



Aliyah



Aims:

- To learn about the first mention of Aliyah in the Torah
- To discuss Avraham and his family's views on moving to Israel
- To think about why we would want to move to Israel

Estimado Madrichim,

Shabbat Lech Lecha is traditionally one that Bnei Akiva makes the most of; we have the introduction of **Am Yisrael** as we learn about Avraham's actions and the introduction of **Eretz Yisrael** in the very first words of the Parasha, which we will focus on today. Now all we need is **Torat Yisrael**, but that will have to wait a few parshiot...

Mis mejores deseos,

Michael

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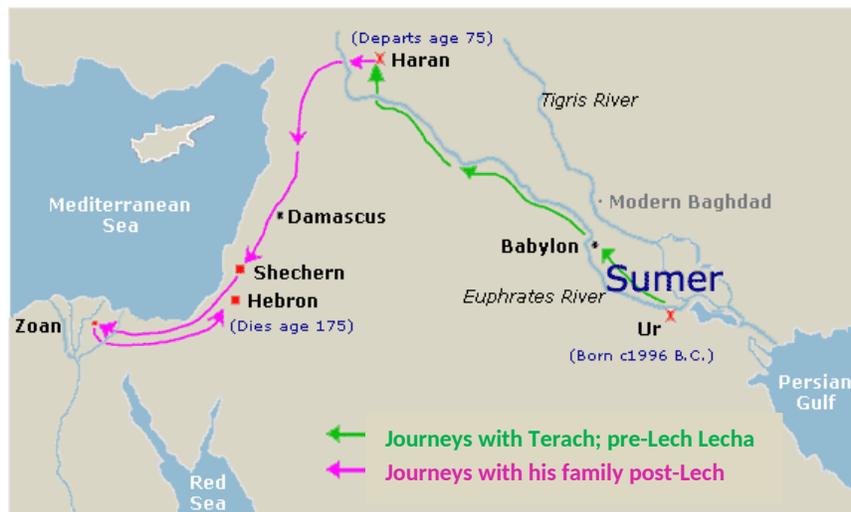
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Who was the first person to make Aliyah?

And Terach took his son Avram, and Lot, the son of Haran, his grandson, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Avram; and they departed with them from Ur Kasdim to go towards the Land of Canaan, and they came to Charan and they settled there. And the days of Terach were 250 years and Terach died in Charan.

This quote is from Bereshit 11:31-2, the last two verses in Parashat Noach. We are accustomed to thinking that Avraham made Aliyah on his own, but actually the Torah teaches us that his whole family had already started making the journey across the desert. Just so you get an idea of the geography, take a look below:



Why on earth would Terach start to make Aliyah? What was there in Eretz Canaan? And why did he give up and just settle in Charan? Is it because he set up the Terach University...?

The first answer is that we don't know! The Torah decides not to tell us why he left his hometown and took his family with him.



However there are *midrashim* that talk of how his son, Avram, became a bit of a believer – going against the grain in the secular and even communist society of Bavel:

- Terach was an idol seller; Avram decided to destroy all the idols in the shop after realising they were all powerless.
- Avram started to believe in Hashem aged 48, the year of the building of the Tower of Bavel!
- Avram was put on trial by Nimrod, the King of Bavel, for his belief in Hashem. He was eventually made to walk through a burning furnace, but miraculously survived.



Was this Avraham's greatest idea?

It seems that Terach may have needed to leave his homeland due to **persecution**. His purpose was more to leave Bavel than arrive in Cana'an – hence why he gets sidetracked and settles in Charan.

Moving on to our Parasha, we see the famous opening line (and

And Hashem said to Avram 'go to yourself, from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's home to the land which I will show you'...And Avram went as Hashem had commanded him and Lot went with him; and Avram was 75 when he left Charan. And Avram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew and all the property which they had amassed and the soul they had made in Charan; and they went towards Eretz Cana'an and they came to Eretz Cana'an.
Bereshit 12:1, 4-5

What is different between the Torah's account of Terach's intended Aliyah and Avraham's actual Aliyah?

As you may have guessed, Avraham's relationship with the land of Israel was a **religious** one. Although there are many indications of this, notice the strange comment that they (presumably Avraham and Sarah) 'made a soul' in Charan.



Avram before his name change

Rashi understands this to mean that they taught people about the existence of one G-d and were successful educators – given that they also amassed wealth, why would they leave Charan? The Torah goes out of its way to tell us that despite having a religiously fulfilling life and enough money to live off, they still made Aliyah.

Now, let's return again to that same passage from Bereshit to look at a third character in depth...Lot. He is mentioned twice:

Isn't the Torah repeating itself? To investigate, let's skip a bit to when Lot and Avraham have the famous argument when they are settling down to live (Bereshit 13:7-11).

Avram: "Let there not be an argument between me and between you; and between my shepherds and between your shepherds, because we are brothers. Is not all the land before you? Separate now from before me - if the left, and I will go right or if the right, and I will go left."

*And Lot raised his eyes and he saw all of the plains of the Jordan **because it was all irrigated** - before Hashem destroyed Sodom and Amorah - like the garden of Hashem, like the land of Egypt, going towards Tzoar.*



Lot's reason for making Aliyah seems to be **agricultural**. He wants good pasture for his sheep and sees business opportunities in this fertile land. In other words, Lot was looking for personal financial gain.

Could this explain his double-mention in the passage detailing Avraham's Aliyah? Lot went along with the religious ideological reasons for moving to Israel to an extent, but when it came to the time to move, he may have thought twice. Therefore he needed to be 'taken with' like the others.¹



So far we have met three different members of the same family, who all had different reasons to move to Israel. But there is one person missing...

Terach had three sons – Avram, Nachor and Haran. Now, we've looked at Terach, Avram and Lot, who was Haran's son (Haran himself died when still in Ur Kasdim). But what about Nachor?

¹ We see this time and time again with Lot – he likes Avraham's way of life but doesn't quite emulate it – he satisfies himself with second best. For instance, like Avraham, he invites guests into his home in Sodom – yet when a rowdy mob comes to the door he is happy to give away his daughters "to do as you please" but as long as they left the guests alone!

Nachor's Diary

When the family made Aliyah, Nachor is noticeably absent. Nachor is seemingly the member of the family who did not want to make Aliyah, and was perfectly happy living in (what is now) Syria.



What happens to Nachor? Well, he disappears from the story but we do encounter his family when Avraham sends his servant to find a wife for Yitzchak from there in Parashat Chayei Sarah.

.....

We have now seen the four major characters in Terach's family with four very different approaches to the Land of Israel. Terach sees a home from persecution, Avraham sees Aliyah as a religious commandment, Lot sees a business opportunity and Nachor doesn't see anything at all!

Points TO Ponder

- ✚ Which of these characters do you most identify with?
- ✚ What is your connection to the Land of Israel?
- ✚ Of the above characters, whose view does the Torah endorse?

I want to live in a country...

- where the seventh day of the week is *Shabbat*, and not Saturday;
- where your elected officials live on your block and pray in your synagogue;
- where Torah is taken so seriously;
- where a person's home is not a measure of his success;
- where my forefathers walked;
- where the street names are from the Bible or names of Torah sages;
- where the guy delivering water can tell me where the closest minyan may be found;
- where the land itself has *kedushah*;
- where the land itself is a gift from *HaShem*;
- where the spoken language is the language G-d used to create the world;
- where you don't have to explain to your employer why you need to leave early on Friday;
- where you can eat *chametz* on the "eighth day" of Passover;
- where the majority of events in Bible took place;
- where many of its soldiers pray;
- where people are passionate about politics;
- where you can feel *Shabbat* is coming;
- where Jews have died protecting the land;
- where one can be proud to be a Jew.

By Rabbi Zev Shandalov

Can you add your own lines to the poem?

Think about the different reasons why people make Aliyah today.

Returning back to the story, what does the Torah make of all this? Does it say whose approach was right?

The answer is yes and no! It doesn't explicitly say since Sefer Bereshit is a narrative and not a set of 'do's and don'ts'. But the Torah is hinting something absolutely massive by what it chooses to include.

Avraham becomes the founder of a great nation, which has survived for thousands of years. He had a super relationship with Hashem, wealth, descendants and one of the biggest ever legacies in world history. In short, he did OK for himself!

Contrast this to the other three. We hear nothing about Terach's life after deciding not to settle in Israel whilst Lot and Nachor are reduced to having secondary roles in the great Jewish story.²

The Torah is subtly asking us a big question: Do we want to be part of Jewish history? Or are we happy with being mere footnotes. It's not that Israel isn't a place to avoid persecution – we have seen in the last century that it is. It's not that Israel isn't a good place to develop agriculture and business – look at Israel's growing economy. These are certainly advantages to our holy land – but the main reason why we, as the Jewish people, have such a connection to the land is that Hashem wants us to be a great nation there. And that is something that, like Avraham, we as Bnei Akiva believe should be done, not just talked about.

² Examples of this include Lot's descendant Rut marrying Boaz, leading to King David and the eventual Mashiach with Nachor's family continuing to provide spouses for the Avot.



- Word Association: Say the word Aliyah and go round in the circle with everyone saying the first word that springs to mind.
- Simulate Terach's family in action by giving chanichim the four main characters and their views, and act out how the discussions would have gone, for example over a family meal.
- Make a TV documentary looking at why people make Aliyah, including funny reasons.
- Good old Family Fortunes. Links in to the idea of Terach's family and you can say 'we asked 100 Olim/BA-niks...' etc.
- Speak to people in Israel who have made Aliyah and get quotes from them on why they did it; put these around the room.

Hadracha Tip: Never criticise a fellow member of the tzevet in front of chanichim. It is extremely undermining, unprofessional and not very nice!



And finally...



Over 60% of those who make Aliyah identify with Bnei Akiva and its ideals.

Sviva of the Week: Leeds



Roshim: Dani Martin & Liat Reback

Madrichim: Vicky Saffer, Emma Coupland, Ben Pliener, Itai Yechezkel, Marc Shaw, Hannah Myerson, Zoe Coupland, Jake Saffer, David Isaacs, Daniel Saffer, Phil Miles, Jade Dapin, Alex Rudette, Abba Cohen & Sam Levi.

Did you know that natives of Leeds are called Loiners?!

You've probably heard the song 'Marching on Together/Leeds! Leeds! Leeds!'. This song was recorded by the Leeds United football team when they reached the FA Cup Final in 1972 and has become the club's official anthem. It has also been adopted by other local organisations including Leeds Rhinos (rugby league side), Leeds Carnegie (rugby union side) and, of course, BA!