

People Waiting Along Our Way

SHALOSHUDOS | LECH LECHA

1. Are we going backward when we go home?

We have spent Shabbos davening, learning, sharing meals, and singing. For a day, the telephone and the business have waited. Soon we will return to the responsibilities of the week.

It is easy to feel that we are leaving the best part behind.

When we come to shul, we feel that we are moving closer to Hashem. When we go back to work, we can feel that the spiritual part of life has been put on hold until we return.

Is that really how a Jewish week is supposed to work?

I want to approach that question through a detail in our davening. We say the words so often that it is easy to miss the remarkable story behind their starting date.

2. Two references to rain - two different functions

At Shemini Atzeres, we begin saying *mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem*: Hashem causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall.

That is a declaration of Hashem's power. We are praising Him as the One Who brings rain.

But there is a separate prayer, in the weekday Amidah's blessing for the year's produce: *v'sein tal u'matar livrachah* - grant dew and rain for blessing.

Here we are actually asking for rain. **Mentioning rain and requesting rain are two different things.** [1]

In Eretz Yisrael, the request begins on the seventh of Cheshvan, from Maariv that begins the date. Here in the Diaspora, we begin later, according to a different seasonal calculation. [2]

Why does Eretz Yisrael wait until the seventh of Cheshvan?

Sukkos is over. The land needs rain. The farmer's livelihood depends on it. Why not ask for that blessing as soon as Yom Tov ends?

What could be important enough to make a whole country delay its request for rain?

3. The Jew still on the road

The Mishnah gives Rabban Gamliel's answer: we wait fifteen days after the festival, until the seventh of Mar Cheshvan, so that the last pilgrim can reach the Euphrates River. [3]

Jews had come to Yerushalayim for Yom Tov. Now they were going home. Some lived nearby; others faced a long journey. Rain that would bless the fields could make that journey difficult.

Picture a farmer already home, waiting for rain. His livelihood depends on it. But another Jew is still on the road. The national request waits for that distant traveler.

That explains **why we wait until the seventh of Mar Cheshvan to ask for rain**. But it leaves us with a second question - the question at the heart of our discussion.

4. Why Lech Lecha - every single year?

Every year, the seventh of Mar Cheshvan falls during the week of Parshas Lech Lecha. It is not merely an interesting coincidence this year. The date and this parsha come together year after year. [7]

Why? What is the inner connection between the day the last pilgrim reaches home and the parsha in which Hashem tells Avraham, *Lech lecha*?

At first glance, the two seem to point in opposite directions.

Avraham leaves Charan and goes toward Eretz Yisrael. We understand that as a spiritual ascent.

The pilgrim leaves the Beis Hamikdash and returns to his field or business. He is leaving the place of revealed kedushah for ordinary life. That looks like a descent.

Why does the calendar bring these two journeys together every year? How can going home FROM the holy place belong with Avraham's journey TOWARD the Holy Land?

Pause.

And this is our question too. Soon we leave the atmosphere of Shabbos for the working week. Are we simply going down a level until next Shabbos?

Let us hold that question. Before answering it, we need to understand the difference between a *sachir* and a *shliach*.

5. The sachir and the shliach

A *sachir* is a hired worker. He provides labor in exchange for wages. A *shliach* is an authorized agent. He acts on behalf of the person who appointed him.

Imagine that you hire someone to paint your house. He does the work, and you pay him. His employment obligates him to carry out the agreed task.

Now imagine that you authorize someone to buy something on your behalf. Within the rules of agency, the purchase he makes can take effect for you. He represents you in the transaction.

That is the principle: "*Shelucho shel adam kemoso*" - a person's agent is like the person himself, for the relevant act of agency. [4]

The categories can overlap. An agent may be paid. A worker may care deeply about his employer's goals. We are using them here to illustrate two attitudes, not to classify every employee's motives.

In the first attitude, my own benefit stays at the center. I work and receive something in return.

In spiritual life, that return can be very refined. I want to feel uplifted. I enjoy a beautiful davening. I love the satisfaction of understanding a difficult piece of Torah. These are good things.

But if my whole measure is how much spiritual pleasure I receive, I will naturally want to remain wherever I feel most inspired.

The shliach introduces a different center of attention: **the purpose of the one who sent him.**

He asks: What have I been entrusted to accomplish? Whom am I meant to help? What does this responsibility require of me?

The change is from "What am I receiving here?" to "What does Hashem want me to accomplish here?"

A shliach may have to travel far from the person who sent him. That distance does not mean he has abandoned the relationship. Carrying out the assignment is itself an expression of it. [5]

Now we can return to the pilgrim on the road home.

6. In the Beis Hamikdash: receiving. At home: being sent.

Now let us apply those words directly to the pilgrim.

When the Jew comes to the Beis Hamikdash, he is more like the sachir. He is doing a mitzvah, certainly. But he is also receiving an extraordinary spiritual benefit: the kedushah, the closeness to Hashem, the inspiration of Yom Tov. He serves in the Master's house and enjoys what that house gives him.

Calling him a sachir here does not belittle his mitzvah. It identifies the element of personal spiritual benefit in the experience.

When he leaves and returns home to carry out Hashem's purpose, he becomes the shliach. He goes out from the place of revealed holiness to bring Hashem's will into his own surroundings.

Now there is a business to conduct honestly, a home to fill with Torah, a person to help. Hashem wants a *dirah b'tachtonim*, a dwelling in this physical world. The Jew is entrusted with making that happen where he lives. [5]

In the Beis Hamikdash, he receives from Hashem. At home, he acts as Hashem's shliach. That is how the journey home can be an ascent.

7. Avraham: from sachir to shliach

Before Lech Lecha, Avraham had already reached extraordinary spiritual heights. Yet his service grew from his own discovery, understanding, and conviction. In this comparison, he too was like the sachir: even his very elevated service was centered in his own spiritual world.

Then Hashem said: *Lech lecha*. Leave even the limits of your own understanding and follow the purpose I give you.

Avraham now becomes the shliach. The center is the Sender and His will. [5]

Now we can answer our question: **Why does the seventh of Mar Cheshvan come together with Lech Lecha every year?**

Both express the same transition: **from sachir to shliach.** Avraham is sent beyond his own spiritual world; the pilgrim is sent from the Beis Hamikdash into his everyday world. Their destinations differ, but the inner movement is the same.

8. Why this is Yaakov's meal

There is another connection that belongs especially here, at Shalosh Seudos. The three Shabbos meals correspond to the three Avos. In the order taught by the Arizal, Friday night corresponds to Yitzchak, the daytime meal to Avraham, and **the third meal to Yaakov**. [9]

Why is Yaakov especially suited to the meal we eat as Shabbos draws toward its close?

Consider the direction of his life. Yaakov grew up in Eretz Yisrael, in the home of Yitzchak, immersed in Torah. Before reaching Lavan, he also spent fourteen years learning in the beis midrash of Ever. Spiritually, that was like the pilgrim's time in the Beis Hamikdash: living in an atmosphere of kedushah and receiving its strength. [10]

Then Yaakov went out to Charan. He entered Lavan's household, worked, and raised his family in a difficult environment. He had to carry that kedushah into the world outside.

Yitzchak remained in Eretz Yisrael. Avraham's defining Lech Lecha journey brought him from outside the land into it. Yaakov's journey to Charan gives us this particular picture: **first the sheltered world of Torah in Eretz Yisrael, then the mission beyond it.**

That suggests a beautiful way to understand his connection to this meal. We have spent Shabbos receiving. Now, like Yaakov, we prepare to go out and serve Hashem with what we have received.

Shalosh Seudos is Yaakov's meal: we take the kedushah with us as we go out to our shlichus.

Yaakov was literally a paid worker for Lavan, yet spiritually he shows us how to live as Hashem's shliach within working life. As Rashi explains *im Lavan garti*, he remained faithful to the mitzvos there. [8]

And that is the force of the traditional announcement after Tishrei: *V'Yaakov halach l'darko* - Yaakov went on his way. The inspiration has a destination: the life in which we are to fulfill Hashem's purpose.

9. A stop for gas

In the summer of 1995, two young Chassidim, Aaron and Shlomie Grossman, were traveling through Florida for the Aleph Institute, visiting Jewish prisoners. [6]

One evening they needed gas and somewhere to stay for the night. Near Daytona, they stopped at a gas station.

The man attending to them noticed the two young visitors and asked them to follow him to an office behind the station. They were uneasy, but they went with him.

An elderly man was sitting inside.

The younger man pointed to the visitors and said:

"Dad! They came to get you!"

Aaron and Shlomie were bewildered. They had come to buy gas. They had never met this man. What could his son possibly mean?

10. "Who do you belong to?"

The elderly man turned to them and spoke in Yiddish: *"Vemens zeit ir?"* Who do you belong to?

They explained that they were Chassidim of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. They were traveling to visit Jews in prison, to offer encouragement and help them learn Torah and do mitzvos.

The man began to cry. Eventually, he was able to tell them his story.

Before the Holocaust, he had been a newly married young man from a Chassidic home in Eastern Europe. His parents, siblings, and wife were murdered. He was the survivor of his family.

After the war, he came to America and lived in Williamsburg. But he could not bear what he saw around him. How could people go on? How could Jews continue their religious lives after what had happened?

He was devastated and bitter. He wanted to get away from every reminder of the life that had been destroyed.

He went to Florida. At first he settled in another town, but even the presence of a Reform temple felt too close to the world he was trying to leave. Eventually he settled near Daytona, in a place where he found no Jewish communal life.

He married a non-Jewish woman and had three sons. He did not tell his family that he was Jewish. One of those sons was the man who had just filled the boys' tank.

Years passed.

A voice from the world he had left

Then one night, unable to sleep, he turned on the television and changed channels.

On the screen was an elderly Chassidic rabbi, speaking Yiddish.

He stopped.

It was the language of his childhood, the sound of the world he had tried to put behind him. The program identified the speaker as the Lubavitcher Rebbe, addressing a farbrengen in Brooklyn.

He stayed with the program. Memories returned. But with those memories came the sense that he had gone too far away, that the decisions of so many years had put that life beyond his reach.

Then he heard a message that reached him.

11. No Jew would be left behind

The Rebbe was speaking about the promise of redemption: Hashem would gather His people, each individual Jew. No Jew would be abandoned or lost to the Jewish people.

The old man understood those words as speaking to him, too.

The next morning, he gathered his family and told them what he had never told them before: he was Jewish. He explained where he had come from and something of his Chassidic past.

And he told them that one day someone would come to get him.

Now the boys understood the son's reaction. Two Chassidic Jews had appeared at the gas station. To the son, this was the arrival his father had spoken about.

"Dad! They came to get you!"

Aaron and Shlomie stayed with the elderly man and sang Chassidic melodies from his youth. They returned the next day and helped him put on tefillin.

Their relationship continued. They corresponded with him and sent him a Chanukah menorah. Jewish life had become part of his life again. About a year later, they learned that he had passed away.

A man who had hidden his Jewish identity even from his own family was again singing the melodies of his childhood and putting on tefillin. The connection he had believed was beyond him had become real again.

12. From this Shabbos into our shlichus

The boys stopped for gas, but when a Jew needed them, they stayed and returned. They acted as shluchim, attentive to the purpose that brought them there.

Now bring that distinction to our own table.

On Shabbos, we are more like the sachir: doing mitzvos and receiving kedushah, warmth, and spiritual nourishment. **When we return to the week, we go out as shluchim:** entrusted to bring Hashem's will into our homes, work, and relationships.

That is the same movement we have traced in Avraham's Lech Lecha and in the pilgrim's return home on the seventh of Mar Cheshvan.

We have spent Shabbos receiving. Now we go out to fulfill the purpose for which we received.

Choose one responsibility for this week - one honest decision, one patient response, one person to help - and approach it as your shlichus.

Sources & speaking notes

NOT FOR ORAL DELIVERY

[1] Mishnah Taanis 1:1-3; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 114:1 and 117:1. Mashiv haruach is the mention of rain in the blessing of Divine might; v'sein tal u'matar is the request in the weekday blessing for the year's produce. They have different starting dates.

[2] Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 117:1; Shulchan Aruch HaRav 117:1. Eretz Yisrael begins at Maariv on the eve of 7 Cheshvan. The Diaspora follows the sixtieth day from tekufas Tishrei. This manuscript does not imply that Toronto begins on 7 Cheshvan. [Read the halachic explanation.](#)

[3] Mishnah Taanis 1:3; Taanis 10a: Rabban Gamliel gives the seventh of Cheshvan, fifteen days after the festival, to allow the last pilgrim to reach the Euphrates. Shulchan Aruch HaRav 117:1 explicitly explains the concern about rain impeding the journey. The continued practice today is recorded there as well.

[4] Mishnah Berachos 5:5; Kiddushin 41b: shelucho shel adam kemoso. Agency operates within defined halachic boundaries. A paid agent can still be an agent; the manuscript's contrast is a spiritual illustration, not a blanket legal separation of paid workers and agents.

[5] Torah framework adapted from Rabbi Eliyahu Wolf, Me'at Min Ha'or, "Hasachir Vehashliach," pp. 31-34, including the separately supplied final page; based on Likkutei Sichos, vol. 20, as cited there. This single attribution covers the adapted Torah framework throughout the talk. For dirah b'tachtonim, see also Tanya, chapter 36.

[6] "They Came to Get You," in your Digital Office manuscript, "Parshas Shelach - 5782: Whose Mission Are You On?" The underlying published presentation is Rabbi YY Jacobson's June 12, 2015 shiur, which says he heard the account from Aaron, a participant. It is a named firsthand report relayed by the speaker, not an independently documented reconstruction of every detail. [Published story source.](#)

Sources & speaking notes

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[7] The seventh of Mar Cheshvan falls in the week leading up to Shabbos Lech Lecha, not necessarily on that Shabbos itself. The supplied text explicitly links the date and parsha. See also "[When Further Is Closer](#)," on [Likkutei Sichos vol. 20, Lech Lecha - Cheshvan 7](#). The answer developed here is their spiritual connection, not a proposed historical reason for arranging the calendar.

[8] Bereishis 32:2, V'Yaakov halach l'darko; Rashi to Bereishis 32:5, im Lavan garti. For the application after Tishrei and its culmination on 7 Cheshvan, see the [sichah of Shabbos Lech Lecha, 8 Mar Cheshvan 5745](#). Yaakov is used as an illustrative model, not assigned an unverified formal title as the origin of halachic agency.

[9] Shem MiShmuel, Vayikra 10, paragraph beginning "Vehinei shalosh seudos," gives the Arizal's order: night - Yitzchak; daytime - Avraham; third meal - Yaakov. Its following discussion also connects Yaakov's holiness with joining the weekdays to Shabbos. [Read the text](#). The specific comparison with Yaakov's departure for Charan is the drash's proposed application, not a quotation of the source's explanation.

[10] Rashi to Bereishis 28:9 and Megillah 17a on fourteen years in Ever's beis midrash; Bereishis 28:10 on leaving Be'er Sheva for Charan. For Yitzchak remaining in the land, Bereishis 26:2-3 and Rashi. Avraham also later went to Egypt (Bereishis 12:10); the contrast here is with his defining Lech Lecha journey into Eretz Yisrael, not a claim that Yaakov alone ever left it.

Story-use check: The located office manuscript is from 5782. No later match for this episode was found in the readable material searched. Some scanned documents and recordings were not searchable, and file dates do not establish delivery dates; the check cannot certify absence from every talk in the past year.

Delivery: Establish the annual calendar question in section 4 without anticipating its answer. Section 6 identifies the pilgrim as sachir, then shliach; section 7 explicitly answers the calendar question through Avraham. Section 12 applies the same transition to this Shabbos and the coming week.