

## Bnei Akiva Sivot 5780: Choveret Chinuchit

*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...*

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### WEEK 4: Aliyah for the right reasons

#### Almost Aliyah – fleeing persecution

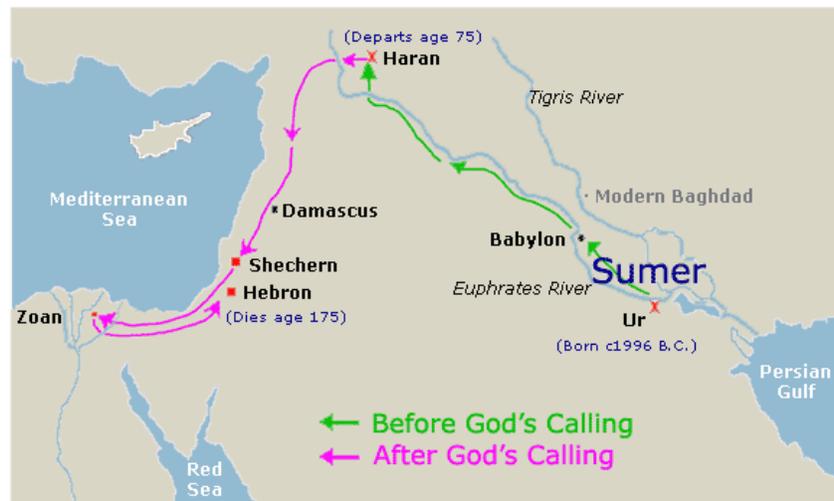
Where is the first time in the Torah that we see a mention of Aliyah?

You're probably thinking that it's in this week's parasha, when God commands Avram to leave his home and go to Eretz Canaan. But wait, what was it we read at the very end of Parashat Noach?

*"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." (Bereshit 11:31-32)*

We are accustomed to thinking that Avram made Aliyah on his own, but actually the Torah teaches us that his whole family had already begun making the journey across the desert. The map on the right shows the journey they made.

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?



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 pariah in Babylonian society. Avram realised that the idols in his father's shop were powerless, destroyed them all. In the same year as the Tower of Babel was built, Avram began to believe in Hashem. Avram was put on trial by Nimrod, the King of Babel, for his belief in Hashem. He was eventually made to walk through a burning furnace, but miraculously survived.

It seems that Terach may have needed to leave his homeland due to persecution. His purpose was more to leave Bavel than arrive in Canaan – hence why he gets side-tracked and settles in Charan.

### Avram's turn – religious obligation

Moving on to this week's parasha, we spot crucial differences between the Torah's account of Terach's intended Aliyah and Avraham's actual Aliyah:

*"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 Canaan and they came to Eretz Canaan." (Bereshit 12:1,4-5)*

Unlike Terach, 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 (they presumably being Avram and Sarai) 'made a soul' in Charan. Rashi understands this to mean that they taught people about the existence of one God and were successful educators. Given that they had such success and 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.

### In it for the big bucks

Now, let's return again to that same passage from Bereshit to look at a third character in depth...Lot. He is mentioned twice: firstly, when Avram was commanded to leave his birthplace Lot went with him, and secondly when Avram left Charan and took Lot with him – notice the second time that Lot is more passive. Isn't the Torah repeating itself? To investigate, let's skip a bit to when Lot and Avram have the famous argument when they are settling down to live:

*"And Avram said to Lot: "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." (Bereshit 13:8-11).*

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'.

### Who was right?

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 Bereishit is a narrative and not a set of rules. But the Torah is hinting something absolutely massive by what it chooses to include. Avram 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 okay for himself! Contrast this to the other two. We hear nothing about

Terach's life after deciding not to settle in Israel whilst Lot is reduced to having a secondary role in the great Jewish story.

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.

## Questions 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?

## Peula Ideas for Younger Years

### Games about the characters

- Musical statues – representing Terach's idols (sing, obviously you can't play music on Shabbat!)
- Memory game – bring 'Avraham's suitcase' filled with objects that related to his life. Give the chanichim 30 seconds to look inside then take the suitcase away and see how many objects they remember.

### Games about aliyah

- Make a TV documentary looking at why people make Aliyah, including funny reasons.
- Israel themes compass – label the walls of a room as 'Golan', 'Negev', 'HaYarden' (the Jordan), 'HaSh'felah' (the plain). Include commands and actions such as: "study in Yeshiva/Midrasha", "Join up to the IDF", "cultivate the desert", "start a company", "take cover" etc. As always, the last person to reach the wall or do the action is out.

## Peula Ideas for Older Years

### Games about the characters

- Simulate Terach's family in action by giving chanichim the main characters and their views, and act out how the discussions would have gone, for example over a family meal.
- Family Fortunes. Links ito the idea of Terach's family and you can say 'we asked 100 Olim/BA-niks...' etc.

### Games about aliyah

- Word Association: Say the word Aliyah and go around in the circle with everyone saying the first word that springs to mind.

- Speak to people in Israel who have made Aliyah and get quotes from them on why they did it; put these around the room. Ask chanichim to stand by the quote that resonates with them most.

## Discussions

- Why do people make Aliyah today?
- What do people want to see from the state they call their home?

