

Beginning the last week of October and continuing through most of November, our weekly Torah readings focus on a man by the name of Abraham (née Abram). Abraham, our father is the first man of the Bible to be called a Hebrew. This seems like a somewhat understated title for the man who the midrash imagines smashing his father's idols, the man who the Bible illustrates arguing with God to try and prevent the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, the man who leaves his land, his birthplace, and his father's household to establish a covenant with God. A Hebrew, though, is exactly what Abraham is. Whereas we might think that the term Hebrew is lackluster, it is an amazing word for us to call the first of of patriarchs. The word "Hebrew" in the Hebrew language is "Ivri," which comes from the root " u1489 f0 " an adjective which conveys the idea of one who cross over. As we quickly approach the three weekly Torah readings about the life of Abraham, I want to share with you a quick thought about Abraham, and in doing so, I hope to share with you some of my own experiences in Israel. In biblical literary analysis, we look for words in the text (in the Hebrew) that repeat and help us understand upon what the author wants us to focus. In the very paragraph that I have used to introduce my goal, I find that the word Ivri (Hebrew) is becoming a repeating theme.

We already know that the meaning of the word " u1489 f0 ", when referring to Abraham, is the essence of crossing over and moving from one place to another. Like Abraham, I made a physical move, from a relatively comfortable life in my own home in Raleigh, to a small apartment in Jerusalem (with a five story walk-up). Leaving behind many of the comforts of home, I have returned to college, and am acclimating to a vastly different culture. The Torah tells us that Abraham left

things behind, namely his parents and their world, but we know that he took Sarah, his wife. In this, I have some envy for our patriarch. As you might know, I am in Israel while my wife is already in Cincinnati. Our fortune in a great job opportunity is also our misfortune in terms of the distance caused by an intercontinental marriage. And whereas I empathize with Abraham who likely misses his parents, I have to wonder if he would have accepted God's request if it meant parting from his wife. The Torah rarely talks about emotions, but we can imagine Abraham's thoughts as he is about to follow God's command to leave home: Is this a good idea? How will I survive the journey and will I be able to survive when I get to the destination? What will I do if I don't like the results? God, will you still be with me as I do this? These questions are not so distant from my own questions as I progress down my path.

The word "עברית" also translates to the name of the language (Hebrew) used in most of our Bible, prevalent in our liturgy, and revived as the national language of the Jewish State in which I currently dwell. To live in Israel has afforded me numerous opportunities to learn and use Hebrew. I especially thank several Israelis who I met and befriended in the States and have had the opportunity to reconnect with, and to be hosted by, here in Israel. Because of them, I have had several opportunities to get out of Jerusalem and see the country. I want to continue to use every opportunity to explore the beautiful landscapes: from sea to sea and from desert to mountains. In my opinion, one of the largest benefits of getting out of Jerusalem (and Tel Aviv, for that matter) is moving from the cosmopolitan, international centers of the country, and forcing oneself

to actually interact with Israel in its own element. Every time that I leave the major cities, I speak Hebrew and have new experiences that cannot be translated.

In my final attempt to talk about the word "זמן", I will mention that it is also the word for the past. Every one of us is on a journey. And perhaps you think that your journey is not as exciting as mine. In some ways, your journey might be even more incredible. Either way, we share something by way of this definition of the word. We share a communal memory--a past that can't be taken away. On that note, I would like to share with you the words of British Actor, Jeremy Irons: "We all have our time machines. Some take us back, they're called memories. Some take us forward, they're called dreams."

May our time machines be sure. May our memories stretch back to Abraham and may we use the strength that we share with him, our families, and all of our ancestors. May we stay strong from and draw upon that memory to help us along the journey. And, may we be blessed to hold fast to that strength throughout the journey as we try to fulfill our dreams.

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Rachel, will be reunited in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Rachel is already an important member of the Jewish community and where Marc will continue his rabbinic education at HUC-JIR.