



Imrey Noam

Parashat Lech-Lecha

Shabbat Shalom

October 24

13 Cheshvan

5787

SHABBAT TIMES



City	Candle lighting Oct. 23	Shabbat ends Oct. 24
New York	5:45	6:44
Los Angeles	5:51	6:46
Chicago	5:38	6:37

Local time in each city · All times PM

The World on One Side, Abraham on the Other

A thought on the parashah
Rabbi Reuven Kuklin



How do we remain faithful to the truth when the whole world thinks differently?

"Walk before Me..." G-d tells Abraham (Genesis 17:1). Of Noah, however, the Torah says: "Noah walked with G-d" (Genesis 6:9).

What is the difference? Rashi explains that Noah needed support, while Abraham grew strong in righteousness on his own. He did not seek the truth because his surroundings encouraged him to do so. On the contrary, the world around him drew him in a different direction.

Maimonides describes how Abraham began to ponder the workings of creation while still a child. How could the heavenly bodies keep moving if no one directed them? He had neither teacher nor guide. His father, mother and entire people worshipped the stars, and at first he followed their example. Yet Abraham kept questioning, reflecting and searching until he understood that there is one Creator, Who made everything and governs the world (Laws of Idolatry 1:3). He was able to reconsider what had seemed certain since childhood and what everyone around him accepted without question.

But discovering the truth is not the same as finding the courage to live by it. G-d commanded Abraham: "Go forth from your land and your birthplace..." (Genesis 12:1). Rabbi Samson Raphael



Hirsch observes that, in an age when people sought security by merging completely into society, Abraham left his homeland and became a voluntary exile. He refused to build his life on beliefs he had recognized as false. Such a step required unwavering faith and a willingness to stand alone.

This quality is expressed in the name Ivri, "the Hebrew," which the Torah gives Abraham (Genesis 14:13). The Sages explain: the whole world was on one side, and he was on the other; ever means "side" in Hebrew (Bereishit Rabbah 42). Abraham did not adjust his convictions to fit accepted views. What mattered to him was not how many people held an opinion, but whether it was true.

Abraham's descendants inherited this steadfastness. Through long centuries of exile, Jews lived among nations with different beliefs and outlooks. They endured persecution and attempts to force them to abandon the Torah, yet our people remained faithful to it. Like their forefather, Jews often stood on one side while the surrounding world stood on the other.

This is Abraham's legacy: to seek the truth for ourselves and, once we find it, not retreat simply because the majority thinks differently. Not to let those around us decide what we believe in or what we live for.

THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH

The Gemara relates that Abraham was punished and his descendants were enslaved in Egypt for 210 years because he enlisted Torah scholars in a military campaign (Nedarim 32a). For a similar mistake, King Asa of Judah was afflicted with a disease of the feet — he employed scholars to dismantle the enemy fortifications at Ramah

(Sotah 10a). Yet Abraham was rescuing the captive Lot, and Asa was defending his country! These teachings reveal the unique place of Torah in our people's life. Its study is not a private pursuit that benefits the student alone. It provides spiritual support and protection for us all.

Adapted from an article by Rabbi Reuven Kuklin on imrey.org. Translated and edited for this bulletin.

Whose Carriage Is It?

A story for the parashah
Adapted from Lelamedcha

Two men claim to be the owner. How can anyone tell which one is telling the truth?

On the road to Salonika, a Jewish coachman met a fellow Jew who was exhausted after hours of walking. "Could you give me a ride?" the stranger asked. "It would be a real kindness!" The coachman gladly invited him into his carriage.

A few hours later, the horses were tired too. The travellers stopped at a roadside inn. The coachman treated his passenger to dinner and even paid for his lodging.

But an unpleasant surprise awaited him in the morning. Barely awake, he heard his guest from the night before ordering the innkeeper to hurry and prepare the horses and carriage. When the coachman came out of his room, the man turned to him: "Get dressed quickly! My horses have rested. It's time to leave!"

"Your horses?" the coachman exclaimed. "But those are my horses, harnessed to my carriage!" His guest was not embarrassed in the least. "Liar! I took pity on you and gave you a free ride, and now you want to take my carriage?"

The coachman was bewildered. How could he prove something so obvious? His brazen passenger confidently posed as the owner, and each man insisted on his claim. The innkeeper suggested: "Rabbi Yaakov Covo, a wise man, lives in Salonika. He will be able to judge between you."

Both men went to the rabbi. He listened patiently to each of them and asked them to wait in the next room while he considered the case. An hour passed. Finally, Rabbi Yaakov appeared in the doorway and called: "Let the coachman come in first!"



The real coachman immediately stood up and approached the rabbi. The passenger remained seated. Only after a few seconds did he realize what had happened and get up too.

"Now we can see who the real coachman is," said Rabbi Yaakov. "A man who has practised this trade all his life is used to answering to that name. He heard it and rose at once. You needed time to remember whom you were pretending to be."

Habit proved stronger than the invented role: an accustomed response came before conscious thought.

That was how the wise man exposed the impostor.

This story helps us understand Abraham's request to Sarah while they were still on the road to Egypt: "Please say that you are my sister" (Genesis 12:13). Why did he ask her already on the journey, and why phrase it as a plea? Surely Sarah would do everything she could to save his life.

Yet the desire to save him would not, by itself, overcome the power of habit. Sarah was used to introducing herself as Abraham's wife. Even knowing the danger, in an unguarded moment she might instinctively say that he was her husband, not her brother. Abraham therefore asked her to begin getting used to this role while still on the road. His special appeal was meant to help her take his words deeply to heart, so that in a moment of danger her habitual response would not override what she knew and intended to do.

THE IMPRESSION THAT REMAINS

Rabbi Reuven Kuklin

Maaseh Ish relates that the Chazon Ish was once walking down a street with a relative. Suddenly he pointed to a spot beneath a tree: "Two people stood here discussing Torah." His companion was astonished. How did he know? The Chazon Ish replied that he could sense the spiritual light emanating from that place.

This story helps us understand the Or HaChaim's explanation of our parashah. When Abraham continued his journey, he dismantled the altar he had built and took its stones with him to rebuild it

at his next destination. Why carry such a heavy load? Would there be no other stones there? But these stones had already acquired holiness. Abraham cherished that holiness and did not wish to part with them.

Our prayers and Torah study also leave an impression. This is why a fixed place for prayer matters so much: it absorbs the holiness of earlier prayers and helps us turn to the Creator with greater purity the next time.