Reading Abraham's Stories

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Teaching Torah Today

In his comments on the importance of incorporating a literary approach into our study of Tanakh, R. Aharon Lichtenstein notes,

We should learn to recognize archetypal forms and techniques of thematic development; to discern patterns of imagery and principles of structure; to be sensitive to narrative flow and dramatic interaction; to observe rhythmic movement and verbal texture. In short, I propose, first, that we discover—or rather, rediscover—*kitvei ha-kodesh* as literature; and, second, that, in order to deepen our appreciation of them as such, we seek to approach them critically….
What we readily acknowledge with respect to language generally is certainly true of *kitvei ha-kodesh*: form and substance, manner and matter, are directly interwoven. To understand, to experience a *pasuk* fully, we best approach it both cognitively and aesthetically. Words are not numbers nor verses equations. The structure of a *perek* and the response induced by it are part of what it presumably is intended to communicate to us. The symbolic import of a phrase or a *pasuk*—what we call its "meaning" —is a function of the sum total of associations elicited in its specific context; and that context is a matter of form as well as of substance, of form insinuated in substance.[1]

Not surprisingly, this attitude is reflected in R. Ezra Bick's Preface to the new collection of Bible studies from Yeshivat Har Etzion's Herzog College. R. Bick outlines its contemporary approach to the study of Tanakh:

First and foremost is the belief that Tanach is meant to be read and understood by the reader, without the absolute necessity of outside interlocutors.… If we are reading the text directly, then we are reading it as a text meant to be read, and this introduces the need to read using the tools of literary analysis. Of course, if the Torah is not a book, but a code or a mystery, it would be illegitimate to read it with the same eyes and mind that one reads literature. For this we have the oft-repeated principle, *dibra Torah belashon benei adam*. The Torah is literature, divine literature, written not in a special divine language but in the language and style of man…. Another result of the above is that the field of interest is not focused on the single verse, but on the story, the entire narrative, and in some cases the

whole Tanach.[2]

The Torah is a book of teachings, and teachings assume many forms and employ a variety of strategies. For example, to teach children to be ethical we might tell them to tell the truth or not to lie. Or we might tell a story about someone who always told the truth and someone who lied—and let them draw the appropriate conclusions. Alternately, we might tell children a story about someone who grew in self-understanding and personal integrity and let them absorb the lesson as a role model. Each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages, and in the book of Genesis the Torah makes almost exclusive use of storytelling as its mode of teaching.
In reading these narratives as a whole, it is worth noting what R. Mosheh Lichtenstein wrote regarding his own analysis of Moses' life:

The interpretive approach adopted throughout this work is undergirded by the basic presumption that human nature in the Torah is basically similar to the human nature we are familiar with. Our view of the biblical drama, and our suggestions for analyzing the narratives, are based on an understanding that emotions like love, hate, envy, compassion and the whole gamut of human emotions with which we are familiar, are identical to their counterparts in the inner world of our forefathers... .
Human events as well as metaphysics are woven into the text [of *Bereishit*]. This is true of Noah, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzhak and Rivka, Yaakov and his family, and many others. … The characters are living people with real emotions, coping with the whole range of situations with which human existence challenges them. The Torah wants us to study these stories for a number of reasons: because these are the basic experiences that shaped our ancestors, because they help us to understand the Torah more fully and accurately, and so that we can better understand the human condition as reflected in their lives and actions.[3]

Indeed, this was surely the approach taken by Hazal and various Rishonim and Aharonim when they pointed out the human component in the actions of the forefathers and foremothers, even highlighting our biblical ancestors' shortcomings and the resulting consequences. As R. Samson Raphael Hirsch notes:

The Torah never presents our great men as being perfect; it deifies no man, says of none 'here you have the ideal, in this man the Divine becomes human' … The Torah never hides from us the faults, errors and weaknesses of our great men. (*Commentary to Genesis* 12: 10–13, Levy translation)

This should not undermine our respect for these spiritual giants, but rather should humble us. We often think—alas, mistakenly—that we are above petty considerations and self-serving strategies. Beware of such hubris, we are warned. Even giants such as our biblical ancestors can fall prey to such pitfalls. Stay on guard. If they could not always live up to their great potential, surely your might fail, too.

Of course, it is true that presenting the human side of the forefathers and foremothers might distort a sense of their greatness—but only if the presentation is made in too early a grade, when youngsters are appropriately forming a "heroic" view of these individuals. Indeed, negative numbers would confuse first-graders learning subtraction, and imaginary numbers would confuse middle-school students learning signed numbers. But woe to the high school math student whose teacher really thinks that there is no such thing as imaginary numbers! A Bible teacher must know when to introduce these human portraits of our Torah greats and how to maintain a proper sense of respect and awe toward them.

It is also true that some of those who portray our biblical heroes in human terms do so from a perspective that simply lacks respect for the grandeur of the Tanakh and the greatness of Hazal. We must distance ourselves from them as we would from fire, says R. Aharon Lichtenstein.[4] On the other hand, he continues,

There are those ...who totally erase the human side [of the biblical heroes]. They know that Ramban spoke of this, but they partially put aside the Ramban and work with other commentators.…
This dehumanization is dangerous for two reasons. They erase the descriptions of these giants like Moshe as Hazal saw him. And what is even worse in my eyes is their reason. Why are they so opposed to seeing the emotional side of Moshe Rabeinu or Avraham Avinu? It is because they oppose feelings and emotions!... Hazal knew of emotions; the biblical text knew of emotions, but they do not… They distort the Tanakh…[5]

Distorting the teachings of Hazal is no way to develop students who are sensitive to the values of Hazal and the Torah they teach. The Torah had an educational purpose in showing us the human side of the forefathers and foremothers, and we should be open to it.
With this is mind we wish to turn to the stories the Torah chooses to tell us about *Avraham Avinu*. The purpose of some of these stories is clear enough: We must be told that God chose Abraham and we—his children—have a certain destiny that includes inheriting a special land. Indeed, that point is reassuringly made over and over again. But there is another series of intertwined stories whose purpose is less obvious. Our aim here is not to give a close reading of the text of each of these individual stories or expose their literary techniques. Rather we wish to understand the sequence of stories as part of a larger coherent whole that reflects an educational strategy, one that drives home the fact that Abraham—a great spiritual giant, to be sure, an individual whose attainments may be well beyond our reach—was still a human being, and we should not be intimidated from trying to emulate him.

Introducing Abraham[6]

The first Abraham story in this latter group is the story that is *not* there. The Torah introduces Abraham and God's revelation to him with little fanfare:

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan; but when they had come as far as Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah came to 205 years; and Terah died in Haran. The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing: I will bless you, and curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves from you. (Gen. 11:31–12:3, NJPS translation).

This short story is remarkable in the absence of the material that we would find most interesting and valuable. For example, how did Abraham become the type of person to be chosen by God? What education did he have? Maimonides (Rambam) fills in some of the gaps:

After this mighty one was weaned, he began to explore and think. Although he was a child, he began to think incessantly throughout the day and night, wondering: How is it possible for the sphere to continue to revolve without anyone controlling it? Who makes it revolve? Surely, it does not cause itself to revolve… Ultimately, he apprehended the way of truth and understood righteousness path through his accurate comprehension. He realized that there was one God who controlled the sphere, that He had created everything, and that there is no other God to be found exclusive of Him. He knew that the entire world was making a mistake…. Abraham was forty years old when he became aware of his Creator (*Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 1:3).

This, though, is not the only external description we have of Abraham's training. For example, as Avivah Zornberg points out, according to the *Midrash ha-Gadol*, "The recognition of God is not a final conclusion reached after a long private philosophical odyssey, but …an unlocated passion which inspires him with energy for hope and disillusion that takes him through the phases of his experience."

[7] Which of these or other descriptions is true, and why would the Torah take such deliberate pain to hide the truth from us?
We suggest that the description is omitted because it is important that we *not* know it. Maimonides was a philosopher and he naturally saw proper training in philosophical exploration. But what of us who lack philosophical acumen, inspiring passion, or any of the other possible useful qualities that Abraham might have possessed? Should we be discouraged from aiming to be able to hear God's call? Abraham was far from "everyman," but he is introduced as such so that we not be discouraged from identifying with him. Any of us might be headed toward our promised land without realizing it, and many of us stop along the way without realizing that we have unwittingly abandoned our destiny. God speaks to Abraham to tell him to keep moving; He may speak to any of us, and we have to know that we too can hear His call.

The Descent to Egypt

No sooner does Abraham enter Canaan and begin to wander through it does he hear God's promise that this land will be given to him and his descendants. We then read the following story:

There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I am well aware that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'She is his wife,' and they will kill me, but let you live. Say then that you are my sister, that it may go will with me because of you, and that I may live thanks to you." When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw how very beautiful the woman was. Pharaoh's courtiers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's palace. And because of her, it went well with Abram; he acquired sheep, oxen, asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels. But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his household with mighty plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abram. Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me! Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife; take her and be gone!" And Pharaoh put men in charge of him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he possessed (Gen. 12:10–20 NJPS).

Is this what we would expect from someone who had just heard God's promises? Disloyalty to the land promised to him and disloyalty to his wife? When Jacob will later condemn Laban for his duplicitous actions, he will use Pharaoh's charge to Abraham: "What is this you have done to me!" Is the Golden Calf what we would expect from those who had just heard God's voice at Sinai? Are our own actions what we would expect from one who merits many blessings each day? In what way are we the better for knowing that Abraham failed?
Soon after this story in Egypt is told, God once again reassures Abraham that the land will be his. That, we suggest, is the real point of the story. Abraham does not forfeit God's promise and continued loyalty by not living up to his ideals—and neither do we. This point is missed if we do not acknowledge Abraham's failings, and that is why Nachmanides (Ramban) explicitly points it out:

Know that Abraham our father unintentionally committed a great sin by bringing his righteous wife to a stumbling-block of sin on account of his fear for his life. He should have trusted that God would save him and his wife and all his belongings, for God surely has the power to help and to save. His leaving the Land, concerning which he had been commanded from the beginning, on account of the famine, was also a sin he committed, for in famine God would redeem him from death. It was because of this deed that the exile in the land of Egypt at the hand of Pharaoh was decreed for his children (Commentary to Gen 12:10, Chavel translation).

Had this story been left out, we might have been left with the mistaken impression that God calls only on saints. The Torah quickly tells us that even Abraham can misjudge a situation. If that could be said of him, it can be said of his descendents who, while far from his high stature and closeness to God, need not despair of meriting the promised blessings despite their faults.

Separating from Lot

Abraham emerged from Egypt with his values intact, but Lot did not. Abraham realizes that he and Lot must part geographically, but he does not yet appreciate the significance of the move. He offers Lot to go to the right or the left. In a society facing the eastern rising sun, it is an offer to go south or north. Abraham assumes that Lot will want to stay with him in the north-south mountain range, where the need for rain accentuates one's dependence on God's grace. But Lot eyes the plains of the Jordan where, as in Egypt, water is plentiful. It is not relevant to him that the people of Sodom are evil and sinning to God. The Torah tells us that because it will help us understand a subsequent contrast with Abraham.

Abraham Rescues Lot

The next episode in Abraham's life that the Torah chooses to relate is a war story. Lot had left Abraham to go to Sodom, and he got caught up in a local war and taken captive. General Abraham rallies his troops and rescues him. An academic secular commentary such as the Anchor Bible[8] sees this story as "an intrusive section within the patriarchal framework," one in which Abraham is depicted as "a resolute and powerful chieftain rather than an unworldly patriarch." But the story is hardly an intrusion. On the simplest level, this story shows us that the Torah will not allow us to form a stereotype of this complex spiritual giant. The man who found God can also field an army—and the man who fields an army can also find God. We are not allowed to picture Abraham as emerging from any particular educational experience. We are not allowed to picture him as completely trusting and brave. And we are not allowed to picture him as meek and subservient. Indeed, whatever picture we form will turn out to be wrong. And whatever excuse we have for not trying to reach his heights will be undermined.

But there is more to this story. There is a striking parallel between this story and the descent to Egypt episode. In both there is danger—there to Abraham and here to Lot. In both there is a response to the danger—there by passing off Sarah as his sister and here by gathering an army and going to war to rescue Lot. In both there is a financial award—there quickly taken and here refused in an act of *Kiddush HaShem*. One cannot help but see tremendous transformational growth in Abraham's response; and one cannot help but understand that that if there is room for growth in Abraham—a spiritual giant who found God and who was found by God—then there is no excuse for our not always trying to reach higher in our own lives. Indeed, rather than being "an intrusive section," the story fits well within the educational strategy of Abraham's Stories.

Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael

The Torah tells us two stories about Sarah arranging for the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael. We understand easily the reason for the second. The Torah must inform us that despite the fact that Ishmael is Abraham's son, he is not the promised son—and his descendents are not the promised people. But what is the purpose of the first story?

Abraham has been promised a son and Sarah apparently cannot deliver him. So she offered her maidservant Hagar to him to be a surrogate. We cannot help but be touched by Sarah's altruistic behavior. "Abram listened to Sarai" without any reservation or protest.

Regretfully, Sarah could not live up to her magnanimous gesture. She soon became jealous of Hagar and mistreated her. Nehama Leibowitz acutely sums up one reason for the Torah's telling of this

story: We must have high ideals, but they must be realistic ones.

Perhaps the Torah wished to teach us that before a man undertake a mission that will tax all his moral and spiritual powers, he should ask himself first whether he can maintain those high standards to the bitter end. Otherwise man is liable to descend from the pinnacle of altruism and selflessness into much deeper depths than would ordinarily been the case… Had Sarah not wished to suppress her instincts and overcome every vestige of jealousy for her rival …there might not have been born that individual whose descendants have proved a source of trouble to Israel to this very day.[9]

However, there is an additional reason for the telling of this story, for without it the second story would have been less poignant:

Sarah saw the son, whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, playing. She said to Abraham, "Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you." (Gen. 21:9–12, NJPS)

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Sarah again tells Abraham to banish Hagar, but Abraham has grown from his past experience: "The matter distressed Abraham greatly, *for it concerned a son of his.*" This was not only an intellectual response but an emotional one—he was being asked to send away his son. But Abraham was wrong again! This time Sarah was right and, significantly, she had learned something very valuable from her previous experiences (something we cannot fully say of Abraham, who later repeats trying to pass off Sarah as his sister).

Sarah had learned that we need not be paralyzed by our mistakes. She had been wrong in first banishing Hagar, and that might have made her lose her confidence when she now realized that Hagar and Ishmael had to be sent away. At this point it was right to banish her—God confirms it—and she had the confidence to act. And what was it that gave her the insight to realize that Isaac cannot be raised in the presence of Ishmael? It was, we suggest, the intervening story of Lot. Sarah saw what happens when one lives with people who mock Abraham's teachings.

Lot in Sodom

We understand well the importance of major parts of the story of the three messengers visiting Abraham. Part of the story is the continued assurance that God's promise will be fulfilled. Part of the story is to add a clarification of sorts to God's promise to Noah (Gen. 9:11) that there will never again be a flood to destroy the whole earth. That promise was not a "free pass" for evil doers: the *world* may never again be destroyed, but a *city* of evil doers can still face devastation. Part of the story is the message is the universal concern for justice that Abraham has come to represent. He pleads not for his nephew in Sodom, but for the righteous. But why must we be told the venue and menu?

> The Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, “My lord, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on –seeing that you have come your servant’s way.” They replied, “Do as you have said.” Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Quick, three measures of flour! Knead and make cakes!” Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to a servant-boy, who hastened to prepare it. He took the curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set these before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate. (Gen. 18: 1–8, NJPS)

Lot is Abraham’s literary foil who serves in contrast to point out Abraham’s traits. Abraham sits alone in the desert at his tent’s door; Lot sits “in the gate of Sodom” where the judges of the city sit. He thinks he will judge them but it is they who will have distorted his judgment. Abraham is leisurely and gracious in welcoming them; Lot has them rested, washed, up early and out in a rapid staccato of verbs. Abraham offered a morsel of bread and gave them a feast; Lot offered a feast and gave them matzah. (Rashi comments, “It was Pesah”—Lot’s holiday of freedom, that is, as the messengers come to free him from the existential slavery of being in Sodom.[10]) Lot thinks he has remembered all the lessons gained from his time with Abraham, but living in Sodom has corroded them. So corrupted was his sense of hospitality, that he offers his daughters to be raped to spare his guests! Sarah, having seen what happened to Lot in Sodom, will not raise her son in anything but a fully wholesome household.

Lot’s Daughters

While the educational value of the story of Lot’s rescue is clear, the epilogue concerning his daughters is at first puzzling. Why should we be told the sordid story of their raping him, almost *mida ke-neged mida*? Thinking that the three of them were the only ones left in the world, the daughters serially get their father drunk so that he would impregnate each of them. Why must we know the origins of their descendants, the Moabites and children of Ammon? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik explains:

Lot’s daughter had something beautiful to contribute to the emerging personality of the King Messiah. What did this primitive girl possess that the Almighty, gathering virtues and noble traits from all over the world, picked up? She was uncouth and primitive, she committed incest, and yet she was the great-great-grandmother of Ruth [the Moabite]. The Messiah will be her descendant!

She was under the impression, says Rashi (Gen. 19:31), that a cosmic cataclysm had struck and only three human beings had survived…. She acted as she did because she wanted to save humanity. This girl wanted to rebuild the world, to start from scratch and raise another race to take the place of the human race, which she believed had been destroyed simultaneously with the destruction of Sodom. This was heroism of an undreamt caliber. Instead of giving up, she had the courage to try to rebuild the world, to make a new humanity arise from the ashes of Sodom. She convinced her younger

sister. Never mind that their method was primitive and crude. These two girls took upon themselves an impossible task, something staggering and awesome….
Mattan Torah is bound up with the Messiah, who will possess the heroism of his grandmothers [including Ruth] whom the Almighty found in the non-Jewish world. They represented the heroism of loneliness, the heroism of universal commitment, and the heroism of faith and waiting. The ideal of *mattan Torah* will be fully realized only in the time of the Messiah. This great vision of a redeemed world would have been impossible had Lot's daughters been destroyed in Sodom.[11]

To fulfill God's ultimate plan, the descendents of Abraham will have to draw on the strengths of descendents of Lot. We are who we are because God chose Abraham, but He did not discard the value of the rest of humanity—and neither should we.

Abraham's Final Test

Abraham's final test was the *Akedah*, a narrative that needs its own comprehensive analysis, if only to understand why Abraham pleaded for the innocents of Sodom and not for his innocent son Isaac. But it is not this complicated matter that concerns us here; it is rather the epilogue to the story:

> Some time later, Abraham was told, "Milcah too has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz the firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, and Chesed, and Hazo, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel"—Bethuel being the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah. (Gen. 22:20–24, NJPS)

How shall we understand this anti-climax to the drama of the *Akedah*? Rabbi Soloveitchik explains:

After the Akeida, some questions began to bother Abraham. Why was I required to constantly bring sacrifices and always undergo these bitter tests? Why am I different from my bother Nahor and his wife Milcah who had so many children without suffering long-standing heart-rending yearnings, without taking his mother's only son to the Akeida?[12]

Abraham's whole life centered around God's promise regarding his children. For decades he held firm, fighting his doubts, and God then tests him once more regarding his children. And then he hears that his idolatrous brother had such an easy time with having progeny, that his pagan brother Nahor will, through Rebecca, share in being the father of God's people. To be able to continue to believe that he was nonetheless right, that his struggle was worth it, that was the real test. And the response was: "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (Gen. 22:13). He realized that a Jewish life is one of sacrifice. "His fate was clear to him: Judaism has a tremendous tradition; it is not simple and easy to live a life of Torah and mitzvot. One must be willing to sacrifice on its behalf many things and to bring sacrifices, small and large."[13]
Here then is the denouement of the Abraham Stories. One need not have a particular pedigree to become an Abraham. One need not necessarily be a weak or strong person. One need not be free of misjudgments or doubts. One need not be at a place that demands no further growth or help from others of a different community. But one must be prepared to sacrifice for a life of Torah and mitzvot.

Notes

[1] R. Aharon Lichtenstein, "Criticism and Kitvei Kodesh," in *Rav Shalom Banayikh: Essays in Honor of Rabbi Shalom Carmy*, ed. Hayyim Angel and Yitzchak Blau (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 2012), pp. 19, 22–

23.
[2] R. Ezra Bick, “Preface,” in *Torah MiEtzion: New Readings in Tanach*, vol. 1: *Bereshit*, ed. Ezra Bick and Yaakov Beasley (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books/Yeshivat Har Etzion, 2011), pp. xv, xvi, xviii.
[3] R. Mosheh Lichtenstein, *Moses: Envoy of God, Envoy of His People* (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2008), pp. 250, 244f.
[4] R. Aharon Lichtenstein in R. Chaim Sabbato, *Mivakshei Panekha, In Quest of Your Presence: Conversations with Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot Books, 2011), p. 200.
[5] *Ibid*., my translation. Of course, in quoting Rav Lichtenstein on the appropriateness of this approach, I do not suggest that he would necessarily agree with any specific readings I have proposed here.
[6] I use the name Abraham throughout this essay, even when referring to the time when Abraham was still called Abram.
[7] Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginnings of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (NY: Doubleday, 1991), p. 81.
[8] *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*, trans. and notes by E. A. Speiser (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co, 1964), pp 105–109.
[9] Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Genesis*, trans. Aryeh Newman (World Zionist Organization, 1974), Lekh-Lekha 7, pp. 156f.
[10] As R. Yoel Bin-Nun points out, “The many parallels between the overturning of Sodom and the plagues of Egypt practically shout out, ‘Pesah!’ There is the closed house, the angels of destruction/deliverance, and the events that continue “all night and until the morning,” when the day dawns and the sun rises (which is the same timetable followed in the exodus). Most specifically, there is the command, ‘Get up, get out,’ and the word ‘linger’; these are expressions that are intrinsically bound up with the exodus. *Benei Yisrael* ‘could not linger—because they were driven out of Egypt.’ Similarly, in leaving Sodom, Lot could not linger because the angels held firmly (perhaps forcibly) onto his hand, and his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, ‘and they brought him out and left him outside the city’… The Midrash recognizes expressions characteristic of the exodus in Egypt within the story of Lot’s exodus from Sodom. Indeed, ‘It was Pesah.’” See his “Lot’s Pesah and Its Significance,” in *Torah MiEtzion: New Readings in Tanach*, vol. 2: *Shemot*, ed. Ezra Bick and Yaakov Beasley (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books/Yeshivat Har Etzion, 2012), pp. 151–154.
[11] R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Abraham’s Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch*, ed. David Shatz, Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (Toras HoRav Foundation, 2008), pp. 177f, 183.
[12] R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Yemei Zikaron* (Hebrew), trans. Moshe Kroner (World Zionist Organization,1986), p. 162. My translation.
[13] *Ibid*.