

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בְּשִׁיטְחָא



PARSHAS
LECH LECHA

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

JUSTICE AND JUSTIFICATION

Parshas Lech Lecha introduces us to the story and travels of Avraham Avinu. His kindness and hospitality were legendary — he specifically settled in an area that would attract weary travelers in need of a meal, despite his terrible pain after his *bris milah* he pushed himself to honor guests that arrived, and when told of the impending doom coming to the evil Sodom, he prayed for their pardon.

All this leads to a question posed by Rabbi Mordechai Miller (1921–2000), the previous *menahel* of Gateshead Seminary. When the shepherds of Avraham and Lot had a disagreement, Avraham told Lot that they must part.¹ “Choose a direction,” said Avraham, “and I will travel the opposite way.” This seems to be a stark contrast with Avraham’s warmth and friendliness. Was Lot any less deserving than a stranger?

To answer this question, Rabbi Miller points to the basis of the argument between the shepherds of Avraham and Lot. Rashi² states that Lot’s shepherds allowed their sheep to graze the land of the inhabitants, which offended the sensibilities of the shepherds of Avraham. However, Lot’s shepherds were not thieves — they believed they were fully within their rights. They reasoned that Hashem had promised the land to Avraham and his descendants. Avraham did not have any children, so the expectation was that Lot would inherit Avraham’s estate, and with it, the Land of Israel.

Thus, they said, this land is promised to Lot by Hashem! To this, the shepherds of Avraham responded that while logic would dictate that Lot will eventually inherit the land, they have not yet taken possession, and therefore have no claim at this point.

With this background, we can understand Avraham’s perspective. Of course Avraham would do good even to the worst of the worst. However, this was assuming that there was some form of communication between Avraham and the recipient. Lot and his shepherds, however, were closed to any further conversation. They were convinced they were in the right, and no amount of reasoning would persuade them otherwise. A person like that would end up as a negative influence on Avraham and his retinue, and therefore, they had to part ways.

There are times where we might be convinced that we are correct, and we have logic and reasoning to back us up. Even then, it is important to be open to the potential admission of error. Only then will we truly be able to grow in our *avodas Hashem*.

1 Bereishis 13:1-12

2 Bereishis 13:7 s.v. ויהי ריב

“Choose a direction, and I will travel the opposite way.”

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

There are two steps to recognizing that one made a mistake. The soul searchin part is actually the easier part. The harder part is actually admitting to the truth.

In general, this is so difficult because we don’t want to seem weak or inept. How do we combat these feelings?

The reality is that one who admits a mistake is much wiser than those who vainly cling to their falsehoods and facades.¹ Those who value wisdom are willing to forego the honor of being right in order to find the truth.

But moreover, true strength comes from being able to do what is correct, even if it is difficult. A sign of the mature mind is one who is capable of recognizing that we don’t have all the answers, and others may be able to help with their input.²

Think about how you feel when others are willing to say, “You are right, I made a mistake.” People generally respect those who are willing to own their mistakes, and they will respect us as well if we take that first step.

1 Avos 5:7

2 Rabag on Melachim I 2:2 s.v. וחזקת ורהיית



I view my fixed commitment to studying Mussar every day as nothing short of Pikuach Nefesh — life saving!

- R' Elya Lopian zt"l, Lev Eliyahu vol. 1, “Ma’asim v’Hanhagos,” note 7

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A STEAL OF A LESSON

Maybe it was because I'm the child of survivors. Or maybe because we never really had much money growing up. Either way, ever since I can remember, I was stingy. Not in a mean way, but I just didn't spend money the way others did.

When I met my future wife, Esty, we discussed everything from backgrounds, outlook, and our vision for the future. However, it did not occur to me to discuss money, and our attitude towards it. I guess I just assumed that any responsible adult would share my view on these matters. We were both in for a surprise.

When Esty bought rolls instead of a regular loaf of bread, I felt my face getting flush. Flicking on lights when just entering the room for a moment really got to me, but I still said nothing. But when I came home from *kollel* to see the air conditioner going, when I knew that there is a good breeze if you would just open the windows, I finally spoke up.

I was careful with how I chose my words, and Esty is naturally easygoing, so we came to an understanding. Or so I thought. But the next day, Esty bought tomatoes when shopping, and I knew that tomatoes had recently become expensive. I felt like I was the only one in our partnership who cared about the finances, and that I had to constantly be on top of her spendthrift ways or we would wind up in terrible debt.

Finally, one night, I told Esty how I was feeling. Esty looked up from the work she was doing on the computer (her second job, which I had found for her) and looked thoughtful. "It sounds like you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders. But Heshy, are you sure this is the proper way? I mean, what happened to trust in Hashem? Don't get me wrong, I understand one needs to do proper *hishtadlus*, but I think we are!"

She was right, she certainly worked hard, but... "But I feel like I need to keep telling you, or you wouldn't care about the finances. We're only here because I'm on top of things."

"Heshy, you know we are both in this together. But I don't think *hishtadlus* means functioning like a pressure cooker. We have to do our share, but let's leave the details up to Hashem."

The way she spoke stirred something. She wasn't asking for luxuries, just the allowance to not hold on to every single penny. I nodded. "Let's try it."

It wasn't easy. But I was bolstered every time things worked out. An unexpected gift, a refund that we gave up on getting, and so on. And with each event, I was able to let go a bit more. It took years of work and healing on my part, but our life together has been so much better, because of Esty's wonderful attitude, and the fact that I allowed the possibility that she was right.

**Adapted from Mountain Climbers by Malky Feig*

DID YOU KNOW?

- The ultimate expression of *Moshe Rabbeinu's* greatness is the fact that, after all he put into bringing the Torah to *Klal Yisrael*, he was willing and able to destroy the *Luchos* when the need arose.¹
- *Yiras Shomayim* alone is not sufficient to defeat the *Yetzer Horah*. One must be willing to see the 'real' person that they are, and only then will they be equipped for battle.²

¹ *Ateres Mordechai* cited in *Rabbi Frand on the Parshah*, pg. 297

² *Ohr Yisrael*, Letter 4

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