

*Parshas Lech Lcha 5768*

*Distraction Abstraction*

**I** am somewhat confused. As is my custom, the Shabbos before my mother's

Yartzeit I like to talk about her life and deeds. However, this year, on this Shabbos, we have a wonderful Simchah, the Aufrouf of Joel Danzinger in anticipation to his marriage to my wife's sister, Hindy Levin. To make matters more confusing, I received an e-mail yesterday from several national organizations, sent to hundreds of pulpit Rabbis, requesting that the topic of our Drashos this week should be about Eretz Yisroel and the proposed dividing of Yerushalim. So, as not to offend any of these important options, I have decided instead to speak about something else entirely. I will talk about someone who I know is near and dear to us all, whom we all cherish; Rush Limbaugh. For those not following the news these past few weeks, something extraordinary happened. To read from Reuters:

*Conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh raised \$2.1 million for children of fallen Marines and law enforcement officers on Friday by auctioning off a letter from Senate Democrats denouncing him for a remark about "phony soldiers."*

*Philanthropist Betty Casey purchased the letter on eBay, which said it was the most expensive item ever sold for charity on the online marketplace.*

*The letter, signed by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and 40 fellow Senate Democrats, expressed outrage over what they described as Limbaugh's "characterization of troops who oppose the (Iraq) war as 'phony soldiers'."*

*Limbaugh denounced the note as a "smear letter," saying the remark he made on his radio show referred to soldiers who falsified their military service.*

*Regardless, Reid, speaking in the Senate, saluted Limbaugh for raising the money on behalf of The Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation, which helps children of Marines and law officers killed in the line of duty.*

*"I strongly believe when we can put our differences aside, even Harry Reid and Rush Limbaugh, we should do that and try to accomplish good things for the American people," Reid said.*

It is astonishing how all the inanity can make us lose our focus, take us away from things we all hold dear, and, what can be accomplished if, instead of falling victim to distraction, we remind ourselves on what we can all agree on and what we care about.

This weeks Parsha is an endless stream of momentous moments. Extraordinarily, no less than 15 times does Rashi, when quoting from our Rabbis when interpreting verses, phrases, names and places, begins his comments with the term: "Remez Al HaSid-a precursor/hint to future events". But there is one moment in this week's Parsha that, quite possibly, may be the most consequential moment for all of us as a nation, second only to the Sinai Revelation; the Bris Bein Habasarim which hints, nay, informs, about some of the most substantial future histories of our nation. It begins;

#### בראשית פרק טו

אחר הדברים האלה הנה דבר ידוד אל אברהם במחזה לאמר אל תירא אברהם אנכי  
 מגן לך שכרן הרבה מאד: (ב) ויאמר אברהם... (ז) ויאמר אליו אני ידוד אשר  
 הוצאתיך מאור פשדים לתת לך את הארץ הזאת לרשתה: (ח) ויאמר אדני ידוד במה  
 אדע כי אירשנה: (ט) ויאמר אליו קחה לי עגלה משלשת ועז משלשת ואיל

**משלש ותר וגוזל** .: (וי) ויקח לו את כל אלה ויבתר אתם בתוך ניתן איש בתרו לקראת רעהו ואת הצפור לא בתר-

*“After these events, G-d spoke to Abram...take three rams...and three turtledoves...you shall split these down the middle...and Abram did not split the birds (turtledoves)...<sup>1</sup>”*

But then something is recorded that, seemingly, does not belong;

**(ויא) וינד העיט על הפגרים וישב אתם אבנם:**  
*“Birds of prey descended on the carcasses and Abram shooed them away.”*

What could be more innocuous, more natural and commonplace than birds feeding on carcasses, as well as someone then shooing them away? Consider, when the verse says,

ויאמר אליו אני ידוד אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים (15:7)  
*“And He said to him, I am G-d who took out from Ur Kasdim...”*

- we need the Rabbis of the Talmud to explain that this is an allusion to the miracle of Abraham being saved from the fiery furnace of Nimrod which happened in Ur Kasdim, for *that* story, and first of the ten prominent trials of Abraham, was deemed unnecessary by G-d to be canonized in the Torah!<sup>2</sup> So, again, what is exceptional about *this* moment?

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**W**e all have had moments lost. When, on Yom Kippur we deep in a moments of spirituality and prayer when suddenly someone next to us sneezes,

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the commentaries explain how the fowl represented the Nation and Land and it was for this reason that they were not to be cut/split, for we do not divide these entities, like Yerushalim, and, I hope, for the time being (this week), this satisfies my obligation regarding this polemic.

<sup>2</sup> In past years we discussed the reason for that particular omission.

or, during a rousing Drashah when we begin to seriously contemplate growth or change, we are asked about the Bills. We lose that focus, the feeling; the Rabbi is speaking under the Chuppa, the family, the Chasan VKalla are moved to tears, when suddenly the microphone goes out leaving the audience with the shriek of

the feedback. Once again the Rabbi must begin all over again, for that feeling has fled.

Avraham was *there*, in the moment, a rendezvous with G-d, his level of feeling, of concentration, was at its peak and the future of his progeny depended, hinged, on this moment. But then the sneeze, the sound system went dead, birds doing what they do, nature, the world – REALITY - risked blinding and distracting him. He had to maintain his focus, keep his “eye on the prize”. This is perhaps how to read the Pasuk, “Vayashav Osam Avraham” not that he shooed the birds away but Vayashav-he (Abraham) returned, he returned to the sacrifices, returned his instincts and reflexes and continued the stream of Kedusha, unchanged.

The “Ayatim” of life causes us to lose our resolve for growth. The Rabbi is speaking, we are drinking in the lesson he is teaching, thinking of how we can apply the words being said to our daily life, when, suddenly, an AYIT, “the rabbi misused that word again...”, we lose it and we struggle to hold on.

I recall my mother driving me to the first day of yeshiva (9<sup>th</sup> grade), she smiling ear to ear “aren’t you excited?”, me, “no...excited?...about what?” “Yeshiva, you are starting Yeshiva!”, after all the diapers changed, suppers made, clothes washed, she never took her eye off the prize, *her* goal –her son *will* go to yeshiva.

Joel and Hindy, marriage is a constant flow of AYITIM. You can disagree on the color of the paint for the dining room and everything can become viewed through the prism of that disagreement, completely causing us to become disloyal to our goals of love and respect. When you are told, and you will hear this Bracha constantly, “you should build a Beis Neamen B’yisroel, it is not a blessing but rather a charge a command, a hope, that by focusing and not being distracted you will achieve that which you seek. Like Abraham, like my mother and, we hope, like you. Good Shabbos and may you both be Zocheh to indeed build a Beis Neamen Byisroel!