



Parshas Lech Lecha 2021, search for peace

The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

The Parsha Perspective in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Shaul Ben Berta & Sasson Bezalel Ben Batia.

Our Parsha introduces us to the father of the Jewish nation, Avraham Avinu. He is commanded to leave his birthplace and hometown and go on an unknown journey led by G-d. Soon after Avraham leaves, he arrives in Cana'an, accompanied by his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot. Hashem tells him that his descendants will inhabit the land he is standing on.

As he was exploring the land of Cana'an, a famine struck, forcing him to travel down to Egypt to buy food. Fearing that the Egyptians would kill him to take his wife Sarah because of her immense beauty, Avraham asked her to allege that he was just her brother.

Sarah was taken and brought to Pharaoh when they arrived at the border. In retaliation, G-d struck Pharaoh's palace members with a plague, causing Pharaoh to realize that he was deceived and quickly released Sarah. He gave Avraham and Sarah many gifts and escorted them out of his land.

We read about the dispute between the shepherds of Avraham and Lot. The shepherds of Abraham did not allow their flock to graze on any land not their own. But Lot's shepherds allowed their cattle to eat wherever they wanted. The argument was that letting their animals to pasture without permission is not only stealing. Worse yet, it is a desecration of Avraham's honesty and his belief in G-d. So Avraham

and Lot decided to go their separate ways, Lot went to Sedom, and Avraham stayed in Israel.

The Parsha concludes with the Mitzvah of Bris Milah. Hashem appeared to Avraham at the age of 99 and asked him to circumcise himself to establish an everlasting bond between them. Accordingly, the Bracha made by each father at a Bris Milah is ***“Lehachnisoh Bivrito Shel Avraham Avinu - enter him (the baby) into the Covenant of Avraham our forefather.”***

However, a question comes to mind: When the Parsha tells us about the disagreements between the Shepherds of Avraham and Lot, it adds a seemingly random detail. The Pasuk writes (13:7) *“There were fights between the shepherds of Avraham’s cattle and those of Lot’s cattle. And the Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling on the land.”* Why does the Torah add that *“the Canaanites and Perizzites were living on the land”*? It is a seemingly random fact that has no implication on the story. Why does the Torah add by writing which nations were living there at that time?!

The Radak (*Rav Dovid Kimchi, a fierce defender of the Rambam & a biblical commentary from the 11th century*) answers this question by explaining the connection between Avraham and who was living in the land of the time. The correlation writes the Radak is whose land Lot’s cattle is potentially stealing from. Therefore, the Torah includes which nations were in the land when writing about the story.

The Radak continues that both the Canaanites and Perizzites gave explicit permission to Avraham to use their lands. But Avraham did not want to use them for fear that it would be a desecration of G-d’s Name. Since it might not have been well known that Avraham had their approval to use their lands, some could think that Avraham is stealing from them.

Considering that Avraham was the leading ambassador of G-d at that time, it can become a desecration of G-d’s Name. This was the crux and core issue in the disagreements between the shepherds of Avraham and Lot.

However, the Sforno (*Rav Ovadiah Sforno, an Italian commentator and doctor from the early 1500s*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He explains that this is no

random fact, but the Torah teaches us a powerful lesson. Earlier in the Parsha, it adds a similar point (12:6) "*Avraham passed through the land as far as Shechem, in the plains of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land.*" Rashi (Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki) writes that the Canaanites were gradually conquering the land at that time.

The lesson Sforno explains is that **two different nations were living in peace, yet one family could not live in harmony.** So Avraham turned to Lot and said, I will do anything it takes to have peace with you again. As the Pasuk writes (13:9) "*Is not the whole land before you? Let us separate: if you go left, I will go right, and if you go right, I will go left.*"

Avraham was willing to leave the land that G-d promised him for the sake of peace. Because G-d only gives His blessings when there is peace between family, friends, and, ultimately, the Jewish community.

In our daily life, we must realize that although we live in highly divisive times, we are stronger united. As President John F Kennedy said in 1961, "*what unites us is far greater than what divides us.*" This is especially true concerning the Jewish people. Despite coming from different countries and backgrounds, what connects us is far more powerful.

The simple fact that we are chosen by G-d to be His ambassadors of light to the world is greater than any divisions we invent. Additionally, the more aligned we are, the stronger we are to repel attacks on our people and our belief in G-d. We can accomplish goals far beyond our imagination **if we look above what separates us and see the beautiful souls of G-d in others hiding in plain sight.**

**“Peace is not the highest goal in life.
It is the most fundamental requirement.”**

*Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*