

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES

Parshas Lech Lecha

November 3, 2006

Dedicated by all of the Students of Yad Avraham
In Loving Memory of

Devorah Bas Shimon o'h

Mrs. Doris Glick o'h

May Her Neshama Have an Aliyah

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
1. The Prerequisite to Process the Oral Law	2
2. The Jewish People, the Spiritual Heirs of the Patriarchs	3
3. The One Who Truly Loves G'd	4
4. The Heart is Integral to One's Sense of G'd	4
5. The Ramifications of One's Actions	6

Previous Topics

A True Indication of Greatness
Man Being Limited by His Own Limitation
Deciphering the Events Of One's Life
The Key to Succeed in Spirituality

About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
November 3, 2006

B"H

Parshas Lech Lecha

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Prerequisite to Process the Oral Law

Chazal tell us that the only one who has relevance to acquiring the Oral Law is the one who is not consumed by material pursuit. One must be totally dedicated to the study of Torah, to the exclusion of all else, in order to have the capacity to process the Oral Law which is vast and limitless.

The Midrash states, "The covenant that G'd made with the Jewish people was through the Oral Law. As it states, 'Al pee ha'devarim ha'eileh (literally) By the mouth of the words (translated) By these words...' It does not state 'because of these words that are written...' Rather the Torah expresses itself in this specific manner to communicate that the covenant was contingent on the Jewish people accepting the Oral Law. It is difficult to study the Oral Law. There is tremendous sacrifice and pain in its pursuit because of the effort that is required to grasp it. As the prophet Yeshaiyah states, 'The people who walk in darkness saw a great light...' It is only the ones who possess the Talmud/Oral Law (Baalei ha'Talmud) that have relevance to seeing that light. They merit special Divine Assistance from G'd who illuminates their eyes to understand what is permitted and not permitted, what is contaminated and what is pure. He will further illuminate their eyes at the end of time and those who love Him will radiate like the sun at its most intense moment." It is evident from the Midrash that those who do not possess and have an understanding of the Oral Law are condemned to "walk in the dark." Therefore, it is not surprising that those who do not study the Oral Law have difficulty reconciling spirituality with the physical. Their questions only emanate from the lack of clarity.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, "Great is the (study of the) Talmud (Oral Law) because its study leads to actualization..." The reason the study of the Oral Law compels and motivates one to take life impacting

actions is because it illuminates. It is because the one who studies the Talmud will gain clarity that will allow him to appreciate the value of Torah. Consequently he will maximize on every mitzvah opportunity that presents itself in every aspect of his life. However, if one does not study the Talmud, then he will not have a sense of its value. Thus, mitzvah observance will be of a superficial nature.

The Torah tells that the Jewish people were not willing to accept the Torah until G'd held the Mountain over their heads "like a barrel." As the verse states, "**They (Jewish people) stood under the Mountain...**" G'd had said to the Jewish people, "If you accept the Torah it will be good for you. If you do not accept it, there will be your grave." The Midrash asks, "Perhaps the verse is referring to the rejection of the Written Law. This cannot be so, because the verse states, 'The Jewish people had said, 'Naaseh v'nishmah – we will do and we will listen.' Meaning, they unequivocally accepted the Written Law. This is because it does not require great sacrifice and effort to perform the mitzvos of the Torah. G'd had then said to them, 'You must now accept the Oral Law which has within it all of the details and methods of understanding the Written Law.' They had seen that this task was as fierce as death...The only one who will engage in the Oral Law properly is the one who loves G'd with all of his life and his resources..." We see that in order for one to succeed in the study of the Oral law one must truly love G'd to the point that he is willing to forgo all worldly pursuits and only dedicate his life to Torah study.

We recite in the Amidah of the Morning Prayer of Shabbos, "Moshe rejoiced in the gift of his portion: because You called him a faithful servant." Why did Moshe rejoice to such a degree if every aspect of his life was bound and governed by the dictates of the Torah? It is because he was a faithful servant of G'd who lived every moment of his life for G'd. Because the only objective and pursuit in Moshe's life was to serve his Master. It was the ultimate privilege. Nothing mattered outside of doing

His Will. Therefore Moshe's unbound joy emanated from his self-negation to perform the Will of his Master.

If one truly reveres G'd, he will be fully dedicated to performing His Will with the greatest degree of joy and excitement. However, this sense of G'd can only be acquired by sufficiently engaging in the Oral Law which has the innate ability to illuminate one's senses/eyes.

2. The Jewish People, the Spiritual Heirs of the Patriarchs

The Midrash Tanchuma cites a verse in Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs), "A small sister (*achos*) who does not have breasts..." To what is this verse referring? It is referring to Avraham when he was cast into the fiery Kiln of Kasdim by Nimrod. The term "small (*kitana*)" alludes to the fact that when Avraham went into the fire he did so without having experienced any of G'd's miracles. Although he had not yet been a beneficiary of G'd's altering nature on his behalf, he was willing to go into the fire and not succumb to idolatry. Why is Avraham referred to as "*achos*- a sister" in the verse? (*Eecha* in Hebrew means to mend). Avraham was the *achos* to the world because there was no tear in a fabric that he was not able to mend. [There was no issue to which Avraham could not respond and satisfy. He was able to refute every false philosophy and theology within society and establish truth/monotheism. He dispelled their heretical views – thus mending the fabric of existence as the expert mender who darns the fabric]. Why is Avraham referred to as the one who "has no breasts" Because at this time, Avraham did not yet have children."

The Midrash continues, "Avraham is like a wall upon which I (G'd) will build upon it an elaborate edifice of silver. He is like a wall that is able to repel many wars. If Avraham was willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of G'd then he would merit to be the father of the Jewish people... However, if Avraham would be weak similar to a tablet of cedar wood, that a design on it could easily be defaced – meaning he would not be willing to give his life for the sake of G'd... then he would not have had any value. Avraham said to G'd, "I am like the wall. I am willing to give my life to Sanctify Your Name- not only myself... but also his grandchildren – Chananya, Meshael, and Azaria, and the generation of Rebbe Chananya ben Tradion and his colleagues (The Ten Martyrs) – they will give their lives to sanctify Your Name... It was because of Avraham's selfless sacrifice for G'd that he emerged from the fiery kiln unscathed." Avraham understood his own depth of dedication to G'd and his willingness to give his

life for the sanctification of G'd's Name. However, how was Avraham able guarantee that his descendants would be equally willing to give their lives for the sanctification of His Name?

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos states, "There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham." When the Mishna refers to the fact that Avraham was tested with ten tests, it states "Avraham, our Patriarch was tested with ten tests." Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl in his work *Ruach Chaim* (commentary on Pirkei Avos) asks, "Why is Avraham referred to as Avraham "our Patriarch" in the context of the ten tests?" He answers that every one of the ten tests in which Avraham had succeeded, he had inculcated into his own spirituality a capacity to deal with all the experiences that he had personally encountered. Thus, he transmitted his spiritual profile to his future descendants. This is the reason Avraham is referred to as Avraham "our Patriarch" regarding the ten tests. Every Jew until the end of time will possess the unique spiritual abilities that Avraham had infused within himself. The reason every Jew throughout history had and will have the ability to give his life for the sake of G'd is because Avraham had given his life to sanctify G'd's Name in the fiery Kiln of Kasdim. Even the ordinary Jew, being a spiritual heir of Avraham, is endowed with that same ability. Because Avraham was able to leave behind his community and to go to the Land of Israel, as he was instructed by G'd, we find that Jewish people throughout history, suddenly have a yearning to go to the Promised Land.

The Torah states in the Portion of Haazinu, "**...Yaakov is the rope of his inheritance ...**" Sforno explains, "Why is Yaakov referred to as 'the rope?' Not only was Yaakov the servant of G'd but also his children were dedicated to His service. Yaakov's devout righteousness was passed onto his descendants. (Meaning, every one of his descendants have the potential to be righteous). However regarding the nations of the world even if one were to find a righteous gentile, his spiritual accomplishment/righteousness would be limited to himself – not to be passed on. It would not extend to his future generations." Every Jew, because he is a descendant of Yaakov, our Patriarch, has relevance to being devoutly righteous in his service of G'd.

The Patriarchs, who are the foundation of the Jewish people, had inculcated within themselves unique spiritual capacities that are inherited by their descendants. Therefore, every Jew must understand that he has relevance to all of the accomplishments that the Patriarchs had achieved.

3. *The One Who Truly Loves G'd*

The Midrash states regarding Avraham our Patriarch, "One who is meticulous regarding mitzvos, his reward is limitless." One would think that the Midrash is referring to the meticulous observance of mitzvos; however, it is actually referring to something beyond this. The Midrash continues, "We find that Avraham was meticulous regarding mitzvos. Because of this, he is identified as 'the beloved of G'd.' As it states in Yeshaya, 'They are the progeny of Avraham, my beloved...' Even the rabbinic law of eruv tavshilin was observed in the household of Avraham. As it states, 'He observed My Commandments, My Dictates, and My Toros...' Are there many Torahs? We know that there is only one Torah as it states, 'There is one Torah that shall be yours...' Why then is the Torah referred to in the plural? It is to tell us that Avraham had observed the Torah and was meticulous in its observance."

Avraham not only observed the mitzvos of the Torah, he established fences to safeguard it. One who truly loves G'd expresses his love by establishing safeguards to ensure that the Torah should not be violated, although these fences create a more restrictive lifestyle. Avraham, who had lived his life in this manner, was considered 'the beloved of G'd.'

Chazal tell us based on a verse in the Song of Songs, "The words of the Rabbis (Chachamim) are even more beloved than the wine of the Torah (to G'd)." Meaning, G'd values rabbinic laws/fences, which are meant to protect the Torah, even more than the Torah itself. Why is this so? Rabbeinu Yonah in his work *The Gates of Repentance*, explains that the pivotal mitzvah that touches upon every aspect of Torah (613 Mitzvos) is "yiraas shamayim (fear of heaven)." As the Torah states, "**You shall fear Hashem, Your G'd,**" All mitzvah observance is an expression of one's fear/reverence of G'd. When one performs a mitzvah, he is only doing so because G'd had commanded him to do so.

Rabbeinu Yonah states, "All the mitzvos of the Torah are the equivalent of appetizers (parparaos) to the fear of heaven." The Rabbis legislated fences only to protect one from inadvertently transgressing the Torah. They create a context which distances the person from violating the Torah Law. For instance, the Torah prohibits the cooking of meat in milk. The Rabbis established a fence that one is not permitted to allow any level of association between milk and meat – although it is not within the context of cooking. Thus, when one observes a

Rabbinic fence, because it is not intrinsically something that is forbidden, it is considered a greater demonstration of his fear/reverence for G'd. However the Torah laws themselves, because they are the actual Word of G'd, their observance does not demonstrate the same degree of reverence. If fences were not legislated by the Rabbis, the Jew over time would inevitably transgress the Torah law itself. Although initially it would be an inadvertent violation, over time it would ultimately lead to a negation and nullification of the Torah.

The Gemara tells us that the only day of the year that satan is allowed to prosecute the Jewish people is Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment. However, the Jewish people are able to silence his prosecution with the blowing of the Shofar. If Rosh Hashanah were to coincide with Shabbos, the Rabbis legislated a fence which prohibits its blowing. The Rabbis were concerned that if one were permitted to sound the Shofar on Shabbos, it may lead a Jew who is not proficient in it blowing to transport it four cubits in public domain (which is a Torah violation). Therefore, despite the unfathomable value of the Shofar, the Rabbis forbade it so as not to transgress the Word of G'd/ Shabbos. This is the ultimate expression of reverence and love for G'd.

It is the one who is "meticulous" in his mitzvah observance that is considered "beloved" by G'd. For example, regarding tefilin, being meticulous goes beyond ensuring that they are Kosher and are worn in the proper manner. The Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) states that when one dons the tefillin of the hand and the head, one must dedicate his heart and mind to G'd. This is a level of meticulousness that is an expression of one's love for G'd.

Maharal of Prague explains that the love of G'd and His reverence emanate from the same source. It is the recognition of G'd's Omnipotence and All-encompassing Essence. When one recognizes and appreciates the awesomeness of G'd, it will evoke from him the greatest reverence and love for Him. Every individual has relevance to demonstrating his love for G'd by creating personal fences/safeguards in areas where he is concerned that he may violate.

4. *The Heart is Integral to One's Sense of G'd*

The Gemara asks, "At what age did Avraham, our Patriarch, recognize his Maker?" One opinion is that Avraham recognized G'd at the age of 52. The other

opinion is that Avraham was only three years old. The Midrash states, “You should see and understand the special love that Avraham had for his Maker. At the age of three he recognized his Creator. How do we know that he was only three years old? The verse states, **‘He heeded (eikev) My Voice....’** Meaning, Avraham observed all of the mitzvos. The numerical value of ‘Eikev’ is 172. The Torah tells us that Avraham observed the Torah/recognized G’d for 172 years. Since Avraham lived to the age of 175, we can conclude that his recognition of G’d commenced at the age of three. Because he recognized G’d at such an early age, it was an indication of his love for his Creator.”

The Torah tells us that after the Great Flood, G’d entered into a covenant with existence that He would not destroy the world again with a Great Flood. This is because, **“The inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain ‘from his youth’ to mean that from the moment a child is cast from his mother’s womb, his heart is already inclined to evil. We see from the words of the Torah that the evil inclination is associated with the heart of man. King Solomon writes, “It is the wise heart that acquires mitzvos.” The Gemara in Tractate Sotah tells us that King Solomon is referring to Moshe, who sought out the remains of Yosef while the Jewish people were borrowing the wealth of their masters prior to leaving Egypt. Moshe was not inclined to do as his Jewish brethren because his heart was “wise.” One is drawn in various directions in life because of what is in his heart.

The Torah states, **“At the end of time G’d will circumcise the covering of your hearts (orlaas leivavchem)...”** Ramban explains that the “covering of the heart” is referring to the interest and desire that exists in the heart of man to pursue evil. The essence of man’s heart has a natural sense to seek out goodness; however, because it is covered/blocked that sense is lost and therefore it lusts evil. Avraham had special love for G’d that caused him to sense His Presence at the age of three. There was something in the heart of Avraham that drew him towards truth. Throughout our prayers we beseech G’d to purify our hearts and to instill within it love for Him. In the first paragraph of the Shema, the verse states, “You shall love G’d with all of your heart.” The word “heart” in Hebrew is normally spelled with one “bais – libcha.” However in the Shema, it is written with a double “bais – levavecha” which indicates that the Torah is speaking about two hearts. The Mishna in Tractate Berachos explains this to mean that one must serve G’d with both inclinations- the positive and the negative in

order to channel and subordinate the negative in a positive direction.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos states that the evil inclination is similar to a fly that goes between the left and the right chambers of the heart. The left side of the heart represents negativity and the right side represents the positive. Reb Chaim of Volozhin explains that the evil inclination of man often comes in the guise of the good. It convinces the individual to perform a mitzvah that will ultimately bring about the spiritual decline of the individual. For example, one may think that he should study Torah throughout the night; however, he would be effected negatively because he will not have sufficient energy to function properly the next day. Although it is a mitzvah to study Torah for extended periods of time, in this situation it is not in the best interest of the person. Therefore one needs to have the clarity to perceive the true consequences of his actions.

There is an opinion in the Gemara in Tractate Pesachim that states that the only way one can fulfill the mitzvah of disposing of chometz (leavened products) before Passover is through burning. This is based on a logical deduction of Kal v’ Chomer. While the burning of chometz is a stringency, because it is limiting the means of disposal, it will ultimately lead to a situation where one cannot perform the mitzvah at all. For example, if one where not able to locate firewood, the mitzvah would not be fulfilled. Thus, the Kal v’chomer is not valid. This is similar to the evil inclination presenting itself in the guise of a mitzvah, when in fact it may lead one to transgress the Torah.

Although Avraham was born into a world that was devoid of G’d’s Presence, as the verse states, **“G’d was known only as the G’d of heaven”** through his own initiative Avraham caused G’d to be known as “the G’d of all the world. (even the terrestrial level).” This is because he recognized G’d and introduced Him into existence. This was only possible because of the special love that he possessed in his heart for G’d. It is because of this love that he was able to overcome all the seemingly insurmountable situations to which he was confronted. In order for one to be able to deal with the difficult issues of life, one must have a sense of love in his heart for G’d. The only way to activate this love is through the study of Torah.

5. The Ramifications of One's Actions

The Torah tells us that during the time of Avraham, our Patriarch, there was a war between the Four Kings and the Five Kings, in which the Four kings were victorious. After the victory, Lot, Avraham's nephew, was taken captive by the Four mighty kings. An escapee who had fled from the battle informed Avraham that his nephew had been taken captive. Avraham immediately rallied his men to go to battle against the Four kings, to save Lot. Chazal tell us that the escapee was Og, the King of Bashan. He had only informed Avraham of his nephew's capture so that he should go to battle and be killed, thus allowing him to take Avraham's wife Sarah as his own. This was the sinister motive behind Og's informing Avraham about his nephew.

When Moshe was told to go to battle against Og, the Torah states, "**G'd said to Moshe, 'Do not be afraid...'**" Although Moshe had performed revealed miracles in Egypt, defeated Pharaoh and taken the Jewish people out of Egypt, split the Sea, and had ascended to heaven and received the Torah, he was nevertheless fearful of Og, the giant. Why should a man of this spiritual dimension and stature fear Og? Moshe was concerned that the merit that Og had as a result of facilitating Avraham's rescue of Lot was still in effect and would protect him. Because he assisted Avraham, Og merited living hundreds of years. It was because Moshe understood that the merit of Og was formidable. If that merit was still in effect, Moshe was concerned that he would not be able to defeat Og. G'd assured Moshe that he had no reason to be afraid because that merit was depleted. If Og was the epitome of evil and his informing Avraham of Lot's capture was motivated by a sinister intent, why did he merit such great reward?

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin states, "The grandchildren of Sancherev studied Torah in Bnei Brak..." Sancherev was the Assyrian king who had destroyed most of the Jewish people by exiling the Ten Tribes of Israel. He had come with an enormous army to lay siege upon Jerusalem. It was only because of a miracle that his entire army was destroyed in one night by the archangel Gabriel. His grandchildren were Shmaya and Naftalion who were the teachers of Hillel and Shami. How did someone who was so evil and wanted to destroy the Jewish people merit having such special grandchildren? The Gemara states, "The grandchildren of Haman, the evil one, studied Torah in Bnei Brak..." Haman was the embodiment of evil because he was a descendant of Amalek. He issued a

decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child. The verse states, "My (G'd) Throne cannot be complete until Amalek is obliterated..." Nevertheless, he merited having grandchildren who converted and studied Torah in Bnei Brak. Why did he merit this?

Although Og's intent and motive was sinister, what was the ultimate result of his informing Avraham? After Avraham and his servant Eliezer, miraculously defeated the Four Mighty Kings by themselves and rescued Lot. The nations of the world were awed by this victory. It was clear to them that Avraham's accomplishment came about through miracle because he was favored by G'd. Because Avraham was revered by all he was coronated as the "father of all nations." This event was the ultimate in kiddush Hashem (sanctification of G'd's Name). Og's intent was irrelevant. Factually he was the catalyst to bring about such a level of Kiddush Hashem- thus, he merited such a long life.

The destruction of the camp of Sancherev was a revealed miracle. The Gemara tells us that Sancherev's cavalry was so vast that the Jordan river dried from the number of horses crossing it. Chizkiyahu, the King of Yehudah, had given the Jewish people an ultimatum by placing a sword along side a Torah scroll. He had said to them, "You can either live by the Torah or be pierced by the sword." It was because of this that the Jewish people were fully engaged in Torah study to the degree that even the women and children were fully proficient in the laws pertaining to spiritual purity. The entire world witnessed the Kiddush Hashem of the destruction of the camp of Sancherev while the Jewish people sat in the study halls fully engaged in Torah. Although Sancherev's intent was evil, he acted as the catalyst to bring about a unique level of Kiddush Hashem. This is why he merited having such special grandchildren who mentored Hillel and Shami.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that Achashverosh, the Persian King, ruled the world supreme. When Haman, his viceroy, suggested that a decree be issued that all the Jewish people should be annihilated it was a guaranteed death sentence. However at the final moment before the decree was to take effect, the decree miraculously reversed itself and it was Haman and the Amalekites that were destroyed. Rather than being killed, Mordachai and the Jewish people were promoted to great prominence. As a result of this miracle, the Jewish people recommitted themselves to Torah and accepted the Word of G'd out of love for Him. They had risen to another level of spirituality that even surpassed that of the Sinai event when they had accepted the Torah under coercion. The consequence of Haman's evil plot was an

unprecedented Kiddush Hashem. Therefore he merited having grandchildren who studied Torah in Bnei Brak. However, since the miracle of Purim was a concealed miracle, unlike that of the destruction of the army of Sancherev, the merit of Haman was to a lesser degree because it only states that his grandchildren studied Torah in Bnei Brak. In contrast, Sancherev's grandchildren effected the future of the entire Jewish people because they were the mentors of Hillel and Shami.

We see that even if Kiddush Hashem is brought about through the most evil people with sinister intent, they are deserving of great reward because of the immeasurable value it has to the world. The Gemara in Tractate Sotah tells us that if one performs a mitzvah it brings about something that is 500 times more powerful than something that results from evil. If one brings about a Kiddush Hashem with the proper intent how much greater will the result be compared to that brought about by one with a sinister intent? Therefore if we bring about a sanctification of G'd's Name, we will merit unfathomable spiritual reward for ourselves and our family.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30- 7:25 am	Halacha
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Avodah Zorah
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

- 11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Taanis**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street
- 12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
Between E.51st and E.52st

Tuesday

- 12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

- 11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Taanis**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street
- 1:00—2:00 pm **Derech Hashem**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

- 10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**
Location: Yad Avraham
- 12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Taanis** Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL)