

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT LECH LECHA · 8 CHESHVAN 5775 - NOV. 1, 2014 · VOL. 22 NO. 3

PARSHA INSIGHTS

SPIRITUAL FALL-OUT

“Go for yourself...” (12-1)

Radiation poisoning is a collection of health effects which present themselves within 24 hours of exposure to high amounts of ionizing radiation.

The radiation causes cellular degradation due to damage to DNA and other key molecular structures within the cells in various tissues. This destruction, particularly as it affects ability of cells to divide normally, in turn causes the symptoms. The symptoms can begin within one or two hours, and may last for several months.

The onset and type of symptoms depend on the radiation exposure. Relatively smaller doses result in gastrointestinal effects, such as nausea and vomiting, and symptoms related to falling blood counts, such as infection and bleeding. Relatively larger doses can result in neurological effects and rapid death. Acute radiation syndrome is generally treated with blood transfusions and antibiotics, with some more exotic treatments, such as bone marrow transfusions, being required in extreme cases.

Rabeinu Bachya, (Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa, 1255-1340) writes that the root of the words that begin this week’s Torah portion “*Lecha lecha*” – “Go for yourself...” are from the root “*lichluch*” meaning “dirt”. In

other words, G-d’s command to Avraham to leave his home and his family was to separate him from the spiritual filth that surrounded him.

Ostensibly, the last person to be affected by his surroundings should have been Avraham Halvri. As our Sages tell us, *Halvri* comes from the same root as the word meaning “to cross over”. The whole world was, so to speak, on one side, and Avraham “crossed over” to the other side, unafraid to proclaim the truth to a world that viewed him as a freak.

Of all humankind, Avraham was the person most immune to spiritual corruption.

Why, then, did G-d tell Avraham to escape?

Dirt is something that sticks to us without our knowledge and even against our will.

If we breathe the air of impurity, its poison will affect us however we try to protect ourselves from its fallout.

• Sources: *Bereishet Rabba* 42:5;
Rabbeinu Baycha; *Rabbi Shimshon Pincus*

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt”l • *Parsha Insights* written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor and Talmud Tips: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

© 1992 - 2014 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Ten generations have passed since Noach. Man has descended spiritually. In the year 1948 from Creation, Avram is born. By observing the world, Avram comes to the inescapable Truth of G-d's existence, and thus merits that G-d appear to him. At the beginning of this week's *Parsha*, G-d tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house and travel to an unknown land where G-d will make him into a great nation. Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants and those whom they converted to faith in G-d. When they reach the land of Canaan, G-d appears to Avram and tells him that this is the land that He will give to his descendants. A famine ensues and Avram is forced to relocate to Egypt to find food. Realizing that his wife's beauty could cause his death at the hand of the Egyptians, Avram asks her to say that she is his sister. Sarai is taken to Pharaoh, but G-d afflicts Pharaoh and his court with severe plagues, and she is released unmolested. Avram returns to *Eretz Yisrael* (Canaan) with much wealth given to him by the Egyptians. During a quarrel over grazing rights between their shepherds, Avram decides to part ways with his nephew Lot. Lot chooses to live in the rich but corrupt city of Sodom in the fertile plain of the Jordan. A war breaks out between the kings of the region, and Sodom

is defeated. Lot is taken captive. Together with a handful of his converts, Avram rescues Lot, miraculously overpowering vastly superior forces, but Avram demurs from accepting any of the spoils of the battle. In a prophetic covenant, G-d reveals to Avram that his offspring will be exiled to a strange land where they will be oppressed for 400 years, after which they will emerge with great wealth and return to *Eretz Yisrael*, their irrevocable inheritance. Sarai is barren and gives Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maiden, to Avram in the hope that she will provide them with a child. Hagar becomes arrogant when she discovers that she is pregnant. Sarai deals harshly with her and Hagar flees. On the instruction of an angel, Hagar returns to Avram and gives birth to Yishmael. The Parsha concludes with G-d commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a covenant between G-d and His seed. G-d changes Avram's name to Avraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. G-d promises Avraham a son, Yitzchak, despite Avraham's being ninety-nine years old and Sarah ninety. On that day, Avraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and all his household.

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

YEVAMOT 30-36

Rava said, "I consider it as if he had done two transgressions, but he is only obligated for one."

This enigmatic statement refers to a case where a man transgressed with his brother's wife, who after his marrying her sister was also his wife's sister as well, and might be prohibited for these two separate reasons. Rava explains in our *gemara*, however, that Rabbi Yosi in our *sugya* holds that "something prohibited cannot gain an additional prohibition; something cannot be more prohibited than prohibited!

Therefore, Rava teaches that Rabbi Yosi really meant that in some sense the person who transgresses in this way is viewed "as if he transgressed two prohibitions" — but he does not actually need to bring atonement for the two separate prohibitions. For example, he would not bring two *chatat* offerings to the Beit Hamikdash if he transgressed in a *shogeg* manner (unintentional yet negligent) and the transgression was punishable by *karet* expiation.

So what is the significance of saying "It is as if he had done two transgressions" asks the *gemara*? "To bury him in the place where completely wicked people are buried" answers the *gemara* — even after death in this world he is buried in a separate place in the cemetery reserved for the worst offenders, such as those given the capital punishments of *sereifa* ("burning") and *sekila* (stoning") (Rashi).

• *Yevamot 32b*

The Sage Abaye said, "The Sages were stricter at times in regard to the Rabbinical laws they enacted than they were in regard to Torah laws."

The Torah laws given at Sinai are understood to have a "stronger" and "more severe" standing than the later Rabbinical laws enacted to serve as a safeguard for fulfilling the Torah's teachings. However, when the Sages felt that people might not be careful in accepting and keeping their laws as seriously as necessary, special penalties were imposed by the Sages that are not found in similar Torah laws, which by their nature were taken more strictly and not likely to be transgressed even without any additional penalty (Rashi).

• *Yevamot 36b*

PARSHA Q&A ?

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?
6. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sarah was his sister?
7. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds?
8. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that?
9. Verse 14:7 states that the four kings "smote all the country of the Amalekites". How is this possible, since Amalek had not yet been born?
10. Why did the "palit" tell Avraham of Lot's capture?
11. Who accompanied Avraham in battle against the four kings?
12. Why couldn't Avraham chase the four kings past Dan?
13. Why did Avraham give "ma'aser" specifically to Malki-Tzedek?
14. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from Sodom's king?
15. When did the decree of 400 years of exile begin?
16. What did G-d indicate with His promise that Avraham would "come to his ancestors in peace"?
17. How did G-d fulfill His promise that Avraham would be buried in "a good old age"?
18. Why did the Jewish People need to wait until the fourth generation until they returned to *Eretz Canaan*?
19. Who was Hagar's father?
20. Why did Avraham fall on his face when G-d appeared to him?

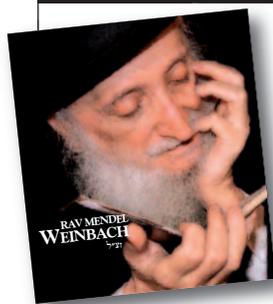
PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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. 12:8 - 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.
6. 12:13 - That the Egyptians would not kill him, and would give him presents.
7. 13:7 - Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.
8. 14:1 - Amrafel was Nimrod. He said (*amar*) to Avraham to fall (*fel*) into the fiery furnace.
9. 14:7 - The Torah uses the name that the place would bear in the future.
10. 14:13 - He wanted Avraham to die trying to save Lot so that he himself could marry Sarah.
11. 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.
12. 14:14 - He saw prophetically that his descendants would make a golden calf there, and as a result his strength failed.
13. 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a *kohen*.
14. 14:23 - G-d had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want Sodom's king to say, "I made Avraham wealthy."
15. 15:13 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
16. 15:15 - That his father, Terach, would repent and become righteous.
17. 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son Yishmael repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson Esav became wicked.
18. 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.
19. 16:1 - Pharaoh.
20. 17:3 - Because he was as yet uncircumcised.

A Memorial Tribute to Rav Weinbach zt"l



The Memorial Tribute Book for Rav Weinbach zt"l is available in print at Ohr Somayach.*

A PDF format is available for free download on www.ohr.edu.

* Suggested minimum donation for the printed version is 36 nis.

Proceeds will be used for the Gemach Charity Fund established by Rav Weinbach, zt"l.

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT LECH LECHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

Avram, who is childless, is afraid that his servant Eliezer will inherit him. G-d assures him, however, that “*That one will not inherit you. Only he who will come forth from within you shall inherit you. And He took him outside and said, ‘Gaze now towards the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them’. And He said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be’. And he trusted in G-d and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.*” (*Bereishet 15:1-3*)

Abarbanel finds numerous difficulties with these verses. Why does the Torah tell us that only in this instance Avram trusted in G-d? There were numerous other occasions where G-d made promises to Avram. What is meant by “and he reckoned it to him as righteousness”? Is this G-d speaking in reference to Avram, or vice-versa? Finally, what is meant by “righteousness”?

Abarbanel answers that Avram’s trusting G-d is a reference not just to this promise but to all previous promises as well. Avram refers to these promises as an example of G-d demonstrating righteousness towards Avram, in that he is deserving of them, having followed G-d’s directive by leaving Ur Kasdim years earlier. The expression “and he trusted in G-d” can also refer to the future, meaning that Avram’s progeny will also trust in G-d. When G-d tells Avram to count the stars, he is referring primarily not to the number of progeny, but rather to six special characteristics that will set them apart from all other nations.

Generally speaking, the nation — and particularly its prophets, scholars and righteous leaders — will be compared to the magnificent stars themselves. This is expressed clearly in the Book of Daniel (12:3): “The wise will shine like the radiance of the firmament, and those who teach righteousness to the multitudes will shine like the stars, for ever and ever.”

Just like the enormous number of stars cannot be counted, so too the nation of Israel will multiply to the extent that it will be impossible to enumerate. Thus the nation of Israel is compared to the stars both qualitatively and quantitatively. Abarbanel states that there are an enormous number of stars not visible to the naked eye, a fact not subscribed to by the rest of world when he wrote his commentary in the early 1500’s, long before the invention of the telescope.

Just like the heavenly bodies do not move by themselves, but are directed by a separate mover, i.e. G-d, so too the Jewish nation exists and moves forward through history

according to G-d’s command. Just like all the heavenly bodies conform strictly to G-d’s direction, so too will Avram’s progeny be led to the fulfillment of G-d’s ultimate plan for the Jewish People. This is indicated by Yosef’s famous dream in which his father, mother and brothers are compared to the sun, moon and stars whose movements are directed by G-d.

Just like the heavenly bodies by virtue of their very existence proclaim the glory and honor of G-d, so too the nation of Israel was uniquely blessed to do the same. The verse in Psalms (115:16) states, “The heavens are to G-d, and the earth was given to man.” This means that the heavenly bodies were created to proclaim G-d’s praises, and the earth was given to mankind that it should do the same. But not everyone is capable of doing so. The unique, spiritual essence of the Jewish nation allows it to overcome negative temptations, and as a result G-d has granted it eternal blessing through its adherence to Torah, which sings the praises of G-d just like the heavenly bodies.

Just like the heavenly bodies in their movement sometimes ascend and cast their light, and sometimes descend and are no longer visible, so too the nation of Israel will undergo periods of spiritual ascent and success, and periods of descent into baseness and spiritual failure.

The physical universe, even though it had a definite beginning from absolute nothingness, is not progressing toward a definite end. Rather, it is eternal. Similarly the Jewish nation, even though its makeup and fortunes vacillate between good and evil, and freedom and slavery, will never be destroyed, even by the pressures of the Exile. As G-d says in the Torah (*Vayikra 26:44*) “I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them.” Furthermore, the prophet Isaiah relates in the name of G-d, “For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I will make will endure before me, the word of G-d, so will your offspring and your name endure.”

These last two characteristics, which equate the eternity of the Jewish nation to the eternity of the physical universe, offer another explanation to the enigmatic verse, “and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” Here, it is G-d who is speaking to Avram and is referring to the future, not the past. He is telling Avram that in the future his offspring will be dealt with by Divine Providence and righteous judgment according to what they deserve, be it reward or punishment.

MEMORY AND FORGETTING

From: Misha

Dear Rabbi,

It's my understanding that according to Judaism, everything has a potential good side and bad side. Could you elaborate on what might be both the good and bad sides of both memory and forgetfulness?

Dear Misha,

This is a very unique and interesting question. I don't remember ever being asked this before!

Of course, memory is a very good and important attribute to both material and spiritual well-being. But it has its downside which can be countered by the beneficial side of forgetting.

Without memory, we would not be able to care for our most basic, simple needs. Society would not be able to function either, since people would not be able to remember and fulfill their obligations and commitments to one another, and no one would be able to rely on anyone for anything. Nor would we remember our Torah learning, ritual and religious obligations or even the existence of G-d Himself.

On the other hand, constantly remembering bad experiences, suffering, or the misdeeds of others would make us depressed, apathetic and paranoid. Therefore, in these instances, it is a great kindness that G-d created us with the ability or tendency to forget. Forgetting our own misdeeds may also be beneficial in enabling us to do *teshuvah* and then to move on, rather than becoming spiritually paralyzed through regret and remorse.

Unfortunately, we generally demonstrate selective memory in our interaction with others. We tend to remember even the smallest offenses of others against ourselves yet forget even great offenses we commit against others. It really should be the other way around – we should overlook and forget even the major wrongs committed against us while remembering and trying to placate others for even minor offenses we've done to them.

Interestingly, there are times when we must “forget” even our Torah learning. For example, in unclean places where it is prohibited even to think about Torah ideas or holiness, we must push such thoughts out of our minds. For most of us, that's not so difficult, and it would be wonderful if we were able to maintain such thoughts even when permitted. But for people immersed in Torah, whose love for it constantly draws their intention to it, this can be quite a challenge.

It is told of the Vilna Gaon that once the solution to a very difficult passage of Torah learning occurred to him while in the bathroom. He was distraught over this, and ultimately came to forget this learning that came to him in a forbidden way.

Conversely, a story is told of the Chafetz Chaim who was once seen on Yom Kippur lamenting over a list in a small notebook. People wondered what transgressions could possibly be written there to make him so upset. When they questioned the rabbi, he explained that this was a list of everything he had done throughout the year, except that he could not reckon for five minutes of his time, which he refused to overlook and forget but rather recalled in order to beseech forgiveness!

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

LIFE FROM THE DEAD SEA – YAM HAMELACH

Yam Hamelech, the so-called “Dead Sea”, has been transformed into a life-giving health resort area.

To name a few of these resorts, there is the Zohar Hot Springs for treatment of muscular and skin dis-



eases and allergies, the Yesha Hot Springs for muscular and joint ailments, and Ein Bokek's international center for the treatment of psoriasis.

These and other year-round resorts attract people from all over and the world.

THE SHEMONEH ESREI: THE FIFTH BLESSING - PART 2

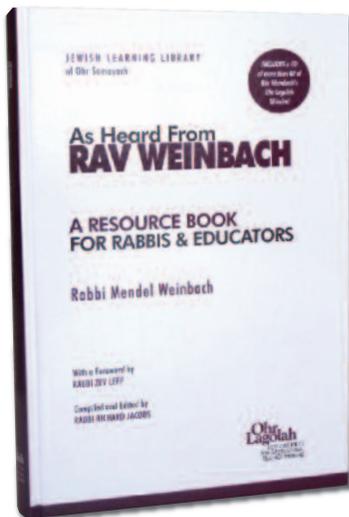
“Return us, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us close, our King, to Your service, and cause us (our souls) to return before You.”

The ways of the world are many. As one embarks on his journey through life, he will be drawn further and further away from where he started. The starting point of one’s life, as a soul in the Heavens, was before its Maker — and so too will its end be the same. We are all destined to give a reckoning of our journeys. What will we say when asked why we’ve been away so long? What will we answer when asked what we were searching for throughout our life? Can one really expect to find G-d without bothering to look?

Although G-d’s glory fills the entire world, one will only find Him if he first turns to the Torah. Through the Divine wisdom hidden within the Torah, G-d’s glory is revealed within this dark world. In fact, the Sages explain that G-d placed Himself, so to speak, in His Torah. Thus, only when

one turns to the Torah first will he succeed in using this world to draw himself closer to G-d. One who merits will be able to hear the voice of G-d call out to Him, discovering that the true purpose for which he has been placed in the world is to serve G-d his maker. When such a person’s soul returns above, it will be filled with a feeling of accomplishment instead of regret.

As we go about our daily activities we are pulled back — morning, noon, and night — to pray before G-d. The intent is that in returning so often we will not be lured so far astray. Accordingly, when saying the fifth blessing, one should have in mind to return to G-d’s Torah, which will in turn bring a person close to the proper service of G-d. It is in connection to this that the Torah is called the “Blueprint of Creation”. It also serves as man’s instruction manual, ensuring that his soul does not become lost, but instead will return above to its Maker unblemished.



As Heard From **RAV WEINBACH** A RESOURCE BOOK FOR RABBIS & EDUCATORS

INCLUDES a CD of more than 40 of Rav Weinbach's Ohr Lagolah Shiurim!

Ohr Lagolah
HERTZ INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL
TEACHER TRAINING



JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY
of Ohr Somayach - Tanenbaum College

Now Available in Jewish Bookstores!
Order online at www.menchapublishers.com