

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #30—Parshat Lekh Lekha 5762

This week's Torah reading begins with the story of Avraham's being told by God to "Go to the Land." Several times during the reading God promises that the Land will be given to Avraham's seed, those who have been circumcised according to the laws prescribed by the Torah. This has been discussed in [Essay #14](#). Discussed in that same essay was Avraham's search for the Land and how he discovered that the Land was under direct Divine Providence, rather than under the administration of a guardian angel. We can add another insight to this teaching. Avraham was not seeking the protection of any guardian angel. Neither did he seek someone to look out for his interests or his connection to God. He wanted a direct connection to God; he wanted to experience God Himself. As is obvious, all want a direct link to God. After all, why bother with underlings and petty administrators if you can have a direct contact with the "Boss" Himself. This connection is made possible through the sanctity of Holy Land.

The problem is we get too busy and don't have the patience to wait for the Boss. "Maybe He's too busy?" "Maybe He won't accept me after what I've done?" "Maybe He's got complaints or even a charge sheet against me?" "Better I should get it over with and make whatever contact I can with His underlings, the guardian angels. After all, haven't they always been with me throughout my career and life?" "Has it really been so bad?" "Why upset the apple cart if things are going OK?"

But Avraham had higher aspirations. He wanted Godliness. He wanted God. And he wanted God enough to travel and seek Him out. This lesson is one that is very applicable today. For God reveals Himself to each person, daily, in a manner unique to the person, so that the person can relate to God if he so wishes (*Likutey Moharan* I, 54:2). But we have to be willing to sacrifice for it. We have to be willing to give up the familiarity of our lands, the security of our homes, the closeness of our parents' homes, in order to seek Him out. And, we must seek Divine Providence for a manifestation of God and not settle for a guardian angel, or for something that appears OK. We must seek the Real Thing. To accomplish this, the Torah tells us to avoid strife and argument.

After Avraham arrived in the Holy Land, a dispute broke out between his shepherds and the shepherds of his nephew Lot. As Rashi explains, Avraham's shepherds would muzzle their flocks until they came to public grounds. On the other hand, Lot's shepherds would allow their flocks to graze on private property. Several ideas emerge from this passage.

Firstly, the Zohar tells us that Lot was accursed, for his name is related to the Aramaic word for "curse." What is this curse of Lot? We can surmise from the Torah's description of him and his deeds. He was Avraham's nephew, constantly in his uncle's presence and should have been humbled by the paucity of his spiritual achievements vis-a-vis those of his uncle. Instead, he was arrogant. Secondly, his reason for taking liberties with others' property was that the Land had been promised to Avraham who, at that time, had no offspring (for even Yishmael was not yet born at that time). Lot therefore assumed, incorrectly, that the Land would be his and treated it as such.

Furthermore, Lot was "loose" with other people's monies and property, regardless of the hard work, time and effort they put into their work. We also find that when Avraham asked Lot to move away because of Lot's loose behavior, Lot, instead of requesting to stay with a righteous person to learn the right way to live, agreed to leave Avraham and seek new friends - the immoral Sodomites! He wasn't a blessed person at all. (We find also in next week's Torah reading that despite Lot's involvement in Sodom, he had some saving grace and was spared their fate. However, a full day didn't pass until he became totally drunk and committed incest with his daughters (see *Genesis* 19).)

The "cursed" man's downfall, we see, began with strife. Although Lot was loose with other people's monies and property, he could have reigned himself in and taken control. When the shepherds' argument blew up and Lot had to respond, he chose the face-saving, "you go your way and I'll go mine" path instead of owning up to his shortcomings. This attitude, we learn from the parshah, stems from strife and argument, for people always try to save face and brush their shortcomings under the carpet. As Rebbe Nachman teaches, "Man's innate desire to be victorious does not allow him to accept the truth" (*Likutey Moharan* I, 122).

When Avraham entered the Land, he sought to establish himself there. But Lot, i.e., the curse of victory and avarice, fell to ever-increasing levels of immorality. To Avraham, the desire for victory and avarice was no challenge; he wanted to be freed of any connection to the curse of material temptation. His nephew, however, succumbed.

Right after Lot left him, God immediately appeared to Avraham and promised the Land to him and his descendents. Thus the lesson of the week, gleaned from contrasting Avraham's behavior to Lot's, tells us the importance of avoiding strife. If things can be worked out, fine. If they are going to get sticky, and you're right, try to get the other guy to walk away from you, as Avraham did with Lot. In today's world, where everyone thinks they're doing the right thing, then it's best just to walk away from it ourselves. In time, we'll be able to grow larger than the arguments and leave it all behind, gaining room for our spiritual growth and thereby merit inheriting the Land. For, as King David says, "The meek shall inherit the Land" (*Psalms* 37:11).

Another important point in this week's Torah reading relating to current events is Avraham's vision of the Covenant of the Halves. "The sun was setting and a deep sleep overcame Avraham: 'fear, a deep darkness, fell upon him'" (*Genesis* 15:12). The Midrash explains that these four concepts represent the four exiles. "Fear" represents Babylon; "darkness" represents Media; "deep" represents Greece and "fell" Edom (the current exile; *Bereishis Rabbah* 44:17). Interestingly, the Targum Yonatan and Targum Yerushalmi comment that "fell" refers to the Persian exile, which in contemporary terms relates to the Iranian/Afghanistan connection.

Targum Yonatan writes that when Persia falls it will never rise again. When this happens, he writes, "from there the Jews will ascend." "From there" can mean "from Persia." It can also mean "from that fall" - from the Persian (Iranian/Afghanistan) descent into oblivion, we will witness the ascent of the Jews. This will lead to the salvation of mankind, from global Arabian - Iranian, Afghanistan, Syrian, Iraqi, Saudi, etc. - oppression and terrorism. So, we can only be encouraged by the conflagrations that are breaking out in that area of the world and hope for the best! May all God's enemies fall soon, Amen.

"On that day [of the Covenant of the Halves] God made [another] covenant with Avraham, saying, 'To

your descendents I have given this land...the lands of the Kenites, Knizites, the Kadmonites, the Chittites, Perizites, Refaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and the Yebusites" (*Genesis* 15:8-21). We are thus told that God promised Avraham the land of ten nations. Yet we know that we received the Holy Land which was the land of the Seven Nations only. What happened to the land of the other three nations? Rashi explains that the additional area, east of the Jordan River extending to the Euphrates River, will be given to us by God in the Future. Therefore, not only is the Holy Land ours, but there is more to come following Mashiach's arrival. This is brought to mind by a joke currently making the rounds.

Bin Laden calls up President Bush and tells him of his dream: From coast-to-coast every building in America displays large banners saying "LONG LIVE BIN LADEN!"

President Bush tells Bin Laden that he was about to call him and tell Osama of his dream.

He saw an Afghanistan rebuilt: "The most exquisite buildings, the most beautiful parks and gardens, a thriving industry and commercial base with joy and happiness upon all the people's faces. And, every building had large banners flying from rooftops."

Osama excitedly asked, "What did the banners say?"

President Bush answered, "Darned if I know. I can't read Hebrew!"

After all, by now we know Whose Land it is! Speedily in our days. Amen.

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