בס"ד

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

Parshas Lech Lecha 5787 *Year 17* **#694** פרשת לך לך תשפ"ז

Avraham and Lot: What was their dispute and why They Had to Part Ways?

וַיְהִי רִיב בֵּין רֹעֵי מִקְנֵה אַבְרָם וּבֵין רֹעֵי מִקְנֵה לוֹט וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי אָז יֹשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ: וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל לוֹט אַל נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָּ וּבֵין רֹעַי וּבֵין רֹעֶיךָ כִּי אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנָחְנוּ: (יג ז–ח)

"And there was a quarrel between the herdsmen of Avrom's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, and the Canaani and the Perizzi were then dwelling in the land. And Avrom said to Lot: Please let there be no conflict between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers." (Bereishis 13:7–9)

These Psukim raise many questions: 1. The Torah says the quarrel was between the herdsmen. Why then does Avrom say, "let there be no strife between me and you," as if the quarrel were between him and Lot? 2. If the herdsmen were already quarrelling, why does Avrom add "and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen"? That fight had already started. 3. Why does the Torah need to tell us, in the middle of this story, that "the Canaani and the Perizzi were then dwelling in the land"? 4. What does "for we are brothers" have to do with stopping a quarrel?

To answer them, we have to go back to the beginning of Avraham and Lot's journey together: One Posuk says, "And Avrom went as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him" (12:4). That implies Lot went on his own. But the very next Posuk says, "And Avrom took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son" (12:5), implying that Avraham took him.

When they left Egypt, it says Pharaoh sent away "him, and his wife, and all that he had" (12:20). Lot is not mentioned. But in the next Posuk it says, "And Avrom went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him " (13:1). Lot went up too, even though Pharaoh had not sent him. Avraham knew very well who Lot was, and at first he did not want to take him along. But Lot was inspired. He decided he wanted to become a better person, and so "Lot went with him," on his own initiative. Avraham brought everyone close, and when he saw that Lot sincerely wanted it, "Avrom took… Lot": he agreed to take him along. That answers the first puzzle. Then they came down to Egypt, Avraham wanted to protect Lot and make sure he would not want to stay there. So, for the sake of peace, Avraham told Lot that Pharaoh was sending all of them away, Lot included, since "all that he had" could be read as including Lot. But the truth was as the Posuk says: "all that he had, and Lot." Lot was not really part of "all that he had"; Pharaoh never sent him. Avraham simply wanted to get him out of Egypt. That answers the second puzzle.

Avraham succeeded in taking Lot out of impure Egypt. But they then arrived in a land where "the Canaani and the Perizzi were dwelling," another source of impurity, just like Egypt. Here too the yetzer hara began its work. At first only the herdsmen quarrelled, and the Torah tells us why: because the Canaani and the Perizzi were in the land. Their influence was already being felt. That answers the third question.

Now Avraham's words to Lot. The heilige Shelah explains that there is a difference between riv and merivah. A riv is a small dispute; a merivah is a great one. So far there was only a small dispute between the herdsmen. But Avraham knew that a small dispute flares up into a fire that no one can put out. That is why he spoke in the future tense: "Please let there be no merivah." That this small quarrel among the herdsmen could grow into a great quarrel between us, and between all our people. He was not describing what had already happened, but what could happen if it wasn't stopped. That answers the first two questions.

Avraham's reason, "for we are anashim achim," carries two messages. First, the word anashim in the Torah means people of importance (Rashi, Bamidbar 13:3). If simple herdsmen quarrel, people understand. But if Avraham and Lot, people of stature, were to quarrel, it would be a chillul Hashem. This was especially true of Avraham, whose whole mission was to spread emunah in the world. To do that he had to be a lover and pursuer of peace, because "the words of the wise are heard when spoken gently" (Koheles 9:17). Only gentle words reach people's hearts. If the master of peace was seen fighting, it would undo everything he was building. Second, Avraham saw that Lot was slipping away, and that he needed to give him Mussar. But the mitzvah of Mussar goes only so far: until the point where the other person would come to a fight. When Avraham saw the herdsmen quarrelling, he understood that the fight could soon spread to the two of them. They were brothers, and he had reached the limit of what rebuke could achieve without bringing real conflict between them. So Avraham said: "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me." Better to part ways in peace than to remain together in strife. And indeed, "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw" the plain of Sedom (13:10). Chazal say he lifted his eyes in order to sin. Lot chose his own path. Avraham had done everything he could, and wasn't obligated to do more.

A lesson for us: Every big quarrel starts as a small one. Avraham teaches us to stop a riv before it becomes a merivah. A person who represents Torah has to guard the peace even more carefully, because others learn from how he behaves. And sometimes the wisest way to keep the peace is to step back, and not to win the argument. *(Yehuda Z. Klitnick)*

STORY OF THE WEEK (*By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)*

******Reb Hershele of Liska sent two angels to save his Chosid ******

R' Yaakov Yosef Lefkowitz was a devoted Chosid of the heilige tzaddik Reb Hershele of Liska. Before every business trip he travelled to Liska first, and whatever the tzaddik told him, he did. Once he came to the Rebbe before setting out for a big fair. He waited a long time for his turn, until the gabbai finally called his name and he went in. He handed the Rebbe his kvittel and pidyon. The Rebbe read it and sat lost in thought for a while. Then he began asking questions. Where was he travelling? How did his business work? Where did he get his money from?

R' Yaakov Yosef explained that the big fair was in the town of Lanya. There was no bank in his own village, so first he would go to Beregszász and take his money out of the bank there. The Rebbe blessed him with success. Then he added: "I want you to promise me something. If anyone stops you on the road and asks you to take him up on your wagon, take him. Don't forget!" "Of course!" R' Yaakov Yosef answered.

R' Yaakov Yosef was on his way to Beregszász when he heard someone shouting at him to stop. Two Hungarian gendarmes- officers- stood in the road. They told him they had been walking for a long time and had no strength left to go on. For a moment he was badly frightened. His first thought was to refuse; he did not want to sit in his wagon with two gentiles. But in a flash the Rebbe's request came back to him: "If anyone stops you on the road, take him." So he pulled up and asked where they were going.

They named the very town where R' Yaakov Yosef lived. He told them he would gladly take them there, but first he had to stop in Beregszász, and only then would he head home. "That suits us fine," they said. R' Yaakov Yosef trusted his Rebbe completely, and he stayed calm. When they reached Beregszász, the officers offered to watch the wagon. He went into the bank, took out his money, wrapped it up carefully, came back to the wagon, and they set off for home.

By the time they arrived it was late at night. The officers said they would have to sleep at his house, since they had nowhere else to go; in the morning they would find their way. R' Yaakov Yosef had no choice. He made up beds for them, and since they were hungry he prepared them something to eat. Then the officers went to sleep.

R' Yaakov Yosef finished his daily learning, said Krias Shema, and fell into a deep sleep. Suddenly he heard knocking at his window. At first he thought he was dreaming, but the knocking grew louder. He woke with a start and went to the window to see who it was. His heart turned cold. Outside stood a man wearing a mask, holding a gun. "Give me all your money!" the man demanded.

R' Yaakov Yosef said he would go and fetch it. Instead he hurried to the room where the officers were sleeping, since they were armed, and tried to wake them to help him. But they were sleeping so deeply that they heard nothing. So he took a small bundle of money, brought it to the window, and said that this was all he had.

The robber would not accept it. He said he knew that R' Yaakov Yosef had been in Beregszász that very day, and knew exactly how much he had taken out of the bank. He wanted all of it! R' Yaakov Yosef felt faint. Once more he ran to wake the officers, and this time they got up. He told them what was happening and begged them to help.

"Tell the robber that you hid the money and need a few minutes to bring it," they said. "Then go and bring him all of it. Meanwhile we'll wait for him on the other side and catch him." R' Yaakov Yosef did as they said and brought out the whole sum he had taken from the bank. The robber counted it, and when he saw it was all there, he turned to leave. But as he walked away, he found the two officers standing in front of him with their guns drawn. They seized him and put him in chains, and they kept him tied up until morning so they could hand him over to the police. One of them brought all the money back to R' Yaakov Yosef, who thanked them warmly.

By then it was growing light outside. The officers pulled off the robber's mask, and R' Yaakov Yosef saw that it was the banker himself, the very man who had given him the money at the bank. He had hoped to get rich at R' Yaakov Yosef's expense!

Soon the police arrived and arrested him. The officers thanked R' Yaakov Yosef for the ride and for his hospitality, and went off with the police in peace. R' Yaakov Yosef never heard from them again. He was certain, that the Rebbe had sent him these two angels to guard him the whole way. R' Yaakov Yosef went on to the fair and did very well there. Later he travelled to Liska, and told him everything that had happened with the gendarmes. But the Rebbe did not want to talk about it, and R' Yaakov Yosef went home in peace. In him the verse was fulfilled: כִּי מַלְאָכָיו יְצַוֶּה־לָּךְ לִשְׁמָרְךָ בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ: "For He will command His angels for you, to guard you in all your ways." *(Tehilim 91:12)*

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