

Lech Lecha 5776

BS"D Parashat Lech Lecha 5776

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Beraishiet 15:18

וַיִּבְרַח אַבְרָהָם מֵעֵיטוֹר וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי עֵיטוֹר וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי כְנָעַן וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי חֵטְיָא וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי עֵיטוֹר וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי כְנָעַן וְיָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי חֵטְיָא

On that day, HaShem made a covenant with Avraham saying: "I have given this land to your descendants from the River of Egypt (the Nile) until the great river Prat (the Euphrates)"

In free translation the words "karat brit" mean "made a covenant", but the Hebrew root "krt" actually means to sever or cut off, which is the opposite of making a covenant. So why does the Torah use this word?

We will return to this later, be"h.

In the staccato noise and cadence of ongoing events in Lech Lecha, one might easily overlook a character who stealthily appears in the background, like a seemingly bit-role actor among the more recognized stars; while it later becomes apparent that he is the dominant character in all the events.

The mystery man in Lech Lecha is Lot.

As appears in the parasha, the events proceed as follows:

Avraham and his family returned unscathed from Egypt, but when friction broke out between the Halachic-minded shepherds of Avraham and the opportunist shepherds of Lot, Avraham decided that, in the name of family peace, it would be better if he and Lot would part. Lot chose to move to the area of the

fertile plain of Sodom and Avraham continued on his trek to familiarize himself with the land.

Question: Why did Lot choose the area where such wickedness reigned?

Four kings from the area of today's Iraq-Iran, led by Amrafel, King of Shinar, invaded the land and conquered five kings in the area of Sodom, taking Lot and his family as hostages. Avraham, without hesitation, and with only 318 men, attacked the four kings and their large armies.

Question: Why did Avraham embark on what would appear to have been a military suicide mission?

Avraham is victorious and saves Lot. The King of Sedom offers Avraham the material spoils of war, while the king would take back his subjects. Avraham refuses.

Question: Where was Lot at the time of this meeting?

HaShem appears to Avraham in the Brit Bain Habetarim (The Covenant of the Divided Animals) with huge promises for the future. Avraham replies that these promises will have no lasting spiritual benefit since he has no heir, except for his servant, the gentile Eliezer of Damascus. Avraham is then promised that he will have an heir who will continue his great spiritual work.

Question: Why did Avraham say that his next in line was Eliezer of Damascus when Lot was a flesh and blood relative?

All these questions are resolved by one sentence in Rashi's commentary (14:1). That Amrafel King of Shinar was, in fact, the infamous Nimrod, who previously had Avraham thrown into a fiery furnace, from which Avraham miraculously escaped unharmed.

This sheds new light on all the seemingly unrelated events in the Parsha, as follows:

Avraham's salvation from the fiery furnace caused great personal shame to Nimrod, disgrace to the pagan culture of the time, and dishonor to the national pride of Nimrod's neighboring nations.

This could not pass unavenged!

Nimrod knew that the God of Avraham would not permit any harm to come to him, as seen by the debacle (from Nimrod's point of view) when Avraham was saved from the furnace.

But Nimrod devised a scheme to destroy Avraham and his teachings. He would sever the continuation of Avraham's beliefs by destroying his heir – Lot.

Amrafel-Nimrod and three other kings attacked the area of Sodom in order to “neutralize” the only living spiritual heir of Avraham. Nimrod succeeded in his war against the five kings and took Lot and his family hostage, thereby neutralizing the monotheistic teachings of Avraham.

Avraham did not have the luxury of analyzing his military options; he had no choice but to free Lot, his heir apparent, upon whom rested the future of Am Yisrael. Avraham attacked with 318 men and miraculously defeated the armies of Nimrod and his allies.

Now comes the critical moment of the parasha.

The King of Sodom meets with Avraham to offer thanks and material benefits for rescuing the Sodomites from the four kings.

At this crucial juncture in the future of Avraham and Lot, Avraham turns to Lot and offers him to return to a life of kedusha. Lot, when he departed from Avraham and chose to live near Sodom, was not yet aware of the evils of Sodom and Amora. But now, after knowing the Sodomites, Lot was given a second chance by Avraham to rejoin the family. At this crucial

moment, when on one side stood his holy uncle who represented a life of morality and fear of God, and on the other side stood the King of Sodom with the promise of recognition and honor (Lot was appointed chief justice of Sodom), Lot again chose to be with the Sodomites. But this time he was fully aware of who they were, and how they behaved.

At that precise moment, Lot abrogated his spiritual connection with Avraham, surrendering all chance of being Avraham's spiritual heir.

At that moment, the one who was closest to Avraham was his servant, Eliezer of Damascus, a fact which Avraham bemoans before HaShem.

HaShem promises Avraham that he would have a son, Yitzchak, who would soon be born to him and Sarah, and through Yitzchak and Yitzchak's son Ya'akov, the Jewish people would begin their momentous journey into eternity.

But soon after, Yishmael is born to Avraham and Hagar. Yishmael now has a claim that he is Avraham's heir apparent, both in the spiritual realm as well as the material wealth of his father.

In Parashat Vayera, the inherent evil character of Yishmael comes to the fore. He is indeed a "pereh adam" an unbridled wild being.

Sarah sees Yishmael for what he is and demands that Avraham terminate all connection with Hagar and her son Yishmael. HaShem appears to Avraham and directs him to follow Sarah's demand.

By doing so, HaShem informs Avraham that Yishmael is neither his spiritual or material heir.

The only heir will be Yitzchak, from whom will descend the Jewish nation.

By severing Lot and Yishmael from any Halachic connection to Avraham, the way was now clear for HaShem to conclude an eternal covenant with Avraham and his future Jewish descendants, free of legitimate claims by Lot or Yishmael.

Now we can understand why the Torah used the verb KRT (karat brit), which means to sever or cut off, to describe the conclusion of the eternal covenant between the Creator and the Jewish people.

The covenant had to be predicated upon severing all who would interfere with the restricted, parochial and insular nature of the covenant. Lot and Yishmael represented those who would intrude on the private, exclusive and selective covenant between HaShem and the Jewish nation.

As Moshe Rabbeinu requested from HaShem (Shemot 33:16)

וְכִי אֵיךְ יֵדוּעַ כִּי אֲנִי וְעַמִּי מָצְאוּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ
אֲלֵימָּה יֵדוּעַ כִּי אֲנִי וְעַמִּי מָצְאוּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ
אֲלֵימָּה יֵדוּעַ כִּי אֲנִי וְעַמִּי מָצְאוּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ

How will it known that I and Your people have found favor in Your eyes, unless you go with us? Only if You distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth

Conclusion: Christians and Moslems claim either all of the holy land or parts of it like the Temple Mount or Mount Zion. And many nations simply don't want the Jews to have a home of their own. So one by one HaShem is removing their tentacles from the holy land, as a precursor to presenting the entire holy land to the Jewish nation.

The Iranian Threat

In the supermarket of opinions regarding the Iranian threat, I request a small place on the shelf for my personal view.

As I have stated previously, in HaShem's complex world, the reality is not necessarily what one sees at the moment. As in the game of pool, the ball that is being struck by the cue stick is not the one that is intended to fall into the pocket. So too, the headlines of today are only a preparation for more significant events.

Iran is threatening Medinat Yisrael. But in the spirit of Middle East culture where truth evokes an allergic reaction among Arabs and Moslems in general, the intentions of the Nazis of Teheran are focused on a very different species of prey.

No doubt, the Persians of today, with their Haman type leader, harbor little love for Jews and the Jewish State. But they are sharpening their fangs and collecting their venom for a much closer enemy – Saudi Arabia.

Israel is a camouflage for their intended victims. The Shi'ite Iranians despise the "not religious enough" Sunni Saudis, as well as all the rest of the Sunni chevra; but they scream "Israel" in the knowledge that no one will really care if Israel is threatened.

The beliefs of Iranian Shi'ite Islam are cruel and irrational; but after they became the accepted culture there, the leaders of Iran make rational decisions that further their demonic ambitions. I believe that they are preparing to sweep into Saudi Arabia for two purposes: To take control over the Moslem "holy" places of Mecca and Medina, and to control Saudi's huge oil reserves. The Iranians are planning to control the flow of oil from the Gulf to the rest of the world, and thereby dominate the world's economies, and in effect dominate the

world.

If the world does not act very soon to subdue the Iranian cobra, the Iranians could determine whether there will be light or darkness in Paris, or warmth or cold in the houses of Monsey.

The Zohar, at the end of parashat Beshalach, states that the descendants of Yishmael (defined as those nations who practice circumcision by religious law or custom – Islam) are destined to cause three great wars: one at sea, another on land and the last close to Yerushalayim. The one at sea will be when the Iranians take control of the Straits of Hormuz (entrance to the Gulf of Arabia from the Indian Ocean) through which flows 30% of the world's oil.

Israel will be less affected than Europe or the US by virtue of the offshore gas and oil deposits recently discovered here. Perhaps this is the intention of the prophet Yeshayahu (45:6-7) when he said:

:אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ וְאֵינִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ
אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ אֲנִי אֶתְּהַלֵּךְ

So that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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