yishmael away was the right thing to do. It seems that Avrohom was still shaken by the error he made in the first banishment.

The notion that the first banishment was a sin is also believed by the Radak and *Ba'al Haturim*. The latter goes so far as to say that the eventual conquest of the land by Hagar's descendants was due to the enormity of this act of cruelty.

The Ramban is thus compelled to view the angel's command that Hagar return and submit to her mistress in order that in the future “the children of Sarah would rule over Hagar's descendants forever.” (ibid 16:9)

To sum up according to the Ramban: The first exiling of Hagar was an unjustifiable sin. To what degree he would agree with the *Midrashim* cited by Rashi as to Hagar's misdeeds we don't know. The second expulsion was justified, and despite Avraham's hesitancy, was correct. The first exiling, being wrong, brought long term suffering upon the Jewish people. It had to be countered by Hagar's return and submission to Sarai, in order that eventually Jewry would triumph over Yishmael's people.

Proper understanding of the *parsha* offers two options: Rashi, who sees Sarai as being correct, and the Ramban, who views it as an evil act. What Avram, according to the Ramban, should have done to pacify Sarai is unclear.

Theologically, the idea that future national power, defeat or victory, hinged on the actions of avos is astonishing. We see here the metaphysical connectedness of our generations, and their effects upon all eras. As to the correct reading of Hagar's banishment, we are ultimately unable to establish an approach that can combine Rashi and the Ramban.

FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

"Walk Before Me, And Be Whole"

Near the end of this week's *parsha*, *Hashem* appears to Avraham to give him the *mitzvah* of *bris milah*, circumcision. From the *pesukim*, it appears that the purpose of the *mitzvah* is to serve as a covenant of sorts, marking Avraham and his descendants as *Hashem's* chosen people. At the very beginning, however, *Hashem* adds what appears to be, on the face of it, a generic exhortation towards good. The *possuk* says:

וְהָיָה אֲבָרָם בֶּן־תְּשָׁעִים שָׁנָה וַתֵּשַׁע שָׁנָיִם וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־אֲבָרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי־אֵל שְׁדֵי הַתְּהִלָּה לְפָנַי וְהָיָה תָמִים:
"And Avram was 99 years of age, and Hashem appeared to Avraham, saying: 'I am Kel-Shakkai, walk before me, and be whole'" (Bereishis 17:1).

Many *meforshim* seize onto the seemingly superfluous nature of this *possuk*, specifically the commandment to be "*tamim*", meaning 'perfect' or 'whole'. Rashi comments that this word is meant to hint at the necessity of Avraham's *milah*; so long as he was uncircumcised, Avraham had a sort of spiritual blemish which made him somewhat incomplete in the eyes of *Hashem*. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the *Beis Halevi*, seizes onto the connection between this commandment and the impending *mitzvah* of *milah*. He writes that the *Rishonim* drew a distinction within the *mitzvah* of *bris milah*; is the fundamental nature of the *mitzvah* the removal of a spiritual flaw which existed in the form of the *orlah* (foreskin), or the addition of an extra level of *kedushah* which comes with entering into *Hashem's* sacred covenant? He explains that both of these ideas can be seen in our *possuk*, with "walk before me" alluding to the active entering into the covenant of the *Bnei Avraham*, and "be whole" alluding to the removal of the metaphysical imperfection which is implicit in the uncircumcised body. Thus, both of these factors are essential parts of the *mitzvah*.

(The *Beis Halevi* also goes on to explain that this distinction explains the two separate parts of a *milah*, those being *chatichah*, the cutting, and *periah*, the removal of the inner layer of the foreskin. He explains that the *chatichah* is primarily intended to remove the negative blemish, while the *periah* is what brings the one who is being circumcised to a new level of *kedushah*.)

Two questions emerge here. One, what exactly is the nature of the defect which needs to be removed through the process of *bris milah*? And two, why is it necessary for the *mitzvah* of *milah* to have two distinct aspects? Why is it insufficient for there to be one process by which the child is simultaneously removed from their spiritual deficiency and brought to a higher level of sanctity?

To answer this question, we can turn to another comment of the *Beis Halevi*, on the very same *possuk*. The *Beis Halevi* writes that *Hashem's* command to Avraham to be "*tamim*" is intended to mean that Avraham should be willing to perform the will of his Creator without any questions or doubts. He goes on to say that while we are of course obligated to delve into the reasons and intentions of *mitzvos*, at the end of the day, to be *tamim* means to perform the *mitzvos* and follow *Hashem* regardless of whether or not we understand why we do what we do. In a similar vein, Rav Chaim Brisker, the son of the *Beis Halevi*, once commented that the phrase "*ta'amei hamitzvos*" should not be translated as "the reasons for the *mitzvos*", but rather, more literally, as "the flavor of the *mitzvos*". In other words, while explaining *ta'amei hamitzvos* gives a nice "flavor" to the *mitzvos* which we do, we cannot make the mistake of believing that the *mitzvos* are subject to our mortal judgements. Another example of someone whom the *Torah* calls *tamim* is Noach (*Bereishis* 6:9). Noach was characterized by his 120 years of building the *teivah*, without ever once questioning *Hashem's* command. The key to being a "*tam*" is to commit to following the word of *Hashem*, whether or not we understand the reasons behind it. This is an essential quality for someone who wants to enter into the *kahal* of *Bnei Yisroel*.

The *orlah* is commonly used as a metaphor for a form of spiritual blockage; the *possuk* (*Devarim* 10:16) implores us to "circumcise the *orlah* of our hearts" in deference to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. With the explanation of the *Beis Halevi*, we can explain that the deficiency of the *orlah* is the notion of continuing to

trust one's own intuition and logic in *avodas Hashem*. If one does this, it is impossible to serve *Hashem* properly, as his service is always dependent on some logical dictum or derivation. As the *mishnah* (*Avos* 5:17) writes, "a love which depends on something else cannot stand; a love which is not dependent on anything else will remain forever." A true *ta m* has removed the *orlah* of their heart, and submitted themselves fully to the wisdom and guidance of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*.

However, this alone is not sufficient. It is not enough to simply fulfil the *mitzvos* which we do not understand quietly and without complaint. We must be especially proud of these *mitzvos*, defending them and performing them with extra care. This is the second part of the phrase, where Avraham is commanded to "walk before Me". This was the core difference between Avraham and Noach. While Noach may have been a *tam*, the *possuk* describes his as "walking with *Hashem*." In other words, Noach was content to walk with *Hashem*, fulfilling his duty without complaint, but he would not walk before *Hashem*, declaring his loyalty to the Creator without any reservations. This is why Noach was unable to get his generation to do *teshuvah*; he was too timid to stand up for the integrity of the Divine Will. Avraham, in contrast, was willing to be thrown into a fiery furnace before renouncing his beliefs, even in the face of scorn from the rest of the entire world! In order to truly be *Bnei Avraham*, we need to not only be willing to follow *Hashem* even when we don't understand his *mitzvos*, but we need to have the fortitude and confidence to "walk before *Hashem*", to stand up and defend our beliefs and practices when challenged by those around us.

This is why *bris milah* was given to Avraham and not Noach; Avraham was a warrior of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* who never once questioned his values, but who also never hid or obfuscated them. To truly be a *ba'al bris*, a member of *Hashem's* covenant, one must have the moral fortitude and courage to stand up for *Hashem's* word, even if the reason is not clear to us. We cannot blur the words of the *Torah* to satisfy those who do not believe in them, or make concessions which adhere to the *halachic* guidelines of the law but undermine its integrity; as *Bnei Avraham*, we are duty-bound to stand up for our *mesorah* proudly in all circumstances, regardless of all else.

Wishing everyone an amazing *Shabbos*,
-Shimi Kaufman

WISDOM FROM THE HAFTORAH

“הלוא ידעת אם-לא שמעת אלהי עולם יהוה בורא קצות הארץ לא יעף ולא יגע אין חקר לתבונתו”

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The God Hashem has existed for eternity; He created the ends of the Earth, He does not tire or grow weary, and His there is no comprehending his wisdom (Yeshayahu 40:28).

The *Chovos Halevavos*, in his *hakdomah* (introduction) to his *sefer*, points out that there is a seemingly superfluous double phrase in the beginning of this *possuk*, namely, the repetition of "*halo yadata*" - do you not know, and "*im lo shamata*" - have you not heard. He explains that "*yediah*", knowing, implies learning about *Hashem* through philosophical inquiry and logical discourse. In contrast, "*shemiah*", hearing, refers to our unbreakable *mesorah* which is transferred from parent to child, all the way back to *Har Sinai*. He explains that this "*shemiah*" is placed after the "*yediah*" in the *possuk* in order to teach us that no matter where our logical pursuits may take us, at the end of the day, they must always come back to the "*shemiah*", the timeless tradition of our ancestors. While it is incumbent on anyone who can to probe into the depths of *halacha* and *hashkafa*, one must make sure that his inquiries do not lead him on a path which is contrary to the *Torah* position. This, comments the *Pas Lechem*, is the methodology of the Jewish secularist philosophers, who ended up constructing modes of thought which were completely out of the boundaries defined by Chazal. Rav Aharon Kahn *shlit"a*, one of the *RIETS roshei yeshiva*, once wrote that there were two philosophy students who scoured the writings of Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, The Rav, looking for some philosophical "*chiddush*" (novelty). They were sorely disappointed when they realized that fundamentally, the Rav was espousing the same core beliefs as his ancestors, albeit with added depth and dimension enhanced by philosophy. While it is essential to learn and expand our knowledge of *Torah* and *hashkofah*, we must always ensure that we are properly grounded in the *mesorah*.

GEDOLIM GLIMPSE: TSHEBINER REBBE

Meir Morell ('22)

Rabbi Dov Berish Weidenfeld (1881–1965) was born in Hrimlov, Galicia (now Ukraine) on 5 *Shevat*, 5641 (January 5th, 1881) to his father, Yaakov 'Yekele' Weidenfeld, rabbi of the town and author of the responsa *Kochav MiYaakov*. Dov Berish's father died shortly after his *bar mitzvah*. His mother, Rochel (who wrote a great number of her husband's responsa on dictation), daughter of R' Shabsai HaKohen Rappaport, *Av Beis Din* of Dabrova Gornicza (Dombrova), was tasked with raising Dov Berish and his two older brothers, Reb Yitzchak, who replaced his late father as Rav of Hrimlov, and Reb Nachum, Rav of Dombrovo and author of the *Chazon Nachum*, later celebrated as a great *posek* in his own right.



At 19, Reb Rav Dov Berish entered by marriage into the illustrious family of Rav Yisroel Yoseif *Hacharif* of Tshubin. Since he did not want any rabbinic post, his wife had a modest coal business, while he continued his single-minded pursuit of *Torah* study, amassing knowledge of phenomenal breadth and scope. Nonetheless, the great number of requests from varied communities that he should lead them as their Rav continued, and his friend, Reb Meir Arik, prayed that his business fail so that *Klal Yisrael* would not be deprived of his leadership. For twenty years, this "Tshabiner *baal habayis*" (layman) – already renowned as the "Gaon of Tshubin" – was consulted by leading rabbanim, with whom he maintained a strong correspondence; still he remained deaf to all rabbinical offers. However, due to his love of learning and teaching, he would commute daily to and from Krakow to say *shiurim* to the local *bachurim* after business hours.

He carefully collected copies of these responsa mentioned above, amassing enough material to publish ten volumes. In 1937 he succeeded in producing the first and only sefer ever printed in Tshubin, entitled *Doveiv Meishorim* – the other nine volumes were never published.

His noted son-in-law, his successor as *rosh yeshivah* of *Kochav MiYaakov*, and a noted *gaon* and author in his own right, Rabbi Baruch Shimon Schneersohn, relates that upon republishing these responsa some 26 years after they were written, he included the Rebbe's subsequent handwritten glosses to the first edition. He found not one correction, only additional proofs to those very answers originally written without as much as a *Gemara*.

The Tshabiner Rav's picture, along with those of the Rebbes of Ger and Belz, had appeared in the venomous tabloid *Der Sturmer*, his caption reading: "The world's greatest Talmudist." Realizing that he was a target for elimination, he fled, crossing the Communist border and entering Lvov (Lemberg). Communist authorities were carrying out their systematic destruction of religious life, and the *gaon* of Tshubin, along with his wife, youngest daughter and thousands of other Jews, were deported to Siberia, arriving in Sverdlovsk, Siberia, in late 1940.

The Tshabiner Rav arrived on *Erev Pesach*, 1946, in Jerusalem, which he was to call home for the rest of his life. He was soon recognized as one of the leaders of *Chareidi* Jewry in Israel, and served as a leading member of the *Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah* of *Agudas Yisroel*.

He established the *Kochav MiYaakov yeshivah* in Jerusalem, first in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, and later in a purpose-built building in Tel Arza.

He died on the 10th of *Cheshvan*, 5726, 70 minutes before *Shabbos*. He was buried on *Har Hamenuchos*.

PARSHA PUZZLERS

Submit your answers to shemakoleinu@yuhsb.org along with your name and cell phone number to be entered into a raffle at the end of the sefer! 1 answer = 1 entry!
(Hint: Use the commentaries in the Mekraos Gedolos Chumashim, along with the Toldos Aharon on the side to find relevant Gemaras and Midrashim)

1. In this week's *parsha*, Avraham is called an "Ivri" (*Bereishis* 14:13). Who is the only other person in the *Torah* to be referred to as an *Ivri*?
2. What article of clothing appears in this *parsha*, and nowhere else in the *Torah*?
3. How old was Avraham when he began to recognize *Hashem*? Give 3 opinions.
(Bonus point: name four!)

HALACHA HASHAVUAH

Yosef Weiner (23)

Bris Milah: Attendance Mandated?

In *Parshas Lech-Lecha*, Hashem commands Avraham of the *mitzvah* of *bris milah*, which is so significant that *halachah* governs even the specifics of attending (or refusing) the *seudas mitzvah* (festive meal) of a *bris*.

After listing seven things for which one is “excommunicated from Heaven”, the *Gemara* cites an opinion that one who does not join a group celebrating a *mitzvah* is also “excommunicated from Heaven” (*Pesachim* 113b). The *Rashbam* (113b) and *Tosfos* (114a) say that a *bris milah* as well as a wedding of a *bas kohen* (daughter of a *kohen*) to a *kohen* would be in this category. The *Rama* codifies that whoever does not participate in the meal that accompanies a *bris* is like one who is “excommunicated from Heaven.” However, he rules that if there are improper people at the *bris*, one need not attend (*Yoreh De’ah* 265:12). Furthermore, some maintain that a *shamash* (and by extension everyone else) should not invite people to a *bris* directly (*Pischei Teshuvah Yoreh De’ah* 265:18). Rather, they should inform people as to where and when the *bris* will be. This way, if one could not attend, they would not be subject to the above “excommunication from Heaven.” The *Aruch Hashulchan* states that getting an invitation nowadays to a *bris* wouldn’t pose much of a problem, because there are typically improper people at a *bris*. (*Yoreh De’ah* 265:37). The *Kaf Hachayim* (90:67) and Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (*Salmas Chaim Orach Chayim* 213) are of the opinion that even if one is invited to a *bris*, they should not forego *tefillah bitzibbur* in order to attend, and their not attending does not include them in those who are “excommunicated from Heaven.” Moreover, some maintain that the obligation only applies when there would be no *minyán* without one’s presence (*Yafeh Lalev* Vol. 3 265:12). Rav Shmuel Wosner states that if one needs to learn *Torah* or do some other *mitzvah* he is freed from the obligation to attend; although, his personal practice was to take some food from the *bris* to eat at home. (*Shevet Halevi* Vol. 8 217:2). There is also an opinion that if one is at a *bris*, he should not refrain from partaking, but there is no obligation to go to a *bris* if one is merely invited. This ruling is based on the *Rema*’s wording of “all those who do not eat”, and not all those who do not come to eat. (*Divrei Yatziv, Yoreh De’ah* Vol. 2 163:1)

CHASIDUS ON THE PARSHA

Feshurin Gorscher (21)

In this week’s *parsha*, Hashem tells Avram that he must leave from three different places: from his land, from his birthplace, and from the house of his father. The *Noam Elimelech*, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1787) artfully explains that these three places refer to the three steps that one must take to fully connect with Hashem. Firstly, one must break his connection with the enjoyment of this world, and ensure that all the enjoyment that they get from the physical world is only for the sake of Hashem. (See *Mesilas Yesharim* Chapter 26 for advice on how to apply this practically.) The *Rebbe* explains that this is what it means when one serves “*elohim acheriem*”, other gods; the word *elohim* has the same *gematriya* (numerical value) as *tevah*, meaning nature. When someone uses the natural world which Hashem gave him for a purpose that is prohibited by the *Torah*, it is like he is serving foreign gods. Hashem therefore instructed Avraham to leave from his land. One’s land is the place where one picks up his desires and wants. Thus, Hashem told Avraham that in order to grow in his *avodas Hashem*, he needed to abandon “his land”, partaking in the physical world not for his sake, but for God’s sake. Secondly, after one deals with their physical desires, one must work on their innate emotions that are there when he leaves his mother’s womb, such as fear, anger, and rage. This parallels Avram being told that he must leave his birthplace, as these emotions and traits are there from the time that one is born. Lastly, one must not only work on his own personal relationship with God, but he must also want to help others connect to Hashem. He must always keep on pushing on for greater heights, each day growing a little more. We see this when Avram is commanded to leave the house of his father. When we are at our parents’ house, it looks like all of our actions are correct; our parents take great pride in everything we do, and we are at the top of the world. We have to step away from that, to see that we are not as perfect as our parents may view us as. This will allow us to see our faults and how we can work on them to reach even greater heights. This all seems like it would be impossible to reach even the first level, but this is not true. All that is asked from us is to start the journey; the rest comes from Hashem!

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: ANIMALS IN THE PARSHA

Yisroel David Rosenberg (23)
Korbanos Without a Beis Hamikdash

In *Maseches Megillah* (31b), the *Gemara* relates and explains a conversation between *Hashem* and Avraham from this week's *parsha*. The *Gemara* quotes how Avraham says to *Hashem*:

"במה אדע כי אירשנה"

"How will I know that I will inherit it [the land]?" (*Bereishis* 15:8)

The *Gemara* explains Avraham's question as the following: What if, *chas vishalom*, *Bnei Yisroel* sin, and *Hashem* comes to wipe them out as He did with the *dor hamabul* and the *dor haflagah*? What will be the proof to Avraham that his descendants will receive the land even if they do sin? *Hashem* answers Avraham by telling him to complete the *Bris Bein Habesarim*, this being the promise that He won't destroy *Bnei Yisroel* because they bring *korbanos* to Him.

This only seems to apply, however, to a time when the *Beis Hamikdash* is standing, when *korbanos* can be brought. When Avraham raises this concern, *Hashem* tells him that the *seder korbanos*, all the *pesukim* of *korbanos*, are established such that *Bnei Yisroel* can read them in place of bringing the actual offerings. When they do this, *Hashem* says, He will consider it as if they have brought the *korbanos*, and He will forgive them for their sins. This can be done even during a time *she'ein Beis Hamikdash kayam*, when the *Beis Hamikdash* is not standing.

Rav Hershel Schacter explains based on this *Gemara* that there may be a *chiyuv de'oraisa* (Biblical commandment) to say the *parsha* of the *Korban Tamid* and the *Ketores* every day. Since, during a time without the *Beis Hamikdash*, reading the *pesukim* of the *korbanos* is equated to actually bringing them, we must read them everyday.

This is similar to the *Tosfos* in *Megillah* (30b), which says that there is no real source in the *Talmud* as to why we read the *korbanos hayom* from a second *Sefer Torah* on *yamim tovim*. The *Gemara* from 31b, which talks about reading the *parshiyos* of *korbanos* when they can't be brought, can be understood as a small source to this practice.

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Parsha Summary

Hashem told Avram to leave his father's house and go, along with his nephew Lot and wife Sarai, to the Land Of Cana'an, where *Hashem* promised to make him into a great nation. Soon after arriving in Cana'an, however, a famine broke out, which forced Avram to flee to Egypt. Avram pretended to be Sarai's sister, so that the people would not kill him in order to take Sarai. Sarai was kidnapped by officers of the Pharoah and brought to his palace, and as a result of this, *Hashem* sent a plague to afflict Pharoah's entire household, causing him to send Avram and Sarai away. After their return to Cana'an, a quarrel arose between Lot and Avram's shepherds, which grew so heated that the two decided to separate. Lot went to live in Sodom, a hotbed of immorality, while Avram remained in Cana'an. Shortly thereafter, Lot was taken as a prisoner of war, and Avram went to fight to free him. The king of Sodom thanked Avram, but he refused to accept any reward. Since Sarai had not yet had any children, she encouraged Avram to marry their maidservant, Hagar, to have a child. When Hagar got pregnant, Sarah grew upset with her behavior and kicked her out of the house. Hagar ran until she met an angel, who told her to return to Avram's tent, as her son, Yishmael, would grow into a great nation. Hagar did so, and Yishmael was born soon after. *Hashem* arranged a covenant with Avram, where he promised him that his children would be slaves in a foreign land, but would eventually come back to the Land Of Cana'an with great riches. *Hashem* then gave Avram and Sarai new names, Avraham and Sarah, adding the "*heih*" of *Hashem*'s name to both of their names. *Hashem* then instructed Avraham to give himself and all the men of his household a *bris milah*, as a sign of the covenant between *Hashem* and Avraham.

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