

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

LECH LECHA

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 40:27-41:16

OCTOBER 27-28, 2017 8 HESHVAN 5778

DEDICATION: LeRefuah Shelemah Elisheva Bat Esther

MANHATTAN class 6PM on Wednesday afternoon at 979 Third Avenue between 58th and 59th on the 17th floor. Weekly Perasha - The class will be about 45 minutes long. Everything is translated into English and we do our best to keep the concepts as simple as possible although all sourced in the writing of the Arizal and later Hahamim. If you would like to join, come with a friend or send a friend, please let us know.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4:00PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100 – Mincha– The most important tefilah of the day –Give us 11 minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!

EDITORS NOTES

Tonight, Thursday the 26th of October, the Seventh of Cheshvan, all those living in the Land of Israel begin asking for rain. The residents of Israel begin reciting "Barech Alenu" and "Ve'Ten Tal U'Matar Livrachah". "The Blessing of the Years" is a blessing which includes mankind's collective need to be showered with abundance from Heaven. Although we begin say Mashib HaRuach on Sheini Aseret, those in Israel wait a further two weeks to allow those on pilgrimage to Jerusalem to return home. In America, we don't begin saying this prayer for another six weeks, but given the current water shortage in Israel, we might consider adding a personal request in Barechaenu for Hashem to send Tal U'Matar Livrachah – Blessed Rains to our brothers in The Holy Land.

I remember years back often writing about the water shortages in Israel. We would show the water line in the Kinneret and we would ask people to pray for rain. Then about four years ago, Israel, a country that is two-thirds arid, declared an end to the water shortages that had hounded it for decades. Israel HaYom writes: A longstanding nationwide awareness campaign ceased and Israelis could take long showers and water their gardens.

There was even talk of exporting surplus water to its neighbors. This came as a result of a massive investment drive in which Israel put 15 billion shekels into its national water grid and sewage treatment centers. I recall writing proudly how Israel recycled 90% of its water back into use for farming and became the example for the world followed by Spain recycling only 20% of its water.

The commercial sector invested another 7 billion shekels into the construction of five desalination plants. Scientific America wrote of how Israel is leading the world and we were told that more than half of Israel's domestic water demand is met through desalination – the process by which salt and other impurities are removed from seawater to produce potable water.

It appeared that man had defeated nature. But in reading recent reports, my mind recalls the words "Kochi ve'osem yadi asah li et hahayil hazeh - My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth" (8:17). Man forgets that the wonders of nature and the fruits of his own labor are in reality the blessings, the works and doing of Hashem.

"No one imagined we would face a sequence of arid years like this because it has never happened before," said Uri Schor, spokesman for Israel's Water Authority.

The Sea of Galilee, technically a lake near the border with Syria, is forecast to hit its lowest level ever before winter rains come, despite the fact that pumping there was massively reduced. Underground aquifers, the other main freshwater source, are nearing levels that will turn them salty. How to cope with the crisis is becoming an increasingly touchy subject in Israel. Proposed cuts to water use for the coming year, more than 50% in some areas, prompted vehement opposition from farmers, who already face tough restrictions and would have been the hardest hit. The government quickly backtracked.

We are told that, "under discussion for a possible long-term solution to Israel's water problem is the construction of an additional \$400 million desalination plant".

Rabbi Abittan often spoke of the careful balance we must maintain between Hishtadlut meaning "striving" or "effort", and Bitachon meaning faith and trust. When we forget the balance and think that everything

is in our hands, Hashem has to remind us that it's not. Hopefully the gentle reminder works.

We live in a world where effort is required, but we must not forget the bottom line and that is, En Od MiLevado - There is none beside Him!

So let's support our brothers in Israel and pray that Hashem sends them the rain they desperately need.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Lech Lecha- Abraham leaves his homeland and makes an everlasting brit with Hashem.

- 1- Hashem tells Abram to leave Haran for Israel. After a famine in Israel Abram heads to Mitsrayim.
- 2- Paraoh takes Sara. Paraoh gets a plague and returns Sara. Abram leaves Mitsrayim back toward Israel.
- 3- Abram and Lot split up. Lot goes to Sedom. Abram settles in Hebron. Hashem blesses Abram that he will have many descendants and Israel.
- 4- The war of the 4 kings and the 5 kings. Abram saves Lot and defeats the 5 kings.
- 5- Melech Sedom makes a compensation offer to Abram for the victory. Hashem reassures Abram and promises him the land.
- 6- Abram seals brit ben habetarim with Hashem. Sara gives Hagar to Abram. Ishmael is born. Abram's name is changed.
- 7- Hashem tells Abraham the covenant of brit milah and that Sara will have a baby. Abraham circumcises himself and his household.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse." (Beresheet 12:3)

Hashem gave Abraham a huge gift. Whoever blesses you will be blessed. Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l asks: This is but one of many examples of Hashem's aid to Abraham. Why is this example chosen? Because one who attempts to contradict the majority of men must expect a torrent of reproach and vilification. Therefore Abraham had been exposed to

much animosity, and he was cursed by the rulers and priests and by the multitude of their followers.

This was a prophetic parallel to Abraham's seed that opposed the idolatrous, cruel and immoral nations, and that opposed the false religions and the materialists, and were therefore the target of a torrent of vilification.

For this reason, G-d promised to take action against the defamers of Abraham's seed. The cursers would be many, but in the end Abraham's name remained blessed by all. Thus it would be with his seed. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And there was quarreling between the herdsman of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock...Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife...' (Beresheet 13:7-8)

When Abraham and Lot accumulated a lot of sheep, the land wasn't able to provide enough pasture and their shepherds began to argue. The word for argument is , but when Abraham tells his nephew that they should part ways, he says, "Let there not be a , a fight between us." There are a few lessons to learn from this passage.

First of all, an argument between two people could start out small (like a) and end up in a fight (like), unless steps are taken to stop it in its tracks. How often do we see a small issue between people turn into a major affair!

Secondly, Abraham says at the end of the verse, "For we are like brothers (we are family)." At first glance, it seems Abraham is saying, "Let's not fight since we are family." But maybe we can say Abraham was saying, "Since we are family it will be easier for the fight to develop, therefore, let us stop it now." That is - precisely when people are closer is the risk greater that something small becomes a big thing. Let us try to remember to keep relationships healthy and peaceful. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Prediction

A friend of mine is great at predicting. He can tell you – three weeks in advance – what the weather will be like at the company picnic. He knows which politician will be elected, and he can inform you which stocks will rise and which will fall. In staff meetings, his opinion is respected because his track record in foretelling the future is so accurate.

When our Sages said: "Who is wise? One who foresees the future" (Tamid 32a), they did not have my friend in mind. His luck – or foresight – is not the wisdom of which they spoke. The wise men of the

past were giving sound advice to all generations: "Weigh the results of your behavior before you act."

Errors in judgment create excuses. Often one is prompted to deny having participated in an activity that turned out to be the wrong thing to do. One lie leads to another until the truth is revealed and the tower of falsehood crumbles embarrassingly before the perpetrator's red face. A smart person avoids the misdeed and is saved from the pressure of the cover-up.

The Torah says: "Keep a distance from falsehood" (Shemot 23:7). That does not only mean "Don't lie"; it means "Don't do things that will bring you to deception." A good rule to follow is: "If you might have to deny it – don't do it!" A good lie may work for a moment, but it will lead to another false statement and then another until the truth is eventually revealed. Consider the long-term results of your behavior, and you will be spared the shame of getting caught.

Those who foresee the future are truly wise. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
Learning About Marriage from Abraham Abinu**

The Torah in Parashat Lech-Lecha writes about Abraham Abinu's experiences after settling in Eretz Yisrael, and we read that when he reached the land, "Va'yet Aholo" – "he pitched his tent" (12:8). The word "Aholo" ("his tent") in this verse is spelled unusually, with a letter "Heh" at the end, instead of "Vav," as though it says, "Aholah" – "her tent." The Rabbis conclude on the basis of this spelling that Abraham made a point of pitching his wife's tent before pitching his own tent.

The Sifteh Hachamim commentary explains the reason for Abraham's conduct based upon the Gemara's exhortation, famously codified by the Rambam, that a man must treat his wife with greater honor than he gives himself. Abraham, a man of great piety and distinction, recognized and fulfilled his obligation honor his wife more than himself, and this dedication to his wife's honor is expressed in his decision to pitch her tent before his.

The Gemara tells that the sage Rabba once said to his students, "Give honor to your wife so that you will become wealthy." The reward for honoring one's wife, it seems, is wealth. Rabba proves his point by citing a Pasuk later in Parshat Lech-Lecha, where the Torah says that Abraham became wealthy in Egypt "Ba'aburah" – "because of Sara" (12:16) – indicating

that he received wealth on her account, because of the respectful way he treated her.

Why would this be the case? What connection is there between honoring one's wife and money?

A wife works hard for her husband and children, and naturally feels a strong desire to be appreciated. When her husband compliments her and treats her with respect, this bolsters her self-esteem and self-worth; she feels valuable and important. And thus the husband is rewarded with "value," with wealth. If he makes a point of ensuring that his wife feels valuable, then he will be blessed with "value" in the form of financial success.

When we think of Abraham Abinu, we instinctively associate him with his extraordinary acts of piety – jumping into the furnace to avoid worshipping idols, leaving his homeland to settle in a foreign country, and being prepared to sacrifice his only son. Yet, the Torah makes a point of spelling "Aholo" and "Aholah" to tell us about the respect Abraham showed to his wife, because this, too, is an important part of Abraham's greatness. Besides the "great" things, such as defying Nimrod and Akedat Yishak, what made Abraham a Sadik was also the "little" things, his everyday conduct, such as treating his wife with respect and consideration. This, too, is something we must learn from Abraham Abinu. We are to gain inspiration not just from the "major" events of his life, but also from his standard, day-to-day conduct. And the example he sets for us begins in the home, with the way we speak to and treat our spouses – with respect, sensitivity and consideration.

VICTOR BIBI

SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein

There is much comment and many different interpretations regarding the first two words of the second verse of this week's Torah reading. The second word "lecha" – "for you" seems to be somewhat redundant in the construction of the sentence. Rashi therefore interprets it to mean "for your benefit and good." The Lord instructs Abraham to leave his homeland and family located in Mesopotamia, in order to achieve the greatness that

is inherent within him, as the forbearer of nations and the founder of the Jewish people.

There is an alternative interpretation of the use of this second word “lecha” in the verse that has always fascinated me. Travel can be a very broadening and entertaining experience. The travel industry the world over is burgeoning as people crave to visit unseen shores and exotic locations. So why would the travel of Abraham and Sarah from Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan be considered by Jewish tradition to have been such a challenging test of Abraham’s faith on the Almighty?

He simply was embarking on a travel experience and was one of many such travelers in his time and world. The answer lies in the fact that the word “lecha” implies permanence. Abraham, you are never going to return home to Mesopotamia again. You are not a visitor, a tourist, a traveler, but you are now a refugee, an alien, and a non-citizen.

And such a status in life is truly challenging and potentially dangerous. So, unlike the interpretation of Rashi, the word “lecha” has a certain ominous characteristic to it. Abraham and Sarah were to be truly challenged by this travel experience. They were not going on vacation.

Abraham’s descendants, the Jewish people, have shared this test and challenge with him over our long history. We always were insecure and homeless during the long night of our exile and dispersal. Even countries where Jews resided for centuries, such as Spain, Germany, Poland, etc., eventually no longer would accommodate our presence. We were always a positive part of any national society we found ourselves in but at the same time we were always the odd man out.

But somehow we were able to survive this enormous test and challenge because we always believed and knew that eventually we were going to go home. We prayed for it to happen and we struggled against all odds and enemies to make it happen. And in our time it has happened.

This belief of the return to Zion and Jerusalem sustained us in our darkest hours. It transferred us in our minds, though not in the minds of others, from the status of tolerated but unwanted aliens into mere visitors and sojourners who have a legitimate and permanent home elsewhere. This is the feeling I have every time I present my Israeli passport for inspection when I travel to a foreign destination. I am no longer a pariah, a refugee but merely a visitor, a tourist,

perhaps even an honored guest. The children of Abraham have returned home.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Inner-Directedness

Is character strictly personal – either you are or aren’t calm, courageous, charismatic – or does culture have a part to play? Does when and where you live make a difference to the kind of person you become?

That was the question posed by three great American-Jewish sociologists, David Reisman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney in their 1950 classic, *The Lonely Crowd*. Their argument was that particular kinds of historical circumstance give rise to particular kinds of people. It makes a difference, they said, whether you lived in a society with a high birth- and death-rate – where families had many children but life expectancy was short – or one on the brink of growth, or one in the early stages of decline. Each gave rise to its own type of character: not that everyone was the same but that you could discern certain traits in the population and culture as a whole.

High birth- and death-rate societies, such as non-industrialised societies or Europe in the Middle Ages, tend to give rise to tradition-directed people: people who do what they do because that is how things have always been done. In these societies – often highly hierarchical – the primary struggle is to stay alive. Order is preserved by ensuring that people stick rigidly to rules and roles. Failure to do so gives rise to shame.

Societies on the brink of growth – transitional societies, such as Europe during the Renaissance and the Reformation – produce inner-directed types. Culture is in a state of change. There is high personal mobility. There is a mood of invention and exploration. This means that people have constantly to adapt to new challenges without losing a sense of where they are going and why, which means facing the future while keeping faith with the past. Such societies pay great attention to education. The young internalise the values of the group, which stay with them through life as a way of navigating change without disorientation or dislocation. They carry their inner world with them whatever they do and wherever they go. Failure in such societies is marked not by shame but by guilt.

Finally come the societies that have already achieved maximal growth and are on the brink of decline. Life expectancy has risen. The birth-rate falls. There is

affluence. Much of the burden of care has been taken over by centralised agencies. There is less need for the driven, focused, resilient inner-directed types of an earlier age. The mood is no longer of scarcity but of abundance. The primary problem is not dealing with the material environment; it is getting on with and winning the approval of others. That is when the third character type emerges: the other-directed individual. Such people are more influenced by others in their age group, and by the media, than by their parents. Their source of direction in life is neither tradition nor internalised conscience but instead, contemporary culture. Other-directed people seek not so much to be esteemed but to be loved. When they fail, they feel not shame or guilt but anxiety.

Already by 1950, Riesman and his colleagues believed that this new, third character-type was emerging in the America of their day. By now, thanks to the spread of social media and the collapse of structures of authority, the process has gone far further and has now spread throughout the West. Ours is the age of the Facebook profile, the vivid symbol of other-directedness.

Whether or not this is sustainable is an open question. But this insightful study helps us understand what is at stake in the opening of our parsha, the words that brought the Jewish people into being:

The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your land, your birthplace and your father's house to the land that I will show you." (Gen. 12:1)

Abraham was commanded to leave behind the sources of both tradition-directedness ("your father's house") and other-directedness ("your land, your birthplace"). He was about to become the father of an inner-directed people.

His entire life was governed by an inner voice, the voice of God. He did not behave the way he did because that is how people had always acted, nor did he conform to the customs of his age. He had the courage to "be on one side while all the rest of the world was on the other."^[1] His mission, as we read in next's week's parsha, was to "instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (Gen. 18:19), so that they too would carry with them the inner voice wherever they went. Theirs was a morality of righteousness-and-guilt, not honour-and-shame or conformism-and-anxiety. Hence the centrality of education in Judaism, since Jews would have to hold fast to their values even when they were a minority in

a culture whose values were diametrically opposed to their own.

Hence the astonishing resilience of Jews throughout the ages, and their ability to survive change, insecurity, even catastrophe. People whose values are indelibly engraved in their minds and souls can stand firm against the majority and persist in their identity even when others are losing theirs. It was that inner voice that guided the patriarchs and matriarchs throughout the book of Genesis – long before they had become a nation in their own right, and before the more public miracles of the book of Exodus.

Jewish identity is that inner voice, learned in childhood, reinforced by lifelong study, rehearsed daily in ritual and prayer. That is what gives us a sense of direction in life. It gives us the confidence of knowing that Judaism, virtually alone among the cultures and civilisations of its day, has survived while the rest have been consigned to history. It is what allows us to avoid the false turns and temptations of the present, while availing ourselves of its genuine benefits and blessings.

Inner-directed people tend to be pioneers, exploring the new and unknown even while keeping faith with the old. Consider, for example, the fact that in 2015 Time Magazine identified Jerusalem, one of the world's most ancient religious centres, as one of the world's five fastest-growing centres for hi-tech start-ups. Tradition-directed people live in the past. Other-directed people live in the present. But inner-directed people carry the past into the present, which is how they have the confidence to build the future.

This life-changing idea of inner-directedness – the courage to be different – began with the words *Lech lecha*, which could be translated as "Go to yourself." This means: follow the inner voice, as did those who came before you, continuing their journey by bringing timeless values to a rapidly-changing world.

[1] Bereishit Rabbah 42:8.

Rav Kook on the Perasha

After Abraham defeated Chedarla'omer and his allied kings, he was greeted by Malkhi-tzedek, the priest-king of Jerusalem: "*Malkhi-tzedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine. He was a priest to God, the Most High.*" (Gen. 14:18)

Who was Malkhi-tzedek? What is the significance of this encounter?

Shem Loses the Priesthood: The Sages identified the priest-king of Salem as Shem, the son of Noah. With his ill-fated greeting of Abraham, however, Shem forever lost the priesthood.

“The Holy One wanted the priesthood to originate from Shem. But when Shem blessed Abraham before he blessed God, the priesthood was transferred to Abraham. Abraham asked: “Is it proper to bless the servant before blessing his Master?” God immediately gave the priesthood to Abraham. ...

“That is what is written, “He was a priest to God.” He [Malkhi-tzedek] was a priest, but his descendants were not.” (Nedarim 32b)

This transfer of the priesthood is deeply significant, as it contrasts the different approaches of these two great individuals, Shem and Abraham.

Shem was called Malkhi-tzedek, literally, “the just king.” He stressed the trait of tzedek — justice and worthiness. Abraham, on the hand, excelled in chesed and kindness. He sought to reach out to others, to influence and help them even beyond what they deserved.

Shem emphasized God’s quality of transcendence. He was a priest “to God, the Most High.” His God was exalted far beyond the realm of humanity. Finite and insignificant, we cannot begin to emulate God, and Godliness cannot directly influence us. For Shem, in order to approach God it is necessary to choose a worthy intermediary. Therefore, the text emphasizes that only he was a priest. Only a holy individual of Shem’s stature could serve as a bridge between God and His creatures. Since Shem’s descendants did not attain the necessary spiritual level, they were unable to inherit Shem’s priesthood.

The Inclusive Priesthood of Abraham: The Torah, on the other hand, views every individual as a being created in God’s image. We all are capable of connecting with our Creator. What then is the function of the kohen (priest)? The kohen not an intermediary, but rather atones for and purifies the people, enabling them to approach God directly. This form of priesthood could only originate from Abraham, from his attribute of chesed and sincere desire to help others.

Abraham developed his special trait of chesed through the two mitzvot mentioned in the Torah portion: brit milah (circumcision), and settling the Land of Israel. Both commandments strengthened his connection with future generations — “This is My

covenant that you must keep, between Me and you and your descendants” (Gen. 17:10). They enabled Abraham to focus on his primary goal: concern for others and preparing the way for future generations.

In general, mitzvot serve to connect and unite. The word mitzvah comes from the root 'tzevet,' meaning ‘togetherness’ or ‘team.’ The mitzvot focused Abraham’s lifework towards the future community of his descendants, and through them, to the entire world.

Abraham’s Altar: A careful reading of the text reveals a major shift that occurred in Abraham’s service of God. When Abraham first arrived in the Land of Israel, he built an altar and dedicated it “to God Who appeared to him” (Gen. 12:7). This dedication expressed Abraham’s gratitude for his own personal spiritual attainments. “To God who appeared to him” — just to Abraham, the holy prophet in his own private spiritual world.

After fulfilling God’s command and traveling through the Land, Abraham returned to the altar he had built. This time, however, Abraham “called out in God’s Name” (Gen. 13:4). As Maimonides explained,

“The people would gather around him and question him about his words, and he would explain to each one according to his capabilities” (Laws of Idolatry 1:13).

Now Abraham “called out in God’s Name.” He publicized the belief in one God. This reflects the essence of Abraham’s new prophetic mission: reaching out to others in God’s Name.

Shem/Malkhi-tzedek, on the other hand, remained on the level of tzedek, without a public calling. “He was a priest to God.” He was a priest, but not the priest. Lacking the definitive article, the prefix letter hey, Shem was only a priest for himself, without a connection to others. Instead, the letter hey was added to Abraham’s name, indicating the universal nature of his mission. From Avram he became Avraham — “Av hamon goyim,” the father of many nations — bringing the entire world closer to God.

“God has sworn and will not retract: you are a priest forever, due to the words of Malkhi-tzedek.” (Psalms 110:4)

(Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah 8: Lech Lecha 5690 (1929))

'Abraham Kept The Entirety of The Torah' Rabbi Meyer Laniado

In perashat lekh lekha we are introduced to Abraham the forefather of our nation. God appears to Abraham and instructs him to leave everything that he has ever known, his country, his larger clan, and his father's house. Abraham follows this as well as the later instructions God gives him, such as circumcision, and sacrificing his son. He was a loyal servant of his Creator, obeying his commands. Does this make Abraham the first Jew, and did Abraham follow the entire Torah, the 613 misvot, prior to it being given to am Yisrael, the nation of Israel?

The primary source[1] that seems to point to Abraham following the misvot of the Torah can be found in perashat Toledot. There Abraham is told that he will be inheriting the land of Canaan "Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, commandments, ceremonies, and laws[2]." Rab, a 3rd century Rabbi of the gemara, comments utilizing the aforementioned pasuq, that "Abraham kept the entire Torah[3]." Rab's contemporary Rab Simi bar Hiyya suggests to Rab an alternative, that Abraham only kept the seven Noahide[4] laws[5]. Rab Ashe, one of the last Rabbis of the generation of the gemara, goes beyond Rab's statement and says that not only did Abraham keep all of the Torah, but he even kept erubei tabshilin, a misva legislated much later by the Rabbis[6].

Could it be that Abraham knew about deRabanan laws established by the Rabbi's only later in history? It could be, but let us investigate further and first ask about the possibility of Abraham following all of the 613 misvot deoraita, misvot from the Torah. Many people are familiar with Rashi's quoting of the derasha on Beresheit 32:5: 'im laban garti,' with Laban I lived, 'vetaryag misvot shamarti,' and the 613 misvot I observed. Rashi seems to be suggesting that Abraham did observe all of the Torah's commandments. Rashi does not indicate if this was obligatory or voluntary. Numerous Hakhamim follow this approach, with some emendations.

If we take the assumption that Abraham kept all 613 misvot, then, in fact, he would have eaten massa every Pesah in reenacting the exodus from Egypt. This would have been done by Abraham even though he was not part of those who were in Egyptian slavery, nor part of the group that was taken out. Maybe, as someone would suggest, this massa could have eaten in memory of what would happen in the future. What about other misvot deoraita that pertain to a nation, such as setting up a king, building the

Beit haMiqdash and wiping out Amaleq. Did Abraham keep those misvot as well?

Rashi, based on some of the midrashim, is of the opinion that Abraham did keep all of the misvot of the Torah, and furthermore, that he observed the misvot that were only later instituted by the Rabbis[7]. In dealing with our question above, we could suggest that the phrase 'kept all 613' means that he kept all of the misvot that applied to him. Even with this understanding, there are other questions, some addressed by the gemara, and others by commentators, such as did Abraham follow all of the misvot including the restrictions or only the actionable misvot? How did Abraham feed the angels meat and dairy[8]? Furthermore, were his children obligated in following the Torah or only Abraham? This is an important question and one that many struggle with since it seems there were numerous transgressions performed by Abraham's progeny[9]. For example, Ya'aqob married two sisters, Rahel and Leah[10].

There are other approaches that do not think Rab nor Rab Ashe literally meant that Abraham kept all of the misvot of the Torah. These are the approaches of Ibn Ezra, Radaq, Rashbam, and Rambam's son Abraham. For example, Ibn Ezra explains that the pasuq about Abraham's reward for following God's instructions is praising Abraham for observing the instructions he was given. Some examples include the opening of our perasha, lekh lekha, traveling to an unknown place on God's word, as well as aqedat yisshaq, taking his son to be sacrificed, and berit mila, circumcision. Radaq explains that the statement by Rab Ashe that Abraham even kept erubei tabshilin refers to Abraham distancing himself from transgression, just like the law of erubei tabshilin was enacted to guard us from transgressing a deoraita[11].

Rabbenu Abraham, the son of Rambam, explains that the parallel created between our forefather's actions, and the misvot of the Torah should be read as a metaphor, and not taken literally. He explains that the Torah and the misvot are meant to help us develop knowledge and a relationship with the Creator of the universe, and to distance us from falsehood and idolatry. Abraham denied paganism, and according to the midrash destroyed his father's idols. Thereby, it is as if he performed all of the misvot of the Torah. This point is made by Rabbenu Abraham's father, Rambam:

... anyone who denies the worship of false gods acknowledges the entire Torah in its totality, all the works of the prophets, and everything that has been commanded to the prophets from Adam, until

eternity[12].

Abraham was loyal to God, utilizing his energies and resources to learn about Him and spread knowledge of Him throughout the land. This is what we mean when say that Abraham kept the entire Torah. May we merit to not only perform the misvot, but internalize their messages, thus truly observing the entire Torah.

[1] See Maharsha Hidushei Agadot Masekhet Yuma 28b on why I did not include the 'last mishna' of qiddushin

[2] Bereshit 26:5

[3] tBavli Yuma 28b

[4] Do Not Deny God, Do Not Blaspheme God, Do Not Murder, Do Not Engage in sexual immorality, Do Not Steal, Do Not Eat of a Live Animal, Establish Courts/Legal System to Ensure Law Obedience

[5] The gemara challenges Rab Simi bar Hiyya. How could it be that the Abraham only kept the seven noahide laws?

Did he not circumcise his son? Circumcision is not one of the seven noahide laws! The gemara then suggest, maybe it is the seven noahide laws and circumcision. This is rebutted based on the pasuq. Note that the pasuq lists multiple terms for following God's instructions: "my charge, commandments, ceremonies, and laws," and we know that there is not an extra word in the Torah. So, what is the purpose of the other terms?

[6] Note that midrash Beresheit Rabbah Perasha 64:4 brings a similar tradition in the name of Ribbi Yohanan, the same generation as Rab. There the misva derabanan is eirubei haserot.

[7] See Rashi Beresheit 26:5 and Beresheit Rabba 64:4

[8] Beresheit 18:8 - There are numerous approaches which do reconcile this question

[9] tBavli Pesachim 119b, Ramban Beresheit 26:5 lists examples

[10] Note Ramban's answer to these questions found in his commentary on Humash as well as on tBavli Yebamot 98a, also mishna Hollin 7:6

[11] Both Radaq and Rashbam state that Abraham followed the rational laws and well known morals and ethics such as seven misvot benei Noah. Also see Rambam Mishne Torah Hilkhhot Melakhim uMilhamot 9:3

[12] Rambam Mishne Torah Hilkhhot Aboda Zara 2:7

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“In this manner (idolatry) the world continued to develop until the birth of Abraham, the Pillar of the World” (RAMBAM, Idolatry 1:2).

“When this giant among men was weaned, he began to cast about in his mind by day & by night, wondering: Whence comes the Energy which rotated the celestial bodies? There was no one to instruct him. But his mind could not rest and he continued to

gain in understanding until he finally arrived at the truth.” (adapted from RMBM ibid. 1:3).

When Abraham Abinu came on the scene, the Rambam says, he looked at the sun and saw how wonderfully it works. The sun is just big enough to warm us. If it were bigger, we would be burned to a crisp; if it were smaller, we would be frozen. If the sun were a little closer, he would be burned; if it were more distant, we would be frozen. How did it happen that the sun was the exact distance and the exact size? Abraham was studying the happiness of this world, how good the sun is for us. With that he came to recognize that there is Someone in charge. That is Abraham's system.

He looked at everything in the world and saw that nothing was accidental. Everything is full of plan and purpose which demonstrates Kindness, Wisdom & Power, and from that he came to recognize the Creator/Bore' Olam.

Whenever you look into the whole purpose of the universe, there is not a thing that doesn't demonstrate plan and purpose. Apples turn red when they are ripe and fit to eat. When they are not the right color, they are hard and sour. They are not healthy that way, and you could get a stomachache if you ate them. The fact that apples turn red is enough proof for everyone to know there is a Creator. And peaches turn pink and red, and oranges turn orange and bananas turn yellow and Granny Smith apples turn green.

All of the instructions to produce these fruit are encoded in 1 million bits of information on the DNA of each seed. This includes production of the tree which bears the fruit which has seeds inside them in order to continue reproduction of these fruits for us.

It is as if Hashem signed His name on them, “Hashem is here.”

Everything proclaims Hashem's Presence. “The World is filled with the Hesed of Hashem” (Tehillim 33)

Abraham became the “Pillar of Hesed” in emulation of Hashem whose greatest Hesed is revealing Himself to mankind through all His creations. “All of Your deeds praise You” (Ashre).