

## The Source of Gravitas (Lech Lecha)

*“If a man happens to find himself, he has a mansion which he can inhabit with dignity all the days of his life.”-James A. Michener*

Gravitas, Pietas, Dignitas and Virtus are the classic Roman virtues whose Latin names have survived to English and many other languages since. Both gravitas and dignitas underscore the fact that the more serious or successful a person becomes, the weightier they become (and I don't mean pounds-wise, though there is certainly a literary connection).

Ibn Ezra (to Genesis 13:2) brings our attention to the antecedent to that concept from the Hebrew language and specifically from the story of Abraham.

*“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. And Abram was very heavy in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” Genesis 13:1-2*

Ibn Ezra explains that to be weighed down with money, with livestock, etc. leads to honor. According to him, the term for honor (kavod in Hebrew) is derived from the word heavy (kaved). Likewise, the opposite of honor, disgrace (kalon) stems from the word light (kal).

So when someone calls another a lightweight, small fry, inconsequential, you now know that it stems from the Hebrew terms of light and disgraced. Likewise, heavy-hitters, big shots, heavy-duty (kaved) are all deserving of honor (kavod), because of their personal gravitas.

May we only be drawn by the gravitational pull of worthy heavyweights.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

### *Dedication*

*To the 39th World Zionist Congress (the first one was in 1897 established by Theodor Herzl) and the seven new federations being represented: Paraguay, Ecuador, Uganda, Serbia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. Plus, the federations from Moldova and Latvia will join at the end of this Congress.*