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Parshat HaShavua sheet**

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Parshat Lech Lecha

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MISSION IMPASSABLE

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The news came from a most unlikely source. Og, a feared giant, came to Avraham (Abraham) and informed him that his orphaned nephew Lot, was captured in a war. Avraham felt compelled to do something. Lot's father, Haran, was Avraham's younger brother. After Avraham was miraculously saved from death by incineration, Haran, also trying to emulate Avraham's monotheistic beliefs, was thrown into a burning furnace. But, miracles don't happen for everyone and Haran was burnt alive.

Now Avraham, the man of peace, was thrust into war. He joined five kings, including the King of S'dom, and battled four of the most powerful kingdoms on Earth. Yet he emerged victorious. He propelled the five kings to a victory that was unprecedented in history. And Lot was returned to his family, unharmed.

The kings were grateful. They offered Avraham the spoils of war that were rightfully his. Avraham declined their magnanimity. "I lift my hand to Hashem if so much as a thread to a shoestraps," replied Avram as he refused to take any personal compensation from the spoils. Genesis (14:22)

The question is why Abraham, when anguished by Pharaoh in Egypt or Avimelech in Grar, had taken gifts as part of a greater compensation for his humiliation. Why defer now? What was different about this war that removed Avram from desiring any rightful financial gain?

One Shabbos afternoon when young Yitzchak Eisenbach was in Jerusalem, he spotted a very valuable gold coin shining in the distance. The value of the coin was enough to support his entire family for 2 weeks! But it was Shabbos and young Yitzle knew that the coin was muktzeh, prohibited to be picked up and taken on the Shabbos. He decided to put his foot on top of the coin and guard the coin until sunset — a good number of hours — but worth every moment of the wait. An Arab boy saw Yitzchak with his foot strangely and obviously strategically placed, and decided to investigate further. "What's that you're hiding?" the Arab asked. "Nothing," replied Yitzchak as he shifted his body to hide the fact that he was guarding a golden treasure. It was too late. The Arab boy pushed him, saw the prize, quickly grabbed it and ran away. All Yitzchak could do was watch in horror as his attacker melted into the Arab market place. Dejected, Yitzchak sulked to the nearby Tzernobel Bais Medrash (synagogue) where he sat in a corner. Normally, Yitzchak would help prepare the final Shabbos meal, but today he sat — dejected and depressed — until the Sabbath was over. The Rebbe inquired about young Yitzchok's sullen mood and was told the story. Immediately after Shabbos the Tzernobel Rebbe (1840-1936) summoned Yitzchak into his private study. In his hand he held a gold coin, exactly the same size as the one Yitzchak had almost secured earlier that day. "I am very proud of you," said the Rebbe. You did not desecrate the Shabbos even for a tremendous monetary gain. In fact," he continued, "I am so proud of you that I am willing to give you this same coin." The Rebbe halted. "On one condition. I want you to give me the reward for the mitzvah you did." The boy looked at the Rebbe in utter disbelief. "You want to trade the coin for the Mitzvah?" The Rebbe nodded, slowly. "If that's the case, keep the coin. I'll keep the mitzvah." The Rebbe leaned over and kissed the child.

Avraham underwent tremendous sacrifice to fight the battle which had basically nothing to do with him. But he did it for one reason. The mitzvah of redeeming his own blood. He refused any compensation that would put any monetary value to the mitzvah. Any reward, albeit a strap or thread, would attach a mundane value to an inestimable act.

Pharaoh and Avimelech compensated Avraham for damages. For that he was willing to accept gifts. But for a priceless Mitzvah — never. Certain actions we do are beyond physical evaluation. By keeping them in the spheres of the unearthly, they remain like the heavens themselves — eternal.

Jews On the Move

By Rabbi Berel Wein

Our father Avraham is a wanderer. All of his life he moves from place to place driven by his inner voice to spread the message of the one God in the world and other times by Divine command itself. In this, as in all other matters, he is the harbinger of the wanderings of his children throughout the ages. The Jewish people are a people of wanderers, moving restlessly from one country and continent to another.

There have been numerous reasons given to this Jewish restlessness. The most obvious one is the attempt to escape poverty and persecution and find a better life for one's self and family. However there have been spiritual reasons also advanced for this phenomenon of constant movement. One is in order to acquire righteous converts from the souls of non-Jews who really wished to accept the Torah when offered to the world before Sinai but whose voices were drowned out in the noise of the general "no" of their fellows.

A more kabbalistic reason was offered for the Jewish wanderings. It stated that there are scattered throughout the world holy "sparks" – nitzotot – that are enclosed in imprisoning "husks" – klipot – and that those "sparks" can only be released through the positive and holy behavior of Jews who are then physically present there. Another explanation advanced for the scattering and wandering of the Jewish people is that this is somehow a guarantee of Jewish survival. It allows Jews to escape from annihilation in certain areas of the world by moving somewhere else.

Undoubtedly all of these reasons have validity to them. However, the bottom line to all of this is that Jews follow in the footsteps of our father Avraham and are constantly mobile and on the move.

Again like our father Avraham, Jews have had a profound influence on all areas of the world where they have lived. Avraham, a lonely, single, unique individual, single-handedly changed the course of human civilization. The prophet Yeshayahu described Avraham as being one of a kind. Well, that description fits all of Israel as well. A small, persecuted, unique people, Jews have contributed to all facets of human civilization in a grossly disproportionate manner.

This is in fulfillment of God's promise to Avraham in this week's parsha that "through you all of the families of the world will be blessed." Perhaps it is the very wanderings and restlessness of Jews that has contributed to this unnatural outpouring of talent and contribution to all of human society. A sedentary people rarely look for new adventures or inventions. It is usually very self-satisfied with what it already has. Immigrant-built nations like the United States and Israel have pushed the envelope of technology and creativity forward more than the sedate and established powers of the Old World.

The common wisdom in life is "If it is not broken, then why fix it?" The Jewish people, always striving for perfection and utopian achievement, constantly view the world and society as still somehow broken and therefore in need of fixing. If we no longer wander geographically now that we are home in Israel, we still wander in our souls and minds in search of greater perfection and spirituality. We cannot help but to do so. It is in the genes that our father Avraham transmitted to us.

Chumras and Hidurim Were Luxuries That Avram Could Not Afford in Mitzrayim

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The pasuk says that on his way down to Mitzrayim, Avram realized that Sora was a beautiful woman. He was afraid that she would be desirable as a wife in Mitzrayim, and that he would be killed in order that Sora could be taken as someone else's wife. As we know, Avram said, "...Please say that you are my sister, that it may go well with me for your sake, and that I may live on account of you..." (Bereshis 12:13).

Rashi says on the words "so that it will be good for me" – this means that I will be given presents. Why Avram Avinu would be so interested in presents is itself a question, but a more pressing question is why Avram indeed accepted these presents from the Egyptians and, in fact, became a wealthy man because of them. Yet, shortly thereafter in the parsha, when Avram Avinu saved Lot, and the King of Sodom offered him the spoils of war, Avram refused to take them. "... I have raised my hand to Hashem, G-d, the Most High, Maker of heaven and earth, if so much as a thread or a shoelace, or if I shall take from anything that is yours! So you shall not say 'It is I who made Avram rich'" (Bereshis 14: 22-23). If Avram was worried about people saying that the King of Sodom made him rich, why wasn't he worried about people saying that the King of Mitzrayim made him rich? If Avram took into account the teaching of Shlomo Hamelech "...and the one who despises presents will live" (Mishlei 15:27) regarding Melech Sodom, why did Avram have such a sudden change of heart from his earlier ready acceptance of gifts?

There is an interesting Medrash that explains this contradiction and teaches a very important lesson. On the pasuk, “And he proceeded on his journeys...” (Bereshis 13:3), the Medrash Tanchuma notes that when Avram returned from *Mitzrayim* back to *Eretz Canaan*, he went to all the places that he visited on the way down to *Mitzrayim*, in order to pay his bills. Apparently, on the way down to *Mitzrayim*, Avram did not have money and he needed to borrow money to pay for his lodging and expenses. It was only on the way back from *Mitzrayim* that Avram had money to repay the debts that he had accumulated on the trip to *Mitzrayim*.

We derive two important lessons from this Medrash:

1. When people lend you money, pay them back. This may seem like an obvious statement, but unfortunately, this is not always done.
2. Do not be a *tzadik* on someone else’s account. This means that it is fine to be righteous and have personal *chumras* (stringencies) and *hidurim* (ritual beautifications) if these *chumras* and *hidurim* only effect you. But if someone wants to practice exceptionally righteous religious behavior (for example, refusing to accept gifts because Shlomo Hamelech taught “the one who hates presents will live,”) then he had better be certain that his personal piety is not causing the people to whom he is in debt to go unpaid. A person’s fiscal responsibilities come first. *Chumras* and *hidurim* can only be built upon that baseline of integrity.

Avram in *Mitzrayim* had to tell Sarah “...in order that it will be good for me for your sake...”. He was in debt at the time and he did not have the luxury of being concerned that people would be able to claim “It is because of me that Avram became rich.” Later on in the *parsha*, Avram had prospered. By then he was “heavy with cattle, with silver and with gold.” (Bereshis 13:2). By the time Avram went out to do battle for the King of Sodom, he was a wealthy man. Aha! A wealthy man has the ability and the luxury to be able to say “One who hates presents, he will live.”

I can give a couple of examples of this principle of “Don’t be a *tzadik* on someone else’s *cheshbon*“:

Rav Dovid Kronglas, zt”l, (1908-1972), the Mashgiach of Yeshivas Ner Israel, had a “*chumrah*” in *shechitah*, such that he did not eat beef. He thus had chicken for supper virtually every night. (There are fewer *halachic* issues with the ritual slaughter of birds than with animals). However, this is not a stringency that he imposed on his wife and children. His family ate meat. He was not going to restrict the members of his family from meatballs, hamburgers, roast, or steak because he accepted certain *halachic* stringencies upon himself.

Another example of not imposing personal *chumras* on others is evident in a story told over by the Tolner Rebbe. A young Kollel student came to Rav Schach, zt”l, and complained to him that his Rosh Kollel told him that he should not learn so late at night. Rav Schach told the young student to have his Rosh Kollel come see him. The Rosh Kollel came to visit Rav Schach, who asked him about the instructions he gave to his young Kollel student.

The Rosh Kollel said, “This young man has recently been looking unhappy – worried and perturbed about something. I asked him what was wrong. He explained that his wife got a new job, for which she needs to leave the house very early. She needs to get up even earlier to make the children’s lunches and get them off to school. She is not getting enough sleep because she needs to get up so early. She is therefore not in a very good mood, and it is affecting their *shalom bayis* (marital harmony). The Rosh Kollel asked his student, “So why don’t you get up early and help make the lunches and get the children off to school?” The student gave as an excuse the fact that he stayed up learning late at night. The Rosh Kollel advised him: Don’t learn so late at night, go to sleep earlier, and get up earlier so you can help your wife make the lunches and get the children off to school. That was “the story behind the story.”

Rav Schach then called the young man back in and told him “Your Rosh Kollel is 100% correct. If you want to learn late at night, that is all fine and good. But if that negatively affects your wife, you cannot do that. You are a *baal chov* (in debt) to her. When you gave your wife her *kesuvah*, you pledged to **support her** in the custom of all Jewish men. She is **supporting you!** For that, she gets a great blessing. But you owe her. You can’t be a *tzadik* on her *cheshbon*. If you are learning so late that it prevents you from getting up early to help your wife, then don’t stay up so late! You have a primary obligation, and that primary obligation is to help your wife.

“Hashem said to Avram: Go from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house to the land that I will show you” (12:1)

Why did Hashem tell Avraham: “Go for yourself”? Rashi explains that it was in Avraham’s best interests to go to Eretz Canaan because there he would have children and his reputation would spread across the world. The ability to start a family is understandably beneficial, but how is it in Avraham’s interests to become famous? When people would learn about Avraham, they would also learn about his character and his teachings about serving Hashem. His newfound fame and influence would inspire many more people to recognize Hashem and this was definitely in Avraham’s interests. Hashem was giving Avraham a test, but even so, He made sure to point out that this was the best thing for Avraham. This is an indication that everything which Hashem asks of us throughout the entire Torah is for our benefit. Hashem is always trying to do good things for us, even if it is sometimes difficult to sense it right away.

“And I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will aggrandize your name, and you shall be a blessing” (12:2)

What does it mean to be a great nation? When Moshe Rabbeinu became an adult, the posuk says that Moshe became “gadol,” big. The Midrash Tanchuma asks: What made him great? The answer lies in the following phrase: “Moshe went out to his brothers and saw their burdens.” The fact that Moshe cared about others is what made him great. This is also what Hashem was telling Avraham, promising him that his descendants would perpetuate his defining character trait of kindness and look after others. That is indeed the hallmark of the Jewish nation.

“Why did you say: She is my sister, so that I took her to myself for a wife? And now, here is your wife; take and go” (12:19)

When Pharaoh challenges Avraham, he does not respond. Yet in a later story, we find that Avraham does respond to an identical accusation from Avimelech. Why does Avraham react differently to the two kings? Rabbeinu Bachya says that when Pharaoh ended his questioning by dismissing him and saying “Take her and go,” he made it clear that he was not really interested in an answer, so Avraham did not feel compelled to offer one. However, Avimelech did not dismiss him, so Avraham proceeded to explain himself. Sometimes people who confront us are interested in hearing our answers, but many times a response will not help matters and it sometimes may make things worse. Not every comment needs a response. Avraham’s silence in the face of Pharaoh’s rhetorical question teaches us to be judicious in responding to criticism. We should consider if a response will accomplish something or improve the situation. If it will not, then it is in our best interests to keep our responses to ourselves, even if we are right.

“And Avram said to Lot: Please let there be no quarrel between me and between you and between my herdsmen and between your herdsmen, for we are kinsmen” (13:8)

The Shela points out that the posuk first calls the quarrel between Avraham and Lot a “riv” and Avraham then calls it a “meriva.” “Riv” is the masculine form, whereas “meriva” is the feminine form. The feminine form of a word indicates something that will go on further, just as a woman gives birth to children. Avraham was telling Lot that this fight is a “meriva,” a dispute that will continue and escalate and only get worse unless it is stopped immediately. This is why he said “let there not be an argument between me and you” even though the fight was among their shepherds. If the quarrel was allowed to continue between their employees, it would no doubt eventually spill over and become a personal fight between the two of them. We see how important it is to contain fights before they get out of hand. Avraham especially stressed that an argument between them would be inappropriate because they were related. Fights are always bad, but fights between relatives are the worst. Family members must always work hard to remain on good terms with each other.

By Rabbi Mayer Friedman

Things Start With An Argument, And They Go Downhill From There

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The pasuk [verse] in this week's parsha says, "And also with Lot who accompanied Avraham there was flock and cattle and tents" [Bereshis 13:5]. Rashi explains that through his association with the Patriarch Avraham, Lot was also blessed with great wealth. But the Torah continues "And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together; for their substance was great so that they could not dwell together." [ibid. 13:6]

This last pasuk apparently contains a glaring redundancy. The fact that the land was not big enough for both of them is mentioned both at the start and the end of the pasuk! What is the repetition teaching us? The Shemen HaTov provides us with a very true insight:

There was a two-stage development here. First because of the abundance of cattle each owned, they got into a dispute regarding grazing rights. As a result of this dispute "they were unable to live together". This is the nature of arguments. There may be valid and understandable reasons for the original dispute. But once people begin to argue, the reason why they started arguing might almost become immaterial. They will eventually get to the point where each party cannot stand to be in the presence of the other.

This is exactly what the pasuk is telling us. It started out as a fight over grazing rights. Ostensibly, the fight began because there was not enough room. But once they began to argue over grazing rights, the argument escalated. Things got out of hand. The parties got to a point where it did not matter anymore why they started arguing. Simply, "they could not dwell together" anymore!

We see the same idea in Parshas Toldos when Yitzchak's shepherds fought with the shepherds in Gerar [Bereshis 26: 19-22]. Each side claimed: "The water is ours". Therefore they called the name of the well Striving (Esek) because they fought over it (hisasku imo). Then they dug another well and they fought over it as well. They called the second well 'Conflict' (Sitnah). By the second well, the Torah already does not state the reason for the fight; it merely states they called the name of the well 'Sitnah'. The idea is exactly as we said before. Initially, the conflict was over water rights, but once the controversy took place, then the people could not stand each other anymore. By the second well, they were prepared to argue with one another for no reason at all.

Paralysis By Analysis

By Sheldon Stern

Generally, a Parsha is named for a key word found at or near its outset. Yes, there are instances where the title contains two words, Chayah Sarah immediately comes to mind, but that's because either one by itself would be unintelligible. However, why is our Parsha called "Lech Lecha?" Surely, the word "Lech" alone would convey the point that Avrohom was told to leave his homeland. Rabbi Menachem Tuchman, Morah D'Asra of the Bialystoker Synagogue, noted that there's a Chereg, a hyphen if you will, between the "Lech" and "Lecha" which indicates that they are inextricably linked. But let's see why our Rabbis saw fit to join them?

Rashi seemingly provides the answer. Hashem was telling His faithful servant that the trip(Lech) would be for his benefit(Lecha). Our foremost commentator continued that this was counterintuitive, because leaving one's homeland is usually detrimental to raising a family, accumulating wealth and enhancing one's reputation. So this would explain the union of these two words. But we would then ask, "Did Avraham need such assurances?" When he defied Nimrod and entered the fiery furnace, Avraham demonstrated that his only motivation was to do what was right in G-d's eyes. At no point in his life do we ever see our Patriarch exhibit self-aggrandizement. Moreover, Hashem was intentionally evasive at the end of the verse and didn't specify Avraham's ultimate location, in order to increase his reward, so telling him that the trip would be for his benefit would be counterproductive. So again, "Why are these words indelibly connected?" While I'm not a savant in dealing with Gematrias, that distinction belongs to Rabbi Avrumi Martin of the Lower East Side, Lech Lecha, in tandem, gives us a total of 100. Hashem was "hinting" to Avraham that if he makes this trip he'll be blessed with a son at the age of 100 who will continue his legacy. This is an incredibly powerful idea which must be developed. There's the famous story of Rav Avner, once the Ramban's prized Talmid, who left the religion to seek out, as Queen sang, "Fame and fortune and everything that goes with it." They later met and when the Spanish Sage questioned his former student R Avner responded, "It's all because of you. You said that every person can find his life mapped out in Parshas Haazinu. I knew that's ridiculous and I also decided that the whole Torah must be nonsensical and so I abandoned it." The Ramban thanks, to some serious Siyata Dishmaya, succeeded in finding an allusion to R Avner in Haazinu. We'll take this one step further. The Midrash tells us that had Reuvein known that his actions would be recorded in the Torah, he would've personally gone down to the pit, extricated Yosef and then carried him home to his father. But hey, spoiler alert, in fact everything is in there. So why don't we believe it? After the Potoker Rav passed away in 1995, the congregants of his shul, the Lutowisker, tried to keep the minyan alive. But it was a struggle. One evening we were waiting for "ah tzenter" and Mr. Pfeffer, one of the stalwarts in the neighborhood was getting antsy, because it was almost time for Shkiyah. One of the other old-timers said to him, "Relax. Do you think G-d cares what time we Daven?" So this is another ploy of the Yetzer hora, to convince us that we are, individually as Ron Pope sang, "Just a Drop in the Ocean." But nothing could be farther from the truth.

Everything we do has cosmic consequences. And yes it's all recorded, so that when we come to the next world we'll see the life that we lived based on the choices we made versus what we could have accomplished had we followed G-d's intended script. Despite Satan's best efforts, Avraham fulfilled his mission to a tee. He was able to block out all the distractions and focus only on being one with Hashem, and so no revisions to his script in the Torah had to be made.

But it's not so easy to be Avraham, who not only accepted G-d's word unstintingly, but often intuited His intent. Lot is presented as Avraham's counterpart in this and next week's Parsha, but there is another individual who figures prominently in our Parsha, even though he isn't explicitly mentioned. That would be Haran, Lot's father who is also Avraham's brother. The Midrash tells us that Avram defied Nimrod's order to worship idols and opted for the literal "trial by fire." When given that same choice Haran went into Jack Benny mode. Mr. Benny was a legendary comedian who cultivated the stage persona of a skinflint. Therefore, when he was mugged at gun point and told, "Your money or your life." He responded with impeccable timing, "I'm thinking. I'm thinking." Haran likewise hedged his bets and told Nimrod that he would decide after seeing what happens to his brother. As the Clash sang in, "Should I Stay or Should I Go." "This indecision's killing me." That literally happened to Haran. When he saw that Avram emerged unscathed he took the fateful plunge. Paul McCartney had a song on his 1975 Venus and Mars Album called "Letting Go." Sometimes in life you've just got to go for it. As Admiral Farragut famously said, "Damn the Torpedoes and Full Speed Ahead." On January 12, 1969 the Jets, led by their superstar quarterback Joe Namath, won the third Super Bowl. I was twelve at the time and thought that this would be the first of many championships. I'm still waiting. The problem is that since Namath left after the 76 season, they've never found another franchise quarterback. This year they signed Justin Fields. He has a strong arm, and is an outstanding runner, but he's afraid to throw the ball and so, too often, he waits until his receiver is wide open, but by that time he usually gets sacked. As Joseph Addison said, "He who hesitates is lost."

But perhaps we're giving short shrift to Haran. Is it a weakness to be logical? The Gemara, on several occasions, says, "Lomo Li Kra, Sevara Hi?" Why do I need a verse when logic can be applied. Moreover, when Yaakov Avinu doled out blessings to his sons, he began by chastising Reuvein for being "Pachaz Kimayim" rash and impetuous. To answer this let's put ourselves in ancient Mesopotamia, and imagine that Nimrod had given the order. Avram wouldn't blink, but he would likely try to dissuade his brother from risking his life. Haran, however, tapped into his inner Carole King and said, "Where you lead, I will follow, anywhere that you tell me to (OK Miss King nee Klein may have gotten it from the exchange between Haran's descendant Rus and Naomi.) They would then grasp each other's hands and jump into the fire together. Miraculously, they would be unharmed. It would be Haran, and not his son Lot who would then be the vehicle chosen by the Torah to produce Moshiach. So why did that moment of indecision prove so costly? Let's get back into our time machines and return to the present and imagine that Moshiach is here. Oh there will be a ruckus but ultimately the warring sides will realize that he is the real deal. But then there will come the last major hurdle, he'll announce that everyone must immediately come to the Promised Land. No crossing go, no collecting 200 dollars. So what will the people do? Now we can explain the problem. In 1979, Supertramp produced its magnum opus album called, "Breakfast in America." It featured a beautiful Klezmer based hit called the "Logical Song." "But they sent me away, to teach me how to be sensible, logical, responsible, and practical." Yes, that is the way we should live our lives 99.9999999 percent of the time. Make sure your retirement portfolios are properly funded, send your kids to the proper schools as the Kinks sang in their 1965 hit, "Well Respected Man." "And he's oh so good, and he's oh so fine and he's oh so healthy in his body and his mind, he's a well-respected man about town doing the best things so conservatively." The band led by the Davies brothers was likely employing a mocking tone, but one should live that way. But what happens at that moment? The late, great Whitney Houston nailed it with her greatest achievement, "One Moment in Time." "I want one moment in time When I'm more than I thought I could be When all of my dreams are a heartbeat away, and the answers are all up to me." This is how it will be when we get the call from Moshiach. You won't be able to run to your Rav for help, because the answer will be up to you. It will be your Avraham moment and if you miss it, there won't be another chance. So now we see how serious it was, when Haran dilly dallied. As the Doors sang in, "Light My Fire, "The time to hesitate is through, no time to wallow in the mire." Or as U2 put it, "You got caught in a moment and you can't get out of it." If Haran wasn't totally on board that flaw would pass down to the Ultimate Redeemer, and that simply wouldn't do. So yes, by all means we should make plans and try to follow them, but when Hashem comes calling you've got to be ready, willing and able to throw caution to the wind. As Benny Goodman wrote in 1939, "Leave your worries on the doorstep and direct your feet to the sunny side of the street." It's all about putting your trust in Hashem.

I once heard a beautiful word from Rabbi Pesach Krohn. We say the following verse in Ashrei, "You open Your hand and satisfy everyone according to his will." The Maggid asked why the verse didn't simply end, "and satisfy everyone." So he explained that each person has his own needs and Hashem tailors His beneficence accordingly. He then elaborated, "For me, I want to hear a good story. So when I take a trip and the guy sitting next to me says, "Can I tell you something that happened to me, I'm in Heaven." The other day I heard the last hit of George Harrison's career for the first time. It's called "Any Road." and it's quite good. More importantly, at least as far as I'm concerned, it really expresses what this essay is all about. My initial reaction was one of surprise that I had never heard it before, but then I realized that Hashem sent it to me at just the right time. "But oh L-rd, we pay the price, with the spin of a wheel with the roll of the dice. Oh yeah, you pay a fare, and if you don't know where you're going any road will take you there." I'll admit that I'm sort of jealous of those who seem to have their act together, but I realize that it's okay to be vulnerable and acknowledge that without Hashem you can't get anywhere at all. Thank you Hashem for sending me this song and for everything You do for me. As Harry Nilsson sang, "Can't live if living is without You."