

A "SNEAK PREVIEW" OF HISTORY

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 256, Must Mohel go to baby?

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov - - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

A "Sneak Preview" of History

One of the themes of Sefer [the book of] Bereishis is "ma'aseh avos siman l'banim" -- that the actions of the forefathers foreshadow similar events for their children. Sefer Bereishis is a virtual blueprint of what will happen to our nation during its history. The experiences of the Avos [Patriarchs] provide us with the strength to endure.

In Parshas Lech Lecha we learn of the famous battle between "The Four Kings and the Five Kings". I once heard the following insight from Rav Nachman Bulman regarding the "prophecy to the children" implicit in this war. Rav Bulman said that if you ask people "When did the first World War begin?" they will answer reflexively "1914". However, Rav Bulman says, that is the wrong answer. The first World War occurred in this week's parsha.

What happened in this precedent-setting battle? How did the war between the four kings and the five kings eventually end? A hostage was taken (Avraham's nephew, Lot). Who then became involved in the middle of the first world war? Our patriarch, Abraham. This is the prophetic foreshadowing.

When major historical events occur and when nations are fighting against other nations, we must hold our breath. One thing is certain: Jews will become involved, one way or another.

A recent example occurred when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United States sent 250,000 troops to

Kuwait. What did that have to do with the Jews? But all of a sudden, the Jews were pulled in the middle of it. "We (Iraq) will give up Kuwait, if the Jews give up the territories they captured."

I never understood when I learned in history classes about "The Big Lie". How can people be so stupid that they believe something that is patently false? The first time Saddam Hussein made this analogy, people dismissed it as ridiculous. There is obviously no comparison between Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and Israel's occupation of territories won defending herself in the Six Day War. But Saddam Hussein repeated the lie and repeated it and eventually people start saying, "Yes, he has a point there." That is an example of "The Big Lie".

Inevitably, when nations begin fighting and war spreads across the globe - watch out! Somehow, they will involve the Jews. This concept is foreshadowed right here in Parshas Lech Lecha: "It transpired in the days of Amrafel, King of Shinaar..." [Bereishis 14:1]

The Medrash states "If you see nations fighting with one another, wait (in anticipation)". Sometimes the connection will be immediately obvious, some times it will be understood in 5 weeks or 5 months or 5 years or 50 years. But the Medrash advises us - wait and see - inevitably it will concern the Jews.

Why Solicit Avraham For The Rescue of Lot?

After the capture of Lot, the pasuk [verse] says, "the survivor came and related this to Avram the Ivri [Hebrew]" [14:13]. Why does the Torah use the adjective "the Hebrew" to describe Avram, specifically at this time? The Torah speaks of Avram in many places without referring to him by this title.

I saw a terrific explanation from the Beis Av by Rav Elyakim Schlessinger. The Medrash says that Avram was called 'Ivri', because "the entire world was on one side (ever echad), and he was on the other side (avar hasheni)". The definition of a Jew is "everyone is on one side, and I am on the other side." The whole world was into paganism and Avram came along and said "No! G-d is One!"

Why did the "survivor" come to Avram to effect Lot's rescue? Avram and Lot had already parted ways, not under the best of circumstances. Why didn't the "survivor" seek help from Lot's friends and neighbors?

The survivor came to Avram, precisely because he is Avram, the Ivri. When in need of a person to go out and put his life in danger in order to save someone else, we need a person who is willing to diverge from "common practice" and follow the path that the Torah instructs. If the Torah commands "Do not stand idly by over the blood of your fellow man" then that is precisely what he will do. This is the only help that is truly reliable. Everyone else will have an excuse - except the Ivri!

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Yerushalayim.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Lech Lecha are provided below:

- Tape # 028 - Conversion (Geirus)
- Tape # 070 - Bris Milah: The Metzizah Controversy
- Tape # 119 - Conversion for Ulterior Motives
- Tape # 166 - The Childless Couple in Halacha
- Tape # 212 - Non-Jews and the Mitzvah of Kibbud Av
- Tape # 256 - Mohel and Baby: Who Goes to Whom
- Tape # 302 - The Mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisroel
- Tape # 346 - Trading Terrorists for Hostages
- Tape # 390 - Geirus -- Mitzvah, Reshus, or Issur?
- Tape # 434 - Anesthesia During Milah
- Tape # 478 - Sandik -- Can You Change Your Mind?
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