

קהל שערי תורה
 CONGREGATION SHAAREY TORAH
THE SHTIEBLE
 98 WEST END AVE BROOKLYN NY 11235

SHABBOS LECH LECHA

13 Cheshvan - October 31

R' Moshe Plutchok - מרא דאתרא שליט"א
 R' Akiva Eisenstadt - ראש כולל

Sponsored by David and Gail Weiss in Honor of The Birthday Celebration of Alvin Weiss

This Weeks Torah Journal is Dedicated to Our Brethren in Eretz Yisroel and The Captured Soldiers: Gilad Shalit, Guy Hever, Ron Arad, Yehuda Katz, Tzvi Feldman and Zacharia Baumel- May Hashem Protect All of Klal Yisroel

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|-------------------------|---------|
| Candle Lighting: | 5:36pm |
| Mincha/Kabalas Shabbos: | 5:45 pm |
| Shacharis: | 8:45 am |
| Shiur Halacha: | 5:00 pm |
| Mincha/Seudah Shilishi: | 5:30 pm |
| Maariv: | 6:43 pm |
| Motzei Shabbos: | 6:53 pm |

(* Please Remember to Turn Back the Clocks Tonight One Hour)

Weekday Schedule

Shacharis

Sunday 8:00 am

Monday - Friday 7:00 am & 7:45 am

Mincha/Maariv: 4:45 pm

Mishna Brurah Chaburah M-F 6:30 am

Talmud Shiur M-F 7:00 am

Night Kollel Mon & Wed 8:00 pm

Torah Tuesday Schmooze 8:00 pm

A Project By The Manhattan Beach Community Kollel



MITZVOS: BEHIND THE SCENE -" Our Heritage, Our Legacy, Our Home"

BY R'AKIVA EISENSTADT

The very first mitzvah that Hashem bestowed on Avraham Avinu was the mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisroel. "Lech Lecha ...la'aretz asher areka" and so began our deep, emotional and religious connection with a land that we love. The very name of Eretz Yisroel evokes a well-spring of feelings amongst all Jews. The longing for our national home reaches across all segments of Yiddishkeit and touches us all. In the past decade thousands of families have made "aliya". Many people look at the prospect of giving up the comforts of America and going to live in Eretz Yisrael as an act of great self-sacrifice, however, 140 years ago, when the disciples of the Vilna Gaon went to Eretz Yisrael, it involved far greater mesiras nefesh. It was literally going to a land that had no economy or means of earning a livelihood. It involved great financial and physical risk, yet people went with great self-sacrifice. Until this very day, there is self-sacrifice involved in making 'aliyah' and people do it. From where do the Jewish people get this strength of determination?

Rav Elya Svei zt'l once remarked that the test of "leave your land and your birthplace and your father's house to go to the land I will show you" [Bereshis 12:1] foreshadows the mesiras nefesh that later generations had in fulfilling the mitzvah of dwelling in the Land of Israel (yishuv Eretz Yisrael).

We all realize that Eretz yisroel is not just another tourist destination but it is a living, breathing legacy to Klal yisroel. It is our heritage and it is our land.

The very first Rashi in Bereishis asks a powerful question, he wonders why the Torah had to begin with the narration of creation. Shouldn't the Torah begin with the commanding of the mitzvos that are much more practical and pertinent to us? He answers the following: The Torah begins with the story of creation just in case the nations of the world should say to Israel: "You are robbers, because you have seized by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan". The response to this accusation would be to say to them "The entire world belongs to the Holy One Blessed be He, He created it and gave it to whomever it was right in His eyes. Of His own will He gave it to them and of His own will He took it from them and gave it to us."

What is the meaning of this Rashi? We are well aware that the "hypothetical situation" of the world accusing us of "occupying" Israel has indeed come to pass. But will citing the argument put forth in the teaching of Rav Yitzchak make one bit of difference to the nations of the world? Will they be impressed by such logic? Obviously not!

Certainly, this teaching is NOT directed at the Arabs or at our enemies in the United Nations or at any of the enemies of the Jewish people throughout the millennia. This Rashi is for us! In order for us to tell our enemies with conviction "This is OUR land" we must in fact believe that it IS our land! If we ourselves are not convinced in the truth of our claim to the Land of Israel then we don't stand a chance of convincing our enemies of that fact.

This issue of the Kollel Torah journal is Dedicated to all our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel and it will hopefully be a merit for the safe recovery and return of Gilad Shalit, Guy Hever, Ron Arad, Yehuda Katz, Tzvi Feldman and Zacharia Baumel.

PARSHAS LECH LECHA

BY PERRY NEWMAN

Chazal tell us that Sefer Bereishis was written to illustrate that Maaseh Avos- Siman Labanim; that the actions of our forefathers are a roadmap for all future generations.

In this week's parsha, Lech Lecha, we are first introduced to Avram, the son of Teach an idol worshipper from Ur Kasdim, who becomes Avraham Aveinu the man who introduces monotheism to the world and is the father to all the nations. One of the great themes of Avraham's life is the extent of his faith. The Torah goes into great detail about his faith, and this is one of his main messages to his progeny.

The Mishna in Avot (5:4) teaches that, "With 10 Trials [of faith] was our father Avraham tried, and he stood firm through all of them. Let's examine Avraham's trials and how they correlate to trials in our own lives. The Rambam, (Maimonides) in his explanation of the above

Mishna enumerates the ten trials as follows:

1. The "Calling" of Lech Lecha - leaving the life he knew in order to surrender to the unknown.
2. The famine in Canaan, especially after G-d has promised blessing and prosperity - feeling abandoned and perhaps betrayed from Life itself.
3. The injustice he faced in Egypt concerning Sarah - Government sponsored injustice.
4. The war between the 4 kings and the 5 kings – being at the mercy of a turbulent political climate of the times.
5. Marrying Hagar because he had no children with Sarah – family drama and relationship challenges
6. The command to circumcise himself at his advanced age – carrying out G-d's Will can be painful.
7. The injustice and deception at the hands of Avimelech of Gerar when he took Sarah – cunning self seeking at the expense of others.
8. The sending away of Hagar after having had a child with her – heartbreak and personal loss.
9. The sending away of his son Ishmael – the pain of doing the right thing for a child.
10. And finally, the binding and attempted sacrifice of Yitzchak, his beloved son, Isaac – testing the limits of sanity itself.*

(* Maimonides only counts incidents specified in the Torah text itself and does not include the incident with Nimrod)

We too are tested in similar ways in our lives, especially in these trying economic times.

Today many Jews face financial challenges. Feeling abandoned by a loss of economic security, many lack the faith to walk an unknown path and start over again, claiming it is below their dignity. On the other hand, many who are willing to start anew do not receive enough support from their brethren who are in a position to help. Many today need a job or help starting a business, but when asked to help, many benefactors weigh the decision as if it were a prudent investment rather than viewing it as an investment of G-d's money. What would Avraham do?

Another test we face similar to Avraham is involvement in politics. Avraham saw injustice in the world and

rose up to fight it. Jews have been noted for their involvement in domestic and world affairs. Just look at the civil rights movement, human rights and Soviet Jewry in the past century. Look at how much Jews have accomplished for our country and the world by their standing up for what is right. However we are now becoming two issue isolationists who involve ourselves only if it affects our interest or Israel directly. Was Avraham so narrow minded?

The trials of family dramas, relationships, heartbreak and pain that Avraham faced are ones we face as well; especially the choice of how to bring up and educate our children. It is quite apparent that Avraham loved both his sons, Yitzchok and Yishmael equally - as did Yitzchok love both Yacov and Esav. However their wives, Sara and Rivka, understood the need to make hard decisions that affected the long-term growth of their offspring. They knew what must be done even at the risk of causing conflict in their marriage and personal lives. Sarah understood that the influence of Ishmael on her son would be detrimental to Yitzchak's growth as a faithful servant of G-d and therefore had him and Hagar cast out. Avraham their father and husband, acquiesced because he knew what must be done to set a proper example for his son. This is why Yitzchok and Avraham survived the final and most daunting task; the Akeida.

How many of us would do the same? Many parents are afraid to stand up to our children or spouse to keep them distanced from bad influences and improper behavior. They succumb to pressure from peers and not from yiras shamayim, and justify these actions with "they're just kids, they will grow out of it", or "its not worth the fight." Is this the lesson Avraham and Sara are teaching us?

Everyday we face new challenges; to overcome them perhaps we should ask ourselves two questions, "What does G-d want from us," and "What would Avraham do."

WEEKLY INSIGHTS - "All Things Are Mortal But The Jew"

BY R' RON FINKELSTEIN

There is a famous story in which the Kaiser asks Bismarck, "Can you prove the existence of God?" Bismarck replies, "The Jews, your majesty. The Jews."

The Jewish people have been pursued, captured, tortured, humiliated, and murdered throughout history. Surveying our past, the faces of our enemies are exchanged over time, but all have had the common commitment of destroying our holy nation. It is in this regard that our light of existence has flickered in the wind of time without ever going out. We have survived while our enemies have not. We have persevered and remained steadfast, keeping our heritage and upholding our faith.

Let us look at what Mark Twain (1835-1910), one of America's greatest writers, wrote regarding the Jews:

"If statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and had done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed; and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?" (The Complete Essays of Mark Twain, pg. 249).

In order to discover the answer to this we must go back in time. We must look towards the original source, the core from which the Jew began. It is in this week's perasha that this chronicle is told.

The Torah states "Hashem said to Avraham: Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great..." (12:1-2). After describing Avraham's departure and his arrival at his destination, the Holy Land, the verse continues: "Hashem appeared to Avraham and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land'" (12:7).

Avraham's leaving his place of origin and the giving of a new land to his progeny marks the opening of a new epoch.

Up until this point was an era of despondency. The original diagram of creation was to have the entire human race share in the accomplishment of Hashem's mission and for the Torah precepts to be shared by all. The Ramchal (1707-1746), in his work Derech Hashem, relates that after twenty generations of abysmal failure from mankind, there needed to be a change. A designated people would become a light unto the world. They would ultimately receive the Torah and, through its practice, perfect humanity and make the dominion of Hashem universally recognized.

The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 9a) explains that Avraham Avinu was born 1948 years after creation. It would be 2000 years after creation when Avraham began his influential campaign to bring others to the service of Hashem. It was in his exuberant and tireless effort to share his message of the service to one G-d, that he earned the privilege of being the founding father of Judaism and to merit that his offspring become the Chosen People.

Our sages explain that Avraham's selection as the father of the Jewish nation was solidified as a result of his passing ten tests from Hashem. The first such test was Hashem's commandment to leave his land for an unknown one; the outcome of this test had a tremendous impact on us as the Jewish people. Avraham was the quintessential example of chesed and kindness. The challenge he faced

under this particular test was that Hashem's command to leave his homeland for the sake of others tested Avraham's own commitment to his father and extended family still living in his homeland. Indeed, we often find that our personal tests tend to pit two "wills" against each other. There is the will of Hashem and what he has commanded man to do, pitted against man's own will, and what he wants to do. Man must subordinate his syllogistic reasoning of what he wants to do, and always place Hashem's will as paramount. Avraham's act did exactly that. His actions demonstrated that it was Divine Truth that governed his behavior, nothing else.

Interestingly, a question could be posed as to why Hashem would need to test Avraham if he already knew what the result would be? The Rambam (1135-1204) explains that the purpose of the test was to convey to the world the greatness of Avraham. It is for us to see how a man remained faithful and obedient despite being under tremendous duress, and to recognize that it was precisely because of this commitment that he was chosen to found a nation.

Another unique aspect of this test was its vital message which is a necessity for the survival of the Jewish people. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) explains that by complying with Hashem's command to separate from his homeland, Avraham taught us about our own ability to continue existing despite overwhelming odds pulling for our elimination. The lesson is as follows: to be a Jew means to know how to stand separate and break from the crowd. It means that the love of G-d overrides public opinion of what we do and who we are. It means that if we must be alone and remain detached in order to serve Hashem, then we must do so.

This is further demonstrated by Hashem bringing Avraham to the land of Israel and promising that it would be given to his children. We see the vitality of this promise still today, such as when on May 14, 1948 the Jews returned to the homeland of their forefathers. It is unprecedented in history that a nation, after being exiled from its home for so long, would make its return, and against all odds, build a vibrant Jewish state.

The roots of this can be found through Avraham, who was called an Ivri. The word Ivri means "Hebrew" but also can mean "the other side". When Avraham came to the Holy Land, he did so by crossing from "the other side" of the Euphrates. In a deeper sense, it was Avraham who stood on "the other side" alone and separate from the general convictions of the world. He was able to break away and remain apart from all that was the antithesis of Hashem. It was because of this that he was able to build an empire of spirituality, transforming the perspective of mankind through his own relationship with G-d. Following this path led to a better world. It was because Avraham pioneered this movement that he was selected and that the Holy Land was given to his progeny. The land would be the body to the Jewish people which was its soul.

The lure of being swayed by popular vote is difficult to overcome, yet Avraham was able to do so when the majority of the world stood in conflict with the belief and service to our Creator. How could we ever have survived without Avraham's lesson for us to remain strong, even when faced with tremendous opposition? We learned from him that it is better to divide from others when their ideology discourages unity with Hashem. It was Avraham who gave us this, for in the times that he lived, idolatry and immorality were rampant and there was a loss of cognitive recognition of Hashem. Avraham courageously stood in the face of all of this, alone. He left everything which was blasphemous, heretical and profane. He sheltered himself from that which was impure and found solace in the purity of Hashem's message. It is this confidence and determination which proves the Jew to be tenacious, which characterizes his ability to persevere, and allows Hashem's message to endure.

The Jewish people should always know that despite our trials and tribulations, we are the children of Avraham Avinu, the carriers of Divine truth, and a holy people whom Hashem will continuously care for and love.

HALACHIC PERSPECTIVES - "Halachos Shel Eretz Yisroel"

BY R' HESHY KAHAN

While there are many more Mitzvos that apply to one who lives in Eretz Yisroel, a good part of these commandments are at times in some way applicable to those living in the Diaspora as well.

Q: Is one biblically commanded to live in Eretz Yisroel?

A: While an ideal format for this discussion is far beyond the scope of this work there seems to be a basic argument amongst the earlier Rishonim as to one's obligation to live in Eretz Yisroel. The Ramban¹ contends that indeed, the verse "and you shall inherit the land and you shall dwell therein"² is a formal commandment to live in Eretz Yisroel. Conversely other Rishonim³ seem to hold that this commandment is not applicable to us nowadays. It can also be insinuated from the omission of this Mitzvah from the Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvos that he too opines that living in Eretz Yisroel is not an official commandment. R' Moshe Feinstein Zt"l⁴ maintains that even according to the Ramban and the many others who hold the "Yishuv Eretz Yisroel" is a biblical commandment, the observance of this is a Mitzvah "Kiyumis", meaning discretionary⁵, as opposed to a Mitzvah "Chiyuvis" meaning one of absolute mandatory nature⁶.

Q: Is one obligated to engage in military activity in order to capture any of our sacred territories (i.e. Chevron, Temple Mount, Shechem etc.)?

A: Although war as a means of self defense is authorized by Halacha, a Milchemes Rishus, a war of aggression, must be sanctioned by the king with the prior approval of the Sanhedrin, as well as receive divine support from the Urim V'Tumim⁷. In due to the fact that nowadays these three factors are not in existence, waging such a war would not be Halachically valid according to most Poskim.

Q: Is there a special commandment for the Jewish people to speak Hebrew?

A: While there are those who hold that one is commanded to speak Lashon Kodesh⁸, many others hold that while it is certainly commendable to speak our holy language⁹ as that was in fact one of the three things that aided in our redemption from Egypt, one would not be transgressing any Issur by speaking his native language, whichever one it may be.

Q: What is one required to do upon visiting the Kotel for the first time in at least 30 days?

A: One would be required to "tear Kriah" by making a rip¹⁰ of 3.75 inches¹¹ on the left side of the garment upon first noticing the Western Wall in its destruction for the first time in 30 days¹². Ideally this tear should not be sewn up. While those of Sephardic tradition rip every garment, the Ashkanazic custom is to rip only the top layer of clothing excluding one's coat¹³.

Q: Are women and children required to "tear Kriah" as well?

A: Where it seems clear in Halacha that women are required to tear as well¹⁴ as men, the notion of children tearing is of more dispute amongst the Poskim. It seems that for children who have reached the age of Chinuch (where they understand the concept of mourning) an adult should "tear Kriah" for them as well¹⁵.

Q: Is there anytime when one need not tear his clothing when visiting the Kotel after the given amount of days that would require Kriah?

A: If one either visited after Chatzos on Friday through Motzai Shabbos or on Rosh Chodesh then one need not rip his clothing. While many have become accustomed to "lending" their clothing to their friend and having their friend do the same to them thereby exempting them from having to rip,(as one is not required to rip "borrowed" garments) the Poskim in general frown upon this practice¹⁶.

Q: Is there any issue with walking to the Kotel on Friday night in lieu of the fact that there are 24 hour video surveillance cameras filming your movement?

A: While the Halacha clearly states that it is prohibited from taking videos as one would be "writing" on the film as it is taping¹⁷, one need not be concerned about the video that may be taping their every movement as merely "walking through" a given area is not within the realms of Melacha on Shabbos¹⁸.

Q: Are there any Halachic concerns of Orlah when purchasing fruits that were imported from Eretz Yisroel?

A: Since the biblical commandment of Orlah, (of not benefiting from fruits from a tree that is in its' first three

years of growth) is on fruits that are grown in Eretz Yisroel¹⁹ one should try to find out the possibility of this particular fruit originating from an Orlah tree. In the event that this is not possible one may be lenient and assume that this fruit comes from majority of trees that are not from Orlah and is therefore permitted to eat it²⁰. It should be noted that R' Shlomo Zalman Aurbach Zt"l prohibited such fruit under question based on the fact that the actual "Safek" originates in the orchard itself where there is a 50/50 chance of being Orlah²¹.

Q: Does one need to be concerned when purchasing produce in America of Terumos (separations) and Ma'asros (literally a tenth) of fruits and vegetables that were grown in Eretz Yisroel?

A: Even though they are sold in America there is still a rabbinic commandment to remove Terumos and Ma'asros from Israeli produce. [Note: There are many fruits and vegetables on the market today such as Jaffa oranges, Carmel tomatoes and Arava peppers that originated from Eretz Yisroel and are relevant to his question.].

Q: How does one find out the status of the fruit and vegetables that come in manufactured products?

A: In general the certification on manufactured products of Chug Chasam Sofer, Agudas Yisroel, She'airis Yisroel, R' Landau of B'nai Brak and Rabbanut Mehadrin²² as well as any reliable American certification (i.e. OU, Chof-K, OK, Sat-K etc.) means that all separations have been taken on that particular product.

Q: When flying back from Eretz Yisroel should Kohanim be concerned about flying over a Jewish cemetery?

A: Since it is generally prohibited for a Kohain to come into contact with a corpse²³ this question was recently of much discussion amongst our contemporary Poskim. R' Y.S. Elyashiv Shlita held that since this impurity does indeed travel up to the sky²⁴ one should be cognizant of this when booking his flight to return from Eretz Yisroel²⁵. However as of recent discussion it seems that El Al has since rerouted its path thereby avoiding this Shailoh entirely.

FOOTNOTES

1. 33:53 D"h V'Horasstem es Ha'aretz, also see Ramban's Peirush on Sefer Hamitzvos
2. Bamidbar 33:53, Devarim 1:8
3. Tosefos Kesuvos 110b D"h Hu Omer
4. Igros Moshe E.H. 1:102
5. Much like putting on a four cornered article of clothing in order to obligate oneself in the Mitzvah of Tzitzis, where it is up to the discretion of the individual if he wishes to put himself in this predicament of obligation or not.
6. Much like putting on Tefillin in the morning, where as long as the individual is a male of Bar-Mitzvah age he is definitively obligated to perform this Mitzvah.
7. Rambam Sefer Hamitzvos:14, also see Aruch Hashulchan Hilchos Sanhedrin 74:7
8. Rashi Devarim 11:19 D"h L'Daber Bam, See Sifri Parshas Eikev
9. Igros Moshe E.H. 3:35
10. S.A. 561:1
11. This is in accordance with the measurements of R' Moshe Feinstein Zt"l, The Chazon Ish would require a rip of closer to 4 inches.
12. Moed Katan 26a
13. Sefer Eretz Hatzvi pg. 44
14. S.A. Y.D. 340
15. Magen Avraham 561: 6
16. Piskai Teshuvos 561:1, Sefer Eretz Tzvi pg. 45
17. Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:103
18. Based on a Psak of the Shevet Halevi, R' Y.S. Elyahiv Shlita actually holds that the fact that there were videos put up to begin with should not have been publicized as maintaining its secrecy would place the passerby in the category of Missasaik U'Machshavosai which would be permitted as long as the individual does not know of the cameras.
19. Vayikrah 19:2, S.A. Y.D. 294:8,9
20. Yabia Omer 6:24 who quotes Chazon Ish's heter. Going after Majority is permitted based on the Klal of Kal D'Parush M'Rubah Parush.
21. Thereby subscribing to the Klal of Kal Kevuah K'Mechtza Al Mechtza Damei.
22. Information taken from Star -K website.
23. Vayikrah 21:1-4
24. See Eruvin 30 for the dispute as to whether or not one can become impure in the likes of an airplane.
25. As it was on the return flight that El Al would fly over Holon cemetery.

OMEK HADAVAR: "Our Heritage - Eretz Yisroel"

BY R' MOSHE WARSAWSKY

Through science, we've only begun to unearth the myriad of infinite wisdom woven into the fabric of our existence. Each time we probe deeper we understand just a little bit more of how perfect every square inch of our existence is. Of course if we would like to picture someone who really used their mind to analyze the world around them, Avraham would be the first to come to mind. Avraham truly brought the world to its purpose by recognizing the creator behind it.

Let's begin by going back to Parshas Bereishis; the Posuk uses the word "Bi'hibar'am" when explaining how HaShem created the world. If you scramble the letters, you end up spelling out the word "Bi'Avraham." The implication being that Avraham was very much in mind as G-d was creating his world; we can even say that our world was constructed as the place where Avraham could accomplish his task and thereby bring the universe to its Tachlis(purpose). But why Avraham; Jewish history is replete with figures who we could have deemed worthy enough to recognize their name in conjunction with the purpose of the world, what was so special about Avraham's service more so than anyone else? Avraham worked with his mind and sorted through an unbelievable amount of Sheker(falsehood). By means of deeply looking into every corner of creation, he reached a very deep knowledge of G-d.

The word Emes doesn't exactly mean the word Truth. It's a little bigger than that; Emes means objective truth, whatever in this present situation would be in accordance with HaShem's will. Emes would be better linked to the word reality; Torah reality. Avraham was recognized as THE Kiruv expert of his time. He didn't simply have a sales pitch; he actually listened to each and every person on a case by case basis and helped them reached recognition of HaShem through their own intellect. He would find you exactly where you were holding as a person in different areas and lead you back to a full awareness of that which truly is.

There are two types of Emes that are reachable and they're exclusive to two types of beings; people and angels. We'll begin with Emes #1; this is service of G-d by default because there's nothing else to do. This Emes can only be accomplished by angels, they serve G-d because

that's what they were created for and they have no alternative. People on the other hand have Emes #2 which is Emes accomplished in opposition to Sheker. When a person accomplishes a task as G-d wants it, it is because a decision was made to overcome the desire to do counter to G-d's will. Our world was created as the "arena" for which we play our game of life and try to let the biggest Emes resonate from our actions. This is what the Posuk means when it says that the world was created with Avraham in mind; he was the King of drawing the Emes out of Sheker and his life laid the groundwork for the ensuing generations of Torah and Klal Yisrael that follow.

In the same way that our physical makeup links us to those preceding us ancestrally, and links us to generations yet to come, spiritual DNA also has a major impact on the spiritual genes of one's family. There are many different Middos attributed to Jews; compassion, generosity, bashfulness. In addition to these traits which were ingrained in our family trees thousands of years ago, we also have certain mindsets that were built into our very existence as a nation. The Michtav Me'elياهو writes that from the tests of Avraham, his children (Klal Yisroel) inherited tremendous spiritual power. While other nations of the world have been away from their land for so many years and thereby forgotten about their heritage, we stay strong and are constantly yearning to return to our homeland. From the test in Lech Lecha (leave your homeland to come to a new land which I G-d am leading you to) Avraham imparted to us the tremendous love of Eretz Yisroel. But we must make sure that everything is understood in context. Avraham's journey to Israel as well as Yitzchak, Yaakov and the ensuing generations was for one reason and one reason only; because in Israel is where G-d rests his presence. Eretz Yisrael is only special when perceived for what it has in the spiritual realm.

Every Monday we refer to Israel as "Yefei nof mesos kol Ha'aretz," "fairest of all sites, joy of all the earth. Is Israel really the fairest? There are a lot of nice places out there, Paris, Greece, Azores, what really pushes Israel to the front of the line in this regard? Beauty is what we call something when conflicting ideas\colors\sounds come together to produce one masterpiece in perfect harmony. Israel has a very deep type of beauty. Right above the temple mount is where heaven meets earth (it's actually

the point where our Tefilos go up) and there the most unbelievable beauty results from the physical realm touching the spiritual realm; and that's beautiful.

Eretz Yisrael only retains its uniqueness so long as we appreciate it for what it is, and not for that which it isn't. In our land, our connection to G-d is much stronger, the learning of Torah is a different type of learning, and mitzvos take on a whole new level. May we merit to have ourselves lifted up on the wings of eagles and return to the land that brings us closer to our creator!

PARSHA QUERIES AND FACTS

BY R' ELI STOLBERG

1. Did you ever wonder what the name "Avrohom" means?

It is an acronym for AV HAMON GOYIM. Which means , A father of a multitude of nations.

2. One of the 4 kings was Amrafel , king of Shinar. What other name did he have?

He was also called Nimrod, we were introduced to him in parshas Bereishis as the first king to rebel against Hashem.

Did you know that....

- When Avrohom went to fight the 4 kings he took 318 soldiers with him. Rashi cites a Gemarah that, in fact, he only brought Eliezer with him. The Gematria (numerical value) of Eliezer in Hebrew is 318 !

- Malki Tzedek, the king of "Shalem" was actually Shem , the son of Noach.

- The city of "Shalem" is the Yerushalayim.

-In this weeks parsha Rashi tells us that "Ein Gedi" is also known by the name "Chatzitzon Tamar".

- There were three brother who had a covenant with Avroham Avinu. They were Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Avraham resided in Mamre's land.

MAZAL TOV

Mazal Tov to Kasriel and Rivka Zadoff upon the Bris of Dovid Yonason

TEFILLAH

ברכת אשר יצר

Boruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, asher yatzar et ha'adam b'chochma, u'vara voe nekavim nekavim chalulim chalulim, galuye v'yadu'ah lifnei kisei k'voe'decha, sh'im yisotame echad may'hem, oh yipotae'ach echad may'hem, ee efshar lhikayaim (v'la'amode l'fenecha) afeelu shah'ah echas. Boruch Atah Hashem, rofae kol basar u'mafli la'asot.

Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, Who formed man with intelligence, and created within him many openings and many hollow spaces; it is revealed and known before the Seat of Your Honor, that if one of these would be opened or if one of these would be sealed, it would be impossible to survive even for one hour (and to stand before You). Blessed are You, Hashem, Who heals all flesh and does wonders.

Within this beracha, we are focused on conveying our tremendous appreciation of the miracle and function of the human body. In fact, in order to demonstrate our true gratitude for the marvel of the human body, we do not begin by focusing on its creation but instead, by praising its Creator. The beracha writes “asher yatzar et ha'adam b'chochma” (Who fashioned man with wisdom), which indicates our admiration for Hashem and the great wisdom which He employed in creating something as multi-faceted as the human body. Our sages, in instituting this beracha, intended it to be said after one uses the bathroom (Talmud, Berachot 60b). This is because we are praising Hashem for our ability to relieve ourselves and for its mechanics, which we depend on.

It is in this regard that the beracha has become part and parcel of our morning prayers. Some opinions state that we say the beracha in our morning prayers, in the form of general thanks to Hashem, regardless of whether one just used the bathroom. However, the majority of sages maintain that we should only say this blessing after using the facilities, including in the morning.

The next part of the beracha is, “u'vara voe nekavim nekavim chalulim chalulim” (and created within him many openings and many hollow spaces). This portion references the many openings and hollow spaces which are part of our bodies. “Openings” refer to the mouth, nose, and ears, while “hollow spaces” refers to organs such as the stomach, intestines, and the heart. Rabbi Shimon Schwab clarifies that the beracha’s repetitiveness, in saying nekavim nekavim and chalulim chalulim, addresses both the physical and spiritual component of each of our 248 organs. Rabbi Schwab asks the following rhetorical question: if a kind and gentle person required a heart transplant and received the donor

heart from a hardened criminal, would the recipient, in turn, begin to act criminally? Of course not! The reason for this is, posits Rabbi Schwab, is that the spiritual aspect of the kind recipient’s heart outweighs the negative physical aspect of the donor’s heart, and the recipient’s gentle nature reigns supreme. In this beracha, we praise both aspects of our being - the physical and the spiritual; we thank Hashem for creating man, our bodies and our souls.

We state next “galuye v'yadu'ah lifnei kisei k'voe'decha” (it is revealed and known before the Seat of Your Honor), where we recognize that Hashem watches over and knows everything. He is able to probe into and know all that is contained within our hearts.

We then say “sh'im yisotame echad may'hem, oh yipotae'ach echad may'hem (v'la'amode l'fenecha), ee efshar lhikayaim afeelu shah'ah echas,” (that if one of these would be opened or if one of these would be sealed, it would be impossible to survive even for one hour (and to stand before You)). This portion of the beracha references the many openings and closings that the body has and the fact that we can still exist despite them. It is interesting to note that if you punctured a balloon with the tiniest hole, immediately the air would leak out and deflate the balloon. The body, on the other hand, remains whole despite its many openings. On the contrary, one could not survive should the body’s openings suddenly close!

The closing of this beracha is “Boruch Atah Hashem, rofae kol basar u'mafli la'asot,” (Blessed are You, Hashem, Who heals all flesh and does wonders). It is here where we make the complete acknowledgement that it is Hashem who heals and it is Hashem whom we rely upon. He has created the miraculous wonder of the human body, and He is the source of our healing.

It is human nature to forget the importance of that which is routine. We generally go through life without considering the human body, which breathes on its own, has a heart which beats involuntarily, and houses a cleansing system built into it which eliminates waste. This beracaha is our reminder - it gives us pause to be amazed and in awe of what Hashem has given to us and to be appreciative of the internal workings which sustain

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