

# מאמרי תורה - Torah Talk



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Parashat Lech Lecha  
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פרשת לך לך  
י"א במרחשוון תשע"ט

Torah Reading: *Bereshit* (Genesis) Genesis 12:1-17:27

In this *parasha*, Avram and Sarai follow Hashem's call to journey to Canaan, where the covenant between Hashem and Avraham is affirmed. Avram is renamed Avraham and has a son with Hagar, Sarai's maid, and Hashem promises that Sarai, renamed Sarah, will bear a son as well.

One of the lesser-known stories in this week's *parasha* has implications for today's world. The text states (13:7-12):

ז וַיְהִי־רִיב בֵּין רֵעֵי מִקְנֵה־אַבְרָם וּבֵין רֵעֵי מִקְנֵה־לוֹט וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרָזִי אָז יָשָׁב בְּאֶרֶץ: ח וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־לוֹט אֵלֶּנָּה תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ וּבֵין רֵעֵי וּבֵין רֵעֵיךָ כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אָנַחְנוּ: ט הֲלֹא כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵיךָ הִפְרָד נָא מֵעָלַי אִם־הִשְׁמָאל וְאִימָנָה וְאִם־הַיְמִין וְאִם־הַיְמִין: י וַיִּשְׁאַל־לוֹט אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־כָּל־כַּפְּרַת הַיַּרְדֵּן כִּי כָּלָה מִשְׁקָה לִפְנֵי | שַׁחַת הִ' אֶת־סֹדֶם וְאֶת־עַמּוֹרָה כְּגֹרֶה' כְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶבְרָה צָעַר: יא וַיִּבְחַר־לוֹ לוֹט אֶת כָּל־כַּפְּרַת הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּסַּע לוֹט מִקְדָּם וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו: יב אַבְרָם יָשָׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־כְּנָעַן לֹט יָשָׁב בְּעָרֵי הַכְּפָר וַיִּאָּהֵל עַד־סֹדֶם:

**7** There was strife between the shepherds of Avram's cattle and the shepherds of Lot's (Abram's nephew) cattle... **8** And Avram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife please between me and you and between my shepherds and your shepherds for we are kin. **9** Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself please from me; if you go to the right, I will go to the left, and if you go to the left, I will go to the right." **10** Lot lifted his eyes and he saw the plain of Jordan that it was all irrigated.... **11** so Lot chose for himself the plain of Jordan and Lot traveled from

the east, and they separated one from the other. **12** Avram lived in the land of Canaan and Lot lived in the cities of the plain.

Avram discerned and deployed a method of conflict resolution that involved no bloodshed, no hostilities, and no anguish. This is not to say that Abram was an absolute pacifist. In the very next chapter, he goes to war – to save the man from whom he had just parted! But his ideas and actions in this passage are peaceful.

Conflict resolution sometimes does involve bloodshed, but hopefully only as a worst-case scenario, when all other avenues have been exhausted. The wisdom to know when to negotiate and when to fight is hard to achieve. One of Avram's great accomplishments, aside from his recognition of God, and aside from his great *middah* (positive character trait) of *hachnasat orchim* (welcoming in guests), was his ability to differentiate between those incidents which required negotiation and those which required force. Would that we today had that ability!

This year is the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. We commemorate the life of a man who began as a war hero, and died because he sought a peaceful solution to a seemingly insurmountable conflict. Let us look to both Avraham and Rabin as models for us in how to negotiate difficult situations.

Shabbat Shalom – a Sabbath of Peace to everyone.

For discussion:

- Why do you think the shepherds were fighting over the land?
- What might be the best ways to handle a situation in which you want to use something that someone else is using, or someone tries to take away something that you are using?
- Is there ever a time when it is appropriate to use physical force against another person? If so, when?
- There is a rabbinic saying “מעשה אבות סימן לבנים – *Ma’aseh Avot Siman Labanim* – what our ancestors did should be a model for us.” Look at chapters 13 and 14 of *Bereshit* and discuss why Abraham decided to use the conflict resolution methods he did in each case.