

Rabbi Ori Samet, Rabbi of Kibbutz Migdal Oz

The Secret of the Choice

God's call to Abraham which begins last week's parashah, "*Lekh lekha me'artzekha* – Go forth from your land," comes as a surprise to the reader, from out of the blue. The Torah does not explain why God turns specifically to Abraham, nor why He does not turn to Abraham's ancestors Arpakhshad, Nachor, or Terach. In contrast, God's call to Noah, telling him to build an ark in order to save the world, is preceded in the Torah by the reason that Noah specifically is chosen: "Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generation; Noah walked with God" (*Genesis* 6:9).

The Maharal (*Netzach Yisrael*, Chapter 11) discusses the difference between Abraham and Noah. He explains that God's choice of Abraham is not the choice of the individual, Abraham, but rather of the nation which would descend from him. This choice is absolute and not dependent on any particular actions. If the Torah had first described Abraham's good deeds, we would likely think that his chosenness, and that of his line, was conditional upon their good deeds. The absence of a reason given for the choice of Abraham teaches us that from this point onward, the chosenness of the Jewish people is irrevocable even if the Jews do not follow the path of their ancestor Abraham.

Though the Maharal explains why the Torah does not **record** the reason for Abraham's chosenness, of course this does not mean that Abraham is chosen at random, without any reason. It is incumbent upon us to uncover the secret and clarify why Abraham specifically is chosen for the job of Founding Father of the Chosen People.

It seems that the secret which is kept from us in *Lekh Lekha* is revealed in Parashat Vayera:

For I know him (i.e., I have chosen him), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they will keep the way of the Lord, to do what is right and just . . . (*Genesis* 18:19)

So why is Abraham chosen for this mission? It says about Chanokh: "Chanokh walked with God" (*Ibid.*, 5:24). It says about Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generation; Noah walked with God." But it does not say about Abraham: "For I know him, that he is righteous and perfect." Rather, it says: "For I know him, that **he will command his children and his household after him**, and

they will keep the way of the Lord." **Abraham is chosen because he is an educator!** It is possible that there were others in Abraham's generation who were righteous and blameless, upright people who served God. But God does not choose them. God is looking for someone who makes education his guiding light – someone who is not just concerned that **he** be righteous and serve God, but who would take care to educate his children and household to follow him in keeping God's ways.

Why is it so important to choose specifically an educator? We have already said that Abraham is chosen not merely as an individual, but as the Founding Father of a nation. It is not Abraham who is chosen, but all his descendants, eternally for all generations. Isn't God taking a risk in choosing one nation for all generations based on the character of its first progenitor? What if his children do not justify the choice and do not follow in their father's path?

For this reason, God is in search of an educator. A regular *tzaddik* can be chosen as an individual, but how can we know that his many positive traits will be passed on to the later generations? When choosing a Founding Father for a nation, we must search for a person who does not only work on himself as an individual, but who makes sure to educate his household to follow in his path. Only in that way can the choice go from risky to realistic, with a reasonable guarantee that most of his future descendants would follow in his footsteps.

However, there is a problem with this. At the beginning of Vayera, when it says that Abraham will command his children and his household after him to keep God's way, Abraham is still childless! How does God know that Abraham is such an accomplished educator, if he has not yet proved himself through educating his children?

We can solve this problem in light of the words of the well-known *midrash* (*Bereisheet Rabbah* 38:13) which tells the story of Abraham in his father Terach's home. Abraham is sitting and selling idols in Terach's store when an elderly man comes in to buy one. Abraham asks him: "Should a fifty- or sixty-year-old man worship a god that is only a day old?" The person is embarrassed and leaves. Afterwards Abraham smashes all the idols in the store. When

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Picture the Parasha



Shabbat Times

	Local	Jerusalem
In		16:07
Out		17:20

Bishul Akum (food cooked by Non—Jews) - Part 1

Rabbi Nehemya Taylor, Former Torani advisor to Torah Mitzion

Several halakhic “food” problems arise when one travels overseas. These problems involve not only the ingredients in different foods, but also the process of their preparation. In this series we shall examine various issues pertaining to cooked foods, bread, and milk produced or prepared by non-Jews, with an explanation of the various halakhic approaches and a clarification of the practical halakha.

The Mishna in Avoda Zara 35b teaches: “These products of non-Jews are forbidden, but there is no prohibition in deriving benefit from them [i.e., the prohibition is limited to eating]... and cooked foods.” Rashi explains: “[This prohibition includes] anything that was cooked by gentiles, even in a vessel that was fit for kosher cooking, all because of [the danger of] intermarriage.” In other words, even if the food itself is technically kosher, and the vessels used for preparing it were fit for use (immersed in a mikveh, etc.), the Sages nevertheless forbid it in order to maintain a distance between Jews and gentiles, so as not to allow a social situation that could lead to the possibility of intermarriage. The Tosfot concur with this opinion, further on in the discussion, and Rambam rules accordingly in his Laws of Forbidden Foods.

Further on in the discussion (38a) Rashi writes that the reason for the prohibition of eating foods cooked by non-Jews is that “Jews should not become accustomed to eating and drinking at [the gentile’s] place, such that he could feed them something impure”. The Beit Yosef on Yoreh Deah siman 113, lists both reasons, quoting Rashi. This led several later authorities to conclude that to Rashi’s view, the prohibition of eating food cooked by a non-Jew applies only when both conditions apply: (1) there is a danger of intermarriage, and (2)

there is a danger that the non-Jew will feed him something that is forbidden. Hence, if a professional cook is cooking in a Jewish house, or in a non-Jewish factory that is under Jewish kashrut supervision, the prohibition of “bishul akum” as Rashi perceives it, does not apply.

Rambam, in his commentary on the Mishna, introduces a new element into the discussion. He writes: “Most of these things, such as bread, cooked foods, etc., were forbidden in order that we should distance ourselves from [the gentiles] and not mix with them, so that we should not – because of our involvement with them – come to stretch out our hand towards something that is forbidden, and this is the intention behind [the Sages’] expression, “because of intermarriage”.” Rambam joins the two reasons together – the need to maintain a distance from gentiles and the concern lest the gentile “put forth his hand” to something forbidden – all under the heading of “intermarriage”. What Rambam means, then – and perhaps Rashi, too – is that the reason for the prohibition is the danger of intermarriage, but Sages defined the extent of the prohibition such that any situation in which there is concern that a Jew will be fed something that is forbidden is included in “bishul akum”. Thus the Bach explains, in his commentary on the Tur: “It appears that the Gemara proves that all in these cases it is clear that the Sages ruled because of [the possibility of intermarriage with] their daughters, but this was meant merely as additional reinforcement from the verse in order that the Jew not be fed something that is impure... Because of this, it is not permitted rather like water that has not changed due to the light and there is no doubt here with regards to impurity”. (Continued on page 3) 

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Terach returns to the store and finds all his idols broken, Abraham argues with him about worshipping them. Afterwards Abraham argues with Nimrod as well, gets thrown into the fiery furnace, and emerges victorious.

When we read this story we find ourselves asking: why is Abraham so fired up to debate everyone with whom he comes into contact? If Abraham has discovered the truth – good for him. Does he really need to endanger himself in order to persuade others of their mistake? Why can’t he let others continue in their meaningless ways, while he enjoys his discovery of the true God by himself?

But Abraham is not willing to make peace with the fact that others surrounding him are living a lie. He is not a postmodernist who believes that everyone has his own truth – my truth is serving God, while my family’s and neighbors’ truth is idol-worship. Rather, if Abraham has reached a conclusion about the Truth, he will use all his persuasive abilities to try to bring the whole world to recognize it.

This is Abraham the educator. Even before he has biological children, he has already succeeded in building an educational household where various people from the idol-worshipping society are educated in the Truth. God knows this, and stands witness that such a person will certainly invest in his children at least as much as he invests in outsiders. Accordingly, he is fit to be the Founding Father of the Chosen People, whose eternal mission will be to serve as a light to the nations and to bring belief in God to all of humanity.

We, the children of Abraham, learn from him the critical importance of education. We are insufficient by ourselves, and it is crucial for us to look at how we pass on these things to future generations. We learn how important it is for us to invest in our children, in our youth, in the next generation. Abraham is an exemplar, teaching us that we must try to influence everyone whose path we cross, and view our entire lives as a *shlichut*, a mission. 

Avraham's Will Indicates G-d's Will

Rarav Shlomo Aviner, from Tal Chermom

Avraham's discussion with Hashem over the inhabitants of Sedom was not a prayer or a petition – it was a debate. Avraham argued with Him, saying: it is inconceivable and sacrilegious that the judge of the entire universe should perform such an unjust act (Bereshit 18:25). This debate in fact paralleled the deliberations that were taking place in the Heavenly Court on the fate of Sedom (Sha'arei Orah). While different Divine attributes, so to speak, were hammering out the issue above, Avraham was like a radio receiver with a large antenna, receiving the heavenly broadcast. He then acted as the mouthpiece for the quality of kindness. Because of his close affinity to, his love of and his faith in G-d, G-d revealed His own will through him, so that Avraham was in fact expressing Hashem's own inner will.

This is the reason that the righteous are able to decree, and Hashem fulfills their desire (See Shabbat 59b and Taanit 23a). Or, in even more extreme cases, that the righteous are able to overturn G-d's decree (Moed Katan 16a). All this does not mean, G-d forbid, that G-d wants one thing, while the righteous wants another and that Hashem changes His mind. No, there can be no inner change in the essence of G-d or of His will. Simply, the righteous person's will is one aspect of G-d's will and he expresses this particular point vocally.

This is also the explanation for why a curse pronounced by a

Torah scholar, even if undeserved, is fulfilled (Makkot 11a and elsewhere). The curse is really a Divine protest against a particular state of affairs. And even though not all the conditions for its implementation apply, the protest stands. As, for example, when King David excavated the foundation of the Temple, the waters of the depth surged up and wanted to flood the world. King David thought of inscribing the Divine Name on a shard and casting it into the depths in order to quell the waters. There was, however, a halachic doubt: did the saving of the world justify the erasing of the Divine Name that would inevitably result from casting the shard into the depths? King David asked if anyone knew the answer, but no one replied. Only when King David threatened that anyone who knew the Halachah but did not speak up would be strangled, did Achitopel respond and say that it was permitted. Despite the fact that Achitopel revealed the answer in the end, King David's curse (inspired by a spark of the Divine will) clung to him and Achitopel died by strangulation (As described in Shmuel 2 17:23). This happened because Achitophel was in essence a negative personality, even though he did not act criminally on this specific occasion.

And thus we see that Avraham is a truly righteous person, whose own will is a faithful reflection of the Divine will. ◻

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According to this view, what we have is not two separate reasons, but rather the reason for the prohibition and the extent of the prohibition.

The Pit'hei Teshuva on Yoreh Deah siman 113 sub-part. 1 quotes the Tiferet le-Moshe, according to whom “the reason for the marriage is permitted foods cooked by an apostate for the purpose of marriage is not [permitted], but there was another reason, set forth in the Beit Yosef: that a person would not come to be fed impure foods. According to this, foods cooked by an apostate are similarly forbidden, for he is as one who denies the entire Torah, and he too could perhaps feed a person forbidden foods

But all of this would seem to apply only if we maintain that these are two separate reasons (and not, as Rashi implies, that the prohibition is specifically when both reasons apply). But if

we maintain, as Rambam does in his Commentary on the Mishna – and as perhaps Rashi means, too – that the crux of the prohibition is to avoid assimilation, then even if the definition of the prohibition is “in case he will feed him something that is impure”, in a case where there is no danger of intermarriage – such as where the food is cooked by a Jewish here-tic – the prohibition of “bishul akum” clearly does not apply.

In the Yabi'a Omer Responsa, part V siman 10, as well as in the Tzitz Eliezer part IX siman 41, there is a discussion of the problems arising where a factory is owned by Jews who are not Shabbat observant, and whether the prohibition of “bishul akum”, as explained in the Tiferet le-Moshe, applies or not. Both conclude that the prohibition of “bishul akum” does not apply to foods produced by a Jew who publicly desecrates Shabbat. ◻

Ze'ev Jabotinsky— a Leader was born

This day in History: 12 of Cheshvan 5681

Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky was born on October 17, 1880 in Odessa, Russia. At age 18, he left for Italy and Switzerland to study law, where he also served as a correspondent for several well-known Russian newspapers. His dispatches and articles were widely read, bringing him recognition as one of the most brilliant Russian journalists. Jabotinsky signed each dispatch and article with his literary pseudonym Altalena.

The horrors of the 1903 pogrom against the Jews of Kishinev had the profound effect of spurring Jabotinsky's Zionist pursuits. He became a pivotal force in organizing self-defense units and fighting for Jewish minority rights in Russia. Jabotinsky was elected as a delegate to the 6th Zionist Congress, the last in which Theodor Herzl participated. During this period, Jabotinsky championed the spread of Hebrew language and culture throughout Russia, as well as the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Following the outbreak of World War I in 1914, he left for the front as a newspaper correspondent. While in Alexandria, his meeting with Joseph Trumpeldor sparked the beginning of his unflagging efforts to establish a Jewish Legion. Jabotinsky was singularly intent upon this goal, and refused to divert the plan by creating an auxiliary unit instead. Following diligent endeavors in London, final confirmation was received in August 1917 to create the first Jewish Legion. Jabotinsky also served in the British army as a lieutenant, seeing duty in the assault on the Jordan River crossings in the campaign to free Eretz Israel (Palestine) from Turkish rule. During Passover, 1920, Jabotinsky headed the Hagana in Jerusalem against Arab rioters, and was condemned by the British Mandatory Government to 15 years hard labor. Following a public outcry against the verdict, he received amnesty and was released from Acre prison.

From 1921, Jabotinsky served as a member of the Zionist Executive and became one of the founders of "Keren Hayesod." Following a series of policy disagreements on the direction of the Zionist Movement, however, he seceded. In 1925, Jabotinsky established the Union of Zionists-Revisionists (Hatzohar), which called for the immediate establishment of a Jewish State.

In 1923, the youth movement Betar (Brith Joseph Trumpeldor) was created. The new youth movement, with Jabotinsky at its head, imbued its members with a military and nationalistic spirit. During the years 1928-1929, he resided in

Palestine and edited the Hebrew daily "Doar Hayom," while undertaking increased political activity. When Jabotinsky left Eretz Yisrael (Palestine) on a lecture tour in 1929, the British administration denied him re-entry into the country. From that point until his death in 1940, Jabotinsky resided in the Diaspora.

In 1935, after the Zionist Executive rejected his political program and refused to clearly define the aim of Zionism as "the establishment of a Jewish state," Jabotinsky resigned from the Zionist Movement. He later founded the New Zionist Organization (N.Z.O), which purported independent political activity for free immigration and the establishment of a Jewish State. In 1937, the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (I.Z.L) became the military arm of the Jabotinsky movement, with him as its commander. The three entities headed by Jabotinsky, the New Zionist Organization (N.Z.O), the Betar youth movement and the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (I.Z.L), were the three operative extensions of the Jabotinsky movement. The New Zionist Organization served as the political arm, maintaining contacts with governments and other political bodies; Betar educated Diaspora youth for the liberation and building of Eretz Israel; and the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (I.Z.L) was the military arm fighting the enemies of Zionism. These three entities synchronized their efforts in organizing the Af Al Pi illegal immigration. This dramatic, intricate rescue effort involved over 30 ships setting sail from European ports to bring tens of thousands of illegal immigrants to Eretz Israel.

Throughout this period of intense political activity, Jabotinsky continued to write prolific poetry, novels, short stories and articles on politics, social and economic problems. Among his works, The Jewish Legion, Prelude to Delilah (Samson) and The Five served as particularly profound inspirations for Jews of the Diaspora.

During 1939-1940, Jabotinsky was active in Britain and the United States in endeavoring to establish a Jewish army to fight alongside the Allies against Nazi Germany.

On August 4, 1940, while visiting the Betar camp in New York, Ze'ev Jabotinsky suffered a massive, fatal heart attack. His will stipulated the request to be buried in Eretz Israel, only at the express order of the Hebrew Government of the future Jewish State. His last will and testament was indeed fulfilled by Levi Eshkol, Israel's third Prime Minister: in 1964, Jabotinsky's remains and those of his wife Jeanne were re-interred on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. ◻

After reading, please be sure to place this Torah Sheet in a Geniza (Sheimus)

Torah MiTzion establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a *Rosh Kollel*, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, or young single men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

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