



TORAH ACADEMY
of Bergen County

קול תורה

Parashat Lech Lecha

Marcheshvan 11 5777

November 12, 2016

Vol. 25 No. 8

CALLING OUT IN THE NAME OF HASHEM, FAR AND NEAR

by *Rabbi David Nachbar*

We encounter Avraham Avinu calling out in the name of Hashem at various points throughout Parashat Lech Lecha. As Avraham ascends the mountains to the East of Beit-El he constructs a Mizbei'ach and calls out in the name of Hashem. Upon Avraham's return from Mitzrayim, he revisits that same location and possibly renews his call in the name of Hashem. Following Lot's departure from Avraham, Avraham travels toward Chevron and builds an additional Mizbei'ach in the name of Hashem. Yitzchak, too, builds a Mizbei'ach in Be'eir Sheva and calls out in the name of Hashem following his feud with the shepherds of Gerar.

Ramban (BeReishit 12:8 s.v. VaYikra) explains that Avraham's instinct was to inform and publicize Hashem's divinity and glory whenever he travelled to a new location whose residents were unfamiliar with Hashem's name. Yitzchak mimicked Avraham's tendency in his effort to disseminate widespread recognition of Hashem. Interestingly, Ya'akov is never seen calling out in the name of Hashem, unlike his father and grandfather. Ramban reasons that this was due to the makeup of Ya'akov's family. Ya'akov successfully raised multiple children, all of whom were dedicated toward serving Hashem, and, as a result, recognition of Hashem's name was publicized via their conduct and the lives that they led rather than through any pronouncement or verbalized message.

In these two models of our Avot, we can identify two distinctive methods of inspiring greater belief, love, and commitment to Hashem. One method entails articulating a verbal message and publicizing that message in order to reach a broad audience. Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Asei no. 3) speaks in these terms in his formulation of the Mitzvah of Ahavat Hashem. He cites the Sifri which identifies Avraham as the paragon of Ahavat Hashem, "Avraham Ohavi." Avraham's abiding belief in, understanding, and love of Hashem necessarily and contagiously found expression in Avraham's educational message to his contemporaries and could not be selfishly contained within

himself. An individual who is enthralled by another can't resist the urge to gushingly praise and speak about that person to whomever is willing to listen.

The Gemara in Yoma (86a), however, presents an alternative method toward realizing the goal of Ahavat Hashem. An individual's conduct and comportment alone can cause the name of Hashem to be beloved in the eyes of others. Constant study, faithful and honest dealings, and pleasant speech elicit an admiration of Torah, those who are privileged to study it, and the One who delivered it to the Jewish people. It takes true wisdom to know when to lead by example and when an articulated, educational message would be most effective.

The Midrash (BeReishit Rabbah 39:16) develops Avraham Avinu's call in the name of Hashem one significant step further. Not only did Avraham raise awareness and recognition of Hashem's presence in the world, but he initiated the conversion of those very same individuals and entered them beneath the divine wings. Avraham's proselytizing efforts and success are captured in the phrase "VeEet HaNefesh Asher Asu BeCharan," which describes the people travelling with Avraham and regarding which Rashi (BeReishit 12:5 s.v. Asher) famously describes Avraham's conversion of his male peers and Sarah's conversion of her female peers. Rambam (Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:3) estimates that the number of lives that Avraham and Sarah impacted soared into the thousands and tens of thousands. Rav JJ Schacter once noted that despite the broad influence that Avraham and Sarah had on their generation, we remain permanently unaware of the names of even a single individual who they inspired. The lone name that stands out for posterity is the name of their own child, their son Yitzchak, "Ki BeYitzchak Yikarei Lecha Zara." The importance of spreading a universal recognition and consciousness of Hashem notwithstanding, the most crucial task for any parent is to ensure the transmission of those very same values within the home to one's own children.

Onkelos translates Avraham's call to Hashem not as an outward call to others, but as a direct prayer from Avraham Avinu to Hashem. May those prayers be answered in offering us the vital wisdom and insight to know our audiences and to know when to formulate educational messages that inspire and when to educate through inspirational behavior, broadly, and, most importantly, to those closest to our homes and to our hearts.

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OUR CLOSE CONNECTION TO HASHEM

by Mo Proctor ('17)

At the inauguration of Shlomo HaMelech's Beit HaMikdash, Shlomo and the rest of the Jewish people pray to Hashem. They plead to Hashem – "Hashem, please always be there for us, please don't ever let your Beit HaMikdash get destroyed." Shlomo and the Jewish people really prayed from their heart! They loved Hashem so much and didn't want anything to happen to His presence.

Hashem Almighty responds to his children's prayers (Melachim I 9:3), as He says to them: "My beautiful Children, My heart and my mind will *always* be on the Beit HaMikdash." Hashem is committing to keeping his presence in the Beit HaMikdash eternally.

However, a few Pesukim later, Hashem calls out to King Shlomo and Kelal Yisrael again and says to them: "Shlomo, if you and my children disregard my beautiful Torah, I will have no choice but to destroy the Beit HaMikdash."

Wait a minute – there's an obvious question that must be asked: Hashem seems to be retracting His word. At first, Hashem promises that His heart and mind will always be on the Beit HaMikdash no matter what. But then, only a few Pesukim later, it seems that Hashem is telling His children that His love is "conditional" – His presence will remain with the Jews in the Beit HaMikdash only so long as they keep his Torah. Which approach is right?

There are two answers offered to this problem. Let's take a look at Rashi's answer first. According to Rashi, there is no question here. Both Pesukim are saying the same thing. The promise made by Hashem to the Jewish people was also "on condition." We see from here that when we do Teshuvah, our Tefilot sway Hashem's mind to reverse a bad decree, because over here, when Kelal Yisrael sin and don't listen to their father in Heaven, Hashem's mind is also swayed to reverse a good decree. Rashi is hammering home for us what the power of Tefilah really is! One simple prayer can make the difference!

Now let's examine Radak's approach to solving this problem. In the first set of Pesukim, when Hashem says that His presence is permanent, Hashem is referring to his presence in the Beit HaMikdash. But a few Pesukim later, when Hashem says that it is conditional, He's not talking about His presence being on condition; rather, what is on condition is the *building* that we call the Beit HaMikdash. Hashem's presence and love for us will never be on condition.

In our lives, when all of us struggle today to find meaning and light in this world, the Kotel is our symbol of hope. Just because we have sinned and are not deserving of having the great Beit HaMikdash in our midst right now doesn't mean that Hashem's presence has left us. The Kotel is our light! It is our everlasting symbol of Hashem's presence.

The beauty of the Jewish People is that each and every one of us, no matter what our level of observance is, has a soul. This soul that we were blessed with by Hashem is like a computer chip inside a robot. A robot, whether he obeys his master or whether he runs away from his master, deep down knows who created him. He knows that his master loves him more than anyone can possibly imagine. While the robot thinks he knows where he is running to, deep down he knows that he should follow the chip back home.

We were all created with chips called souls. Our Master Who created us loves us more than we could ever imagine. Sadly to say, many of us have run away from our master. While we think we know where we are running to, deep down we know that we should follow our souls back home. Hashem is awaiting our arrival with open arms, smiling ear to ear. Hashem cannot wait for all the souls to return back home to Him. And once our deeply bruised souls find our way back, Hashem's beautiful Beit HaMikdash will finally be rebuilt once again! May we all continue to find our way back home!

Kol Torah proudly presents this Halachic piece written by Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Rudolph '98, a TABC alumus. His discussion on the permissibility of tooth brushing on Shabbat will be continued in the next few weeks.

BRUSHING TEETH ON SHABBAT: A REEVALUATION IN LIGHT OF RECENT RESEARCH - PART I

by Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Rudolph DDS (TABC '98)

The *halachot* regarding brushing teeth on Shabbat were discussed by many of the *Poskim* of the previous generation, including R. Moshe Feinstein, R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, R. Ovadia Yosef, and R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. In 2002, R. Aryeh Lebowitz published a comprehensive review of the halachic issues relevant to brushing teeth on Shabbat.¹ However, new research about the mechanism through which toothpaste improves oral health may have implications that warrant a second look at some of these halachic issues.

Refuah

R. Moshe Zweig ruled that brushing teeth is prohibited on Shabbat because of the prohibition of *refuah* on Shabbat². R. Zweig

¹ R. Aryeh Lebowitz, "Brushing Teeth on Shabbat," *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 44 (Fall 2002), pp. 51-79.

² *Chazal* prohibited the use of medicine, and subsequently most forms of *refuah* on Shabbat, in order to avoid the possibility that one might

come to grind the ingredients on Shabbat (*shechikat samanim*), which would violate the *melacha* of *tochen*. The prohibition is limited to one who experiences "*meichush b'alma*," mild pain and discomfort. See *Shulchan Aruch* 328:1.

bases his view on a *Tosefta* (*Shabbos* 13:17) that states that it is forbidden to rub one's teeth with "sam," medicine, when it is intended for the purpose of *refuah*; it is permissible only if done solely for the purpose of eliminating bad breath³. R. Zweig felt that toothpaste is akin to the "sam" mentioned in the *Tosefta*, and it is therefore forbidden to be used on Shabbat.⁴

The majority of *Rabbonim* and *Poskim* did not share this view.⁵ Most of the responsa on brushing teeth on Shabbat were written when the prevailing belief was that toothpaste and brushing only prevent future tooth decay from occurring but do not heal existing cavities. The prevalent perception was that brushing with the help of toothpaste removes food that is stuck on the teeth, and thereby prevents cavities from developing. Since brushing was perceived as solely preventative, most authorities maintained that it is not forbidden on Shabbat due to the prohibition of *refuah*. As R. Ovadia Yosef explained, preventing cavities by removing food from the teeth is not called *refuah*. It is simply "ma'riach ari," "chasing away a lion" – it removes something bothersome, but cures no illness.

However, recent research has shown that in addition to preventing plaque build-up on teeth, tooth brushing may, in fact, heal existing tooth decay. Thus, R. Zweig's opinion that brushing teeth is prohibited on Shabbat as a form of *refuah* may warrant reconsideration.

Cavities develop because bacteria build up on teeth and form plaque, or dental biofilm. This plaque feeds on the sugars in food and produces acid. In the demineralization process, the acid

"dissolves" the main component of tooth enamel, making the tooth soft and susceptible to bacterial penetration and cavity development.⁶

For many years, the scientific community assumed that fluoride prevents tooth decay only by preventing the demineralization process.⁷ However, recent research has shown that fluoride not only prevents demineralization, but it also repairs existing demineralization.⁸ Fluoride facilitates remineralization, or the re-hardening of areas that have been previously damaged by bacteria, and it can reverse small damage, such as white spots ("white lesions")⁹. According to many, the main way in which fluoride prevents tooth decay is actually through remineralization, not the prevention of demineralization¹⁰. Research in the remineralization process has progressed to the extent that new toothpaste technology that enhances the remineralization abilities of toothpaste and fluoride is being developed and marketed.¹¹

Through remineralization, fluoride arrests or reverses the progression of a carious lesion. Although the white spot will probably still be noticeable on a radiograph because the tooth will never remineralize completely, the use of fluoride does improve the outcome.¹² Professional use of fluoride, over-the-counter toothpastes, and prescription extra-strength fluoride

³ The Rambam (*Hilchot Shabbat* 21:24) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 328:36) cite this *Tosefta* as the Halacha.

⁴ *Ohel Moshe* 2:98.

⁵ *Yabia Omer* 4:29-30, *Ketzot Hashulchan* 8:99

⁶ This is a simplification of the process; demineralization is more complicated and entails the lowering of the pH of the oral cavity. There are two main aspects of brushing that help prevent cavities: the mechanical removal of the biofilm and the fluoride that is incorporated in the toothpaste. Mechanical removal of the dental biofilm, through brushing, is very important; however, the incorporation of fluoride in toothpaste is a critical and necessary addition in the prevention of cavities. This article is not diminishing the importance of the mechanical removal aspect of brushing teeth but is merely focusing on the fluoride aspect of brushing.

⁷ See Frank E. Law, Margaret H. Jeffreys, and Helen C. Sheary, "Topical Applications of Fluoride Solutions in Dental Caries Control," *Public Health Rep.* 76(4) (April 1961): 287-90; O. Fejerskov, A. Thylstrup, and M.J. "Rational Use of Fluorides in Caries Prevention: A Concept Based on Possible Cariostatic Mechanisms," *Acta Odontol Scand.* 39(4) (1981): 241-9. In the 1960s, it was thought that when fluoride is incorporated into a developing tooth, it makes the tooth stronger by creating stronger chemical bonds than the chemical bonds that naturally exist in the tooth. Because the teeth become stronger, the tooth is less susceptible to demineralization. The concept of "systemic fluoride" led to the implementation of water fluoridation and the use of fluoride tablets. It was later discovered that fluoride prevents demineralization in a completely different way, which is related to the concentration of the fluoride ion on the surface of the tooth. The concept of "topical fluoride" is now the prevailing view of how fluoride prevents demineralization.

⁸ E. Hellwig and A.M.Lennon, "Systemic Versus Topical Fluoride," *Caries Res.* 38(3) (May-Jun 2004): 258-62.

⁹ A. Dijkman, E. Huizinga, J. Ruben, and J. Arends, "Remineralization of Human Enamel in Situ after 3 Months: The Effect of Not Brushing Versus the Effect of an F Dentifrice and an F-Free Dentifrice," *Caries Res.* 24

(1990): 263-6. Fluoride slows demineralization and enhances remineralization in multiple ways. The exact mechanism of how this is accomplished is beyond the scope of this article; John Hicks, Frank Garcia-Godoy, and Catherine Flaitz, "Biological factors in dental caries: role of remineralization and fluoride in the dynamic process of demineralization and remineralization (part 3)," *The Journal of Clinical Pediatric Dentistry* 28 (3) (2004)

¹⁰ Jaime Aparecido Cury and Livia Maria Andaló Tenuta, "Enamel Remineralization: Controlling the Caries Disease or Treating Early Caries Lesions?" *Braz. Oral Res.* 23(11) (June 2009): 23-30; John D. B. Featherstone, "Prevention and reversal of dental caries: role of low level fluoride" *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology* (Feb 2007)

This article is only referring to the way fluoride helps fight cavities, brushing away the

¹¹ Steven R. Jefferies, "Advances in Remineralization for Early Carious Lesions: A Comprehensive Review," *Compendium of Continuing Education in Dentistry* (April 2014). It is important to note that despite the additional benefits of fluoride, mechanical removal of the biofilm is still an important part of oral hygiene.

¹² H.E. Kim, H.K. Kwon, B.I. Kim, "Recovery Percentage of Remineralization According to Severity of Early Caries," *Am J Dent.* 26(3) (June 2013): 132-6; F.N. Hattab, "Remineralisation of Carious Lesions and Fluoride Uptake by Enamel Exposed to Various Fluoride Dentifrices in Vitro," *Oral Health Prev Dent.* 11(3) (2013): 281-90; A.R. Prabhakar, A.J. Manojkumar, and N. Basappa, "In Vitro Remineralization of Enamel Subsurface Lesions and Assessment of Dentine Tubule Occlusion from NaF

toothpastes reverse dental caries. Thus, tooth brushing not only prevents decay, but it also treats areas with existing decay, and it therefore may be viewed as *refuah* and not only “*maoriach ari*.”¹³ The risk of developing dental caries depends on many factors, including genetics, food intake, and strains of bacteria in one’s mouth, oral hygiene habits, age, and access to fluoridated water¹⁴. Every person is unique in the cause of his or her carious lesions. Furthermore, there is a wide range of caries susceptibility. There are people who regularly brush their teeth and still develop cavities and those who never brush their teeth and never develop cavities. Even per individual, their caries risk and development can vary over time. For those people who have a minimal caries risk – they either never or rarely developed a cavity or they used to have many cavities but have not had a cavity for many years¹⁵ – the remineralization process probably provides very little support in maintaining disease-free teeth. Even without fluoride their teeth would remain healthy. However, for the significant portion of the population that has a caries problem and develops cavities constantly, remineralization is vital in the fight against the disease. It is for this significant portion of the population that remineralization may be viewed as *refuah*.

In addition to causing remineralization of the tooth enamel, brushing teeth treats gingivitis, an inflammation of the gums that occurs predominantly among people who do not regularly brush their teeth. The mechanics of brushing removes the plaque and bacteria that elicit this inflammatory response. In addition, the antimicrobial antiseptic ingredients in all toothpastes approved by the American Dental Association reduce and prevent gingivitis¹⁶.

Furthermore, besides fluoride being able to act on the tooth, it has been shown that fluoride also has the ability to act directly on bacteria; it is bactericidal (kills bacteria) and bacteriostatic (stops bacteria from reproducing)¹⁷. Moreover, some toothpastes contain

additional ingredients that are antimicrobial¹⁸. Research has proven that regular toothpastes can kill the bacteria that create cavities and cause gingivitis¹⁹.

Based on this research, the *Shulchan Shlomo* quotes Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach as presenting the possibility that if toothpaste can disinfect bacteria from the tooth and reduce inflammation of the gums, then it may be considered *refuah*²⁰.

Thus, brushing teeth can provide *refuah* for people with the early stages of the cavity process or gum disease. Since a significant percentage of the population has at least some dental cavities and/or gingivitis, tooth-brushing may be considered *refuah* for many people, and may therefore present a problem on Shabbat²¹.

Conclusion

We will, God willing, continue our discussion next week by presenting a variety of reasons to justify a lenient approach to this issue.

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Dentifrices With and Without Calcium, “*J Indian Soc Pedod Prev Dent*. 31(1) (Jan-Mar 2013): 29-35; S.G. Damle, V. Bengude, and E. Saini, “Evaluation of Ability of Dentifrices to Remineralize Artificial Caries-Like Lesions,” *Dent Res J (Isfahan)* 7(1) (Winter 2010): 12-7; E. Casals, T. Boukpepsi, C.M. McQueen, S.L. Eversole, and R.V. Faller, “Anticaries Potential of Commercial Dentifrices as Determined by Fluoridation and Remineralization Efficiency,” *J Contemp Dent Pract*. 8(7) (Nov. 2007): 1-10; J. Timothy Wright, Nicholas Hanson, Helen Ristic, Clifford W. Whall, Cameron G. Estrich, Ronald R. Zentz, “Fluoride Toothpaste Efficacy and Safety in Children Younger Than 6 years: A Systematic Review,” *Jada* 142:2 (Feb. 2014): 182-9; J.A. Cury and L.M. Tenuta, “Enamel Remineralization: Controlling the Caries Disease or Treating Early Caries Lesions?” *Braz Oral Res*. 23(1) (2009): 23-30.

¹³ According to this understanding of how fluoride functions, use of toothpaste is very different from cleaning one’s skin, an analogy that Rabbi Lebowitz suggests in his article, note 35.

¹⁴ Robert H. Selwitz, Amid I. Ismail, and Nigel B Pitts, “Dental Caries,” *Lancet* 369 (2007): 51–59.

¹⁵ Determined by consistent dental visits for exam and cleanings.

¹⁶http://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/Files/Seal%20guidelines/SCI_SealGuidelineChemotherapeuticProdforControlofGingivitis_2011Nov01.ashx.

¹⁷ R.E. Marquis, “Antimicrobial Actions of Fluoride for Oral Bacteria,” *Can J Microbiol*. 41(11) (Nov. 1995): 955-64. Fluoride cannot penetrate the tooth to kill the bacteria inside a cavity, but it can render the bacteria that are on the outside of the tooth inactive, thereby preventing cavities. With respect to gingivitis, fluoride’s bactericidal properties can help heal the gingivitis, not merely prevent it.

¹⁸ For example, Colgate toothpaste contains Triclosan.

¹⁹ Marieke P.T. Otten, Henk J. Busscher, Henny C. van der Mei, Chris G. van Hoogmoed, and Frank Abbas, “Acute and Substantive Action of Antimicrobial Toothpastes and Mouthrinses on Oral Biofilm *In Vitro*,” *European Journal of Oral Sciences* 119(2) (2011): 151-5. In certain situations, dentists use fluoride-releasing materials to help prevent the tooth from developing recurrent, new decay under a filling or crown.

²⁰ *Shulchan Shlomo* Shabbat vol. 3 328:39

²¹ The *Mishna Berura* (328:130) rules that when the benefit of a particular *refuah* practice could not be accomplished by taking a pill, that practice is permitted on Shabbat. R. Lebowitz notes a number of reasons why this leniency would not apply to toothpaste (see note 32). However, the most important reason is that the benefits of toothpaste can very often be attained through a pill. In areas that do not have fluoridated water, many children take fluoride tablets to strengthen their developing adult teeth. Additionally, if remineralization is *refuah*, then using any of the “*Kosher*” Shabbat products, like the Shabbat toothbrush and toothpaste, would not be allowed as long as fluoride is one of the ingredients in the toothpaste being used.