Points to Ponder

Lech Lecha 5783

**וַיֵּ֥לֶךְ אִתּ֖וֹ ל֑וֹט And Lot went with him (12:4)** - Why Avraham was never able to influence Lot? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl** answered “because he was Lot.” Lot was never going to change despite the fact that he had the greatest mentor in his inner circle. Lot wasn’t open to being influenced by Avraham. We can’t always put the blame on the leader.

**וְשַׂמְתִּ֥י אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ֖ כַּֽעֲפַ֣ר הָאָ֑רֶץ Your children will be like the dirt of the land (13:16)** - Why is the description to dirt a positive description of Avraham’s children? The **Yalkut Yehuda (Rav Yehuda Leib Ginsburg)** explains that that dirt is a very valuable commodity. All of life depends on dirt and one cannot put a real value on it. The reason for this is because dirt contains hidden potential. Nothing valuable can be seen, but beneath the surface, there is a lot of potential.

**וַיָּבֹא֙ הַפָּלִ֔יט וַיַּגֵּ֖ד לְאַבְרָ֣ם הָֽעִבְרִ֑י The refugee came and told Avram the Ivree (14:13)** - Why is he called HaIvri here**? Rashi** explains that the refugee here is Og who survived the Mabul and wanted to see Avraham die so he could marry Sarah. Why does Rashi mention this here? **Rav Zeidel Epstein** explained that Rashi wanted us to know that Og was NOT a friend of Avraham as Avraham was Ivree – on the one side of the world with the rest of the world on the other. Rashi is confirming this point here.

**וּמַלְכִּי־צֶ֨דֶק֙ מֶ֣לֶךְ שָׁלֵ֔ם הוֹצִ֖יא לֶ֣חֶם וָיָ֑יִן Malkitzedek took out bread and wine (14:18)** - Why did Malkitzedek specifically bring bread and wine? **Rav Yehoshua Baumohl** suggests that before the battle Avram wasn’t known as a warrior, he was known as a ba’al chesed. Now that Avram was a warrior, the king of Sdom walked him through emek shaveh as if to say that we are all equal – you were transformed into a warrior just like us. Malkitzedek wanted to send a different message. As opposed to all other foods, bread and wine are the only two foods whose beracha is elevated as they are produced (אישתני למעליותא). The message to Avram was that this act of war did not lower him to the status of a warrior, but just the opposite. By acquiring another set of tools, he was אישתני למעליותא.

**כִּי־גֵ֣ר | יִֽהְיֶ֣ה זַרְעֲךָ֗ בְּאֶ֨רֶץ֙ לֹ֣א לָהֶ֔ם Your offspring will be strangers (15:13)** - Why is this designation – that of “Zera” used to describe Avraham’s children? **Rav Schachter** cited Tosafos who notes that Ben refers to biological children whether they follow in their parents footsteps or not. Zera refers to future descendants but only the Kosher ones. Bris Bein HaBesarim and the reward of Eretz Yisrael  was relevant only to the children who observe the Torah.

**פֶּ֣רֶא אָדָ֔ם He will be a wild man (16:12)** - What is a wild man? **Rav Nosson Wachtfogel** explains that wild children grow up without any chinuch. Although trained by Sarah, Hagar decided not to accept any direction from Sarah after she married Avraham . Since she lacked a Michanechet so did Yishmael.

**וְאַ֨בְרָהָ֔ם בֶּן־תִּשְׁעִ֥ים וָתֵ֖שַׁע שָׁנָ֑ה בְּהִמֹּל֖וֹ Avraham was 100 when he had a Bris (17:24)** - Why didn’t Avraham do his Bris earlier. Didn’t he keep all Mitzvos? Why wait to do this one? **Rav Nisson Alpert** explained that doing a Bris before being commanded is like striking a deal without the other side. It is not much of an agreement. Avraham had to wait to be commanded so that Hashem would be on board first.

Haftara

**נִסְתְּרָ֚ה דַרְכִּי֙ מֵֽ֔ה My way is hidden from Hashem (Yeshayahu 40:27)** - The Midrash castigates Yaakov who uttered this statement about having to send Binyamin down to Mitzrayim to meet the viceroy. For not seeing the hand of Hashem in his process he was reproofed. A Jew should never say “my way is hidden from Hashem”. **Rav Pam** often noted that challenges in life are Hashem’s preparation for redemption.