



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

פרשת
לך לך

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

THE HONEST THIEF

Avraham Avinu was the greatest *kiruv* expert in history. *Chazal* tell us his simple tactic: he opened a free hotel in the middle of the desert, near a highway on which many people traveled without food, water, or shade. Passersby were grateful for a chance to stop and rest. Avraham offered refreshing water, a full meal, and a nice, shady spot under a tree...a *mechayeh!*

When it was time to leave, guests had to check out. "How much did my stay cost?" they asked.

Avraham consulted the bill. "Ten thou— Oh, no, your bill is covered, actually. You don't owe anything."

"What? By whom? How can that be?"

"Hashem pays for any guest who is willing to *bentch*."

" W h o ? What?"

"Hashem is the Creator and Master of the universe. He gave you and me all this. All you need to do is recognize Him and say a *bracha*, and He will pay



PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles will appear in next week's issue.

- 1 Which three morning mitzvos are thanks to the actions of Avraham Avinu?
- 2 Which three types of birds are mentioned in *Parshas Lech Lecha*? Can you think of two other types of birds mentioned in *Chumash*, besides the list of nonkosher birds in *Shemini* and *Re'eh*?
- 3 Where do *Chazal* find the source for the concept of *notrikon* (*drashos* involving initials, shortened words, or similar-sounding words) in the Torah? Rashi points it out. Can you find five other examples of *notrikon* in this week's *parshah*?
- 4 Which names of places in the *parshah* are also regular words?



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 2

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: Reb Beirish is trapped in a blizzard while trying to reach Ruzhin for Shabbos Chanukah.

R

eb Beirish, hitched to the wagon alongside his horse, gave another heave, and the cart sledged forward a little bit. He stopped to rest and then heaved a bit more.

He wasn't going to make it very far like this, but he needed to find that inn. The snow was driving into his eyes, the wind was howling through his bones, and his fingers and toes felt like icicles. If he didn't find shelter soon, he would be in real danger. And the feeble light of the sun was fading too.

Reb Beirish considered walking ahead of the horse and wagon to look for the inn, but he was afraid he wouldn't be able to find them again if he left them in the swirling snow. So he pushed forward, again and again. Trees were barely visible in the murky, cloudy whiteness, but no buildings appeared.

Reb Beirish was on the verge of collapsing. He had decided to give up and try to huddle under the wagon until the storm passed, hoping that the horse would survive, when he smelled something. Was it...was it wood smoke? He dared to hope. He pushed his scarf off his nose and sniffed again. Yes! There was a fireplace nearby—which meant there was a house, or inn, and warmth, and maybe a hot drink... Reb Beirish began to dream.

With a start, he snapped out of his reverie. *Got to keep going!* He pushed ahead, again and again. Soon, he saw a light in the gathering darkness. Something was out there! A few more heaves, and the outline of a small building came into view. Yes! It was the small inn he was looking for, the place he stopped every time he traveled to Ruzhin! He had made it!

Reb Beirish stumbled to the door and knocked on it weakly. He could hear sounds of cheer within. He knocked again. The pitch of the voices changed and footsteps approached the door from the other side. Reb Beirish was leaning against the door for warmth when it was flung open, and he toppled into the room in a cloud of powdery snow.

“Reb Beirish! *Oy vey!* Shprintze! *Kum schnell!* Reb Beirish!” shouted Zanvil, the proprietor. He dragged the frozen man to the fire while his wife quickly put a kettle of soup on the stove. One of the kids ran to stable the horse and give it feed and straw bedding.

The cheerful, crackling fire and delicious hot soup soon revived Reb Beirish. He sat in an old rocking chair and stretched his toes toward the fire. Zanvil and his family crowded around him.

“Ah, come now, Reb Beirish. We've been waiting for this for months,” Zanvil said, settling himself comfortably in an armchair. “Tell us some more of your great stories about the holy Ruzhiner and his *Chassidim*.”

And so Reb Beirish began to speak. He told of the Rebbe's wisdom and his miracles. He spoke about the deeds of the *Chassidim* and their pious ways. He sprinkled *divrei Torah* and *chochmah* around his stories, and the family listened, spellbound, late into the night.

It was in the wee hours when everyone called it a night, yawning, with hot food in their bellies and warmth in their souls. The family retired to its quarters, and Reb Beirish was shown a comfortable room.

They had all just drifted off to sleep when the pounding on the door began, along with shouting.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2

DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each in classic Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic styles. See if your children can guess which idea comes from which school of thought!

וְאַבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בַּמִּקְנֵהוּ בַכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב

“And Avram was weighed down heavily with livestock, silver, and gold [that he received from Pharaoh]” (*Bereishis* 13:2).

הֲרִימְתִי יָדַי אֶל ה'... וְאִם אָקַח מִכֶּל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשִׂרְתִּי אֶת אַבְרָם

“I raise my hands to Hashem...[as] if I would take anything of yours, so you won't say, 'I made Avram rich'” (*ibid.* 14:22).

Why did Avram agree to accept riches from Pharaoh, but not from the king of Sedom?

RAV REUVEN KARELENSTEIN (LITVISH):

Avraham's sole purpose in life was to increase *kvod Shamayim* in the world.

On his way to Mitzrayim, people had laughed at him when he tried to get them to serve Hashem, because he was penniless. They said, “Why doesn't this G-d of yours take care of you?” It was important to show that Hashem *did* take care of him, in miraculous ways. That is why he took the money from Pharaoh. But taking money from Sedom would have just looked like greed. Avraham had enough already, and needed to show the *middos* of a tzaddik.

YAD HAMELECH (CHASSIDISH):

Avraham did not want to take anything from Sedom because these riches were won in a war, and he didn't want to let himself think for a second that he earned them (the gifts from Pharaoh were clearly caused by the *malach*). When he said “Don't say I made Avram rich” he was talking to his hands (mentioned in the previous *pasuk*), not the king of Sedom!

RAV OVADYAH YOSEF (SEPHARDI):

Avraham understood that his experience in Mitzrayim paved the way for *Klal Yisrael's* slavery and freedom generations later. Just like *Bnei Yisrael*, Avraham was oppressed by the Mitzriyim and Pharaoh, who were beaten and later sent him away with riches. Had he refused to take the money from Pharaoh, the Jewish people would not have left Mitzrayim with great riches, either!



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Parshah summary

Parshas Lech Lecha traces the emergence of the roots of the Jewish people, the nation uniquely tasked with fulfilling Hashem's plan for the universe, from among the nations. It teaches us about Avraham, his great righteousness, and how he recognized Hashem and worked hard to teach the world about Him. The *parshah* reveals how Avraham was chosen to have his descendants carry out the mission of spreading *kvod Shamayim*, the tiny mistakes that he made, and the steps that would have to be taken to purify *Klal Yisrael*, such as the branching off of Yishmael and the slavery in Mitzrayim.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:

1. Review your new list of *kabbalos* made over the Yamim Nora'im. Now is the time to hone it down to two inviolable commitments—one *bein adam l'chaveiro* and one *bein adam laMakom*. These accomplishments will survive the year and will be second nature by next Rosh Hashanah. This is the essential work for this year.
2. *Klal Yisrael* has a responsibility: we need to be *mekadesh Shem Shamayim* wherever we go. In your public interactions this week, take special care to leave a love of Hashem with the people that interact with you, through your sterling behavior and *middos*.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

1. What is the only time in history that the sun rose in the west and set in the east? During the seven days preceding the **Mabul, as a warning to the resha'im (Midrash)**. During the *Mabul*, there was no rising and setting of the sun. How did Noach know how many days had passed (as the *pesukim* say he did)? **Sifsei Chachamim gives several answers, including: Noach could tell time by the behavior of the animals, as Chazal tell us regarding donkeys, chickens, and ravens. The Minchas Elazar says Noach must have had a spring-loaded watch, such as those that exist today!**
2. If all the trees outside the *teivah* were destroyed, where did the dove find an olive branch? **The Mabul did not affect either Eretz Yisrael or Gan Eden; Hashem set up miraculous walls to keep the water out. If the dove could fly there to get an olive branch, the walls must have been removed, meaning the water had dried up (Ramban).**
3. What was Noach's wife's name? **Na'amah**. Can you think of seven couples in *Tanach* whose names start with the same letter? **Aharon and Elisheva (א), Chizkiyahu and Cheftzibah (ח), Esther and Achashveirosh (א), Eisav and Addah (א), Achav and Izevel (א), Asniel and Achsah (א).**

me directly!”

“Oh, I see. I think I’d rather just pay the bill.”

“Sure, that will be ten thousand dollars.”

“What! Highway robbery! Price gouging!”

“Look, it costs a lot to get food, water, and shelter all the way out in the desert...”

One day, *Chazal* relate, Nimrod arrived. He was a strongman who claimed he was a god, but he also needed a drink. He made himself comfortable at Avraham’s hotel. In fact, he stayed for a month, living it up! When he was ready to leave, Avraham handed him a bill for millions of dollars.

“I heard this place was free! What’s this?!” Nimrod protested.

“This is the bill for all the people who stayed here since we opened this hotel.”

“What? Why should I pay that? I’ll pay for my own stay, and that’s all.”

“But everyone knows that G-d is paying me for their stay. And you claim that you are G-d. So pay up!”

“I-I don’t carry so much cash...”

“What kind of god runs out of money? Pay up or sign this paper admitting you are a fraud, not a god!”

With no choice, given Avraham’s popularity and fame, Nimrod signed.

The news quickly spread: Nimrod had admitted he was not G-d! Nimrod was furious, but he couldn’t harm Avraham (he had already tried throwing him into a fire many years before...).

Suddenly, he had a great idea. Lot looked exactly like Avraham, and he lived in Sedom—which owed him taxes! Nimrod gathered his army, attacked Sedom, and kidnapped Lot. He then traveled from town to town, forcing Lot to make an announcement in each location: “I am Avraham! The paper was a forgery! Nimrod is a god, and I am a liar!” Everyone thought Lot was really Avraham. It was a terrible *chillul Hashem!*

Avraham had to do something about it...

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

In the haftorah for *Parshas Lech Lecha*, the *navi* Yeshayahu encourages *Klal Yisrael*, who are frustrated with the long, endless *galus*, telling them that Hashem has not forgotten them, still controls all world events, and will save them when they are ready. The Navi then turns to the nations of the world and rebukes them for their behavior toward *Klal Yisrael* and for their failure to recognize that Hashem runs the world. He then turns back to *Klal Yisrael* and promises a successful future and an end to the *galus*.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

Chazal interpret four *pesukim* in the haftorah as referring to Avraham’s travel from Aram Naharayim to Eretz Yisrael, his war against the four kings, return of the spoils, and founding of future generations. Although these *pesukim* do not mention Avraham specifically, they refer to one coming from the east. Later, the Navi does mention Avraham, calling him “*ahuvi*—My beloved one.”

The haftorah also describes the seeming endlessness of *galus* and the ultimate redemption, both of which Hashem told Avraham about in the *parshah*. The nations are rebuked, as Hashem promised Mitzrayim would be. The haftorah also encourages the people not to doubt Hashem’s ways—i.e., to be like Avraham in the *parshah*—and declares *Klal Yisrael’s* uniqueness among the nations, a theme developed in the *parshah*.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

Today’s headlines report leaders rebuking Orthodox Jews and their supposed causing of the spread of COVID-19. The elections are also foremost on people’s minds. The *parshah* reminds us that Hashem, not people or leaders, decides events, and He rebukes the nations for forgetting that and mistreating *Klal Yisrael*.



WHAT'S THE HALACHAH?

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

A person has to pay for anything he damages, even if it happened by mistake. However, when people play a game like basketball, they understand that there is a possibility that their belongings will get damaged, and they agree to play anyway. When Yanky joined the game, he accepted the possibility of his glasses getting damaged. **Therefore, Moshe does not have to pay.**

The halachah is based on the assumption that when two people decide to play a rough game together, they understand that there is a risk for injury or damage to property (*Teshuvot HaRosh* 101:6, based on the Gemara in *Bava Kama* 32a that exempts two people who run in the street and bump in to one another and cause damage). It is further understood that if someone gets injured or if property breaks in the normal course of the game, the players will not hold each other responsible for that damage.

What if one boy plays more roughly than most? Is he exempt because they agreed to play, or is he obligated because no one expected him to play so roughly?

The exemption is limited to boys who play in the normal way boys play. If someone is unexpectedly rougher than normal, it cannot be assumed the other boy realized the risk that he was taking, and the boy who was rough would be responsible

If a third boy joins the game without being invited, is he also exempt from damaging someone else?

Although the other boys may be exempt if they damaged him (the newcomer knowingly took the risk), the third boy is not exempt. Since they did not accept him into the game, so we cannot say that they knowingly took this risk.



וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו. אַבְרָם יָשָׁב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְלוֹט יָשָׁב בְּעַרֵי הַכְּנָר

“And each man separated from his brother; Avram lived in the Land of Canaan and Lot settled in the cities of the valley” (ibid. 13:1).

Why did Avraham separate from Lot? Don't we learn so much about the importance of *shalom*?

Sometimes, peace is a tool of the *yetzer hara*! In some cases, trying to keep the peace just increases *machlokes*:

חלוקת = 578 = שלום רב (Chasam Sofer)

שלום = 673 = עשו (Baal Haturim. Eisav wanted “peace” in order to attack Yaakov.)

The last letters of

וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו אַבְרָם יָשָׁב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

spell שלום (Baal Haturim).

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On the 13th of Cheshvan 1553, Pope Julius III ordered the burning of thousands of *sifrei kodesh* in Piazza San Marco, the central square of Venice, the center of Jewish publishing at the time. The pope had issued orders months earlier to gather all Jewish books from all lands controlled by the Catholic church and bring them to Venice. Over 1,000 copies of *Shas* and 500 copies of the Rif's writings were burned.

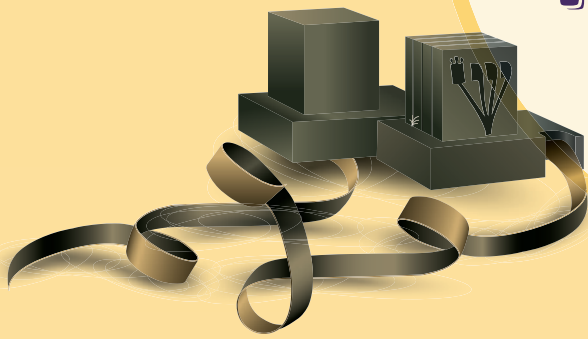
Many more burnings took place over the next 20 years, and printing of *Shas* was banned. As a result, Jews of Italy began to study Kabbalah and other *sefarim*. In Poland and Salonika, where printing was allowed, people were hard at work printing as many copies of *Shas* as possible.

How did it all start? Apparently, two Christian printers got angry at each other, and one accused the other of printing nasty things about the church in Hebrew books. He complained to the Vatican, and without understanding a word of the books, Julius III ordered the burnings. Other Christian scholars said the pope's decision was as silly as a blind man's decision about colors.



HALACHAH

Retzuos of tefillin



In the *zechus* of telling the king of Sedom that he would “not take a string or strap from the spoils of war,” Avraham was given the mitzvos of *techeiles*, the dye with which tzitzis were colored, and *retzuos*, tefillin straps. Here are some halachos of tefillin straps.

COLOR

It is a *halachah l’Moshe miSinai* that the outer side of tefillin *retzuos* have to be black. The inner side can be any color except red, so that it does not look bloody, and some advise that the inside should not be black, so that one will not accidentally twist the straps inside out, in which case he may not be *yotzeh*. If the minimum length and width of the strap is not black on the outside, he is not *yotzeh* at all.

The Biur Halachah considers it a *safeik* whether one is *yotzeh* if the rest of the straps, past the minimum size, are not black. Near the folds and bends, the color often fades. It must be repainted

l’shem mitzvas tefillin, for the sake of the mitzvah of tefillin, (it must be spoken) by an adult Jew or a child with an adult supervising that it is done *l’shmah*.

How black, exactly, do the *retzuos* need to be? The *Mishnah Berurah* notes that the *retzuos* should be “black as a raven,” which requires two or three coats of paint, but they are kosher if people would call them “black.” Today, there are tefillin straps that have absorbed the paint all the way through to the other side; this prevents flaking and chipping of the paint.

LENGTH

The *retzuos* of the *shel rosh* should be long enough to encircle the head and hang down until near the waist; the right strap should be slightly longer, and the left can be slightly shorter. There is no maximum length, but they should not drag on the floor. If one is stuck and only has tefillin with short straps, *b’dieved* he can say the *bracha* if they encircle

the head and hang at least two *tefachim* (about eight inches). If they are shorter than that, he should not say a *bracha*.

The *shel yad* straps must be long enough to wrap the tefillin on the arm and reach the fingers, with a wrap there as well. The minimum width of the straps are the length of a barley kernel, about 11 millimeters.

CHATZITZAH (BARRIER)

There should not be any material between the *retzuos* and the body, at least in the area in which it is tied—the first loop on the arm and the encircling of the head. There may not be a bit of yarmulke or toupee under the straps.

What about bandages or a cast on the arm? The Magen Avraham and Chayei Adam seem to allow tefillin straps to be worn over those (but not *batim*); check with a *posek*.

Most people do not wear a watch under the tefillin straps because of *chatzitzah*, but there are sources that are lenient, allowing one to have a watch on the wrist.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“THIS LONG, BITTER EXILE WILL FINALLY END WHEN WE ARE HUMBLD ENOUGH TO LEARN TORAH FROM HASHEM HIMSELF.”

—The Chida, Rav Chaim Yosef David Azoulay



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