Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Lech Lecha
November 9, 2024 *** 8 Cheshvan, 5785

Lech Lecha in a Nutshell

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

The name of the Parshah, "Lech Lecha," means "Go Forth" and it is found in Genesis 12:1.

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: Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/579794/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The *haftorah* 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 witness 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

The Power of Example: Lech Lech by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/lech-lecha/the-power-of-example/

So familiar are we with the story of Abraham that we do not always stop to think about what a strange turn it is in the biblical narrative. If we fail to understand this,

though, we may fail to understand the very nature of Jewish identity itself.

Here is the problem: Until now the Torah has been concerned with humanity as a whole. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel are human archetypes. The former represent the tensions between husband and wife, the latter the rivalry between siblings. Both are stories about individuals and both end tragically, the first with paradise lost, the second with bloodshed, fratricide and death.

Then comes another pair of stories – the Flood and the building of Babel – this time about society as a whole. Each is about the tension between freedom and order. The Flood is about a world where freedom (violence, lawlessness, "everyone doing what was right in their own eyes") destroys order. Babel is about a world where order (the imperialist imposition of a single language on conquered peoples) destroys freedom.

All four narratives are about the human condition as such. Their message is universal and eternal, as befits a book about God who is universal and eternal. God as He appears in the first eleven chapters of Genesis is the God who created the universe, made all humanity in His image, blessed the first humans, and who - after the Flood - made a covenant with all humankind. The God of the universe is the universal God.

Why then does the entire story shift in Genesis 12? From here onward it is no longer about humanity as a whole but about one man (Abraham), one woman (Sarah), and their children, who - by the time of the book of Exodus - have become a large and significant people, but still no more than one nation among many.

What is happening here? Does God lose interest in everyone else? That surely cannot be the case. At the end of Genesis, Joseph says to his brothers:

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Gen 50:20

It may be that the phrase "many lives" means no more than the lives of his own family (so Targum Yonatan understands it). But the plain sense of the phrase am rav, "a great people," suggests Egypt. Not until Exodus are the Israelites called am, a people. Joseph is saying that God sent him not merely to save his family from famine, but also the Egyptian people.

That too is the point of the book of Jonah. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, the Assyrian city, to persuade the people to repent and thus avoid their own destruction. In its closing words God says to the prophet:

"Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?" Jonah 4:11 (and see Malbim ad loc.)

God is concerned not only with Israel but with the Assyrians, despite the fact that they would become Israel's enemies, eventually conquering the northern kingdom of Israel itself.

Amos famously says that God not only brought the Israelites from Egypt, but also the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir (Amos 9:7). Isaiah even prophesies a time when the Egyptians will worship God, and He will rescue them from oppression as he once rescued Israel (Isaiah 19:20-21). So it is not that God loses interest in humanity as a whole. He feeds the world. He sustains all life. He is involved in the history of all nations. He is the God of all people. Why then the narrowing of focus from the universal human condition to the story of one family?

The philosopher Avishai Margalit, in his book The Ethics of Memory, talks about two ways of thinking: "i.e." and "e.g." The former speaks of general principles, the latter of compelling examples. It's one thing to talk about general principles of leadership, for instance – think ahead, motivate, set clear goals and so on. It's another thing altogether to tell the story of actual leaders, the ones who succeeded, the role-models. It is their lives, their careers, their examples, that illustrate the general principles and how they work in practice.

Principles are important. They set the parameters. They define the subject. But without vivid examples, principles are often too vague to instruct and inspire. Try explaining the general principles of Impressionism to someone who knows nothing about art, without showing them an Impressionist painting. They may understand the words you use, but these will mean nothing until you show them an example.

That, it seems, is what the Torah is doing when it shifts focus from humanity as a whole to Abraham in particular. The story of humanity from Adam to Noah tells us that people do not naturally live as God would wish them to live. They eat forbidden fruit and kill one another. So after the Flood, God becomes not only a Creator but also a teacher. He instructs humanity, and does so in two ways: i.e. and e.g. He sets out general rules – the covenant with Noah – and then He chooses an example, Abraham and his family. They are to become role-models, compelling examples, of what it means to live closely and faithfully in the presence of God, not for their sake alone but for the sake of humanity as a whole.

That is why five times in Genesis the patriarchs are told:

"Through you all the families, or all the nations, of the earth will be blessed." Gen. 12:2, Gen. 18:18, Gen. 22:18, Gen. 26:4, Gen. 28:14

And people recognise this. In Genesis, Malkitzedek says about Abraham, "Praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand" (Gen. 14:20). Avimelech, king of Gerar, says about him, "God is with you in everything you do " (Gen. 21:22). The Hittites say to him, "You are a prince of God in our midst" (Gen.

23:6). Abraham is recognised as a man of God by his contemporaries, even though they are not a part of his specific covenant.

The same is true of Joseph, the only member of Abraham's family in Genesis whose life among the gentiles is described in detail. He is constantly reminding those with whom he interacts about God.

When Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him he says:

"How could I do such a great wrong? It would be a sin before God!"Gen. 39:9

To the butler and baker, whose dreams he is about to explain, Joseph says:

"Interpretations belong to God." Gen. 40:8

When he is brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, he says:

"God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." Gen. 41:16

Pharaoh himself says of Joseph:

"Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Gen. 41:38

Jews are not called on to be Jews for the sake of Jews alone. They are called on to be a living, vivid, persuasive example of what it is to live by the will of God, so that others too come to recognise God and serve Him, each in their own way, within the parameters of the general principles of the covenant with Noah. The laws of Noah are the "i.e.". The history of the Jews is the "e.g.".

Jews are not called on to convert the world to Judaism. There are other ways of serving God. Malkizedek, Abraham's contemporary, is called, "a Priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18).

Malachi says a day will come when God's name "will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets" (Mal. 1:11). The prophets foresee a day when "God will be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9) without everyone converting to Judaism.

We are not called on to convert humanity but we are called on to inspire humanity by being compelling role-models of what it is to live, humbly, modestly but unshakably in the presence of God, as His servants, His witnesses, His ambassadors – and this, not for our sake but for the sake of humanity as a whole.

It sometimes seems to me that we are in danger of forgetting this. To many Jews, we are merely one ethnic group among many, Israel is one nation-state among many, and God is something we talk about only among ourselves if at all. There was recently a television documentary about one British Jewish community. A non-Jewish journalist, reviewing the programme, remarked on what seemed to her a

strange fact that the Jews she encountered never seemed to talk about their relationship with God. Instead they talked about their relationship with other Jews. That too is a way of forgetting who we are and why.

To be a Jew is to be one of God's ambassadors to the world, for the sake of being a blessing to the world, and that necessarily means engaging with the world, acting in such a way as to inspire others as Abraham and Joseph inspired their contemporaries. That is the challenge to which Abraham was summoned at the beginning of this week's Parsha. It remains our challenge today.

How Can We Be a Blessing? By Cantor Rabbi Shoshi Levin Goldberg
https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/how-can-we-be-a-blessing/

I have often pondered the meaning of the expression that a deceased person's memory should be a blessing or will be for a blessing. Proverbs 10:7 teaches that "the name of a righteous person is invoked in blessing"—זֵכֶר צַדִּיק לִבְרָכָה . Originally, this likely referred to invoking the name of a well-known righteous person as an exemplar and conduit for our own blessing. The Babylonian Talmud also teaches (Kiddushin 31b) that after the death of a parent, we may continue to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring our parents, and by extension other beloved relatives and friends, by saying "zikhronam livrakhah," "may their memory be for a blessing."

Can only the deceased be a source of blessing? What about the living? This theme is paramount in Parashat Lekh Lekha, where God's response to our patriarch Abraham's call is replete with mentions of blessing. In Genesis 12:2, God says to Avram:

וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגֹוי גָּדֹול**וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ** וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ **וְהְיֵה בְּרָכָה:**

I will make of you a great nation,
***And I will bless you**;*
I will make your name great,
And you shall be a blessing.

It is easier to conceptualize what it might mean for God to bless Abraham. But what does it mean for Abraham to "be" a blessing? How might we follow in Abraham's footsteps to be a blessing: for ourselves, our families, our communities and our world?

The 15th-century Italian commentator Ovadia Seforno offers a striking possibility: being a blessing indicates that God will rejoice in Abraham's actions. Seforno cites a fantastical scene in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 7a) in which Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha, a High Priest, enters the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur and encounters the Holy Blessed One, enthroned. God demands, "Yishmael, bless me!" Stunned, the High Priest blesses God:

May it be Your will that Your compassion overcome Your anger,
and may Your compassion prevail over Your other attributes,
and may You act toward Your children with the attribute of compassion,
and may You enter before them beyond the letter of the law.

Whether or not this gorgeous prayer was spontaneously crafted by Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha, the Talmud gleans the lesson that שֶׁלֹּא תְּהֵא בִּרְכַּת הֶדְיוֹט קַלָּה בְּעֵינֶיךָ one should not take the blessing of an ordinary person lightly. God nods in approval and acceptance of the prayer. If a mere mortal can deliver a blessing directly to God, surely people can serve as blessings to one another!

What was it about Abraham that enabled him to **be** a blessing? I'd argue that it was his sense of purpose. Maimonides posits that even from a young age, Abraham knew he had a purpose. In his Mishneh Torah, Maimonides explains how Abraham became a spokesperson for monotheism: "As soon as Abraham was weaned—even in his infancy—he began to muse, night and day, wondering: how is it possible that the world should be continuously in motion without one to guide it? And such were his ponderings, until he knew that there was one God."[1] This text recalls a sweet image of baby Avram, the philosopher. It teaches us that even from a young age, Abraham knew what he was meant to do.

Having a purpose is not only important on our better days. The Austrian psychologist, philosopher, and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl was one of the first psychologists to propose that having a high-level belief system, such as a purpose in life, enables people to endure life's most severe and unimaginable hardships.

An article published in 2009 in the Journal of Positive Psychology[2] examined the connection between purpose and life satisfaction among adolescents, emerging adults and adults. The results of this study revealed that having identified a purpose was associated with greater life satisfaction at all those three stages of life. Interestingly, the study also found that searching for a purpose was only associated with increased life satisfaction during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Moreover, the study stated that a strong sense of purpose underscores moral action and civic engagement. We can understand from this research that both seeking and finding our purpose not only brings us contentment; it also helps us make a difference in our world.

Perhaps Abraham did not have to search for his purpose. Maybe, as Maimonides suggests, God's call made it clear to our forefather that he was put on earth to disseminate monotheism. In contrast to our patriarch, most of us lack that kind of clarity of purpose. But in these murky and formidable times, discerning, connecting with, and taking action to realize our purpose is more important than ever.

In her Rosh Hashanah sermon, Rabbi Annie Tucker from Temple Israel Center in White Plains, New York, taught, "Purpose can pull us out of the pits of despair, motivate us to fight against improbable odds, and even lead us to risk the things most precious for the sake of something greater. It is the anchor by which we pull ourselves towards a brighter future." Rabbi Tucker's words imply that unfortunately given our current circumstances, our "brighter future" surely will not arrive unless we connect with our purpose and engage actively with leading ourselves—and others along with us—toward it.

If this feels like a tall order. or if you are not sure where to begin, let's return to two messages from the Talmudic passage above: first, that "one should not take the blessing of an ordinary person lightly." While we may not know whether God is nodding along with our prayers as the Talmud describes, I still believe that our prayers in this current moment make a difference. And second, to echo the prayer of Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha, extending mercy and compassion toward ourselves and others, while simultaneously aspiring to go above and beyond in all that we do, is more than enough. In these ways, may we all become blessings. *(Cantor Rabbi Shoshi Levin Goldberg is Director of the HL Miller Cantorial School at JTS)*

[1] הלכות עבודה זרה וחוקות הגויים 1:3

[2] Cotton Bronk, K., Hill, P. L., Lapsley, D. K., Talib, T. L., & Finch, H. (2009). Purpose, hope, and life satisfaction in three age groups. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4(6), 500–510. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760903271439

Lech Lecha: The First Jew. Why Abram? By the Accidental Talmudist

https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/11/05/lech-lecha-the-first-jew/

And the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will aggrandize your name, and [you shall] be a blessing…." Gen. 12:1-2

In this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecha ("Go Forth"), God speaks to Abram, commanding him to leave his birthplace and his father's home and travel to a place he's never been before. God tells him that there, Abram would be the progenitor of a great and blessed nation. Abram accepts his holy mission and devotes his life to serving God. This is the beginning of the Jewish story, and Abram (later Abraham) is the first Jew.

Before Abram's life-changing "Lech Lecha moment," the Torah tells us very little about him. We know only that he is the son of a man named Terah, and that his wife Sarai is barren, leaving the couple childless. In last week's parsha Noach, God selects Noah for his own special mission, but we understand why because the Torah first introduces Noah as "a righteous man" (Gen. 6:9). Why isn't Abram also given an introduction that explains why he was chosen?

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905) was fascinated by this question and every year he shared a different answer with his students. One year he cited the Zohar, a foundational work of Jewish mysticism, saying that "God called out to everyone. But Abraham was the only one who listened." God speaks to all of us all the time, for example in the language of events and in the natural world. Abraham looked around him and discerned proofs of a loving Creator everywhere. His deep desire to serve and come close to God prepared him to hear Divine messaging. When we're interested in God, God is interested in us!

Lech Lecha: Shepherd Vs. Shepherd: Beginning of Strife
by the Accidental Talmudist
https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/11/05/lech-lecha-shepherd-vs-shepherd/

When Abram follows God's instructions and journeys from his homeland, he doesn't travel alone. With him are his wife, all that he possesses including flocks of cattle and sheep, and his nephew Lot, who also brings all of his possessions and flocks. At one point "there was a quarrel between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and between the herdsmen of Lot's cattle…. And Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no quarrel between me and between you and between my herdsmen and between your herdsmen…." – Gen. 13:7-8

The Torah contains not a single extraneous line, word, or even letter, so this seemingly mundane episode of the bickering shepherds must contain an important message. The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893) finds an explanation in the Book of Proverbs: "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, and before you are exposed, abandon the quarrel." (Prov. 17:14) If a barrel full of water has a tiny hole in it, water will trickle out through that hole and eventually the trickle will become a stream because the water itself will make the hole bigger. So too with an argument. Abraham is wise enough to know that a petty disagreement among hired herdsmen, if allowed to continue will eventually become a dispute that threatens his relationship with his nephew. Even a seemingly innocuous disagreement can turn into something toxic, so let's resolve disputes as soon as they begin!

Table for Five
Lech Lecha: Leap of Faith – Jewish Journal
Why did Abram bring along his nephew Lot, who didn't share his uncle's holy values?
Edited by Nina and Salvator Litvak, the Accidental Talmudist
https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/table-for-five/2024/11/05/lech-lecha-leap-of-faith/

And Abram went, as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him, and

Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Gen. 12:4

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, Founder, Jewsforjudaism.org

Our sages teach that the deeds of the Patriarchs are a portent for their children. So, when Abram took a leap of faith and moved his family to the land of Canaan, his spiritual DNA was transmitted to us and empowered us to overcome situations that challenge our faith.

My father fought in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Sicily and Italy During World War II. While in Rome, he did a favor for the Catholic soldiers under his command. He visited the Vatican to get them Roseries blessed by the Pope Pius XII. Although everyone in line kneeled to the Pope, my father remained standing and politely explained that as a Jew, he does not bow to anyone but God.

Abram refused to bow to the idols, and my father, along with generations of Jews, inherited this trait and refused to bow when his faith was challenged. I inherited this trait, and it gave me the strength to found Jews for Judaism and successfully respond to cults and missionaries who seek the conversion of Jews to foreign beliefs. Our ancestors were trailblazers, and it is up to us to carry on the mission of spreading the monotheism, wisdom, and values of Judaism.

Rabbi Nolan Lebovitz, PhD, Valley Beth Shalom

When God issues Abram the command of Lech Lecha – translated as “you go” in the singular – Abram intuitively brings along his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. In doing so, he models that the Jewish journey of life in general, and specifically the path toward heightened spirituality, cannot be accomplished alone. Today, we face modern challenges such as living great distances apart from our family. We also maintain the benefit of technology. Our understanding of family has expanded to include our biological relatives, and also family of our choosing. As we adapt to the changing nature of family, finding our place in larger communities can help us adjust. Our Sages teach us in a midrash, “A society and a family are like a pile of stones. If you remove one stone, the pile will collapse. If you add a stone to it, it will stand.” (Genesis Rabbah 100:7) Ultimately, the Jewish journey is one of togetherness. Whether it be family or community, we are meant to live within a structure in relationship with others. From the arc of Abraham’s narrative, we know that he feels a great responsibility for Lot, even after they live apart. In a world in which we hear news streaming from the far corners of the earth, this section of the Torah reminds us to focus on our loved ones. Can we articulate this priority to our family with compassion and responsibility? I believe that Abram did. His descendants can certainly do the same.

Dr. Erica Rothblum, Head of School, Pressman Academy

This pasuk has incredible lessons for the Jewish people today. Our Rabbis teach

that verse 12:4 is a reminder from God; Avram had already been commanded to leave his home, and this is a gentle reminder from God that Avram should start the journey. On the other hand, our Rabbis teach that 12:4 shows Avram's faith; while in 12:5 we learn more details about the journey, this verse indicates that Avram started the journey because of his faith in God and not because he understood the details or the destination. And in this contradiction is, I think, the beauty of our Torah. When we learn of our ancestors as one-dimensional people, it is hard to relate and then to emulate. How can we be as faithful as Avram, as wise as Moshe, as resilient as Jacob? But when we understand our ancestors as people who struggled and nonetheless prevailed, they provide an example for us to emulate, even on our hardest days. And in 2024, Avram is the role model we need. He lived a life that was different from anyone else of his time; he was not afraid to be different and to stay aligned with his values. So too, as anti-semitism and anti-Zionism increase around the world, the Jewish people can strive to be like Avram – despite our struggles or our fears, we must live a life of courage and faith, a life in which our core values guide us as we make difficult decisions.

Rabbi Dr Janet Madden, Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue

Martin Buber wrote "All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware." How could our ancestor Avram have envisioned the magnitude of his destiny?

As the sum of the first five pentagonal numbers, seventy-five is a pyramidal number, a mathematical representation of Avram's name: "high father." This is the age at which, in order to fulfill his own destiny, Avram must leave his father, his past life, and the place where his family has settled after leaving Ur.

Haran, named for his deceased brother is, for Avram, a "parched place," "a crossroad." Leaving, as Avot d'Rabbi Natan teaches, constitutes one of Avram's ten Divinely-designed tests. Haran is his jumping-off point into sealing trust in the Divine, a decisive movement that is a literal act of faith.

With his wife and his nephew-companion, Lot, whose name–"veiled"/"hidden"–hints both at Lot's character and at the many revelations that lie ahead, Avram steps into a life-partnership with the Holy One. He cannot know that he will live another hundred years. He cannot know that he will be claimed as patriarch by three major faith traditions, his journey releasing a "wafting aroma," says Bereshit Rabbah, as his name–his essence–is enlarged in the world.

But in choosing to trust that the blessings promised to him will manifest, our ancestor demonstrates that he does know the power of choosing to be in intimate relationship with Divine. And his example stands as a lasting reminder of our power to choose the same.

Rabbi Jonathan Leener, Prospect Heights Shul

Abraham is best known for his radical hospitality to strangers. He and Sarah designed their home to be open on all sides, ensuring they could always see and assist those in need. Amid Abraham's extraordinary care for strangers, however, his unwavering generosity toward his nephew, Lot, is often overlooked. After the tragic death of his brother, Abraham adopted Lot and treated him as his own son. Later in Genesis, we see Abraham take drastic measures to save Lot: he goes to war to rescue him from captivity and even argues with God over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot eventually settled.

What's most remarkable is that Abraham did all of this despite knowing that Lot's choices didn't align with his own values. Lot chose to live in Sodom, drawn by its wealth and indulgent lifestyle. Yet, Abraham was always there for him. Why? According to Rebbe Noson of Breslov, Abraham had the capacity to see the endless potential in every individual. While Lot certainly had his demons, Abraham continually saw sparks of holiness trapped within him. Ultimately, Abraham was right—Lot's descendants would include Ruth and King David, beginning the messianic line.

While Abraham's openness to the stranger became his spiritual legacy, his relationship with Lot may be his crowning achievement. Having enduring faith in a family member, despite every reason not to, is truly remarkable and reveals Abraham's profound patience and kindness.

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Yahrtzeits

Blossom Primer remembers her sister Rhoda Rappaport on Sun. Nov 10. and her father Jack Rappaport on Wed. Nov. 13

Rabbi Lisa Vernon remembers her father Dr. Chester M. Vernon on Tues. Nov. 12

Lisa Small remembers her father Joseph Small on Fri. Nov. 15