

Perasha Summary

Ronnie Hasson

Perashat Lech Lecha begins with Hashem's first command to Abram; "Lech Lecha" – "go forth ... to the land that I will show you." Hashem commanded him to leave his home and travel to a new land. Abram followed Hashem's command and also took Sarai and Lot with him. When he reached Canaan, Hashem told him that this is the land that He is going to give to Abram's offspring.

There was a famine in the land and Abram was forced to go to Egypt. Abram told his wife Sarai that since she was so beautiful, they would kill him in order to marry her. He told her to pretend that she was his sister so that they would not kill him. When they arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh took her to his palace. He gives her 'brother' Abram many gifts, but Hashem punishes Pharaoh and the people in his palace for taking Sarai. Pharaoh asked Abram why he didn't tell him that she was his wife. He then had Abram and Sarai escorted out of the country.

Abram and Lot begin to travel with a large flock. Lot's and Abram's shepherds get into a fight and Abram and Lot decide to split up. Lot goes to Sedom and Abram goes to Mamre (which is in Hebron). Sedom was the richest part of the country but it was also full of evil and corruption.

There was a war in the Land. There were four kings fighting against five kings. They attack Sodom and capture the city. Lot is taken captive and Abram goes to his rescue. Abram is successful and chases the armies out of Sodom. The king of Sodom tries to reward Abram but Abram refuses to accept anything from him.

Next, we read of the Brit Ben Habetarim - The covenant between parts. After the war, Hashem reassures Abram that he will father a great nation. He promises him that he will have a son. Hashem also tells him that his descendants will be slaves in a foreign land where they will be oppressed. Only afterwards will they emerge a great nation and inherit the land of Canaan.

At this point, Sarai was still barren and could not bear children. She told Abram to take her maidservant Hagar, and try to have a child with her. Hagar becomes pregnant and starts to treat Sarai with disrespect. Sarai kicks her out of the house. She is in the desert and an angel comes to her and tells her to return to Sarai and to respect her. Hagar returns and has a son whom she names Yishmael.

At the conclusion of the Perasha, Hashem tells Abram that he will still have another son exactly one year after this prophecy. The other son will come from Sarai. Hashem changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah. Hashem also commands Abraham to circumcise himself and Yishmael. He was 99 and Yishmael was 13 at their circumcisions.

Perasha Quiz

1) **Q.** "And he treated Abram well for her [Sara] sake" (12:16). What do we learn from this Pasuk?

A. The Gemara Baba Metzia 59a teaches us from this Pasuk that a man must always be very careful to respect his wife because blessing is only found in his house due to his wife.

2) **Q.** Why was Pharaoh chosen to be the one who would rule over Bnei Yisrael?

A. There is a Mitzva that whenever a guest leaves, the host should walk him out, 4 steps. The midrash teaches that Pharaoh did this for Abram and for fulfilling the Mitzva of these 4 steps, he received a reward of having slaves for 400 years to build his empire.

3) **Q.** Abraham didn't accept any money from The King of Sedom, not wanting the king of Sedom to say "I made Abram rich." Why then was he willing to take presents from Pharaoh, King of Mitzrayim?

A. Abraham suspected that the King of Sedom would publicize the fact that he enriched Abraham. Pharaoh, on the other hand, wouldn't brag about his gifts to Abraham. Since they were given under embarrassing circumstances, Pharaoh would avoid mentioning them in order to avoid drawing attention to the incident. Abarbanel explains that he was forced to accept Pharaoh's gifts so as not to arouse any suspicion that he was really Sarai's husband.

4) **Q.** Why were Bnei Yisrael destined to become slaves in Egypt?

A. One Midrash wanting to emphasize the importance of Torah study states that it was a punishment to Abram for taking his students away from Torah Study to fight the war. Another opinion is because he agreed to give the king of Sodom all his people back. Had Abram kept them under his control, he may have been able to convince them to believe in Hashem and fulfill the great mitzva of converting them. A third opinion states that it was because when Hashem told Abram that he will inherit the land of Canaan, Abram said: "how do I know that I will? [give me a sign]" (15:8). Since he demanded this of Hashem, he was punished. A fourth opinion (Ramban) is that Abraham committed two great sins. The first was that he left Canaan and went to Egypt. He should have had faith that Hashem would provide him with food. The second is that when he went to Egypt he placed Sarah in a terrible situation, where she could have committed a great sin had she slept with Pharaoh. Ramban also notes the similarities between this episode and Bnei Yisrael later on. Abraham left Canaan and went to Egypt because of a famine and Yaakov and his children left Canaan to Egypt because of famine. His wife was taken by the Egyptians and the girls were taken by the Egyptians later on ("and Pharaoh let the girls live"), and both times Hashem brought plagues upon the Egyptians and both Abraham and his future descendants were kicked out of Egypt with a lot of riches.

5) **Q.** Why was Abram worried after the war?

A. He had miraculously won the war and was afraid that the victory was Hashem's reward for his good deeds. If he used up his good deeds to win the war, he was worried that he didn't have enough left. But Hashem reassured him that everything is fine.

4) **Q.** Why did Hashem take Abram out to see the stars?

A. In Tractate Shabbat (156a) it explains that Abram told Hashem: I looked into my Mazal (astrology) and it says that I will not father a child. So Hashem took him out to see the stars and explained to him that there is no Mazal for Yisrael, meaning that we are not affected by the stars and we can always change our life through prayer and merit and our destiny is never predetermined without our ability to change it. In the Midrash (Bereshit Raba) it explains that Hashem explained to Abram that the Mazal for Abram does say that he will not have a child and that is true, he will not. But Abraham will have a child. (Later Hashem changes his name from Abram to Abraham-see summary above). This Midrash is one of the sources for the custom to change someone's name in an attempt to change their Mazal. Others disagree with the custom and don't believe it is an acceptable Jewish custom as we do not believe in astrology. This is why the Talmudic term for an idol worshipper is an oved kochavim u'mazalot – believer of stars and astrology.

5) **Q.** How long will the Messianic period be?

A. One opinion (of several) is that it will last 400 years. This is because in Psalms it says "make us happy, for the amount of time we suffered", since in Egypt

we suffered 400 years, that is the time the Messianic period will last, and afterwards will come the complete redemption.

6) **Q.** Why were Abram's and Yaakob's names changed (to Abraham and Yisrael, respectively), and not Yitzchak's name?

A. Because Abram and Yaakob were named by their fathers, but Yitzchak was named by Hashem, so it did not need to be changed.

7) **Q.** What is the significance to the letters added to Abram's and Sarai's names?

A. The letter `Yud' taken away from Sarai's name has a numerical value of ten. It was divided into the two letters `hey'—each of which has a numerical value of five. One was added to Sarah's name, the other to Abraham's. This teaches that an ideal marriage is based on sharing. Based on Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 2:6

8) **Q.** What is this week's Haftara, and why is it read?

A. This week's Haftara is Yeshayahu 40:27-41:16. There are three parts to this week's Haftara. The first is an encouraging reminder that although after being abandoned in exile we sometimes feel that God is ignoring us and no longer pays attention to what we do, the prophet Yeshayahu reassures us that God will never "tire or weaken" he will always care for us with his full strength. We read the well known verse that since God never weakens, so those who believe in him should have renewed strength. The second part describes the fear and folly of the nations that don't believe in God and put their faith in manmade gods. The third part of the Haftara concludes the Haftara with a reassurance that the descendents of Abraham will leave their exile in Babylon (after the destruction of the first temple) and journey back to the Promised land, as their forefather Abraham (in this week's Perasha) had done approximately 1,000 years earlier from the very same region that they were at that time in exile. This reminds us that Abraham was not originally from the land of Israel, and did not originally speak Hebrew, rather he learned Hebrew from the Canaanites.

A Torah Thought for Perashat Lech Lecha

Rabbi Dr. Eli B. Greenwald

"And he said, O my Master (15:8)

The Gemara (Berachot 7b) tells us that Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai: Since the day that Hashem created the universe, no one had called Hashem by the name ADON (master) until Avraham came and called Him ADON in the above verse.

The story is told that a man wrote a commentary on the SIDDUR TEFILA, the prayer-book, and came to Rabbi Elijah of Vilna (better known as the Vilna Gaon) for a HASKAMA, a letter of approval, which he would show to people in order to convince them to purchase his work. The Vilna Gaon read the first few pages and found an explanation the author wrote as to why the order of the morning prayers begins with the Hymn to Hashem's glory, "ADON OLAM." His explanation was based on the statement in the Talmud by Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai, quoted above. He wrote, "Since we know that Avraham Avinu introduced TEFILAT SHAHARIT, the morning Service, it is proper and fitting that this service begin with the Divine appellation ADON, which he, Avraham, was the first to use." In giving his approval to this commentary, the Vilna Gaon said that if only for this explanation, the publication of this commentary would be worthwhile.

The acknowledgment of Hashem as our Master is very important, for it means that we must follow His instructions, the Torah—the way of life He laid out for us. Avraham Avinu was the first to recognize this, and left this teaching for us, his children, to always keep in mind. So, as our Sages arranged, ADON OLAM properly belongs at the beginning of the daily prayer service.



Lech Lecha
October 20, 2007

לך לך
ח חשוון תשס"ח

	Perasha	Haftara
Soncino Humash	p.60	p.82
Hertz	p.45	p.60
Kaplan	p.54	p.1058

Minyan Schedule

Friday	Shaharit: 6:15am & 7:30am	Minha/Candle Lighting 5:52pm
Sat.	Shaharit: 8:30am	
	Minha: 5:30pm	Arbit: 6:30
Sunday	Shaharit: 7:45am	Motsaei Shabbat: 6:44pm
Mon.-Thu.	Shaharit: 6:15am & 7:30am	Minha/Arvit: 5:50pm
Next Fri.	Shaharit: 6:15am & 7:30am	Minha/Candle Lighting 5:42pm

Classes

Sun-Fri	After 6:15am Shaharit:	
	Gemara Sanhedrin.....	Rabbi Farhi
	Hok LeYisrael.....	Shlomo Salman
Wednesday	8:30pm Jewish History.....	Rabbi Greenwald
Thursday	8:30pm Perasha in depth.....	Rabbi Farhi
Shabbat	One Hour before Minha	
	Gemara (Moed Katan).....	Rabbi Greenwald
	Proverbs (Mishlei) for Women.....	Rabbi Farhi
	Seuda Shelishit	
	Yalkut Yosef – Halacha.....	Rabbi Greenwald
	Perasha & Haftara.....	Rabbi Farhi
	Motzaei Shabbat	
	Judaism 101.....	Rabbi Hasson
	-- An in depth study of basic Jewish concepts	

Dedicated in Memory of
Rachel Hasson bat Esther

Shabbat Children's Program

9:00am Tefillah with explanation and commentary
4:30pm Class, games, Tefillah, refreshments, prizes and more.

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