

# LAMPLIGHTER

7 Cheshvan  
Parshas  
Lech-Lecha  
**1319**  
27 October  
5778/2017

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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, we are told about the births of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac.

When G-d promised Abraham that he would have Isaac, Abraham already had a son, Ishmael. Thus Abraham responded to G-d, "I pray that Ishmael might live before You" - i.e., that Ishmael would conduct himself as he should and pursue the Divine way of life. G-d, however, replied, "No. By Isaac shall your seed be called." From Isaac, Abraham was assured, his true joy would come.

There is a basic difference between Ishmael and Isaac. The birth of Ishmael was natural, without any heavenly intervention. Isaac's birth was miraculous for Abraham and Sara were far advanced in age.

Another difference between Ishmael and Isaac relates to the commandment of circumcision. Ishmael was circumcised when he was thirteen years old. At the age of thirteen a youngster has sufficient reason to be held accountable for his conduct and he becomes obligated to observe the mitzvot. Ishmael thus used his reason to determine his readiness to enter the covenant with G-d, and accepted circumcision.

Isaac was circumcised when he was eight days old. An infant that young cannot give consent; nevertheless he was bound up with G-d at that early age. This type of bond can never be dissolved and erased; it is eternal, as the Torah calls it "an eternal covenant."

Isaac's supernatural and miraculous birth was in contrast to Ishmael's natural birth. And Isaac's covenant with G-d was in a supra-rational manner as opposed to Ishmael's covenant.

Normally a child is born and raised under the supervision of his parents, guarded against every harm. He is educated to gain proper understanding, which in turn leads to attachment with G-d. This was the way of Ishmael. He was raised in the home of Abraham and received an education which made him understand that he ought to attach himself to G-d.

This course of life, however, provides no assurances. When religious commitment is based exclusively on reason, we cannot predict how it will be affected by the variables of life. Thus we find with Ishmael, that as soon as his inheritance was affected by Isaac's birth, his behavior deteriorated and G-d commanded Abraham to listen to Sara when she asked that Ishmael be sent away.

Lech Lecha teaches us that, to establish Jewish continuity, one cannot set out with strictly natural calculations. The very existence and purpose of the Jewish people transcends nature. A Jew's life, right from birth, is intertwined with miracles and a disregard for the course of nature.

## Leaving Home - For Good

By Yossy Goldman

The story is told of an encounter between two famous rabbis of yesteryear -- Rabbi Elijah, the famed "Gaon" (prodigious scholar) of Vilna, and Rabbi Yaakov Krantz, known as the "Maggid" (preacher) of Dubne. Apparently the Maggid of Dubne once visited Vilna and went to pay a courtesy call on the great Gaon. The Gaon asked the Maggid to preach to him, as was his specialty. "Give me mussar (words of rebuke). Chastise me," said the Gaon. "G-d forbid that I should have the chutzpah to chastise the great Gaon of Vilna," replied the Maggid, quite horrified at the suggestion. "No matter, that is your forte and I want to hear mussar from you," insisted the Gaon.

So the Dubner Maggid thought a while and then most reluctantly acceded to the wishes of his illustrious host. Said the Maggid, "Is it a great achievement to be a Gaon sitting in Vilna in your little secluded kloiz (small study hall)? Go out into the world, mix with the people, and then let us see what kind of Gaon you will be."

Indeed, it is much easier to be scholarly and pious in a sequestered ghetto than it is outside in a world that is often oblivious, or even hostile, to Torah and its values.

This, in fact, was more or less the test of Abraham in this week's Parshah. "Go from your land, from your birthplace, from your father's house, to the land I will show you." And it was there -- far from his natural environment and comfort zones -- that Abraham accomplished his divine mission. He spread the truth of the One G-d to a pagan world and, in the process, his own name and reputation was established for eternity. It was only after leaving home that Abraham became the founding father of the Jewish people.

A hundred years ago, an entire generation of Yiddish-speaking, Torah-observant Jews migrated from Europe. They came to America, the golden land of opportunity, to escape pogroms and persecution. With blood, sweat and tears they raised themselves from rags to riches and soon came to personify the American dream -- an amazing and inspiring success story. But the fact is that, for the most part, as their businesses succeeded their religious lives failed. Unquestionably, Judaism took a severe body blow. Most were unable to sustain their old world values in new world America. The transition from shtetl to suburbia proved too formidable and children and grandchildren grew up ignorant of and alienated from their own sacred traditions.

Today, we see this phenomenon playing out on a lesser scale when families emigrate or move from city to city. Displaced from their spiritual support systems, they flounder. The bulk of their efforts are directed at just resettling and reorganizing their lives. Putting religious infrastructures in place often comes last -- at great cost in the long run.

And on a more subtle level, a similar test of conscience faces us when we take our annual vacations. Away from home and our habitual norms of behavior, we are challenged to maintain the code of conduct we are committed to all year long.

It's like the story of the shadchan (matchmaker) who suggested a young lady to a fellow and absolutely raved about her. After their first date, the fellow calls up the shadchan and gives him a piece of his mind. "How dare you introduce me to such a girl, didn't you know she limps!" Quite unflustered, the shadchan retorts, "But, what's the problem, it's only when she walks."

It is when we walk away from our comfortable spiritual cocoons of home and community into the wider society that we may find ourselves limping somewhat, losing our Jewish equilibrium. It is then that our faith, our values, our morals and beliefs are truly challenged.

May G-d help that the children of Abraham will emulate their forefather, who left his land and remained strong in faith, going on to achieve remarkable success, both spiritually and materially.

# Slice of LIFE

## How I Learned to See the Bigger Picture

By Elana Mizrahi

I have a great story to share with you. My father was visiting us this past month, and he told us about something that happened to him when he was 2 years old.

The year was 1944, and his father, my grandfather, who had been drafted into army service, was stationed at an army base near Yuba City, California. My grandmother decided that she wanted to visit him, and so she bought tickets for a flight that would take her and my father from New York to California.

For some reason, the airplane made a stop in Chicago, and my grandmother and father very inconveniently got bumped from the flight. Determined to continue, my grandmother hopped on a train that took them to California. When they arrived, they heard the news: The flight that they had been bumped from crashed. Everyone on board was killed.

It's no wonder that when my grandmother passed away more than 60 years later, they found among her saved belongings the airplane tickets from this flight and a newspaper clipping describing the crash. For 60 years, my grandmother kept this reminder that nothing in life happens coincidentally.

I had a slightly challenging time last week with my appliances. Our dryer broke, which would not be a big deal in the heat of the summer, but in the cold of the winter, with a family of six (not to mention that I am a massage therapist, who needs to constantly wash sheets for sessions), a broken dryer is definitely a technical difficulty! Then my food processor jumped out at me from the cabinet and came crashing to the floor, breaking into a million pieces. My food processor is my right-hand man for all my Shabbat meal preparations, and there it lay, shattered.

At the end of the week I went to a

client's home to give a treatment. As I was carrying my massage table down the many cement stairs that led from my client's home, my laptop fell out of my backpack and came crashing down onto the cement floor. I picked it up, not even wanting to think about what had just happened. Now let me remind you, I'm not just a massage therapist, I'm also a writer! You know what a laptop is for a writer...

Back at home, I opened the laptop, and there was a spider's web of a screen in front of me. It was late. I was tired. "Why?" I wanted to cry. I looked at my husband. "Thank G-d, it was just the computer and not my head! But tell me something. Why?"

He looked back at me. "Thank G-d, it's just a computer."

Why did all this happen in one week? I don't know. I could make things up, but do I really know why? Does it matter why?

There once was a great sage named Rabbi Akiva. The Talmud relates this story about him:

Rabbi Akiva was accustomed to saying, "Everything G-d does is for the good." Once Rabbi Akiva was traveling with a donkey, a rooster and a candle, and when night came he tried to find lodging in a nearby village, only to be turned away. No one wanted him. Although Rabbi Akiva was forced to spend the night in the field, he didn't complain, but instead his reaction was, "Everything G-d does is for the good." A wind came and blew out his candle, a cat ate his rooster and a lion ate his donkey. With each thing that occurred, Rabbi Akiva's reaction was the same: "Everything that G-d does is for the good." That night, a regiment came and took the entire town (where Rabbi Akiva had wanted to stay) captive, while Rabbi Akiva, who was sleeping in the dark and quiet field, went unnoticed and thus was spared. When Rabbi Akiva realized what happened, he said, "Didn't I tell you that everything that G-d does is for the good?"

The commentator Rashi explains that if the candle, rooster or donkey would have been around, the regiment would have spotted or heard them, and surely would have captured Rabbi

Akiva.

Now, let me give you a twist on this story. Let's say that Rabbi Akiva never found out about the fate of the village. And let's just say that my grandmother and father boarded the train, and never heard that the plane had crashed...

In our daily prayers we say:

"We give thanks to You, acknowledging that You are the L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers forever. You are the strength of our life, the shield of our salvation in every generation. We will give thanks to You and recount Your praise, evening, morning and noon, for our lives that are committed into Your hand, for our souls that are entrusted to You, for the hidden miracles that You do for us every day, and for Your continual wonders and beneficences. You are the Beneficent One, for Your mercies never cease; the Merciful One, for Your kindnesses never end; for we always place our hope in You."

Why do we include this particular prayer in our daily prayers? Because as Rabbi Bechayei, a 14th-century commentator, wrote, "There isn't any individual in Israel for whom hidden miracles don't happen every day!"

Sometimes we are given a glimpse, a very small piece of a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, a puzzle that includes not only the physical reality of the world as we know it, but the spiritual world as well. This spiritual world is beyond human comprehension and our limited human vision. If we could really see the entire puzzle, we would see that the very thing that was so tragic and difficult for us is for the best. But it is only when the spiritual parts to the puzzle will be revealed to us that we will see this.

When we do see the salvation —when it's revealed to us and we are grateful for it—surely we need to hold onto it, to remind us that there are no coincidences and that, yes, everything that G-d does is for the best. It's so hard to discern where the piece of the puzzle goes and what the puzzle really looks like. It's so hard to see clearly the good in each thing that happens, but ultimately we must know something: Hidden or revealed, everything that G-d does is for the best. Twenty-four hours of the day, seven days of the week, 365 days of the year, He performs miracles for us.

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### WEEKLY VIDEO



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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Guidelines for Outreach

### Greeting and Blessings:

After the long interval, I received your letter of the 18th of Iyar. I am sure you know that that is the day of Lag B'omer and that you fully realize its significance.

As for the contents of your letter and the problem of working with non-religious groups, in a way that such cooperation would not weaken the religious convictions of your own groups, etc., needless to say, it is impossible to make hard and firm rules about such cooperation that would apply to all instances. For a great deal depends on the atmosphere and circumstances of such meetings.

However, one general principle should be borne in mind, according to the teaching of our Sages in the Mishna (Pirke Ovos 1:12) "Hillel says 'Be of the disciples of Aaron... loving the creatures and bringing them closer to the Torah.'" This means that one should always practice the love of fellow-Jews, even to such who have no other merit except that they are "creatures" of G-d, as explained in the Tanya, Chapter 32. At the same time, this should be coupled with the precaution that it should be for the purpose of "bringing them closer to the Torah," and not making the Torah suit to their standards. In other words, it is necessary to make certain that while trying to influence others towards a fuller appreciation of the Torah and Mitzvot, one should not be influenced in the other direction, nor make any concession. I can only suggest, therefore, that you keep this guiding principle in mind.

Precisely this year, being the 200th anniversary of the Histalkus of the Baal Shem Tov, which we observed on the first day of Shovuo, has much to say on this question, since the Baal Shem Tov taught and personified what should be our aim and purpose in life. For he taught that Ahavas Yisrael means loving even the Jew who is at the other end of the world, which includes not only geographical distance but also spiritual distance. At the same time he demanded that the observance of the Torah and Mitzvot should be with animation and inner inspiration and with every possible Hidur. I trust that among your Lubavitcher acquaintances in Montreal there are some who could help you get a deeper insight into the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and how to apply them in daily life.

In connection with the above, I trust you will find the enclosed copy of my Shevuot message stimulating and useful.

I hope that since writing to me last, you have practiced the injunction of our Sages that "All things of holiness should be on the ascendancy," also in your personal life, and there is nothing that stands in the way of will and determination.

Hoping to hear good news from you always,  
With blessing,

## A WORD

*from the Director*

*This week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha, describes G-d's promise to Abraham that the Land of Israel will be an eternal inheritance to the Jewish people. Abraham's traversing of the land was not a necessary prerequisite for his taking possession of it as G-d's promise itself sufficed to transfer ownership of the Holy Land to Abraham.*

*It has been mentioned numerous times that the Rebbe's statements regarding the Holy Land, and his staunch position not to give even one inch of land to the Arabs, has nothing to do with Biblical promises nor Messianic visions.*

*Rather, the Rebbe has made these statements and taken this position because of Pikuach Nefesh - the imminent danger to life - of Jews in the Holy Land. Time and time again, the Rebbe's stand has been shown to be absolutely true.*

*And yet, of course, there are spiritual as well as mundane lessons to be learned from this week's Torah portion. There are spiritual implications, the Rebbe explains, of G-d's promise to the Jewish people via Abraham:*

*"There is a particular relevance to G-d's promise in the present age, the era immediately preceding Moshiach's coming. For G-d promised Abraham the lands of the ten nations, including not only the land of the seven Canaanite nations conquered by the Jews after the exodus from Egypt, but also the lands of the Keini, the Kenizi, and the Kadmoni people. G-d promised - and thus gave - the Jewish people all these ten lands at the same time. Nevertheless, in the present era, we were granted only the lands of seven nations and the fulfillment of this promise in its full sense will not be until the Era of the Redemption...at that time not only all the Jews of that generation but also all the Jews of all previous generations who will arise in the Resurrection, will live there."*

*With the situation as it is now in Israel, the only solution is that G-d fulfill His promise and give possession of the entire Holy Land to the Jewish people under the leadership of Moshiach. May we merit this now!*

*J. I. Gutnick*

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

*With Rabbi Aron Moss*

### Do Jews Believe in Hell?

#### **Question:** Dear Rabbi,

*Do Jews believe in Hell? I am not planning any trips there or anything, but I have heard conflicting reports about its existence.*

**Answer:** We do believe in a type of Hell, but not the one found in cartoons and joke books. Hell is not a punishment in the conventional sense; it is, in fact, the expression of a great kindness.

The Jewish mystics described a spiritual place called "Gehinnom." This is usually translated as "Hell," but a better translation would be "the Supernal Washing Machine." Because that's exactly how it works. The way our soul is cleansed in Gehinnom is similar to the way our clothes are cleansed in a washing machine.

Put yourself in your socks' shoes, so to speak. If you were to be thrown into boiling hot water and flung around for half an hour, you might start to feel that someone doesn't like you. However, the fact is that it is only after going through a wash cycle that the socks can be worn again.

We don't put our socks in the washing machine to punish them. We put them through what seems like a rough and painful procedure only to make them clean and wearable again. The intense heat of the water loosens the dirt, and the force of being swirled around shakes it off completely. Far from hurting your socks, you are doing them a favor by putting them through this process.

So too with the soul. Every act we do in our lifetime leaves an imprint on our soul. The good we do brightens and elevates our soul, and every wrongdoing leaves a stain that needs to be cleansed. If, at the end of our life, we leave this world without fixing the wrongs we have done, our soul is unable to reach its place of rest on high. We must go through a cycle of deep cleansing. Our soul is flung around at an intense spiritual heat to rid it of any residue it may have gathered, and to prepare it for entry into Heaven.

Of course, this whole process can be avoided. If we truly regret the wrong we have done and make amends with the people we have hurt, we can leave this world with "clean socks." That's why our Sages said, "Repent one day before you die." And what should you do if you don't know which day that will be? Repent today.

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

## 100 Barrels of Wine

The Baal Shem Tov once gathered a select group of his students and announced: "Come, I will show you someone who sincerely and wholeheartedly welcomes guests into his home."

The Baal Shem Tov asked for his horse and wagon to be prepared for a trip. The wheels of the wagon flew through fields and forests, mountains and valleys. By late afternoon, the Baal Shem Tov and his students arrived at a village, and the wagon came to a halt in front of an inn.

A Jewish man came running out of the inn to greet them. He called out: "Hooray, there are guests! Precious Jewish guests!"

The innkeeper went over to the travelers and invited them into his home. "Come, dear rabbis, come into my home. You can rest up and eat something. You will refresh yourselves, and at the same time bring life to me! It's not every day that I am so fortunate to do the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim [welcoming guests]!"

The Baal Shem Tov responded, "Perhaps it would be better that we continue on our way to the nearby city. There we will have a mikvah, and we will be able to pray with the congregation and hear the Torah reading."

"Oh, but I have a mikvah and a Torah scroll right here; and together with all of you, we will also have a minyan [quorum of 10]," the innkeeper said, entreating them to remain. He added that if they would like to pray in the city on Shabbat, they could walk there, because it was within the permissible area one is allowed to walk on Shabbat.

In the end, the Baal Shem Tov agreed to the request of the innkeeper, and the travelers became his guests.

While the innkeeper lived modestly, he offered his guests his best rooms and did everything he could to make their stay comfortable. After they had prayed, he invited them to a table set with delicious food. He himself stood by to serve them.

On Shabbat morning, they all walked to the nearby city to pray. After Shabbat, the innkeeper prepared a lavish melaveh malkah feast (meal after the conclusion of Shabbat), and even invited many more guests from the area. He radiated joy as he greeted his guests and bustled around making sure everyone was cared for.

The Baal Shem Tov and his students spent a few more days with the villager, who took care of all their needs personally and did everything in his power to make sure they felt at home.

Before leaving, the Baal Shem Tov asked their host if he had any special requests. "My only request is that you pray for me that I merit life in the world to come," he answered.

"The thing you ask for is dependent upon you," the Baal Shem Tov responded. "But if you want me to bless you, you must come to me in Mezhibuzh. And, by the way, I can give you some sound advice. Since in our country there is a shortage of wine, when you come, it would be worthwhile to bring with you 100 barrels of wine of the best kind, so that you can earn a nice profit."

Time passed, and the students all but forgot about the whole episode. One day, the Baal Shem Tov said to his students, "Today a group of poor people came to our town. Please go and tell them that I am inviting them to my Shabbat meal."

The students were very surprised to hear this. The local custom was that poor people and passing guests who came to town had all their needs met by the local committee in charge of accommodating wayfarers, who arranged meals and sleeping accommodations. And now the Baal Shem Tov was inviting this group to his house.

When the poor folk were seated around the table, the Baal Shem Tov turned to one of them and invited him to come sit next to him.

"Do you recognize me?" the Baal Shem Tov asked him. "Yes," the poor man answered. "I had the merit to host the Rebbe and his students in my inn."

The students sitting around the table perked up their ears. "Tell us what happened to you since then," the Baal Shem Tov continued. The villager told the following tale:

"When the Rebbe told me to come to him to Mezhibuzh and bring 100 barrels of the best wine, I firmly believed in the words of the Rebbe, and set out to do this. I sold everything I possessed, and bought 100 barrels of wine. Then I set out on my way. Toward evening, as we passed through a forest, a big storm broke out and torrents of rain fell.

"The path was totally sodden with water, and the wagons were unable to move

forward. I got off the wagon and, leaving the merchandise with the wagon drivers, I started searching for a house or inn in which to spend the night.

"Eventually, I noticed a small light far ahead in the darkness. I went toward the light. Soon I reached a house in the forest. An old Jewish man with a flowing beard greeted me at the door. He invited me in. The house was warm and well-lit, and the old man treated me kindly until I warmed up. In the morning, after I said the morning prayers, I parted from the regal old man and went back to where I had left my wagons. However, there was no trace of them. It was as if they had vanished into thin air.

"At first I was very upset and depressed. However, then I began to think that I don't have any reason to be upset. 'G-d gave and G-d took, may the name of G-d be blessed.' I Surely it is all for the good, I decided. I began to walk, and then came upon a group of poor people traveling this way. I traveled with them until I came to Mezhibuzh."

The poor man finished his story, and all eyes now focused on the Baal Shem Tov.

"Do you regret that you asked me to be blessed with life in the world to come? Perhaps you would prefer to get all your lost wealth back?" the Baal Shem Tov asked the innkeeper.

"G-d forbid!" the man replied without hesitating. "Is the Rebbe suggesting that I give up my share in the world to come in exchange for 100 barrels of wine? Absolutely not, Rebbe. I am prepared to remain a poor person all my life, traveling from place to place, if only I can merit life in the world to come!"

"Indeed that is what I wanted to hear from you," the Baal Shem Tov said. "A Jew needs to be ready to give up everything for faith in G-d. You accomplished this, and therefore you will merit life in the world to come."

A smile of pure happiness spread across the poor man's face.

The Baal Shem Tov continued: "You are thinking that now you will have to wander with your friends for a long time. Well, that is not the case. With the help of G-d, tomorrow the wagons with the wine that you lost in the forest will arrive here. You will sell them for a nice profit, and you will once again be able to do the mitzvah of welcoming guests as before."

Sure enough, the very next day, the wagons arrived as the Baal Shem Tov had said. The villager became wealthy, and continued to host guests in a generous fashion.

## PARSHAS IN A NUTSHELL

G-d speaks to Abram, commanding him, "Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you." There, G-d says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife, Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of a one G-d.

A famine forces the first Jew to depart for Egypt, where beautiful Sarai is taken to Pharaoh's palace; Abram escapes death because they present themselves as brother and sister. A plague prevents the Egyptian king from touching her, and convinces him to return her to Abram and to compensate the brother-revealed-as-husband with gold, silver and cattle.

Back in the land of Canaan, Lot separates from Abram and settles in the evil city of Sodom, where he falls captive when the mighty armies of Chedorlaomer and his three allies conquer the five cities of the Sodom Valley. Abram sets out with a small band to rescue his nephew, defeats the four kings, and is blessed by Malki-Zedek the king of Salem (Jerusalem).

G-d seals the Covenant Between the Parts with Abram, in which the exile and persecution (galut) of the people of Israel is foretold, and the Holy Land is bequeathed to them as their eternal heritage.

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant Hagar. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly; an angel convinces her to return, and tells her that her son will father a populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram's eighty-sixth year.

Thirteen years later, G-d changes Abram's name to Abraham ("father of multitudes"), and Sarai's to Sarah ("princess"), and promises that a son will be born to them; from this child, whom they should call Isaac ("will laugh"), will stem the great nation with which G-d will establish His special bond. Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and his descendants as a "sign of the covenant between Me and you." Abraham immediately complies, circumcising himself and all the males of his household.

## CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 27 - 28 October	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	7:31	8:32
Adelaide	7:22	8:21
Brisbane	5:45	6:40
Darwin	6:28	7:18
Gold Coast	5:44	6:39
Perth	6:19	7:16
Sydney	7:00	7:59
Canberra	7:11	8:10
Launceston	7:29	8:32
Auckland	7:31	8:31
Wellington	7:38	8:41
Hobart	7:30	8:35
Byron Bay	6:44	7:39

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

### PARSHAS LECH-LECHA • 7 CHESHVAN • 27 OCTOBER

<b>FRIDAY NIGHT:</b>	MINCHA:	7.40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.10 PM
<b>SHABBOS DAY:</b>	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.39 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.30 PM
<b>WEEKDAYS:</b>	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	7.30 PM
	MAARIV:	8.20 PM