



Jewish nation must be dealt with by distancing and severing those claims.

It cannot come from Hashem, but rather those who make those claims must perform their own spiritual suicide.

At that time in history, there were two people who had a claim to the spiritual and material wealth of Avraham – Lot, Avraham's nephew and brother-in-law, and later on Yishmael, Avraham's son by the Egyptian woman Hagar. And it was Hashem's plan that both would willingly relinquish their spiritual claims to be Avraham's successor.

### **Part B:**

The first to do so was Lot in parashat Lech Lecha.

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

Avraham and his family returned unscathed from Egypt. Friction broke out between the halachically minded shepherds of Avraham and the opportunist shepherds of Lot; and 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 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 Sodom 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 a son from Sarah 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 living 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 unscathed.

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

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

This could not pass without revenge!

Nimrod knew that the God of Avraham would not permit any harm to come to Avraham, 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 only heir at the time – 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 future 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.

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

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.

But according to the rules set down by the Almighty, Yishmael must willingly abdicate his claim as Avraham’s spiritual heir.

This occurs later on in the parasha in the Akeida episode (the binding of Yitzchak).

The Torah states that when Avraham and his entourage arrived in Yerushalayim, Avraham points to Yishmael and to his servant Eliezer, saying (22,5):

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱבְרָהָם בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לְאַבְרָהָם וַיִּבְרָךְ אֱלֹהִים בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֱבְרָהָם אֲנִי כֹּה־בְרִיָּה וְאֵלֹהֵי אֱבְרָהָם הֵם  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה וְעַתָּה אָבְרָהָם יֵשׁוּב וְעַתָּה אֲבְרָהָם וְעַתָּה אֲבְרָהָם וְעַתָּה אֲבְרָהָם וְעַתָּה אֲבְרָהָם

*And Avraham said to the young men (Yishmael and Eliezer), “Stay here with the donkey while I and the young boy go there (Mount Moriah) where we will worship and return to you”.*

At that very moment Yishmael should have protested and demanded that he was the one to ascend with his father to the Mount and pray, not Yitzchak. But instead Yishmael chose to remain with Eliezer and the animal, because to ascend the

Mount would have meant his self-sacrifice to Hashem, which he was not willing to do.

Here we are witnessing the self-severing of Lot and Yishmael from the spiritual future of Avraham, paving the way for the creation of the eternal covenant between HaShem and Bnei Yisrael.

Now we can understand why the Torah uses the verb KRT (karat brit), which means to sever or cut off to describe 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 יֵשְׁבֵנוּ עִיר וְעָבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְיִשְׁכְּחוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִשְׁכְּחוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית  
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ וְיִשְׁכְּחוּ אֶת יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר מֵצִיאָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

*How will it be 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.*

Throughout the generations there has been an ongoing process of self-elimination from HaShem's holy people through assimilation, very similar to the decisions taken by Lot and Yishmael.

The Mount Moriah of Yishmael is in our times Medinat Yisrael, and the offer to return from the Sodoms and Amoras to rejoin with Avraham is the open gates of the Medina beckoning all to return.

In our time, six Million Jews have heeded the call or have

been blessed to have been born here, but there are millions who prefer to stay away.

This is the national and religious tragedy of our times, which will be analyzed and discussed by future generations .

The Mashiach will appear in Eretz Yisrael and together with him we will lament over the millions who could have been here but who willingly severed themselves from HaShem's call to ascend the holy mountain, preferring to remain with the animals in the Sodoms and Amorahs of this world.

Let all of us who have merited to hear the call of return offer up praise to HaShem for embracing us, and taking our hand as we ascend the "Mountain of the Lord".

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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