

WHAT HAPPENED TO LOT?

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 # 434 Anesthesia During Milah. Good Shabbos!

What Happened To Lot?

The pasuk [verse] in this week's parsha says, "And they took Lot and his possessions, the nephew of Avram and they left; for he lived in Sodom" [Bereishis 14:12]. We have commented in past years on the strange grammatical construction of this pasuk: "The nephew of Avram" seems to be a misplaced modifier. It seems that the way the pasuk should have been written is "And they took Lot, the nephew of Avram, and his possessions..."

Recently, I saw an insight into this pasuk from Rav Shimon Schwab, zt"l. Lot began the parsha as a righteous person. He was a disciple of Avram Avinu. He followed Avram into exile. He went down with him to Egypt and supported him in his risky plan to pretend that Sarah was only his sister. [The Medrash states that Lot's loyalty to Avram during this era earned him the merit by which he was rescued from Sodom.] The pasuk references the fact that Avraham referred to himself and Lot as "anashim achim anachnu" [We are like brothers] [13:8]. In other words, we are both righteous individuals.

Somewhere along the line, something happened to Lot. Somewhere along the line, he deviated "off the path". The pasuk references this "departure" from the path when it says "And G-d spoke to Avraham after Lot parted company from him" [13:14]. The Medrash Tanchuma explains that G-d did not want to speak with Avram as long as the wicked Lot was with him. What happened to Lot, who had started out as a righteous "brother" of Avraham, that caused him to suddenly become wicked?

Rav Schwab suggested that although we do not have an explicit answer to this question, the above quoted pasuk hints at an answer: "And they took Lot and his possessions, the nephew of Avram". That which separated Lot from Avraham was "his possessions". Lot's money is what separated the "brothers" not only in this pasuk but in their entire outlook on life as well. This is one of the oldest

stories of humanity. Money can have a very corrosive effect on people.

It seems that after accumulating a little money, Lot wanted to go live "the good life". Lot moved to Sodom. What kind of person would do that? Imagine if a person was living together with his righteous uncle in Monsey or in Baltimore and he suddenly decided to move to Atlantic City. What kind of person would do that? What happened? "The possessions" - that's what happened. Lot's wealth went to his head. His desire to live "the good life" drove him off the straight and narrow path of Avraham.

Adon Olam Is The Prayer of Avraham Avinu

Someone once wrote a Siddur commentary and showed it to the Gaon of Vilna for his approbation. The Gaon saw the following insight and said that for this insight alone, the work was valuable.

The author asked why the Siddur begins with the prayer "Adon Olam" (Master of the World). The Talmud [Brochos 7b] quotes a teaching of Rav Yochanan in the name of Rav Shimeon Ben Yochai that from the day G-d created the world no creature called G-d by the term "Master" (Adon) until Avraham came and called Him Master as it is written "And he said Adon-ai..." [15:2].

We attribute each of the three daily prayers to a different one of the Patriarchs. The prayer of Avraham is the morning prayer, Shachris. It is therefore only right that the morning prayer begins with "Adon Olam" (Master of the World...).

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch further clarifies the nuance implied by referring to G-d as "Adon" (Master) as opposed to King or Monarch. Rav Hirsch points out a difference between a "King" and a "Master". The relationship between a King and a citizen of the country is a very tenuous one. "What do I have to do with the King? The King does not know that I exist. He is not aware of my needs or my problems." The word "Adon" is used in connection with a servant. The relationship between a master and his servant is a very different one from the relationship between a king and his citizen. The master knows his servant very well. A personal relationship exists between them.

It could be that when Rav Shimeon Ben Yochai spoke of the novelty of Avraham Avinu referring to G-d by the name Adon, he was referring to this nuance. Avrohom introduced into the world the idea that G-d is not merely our King - He is our Master. He was the first person to recognize that despite the fact that G-d is King of all kings, he is also MY personal G- d, my Master.

This idea fits in very nicely with the flow of the liturgical poem Adon Olam. The poem begins with the terminology Master of the WORLD who ruled before any form was created. But it later says, "He is

MY G-d and MY living Redeemer; Rock of MY pain... MY banner; MY refuge..." This makes it even more appropriate to label Adon Olam as the prayer of Avraham Avinu, because Avraham was the person who taught that the Almighty is both the King as well as my personal G-d.

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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:

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