



Stars and Sand

By Moshe Benhamu, 12th Grade

In Parshas Lech-Lecha, Avraham complained to Hashem that he was childless. Hashem promised that his children would be as numerous as the stars in the sky, as it says in the pasuk: "Hashem took him outside and said, 'Look at the sky, and count the stars if you can! So will be your descendants.'" On another occasion, Hashem promised Avraham that his children would be like "the sand on the seashore." Why are the Jewish people compared to both stars and grains of sand?

The Chachamim took note that Hashem's promise in Lech-Lecha uses the uncommon word "Koh." They explained that this word alludes to the Jewish people's future greatness at Har Sinai, where the word "Koh" also appears. What does the state of the Jewish people at Har Sinai have to do with being compared to stars?

Dovid Hamelech wrote in Tehillim that Hashem named each star, because each and every star has a unique function and a special purpose for why it was created, and is therefore given a unique name to reflect that. The comparison of Avraham's descendants to stars indicates the importance and greatness of every individual member of the Jewish people. Every soul is a universe unto itself, as the Chachamim wrote, "One who saves a single soul of Israel, it is as if he has saved an entire world."

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Life's Baggage

By Avi Cohen, 11th Grade

The Medrash Rabbah on this week's Parsha states in the name of Rav Levi: There are two times that "Lech Lecha" is written in the Torah, and we do not know which one G-d holds more precious. The first "Lech Lecha" is obviously the first pasuk of our Parsha. It says "Go out from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you." The second "Lech Lecha" is in connection with Akeidas Yitzchok, where Avraham is told, "Go out to the Land of Moriah and offer him there as a korban on one of the mountains I will tell you." Rav Levi concludes that Akeidas Yitzchok was a greater test than the test of Avram leaving his homeland and therefore the second instance of "Lech Lecha" is "more precious to G-d".

Seemingly, it is strange that Rav Levi was even puzzled by this question. Why would anyone think that the test of leaving one's homeland might be comparable to the test of the Akeida? The Akeida would be the most difficult test for any parent, particularly such a person as Avraham, who was known for Chessed and who had preached monotheism and the virtues of a Merciful G-d to his many disciples.

A Nesivos Shalom at the beginning of the Parsha addresses this issue. Certainly, the Akeida was a very difficult test, but it was a "one-shot deal." Avraham was called upon to ascend the mountain, sacrifice Yitzchak, and then the test would be over. However, the test of "Lech Lecha" in our parsha is a test of beginning a journey that will affect him and will last the rest of his life. Everyone has their own personal challenges in life. We are all charged with the task of bringing completeness to our souls. We have to achieve Tikun of our Neshma in our own

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade
Rebbe

**Parshas Lech Lecha
Questions**

1. Which two people are called brothers but weren't?
2. Aside from this parsha, where else does Hashem command Avraham with the words *Lech Lecha* - "Go for yourself"?
3. Which body of water, found in Israel, is mentioned in this parsha?
4. Which article of clothing appears in this parsha, but nowhere else in the Torah?
5. Aside from Avraham and Sarah, who else in the book of Genesis is given a new name? (3 answers) Who else in the Torah is given a new name?
6. In this parsha, in what context is the number 10 mentioned? In what context is one-tenth mentioned?

Answers

1. Avraham refers to Lot and himself as "brothers" (Genesis 13:8). Avraham was actually the uncle of Lot (Genesis 11:27).
2. When Hashem tells Avraham to sacrifice his son, He says *Lech Lecha* - "And go to the land of Moriah" (Genesis 22:2).
3. The Dead Sea, is mentioned in conjunction with the war of the four and the five kings (Genesis 14:3).
4. Avraham tells the king of Sodom that he will not even take a shoelace from the spoils of war (Genesis 14:23)
5. The name of Yaakov is changed to Yisrael - both by the angel he fought (Genesis 32:29) and by Hashem (35:10). The name of Yosef is changed by Pharaoh to Tzafnat Pane'ach (Genesis 41:45). Benyamin's original birth name was Ben-Oni, later called Benyamin (Genesis 35:18). Moshe changes the name of Hoshea Bin Nun to Yehoshua (Numbers 13:16).
6. Avraham and Sarah wait 10 years in the land of Canaan before Avraham marries Hagar (Genesis 15:3). Avraham gave one-tenth of everything to Malchei-Tzedek (Genesis 14:20).



The complete edition of
Rabbi Moshe Atik's
Torah Teasers
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1st Aliyah - In this Aliyah Hashem commands Avraham to leave his home, his home land and travel to the land that Hashem will show him. Hashem promises Avraham that Hashem will take care of Avraham. Avraham takes his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, they arrive in Cnaan and Hashem tells them, and tells him that this is the land that Hashem will give to Avrahams descendants. The Aliyah continues to talk about a famine that forces Avraham to travel to Mitzrayim and Avraham was afraid that the Egyptians will kill him in order to take Sarai so Avraham asks her to say that she is Avrahams sister.

2nd Aliyah - In this Aliyah we hear that Sarai was taken captive and brought to Pharaoh. Hashem punishes Pharaohs palace and Sarai is released and Avraham and Sarai receive gifts and riches and they return successfully to Eretz Cnaan.

3rd Aliyah - In this Aliyah Lots shepherds and Avraham shepherds get into a fight and Lot and Avraham split up. Lot goes to Sedom and Avraham stays in Eretz Cnaan and after they split Hashem speaks to Avraham after Lot leaves and Hashem repeats His promise to give Eretz Cnaan to Avrahams descendants and Hashem also promises that those descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth.

4th Aliyah - In this Aliyah we hear about a war between five kings and four kings. The four kings eventually defeat the five kings and they capture all of their cities including Sedom. We know from the last Aliyah that Lot was in Sedom. Lot is captured and Avraham hears that his nephew Lot was taken captive and Avraham, with only a small army, a small force, defeats the five kings and releases all of the captives and he returns all of the spoils.

5th Aliyah - In this Aliyah the king of Sedom wants to reward Avraham with the spoils of the war. However, Avraham declines very strongly and the Aliyah continues with Hashem reassuring Avraham that his descendants, despite the fact that now he has no heirs, will be as numerous as the stars of the heavens.

6th Aliyah - In this Aliyah we hear about the Bris Ben Habisarim. Avraham is told that his descendants would inherit Eretz Cnaan but they would first go through a painful period in Mitzrayim. They would leave there with great wealth. Afterwards Avraham at the suggestion of Sarai marries Saris maid Hagar. After Hagar becomes pregnant Hagar mistreats Sarai. Sarai responds and Hagar flees and eventually encounters an angel who tells her to go back to Sarai. The Malach promises Hagar that the child she will have will become a great nation. She obeys and she gives birth to Yishmael. And the Aliyah ends with Hashem changing Avrahams name to Avraham.

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10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by
Eli Wiseman

Eating "On the Go"

- **Q: What is the source that eating on the go might be a problem?**
- **A:** The Mishna (Kiddushin 40b) writes if a person doesn't know Tanach, Mishna or doesn't have good character traits, he is compared to a person who is outside society and cannot be a witness.
 - The Gemara there quotes a Braita that states: if a person *eats in the marketplace*, he is compared to a *dog*, and there are some who say that this too disqualifies him as a witness.
 - The Gemara Poskins like these sages. It is very important to know what the Gemara is talking about since a disqualified witness at a wedding can make the marriage invalid.
- **Q: What does eating in the marketplace refer to?**
- **A1:** In Rashi Kiddushin 40b, it is implied that it is someone eating in public (a place not set for eating). He is disqualified as a witness because he doesn't care about himself or embarrassed to demean himself like the person in the Mishna above.
- The Ri Migash (Teshuva Siman 159) explains Rashi to mean it's not a prohibition to eat on the go, but it is not the way a dignified person eats.
- According to the Ri Migash, not only eating on the go disqualifies one as a witness but also anything that is deemed a disgusting behavior would make him disqualified.
- **Q:** Tosfos asks on Rashi: Why should eating in a street (a place not set for eating) disqualify him from testifying? Doesn't the Yerushalmi say that Rabbi Meir saw Rabbi Shimon eating in the street, where he said to him "It is not respectable for a Talmid Chacham to eat in the street!", implying that regarding anyone else, it doesn't matter?!
- **A:** Rav Yaakov Emden answers that only if a person is walking in a marketplace is it prohibited to eat but if one is eating in a public area it is not a prohibition.
- **A2:** Tosfos (Kiddushin 40b) quotes Rabeinu Chananel who says eating in the marketplace refers to grabbing and eating.
 - Tosfos explains that he is not disqualified for stealing since he either stole less than a Peruata or the owner was ok with people grabbing.
- **A3:** Tosfos (Kiddushin 40b) quotes Rabeinu Eliyahu who says the case of a person eating in the market is when a person takes food from all the stands but doesn't buy anything.
- The issue that we are dealing with is Gneivas Daas, to deceive someone that something is true even though it isn't since he is deceiving the storekeeper who thinks he is buying the food.
- **A4:** Rambam (Hilchos Edut 11:5) writes that someone who eats while walking in the street cannot be a witness.
- **Q: What does one need to eat in order to be called a dog?**
- **A1:** According to Rabbenu Tam's explanation of Rabenu Chanael, one is only called a dog if he eats bread or the like.
- **A2:** Rosh says one is only called a dog if he has a set meal.
 - The Korban Nesenal says the Rosh is talking about a set meal with bread.
- **A3:** The Kesef Mishna is not sure if the Rambam holds that one can't even eat fruits while walking on the street. He concludes that a regular person can while a Talmid Chacham no.
- **Q: Is drink included in this discussion?**
- **A:** The Siach Yitzchak deduces from the Gemara in Berachos (54a) that tells a story that Mar the son of Ravina was walking in a valley and was thirsty, so Hashem made a miracle and a spring appeared.
 - One could argue that Hashem gave him the water because without it he would die.
- **Q: Why does the Gemara compare him to a "dog"?**
- **A1:** The Maharal (Chidushei HaGados) writes that out of all the creatures of the world the dog has the least dignity, and if someone is eating in the marketplace, he is a person of low dignity like a dog.
- **A2:** According to Tosfos (Kiddushin 40b) who quotes Rabeinu Eliyahu as saying eating in the marketplace refers to a person who takes from each stand but doesn't

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SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Yaakov
Fuchs*

Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger, commonly known by the title of his Magnum Opus the Sfas Emes, brings out a question from Rashi to begin a ma'amar on Parshas Lech Lecha. Why didn't Hashem tell Avraham where he was supposed to go? It would have been extremely helpful and less trying for Avraham had he had a sense of where he was headed! The Sfas Emes explains that the nature of the question was not academic, rather something provided as a direct relevance to us. Sefer Bereishis as a whole largely revolves around the theme of Ma'asei Avos Siman L'Banim - the ways and lives of our forefathers pave and shape an image of our priorities and goals in this world. The Sfas Emes explains that because of this, every member of Klal Yisrael needs to experience their own personal Lecha Lecha moment.

The Sfas Emes further explains that our Lech Lecha journey (and Avraham's) is (was) not solely a physical journey, rather a spiritual one as well. The purpose of Hashem not telling Avraham where to go is because when you know where you are headed, you have some form of comfort and control. But when we know Hashem is leading the way, that same sense of comfort is there. An intrinsic part of a Tzaddik's journey through life is the willingness to do only the ratzon Hashem. That is, by freely willing giving up our autonomy and control, we become, in effect, instruments to realize the ratzon (will) of HaShem in this world.

I see this Sfas Emes as a message into our lives now. Very often we find the idea of being a leader or taking initiative to be a daunting task. That's why Hashem tells us "Lech Lecha". If we just go, knowing Hashem will take care of us, we will always succeed. Remember to do your best and Hashem will do the rest!

(Moshe Carroll- Continued from page 6)

a fresh start. This changes the person's thinking and attitude, for the better and makes one a new creation.

This is how Rav Neventzal understands the necessity for Avraham to move from Aram Naharayim. Every person is influenced to a greater or lesser extent by his environment and peers. This influence exists to a certain extent, even against one's will. Therefore Avraham was commanded to move to Israel. Hashem wanted Avraham's influences and daily habits to change so that his decree could change. In Aram Naharayim, Avraham could not reach his full potential and merit becoming the father of the Jewish nation. The move was a natural and human experience. Moving to a new place gives a person a new outlook, fresh possibilities, and loftier goals.

However, Rav Neventzal continues and adds a spiritual dimension to this idea. A person draws inner strength and security from the place he lives. There is not just a concept of the Jewish people living in the land of Israel, but every Shevet living in their assigned portion. That is the reason for the halacha that even if the Jews are living in the land, but EACH tribe is not living in their assigned portion, the laws of Yovel don't apply since every tribe derives its spiritual strength from its specific portion.

We can now really appreciate the Gemara in Rosh Hashanah: the essence of Avraham's move to a fresh location was necessary to change his outlook and create a new essence and personality that enabled him to become a leader. But the fact that the move was specifically to Eretz Yisrael opened the path for Avraham to become spiritually complete and worthy of becoming the father of the Jewish nation. Have a good Shabbos!

(Aliyah Summary- Continued from page 2)

7th Aliyah - In this Aliyah we hear about the Bris that Hashem made with Avraham and his descendants the Bris Milah. All males when they are eight days old will get a Bris. In this Aliyah Sarais name is changed to Sarah and Hashem promises Avraham that he will have another son but this time not from Hagar, from Sarah. The Aliyah ends with Avraham giving himself a Bris at the age of 99 and he also gives a Bris to his son Yishmael and all of the males of Avrahams household also get a Bris.

What's the Big Test?

By: Zecharia Lebowitz, 10th Grade

This week's parsha begins with the pasuk of Hashem telling Avraham to leave his land, his house, and house of his father. Hashem promised Avraham that he will become blessed and famous as a reward for following this command. When we consider the abundance of blessings promised to Avraham for leaving his homeland, it seems that the "test" was not such a great challenge. If Hashem were to tell any of us to leave our homes in order to go to Israel and become extremely successful, wouldn't we all listen immediately? The promise of becoming a great nation and of worldwide fame should be enough to lure even people on a much lower level than Avraham. Why, then, is this considered to be one of the ten great tests that Avraham had to face?

Even in our times, each and every day, people move far away from their homes, and suffer many indignities and rejections, for the POTENTIAL CHANCE of becoming rich and famous. Restaurants in Los Angeles are full of "future stars" who are waiting tables until they become famous. Why then would a guarantee of fame and fortune not be sufficient to draw Avraham to leave his home?

Some explain that the real test was not whether Avraham would or would not go. Rather, the test was WHY he would go - if he would go in order to achieve all of the promised blessings then he would have failed the test. If, however, he would go in order to fulfill the TZIVUY HASHEM, then he will have passed the test.

When viewed in this way, the test of Avraham is even greater than originally thought. We often do the right things, but for the wrong reasons. Avraham sets an example of doing the right things out of a pure love for Hashem.

Each morning, immediately following birchas hatorah we list several mitzvos for which we are rewarded in both this world and the next. Part of our mission, as bnei Avraham, is to fulfill each of those mitzvos (e.g. kibud av va'eim, hachnasas orchim, bikur cholim), out of a pure desire to do the Ratzon Hashem.

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But the Jewish people also have a collective mission, as indicated by their comparison to sand. A single grain of sand is worthless, but together, these grains of sand form a border against the ocean, establishing dry land and enabling life to exist. Bnei Yisroel's collective purpose is to bring about the world's spiritual advance. Hashem made sure to first establish the collective mission of the Jewish people, and only afterwards focus on their individual goals. When they left Egypt, Bnei Yisroel was at first a nation with a collective mission; to bring spirituality to prominence in this world. The promise of the stars, on the other hand, is indicative of the special mission of each individual. This refers to the potential for greatness that each member of the Jewish people acquired at Har Sinai. These special goals are a function of each individual's efforts, deeds, and Torah study. This level is based on the revelation of Torah and Mitzvot at Har Sinai. The Midrash teaches us that when Bnei Yisroel promised to obey the laws of the Torah, the angels tied two crowns to the head of every Jew. These spiritual crowns reflected the greatness of each individual; every Jew was a prince, bearing his own unique crown of holi-

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purchase, this person is like a dog who eats a little here and a little there.

- **A3:** The Gra (introduction to Megillat Ruth) writes, based on Chazal, that eating nowadays is in place of Karbanos.
 - o The Gemara (Chagiga 27a) writes that when we had a Bais Hamikdash, the Mizbeach atoned for sins through Karbanos, but nowadays the table atones for sins because of inviting guests (Rashi).
 - o From this Gemara, we can learn that a person must treat his table like a Mizbeach by saying words of Torah (which represent fire) on This is comparable to the Mizbeach where a pillar of fire that came down on the Mizbeach

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Life's Baggage

By: Moshe Carroll, 12th grade

In the first pasuk of this week's Parsha, Hashem commands the father of the Jewish nation, Avraham Avinu, to go to Eretz Yisrael. In the second pasuk, Avraham is given a bracha. What is the connection between these two Pesukim?

One possible connection could be that the bracha which was promised in pasuk bet is the reward that Avraham will receive for following Hashem's command of leaving his homeland and going to a new, uncharted and strange land. Hashem's command is the goal and the blessing is the result. And why was it necessary to specify the reward? Maybe to test Avraham, to see if he would follow Hashem's difficult command only in order to receive a reward. Rashi understands these pesukim in a similar fashion: since travel causes difficulty having children and diminishes one's finances and reputation, Hashem promises Avraham that despite these difficulties, if he fulfills this command of "lech lecha," he will become a great nation.

However, there is an alternative way to understand the connection between these two pesukim. Hashem is telling Avraham that His goal is to bless him and make his name great in the world. But, in order for this goal to become a reality, Avraham would need to leave his homeland since this bracha could only be showered on him in the land of Israel. According to this understanding, the goal is the bracha and the aliyah to Israel was the necessary condition for its attainment.

Rav Avigdor Neventzal suggests a third explanation. The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah (16b) states: The proof of the "yesh omrim" - change of place - is the experience of Avraham. In Charan, Avraham did not merit having children, but as soon as he left, Hashem promised him, that he would become a great nation. Rashi adds: If in Aram Naharayim, there was a decree that Avraham would not have children, this would not be the case in Eretz Yisrael, where the decree, in a different location, would be different. When the condition of location changed, the decree was then able to change.

The Gemara further explains that Rabbi Yitzchak did not list "changing one's place" as one of the conditions for changing a decree of Hashem, because he felt it was not simply due to Avraham changing his location, but rather the special Zechut of the land of Israel that allowed Avraham and Sarah to have children. Similarly, the halacha states that if a husband and wife are unable to have children for ten years and then they move to Israel, the counting starts fresh from the day they move. In essence, the argument between Rabbi Yitzchak and the "yesh omrim" is whether Avraham's physical geographical move or specifically the move to Israel, allowed his decree to become a great nation changed for the better. Rav Neventzal continues this thought by explaining that the essence of changing one's house or town where he has a comfortable daily routine allows for new opportunities that the person would never have otherwise experienced in his life. A move allows for a new awareness and a new outlook on life,

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personal fashion.

That is the charge of "Lech Lecha". This charge involves a lifetime of work. Many times, this charge requires getting out of one's environment, society, and family. We never enter life with a clean slate. We all enter life with baggage; emotional baggage, financial baggage, genetic baggage, family baggage, and more. Sometimes, the baggage is very good and extremely helpful. Other times, the baggage can be a real handicap. The type of people that we are and the characteristics that we have are primarily not our own choosing. When a person is given a mission in life and a goal to accomplish, it may involve the need to rid himself of so much of the baggage he came with. Such a challenge is not a "one-shot deal," rather, it accompanies us day in and day out. Such a constant, life-long challenge may indeed be a greater test than a test requiring only a momentary rise to the occasion, as difficult as that challenge may be. Have a good Shabbos!

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much, if not more credit in Hashem's book for being an anonymous donor. A person does not need to be a famous Torah scholar in order to ultimately succeed in life because Hashem knows each person's thought process and what they're doing from behind the scenes.

Avraham's Original Belief

By: Avi Kupchick, 12th Grade

In this week's Parsha, we read about one of the most impactful people ever: Avraham Avinu. Where exactly did Avraham come from? He had no one who taught him or guided him; he found Hashem by himself. But still, someone or something must have led him to be inspired and to find Hashem.

The Medrash explains that Avraham was led to his inspiration by his idol-worshipping father Terach. One day, Avraham was working in his father's idol shop, and asked a customer, "How could something made yesterday by Terach be a god?" Avraham had 2 siblings: nachor and charan! Nachor the younger one was named after terach's father nachor who was the first person in the Torah to do this. When Avraham takes the entire attitude of nachor from the micro to the macro he realize that HASHEM is the 1 and Only G-D! The journey that Avraham taken to cannan was taken already by terach but he stopped half- way and avraham was the one who continued the journey both physically and intellectually.

Based off of shiur from Rabbi Ari Kahn on yutorah.org

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- o The Mishna Berura (Siman 158) says one reason why we wash our hands before eating is that they need to be clean like the Cohanim wash before bringing Karbonas.
 - ✦ During the times of the Bais Hamikdash, any food outside the boundary of where it could be eaten was considered Treif and you give it to a dog. If *one eats in the Marketplace*, he is taking food out of the place where it is supposed to be eaten (in a set place for eating). If he eats that food, he is like the dog who eats the food that was taken out of the place where a Korban could be eaten.
- **Q: So can one eat or drink on the go?**
- Rashi explained by the Ri Migash: It is not prohibited just undignified. (However, it might prohibit one from being a witness if certain criteria are met.)
- (Rashi explained by Tosfos: It is only disgusting for a Talmid Chacham but anyone else it is not.)
- Rashi explained by Rav Yaakov Emden: It is only disgusting to eat on the go, but it is not disgusting if one is only sitting in a public place
- Rabeinu Chananel in Tosfos: It is ok since one is not grabbing from the marketplace.
- Rabeinu Eliyahu in Tosfos: It is ok since one is not taking from each stand in the marketplace.
- Rabbeinu Tam's explanation of Rabbeinu Chananel in Tosfos: It is ok since one is not grabbing and even if he was grabbing it if he wasn't eating bread, it is ok.
- Rambam: It is possible that there may be a problem.
- **Q: How do we Poskin?**
- **A:** The Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat Siman 34) poskins like the Rambam.
 - o **However**, one could argue in a society where it is not considered doggish to eat on the go, it is not prohibited and not even disgusting.
 - o The Teshuvos Derech Tzvi (Orach Chaim Siman 119) says its only doggish for a Talmid Chacham.
- **Q: How about eating in a car?**
- **A:** In Derech Sicha Rav Kanievsky is quoted as saying that eating in a car or when going to a Shiur is permissible.
- **Q: Should one ask witnesses if they ate on the go?**
- **A:** Rav Menashe Klein says that one should be careful to ask because they can be disqualified.
 - o **However**, this probably only refers to a person who eats like a pig on the go, but a person who just eats on the go should be fine.
- **Q: Is one required to make a new Bracha if he is eating on the go when he is changing places?**
- **A:** According to Rav Ovadia Yosef and other Poskim, even though one who changes places has to make a new Bracha if one plans to eat on the go, one Bracha is all that is needed.

STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: TZVI GRUSHKO

It is a consistency that in every generation there are hidden tzaddikim ("righteous ones") who conceal their greatness from the eyes of men and live amongst us, disguised as simple, ignorant folk. Rabbi Gershon Kitover once asked his famous brother-in-law, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, to show him one of these "hidden", righteous men. At first, the Baal Shem Tov refused, but Rabbi Gershon persisted in his request until the Chassidic master finally relented. The Baal Shem Tov gave Rabbi Gershon a prophecy, saying, "this Friday night in shul, look among the crowd of beggars by the door, waiting to be invited for the Shabbat meal. One of them will be a hidden tzaddik." Additionally, the Baal Shem Tov issued a warning along with this prediction. He said, "But you must promise not to let on in any way that you are aware of his true identity." Rabbi Gershon quickly identified the tzaddik-in-disguise and invited him to join him in his Shabbat meals. But though he carefully scrutinized his guest's every word and deed, he was unable to discern anything beyond the ordinary behavior of a wandering pauper. Finally, he could not resist the temptation to ask his guest to grace the table with some words of Torah. "Me?! Speak words of Torah? A beggar the child of beggars, who has scarcely seen the inside of a cheder? Whatever gave you such an idea, anyway?" asked the guest, a note of suspicion in his voice. Rabbi Gershon quickly let the matter drop. The next day, however, at the noontime meal, Rabbi Gershon could not resist another attempt. He thought, I have one of the greatest people of the generation at my table—should I indeed learn nothing from him? Again he pressed his guest to reveal something of his well-concealed greatness. This time, the hidden tzaddik seemed to hesitate somewhat, as if tempted to accede to his host's request, but only for a fleeting moment. He immediately resumed his ignorant-beggar pose of the night before, protesting that the very request was ridiculous. Finally, at the seudah shelishit, the third Shabbat meal, Rabbi Gershon seemed to have finally made some headway. When he again asked his guest to enlighten him with words of Torah, the holy beggar's face was transformed. His eyes began to glow with a Di-

vine light, and his coarse features assumed a sublime grace. He opened his mouth to speak; but before a single word emerged from his lips, he suddenly closed them, and with obvious effort, wrenched himself from his seat and bolted from the room. By the time Rabbi Gershon had collected his wits and run after him out to the street, he was gone. The next day, when Rabbi Gershon came to see the Baal Shem Tov, he was shocked to learn that his brother-in-law had been ill throughout that Shabbat. At the Friday night meal, the Baal Shem Tov's disciples had noticed that something was amiss; the next day the situation had worsened, and at one point, toward the close of Shabbat, it had seemed that his very life was in jeopardy. Luckily, with the help of Hashem, the crisis passed and he was steadily regaining his strength. When Rabbi Gershon entered his brother-in-law's room, the Chassidic master said to him: "What have you done? Because of you, I almost departed from this world." Seeing the look of bewilderment on Rabbi Gershon's face, the Baal Shem Tov went on to clarify his previous statement. "You see, every righteous soul has two faces, one hidden and the other revealed. The tzaddik who ate at your table this Shabbat is my cosmic "twin" whose greatness must remain hidden for as long as I openly serve as a teacher in the service of the Almighty. But the temptation for a hidden tzaddik to reveal himself is very great, since every person desires to manifestly influence his surroundings. Had he done so, my soul would have had to be concealed from the world; since I am already widely known, this meant that I would have had to pass on from my present life. Luckily, he stopped himself just in time." This story communicates a very important message that applies to our everyday lives. We must know that looking good and impressing others is great in Olam Hazeh, but that this will not help us after our short period of existence on the Earth. For example, it may look nice to put your name out there as a big sponsor for a school or organization, but you get just as

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