

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT LECH LECHA

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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

LOBSTER

The lobster is a soft mushy animal that lives inside a solid shell. That rigid shell doesn't expand. So how does the lobster grow? As the lobster grows it feels under pressure of its shell. It goes under a rock to protect itself from predatory fish, casts off its shell and produces another bigger one. Eventually that shell becomes uncomfortable and again it goes through the same process.

The stimulus for the lobster to grow is that it feels uncomfortable. Perhaps if lobsters had a doctor they would never grow; as soon as they felt uncomfortable they would go to the doctor and get a quick cure.

Times of stress are also signals for growth. A tough ride shouldn't be viewed as adversity, rather as an opportunity to renew, revitalise and strengthen oneself.

The Torah goes into great detail regarding the fine nuances of the lives of our patriarchs and matriarchs, for it is written, Ma'aseh Avot Siman L'Banim – Whatever happened to the forefathers, is a sign for the children. Therefore, by studying their lives, we can better appreciate the meaning of our own lives.

Our father Avraham was challenged with ten tests, all of which he passed with great distinction (Pirkei Avot 5:4). Rabbi Dessler Z'l explains that all of the trials and tribulations of future

generations are traceable to those ten tests. If, through our long and painful history we have remained faithful to G-d and never lost sight of our calling, it is because Avraham created the character traits that enabled us to prevail.

But tests are hard, so what is the real purpose of a divinely ordained test?

A student is tested in school so that the teacher can find out how much the student knows. The omniscient G-d, by contrast, is already aware of a person's capacity before the test. The purpose of a divine test, therefore, cannot be to reveal any new information to G-d.

The Hebrew word Nisah, "tested," is derived from the word Naseh, which means flag. The Midrash explains that just as a flag flies high above and identifies an army or ship, so too a test is meant to elevate and reveal the innate potential of the person being tested.

A test is always a choice at the upper limit of a person's capacity. Passing the test actually changes the person. Potential becomes actualized. A rose bud contains all the petals of the opened rose, but a rose in full bloom is far more beautiful than a bud.

The Mishna in Yuma (5:3) relates how the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur would sprinkle blood on the Mizbeach (altar). He would sprinkle once upwards and seven times downwards. Each time he would count. He started with the first one above and counted "one", then made the second sprinkle which was downwards and said, "one and one".

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He continued with the third sprinkle and said, "one and two", followed by, "one and three" etc. Our sages are perplexed why at each count the Kohen Gadol had to continue to say "one and". Why didn't he just say number two three etc.?

The Yismach Moshe explains that the first sprinkling the Kohen Gadol carried out would be infused with emotion. But as with everything in this world, the more action we perform the more we lose the original inspiration. The Kohen Gadol wanted to keep that original inspiration with him and so he constantly reminded himself of the first sprinkling throughout the process.

It is the initial test that carries us through all the other trials and tribulations. We sap energy from our tests and use them to grow. Sometimes we fall, but our approach must be based on understanding that Hashem runs the show and only tests those that can withstand and be strengthened from these tests.

When man was created, the Torah relates that the Almighty said, "Let us make Adam (man) in our image and our likeness" (Bereishit 1:26). The commentators explain that

G-d wanted to include His heavenly tribunal of angels in the decision to make man. Even though He did not need to do so, He wanted to teach us to always include others when making a decision, even if they are less worthy than us.

I once heard an amazing idea on this. The Pasuk can be read in a different light. G-d at the outset was teaching us that He will have an input in our lives. He will test us, and it is up to us to withstand this and build ourselves. Both of us are partners in man's creation. G-d says to us – let us make man.

Join Me says G-d in making you into who you can be. Together we will form the real person in you.

Avraham was tested ten times to bring out different facets of his potential. According to the Rambam the first test that the Torah mentions is when G-d instructed Avraham and said to him (Bereishit 12:1): "Go for yourself, from your land, your birthplace, and from your father's house." Avraham was comfortable where he was. He had built up a fantastic name for himself, people knew him and it would be difficult to leave the country and live in an unknown

land. Nevertheless he went forth. Through passing this test he was able to build an even greater family, bearing children in the land of Israel. Avraham's tenth and final test is also introduced with the words "Go for yourself". He was told to sacrifice his beloved son Yitschak. Ten tough tests culminating in the ultimate challenge; being ready to accept that all that you have been blessed with and worked hard for should ultimately belong to G-d. He withstood the test, became our patriarch and gained a nation.

Until today we reap the rewards of his actions. We tap in to his stamina, eagerness and selflessness in the service of G-d. It was through him "going for himself" that he was able to realise himself and create the future Jewish people.

We are all tested on our own level, but this week when we read the Parasha and take pride in our ancestor's strength of character let us apply it to our own lives. We can pass any test that G-d gives us, it is for our good, and we will only grow from it. I never thought I would say this, but next time you get tested, just remember the lobster!



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT LECH LECHA

In this week Parsha, we find that Hashem tells Avraham to go out, look at, and count the stars. Then Hashem says, "כה יהיה זרעך" – "so shall your offspring be" (Bereishit 15:5). Rav Meir Shapiro explains that this could also be understood as follows: G-d told Avraham Avinu to count the stars, and Avraham made the attempt. Although it's impossible to count all the stars, Avraham still made the effort, still tried. כה יהיה זרעך – that effort, that drive, is a trait

within the people of Israel: to always attempt, to always try, and to persevere, even when it seems impossible.

I recently heard a powerful understanding in Tehillim (Psalm 130). At the end, we say, והוא יפדה את ישראל – "He [G-d] will redeem Israel." In this chapter, the name of Hashem is mentioned many times. So why is it that this final time, we just say והוא, "and He," as a reference to G-d? Why not mention Hashem's name directly?

It may very well be that the והוא doesn't only refer to G-d; perhaps it

also means והוא, "and it"—referring to a specific quality or trait. The Pasuk just before this says, יחל ישראל אל השם – "let Israel hope in Hashem." This hope is an effort, an attempt, a never-giving-up, always-striving for closeness to G-d. So והוא – that quality, that trait of hope, of not giving up—is what יפדה את ישראל, what will redeem ישראל עם.

May we merit to יחל ישראל אל השם, to hope, to desire, and to strive, never giving up in our yearning for G-d. And והוא—may that quality, that trait within us, יפדה את ישראל—bring us to a complete redemption, the Geulah Shleimah.



JACOB BOYDEN, TAL Schools Educator

The Interesting Comparison Between Noach and Avraham

There is a very interesting paradox between Noach and Avraham that we are enlightened about at the beginning of last week's Parsha.

The Pasuk says

אֱלֹהֵי תוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו
 This is the offspring of Noah. Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generation. Rashi has a famous comment: IN HIS GENERATIONS – Some of our Rabbis explain it (this word) to his credit: he was righteous even in his generation; it follows that had he lived in a generation of righteous people he would have been even more righteous owing to the force of good example. Others, however, explain it to his discredit: in comparison with his own generation he was accounted righteous, but had he lived in the generation of Abraham he would have been accounted as of no importance (cf. Sanhedrin 108a).

Why does Rashi choose to compare Noach to Avraham? He could have compared Noach to Adam or Moshe or

any other Tzadick? What did Noach fail to do that Avraham achieved? Ohr Hachaim explains something fascinating. Why does the Pasuk say אֱלֹהֵי תוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ? These are the offspring of Noach-Noach? Why is Noach repeated twice? Ohr Hachaim answers with an incredible Medresh that illustrates a conversation between Moses and Noach reported in Devarim Rabbah 11,3. In that conversation Noach claimed to have been greater than Moses because he was saved during the flood. Moses retorted that Noach had not been able to save anyone other than himself, whereas he had saved his generation after the sin of the golden calf. The word אֱלֹהֵי accordingly describes the limited value of Noach's good deeds. They sufficed only to save himself. The additional word בְּדֹרֹתָיו further underlines that Noach did not succeed in making students out of his peers. His sons who were considered as his "branches" are therefore included in the name Noach. This goes nicely with the Gemarah in Sanhedrin 19b that

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן: כָּל הַמְלֻמָּד אֶת בֶּן חֲבֵרוֹ תוֹרָה, מֵעֵלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב בְּאֵלוֹ יִלְדוּ

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: Anyone who teaches the son of his friend Torah, Scripture considers it as if he had fathered him. Why is that so? Because by teaching Torah your building and forming a person spiritually. Rashi therefore makes sense, if Noach was in the generation of Avraham he wouldn't have been anything. Avraham was the father of monotheism, he had the ability to teach the idea of G-d and make people follow in his way. This was ultimately the mission of Noach, which ended up with Noach only being able to save himself. This shines an incredible light on Avraham and is a fascinating insight into his greatness. Every story in the Torah is a life lesson for us. We are obligated to be like Avraham and bring G-dliness into the world spreading the light of Torah to others.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Asher Yasar – The Importance and Basic Interpretation of the Beracha

Maran, in the Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 6), presents a detailed explanation of the text of Asher Yasar (the Beracha recited after one uses the restroom). It is very uncharacteristic of Maran to include in the Shulhan Aruch an interpretation of a text. The Shulhan Aruch is a Halachic code which instructs what is permissible, forbidden and obligatory; it is not intended as an interpretation of liturgical texts. Evidently, Maran afforded particular importance to the recitation of the Beracha of Asher Yasar, and therefore found it worthwhile to present a detailed explanation of the text in the Shulhan Aruch.

In the beginning of the Beracha, we give praise to Hashem for creating the human being "with wisdom" ("Asher Yasar Et Ha'adam Be'hochma"). Maran gives different interpretations of this phrase. Some explain that this refers to the fact that we have holes in our body, and yet the air inside us does not escape. If even a pinhole is opened in the surface of a balloon, all its air escapes. A living human

being, however, has many holes in the surface of his body that lead into his interior, and yet he is able to maintain his air. This is the special "wisdom" inherent in the creation of the human being. Others explain this phrase to mean that Hashem created Adam and Eve last, after the rest of the creation was completed. If they had been created earlier, they would have had to wait, perhaps even several days, before they had something to eat. It was in God's "wisdom" that He first "set the table," so-to-speak, by planting the entire natural world, before creating mankind. After this phrase, we praise God for creating us with "Nekabim" and "Halulim." The term "Nekabim" refers to the exterior openings to the human body, such as the nostrils, the ears, the mouth, and the excretory organs. "Halulim," by contrast, refers to the holes inside our bodies, such as the ventricles of the heart, the lungs, the stomach and the intestines. We acknowledge in this Beracha that if any of these would open when it is supposed to be closed, or close when it is supposed to be open, we would be unable to survive for even a moment. God, in His infinite mercy, ensures that these openings function

precisely as they must for us to continue living.

We conclude the Beracha by describing the Almighty as "Rofeh Chol Basar U'mafli La'asot" ("Healer of every flesh, who acts wondrously"). God is a "healer," a "physician," as He enables us to remove the waste from our bodies. If, Heaven forbid, we would be unable to excrete the waste from our bodies, the toxins would remain inside us and kill us. Using the restroom is thus no less than a medical procedure, which is overseen by God Himself, and in this sense He is the "Healer of every flesh." The phrase "acts wondrously," as the Rama (Rabbi Moshe Isserles of Cracow, 1525-1572) explains in his glosses to the Shulhan Aruch, refers to the remarkable blending between the human being's physical and spiritual qualities. The realms of the physical and the spiritual are opposites, and yet God "wondrously" merges the two together and sustains their coexistence. This is truly nothing short of a miracle.

Whenever we recite the Beracha of Asher Yasar, we should have at least these basic concepts in mind.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Lech Lecha

It is now ten generations since the creation of the first man. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and Hashem resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the world. Hashem instructs Noach to build an ark in which to escape the flood. After forty days and nights, the flood covers the entire earth, including the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water begins to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, this ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends forth a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same

evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After seven more days, Noach once again sends forth the dove, which this time does not return. Hashem tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to Hashem from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. Hashem vows never again to flood the entire world and gives the rainbow as a sign of this covenant.

Noach and his descendants are now permitted to eat meat, unlike Adam. Hashem commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibitions against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder and eating the meat of a living animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today.

Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yefet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended.

The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Bavel, which results in Hashem fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Torah portion concludes with the genealogy from Noach to Avram.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. What benefits did G-d promise Avraham if he would leave his home?
2. "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." What does this mean?
3. Who were the souls that Avraham and Sarah "made"?
4. What were the Canaanites doing in the Land of Canaan when Avraham arrived?
5. Why did Avraham build an altar at Ai?

A

1. 12:1 - He would become a great nation, his excellence would become known to the world, and he would be blessed with wealth.
2. 12:3 - A person will say to his child, "You should be like Avraham."
3. 12:5 - People they converted to the worship of G-d.
4. 12:6 - They were in the process of conquering the land from the descendants of Shem.
5. He foresaw the Jewish People's defeat there in the days of Yehoshua due to Achan's sin. He built an altar to pray for them.



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And [Hashem] took him [Avraham] outside and He [Hashem] said, "Look to the sky and count the stars ... so will be your offspring" (Bereishis 15:15)
Hashem took him out of the atmosphere and lifted him above the stars (Rashi)