



November 8-9, 2024

ח חשון תשפ"ה

Candle Lighting 4:36 PM

**Parashat: Lech Lecha** לך לך Genesis 12:1-17:27

Stone - p 54 Hertz - p 45 Etz Hayim - p 69

**Haftarah:** Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Stone - p 1133 Hertz - p 60 Etz Hayim - p 95

Join us following services  
for *kiddush* sponsored by the Congregation

**Shabbat** ends 5:35 PM

## **TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION**

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Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director - traditionalcong@gmail.com

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Sunday - 8:30 AM

Tuesday - 6:30 PM

**Shabbat** - 9:30 AM

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## On This Week's Torah Portion - Lech Lecha

The women in Abraham's family were abducted (or nearly abducted) no less than four times. Let us explore these abductions and the lessons they contain.

Abraham and Sarah were living in Canaan (which was to become the Land of Israel). G-d brought a famine upon the land, and because of its severity, Abraham and Sarah made their way down to Egypt. Upon their arrival, Abraham suddenly recognized his wife's beauty, and so asked Sarah to refer to him as her brother, so that the Egyptians wouldn't kill him in order to get to her.

So it was. As soon as they entered, the Egyptians gazed upon Sarah's beauty and brought her to Pharaoh, sparing Abraham's life. The king gifted him with sheep, oxen and slaves for being the "brother" of Sarah. That night G-d afflicted Pharaoh and his household with a plague, and so Pharaoh released Sarah and sent her and Abraham on their way.

A deeper interpretation of this tragic event is that Abraham and Sarah were laying down the foundation for future events that would occur to the Jewish people. Sarah's captivity foreshadows the Jewish people's enslavement in Egypt. The affliction brought upon Pharaoh and his household represents the plagues that G-d would bring down on Egypt. Finally, the gifts of cattle and slaves given to Abraham signify the riches with which the Jewish people would leave Egypt.

Additionally, their going down to Egypt did not only not impact their spirituality, but on the contrary, they affected their surroundings and liberated the G-dly sparks trapped within the immorality of the land. This in turn empowered the Jewish people to do the same when they were enslaved in Egypt.

Sarah was abducted yet again, shortly after the destruction of Sodom and its sister cities, when Abraham and Sarah sojourned in Gerar. This time Abraham didn't ask permission from Sarah; he simply introduced himself as her brother to Abimelech of Gerar, king of the Philistines.

Consequently, Abimelech took Sarah into his chambers that night. G-d then appeared to him in a dream and threatened that if he did not let Sarah go, he would die, and he and his servants were smitten with plagues. Abimelech was frightened, and confronted Abraham as to why he deceived him, to which Abraham responded, "I thought that surely there is no fear of G-d in this place." Abimelech then presented cattle and slaves to Abraham, released Sarah, and pleaded with Abraham to pray to G-d to remove the plague from among his people.

Shortly after this, a miracle occurred, and at the age of 90 Sarah conceived and gave birth to Isaac.

The famous biblical commentator Rashi explains: "Scripture places this section after the preceding one to teach you that whoever prays for mercy on behalf of another, when he himself is in need of the very thing for which he prays on the other's behalf, will himself first receive a favorable response from G-d."

And so, it was because of the abduction, and Abraham's prayers on behalf of Abimelech and his people to be healed from the plague, that Sarah was ultimately healed from her barren state and conceived a child.

This story demonstrates the power of selflessness. Abraham surely had every right to be incensed by Abimelech's actions and refuse to pray for him. Nevertheless, he put his emotions aside and pleaded to G-d on his behalf, which led to Sarah's greatest wish, of having a child, coming true.

Almost exactly the same scenario repeats itself in the next generation, with Abraham's son Isaac and his wife, Rebecca. Isaac and Rebecca were dwelling in Canaan until a famine hit, prompting them to seek out sustenance in the land of Gerar. Upon arrival, Isaac was fearful that the people of the land would murder him on account of his wife's beauty, and referred to Rebecca as his sister.

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However, unlike what transpired to Abraham, Abimelech did not kidnap Isaac's wife. He suspected that Isaac, being over 60 years old, was indeed married. So that night he spied on Isaac and Rebecca, and saw that they were in fact a couple. Then, just as with Abraham, Abimelech confronted Isaac and accused him of misleading him. Isaac justified his actions on the basis that he feared for his life. Abimelech charged his subjects not to harm Isaac or Rebecca.

Isaac then settled in the land and reaped bountiful produce. G-d blessed him, and he grew wealthy and acquired much cattle and livestock.

While the above episodes had happy endings, this was not the case for Dinah, daughter of Jacob. This story is also unique, in that she was not married at the time. Here is what transpired:

Shortly after the big showdown between Jacob and Esau, Jacob and his family journeyed to Shechem, where they set up camp. Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob, used this opportunity to visit the daughters of the land.

Shechem, son of Chamor, who was the chief of the city of Shechem, set his eyes upon Dinah and forced himself upon her. He then fell deeply in love with Dinah and wished to marry her. News of this incident reached Jacob's ears. His only daughter had been defiled, and he was in anguish. Chamor approached Jacob and requested that Dinah be given to Shechem as a wife. Moreover, he suggested that the people of Shechem and Jacob's family should intermarry and become one people.

Jacob's children were angered by Shechem's actions, as such a cruel act was considered immoral by all. The sons of Jacob responded with guile, stating that Jacob's family could never marry the Shechemites as long as the men of Shechem remained uncircumcised.

Determined to marry Dinah, Shechem arranged that all the men in the city be circumcised. When the people of Shechem were weak and frail after performing this operation, Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi seized the opportunity to execute all the men of the city. How did such a terrible event come about?

Let us rewind a little. When Jacob and his family met with Esau, the verse mentions that Jacob arose during the night with his two wives and eleven sons, curiously making no mention of Dinah. Rashi explains that Jacob had Dinah hidden and locked away, lest Esau lay eyes on her and take her as his wife. As a result, Jacob was punished through his daughter being defiled at the hands of Shechem. What a curious thing. The hallmark and pride of the Jewish woman is her *tzniut*—her modesty. Yet we see here that Jacob is reprimanded for an act of *tzniut*. In hiding Dinah away from the rebellious Esau, what did Jacob do wrong?

The Midrash conveys the following answer:

Where was Dinah? Jacob placed her in a box and locked her inside. Jacob thought to himself: this wicked person (Esau) will cast his eyes on her; he should not linger his gaze upon her and take her from me. . . . G-d said to Jacob, "You prevented kindness from your brother. If she (Dinah) would have married him, she would not have been abducted."

So what was this act of kindness that Jacob abstained from giving to his brother Esau?

Dinah possessed the unique potential to affect and influence her surroundings. This is evident from the text itself: "Now Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, *went out to visit the daughters of the land.*" Dinah could have utilized her immense spiritual abilities to positively influence Esau; however, Jacob kept her isolated, and as a result was punished.

Ultimately, we cannot understand why Dinah needed to suffer the way she did. However, a lesson we can take away from this episode is: when endowed with the gift to create an impact on people and the world, we cannot afford to squander this blessing. Rather, it must be utilized in order to turn this world into a dwelling place for G-d.

***Shabbat shalom,***  
**Rabbi Dovie Schochet**

*Rabbi Schochet is a teacher at Hasmonean High School and freelance author.  
He currently resides in London with his wife and child.*

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***Ruth Rabbah 11:7***

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## **PRAYER**

I am a Jew because Judaism demands  
no abdication of my mind.

*I am a Jew because Judaism asks every possible  
sacrifice of my soul.*

I am a Jew because wherever there are tears  
and suffering the Jew weeps.

*I am a Jew because whenever the cry of  
despair is heard the Jew hopes.*

I am a Jew because the message of Judaism  
is the oldest and the newest.

*I am a Jew because the promise of Judaism  
is a universal promise.*

I am a Jew because, for the Jew, the world is  
not finished; human beings will complete it.

*I am a Jew because, for the Jew, humanity is  
not fully created; mortals are creating it.*

I am a Jew because Judaism places human  
life above Judaism itself.

*I am a Jew because, above the individual,  
Judaism places the oneness of God.*

**Edmund Fleg (adapted)**

## **THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE**

To try is to risk failure. But risk must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, and is nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, live, or love. Chained by his addictions, he's a slave. He has forfeited his greatest trait, and that is his individual freedom. Only the person who risks is free.

**Leo Buscaglia**