

Melaveh Malkah Shabbat Lech Lecha 5769

Saturday, 11 *Cheshvan*, 5769 (November 8, 2008) / The *Od Yosef Chai Yeshivah* in *Yitzhar*

[After the initial singing, one of the students held up a sign reading: "We want action; we want a party"]

The Rebbe spoke much about the need for ten stubborn individuals whose stubbornness would bring the Mashiach.

The numerical value of "the Holy Temple" (בית המקדש) is 861. 861 is the triangle of 41. Today is the 41st day of the year. This is like what we do during the counting of the Omer, where we add the days together. To get to the Holy Temple (861) from 613—the number of commandments in the Torah—we have to add another 248, which is the number of positive commandments. What this teaches us is that in order to succeed in building the Temple we have to act [the 248 commandments that are part of the 613] and then act again, suggested by the need to add another 248. God created the world in order that we act in it, as the final verse of creation states: "That God created in order to act."¹ In order to do things the right way, God gave us the 248 positive commandments which tell us how to do things in a constructive way. But, to bring the Mashiach we have to add more action above and beyond the basic minimum prescribed by the Torah.

If we transliterate the word “action” into Hebrew we get אקשן. The value of this transliteration is 451, which is also $11 \cdot 41$. What does this product symbolize? As we know today is 11th day of *Cheshvan* and the 41st day of the year, Jewish Mother's Day [in Hebrew, "mother," מא, equals 41]. So this should provide us with more motivation for "action."

Now, the word for a "(political) party" in Hebrew is מפלגה. This word has a lot of negative connotations. We recall that the Rebbe explained that Lubavitch should not form a political party. Just as Lubavitch should not become a political party, it is clear that there should not be a political party that is made up and supported only by Lubavitch. The reason for this can be understood from the following fact. When it came to the struggle for the wholeness of the Land of Israel, the Rebbe wrote a number of times that we should not use a name that would limit other's involvement in such a movement. It is clear that the Rebbe wanted people to know that he was for the wholeness of the Land of Israel, but he didn't want his name and the name of Lubavitch to be associated with only a particular party for fear that this would alienate others from joining and supporting it.

Still, the Rebbe always told us to vote for the most religious party, which is why for years Lubavitch Chassidim voted for the *chareidi* parties. But, once these parties stopped fighting for and advocating the necessity to keep the Land of Israel whole, the Rebbe denounced them. In this



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respect they stopped being the most religious parties. Of course standing for the wholeness of the Land of Israel does not mean just warning people about the danger of losing parts of the Land; it must include advocating the inherent holiness of the land and has to include a positive message!

Getting back to the Hebrew word for “party.” In Hebrew, this word stems from the verb meaning to divide or to separate (לפלג) and is the root that the Torah uses to describe the discord and division that occurred as a consequence of the building of the Tower of Babel. Numerically, “party” (מפלגה) is equal to 158. The simplest word whose *gematria* is 158 is חנק, which means “strangulation.” Obviously, this doesn't sound very encouraging. But, if we look at the letters that make up “strangulation,” they are חן and ק. The first two letters make up the word meaning “grace” (חן); they are also the letters of the name “Noach” (נח). The third letter, ק, is equal to 100 and is the value of “beauty” (יפי). So the value of 158 now suggests to us the verse in Proverbs: “Beauty is false and grace is vain” (“שקר החן והבל היפי”).² This is also not very encouraging. It means that by nature most political parties are about false beauty and vanity.

But, the continuation of the same verse implies that a woman who has fear of God, she can transform the false beauty into something that is real and true: “A woman who has fear of God, she will be exalted.” What woman is Proverbs speaking about in our context? The answer is Rachel. According to the Arizal, Rachel is the woman who has fear of God (Leah is described as a humble woman, as in the verse: “On the heels of humility comes fear of God”,³ עקב עונה יראת” (ה). Rachel's day of passing is today, the 11th of *Cheshvan*. In Kabbalah, Rachel is the archetypal figure symbolizing the essence of the Land of Israel. Numerically, Rachel (רחל) is equal to 238 and “the Land of Israel” (ארץ ישראל) is equal to 832, a reversal of numerals, as explained elsewhere. She is the woman who can transform beauty into something that is real. That is why Jacob fell in love with her in the first place. As the verse states, “You shall give truth to Jacob.”⁴ There are a number of different commentaries as to who should give this truth to Jacob, one of them is that Rachel gives him true beauty.

What this all means in the context of a political party is that indeed a party should be beautiful. Of course, most of the political parties are lying to you, not only because their platform is based on false values (not true Torah values), but because the people themselves are deceitful, they do not keep their word nor are they true to their own platforms. Fear of God is up to us. As the sages say, “All is in the hands of Heaven, except for fear of Heaven.” But if there is fear of heaven, if we can concentrate our awareness to connect and be one with that of Rachel, our matriarch, then we can build a political party that is based on truth and beauty.

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On Friday morning, we thought that we should spend Shabbat here in *Yitzhar*. Everyone is aware of Shabbat Hebron, which is marked annually on the Shabbat of *parshat Chayei Sarah*. On that Shabbat, many thousands of Jews come to spend the holy day in Hebron and this truly increases awareness of our connection to the sanctity of Hebron and to the Cave of the *Machpelah*, where our patriarchs and matriarchs are buried. The Shabbat of *parshat Chayei Sarah* was chosen because that is the Torah reading in which we read of how Abraham purchased the Cave of the *Machpelah*. Some years ago, there were people who live in the vicinity of

Shechem (another one of our holy cities) that tried to mimic this and thought that on the Shabbat of parshat *Vayishlach* there should be a Shabbat *Shechem*. The choice of *parshat Vayishlach* was obviously because there the Torah describes how Jacob purchased the plot of land in *Shechem*.

But, as we all know, Shabbat *Shechem* never really caught on. Now, we would like to explain that the reason for this lack of success is because Shabbat *Shechem* should be celebrated on the Shabbat of *parshat Lech Lecha*, this Shabbat!

In *parshat Lech Lecha* we first encounter *Shechem*. The sixth verse of the *parshah* is:

And Abram passed through the land, until the place of Shechem, until the plain of Moreh, and the Canaanites were then in the land.

The full value of this verse is 2368, or the product of 32 and 74. This is an example of self-reference, because 74 is the numerical value of the word "until" (עד), which appears twice in the verse. Moreover the two letters of the word "until" can also be read as "witness" (עד), and as the Torah tells us, "A testimony must be based on two witnesses." A repetition of the word "until" also alludes to the idiom "until and including" (עד ועד בכלל), which in this context suggests that we cannot be satisfied with only being "until," i.e., near the city of *Shechem* (as we are here in *Yitzhar*), but we have to continue to strive to return to the city itself.

As *Rashi* explains, when Abraham reached *Shechem*, he connected fully with the land. He did this by praying for the success of his grandchildren, Simon and Levi (who would fight a battle with the people of *Shechem*). This act was more essential and significant for forever connecting our Jewish consciousness to *Shechem*, even more so than Jacob purchasing the land here. First, because Abraham was the first Jew, and every action that he carried out in the Land of Israel (and in general) carries tremendous weight. But, more importantly, this was the first place that he came to in the Land of Israel. From the way in which Abraham acted we learn that the way for us to connect and to become one with the Land of Israel involves praying in its various parts. This is also true for wherever a Jew is, if he wants to connect with a place, he has to pray in it. In any case, in order to increase our connection with *Shechem* and to increase people's awareness of our holy city, we should establish Shabbat *Lech Lecha* as Shabbat *Shechem*.

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But, based on what we have said, since *Shechem* is the first place that Abraham prayed in, in the Land of Israel, the first place that he existentially connected with, then Shabbat *Lech Lecha* is not just Shabbat *Shechem*, it is also the Shabbat of the entire Land of Israel. From this verse we see that *Shechem* symbolizes not only the entire Land of Israel but also the situation in the entire Land. The Torah ends the verse with the words "And the Canaanites were then in the Land." Throughout the Land of Israel there is tremendous opposition to us as Jews. The "Canaanites" as it were, are in the Land. But, these words—"And the Canaanites were then in the Land" (והכנעני (אז בארץ)—also equal "Shimon Levi" (שמעון לוי), as we have discussed many times, indicating that through the courage of our people, through our true yearning for the coming of Mashiach, we will indeed in the end inherit the entire Land of Israel, just as Shimon and Levi inherited *Shechem* through their courage.

We truly want the Mashiach to come today, to come right now. In order for this to happen we have to act, and as the sages say: "Action is better than failure to act." Indeed, when there is uncertainty about what to do in a given situation the sages tell us that "Sitting passively and refraining from action is better than acting [without knowing exactly what to do]." Still, even in such cases only the failsafe approach is to sit passively. Truthfully, it is important that even in such cases, a person should strive to do something. Sometimes the problem is that we have been doing all the right things, but we have been doing them without the proper intent. The Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that every commandment should be performed on two levels, the practical and the inner intent. Perhaps that is our problem and perhaps that is what we need to focus on in order to change reality—adding a deeper inner motivation and meaning to our actions.

Additionally, it may be that some actions simply need to be repeated. As we mentioned before, the value of "the Holy Temple" is 248 more than 613, indicating that we may have to perform the 248 commandments again and a second time in order to make them "stick." Putting the two ideas together we may say that we need to repeat commandments again and again because the first time, we simply did not have the proper intent—intent that ran deep enough to change reality permanently. Therefore, we have to go about repeating the action again and again, until we get it right, until we are able to come to *Shechem* itself, to use the image from the verse, and not end up only near it.

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Still, as of this moment, by Divine Providence, we are not in *Shechem* but nearby in the settlement of *Yitzhar*. The word "*Yitzhar*," in Hebrew, means "[olive] oil" (שמן). In the *Zohar*, oil is likened to the secrets of the secrets of the Torah.

Now let us calculate what number verse of the entire Torah the verse that we have been quoting is ("*And Abram passed through the land, until the place of Shechem, until the plain of Moreh, and the Canaanites were then in the land.*").

In *parshat Bereishit* there are 146 (the *gematria* of "world," or עולם) verses.

In *parshat Noach* there are 133 verses. 133 is the value of "Betzael" (בצלאל), the great sage and artisan who designed and constructed the desert Tabernacle. From this we learn that Bezalel inherited Noah's technological skill to create new creations, just as God did in creating the world.

Now, our verse is the 6th verse in *parshat Lech Lecha*.

So, altogether this verse is the 305th verse of the Torah. But, 305 is the exact value of "*Yitzhar*" (יצהר). So it is not by chance that the exiles of *Shechem* are now in *Yitzhar*.⁵ This means that in order to return to *Shechem*, we have to have *Yitzhar*, i.e., oil, the secrets of the secrets of the Torah. So we suggest that from now on, every Shabbat *Lech Lecha* should be called not only Shabbat *Shechem*, but the Shabbat of the Land of Israel.

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Now let us turn to another point about *parshat Lech Lecha*. *Lech Lecha* is the third *parshah* of the Torah. The Rebbe explains that the first two *parshahs* of the Torah are universal. The third, *parshah*, *Lech Lecha* is the universal *parshah* for the Jewish people and as we have just said, it is

the universal *parshah* of the Land of Israel. Since now we have that the first three *parshahs* of the Torah are universal in nature, this suggests that they correspond to the three heads of the crown.⁶ The only question is how to order the correspondence: Does *Bereishit* corresponds to the highest of the three heads, the unknowable head, or does it correspond to the lowest of the three, the head of patience. In either case, *parshat Noach* will correspond to the head of nothingness, or pleasure. This is easily seen to agree with the meaning of Noach, which is "peace" or "rest," a state of pleasure. In addition, the *Zohar* states that the repetition of the name Noach in the first verse of the *parshah* represents rest and peace both in the supernal realm and in the mundane realm.

To establish the correct order of the correspondence, let us look at *parshat Lech Lecha* and see what it is about: is it more about faith (the experiential manifestation of the highest head, the unknowable head) or more about will (the experiential manifestation of the lowest head, the head of patience).

In *parshat Lech Lecha* God makes a covenant with Abraham over the Land of Israel, promising him that His offspring will receive the entire land. Thus, *Shechem* is the representative of the entire Land of Israel. Not only does God promise him the entire land, He also promises him the land of the three nations, the *Keini*, the *Knizi*, and the *Kadmoni*,⁷ nations that as the sages explain, we will inherit only in the future.⁸ Since *Lech Lecha* involves the Land of Israel to a great degree, we might think to correspond it with will, because the meaning of "land" in Hebrew (ארץ) stems from the same root as the word for "will" (רצון). In addition, we find a king whose name is *Aryoch* mentioned in the *parshah*.⁹ This name itself suggests the head of patience, which in Aramaic is called the head of *Arich*; the two names are clearly related.

Still, the most important idea in *parshat Lech Lecha* is that of faith and belief. The Torah tells us that,

*And he [Abraham] had faith in God and He [God] considered it a merit.*¹⁰

This is the central verse of the entire *parshah* and is the first time that the word "faith" is mentioned in the Torah. This verse indicates that *parshat Lech Lecha* corresponds to the highest head, the unknowable head, which manifests in us as faith. Indeed, in relation to Jewish Mother's Day, today, "faith" (אמונה) exactly equals "Mother's Day" (יום האם).

In the first chapter of Chronicles we find a verse with three words that reads: "Avram is Abraham."¹¹ This verse is not simply telling us that Abraham had two names, first Avram and later Avraham. Rather, as explained elsewhere, his original name, Avram, alludes to the first covenant that God made with him over the Land of Israel before his name had been changed from Avram to Avraham. The name that God gave him later, his second name, Abraham, alludes to the second covenant, the covenant of circumcision that God made with Abraham. And the verse is telling us that they are codependent because they were made with the same person. As the *Zohar* tells us, we merit inheriting the Land of Israel only if we keep the covenant of circumcision. For this reason, just prior to God making the covenant over the land with Abraham, He promises him that he will have offspring. Otherwise what was the point of making a covenant with Abraham if he were not to have any offspring?

Indeed, the borders of the land that God tells Abraham reach the river Euphrates, which in Hebrew stems from the word meaning “offspring.” For this reason, whenever we draw the land of Israel, we should take care and make sure that it is explicit that it goes all the way from the Nile to the Euphrates.

Lech Lecha also tells us to always be on the move, which would suggest that it corresponds again to will. But, the truth is that the motivation for moving—understanding that where I am standing right now is relatively impure relative to the place that I should be—is faith.

* * *

It follows then that we should now take a look at the 360th verse of the Torah. 360 is the value of *Shechem* (שכח), so this would be the verse that is the *Shechem* verse of the Torah. Since this verse also appears in *parshat Lech Lecha*, we have another indication that the Shabbat of *parshat Lech Lecha* is indeed the most appropriate Shabbat in the Torah to be called Shabbat *Shechem*. We find that the 360th verse is:

*If I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.'*¹²

Today, the 11th of Cheshvan, is not only the day of passing of Rachel, our matriarch, but also of Rebbe Menachem Nochum of Chernobyl. Rebbe Nochum was one of the Alter Rebbe's best friends, even though he was much older than the Alter Rebbe [he was the eldest of the Magid of Mezritch's students and had even heard Torah from the Ba'al Shem Tov himself]. Rebbe Nochum's book is titled *Ma'or Einayim* [lit. *Light of the Eyes*]. One of the most famous innovations that Rebbe Nochum brings in his book is that every Jew has a spark of the Mashiach in him. This idea is obviously emphasized today, his day of passing. As the Rebbe explains, this idea means that every Jew has a spark of the lights of chaos, which are needed in order to bring the Mashiach.

In *Ma'or Einayim*, Rebbe Nochum offers a Chassidic commentary on the 360th verse—the *Shechem* verse—of the Torah, that we just quoted.

Rebbe Nochum quotes the Talmud¹³ that states that in merit of Abraham's refusal to take anything, *not even a thread or the thong of a sandal*, his children merited two specific *mitzvot* (commandments): *tefilin*, symbolized by the “thong of a sandal,” and the azure colored thread of the *Tzitzit*, symbolized by the “thread.” The Talmud then asks: meriting *tefilin* is understandably related to Abraham's words, because the Torah tells us that *tefilin* instill fear in our enemies: “*And all the people of the earth will see that the Name of God is upon you,*” which refers to *tefilin*. But, asks the Talmud, what benefit (see *Rashi ad. loc.*) do we get from the thread of azure?

The Talmud brings Rabbi Meir's answer to this question. Rabbi Meir says that azure is similar to the ocean, the ocean is similar to the heavens and the heavens resemble God's throne of glory.

All in all, this is a very difficult passage to understand.

Rebbe Nochum explains that what Rabbi Meir is telling us is that *tzitzit* is an instrument of *teshuvah*; it has the ability to reconnect us with God. Specifically, when we look at our *tzitzit* we are inspired to embark upon a spiritual journey back to our source; a journey whose goal is to

make us into a "throne" or a "chariot" for the Divine Presence.¹⁴ The path of *teshuvah* is complex and long and has to proceed stage by stage.

At first a person who is far from Torah and *mitzvot* sees the *tzitzit* and receives a bit of enlightenment from the ocean of wisdom. Then he receives a little more enlightenment and recalls the heavens. Finally, he connects with the soul root of all Jews, God's throne of glory. In Ezekiel's vision, the Divine chariot—the deepest of all Kabbalistic secrets—is meant to carry God's throne of glory, which is the source of the souls of the Jewish people. To reach an awareness of this level represents the highest level of *teshuvah*. Thus, the power and the *segulah* of the *tzitzit* are to bring us back to the original source of our soul in God's throne of glory.

To illustrate the power of *teshuvah* that the *tzitzit* harbors, Rebbe Nochum alludes to a story that appears in the Talmud.¹⁵ The Talmud tells of a Jewish man who heard that there was a prostitute in a distant land who was so beautiful and popular that she charged 400 gold coins. He sent her the money and set a time to meet her. When he arrived there, he saw that she was indeed the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Then he ascended a seven story bed that she had prepared for him. But, suddenly he became aware of his *tzitzit* and was struck by them into a sudden sense of *teshuvah*. He told her he could not go through with what he had come for and sat on the floor. She too sat on the floor in front of him and swore that she would not let him leave unless he told her why he found her disagreeable. He told her that it had nothing to do with her, that he had never seen such a beautiful woman, but that God had commanded us with the commandment of *tzitzit*, and in commanding it He told us twice that He is our God, referring to the fact that He gives both reward and punishment. The man left and the prostitute was so impressed by his actions and sudden change of mind that she decided to convert to Judaism. She split her belongings three ways, giving a third to charity, a third to the government (ostensibly to let her leave and travel to the Land of Israel to convert) and took the final third with her. She came to the Land of Israel to the court of Rabbi Meir,¹⁶ where she converted and sought out and eventually married the Jewish man who had impressed her so much (who himself was a student of Rabbi Meir).

From this story in the Talmud we learn that not only does the *tzitzit* have the power of *teshuvah*, it also has the power to free sparks of holiness from wherever they have fallen into. Not only did the *tzitzit* make this Jew do *teshuvah*, but by revealing his essence, it inspired the prostitute to convert to Judaism.

It is also relevant that it was Rabbi Meir who revealed the inner power of the *tzitzit*, since an astounding story about him as a young man and how he took upon himself *teshuvah* appears in the second part of *Seder Hadorot*. The Talmud relates how he saved a Jewish girl from captivity and being placed in a house of prostitutes. As can be seen from these stories, Rabbi Meir himself is an example of lights of chaos (related in particular to sexual passions and the ability of the *tzaddik* to elevate profane love to holy love, as taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov), the lights that bring the Mashiach; in fact, he calls himself the Mashiach.

The bottom line is that the *tzitzit* have the power to bring us back to our highest source, and through this return, in passing, all the sparks, even those in non-Jews and in impure places, are

elevated as we pass by them. *Tefilin* overpower our enemies and allow us to conquer them, but the *tzitzit* have the power to save and elevate whatever sparks of holiness are in them. *Tzitzit* thus epitomizes the power of transformation.

The reason for this difference can be understood from the different nature of *tefilin* and *tzitzit*. It is known that the *tefilin* in this respect are described as the “*tefilin* that are in your head,” not “the *tefilin* that are on your head.” *Tefilin* represent imbuing ourselves with Divine consciousness, in and within our minds. But, the *tzitzit*, which are a garment worn over the body, which by enveloping us come in contact with the rest of the world, affecting it as explained.

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In the verse we are now studying, why did Abraham so forcefully refuse to receive anything from the king of Sodom? *Rashi* explains that the reason was that God had promised Abraham wealth. Abraham wanted to receive his wealth directly from the Almighty.

This idea is relevant to us today. If we truly believe that God has promised us wealth—being that we are truly committed to the Torah and to guiding the Jewish people and the entire world to Divine consciousness—then, our physical sustenance, our wealth and ability to fund our needs do not depend on receiving handouts from the establishment. Once you take money from the political establishment, then the establishment feels that it owns you. It says, “I made this place,” and “This *yeshivah* is mine.”

The same is true of a political party. If we are certain that our direction is correct, we will win even without a political party, because God promises us that we will inherit the Land of Israel even without getting dirty and rolling around in the filth of politics. If we are convinced of this, if we hold true to this conviction, then regardless of what happens, our mindset will remain pure and devoted to the truth because we are not counting on a political party to provide us with funding (as is the case with many movements in Israeli politics). In such a case, we do not give the establishment the notion that they created us and that they support us.

Now let us continue to study this verse by analyzing it numerically. In Hebrew, this verse, which we recall is the 360th verse of the Torah—the *Shechem* verse of the Torah--reads:

אם מחוט ועד שרוף נעל ואם אקח מקל אשר לך ולא תאמר אני העשרתי את אברם

This verse has 16 words and 52 letters, so the "signature" of this verse—the product of its number of words and number of letters—is 832, the value of "the Land of Israel" (ארץ ישראל). The verse starts with the word “If” (אם) alluding to Mother’s Day (the 41st day of the year, where 41 = אם) and to the initials of "action" and "party" (אקשן, מפלגה). The middle of the verse, based on the cantillation marks, is the word לך. Thus the first half of the verse has 10 words and the second half 6 words. The value of the first 10 words is 41² (אם squared), meaning the value of the first half of the verse is equal to the square of the first word of the first half! The value of the 6 words that make up the second part of the verse is 2368 which is the product of 37 and 64. But, 37 is the value of the first word of the second half, "lest" (ולא), so the *gematria* of the second half of the verse is a multiple of the first word of the second half!

But, recall that 2368 is also the value of the sixth verse of our *parshah*, the 305th, the *Yitzhar* verse! So we have here an explicit connection between *Shechem* and *Yitzhar*!

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There is another very important thing about *parshat Lech Lecha* and in general about the Book of Genesis, which is also called the book of the Upright, alluding to the upright stature of our forefathers, the stories about whom precede are thus understood to be even higher than the laws of the Torah.

The message of *parshat Lech Lecha* is that we should “Go forth,” the literal meaning of the words “*lech lecha*.” *Parshat Vayeira*, the next *parshah* in the Torah, begins with God revealing Himself to Abraham. The Rebbe Rashab (the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe) once asked his grandfather, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, why is it that God revealed Himself to Abraham but He does not reveal Himself to us? The *Tzemach Tzedek* answered that if at the age of 99, after so many years of serving God, a Jew can come to a realization that he is relatively still “uncircumcised,” then such a Jew is worthy of God revealing Himself to him. This means that even at the age of 99, Abraham still felt that he needed to “Go forth.”

We see that the termination of *parshat Vayeira* also contains the phrase “Go forth.”¹⁷ In this case, “Go forth to the Land of Moriah,” the final test God gave Abraham, the binding of Isaac. In *parshat Lech Lecha*, Abraham goes forth “until the place of *Shechem*.”¹⁸ At the end of *parshat Vayeira*, he goes forth to the place where eventually the Holy Temple was built, to a place called Moriah, which at the end of the story is referred to as “the mountain where God will be seen.” Thus, it is only at the end of *parshat Vayeira* that Abraham sees the fulfillment of God's initial words to him: “to the land that I will show you.”

The name *Vayeira* also stems from the verb “to see.” Where *Lech Lecha* is about walking, *Vayeira* is about seeing. The *Gra* notes a beautiful *gematria*: the value of the filling of “that I will show you,” אראך (אלף ריש אלף פא), is 832, the same as the *gematria* of “the Land of Israel” (ארץ ישראל). In any case, we see that walking precedes seeing. Now, one way of understanding the relationship between walking and seeing is that moving around changes your perspective on things. If you stay in one place for too long, your vision, as it were, blurs and dims. You see less and less of what is around you. Getting up from one place and going somewhere else is refreshing. A change of scenery leads to new understanding and to new insight into your previous surroundings. Moving around also lets you find new horizons, new challenges, and new directions in life.

You might say that this is what happened in the American elections recently. For a long time there were only white presidents, and after a while people got used to it and wanted change, something new. After a while even the white seems black and then you want something black, because it seems to be shiny and new.

On the plane back to *Eretz Yisrael*, we saw in the Jerusalem Post that it said that “America wants change, too bad that Israel doesn’t.” Indeed, we have to be mobilized by this idea and inspired by it.

In 5752, at the end of *parshat Noach*, the Rebbe shouted seven times “*Havayah Hu Ha’elokim*” (GOD is God), the conclusion of the *Yom Kippur* prayers. The Rebbe in his talk explained that perhaps the only thing that is missing for the Mashiach to come is that we say the blessing on the new moon with more intent. The practical point that came out of this talk was that the Rebbe included women in the blessing of the moon. When we bless the new moon we are actually blessing Rachel herself, who is symbolized by the moon.

We have explained elsewhere that when it comes to morning blessings, there are three approaches taken by women. There is a blessing that reads: Blessed are You our God, Master of the universe who has not made me a woman.” In many *sidurim* it says that women should substitute this blessing with one that reads: "... who made me according to His will.” But, because this substitution is not mentioned in the Talmud or any of the early legal sources, there are opinions that it should not be used as a substitute. Still, because many women feel strange saying a seemingly male blessing ("...who has not made me a woman"), they just leave it out altogether. But, in the Alter Rebbe’s *siddur*, there is no such instruction. In other words, one may think that the Alter Rebbe did not intend to differentiate between men and women in regards to this blessing. So in all, we find three approaches taken by three different types of women:

- 1) Women who substitute the male blessings with the female version.
- 2) Women who simply don't say this blessing.
- 3) Women who say the blessing in its original form, understanding that they have the same spiritual capabilities as men to influence others, the essence of masculinity.

Similarly in regard to the Rebbe's inclusion of women in the blessing of the new moon: there are three different interpretations.

1) There are those women who understood that this was a one time event that women were instructed to say the blessing for the new moon. [But, from experience this is a little hard to swallow, because the Rebbe never did things once. All his instructions seem to be ongoing.]

But, there are those who understand that the Rebbe’s instructions continue to apply, therefore women should continue to say the blessing for the new moon. These women have adopted two different approaches:

- 2) The first is that they participate in blessing the new moon by answering "Amen" to their husband's or the congregation's blessing.
- 3) But, there are women who understand that the Rebbe instructed that they should say the blessing themselves. And, since women can halachically congregate, i.e., they form a *tzibur*, they may even say it together.

This year it came out that the blessing of the new moon of *Cheshvan* fell on *Motza’ei Shabbat* of the day of passing of Rachel.

* * *

Returning to the previous point: that walking leads to seeing. *Rashi* explains that by not revealing to Abraham in the beginning which land he was going to, God intended to increase his reward that he believed in Him blindly. But, a deeper explanation might be that the whole idea of leaving our present locale is meant to provide us with new stimuli.

A Jew is more prone to boredom than a non-Jew and therefore needs to spend more time searching for something interesting. This is one of the reasons that Jews travel so much and that so many Israeli youth are traveling all over the world. There are ancient maps of the Land of Israel, maps made by non-Jews, where the Land of Israel is not perceptible at all. The idea here is that when Abraham was in Charan he could not yet imagine what this land might be like. Only once he started moving could he begin to see it, to perceive what this land might be.

Now let us apply this relationship between walking and seeing into the wider context of the 12 senses described in the *Book of Formation*. These 12 senses correspond to the 12 months of the year. Walking and sight correspond to the months of *Sivan* and *Tamuz*, respectively.

In passing let us mention that the *Gra* gives a different correspondence. He writes that sight corresponds to the month of *Sivan*, the month of the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai and walking corresponds to *Tamuz*, the month in which the spies went to see the Land of Israel.

Still, the more accepted version and the one given by the Arizal is that walking corresponds to *Sivan* and sight to *Tamuz*. The month of *Tamuz* corresponds to Reuben, whose name also means to see (“see, a son”).

Now, if we look at the numbers of the months, we see that *Sivan* and *Tamuz* are the 3rd and 4th months. Indeed, *Lech Lecha* and *Vayeira*, are the 3rd and 4th Torah portions of the Book of Genesis. Altogether, the Book of Genesis has 12 *parashot*, 12 Torah portions. It follows therefore that the 12 portions of Genesis may be seen to correspond to the 12 months of the year. Another point: in *Lech Lecha* there are exactly 126 verses, and 126 is the value of *Sivan* (סיון)!

Let's write out the complete correspondence between months and *parashot*:

<i>parshah</i> in Genesis	month
<i>Bereishit</i>	<i>Nisan</i>
<i>Noach</i>	<i>Iyar</i>
<i>Lech Lecha</i>	<i>Sivan</i>
<i>Vayeira</i>	<i>Tamuz</i>
<i>Chayei Sarah</i>	<i>Av</i>
<i>Toldot</i>	<i>Elul</i>
<i>Vayeitzei</i>	<i>Tishrei</i>
<i>Vayishlach</i>	<i>Cheshvan</i>
<i>Vayeishev</i>	<i>Kislev</i>
<i>Miketz</i>	<i>Tevet</i>
<i>Vayigash</i>	<i>Shevat</i>
<i>Vayechi</i>	<i>Adar</i>

Since in this table *Bereishit*, i.e., creation corresponds to the month of *Nisan*, this fits the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua in the Talmud who says that the world was created in *Nisan* (not in *Tishrei*).

Obviously to develop this correspondence will require time, so let us leave it for now.

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There is another topic that we wanted to address, the war between the four and five kings discussed in our *parshah*. For lack of time, we will only say a few words. The *Arizal* explains that the four kings correspond to the four elements, and the five kings correspond to the five senses. In the beginning the elements win the battle against the senses, but in the end, Abraham, who will receive an additional letter *hei* (5) added to his name, fights the battle of the senses and wins against the elements. Thus, the *Arizal* is implying that Abraham joined the battle in order to help the senses overcome the elements. This is the type of war that the *Mashiach* will fight and win. But, for lack of time we will let the wise add more wisdom...

* * *

The simple meaning of *Lech Lecha* is to go from wherever someone is abroad to the Land of Israel. But, earlier we said that wherever you are, eventually you feel your eyesight dimming and need a change of scenery. There are people who are stubborn and do not want to ever leave the Land of Israel, and a lot of these people are here in this room. For these people, it might be proper to think about taking a trip to visit other parts of the world. In fact, the *Talmud* says that when a person who lives in the Land of Israel travels abroad for some time and then returns home to Israel, his understanding of the *Torah* deepens. A point to think about...

* * *

The last point that we would like to make is about walking. There used to be people who thought that the world was flat. This was not the opinion of the sages. In any case, there are few people who would today argue that the world is flat. Most people would agree that the earth is spherical. What we gained from this new understanding is that in whatever direction you begin to go, in the end you will end up in the same place. This is not true only on Earth, but according to Einstein, the same is true of space as well because space is curved like a sphere.

A flat world means that we can imagine walking in a straight line. But, since now we say that regardless of what direction you walk in, in the end you will return to the same place, then really there is no difference between a flat earth and a round earth. This is a way to give some value to the thought the Earth might be flat.

¹. Genesis 2:3.

². Proverbs 31:30

³. Proverbs 22:4.

⁴. Micah 7:20.

⁵. After the Israeli army abandoned the site of Joseph's Tomb and *Yeshivat Od Yosef Chai*, subsequently to be destroyed and defiled by the Arabs in 2000, the *Yeshivah* moved to the nearby settlement of *Yitzhar*.

⁶. See *What You Need to Know About Kabbalah*, pp. 101ff.

⁷. Genesis 15:19.

⁸. See in length in the *Mittler Rebbe's Ma'amarim, Devarim, s.v. Al Tatzar et Mo'av*.

⁹. Genesis 14:1.

¹⁰. *Ibid.* 15:6.

¹¹. 1 Chronicles 1:27.

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- ¹². Genesis 14:23.
- ¹³. *Sotah* 17a.
- ¹⁴. A repeating motif in Rebbe Nochum's teachings.
- ¹⁵. *Menachot* 44a.
- ¹⁶. See *Tosafot* there, s.v. *Lebeit midrasho shel rabbi chiya*
- ¹⁷. Genesis 22:2.
- ¹⁸. The Hebrew of the words "Until the place of *Shechem*" is עַד מְקוֹם שָׁכֵם. The initials of these three words are "*Shema*," שְׁמַע. Just the two words "the place of *Shechem* (מְקוֹם שָׁכֵם) is equal to "crown" (כֶּתֶר).