

# Lech Lecha 5773

BS"D Lech Lecha 5773

## Part A:

Of the many shiurim (lectures) and words of wisdom I gleaned from my rabbis, there is one whose lessons have remained with me until today because of its repetitiveness in life.

The rabbi asked for a solution to the following problem:

*A man was crossing a river while holding a package in each hand. Under no circumstances were the packages to come into contact with water. Halfway across, the man's feet became entangled in the river bottom and he could not advance. What was he to do?*

One boy suggested that he call out for help. The rabbi replied that no one was there. Another suggested that the man throw the packages to the shore and then free himself with his hands. The rabbi explained that the shore was too far away. And all other suggestions were eliminated.

The class was stumped. When we asked the rabbi for the answer, he shrugged his shoulders and replied with two Yiddish words: "Takeh schlecht" (indeed a very bad situation) – meaning at times HaShem presents us with bad situations which are beyond our ability to solve.

In this week's parasha, Lot is faced with a dilemma of takeh schlecht.

Avraham presented him with an irreversible ultimatum, "We must now part. If you go south, I will go north; if you go north, I will go south".

For Lot it was "takeh schlecht". On the one hand, he could no

longer hide under the protective wing of Avraham; while the alternative of being independent of Avraham in a strange land was a frightening thought. In the end, he “went with the money” by choosing to live in the wealthy, albeit, wicked city of Sodom with its potential for great material rewards. This bad choice eventually cost him all his wealth, his wife and two of his four daughters who died; and he will forever be remembered as the man who fathered sons by his other two daughters. Takeh schlecht!

America is facing a presidential election which will define the history of that nation for generations to come. If the present choice for president is befuddling for the American public, then how much more so is it “taken schlect” for the knowledgeable religious Jew in the USA.

President Obama is of mixed racial background – his father was a black Kenyan and his mother a white American. In this balanced biological-genetic reality, he chose to cast his lot as a black person. If the vast majority of American blacks don’t like or even detest whites, 99% of them detest Jews.

In addition, it is no secret that Obama has very strong Moslem leanings, as testified to by his speech in Cairo, his bowing before the King of Saudia, his open White House invitation to radical Moslem leaders, and, of course, his bullying of Israel to return to the pre-1967 indefensible borders. And there is much more to say about Obama and his knee-jerk anti-Israel positions.

Mitt Romney is for the Jewish mind, even more problematic. He is an elder in the Mormon Church and knows what Mormonism stands for, but like a good Mormon he is not telling.

Mormonism is Avoda Zara.

Mormons believe that the deity of this world is not the Supreme Being of the universe, but was initially a man of blood and flesh who attained the status of deity through

righteous living and persistent effort. They believe their deity has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's. Any human can also become a god!

Their Supreme Being created multiple worlds and each world has people living in it. There are multiple gods, each with his own universe. A believer is only subject to his God; and if he obtains the highest level of heaven, he can become a god himself.

This is Avoda Zara at its "finest", and there is much more that is buried under the great Salt Lake of Utah.

These are the choices facing our fellow Jews in the upcoming election. A black (closet) Moslem, anti-Jewish and anti-Medinat Yisrael vs. an elder in the church of Avoda Zara (idolatry).

Why would any God-fearing Jew want to live in a country lead by people like these?

The answer is the one that spoke to Lot and led him to the fertile plain near the Dead Sea – the money trail – even when it leads to one's personal Sodom and Amorra.

## **Part B:**

Excerpts from my book "With all Your Might" on the occasion of the 22nd yahrtzeit of Rav Meir Kahana's zt"l assassination.

## **Two Eulogies**

The Gemara in Megilla 3a discusses the important contribution of the illustrious Tana Yehonatan ben Uziel, the most outstanding student of Hillel (Suka 28a), with his Targum (explanatory translation) on Tanach.

As an example the Gemara quotes the problematic pasuk in the Prophet Zacharia 12,11:

*“On that day, there will be a great eulogy (and funeral) in Yerushalayim, as great as the eulogy of Haddadrimon, in the Valley of Megiddon.”*

Problematic because we do not find anywhere in the Tanach a person called Haddadrimon who was eulogized in a place called Megiddon.

Yehonatan ben Uziel explains as follows:

*“On that day, there will be a eulogy as great as the one said over Achav ben Omri (king of the northern tribes), who was killed by Haddadrimon ben Tavrimon on the Gilad Heights, and as great as the eulogy for Yoshiyahu ben Amon (king of the southern tribes, from the family of King David), who was killed by Pharaoh Necha in the valley of Megiddo.”*

Why did these two people merit such impressive funerals and eulogies, which serve as the model for the eulogies in the future of two great men in Yerushalayim?

The problem is especially acute with regard to Achav, who is mentioned in the Mishna in Sanhedrin 90a as one of the three kings who lost his place in Olam Haba (paradise). (The other two are Yeravam ben Navat and Menashe ben Chizkiyahu.)

It would be an understatement to say that Achav did not follow the Torah. He and his Phoenician gentile wife, E'zevel (Jezebel), sought out the religious leaders of the northern tribes and killed them all but 100 who were hidden in caves by the righteous Ovadia (Melachim 1,18:4).

They introduced idolatry into every Jewish home by the sword. But when Achav died, there was an astonishingly large and emotional funeral with loving eulogies.

The answer is that Achav, by all accounts, was a beloved leader. He brought great wealth to the land and fought in many wars to protect the independence of his country.

The way he died is indicative of his greatness as a leader who lived for his people. Achav fought his last battle against the Aramians (today's Syria). While standing in his chariot, an enemy soldier whose name was Na'aman (Yalkut Shimoni Melachim 1:22) shot an arrow randomly into the air. It came down and struck Achav through a small opening in his armor. Achav could have retreated from the battle to get medical treatment, or, at least, descend from his strategic position in the command chariot in order to be treated. But since this would entail removing himself from view of his soldiers – and thereby possibly weakening their resolve to fight, he chose to remain in his lead chariot until he died.

Achav was a highly respected and beloved leader, despite being a man devoid of Torah.

In total contrast, Yoshiyahu, King of Judah and Yerushalayim, was a tzaddik (righteous person.) In his lifetime, Yoshiyahu made extensive and costly repairs to the Beit Hamikdash structure, he eradicated almost entirely the worship of avoda zara (idolatry) from the land, and put to death the priests of idolatry. He restored the "aliya la'regel" (pilgrimage to Jerusalem). The Tanach relates that during his rule, Pesach was not practiced in such a glorious manner since the days of Yehoshua ben Nun. Yoshiyahu was, like Achav, a staunch nationalist. He was killed in a battle in Megiddo, attempting to prevent the Egyptian army from using *Eretz Yisrael* as a land corridor to do battle with the army of Assyria.

The Gemara in Bava Kama relates that when Yoshiyahu's body was brought home to Yerushalayim, he was escorted by 36,000 pallbearers on the way to his tomb. The question was asked why Achav was paid the same honor? The Gemara replies that in the case of King Yoshiyahu, they placed a sefer Torah on his bed and called out, "This man performed what is written in this Torah."

Both the God-fearing Yoshiyahu and Achav, the denier of Torah,

merited the love of their subjects, for they had fought for the honor of the Jewish people and were protectors of *Eretz Yisrael*.

The prophet Zacharia predicted that in the future, Yerushalayim would be witness to two eulogies as great as those held for King Yoshiyahu and King Achav.

Since the destruction of the Temple and exile of our people, the city of Yerushalayim has not seen funerals as large in attendance and as emotionally charged as the funeral of my brother, Harav Meir Kahana zt"l, and of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin.

Rabin was no Achav, and Harav Meir was no Yoshiyahu, but in their time, both could be compared to those kings of the Tanach.

Rabin denied the Torah, but like Achav, he was a soldier who had defended the country since his youth. He was a beloved leader for many people, and thousands attended his funeral to mourn his death.

Meir was a *talmid chacham* (Torah scholar) and great leader for many people. He brought the plight of the Jews in the Soviet Union from page 54 of the newspaper to page one, which eventually brought down the Soviet Union and opened the gates of freedom to all Jews who wished to leave. There were close to two hundred thousand people at his funeral!

Each one represented radically different outlooks, and their deaths testified to their contrasting beliefs.

Rabin was killed on Motzei Shabbat of parshat Lech Lecha, and Meir was killed close to the following Shabbat, parshat Vayera (in different years).

In parashat Lech Lecha, when Avraham is informed that Sarah will give birth to a son, Avraham replies to God "lu Yishmael

yich'ye le'fanecha" – "May Yishmael live before you". Avraham comes to the defense of Yishmael and requests equal rights for his son born from Hagar, the Egyptian woman.

In parshat Vayera, Sarah demands that Avraham send Yishmael away, saying, (Beraisheet , 21:10)

*"Chase away this maidservant and her son, for this son of the maidservant will not inherit together with my son Yitzchak"*

Sarah instinctively sees the evil and wildness in the soul of Yishmael, and knows that Yitzchak and Yishmael will never be able to live together. God tells Avraham to abide by Sarah's request, for she is correct in declaring that Yishmael and the future descendants of Yitzchak will never be able to live together.

Rabin, who was killed motzei Shabbat of Parshat Lech Lecha, adopted Avraham's position and believed that the two peoples could live together. Toward this end, he returned the PLO murderers living in Tunisia to *Eretz Yisrael* and gave them forty thousand weapons. Harav Meir, whose holy neshama left the world close to parshat Vayera, adopted Sara's divinely affirmed position that the souls of the two are hewn from vastly different worlds – Yitzchak is the ben Torah and worthy to be a korban for God on Mount Moriah, while Yishmael is a "perch adam" who prefers death over life.

God tells Avraham that Sarah is correct in her assessment of his two sons – Yishmael must be sent away, for he cannot live side by side with Yitzchak.

Harav Meir preached and pleaded that the people of Israel should see the future and take steps to prevent the tragedies we are witnessing today. Rabin wanted to give them half of *Eretz Yisrael*, despite the words of our mother Sarah that "the son of this maidservant will not inherit with my son Yitzchak". History has played out according to God's command to Avraham to abide by Sarah's wishes.

May the souls of both these men be united with the living souls in Olam Haba.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5773/2012 Nachman Kahana