

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parasha Lech Lecha
November 5, 2022 *** 11 Cheshvan, 5783

[Lech Lecha in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3161/jewish/Lech-Lecha-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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G-d speaks to Abram, commanding him, “Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you.” There, G-d says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife, Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of a one G-d.

A famine forces the first Jew to depart for Egypt, where beautiful Sarai is taken to Pharaoh’s palace; Abram escapes death because they present themselves as brother and sister. A plague prevents the Egyptian king from touching her, and convinces him to return her to Abram and to compensate the brother-revealed-as-husband with gold, silver and cattle.

Back in the land of Canaan, Lot separates from Abram and settles in the evil city of Sodom, where he falls captive when the mighty armies of Chedorlaomer and his three allies conquer the five cities of the Sodom Valley. Abram sets out with a small band to rescue his nephew, defeats the four kings, and is blessed by Malki-Zedek the king of Salem (Jerusalem).

G-d seals the Covenant Between the Parts with Abram, in which the exile and persecution (galut) of the people of Israel is foretold, and the Holy Land is bequeathed to them as their eternal heritage.

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant Hagar. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly; an angel convinces her to return, and tells her that her son will father a populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram’s eighty-sixth year.

Thirteen years later, G-d changes Abram’s name to Abraham (“father of multitudes”), and Sarai’s to Sarah (“princess”), and promises that a son will be born to them; from this child, whom they should call Isaac (“will laugh”), will stem the great nation with which G-d will establish His special bond. Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and his descendants as a “sign of the covenant between Me and you.” Abraham immediately complies, circumcising himself and all the males of his household.

[Haftarah in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/579794/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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The haftarah for this week discusses Abraham's journey to the land of Canaan

at G-d's behest, and touches upon Abraham's miraculous battle against the four kings, both of which are described in this week's Torah reading.

The prophet Isaiah addresses Israel's complaint: ""My way [of serving G-d] has been ignored by the Lord, and from my G-d, my judgment passes [unrewarded]."" Isaiah reminds Israel of the Creator's greatness. The time will come when "He will give the tired strength, and to him who has no strength, He will increase strength. Youths shall become tired and weary, and young men shall stumble, but those who put their hope in the Lord shall renew [their] vigor, they shall raise wings as eagles; they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not tire." Nevertheless, "there is no comprehension of His wisdom," and as such, at times we cannot understand why He chooses to delay the reward of the righteous.

The haftorah then turns its attention to the idolatrous nations of the world. Isaiah reminds them of Abraham's greatness, how after arriving in Canaan he pursued and defeated four mighty kings. "The islands saw and feared; the ends of the earth quaked." Nevertheless, the nations who witnesses these miracles did not abandon their ways. "The [idol] craftsman strengthened the smith, the one who smoothes [the idol] with the hammer strengthened the one who wields the sledge hammer; the one who glues its coating says, "It is good," and he strengthened it with nails that it should not move..."

G-d promises the Jewish nation to reward them for their loyalty to G-d. "Do not fear for I am with you; be not discouraged for I am your G-d. . . Behold all those incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded; those who quarreled with you shall be as naught and be lost."

Food For Thought

[Journey of the Generations: Lech Lecha by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l](https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/lech-lecha/journey-of-the-generations/)
<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/lech-lecha/journey-of-the-generations/>

Mark Twain said it most pithily:

When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.

Whether Freud was right or wrong about the Oedipus complex, there is surely this much truth to it, that the power and pain of adolescence is that we seek to define ourselves as different, individuated, someone other than our parents. When we were young they were the sustaining presence in our lives, our security, our stability, the source that grounds us in this world.

The first and deepest terror we have as very young children is separation anxiety: the absence of parents, especially of the mother. Young children will play happily

so long as their mother or care-giver is within sight. Absent that, and there is panic. We are too young to venture into the world on our own. It is precisely the stable, predictable presence of parents in our early years that gives us a basic sense of trust in life.

But then comes the time, as we approach adulthood, when we have to learn to make our own way in the world. Those are the years of searching and in some cases, rebellion. They are what make adolescence so fraught. The Hebrew word for youth – the root is n-a-r – has these connotations of ‘awakening’ and ‘shaking’. We begin to define ourselves by reference to our friends, our peer-group, rather than our family. Often there is tension between the generations.

The literary theorist Harold Bloom wrote two fascinating books, *The Anxiety of Influence* and *Maps of Misreading*,^[1] in which, in Freudian style, he argued that strong poets make space for themselves by deliberately misinterpreting or misunderstanding their predecessors. Otherwise – if you were really in awe of the great poets that came before you – you would be stymied by a sense that everything that could be said has been said, and better than you could possibly do. Creating the space we need to be ourselves often involves an adversarial relationship to those who came before us, and that includes our parents.

One of the great discoveries that tends to come with age is that, having spent what seems like a lifetime of running away from our parents, we have become very much like them – and the further away we ran, the closer we became. Hence the truth in Mark Twain’s insight. It needs time and distance to see their wisdom, to see how much we owe our parents, and to acknowledge how much of them lives on in us.

The way the Torah does this in relation to Abraham (or Abram as he was then called) is remarkable in its subtlety. *Lech Lecha*, and indeed Jewish history, begins with the words, “God said to Abraham, ‘Go from your land, your birthplace, and your father’s house to a land I will show you’” (Gen. 12:1). This is the boldest beginning of any account of a life in the Hebrew Bible. It seems to come from nowhere. The Torah gives us no portrait of Abraham’s childhood, his youth, his relationship with the other members of his family, how he came to marry Sarah, or the qualities of character that made God single him out to become the initiator of what ultimately turned out to be the greatest revolution in the religious history of humankind, what is called nowadays Abrahamic monotheism.

It was this biblical silence that led to the midrashic tradition almost all of us learned as children, that Abraham broke the idols in his father’s house. This is Abraham the Revolutionary, the iconoclast, the man of new beginnings who overturned everything his father stood for. This is, if you like, Freud’s Abraham.

Perhaps it is only as we grow older that we are able to go back and read the story again, and realise the significance of the passage at the end of the previous parsha. It says this:

Terach took his son Avram, and his grandson Lot, son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Avram's wife, and together they set out from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Canaan. But when they arrived at Harran, they settled there.

Gen. 11:31

It turns out, in other words, that Abraham left his father's house long after he had left his land and his birthplace. His birthplace was in Ur, in what is today southern Iraq, but he only separated from his father in Harran, in what is now northern Syria. Terach, Abraham's father, accompanied him for the first half of his journey. He went with his son, at least part of the way.

What actually happened? There are two possibilities. The first is that Abraham received his call in Ur. His father Terach then agreed to go with him, intending to accompany him to the land of Canaan, though he did not complete the journey, perhaps because of age. The second is that the call came to Abraham in Harran, in which case his father had already begun the journey on his own initiative by leaving Ur. Either way, the break between Abraham and his father was far less dramatic than we first thought.

I have argued elsewhere^[2] that biblical narrative is far more subtle than we usually take it to be. It is deliberately written to be understood at different levels at different stages in our moral growth. There is a surface narrative. But there is also, often, a deeper story that we only come to notice and understand when we have reached a certain level of maturity (I call this the concealed counter-narrative). Genesis 11-12 is a classic example.

When we are young we hear the enchanting – indeed empowering – story of Abraham breaking his father's idols, with its message that a child can sometimes be right and a parent wrong, especially when it comes to spirituality and faith. Only much later in life do we hear the far deeper truth – hidden in the guise of a simple genealogy at the end of the previous parsha – that Abraham was actually completing a journey his father began.

There is a line in the book of Joshua – we read it as part of the Haggadah on Seder night – that says:

In the past your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River, including Terach the father of Avraham and Nahor. They worshiped other gods.

Joshua 24:2

So there was idolatry in Abraham's family background. But Genesis 11 says that it was Terach who took Abraham from Ur – not Abraham who took Terach – to go to the land of Canaan. There was no immediate and radical break between father and son.

Indeed it is hard to imagine how it could have been otherwise. Avram – Abraham's original name – means "mighty father". Abraham himself was chosen "so that he may direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by

doing what is right and just...” (Gen. 18:19) – that is, he was chosen to be a model parent. How could a child who rejected the way of his father become a father of children who would not reject his way in turn?[3] It makes more sense to say that Terach already had doubts about idolatry and it was he who inspired Abraham to go further, spiritually and physically. Abraham continued a journey his father had begun, thereby helping Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson, to chart their own ways of serving God – the same God but encountered in different ways.

Which brings us back to Mark Twain. Often we begin by thinking how different we are from our parents. It takes time for us to appreciate how much they helped us become the people we are. Even when we thought we were running away, we were in fact continuing their journey. Much of what we are is because of what they were.

[1] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[2] Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God’s Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Schocken Books, 2017).

[3] Rashi (to Gen. 11:31) says it was to conceal the break between son and father that the Torah records the death of Terach before God’s call to Abraham. However, see Ramban ad loc.

Walking Free: Democracy and Incarceration by Rabbi David Dunn

<https://truah.org/resources/parshat-lech-lecha-david-dunn-bauer-moraltorah/>

Why does God call Abram to travel, why use the phrasing “Lech lecha” (literally, “walk towards yourself”), and why does Abram say yes?

To those familiar questions, I’m adding one that I have never posed before: What if Abram hadn’t been able to leave?

In answer to the first question, a famous and comedic midrash upstages the Torah’s laconic introduction of Abram at the end of Parshat Noach. Abram mocks customers at his father’s idol factory. He asks the age of one, and when told the man is 50, responds, “Woe to such a man! You are 50 years old and would worship a day-old object?!” (Bereshit Rabbah, 38:13) God chooses Abram for his skepticism of factory-made idol-worship and his curiosity about the possibility of a single, eternal, living God.

In a midrash on the opening verse of Lech Lecha (Bereshit Rabbah 39:2), Rabbi Berekiah adds poignancy and beauty to our understanding of Abram’s character, emphasizing not only Abram’s potential, but also the absolute necessity that Abram leave home and travel with God.

What did Abraham resemble? A phial of myrrh closed with a tight-fitting lid and lying in a corner, so that its fragrance was not disseminated; as soon as it was taken up, however, its fragrance was disseminated. Similarly, the Blessed Holy One said to Abraham: ‘Travel from place to place and thy name will become great in the world’: hence, ‘Lech lecha.’

God senses an irresistible appeal to Abram’s spirit that, to be appreciated, needs to be freed from its constrictive surroundings. Abram isn’t at home in Ur, his spirit is

imprisoned there, sealed up and cast away as if worthless. I don't picture an abandoned bottle of perfume. I picture Abram himself, lying asleep under a blanket, in the dark corner of an airless cell.

If the midrashim tell us why God calls Abram, the Izhbicer Rebbe (1801-1854, Poland) gives a strikingly beautiful explanation of why Abram agrees to go:

Abraham Avinu wanted to know just where the essence of his life was intensely joined to God and how far it reached. Thus God responded to him, "to the land which I will show you," meaning that you are joined to me in a place called "which I will show you." For God has no end, God's endless light will continually increase within you, and this you will find in the land of Israel.

Abram senses the immensity of God but doesn't yet grasp the truth of God's infinitude. More than that, Abram knows there is more of God and of himself to be experienced. Abram feels his own unrealized potential. All that curiosity, that religiosity, that intoxicatingly fragrant essence of life — what if it had to remain trapped in a place where it could never be freed and his potential never fulfilled? I am profoundly touched by these depictions of Abram's and God's mutual yearning, but I want to point out that Abram's acceptance of God's offer is an exercise of his patriarchal privilege. He not only is free to move (literally, to walk) wherever he chooses, he gets to take his whole family and entourage with him. He can leave home yet take with him all of home's comforts. When it becomes prudent to separate from someone, from his nephew Lot, Abram can do so with ease and generosity.

Of all the places I have served in a rabbinic capacity, the maximum-security prison where I serve now is the most religious. As a chaplain, I teach Jewish text, practice, and tradition to anyone who is curious. I work in the most racially, religiously, and culturally diverse community I have ever encountered. Without irony, I say that prison is full of Abrahams, people (mostly men of color) of humor, curiosity, and awareness of the immensity of God. To learn with them is to encounter extraordinary imaginations and intellects, to inhale the ravishing fragrance of myrrh. This precious essence is sealed not in a fragile phial but behind steel, shatterproof glass, and razor-wire. I see prisoners who care about the good of the world. I have learned that prisoners are not their crimes. Americans need to know that prisoners are not the same at age 50 or 60 that they are at 18 or 23. They change, but remain prisoners, unable to move. What if Abram had been called but simply couldn't leave?

In the Torah, God renews Abram's vitality and Sarai's fertility in old age. In modern-day America, many people whose essence of life we sorely need to encounter and nurture will die before they can bless the world with their beauty. It's called death by incarceration.

We celebrate Abram's call, Lech lecha. Walk towards yourself. Walk towards the

essence of your spirit and the light of the Holy One within you. I feel the irony of that call to a random idol-maker's son, when we as Americans are conditioned to bristle with fear or suspicion when we hear "Let him walk" said about someone in prison.

When we vote, in this election or in any future one, we need to press candidates on prison reform. We need to elect candidates who will end mandatory minimum sentences, who will increase funds for education, treatment, and support of the incarcerated. We, as a people, need to pay attention to the individuals we imprison, to stop warehousing them. We need to reverse the process of mass incarceration and fund the process that returns citizens to their lives.

I believe without a doubt that countless Abrahams are imprisoned here, have done their teshuvah, and that many have heard the call of the God of peace, justice, and imagination. We can no longer afford to prevent them from answering. We need our system to evolve to the same degree these people have, so that when they are called, we can let them walk.

(Rabbi David Dunn Bauer is a member of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and served as Director of Social Justice Programming for Congregation Beit Simchat Torah 2013-2017. Based in the Philadelphia area, he writes and teaches — primarily on Queer Jewish thought and practice — and has worked as a prison chaplain since 2019.)

[Learning as a Lifelong Experience: Lech Lecha by Edward L. Greenstein](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/learning-as-a-lifelong-experience/)
<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/learning-as-a-lifelong-experience/>

The ancestor of the Hebrews, Abraham, is probably best known for two episodes in his life. The first is not found in the Written Torah. A midrash relates that when Abraham was a child, he became the first monotheist and iconoclast, smashing the idols manufactured by his father. The second is a high point in the Torah, read not only during the weekly cycle and on the second day of Rosh Hashanah but every morning in the early morning prayers. Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac, and he demonstrates his readiness to perform that horrific act. From these two stories one might get the impression that Abraham was a born "knight of faith," as the nineteenth-century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard famously dubbed him. However, an attentive reading of the Torah and of Parashat Lekh Lekha in particular leads to a very different understanding. Abraham was a learner—he needed to grow in his trust of the Deity, and in himself. In this sense, Abraham's career models the path of a lifelong learner.

We first encounter Abram (for simplicity's sake I will refer to him going forward by his rename, Abraham) within his parental household in Syro-Mesopotamia. From there, Abraham is commanded lekh lekha, ("Get a move on!") to overcome his stasis and take on a challenge—to leave home and take up residence in an as yet unnamed land. He is promised territory and descendants if he makes this move, but it is unclear if that promise is the carrot or the stick. Almost as soon as Abraham and his wife Sarah settle in Canaan (later Israel), the land is stricken with

famine. A truly pious person would appeal to the Deity for relief, but Abraham and Sarah leave the Promised Land and seek sustenance in the breadbasket of Egypt. There Abraham displays a lack of confidence and nearly loses Sarah. He is extricated from the mess that ensues not by his own lights but by a sympathetic Deity who takes on the role of teacher, saving the apprentice from the consequences of his blunder.

Back in Canaan, Abraham's shepherds and those of his nephew Lot, whom he had brought with him from Syria, could not get along. Abraham realized that he needed to compromise regarding the promise of land, and he proposed that, rather than war with his nephew, he would divide the land between them. But when, in the next episode, Lot was taken captive by an onslaught of foreign kings, Abraham raised a private army, routed the invaders, and rescued Lot. Abraham was learning that he would need to be more and more self-reliant—that trust in the Deity implies a partnership, for which he, too, bears responsibility.

Abraham and Sarah had been promised progeny, but they were elderly and childless. Abraham did not trust the Deity and decided to adopt his major domo as his legal heir, a practice not unusual in his era. But the Deity stopped him, reiterating the promise of a son, against the apparent odds. At this point the narrator tells us that "(Abraham) trusted in the LORD, and He accounted it to him as merit" (Gen. 15:6).[1]

With his back to the wall, so to speak, Abraham, who had managed to cope with all the challenges thrust in his path, was learning to trust. Abraham, who in next week's parashah would demonstrate his readiness to sacrifice his son, needed to evolve in his trust by way of experience.

The earliest reference to Abraham's steadfast trust in the Deity is expressed already within the Hebrew Bible, in the prayer of Ezra recorded in Nehemiah 9:7–8:

It is you, O LORD God, who chose Abram, and took him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and fixed his name as Abraham, and found his heart to be trusting of you, and made a covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanites [and various other peoples], as a grant to his descendants, and you fulfilled your promises because you are righteous.

The passage is incorporated into our daily morning prayers. Jumping ahead to the era of the Maccabees, their leader Mattathias, seeking in his last words to inspire ardor among his sons, invokes the example of Abraham in language reminiscent of Ezra's:

Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive divine honor and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? (1 Maccabees 2:50–51; New Revised Standard Version translation).

The idea that Abraham had to overcome a series of increasingly harder trials received classic expression in the post-biblical topos of his Ten Trials. The Book of Jubilees, an important ancient Jewish work preserved in books outside the Bible, enumerates seven, and then ten, ordeals that Abraham succeeded in overcoming, climaxing in the Binding of Isaac, the Akedah. The ten trials of Abraham became ensconced in traditional Jewish literature, for example, in Mishnah Avot(5:3), the so-called Ethics of the Fathers (of the Sanhedrin), from the early third century of our era:

By ten trials our father Abraham may peace be upon him was tried, and he withstood them all—to make known how great was (God’s) love of our father Abraham, may peace be upon him.

Although one may infer from this that our sages wanted to create the impression that Abraham was a paragon of trust from the outset, we have seen that the Torah develops Abraham’s character and covenantal reliability in stages. It is a dynamic process of religious education—a model we all emulate in our teaching and in our lives. (*Edward Greenstein is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Bar Ilan University.*)

[The First Jewish Environmentalist: Abram Models Interpersonal and Environmental Harmony by Tuvia Aronson](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-first-jewish-environmentalist/)

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-first-jewish-environmentalist/>

In this week’s Torah portion, Abram and Lot’s inability to coexist on one piece of land leaps out at us: “And the land was unable to bear them to live together, because their possessions were great and they could not sit together” (Genesis 13:6). In our era, when environmental issues such as population, food, and land distribution are major concerns, we can look to this text for guidance.

The great commentator Rashi interprets the verse to mean that the land was simply unable to provide sufficient pasture for all the cattle and sheep involved. It is as if there is missing information intended to be inserted in the verse: “And the [pasture of the] land could not bear them.”

An alternative approach is that of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany 1808-1888) and the “Netziv” (Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, Russia 1817-1893):

It was not because they had too many herds or because there was not sufficient pastureland for both of them. If it all had been combined into one herd, one household, the land would have been sufficient...if two people cannot agree...separate tents are needed—boxes, crates, everything separate for each of the two parties...Had their personalities been compatible, there would have been no need for separate pastures...the only thing that counted in Lot’s enterprise was profits, while in Abraham’s household attention was given to interests of a higher level.

According to this approach, Abram and Lot’s attitudes were incompatible, therefore

they could not cooperate. This is why the verse stresses “together” — yahdav. Interestingly, Targum Onkelos (the Onkelos translation) translates yahdav using the wording “as one,” connoting the need for a deep interconnection that ultimately enables living in harmony with the Land. The Abrahamic tradition demands that we make our personal and societal decisions based on both environmental considerations (the approach quoted by Rashi) and social considerations (the approach quoted by Rabbi Hirsch).

Abram and Lot

Lot followed Abram, but was not committed to the moral path. There is a textual nuance that proves this point. When Abram receives the command to immigrate to Canaan, the verse notes (12:4), “Lot went [et] him.” Similarly, the Torah (13:5) states that “Lot was going et [with] Abram.” Rabbi Meir Leibush (Malbim) explains that to go ‘et’ merely implies a shared travel itinerary, while to go ‘im’ (with) connotes a shared sense of purpose and mission.

Viewing this story in its larger context can further illuminate this issue. Abraham bequeathed to the Jewish people the concepts of Tzedek U-mishpat—justice and righteousness. If the essence of societal flaws during the flood era were based upon moral corruption and selfish behavior, then the tikkun (fixing) initiated by Abraham had to focus at its core on interpersonal relationships.

The sages explain the seemingly extra words in the verse “and the Canaanites dwelled in the land” as referring to an ethical debate about allowing flocks to eat from the fields of the locals. Abraham’s commitment to justice was so strong that he could not stand living with Lot who could rationalize this form of theft, even from the most immoral of pagans.

Abraham’s mission was to elevate the material world and create a dwelling space for the Divine. This could only be done when we act with deep care and concern for the other. This is in fact a classic case of Hilkhot Yishuv HaAretz, the laws of settling the land of Israel: one is not to tend flocks in a way that damages the property of others.

Abraham was decisive and resolute. He could not make a treaty with Lot—he could not share the Land of Israel with someone who condoned theft and did not focus on the importance of other people.

Unbalanced greed would later be a cause of the destruction of the Second Temple and the subsequent exile from the land. The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was to be a space devoted to the confluence of Bein Adam Lamakom (human-God) and Bein adam lehaveiro (interpersonal) values. Abraham earned the right to the land of Israel through his ethical treatment of others in light of his monotheistic beliefs. He could not jeopardize that bond by allying with Lot.

Judaism & Environmentalism

In recent years we have seen an explosive trend in the growth of Jewish environmental groups and programs. Many of these programs see the coupling

together of human cooperation with the environment as essential to their tasks. They teach that the way we treat each other is going to affect our ability to live in an ecologically sustainable way.

Jewish environmental education programs stress ahdut—togetherness. Jewish community gardens are flourishing, and consumer assisted farming projects are enhancing Jewish life in ways that promote both communal unity and harmony with nature. Intentional Jewish ecological communities are gaining momentum.

Concern for the environment crosses denominational and philosophical divides. Globally, environmental and human rights concerns have been increasingly linked in recent years. The international community is gaining awareness of the issues relating to how we treat each other and the world we live in. In May of 1994, a United Nations group of experts on human rights gathered in Geneva and drafted the first-ever declaration of principles on human rights and the environment and proposed: “Human rights, an ecologically sound environment, sustainable development, and peace are interdependent and indivisible.”

Despite this, the environmental situation, particularly in the land of Israel, desperately needs to progress faster. While efforts toward recycling and cleaning up the waters are making some progress, we have a great deal of work ahead of us and we must unite in the effort. Jews worldwide need to be at the forefront of environmental and human rights concerns, if we are truly to be a “Light unto the Nations.”

In our generation, the Torah seems to be calling to the Jewish people: “Return to your roots and show the world a model that would make Abraham proud.”

The Haftarah for our portion from Isaiah reflects the themes of “yahdav” (togetherness) and “tzedek” (justice) that we have discussed. It speaks of how we must not be hopeless in the face of impending degradation. A more ideal way is expressed to give us hope: “Every human will help their friend, to their brothers (and sisters) they will call out, ‘be strong’” (41:6).

Working as one to take care of our precious resources is incredibly powerful. This is at the very core of our Jewish and environmental understanding. We must move towards living more harmoniously with the Earth by living more in unity with each other. Ultimately this will help us grow even closer to Hashem.

This is the legacy of Abraham. (Tuvia Aronson is an environmentalist and Jewish educator living in Israel.)

Yahrtzeits

Rabbi Lisa Vernon remembers her father Dr. Chester M. Vernon on Sat. Nov. 5 (Cheshvan 11).

Blossom Primer remembers her father Jack Rappaport on Sun. Nov.6 (Cheshvan 12).

Lisa Small remembers her father Joseph Small on Tues. Nov. 8 (Cheshvan 14).

Coming At Kol Rina

Rabbanit Dr. Adena Berkowitz is Scholar in Residence@ Kol HaNeshamah NYC & Senior Educator at the Manhattan Jewish Experience. With a background in law, Jewish studies & psychotherapy, she is the author of the best selling *The Jewish Journey Haggadah*; and co-editor of *Shaarei Simcha- Gates of Joy*, a mini siddur and the first liturgical work written in the modern era by Orthodox women. A practicing therapist, she lives in NYC with her husband, Rabbi Zev Brenner & children.

Examining Biblical, Rabbinic and contemporary Halakhic sources, Rabbanit Dr. Berkowitz will continue the discussion of these complex issues raised in her commentary article in this past summer's Hadassah Magazine, entitled "Jewish Tradition's Nuanced Approach to Abortion, Neither Pro-Life, Nor Pro-Choice, But Pro-Woman."

This program is sponsored by the Susan Marx Fund for Adult Education at Kol Rina.

Kol Rina's late member Susan Marx, of blessed memory, left a generous bequest to Kol Rina with the request that it be used to provide quality Jewish adult educational programming to the entire community. In accordance with Susan's wishes, an empty chair will be set aside (virtually) for her as we study.

For questions regarding the event, please email: KolRinaNJWelcome@gmail.com

My Body My Choice: How Does Jewish Tradition Approach Autonomy and Decision-making, including Abortion?



With Rabbanit Dr. Adena Berkowitz

Sunday, November 6, 2022 10:30 AM

Register

**My Body My Choice: Jewish Tradition on
Autonomy, Decision-making & Abortion**