



פרשת לך לך
מרחשון תשפ"ד

CHASSIDUS EVENING

Join us this Thursday night in preparation for Chof Marcheshvan at a community Chassidus Learning Evening. Thursday 8-9pm in the Kollel and lunchroom, with hot refreshments and Lechaim.

NEW HALACHA SHIUR

In conjunction with Daminyan and Young Yeshivah, Kollel is proud to an exciting new Halacha-learning initiative to the Melbourne Anash community.

The Semichas Chaver Program (SCP), which runs in over 250 locations around the world, is an innovative, fast-paced, interactive halacha learning program, with material specifically designed to be easily imparted to your family!

Upon successfully passing a written exam, every member will personally receive Bal-Habatim Semicha from Chief Rabbi Dovid Lau, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar, Harav Herschel Schachter and other world renowned Rabbonim and Talmidei Chachamim.

The program is geared specifically for your busy 21st century lifestyle, with a minimal 60-75 minute weekly commitment, an interactive Shiur, and materials to take home with you for use in your own time.

The local Shiur is being managed and given by **Rabbi Yossi Gopin** of Kollel Menachem Lubavitch, for more details please feel free to reach out to him on **0420 870 560**

A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem



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Fighting Evil to Return our Captive Brothers

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Rabbi Yonason Johnson

As Jews, we are taught that we need to live with the Parsha of the Week, to find relevance and draw lessons to our present times and our daily lives.

Many people have pointed out the connection between the current events in Eretz Yisroel and the War of Kings in the Parsha, which describes the abduction of Lot and Avraham's heroic actions to rescue him and bring him home.

In the specific details of this episode and the words of the commentators, we can find many connections and more importantly lessons to strengthen us in these difficult times.

Our enemies' intentions

When describing Lot's capture, the Torah states; *"They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, and his possessions, and departed; for he had settled in Sodom"*. We already knew that Lot was Avraham's nephew. Why does the Torah repeat it here?

The commentaries teach that unlike the other residents of Sodom, they did not take Lot because of his wealth. They took him because he was the nephew of Avraham. This was an ideological war. They despised Avraham because spiritually he stood against their beliefs in idolatry and spread the awareness of Hashem in the world. This is why they did not kill Lot, because they wanted to entice Avraham into battle so that they could kill him.

Contrary to what many would like to believe, the horrendous attack and the hatred of Hamas is not about Zionism, land or a lack of autonomy. It was not born out of poverty or oppression.

This attack was driven by a theological hatred of all Jews and a desire to wipe Israel and its inhabitants off the face of the earth, followed by Jews around the world *היה לא תהיה*. This has become so evident in the antisemitic rhetoric around the world in which we see clearly that this is not about Zionism, but about pure antisemitism and hatred of Jews.

It is important to know this fact because it informs, shapes and justifies the only appropriate response,

as we will see shortly.

Not a time for divisions

Who was Lot? Whilst he was Avraham's nephew, he did not act as a relative of Avraham. Only a few verses earlier, we read about the fight that erupted between the shepherds of Lot and Avraham. This caused Avraham and Lot to separate, "if you go to the left I will go to the right and if you go to the right I will go to the left." Spiritually, Lot did not follow the path of Avraham in his service of Hashem. Lot saw the wickedness of Sodom and chose to settle there, far "from Avraham and his G-d".

This is so reminiscent of the schisms and strife that plagued Israel over the past year, which pitched left against right and right against left and a rift between the religious and the secular.

But all of those rifts ended the moment Lot was taken captive.

The Midrash teaches that Lot looked like just Avraham and that this is why he was taken captive. Our enemies do not see the distinctions and divisions that we make amongst ourselves. They do not see left or right, religious or secular. To them we all look the same. We are all Jews. And in truth they are right. Despite our outward presentations, beliefs and lifestyles, we are one people, sharing one soul, one past and one destiny.

"And Avram heard that his brother had been taken captive, he armed his trained men... and he pursued them."

No time to hesitate

The Malbim teaches that Avraham was not spurred to go to war by hearing that Lot's wealth had been taken. The Torah stresses that what bothered and motivated Avraham is that his brother had been taken captive.

From the juxtaposition in this verse, Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that immediately on hearing about Lot's abduction, Avraham armed himself and went out to battle. There was no moment of hesitation,

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no question on what had to be done.

The world may call for ceasefires, for restraint or proportionality. They may ask us the delay invasion on all sorts of grounds. But as Jews, when we hear that our brothers have been taken captive and when the blood of our people has been spilled, there is an urgency and an emotion that cannot be stopped. There is no time for hesitation or calculations. We need to take immediate action to save them and bring them home.

They are our brothers

Even though Lot was Avraham's nephew, the Torah records that Avraham heard that "his brother had been taken captive.

Rabbeinu Bechaye writes that the Torah is teaching us about the Middos of Avraham. In that moment, Avraham did not allow any consideration of their previous strife to affect his judgment. Despite their spiritual differences and their rift, he swiftly went out to battle, motivated by a pure brotherly love.

When our enemies attacked us, all of the divisions between us disappeared and we realised that we are brothers.

We are witnessing an unprecedented unity amongst the Jewish people. The political protests were disbanded and those who had vowed that they would not serve, took up arms and joined the fight. The secular and religious who had been fighting came together side-by-side to assist in the war effort in whatever way possible.

For the religious it made no difference that many of those who were attacked were Jews who went to a dance party in the desert on Yomtov. The political and religious beliefs of the victims and the captives is absolutely irrelevant. The superficial divisions that separate us faded and our true love and unity was revealed. We are like brothers. We may fight and argue from time-to-time, but we love one another infinitely and would do anything to protect and save each other from harm.

An answer to the pacifists

The Ohr Hachaim shares a fascinating explanation why Avraham did not try to redeem Lot through peaceful means and give his opponents the opportunity to return him peacefully before launching his attack. Instead, Avraham went straight to war.

The kings knew exactly who Lot was. They knew that he was Avraham's relative and that is why they intentionally abducted him. They

declared loudly to the world that they were enemies of Avraham.

Interestingly, the Ohr Hachaim adds that you might think that the kings had legitimate cause to abduct Lot, because they were at war with the king of Sodom. But as they were not at war with Avraham, they should have spared Lot and set him free. The fact that they did not do so, only further illustrates that their true intention was to cause harm to the family of Avraham and to engage Avraham in battle.

The fact that our enemies deliberately attacked, killed, maimed and abducted innocent civilians; women, the elderly and young children and babies, takes away any legitimacy that they may claim in the name of their cause. It became apparently clear that this has nothing to do with geopolitics or fighting their "oppressors". It only evidences that they are driven by Jew-hatred and the desire to cause harm to our people.

When facing this type of enemy, there is no peaceful, negotiated solution. You cannot negotiate with those who just want to see you wiped off the face of the earth and will stop at nothing to realise their objectives, with those who lack any thread of compassion and goodness in their hearts. The only response, like Avraham, is to go to war, to fight and eradicate the enemy and to secure the return of our captives.

Disciples of kindness

The men whom Avraham takes with him into battle are described as Chanichav. This term comes from the term Chinuch, meaning that they were students or disciples of Avraham. They had been raised and educated with Avraham's morality and sense of justice and right. They too believed shared Avraham's value of brotherly love and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their brother.

According to Kabbalah, Avraham embodies the Middah of Ahavah and Chessed - love and kindness. As part of our fight against our enemies, we must be the disciples of Avraham.

In addition to the powerful unity that this war has brought out, we have witnessed tremendous Chessed; fundraising efforts from around the world, Jews travelling from overseas to visit the families of mourners and the families of captives to give them Chizzuk, thousands of "strangers" showing up to the funeral of a lone-soldier who lost their life in battle, families cooking hundreds of hot meals for soldiers and volunteering in hospitals. The list goes on and on.

We have shown that we are the students of Avraham, who have learned and internalised the

value of Chessed and this merit will certainly stand by us to bring our victory.

The power of prayer

The Torah teaches that Avraham went out to war with 318 men. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev points out that the number 318 is the Gematria of נִשְׁאָר . Literally this means speech, teaching that Avraham defeated the kings by pronouncing the Divine Name.

נִשְׁאָר is also one of the terms used to denote prayer, in which we call out in Hashem's Name. In support of our soldiers fighting the physical battle, our prayers are affective and needed at this time. Our Tehillim helps bring healing to the wounded, gives strength to our soldiers and evokes mercy of High to bring us victory and bring back our brothers.

Trust in Hashem

On the verse describing how Avraham went to battle, the Midrash references the verses in Tehillim (112:7-8) "*He fears no evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure. He will not fear, until he beholds the fall of his foes*".

Avraham went into battle with full trust in Hashem. With this trust he was not afraid. We too, must strengthen our trust in Hashem so that we advance with courage and determination with no fear in our hearts.

Just as in the Parsha our enemies were miraculously and utterly defeated and the captives were safely returned home, may we have a miraculous victory over our enemies and may all of the captives come safely home to their families.

Instead of being upset that he had killed his descendants, Malki-tzedek brought gifts to Avraham. Whilst it may not seem like this now, ultimately the world will recognise that we are in the right and our actions have been just. They will thank Israel for leading the fight against terror and for standing up for goodness, justice and righteousness.

The Midrash on this passage concludes; "If you see nations fighting one another, await the arrival of Moshiach. Know this is so because by going out to fight the kings, it brought Avraham redemption". May we merit the immediate Redemption with the coming of Moshiach which will bring the end to all war and suffering and bring all of us back safely to the Holy Land.