

## Roots, Sprouts, And Trees

By Avi Cohen, 12th Grade

**M**any of the details mentioned in the stories told over in Sefer Bereishis seem to be irrelevant or inconsequential. Why do we need to know how many wells were dug by our forefathers or exactly who prepared the food for the heavenly visitors at Avraham's tent? What is the significance of the Torah telling us about Avraham's travels throughout the land of Canaan or where he went during a famine? The Ramban addresses this question. He says that he will explain a general rule regarding all of the upcoming parshiyos that deal with Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Everything that happened to our forefathers is symbolic of what will occur to their children. Therefore, the Torah relates to the lengths of travels, the digging of the wells, and other occurrences. One might think that these stories are unnecessary but in reality, they were all written to inform us of what will happen in the future. For example, the Ramban explains that the three wells dug by Yitzchok symbolize the three Batei Mikdash.

In order for a tree to grow, a seed must be planted in the ground. The type of tree that will grow is determined by which seed was planted and how it took root. This concept is true in the spiritual realm as well. The Avos are not only our roots in a physical sense but also in a spiritual sense. All of their actions were carried out with the intention of creating a spiritual nation. These actions were the seeds of the Jewish people, and the sprouts that grew out of those seeds can be perceived through what has occurred to the Jewish nation throughout history.

(Continued on page 5)

## Leave It Behind

By Avi Mandel, 11th Grade

**I**n this week's Parsha, the Torah begins with Avram's first test. Hashem says to Avram, "go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Usually, when a person leaves his hometown, he first exits his father's house, then his relatives, and then he leaves his land. Why then does the Torah reverse the order?

The answer is simple. The pasuk is referring and alluding to the spiritual sense of Avram's departure. When the pasuk says leave your hometown, it means changing your bad habits and leaving your old ways. This is why the order is reversed. The pasuk is starting with the easier tasks and then going to the harder ones. The culture of one's land is not so deeply instilled in him and is therefore easy to get rid of. It is then more difficult to rid oneself of bad habits that one received from his friends. And lastly, it is most difficult and extremely challenging to get rid of one's own habits acquired in his own house.

The Sfas Emes quotes the Zohar and says that in every single generation Hashem proclaimed "Go for yourself." However, Avram was the only one to act on Hashem's proclamation. Hashem still calls out "Go for yourself" in today's generation and it is upon us to respond and react. We must hear Hashem calling out and run away from our bad traits and habits and serve Hashem even during times of difficulty and hardship. (Adapted from Aish)

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### Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

## Parshat Lech Lecha Questions

1. Aside from this parsha, where else does Hashem command Avraham with the words *Lech Lecha* - "Go for yourself"?
2. Which two people are called brothers but weren't?
3. Which *Brit* ("covenant/treaty") was made between people, and not with Hashem?
4. Which body of water, found in Israel, is mentioned in this parsha?
5. Where is Avraham called an *Ivri* ("the Hebrew")? Who is the only other person in the Torah called an *Ivri*?
6. What event in this parsha occurs *B'etzem hayom ha'zeh* - "on that very day"? What other events in the Torah occur *B'etzem hayom ha'zeh*? (3 answers)

## Answers

1. When Hashem tells Avraham to sacrifice his son, He says *Lech Lecha* - "And go to the land of Moriah" (Genesis 22:2).
2. Avraham refers to Lot and himself as "brothers" (Genesis 13:8). Avraham was actually the uncle of Lot (Genesis 11:27).
3. Avraham makes a *Brit* with three men in Genesis 14:13.
4. The Dead Sea, is mentioned in conjunction with the war of the four and the five kings (Genesis 14:3).
5. When the refugee informs of the capture of Lot, Avraham is referred to as *Halvri* (Genesis 14:13). It is the only place where he is called this. Yosef is the only other person called an *Ivri*, by the wife of Potiphar (Genesis 39:14), and by the butler when he informs Pharaoh of Yosef's ability to interpret dreams (Genesis 41:12).
6. Avraham gives all the members of his household a *Brit Milah* "on that very day" he is commanded (Genesis 17:23, 26). The same expression is used when Noach enters the Ark with his family (Genesis 7:13), when Hashem takes Jews out of Egypt (Exodus 12:17), and when Hashem tells Moshe to ascend Har Nevo to visually survey the Land of Israel before his death (Deut. 32:48 with Rashi).



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**First Aliyah:** Avram is commanded by Hashem to leave his father's house and homeland, and travel to the land that He will show him. As reward for doing so, Hashem promised to make Avram the patriarch of a great nation. Avram obeyed, taking along his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. Once Avram arrived in Canaan, Hashem informed him that He will eventually give that land to his descendents. Avram traverses the length of the land until a famine forces him to travel to Egypt. Fearing that the Egyptians would kill him in order to take Sarai, Avram asked her to tell them that he was her brother.

**Second Aliyah:** Sarai was taken captive and brought to Pharaoh. Hashem struck the members of Pharaoh's palace with a plague. Pharaoh let Sarai leave and gave Avram and Sarai with gifts and riches, and had them escorted out of his land. Avram returned triumphantly to Canaan.

**Third Aliyah:** When Lot's shepherds quarreled with Avram's shepherds, the two parted ways, with Lot settling in Sodom, which was renowned for its evil inhabitants. After Lot departed, Hashem spoke to Avram again, reiterating His promise to bequeath the land to his descendents, and promising to make his descendents numerous as the soil of the earth.

**Fourth Aliyah:** The southern region of Canaan was involved in a major war between four and five kings. Lot was taken captive in the war. When Avram was informed of this he ran to save him, and he defeated the kings that had taken his nephew captive.

**Fifth Aliyah:** Sodom's king offered Avram all the war's spoils, but he refused. When Hashem reassured Avram that he would be greatly rewarded for his righteousness, Avram cries out, "What is the point of all the reward and wealth if I have no heir to inherit it?" Hashem assured Avram that he will indeed have a child, and promised that Avram's descendents will be as numerous as the stars of the heaven.

**Sixth Aliyah:** Avram requested a sign from Hashem that his descendents would inherit the land of Canaan. Hashem responded with the *Bris Ben HaBesarim*: *Avram and the Shechinah passed between halved animals, and Hashem told Avram that his descendents would be exiled and in bondage for four hundred years. His descendents would leave with great wealth, Hashem would punish the nations which enslaved them, and Avram's children would inherit the lands of Canaan.*

After, Sarai suggested that Avram father a child with her Egyptian maid, Hagar, in order to have a child. Hagar conceived and began to mistreat her mistress Sarai, which made Sarai treat her harshly, prompting Hagar to flee. Hagar encountered an angel who encouraged her to return to Sarai, promising her that the child she will bear will become a great nation. She obeyed, and gave birth to Yishmael. At the very end of this section, Hashem added the letter *hey* to Avram's name, making it Avraham.

**Seventh Aliyah:** Hashem sealed a covenant of circumcision for males at eight days old with Avraham and his descendents. Sarai's name is changed to Sarah, and Hashem promises a delighted Avraham that he will father another son, this time from Sarah. At the age of 99, Avraham circumcised himself, his son Yishmael, and all the members of his household.

# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz  
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Transcribed by  
Dovi Flug

## Wearing Tefillin at a Bris Milah

There is a minhag brought down by several sources to davka wear tefillin by a bris milah.

- The Sha"ch in Yoreh De'ah 265:24 quotes the Hagaos Minhagim who says that we do the bris before we say aleinu and we should be careful not to take off our tefillin before the bris milah. The reason for this because the same way the bris milah serves as an "os", a sign, so too the tefillin serve as an "os".

These two minhagim are probably related to each other; perhaps the reason why we perform the milah before aleinu is to make sure that people remain wearing their tefillin during the milah itself. It also might have to do with the role of aleinu.

- In the sefer harerei kedem Rav Soloveitchik writes that there are two opinions in the rishonim regarding the tefillah of aleinu. According to some the tefillah of aleinu serves as a siyum hatefillah, an ending of tefillah. The other opinion is that aleinu is a siluk mbeis haknesses, a way to say goodbye to the shul after you've completed what you were there for.

If we were to say that aleinu is a siyum hatefillah then we should say aleinu **before** the bris milah since davening is over before we begin the bris. However, if we say that aleinu is a siluk beis haknesses then it's mistavra that we should say aleinu **after** the bris since part of the reason we are in shul is to perform the bris.

But it may also relate to the idea that we want people to be wearing their tefillin at the bris. This minhag is not only quoted by the Sha"ch, but it is also quoted by the Magen Avraham in siman 25 in hilchos tefillin, where he quotes from the Hagaos Maimonios who says that on a day that there is a bris milah, one should not remove his tefillin until after the bris milah. In fact, the Mishna Bru-rah in siman 25:55 quotes this minhag as well. The reason for this is the same as the reason brought down by the Sha"ch.

Another reason that is quoted by some achronim which is not quoted by the nosei keilim of the Shulchan Aruch is based on the gemara in megil-

lah 16b. The gemara, when darshening the passuk "la'yehudim haysa orah v'simcha v'sasson v'yikar," translates the passuk as follows:

Orah = Torah  
Simcha = Yom tov  
Sasson = Milah  
Yikar = Tefillin


Since the passuk places Milah right before tefillin we see that there is a reason to assume that milah should be performed while our tefillin are still on.

Parenthetically, the Be'er Heitev points out that if you say Orah = Torah then it would also seem that we read from the torah before performing the milah.

However, if we take the reason of most of the rishonim that we wear tefillin during the milah in order to have two signs, a major issue is posed.

The gemara in Eiruvin on daf 96 quotes a braisa which says that one might think that he should wear tefillin on shabbos and yom tov but because we already have the os of shabbos we don't do so. The gemara learns from here that it is not good to have more than one os at a time.

If this is the case that it is incorrect to have two osos at the same time, then how can the halacha be that we should davka make sure to have two osos during the bris? Many rishonim answer that all times one needs two osos; Tefillin and milah. The reason for this is because the passuk says "al pi shnei eidim yakum daver" "at the word of two testifiers a matter is upheld" in our case the "eidim" are our osos. On shabbos since we have shabbos and milah we don't need the os of tefillin since we already have two osos. The Elya Rabbah says that the reason is because tefillin and shabbos are two osos that represent yetzias mitzraim. Therefore, to have two osos is showing that one alone is not strong enough. Rav Moshe says that the os of milah is having a bris, not creating a bris. When we are at a bris with our tefillin it's not two osos because the act of a bris is not an os. Rav Ovadya Yosef says it's not an issue.

**SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS**  *With Akiva Magder*

After the mass destruction of the mabul and the corruption of the dor haflaga, we are finally introduced to Avraham Avinu, the father of klal yisrael. It is imperative to appreciate what Avraham Avinu brought to the world. The gemara in Brachos 7b states: "Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon the son of Yochai: From the day that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the world there was no person who called him "Lord" until Avraham came and called him Lord." This means that Avraham was the first to recognize Hashem's kingship over this world. There is another interesting gemara found in Pesachim 117b which states: "Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: 'And I'll make you a great nation', that's why we say: the God of Avraham; 'And I'll bless you', that's why we say: the God of Yitzchak; 'And I'll make your name great', that's why we say: the God of Yaakov. Could it be that we conclude the blessing with all of them? Therefore, the verse teaches us by saying: "and you will be a blessing". With you we conclude the blessing, but we don't conclude with all of them." The pasuk the gemara quotes for Avraham is the second pasuk in this week's parsha: "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great; and you will be a blessing."

There is a rule when reciting brachos, that one must mention Hashem's name and malchus (e.g. melech ha'olam). That being the case, Tosfos asks (Brachos 40b) regarding the first bracha of shemoneh esrei- why don't we mention malchus?! Tosfos gives the astonishing answer that by saying the words "Elokei Avraham" it is like mentioning Hashem's kingship. That is because Avraham coronated Hashem king over the whole world by establishing to the world that Hashem is king.

The Chida (Rav Chaim Yosef David Azulai) in his sefer Pnei David says something amazing. He learns what Tosfos said from the pasuk quoted above: "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name

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# Congregation of Torah

By Avi Ash, 11th Grade

“Vayikra Beshaim Hashem”

“And he called out in the name of Hashem”(12:8)

The Rambam interprets this verse to mean that Avraham had a large following to which he would share thoughts and knowledge directly relating to G-d's existence. This, however, was impossible to do in Ur Kasdim, where the people shunned Avraham and his teachings, but in Eretz Yisrael, he was able to spread Torah to the masses. The Rambam gives a similar interpretation regarding Yitzchak when he settled in Gerar and was promised by Hashem, “Do not fear, for I am with you”, saying that Yitzchak would teach the surrounding people about the glory of Hashem. However, the Rambam asks, nothing similar is ever said about Yaakov. Why is that so?

He answers that Yaakov had the zechus of having many children in his lifetime who were all tzaddikim and Talmidei Chachamim. They were called “the congregation of Israel”, and Torah was spread through them to everyone surrounding him. It wasn't necessary for him to teach the locals about Hashem, for it was well publicized throughout the land. We can see from here the value of building G-d-fearing congregations who spread Torah, while also seeing the value of improving our own personal behavior to so we can be zocheh to influence other people in a positive direction, just like the Avos did in their times.

(Avi Cohen- Continued from page 1)

When Bilam planned to curse the Jews, his intention was to annihilate them by destroying their roots. For this reason, he had seven altars built, to rival the seven altars that were erected by our Avos. He was unsuccessful in his attempts, as he himself said: “I look at their beginnings and their roots and I see that through the actions of the patriarchs and matriarchs their foundations are concrete like mountains of hills.”

Although the Avos succeeded greatly in their endeavors, they had the ability to do even more than they did. Chazal tells us regarding Avraham's hospitality toward the three angels that every action he performed personally garnered a reward that was delivered by Hashem Himself, while every action that he performed through an emissary garnered a reward that was delivered by an emissary of Hashem. Additionally, the Rambam writes that because Avraham did not place complete faith in Hashem that He would sustain him during the famine, and he left the country in which he had been commanded to reside, his offspring suffered the exile in Mitzrayim.

Chazal tells us that it was because Avraham took along Talmidei Chachamim when he waged war against the four kings that his descendants became slaves in Mitzrayim for 210 years. What should Avraham have done differently? How could he fight mighty armies without a handful of warriors? It seems that Avraham, who was planting seeds with his every action, could have done even more, thereby influencing the events that would later “sprout” from his actions.

So how can this apply to ourselves? For one thing, it gives us a new appreciation of every single word written in the Torah. Additionally, there are instances when we too have the ability to plant seeds for the future. For instance, our actions on Rosh Hashanah plant seeds for the following year, and during those two days, we must be extra careful with our behavior. Finally, this knowledge gives us an incentive to strive for greater heights. If the Torah tells us that even Avraham could have done more, then certainly we can also do more.

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## The Real Test

By: Daniel Lebowitz, 9th Grade

This week's parsha begins with Hashem telling Avram 'lech lecha,' go for yourself. Why does it have the double language? Rashi explains it to mean that he told Avram to go just for his own benefit. Hashem said that the journey would end up being beneficial to him. If he stayed in Charan he wouldn't have children. But if he went to Canaan he would be blessed with starting a family that would eventually become a great nation and spread around the world.

However, there is a very basic question on this Rashi. The mishna in Avos says that one of Avram's ten tests was the command of him to go for yourself to the unknown land and that Hashem said He would show him where to go. Why is this considered a test? If Hashem came to anyone and told them to move, and promised them guaranteed blessings like success, and family well-being we would all agree to move. Especially considering the greatness of Avram, was this really such a big test?

Rav Moshe Feinstein gives the following answer. There was no doubt that Avram would listen to Hashem. The real test was to see if he would ask Hashem for a reason as to why he had to move to get such blessings. As a great tzaddik, Avram knew that Hashem has the power to give him children anywhere. Thus, possibly prompting him to ask why he had to uproot himself and move. Why couldn't he get these blessings in Charan? It is human nature to find it difficult to perform even the most menial of tasks when one doesn't understand the reasoning behind it. Surely a large task like moving would need an explanation. That was the real test. Of course, Avram passed the test because he didn't question Hashem. Rather he assumed that Hashem had a good reason, so he obeyed without question.

*(Sparks of Chassidus- Continued from page 4)*

great and you will be a blessing," Being that each one of these clauses corresponds to one of the avos, as mentioned by the gemara in Pesachim, when Hashem tells Avraham "and you will be a blessing" this literally means you will be a bracha. That through mentioning you, Avraham, the first bracha of shemoneh esrei is considered a bracha as Tosfos explained.

Maybe this can be furthered by what the Kedushas Levi (Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev) says. He comments that the word "v'hei'yay-and you will be", has the same letters as Hashem's name, YKVK. He points out that the name of YKVK first has a yud hei and then a vav hei as opposed to "v'hei'yay" which first has a vav hei and then a yud hei. What is the significance of this? He explains that there are two types of divine inspiration, one coming from Hashem (called isarusah d'l'ei'lah) and one coming from us on this earth (called isarusah d'l'satah). Before Avraham came into this world the divine inspiration came only from Hashem. This is proved through what the Torah says about Noach, that he "walked with God". Rashi comments there (6:9) that Noach needed support to keep him up, however, Avraham would strengthen himself and walk in his righteousness. However, once Avraham came to the world the inspiration came from below as well. Reb Levi Yitzchak says that this is why the Torah uses the word "v'hei'yay" which first has a vav hei and then a yud hei to represent that the divine inspiration came from below, from Avraham himself.

From this explanation we can understand the first gemara that was quoted: "Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon son of Yochai: From the day that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the world there was no person who called him "Lord" until Avraham came and called him Lord." Meaning that before Avraham Avinu, all the divine inspiration came from Hashem since no one recognized Him as being the master over the world. Though, once Avraham came to the world and recognized that Hashem is the master over the world, the divine inspiration came from below.

In reality, this is the theme of shemoneh esrei. We call out to Hashem and recognize that everything comes from Him. Shemoneh esrei is a time where each individual in their own way recognizes that Hashem is our father and king. Instead of Hashem just giving us everything without us asking, He expects that we call to him. Hashem expects us to be like Avraham and recognize His presence in this world. In reality this is the only way to ensure our tefillos are answered because making Hashem's name great in this world is the greatest thing we can do. Understanding this is truly acting like Avraham and a true coronation of Hashem in this world.

Have a great Shabbos!!

*(SOG- Continued from page 8)*

arrived at their destination. The seat opposite him was empty. In the back of his mind, the thought that his dream might not have been a dream after all frightened him. As evening morphed into night, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua made his way to Moshe's home—a cabin on the city's outskirts, not far from the cemetery. Everything was shrouded in darkness by the time he stepped up to the door and knocked gently. A woman, clearly Moshe's wife, opened the door and regarded the holy visitor with wide-eyed reverence. "Where is your husband?" Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua asked. Tight-lipped, the woman directed a shaking finger at a small hut in the corner of the yard. "There." With a quiet murmur of thanks, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua left the woman by the door and approached the hut, treading slowly and softly through the yard. He peered through a small crack in the door and studied the scene inside: Sitting in the center of the room, swaying over a large book with utmost reverence, were Moshe the shochet, the old hitchhiker, and the young traveler who carried the heavy bundle. Their faces emanated a golden glow that filled the small room. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua crept back to Moshe's wife, who was still standing in the doorway. "Please, can you call your husband?" he asked. The woman obliged and disappeared inside the hut. Moshe then staggered from the darkness towards Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua, barely keeping his balance, a sloshing bottle of spirits swinging in one hand. "I demand you cease this act at once!" said Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua sternly. "Tell me what is happening here." Moshe's expression transformed mid-step into one of utter seriousness. He dropped the bottle and pulled Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua out of his wife's earshot. "For a long while, I've kept my true identity a secret. Time after time, I buried it under various guises and behaviors. But now that you have revealed my secret, I realize my role here in this world has come to an end. I ask one thing of you — please arrange that my wife and children receive a monthly stipend." Moshe's body was laid to rest the next day. Leading the funeral procession, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua bared his anguish in heaving sobs, a tormenting guilt seared forever into his soul. The life of an innocent, righteous man had been severed short, and it was his fault. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua used the eulogy to reveal Moshe's identity as one of the 36 hidden righteous people and described the extreme measures he had taken to maintain his disguise. Now seeing their wayward shochet in a new light, the townspeople rushed to fulfill Moshe's last wishes. It was these events that Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua relayed to his peers, after which he began his penance: a three-year exile through the Polish countryside.

Translated and adapted from Sichat Hashavua vol. 867



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## STORIES OF GREATNESS

### TOLD OVER BY: HILLEL GOLUBTCHIK

Face flushed with emotion, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua Heschel, then rabbi of Kolbuszowa, Poland, finished recounting his story and fell quiet. His peers, Rabbi Mordechai of Neshchiz and Rabbi Aryeh Leib (known as the Shpoler Zeide), seemed oblivious that the story had come to an end. "Esteemed gentleman," said Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua loudly, "What is the verdict? I accept whatever you decide." Concerned, the rabbis agreed that the details were too scarce to settle on a ruling. It took another hour of pointed questioning before they felt ready to deliver a verdict. "The circumstances surrounding your actions classify you as an accidental murderer," they decided. "Technically, you did nothing wrong, but a man of your spiritual stature should have pursued an alternate set of actions. An extended exile would be the appropriate remedy for your soul." Because they had issued the verdict upon their friend, the rabbis assumed his punishment too. All three would aimlessly wander the country for three years, relying on G-d for their sustenance. Several weeks prior, a small delegation of Jews from a neighboring town had traveled to Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua with shocking news about the behavior of their shochet (ritual slaughterer). Moshe had fallen on tough times, and was now known to frequent the local watering holes, whiling away entire nights in a drunken stupor. Witnesses reported seeing him swaying wildly, slurring local folk songs at the top of his lungs. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua could hardly believe his ears. There was nothing harmless about Moshe's behavior! A shochet, the individual responsible for providing the town's supply of kosher meat, was expected to act with decorum. He packed a few belongings, and left the very next day to investigate. The scenery rolled by uneventfully as the

carriage gently rocked its passenger. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua noticed a man, hunched with age, walking deliberately along the roadside. "Why are you tiring yourself out?" he called from the carriage window. "Please, come share the bench with me. There's plenty of space." The man climbed aboard, and although the rabbi attempted to engage him in friendly conversation, the newcomer made it clear he preferred to be left alone. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua did not notice the tiredness descending. Without even a yawn of warning, he found himself overcome by a strong and sudden urge for deep sleep. "How is the Rabbi of Kolbuszowa swayed by slander about a shochet who is revered by the angels themselves?" Convinced it was the old hitchhiker who said these words, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua forced his eyes open and whirled around, only to discover that the carriage had stopped and he was alone inside it. The driver tended the horses, then hoisted himself back up onto the seat and promptly resumed the journey. Once again, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua spotted a lone figure trudging along the road, a heavy sack slung over his shoulder. He ordered the driver to slow the carriage and invited the young traveler inside. Cheered by the kind offer, the young traveler took a seat and stared out the window wordlessly. Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua, grateful for the company, asked a few questions, but was once again met with silence. For the second time that day, the rabbi felt himself overcome with a sudden, heavy exhaustion, and as his eyes drooped, he heard the familiar thundering voice. "Is it true the Rabbi of Kolbuszowa wishes to fire a shochet who even the angels above dare not approach?" Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua woke up and realized they had

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דברים היוצאים מן הל"ב

Weekly Torah Publication of the DRS Yeshiva High School

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