



# TAL

## LECH LECHA

### 5775

## THE COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

**Shabbat Begins 16:18 Shabbat Ends 17:25**

### Movers & Shakers

#### Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



A great man once said, "If you are going through hell – keep going!"

We were created to be movers; we are blessed with wonderful feet that never seem to be still. We are movers; we are shakers and we push ahead. In G-d's first official appearance to Avraham, He relates to him that he must go – Lech Lecha - literally, go to yourself.

The Sages query the need to say go to yourself. How can a person go to themselves?

The Baal Haturim states the hidden gems behind these words. He notes that the numerical value of these words is 100. Avraham was old and without children. He was desperate to continue his legacy. In the words Lech Lecha (=100) Hashem was hinting to Avraham that if he listened to His command, leaving his birthplace, then he would be blessed with a child that would be born to him at the age of 100. Furthermore, he was hinting to him that he would live for a further 100 years!

Sometimes we find ourselves stuck. We are used to our routine, but Hashem grants us times in the year to help us re-energise and move on. The higher we move, the more blessings we open ourselves up to.

It was just over a year ago on this week's Parasha that we learnt of the sad passing of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef Zts'l.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef was a spiritual giant and leader of the Jewish peo-

ple. He earned the respect of hundreds of thousands, and his Levaya was attended by close to a million people in Jerusalem – probably the highest amount of people ever to attend a Levaya in Jerusalem's history.

Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein Zts'l once said that there is a lesson to be learned from the first three Parashiot of the Torah. Not only is the world, and subsequently, the Jewish people built in these Parashiot, but the world's survival was also fabricated by only three people: Adam, Noach, and Avraham. We are around because of these individuals.



We see from here the power that each individual has within themselves to create whole worlds and to leave an everlasting mark on this one.

Interestingly, Rabbi Shimshon Pincus Zts'l gives a deeper aspect to Hashem's command.

He explains that if a person does an act of Chesed (kindness), e.g. by giving £100 to a poor person, there are two aspects to his act.

First, there is the effect he had on the world: he helped a pauper obtain food with which to sustain his life. Second, there is the effect he had on himself: he built his personality and made himself into a Ba'al Chesed. Now he is a man of kindness.

R Shimshon asks which aspect is more important- that which he contributed to the world at large or that which he contributed to his own personality?

He explains using our verse, 'Go for yourself'. Hashem is telling us that what a person does for himself to build his own personality is the more important aspect.

The Rabbis say, 'Who is a Chasid? He who does Chesed with his Maker'. In other words, they are asking how to do true Chesed. The answer is: by doing Chesed with Hashem. This is Chesed at its best.

There is one thing that Hashem does not have, so to speak, and only man can give it to Him. It is when man perfects his own personality. When a person corrects and perfects his own self, making himself into a better person, this is something that Hashem cannot do on His own, so to speak.

If Hashem would try to make someone into a good person, the result would not be a good person. Perhaps it would be a good robot, or a good

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angel, but not a good person. Making a good person is the only thing that Hashem doesn't have, and only we can give it to Him.

When we give money to a hungry pauper, we believe that Hashem has decreed for this pauper to receive money. We are just the emissary. If we do not give him money, someone else will. Therefore, whatever we give the pauper is something he would have received anyway. This is not Chesed at its best.

True Chesed is only the Chesed we do for Hashem by making **ourselves** into better human beings.

With the command, 'Go for yourself', Avraham was commanded to give Hashem something that Hashem cannot create on His own, so to speak. And THIS is the most precious thing to Him. This is the greatest kind of Chesed. Avraham eventually excelled in himself to become our forefather and one of the most potent people in the history of the world.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef Zts"l from a young age delved into the depths of Torah

serving G-d and His people throughout all his life. He was a man that went for himself and thus spilled over his greatness and knowledge to us and generations to come.

We all have the ability to go to ourselves – it only takes a few steps forwards.

Don't watch the clock; do what it does! Keep going!

Go- Move- Achieve- and let Hashem and humanity benefit from your life.

This week's parsha introduces us to Avrohom and his life of *nisvoinous*, trials, after choosing to serve Hashem. He has ten trials and the parsha starts off with the second trial of *Lech Lecha*, where he is told to leave his land, birthplace and father's house to start travelling to a destination that has not yet been revealed.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (5:3) tells us that with ten trials Avrohom Ovinu was tested and that he withstood them all. R' Chaim Volozhin in his commentary there, called *Ruach Chaim*, points out that when the Mishna lists the ten generations from Noach to Avrohom, it does mention his title of Ovinu and yet suddenly in this Mishna of the ten trials it does. The reason being that only now when it talks about the ten trials that built him up spiritually, when he gave up his essence to serve Hashem, that is when he gains the title of Ovinu.

Ovinu, our father, is the title chosen because he is a father to every Jew in that his spiritual make-up that came about through these ten trials are now in every Jew's genes. This is clearly seen in how throughout Jewish history when Jews were faced with the options of conversion or dying for their religion even Jewishly uneducated Jews were able to volunteer to die fearlessly despite the prospect of gruesome deaths! This is because for them this decision is not so hard as it is in a Jew's blood from the time of Avrohom **Ovinu**. Once it was done by him in his first trial in Ur Kasdim (either to serve idols or to remain faithful to Hashem- and he decided to die) the victory of this trial now gave strength to make it more

natural for all his future descendents to do the same. The same is true of all ten trials. The second trial of our parsha, *Lech Lecha*, would explain the sudden yearnings and pull to the Jew to go to the land of Eretz Yisroel.

The Maharal (Netzach Yisroel, Chapter 11) asks why does the Torah hid the great trial and miracle of Avrohom being thrown into the furnace and coming out alive. Surely this should be publicised such a great Kiddush Hashem? Why is this not the highlight and introduction to the greatness of the individual Avrohom Ovinu? Why are the details of Avrohom's trials only elaborated in detail from the second trial onwards?

## “Why are the details of Avrohom's trials only elaborated in detail from the second trial onwards?”

He answers that had it been written in the Torah, people would say that the choosing of Avrohom as the founder of the Jewish Nation was based on his actions – his *mesiras nefesh* (self sacrifice) based on his belief in Hashem. This would then be a case of love based on a reason namely Avrohom's remarkable actions. This would mean that if the Jewish Nation would not replicate these high levels of *mesiras nefesh*,

then the love could be *chas vesholom* (G-d forbid) rescinded, like some other religions want to claim. Some religions agree that Jews were the chosen nation but say that we were given the choice to do good or bad and based on our sins we were forsaken and therefore they now claim to be the chosen nation (Ramchal in Daas Tevunois 36 - the fourth type of claim against the Jews).

The Torah therefore omitted all mention of the special actions of the first trial of the furnace, which led to the choosing of Avrohom to be the Ovinu of the Jewish Nation, to demonstrate that this decision was based out of love for the Jews and not on actions. Therefore this love is eternal, a choice not dependent on the actions of the Jews. Besides for this, Hashem is G-d and therefore He does not make mistakes as He knows all the future. A decision choosing Avrohom and the Jewish Nation as His chosen nation cannot be changed since all these calculations were already included when the choice was made!

Let us end off with the song some sing on Simchas Torah that still rings in my ears – *Boruch Eloikeinu Shebironu Lichvoidoi*, Blessed be our G-d Who chose us to honour Him!

### Parasha Insights

#### Rabbi Dov Levene







**"And Avram went according to G-d's instructions, and Lot went along; and Avram was 75 years old when he left Charan." (12:4)**

**QUESTION:** Why is Avram's age men-

tioned?

**ANSWER:** Avram lived a comfortable life in Charan. Picking himself up at the age of 75 and moving to a new country was indeed difficult.

Avram was very much attached to Hashem and did anything that

Hashem told him, even if it appeared difficult or he did not know its reason or significance. On the other hand, Lot accompanied Avram *only* because he calculated that he was an old man who would soon die childless, leaving Lot as his sole heir.

**"Avram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, and the Canaanite was then in the land." (12:6)**

**QUESTION:** What is the connection between these two things?

**ANSWER:** When Avram came to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Canaanites were engaged in conquering the land of Israel from

the children of Shem (Rashi). Usually, during a war, armies are extremely cautious, and all strangers are questioned to make sure they are not spies for the other side. Should they seem suspicious, they are punished and even tortured.

The Torah is emphasizing that although the Canaanites were presently in the land and it was a time of war, Avram was miraculously protected by Hashem and very easily went through the entire country without any hindrance.

## Our Chachamim

### Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu



Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, of righteous memory – who would later serve as the Israeli Chief Sephardic Rabbi – was the youngest rabbi in the Israeli rabbinate when at the age of 28 he joined the rabbinical court in the city of Beersheba. Even at that relatively young age, he was renowned as a brilliant scholar who was exceptional in his care and personal attentiveness to the needs of all whom he met.

A short time after he was appointed to his post, he noticed a woman sitting outside the offices of the rabbinate reciting Psalms, tears in her eyes. This recurred for days, with her closing her Book of Psalms only as the rabbinate office closed its doors for the day.

His curiosity and concern aroused, one day, the young rabbi asked his assistant to call the woman into his office.

"Tell me what you are doing here," Rabbi Eliyahu gently asked once she appeared before him. "How could we help you?"

She responded with a distinct Moroccan accent: "I just moved to Israel from Morocco. The government settled me in this city, and I immediately sought out the local rabbinate."

"You see, back in Morocco my husband was a taxi driver. Ten days after our marriage he travelled from one city to the next and I never heard from him again. They say he died in a

crash, however, they cannot locate his body, only the wrecked car.

"I never found his body or those who buried him, and I was told that I cannot remarry unless someone testifies that he or she actually saw the corpse.

"Now that I am in Israel, I thought that perhaps in Morocco no one could help me, but maybe here a rabbi could assist me and permit me to remarry.

"Since then, I have been praying here."

The rabbi asked, "But, why have you not entered the offices to speak to us?"

"Who are you?" responded the Sephardic woman, "you are but messengers. I am praying to G-d, the Creator of the world; He will decide if I should remarry or not!"

Rabbi Eliyahu, admiring the woman's strong faith, travelled to Netivot, to Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzairah, the famed and righteous Sephardic sage (known as the "Baba Sali") who hailed from Morocco, to see if he had any idea to whom to turn.

The sage told him that he should be in touch with his brother, the "Baba Chaki." "He knows everyone; he will tell you who was in charge of burials at that time in that city," he said.

Rabbi Eliyahu took a taxi from Netivot to Ramla, where the Baba Chaki resided. The sage from Ramla told him that the grave diggers in that city moved to Israel eight months earlier, one living in Kiryat Ata and one living in Dimona." He gave Rabbi Eliyahu the exact addresses for both.

The rabbi continued to the closer of the two cities, Dimona. Upon arrival at the home of the grave digger, there was a note on the door saying that the father of the home – the grave digger – had just passed away. Rabbi Eliyahu arrived just in time for the afternoon prayer services. He joined the prayer services and then shared some words of comfort with the family.

In the hope that someone there would be able to give him a clue to aid him in his undertaking, he said over the woman's story.

When he said the story and mentioned the deceased's name, an old man, dressed in traditional Moroccan clothing, jumped up in the corner of the room. "I am one of the grave diggers who buried the taxi driver. The second one just passed away and I am here in his home to console his family..."

The rabbi immediately gathered two others, creating a mini rabbinical court,

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and they took this man's testimony. The next day, Rabbi Eliyahu delivered a letter to the woman, permitting her to remarry.

Relating to his fellow judges in Beer-sheba's rabbinical court what had happened the day earlier, Rabbi Eliyahu exclaimed,

"This is the power of a prayer that comes from a sincere heart."

## Halachot Of Shemita

### Rabbi Dov Levy



#### Shemita Year

Shemita produce has special holiness and must be treated accordingly.

**I bought some fruit of Israeli origin which most probably grew in Shemita year. Should I just throw it out?**

Absolutely not! It is forbidden to degrade Shemita produce whilst still edible. You should eat the fruit but

make sure not to throw away any peel as it may have some food left on it. Similarly any parts of

the fruit which you don't want to eat must not be disposed of.

#### Does it matter how I eat it?

Shemita food should only be eaten in its regular way. So a food that is normally eaten raw should not be

cooked and a food which is normally cooked must not be eaten raw.

**So what do I do with any parts I'm not eating?**

You need to find a container to leave it in until it rots to a degree that it's no longer edible for an animal. Only then can it be disposed of.

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