**Parshas Lech Lecha- ספר הכוכבים...כה יהיה זרעך**

**Make Yourself Great**

In this Parsha, we learn of Avraham Avinu’s campaign against the vicious gang of four kings. The Torah relates in detail, how these savage tyrants bulldozed their way through the fiercest tribes of that time in a relentless drive to eliminate any opposition. Avraham was not impressed. With his few cronies and without any weaponry other than the sand and straw, Avraham vanquished them. In the process, he demonstrates unflagging loyalty and rescues לוט, despite the disparity between them. He puts an end to the years of cruel repression that gripped the region and he is crowned by all as the supreme leader and Prince of Hashem. Avraham Avinu was never groomed to be a politician or statesman, nor was he skilled in military strategy. All his victories were למעלה מדרך הטבע, defying reality and silencing any skeptics or naysayers. Decades of political upheaval and strife were directed מן השמים, to maneuver Avraham into the spotlight, כדי שיצא טבעו בעולם – so that he nations of the world would come to know that there is an Eibishter and Avraham is His representative.

Despite the open miracles and clear Hasgacha Elyonah, there still seemed to be a reluctance to recognize the Hand of Hashem and appreciate the power of Emunah. Avraham Avinu had to make it clear to the king of Sodom, that any success or good fortune that he enjoyed, was only from Birchas Hashem. בלעדי – it has nothing to do with me. Even Malkitzedek, none other than Shem ben Noach, sort of missed this awesome lesson in Emunah, when he first lauded Avraham’s prowess, before crediting Keil Elyon.

Following this episode, the Ribono shel Olam makes one of the most dramatic promises in the Torah, as he urges Avraham Avinu to raise his eyes and gaze heavenward - “Count the stars if you can, so will your descendants be”. In its simplest form, this is Hashem’s promise of a nation of uncountable multitudes. R’ Meir Shapiro, zt”l offered a novel, more powerful interpretation. Nothing seemed to ever get in the way of Avraham Avinu’s intense desire to bring Hashem’s light into the world. He walked in fire, took on mighty kings and singlehandedly stood up to the entire world to demonstrate the concept of Emuna B’Hashem. He stood up to every challenge that any other person would shy away from. Not because he could, but because he was determined to.

This is what the Eibeshter was saying to Avrohom Avinu. “You are looking up to try and count the stars because I asked you to, even though you know you can’t possibly count them. Your children will also have that dogged determination to do, even if they know, על פי טבע, they cannot.”

Like Avraham Avinu, Klall Yisroel doesn’t measure their willingness to take on something by their ability to do it. Our ability is shaped by our determination to be מרבה כבוד שמים and get it done, no matter the odds. Every community, every Mosad Chinuch, Chesed or other Tzarchei HaKlall, was built by Yidden who reached far beyond their abilities and Kochos.

R’ Isser Zalman Meltzer, zt”l, recalled an amazing incident from his days as Rav of Slutzk. An elderly Talmid Chochom, who was going blind, came by one day. He showed the Rav a sefer he had written and indicated a specific piece in the sefer as his last Chidush. R’ Isser Zalman didn’t understand. The Yid explained that as he grew older, he found it difficult to learn so deeply and develop Chiddushim. He decided to lighten up and learn without such intense effort. That’s when he realized that his vision was failing. The eye doctor he consulted with told him he could do nothing to reverse the damage. In fact, the doctor wondered how he managed to see so well till then. According to what the doctor saw, he should have already been totally blind ten years back. There was no way to explain how he had been able to see all this time. The doctor could not explain it. But this Yid could. As long as he was determined to learn with all his כוחות, he was given the Siyata Dishmaya to go beyond his true ability. Once he lost the Ratzon to push himself, he no longer was granted the extraordinary vision that defied טבע.

Every one of us can reach further and achieve new horizons. If you don’t believe you can, then you are forgetting that the Ribono shel Olam is with you on this. Where physical ability and practical resources stop, the Siyata Dishmaya takes you way further. הבא לטהר מסעין אותו מן השמים. Reach up high and reach deep within yourself. With Hashem’s help, you can daven better. You can learn more and deeper. You can be more patient and kind. You can resist temptation. You can make a difference in someone’s life. You can make a change for the better in your community, family and your own life. You can reach for the stars. Believe in yourself. Believe in your children. Believe that there is an, as yet, unexplored galaxy of greatness in every Yid.

Have a wonderful Shabbos, yk

**L’Ravcha D’Milsa Weekly Almanac**

**Erev Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha** - 10 Cheshvan

**Gad ben Yaakov Avinu** born and niftar (1566 BCE-1441 BCE). The Seforim teach that this is an auspicious day for starting a business or undertaking any project with success for today “Ba Gad” – Good Mazel came into the world. Mazel and Bracha!

**Rav Aryeh Leib of Stanislov**, author of Nachlas Aryeh (1749). The city of Stanisławów was founded in the year 1654 by the Hetman (commander) and Starosta (County Administrator) of the Halicz region, Jedrzej Potocki, and was named after his son Stanisław. Armenians and Jews were invited and promised, in the founding charter of the city of May 7, 1654, the right to settle in the city and the right to establish a house of prayer on the land that was given to them. In a special charter from September 17, 1662[6], Jedrzej Potocki granted the Jews (Żydzi talmudowi) the right to settle permanently in the city and the right to engage in commerce and crafts in the same measure as “the members of the Polish, Ruthenia and Armenian nations.” In 1732, the Jewish population was 1,470 souls from among a total population of 3,321

R’ Dov Schwartzman (2011) Rosh Yeshivas Bais HaTalmud Yerushalayim

**Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Lech Lecha** - 11 Cheshvan

**Metushelach** ben Chanoch, grandfather of Noach (3074 BCE – 2105 BCE)

**Rachel Imeinu** dies in childbirth (1554 BCE) According to the Vilna Gaon; she was 36 years old; according to Sefer Hayashar, 45.

**Binyamin** ben Yaakov Avinu born and niftar (1554-1445 BCE)

**Rav Menachem Nachum Twersky, the Chernobyl Rebbe** (1730-1797), a student of the Baal Shem Tov and the Magid Mezritch. He authored Meor Einayim. He was succeeded by his son, Mordechai, founder of the Chernobyl dynasty, the descendents of which are the Skverer Chasidim, the current Rebbe of whom is Rav Dovid Twersky of New Square, NY.

**Rav Pesach Pruskin**, Rav and Rosh Yeshivah in Kobrin (1879-1939). Born to his widowed mother (he was named after his father, who died several months prior to his birth), in abject poverty. She took her five children to the home of her grandfather, Rabbi Pinchas Michael, who was Rav in Antipole. In his teens, he joined the yeshivah of the Chofetz Chaim in Radin He later went to Slobodka, where he was inspired by the Mussar of "der Alter," Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel.and spent a year at Kelm with Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv The Alter of Slobodka, constantly searching for suitable cities in which to establish yeshivos, selected Slutsk, a large city in White Russia, for his next undertaking. He dispatched Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer as Rosh Yeshivah, with fourteen talmidim - among them Pesach Kobriner. He became mashgiach in Slutsk, than – in 1911 – Rav of Amtsislav (also called Mistsislav); there he opened a yeshiva. When the Bolsheviks took over Russia, and his native city of Kobrin was incorporated into Poland (by the Soviet-Polish treaty of Riga, 1922), he escaped the Communist rule to Kobrin. Where he became Rav and opened another yeshiva.

**Rav Avraham Elimelech Weinberg, founder of Slonimer Chassidus** (1804-1883), a disciple of Rav Noach of Lechovitz, and author of Be'er Avraham on Mechilta, Yesod Ha'avodah, and Chessed L’Avraham. He was was active in the spread of the Chasidic movement in Lithuania and was a main organizer of support for the religious communities in the Holy Land.

 **Rav Yehuda Leib Chasman**, mashgiach of Yeshivas Chevron (1869-1935). Learned in Kelm under Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziev, in Volozhin under the Netziv as well as that of the Rabbi Chaim Halevi Soloveichik of Brisk. In 1897, he was brought to serve as the Telz yeshiva's Mashgiach. He established the independent Yeshiva in Shtutshin in 1908. In 1912, he was rabbi of Shtutsin. In his last years, he was the spiritual director of the Slabodka Yeshiva in Hebron and in Jerusalem. In 1926, he became mashgiach at Chevron. Author of Ohr Yohel. Among his talmidin was Rav Shlomo Schwadron.

R’ Nosson Tzvi Finkel (2011) Rosh Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim

Sunday, Parshas Vayeira -12 Cheshvan

 **Rav Yehuda Tzadka**, Rosh yeshiva of Porat Yosef (1909-1991). Born in Yerushalayim, Rav Yehuda was a great-great grandson of Rav Tzadka Chutzin, author of Tzedaka U’misphat. His mother, Simcha, was the Ben Ish Chai’s niece. The Tzadka family lived in the Beis Yisrael neighborhood of Yerushalayim. When he was 12 years old, Yehuda Tzadka enrolled in the Porat Yosef Yeshiva in the Old City. There, he became very close to Rav Ezra Attia. At the age of only 27 years, he was appointed to teach at the yeshiva. Among Reb Yehuda’s first students was Rav Ovadia Yosef. In time, Rav Yehuda became the menahel ruchani, and with the petira of Rav Ezra Attias in 1970, he was appointed to new Rosh Yeshiva.

Monday, Parshas Vayeira – 13 MarChesvan - BaHa”B, Sheini Basra

*November 14 - “Frost Moon” SuperMoon - it will be the closest such moon to Earth since January 1948. We won’t see the full moon this close again until Nov. 25, 2034.*

 In 1553, the Pope ordered the burning of Seforim in the main square of Venice. Mattathias Delacrut, in his book, Zikkaron, still in manuscript, writes:

Our books are lost, the little that we had. If not that our eyes had seen this, in the year, “And Shakai shall be your treasure” (Job 22:25), for the pope and his cardinals from Rome decreed to despoil our books and our glory, trample and burn them in the fire. In Venice they burned more than a thousand complete books of the Talmud, and five hundred copies of the Alfasi, and other books without end, new and old.

Wednesday, Parshas Vayeira - 15 Cheshvan

**Mattisyahu ben Yochanan, Kohen Godol**, father of the Chasmonaim (138 BCE, or 165)

**Rav Chaim Pinto** the Second was born in Mogador (current Essaouira), Morocco (1939). His grandfather, Rav Chaim the First, was the great-grandson of Rav Yosef Pinto, who fled from Spain to Rome with 26 talmidim after the 1492 expulsion. However, he had to flee to Damascus after local priests trapped him into a theological debate and soundly lost. When the Jewish population of Mogador began thinning out, Rav Chaim the Second moved to Casablanca, while his son, Rav Moshe Aharon Pinto, stayed Mogador to prevent his father’s shul from closing down.

 **Rav Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz**, **the Chazon Ish** (1878-1953). Educated by his father, the Av Beis Din in Kosova, Poland (near Grodno)), his first work on several parts of the Shulchan Aruch was published anonymously in Vilna in 1911 under the title "Chazon Ish," by which name he became known. He moved to Vilna about 1920 and moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1933, settling in Bnei B'rak. Upon his arrival in Eretz Yisrael, he devoted vast amounts of time and energy to Seder Zeraim, which deals mainly with laws pertaining to the land, to answer the many halachic problems inherent to a life in the Holy Land consistent with Torah.

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