



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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Last Monday morning, Rabbi Moshe Hauer, Rabbi Shimon Ismach and I went to *Ma'arat Hamachpelah*, the Cave of the Patriarchs, to daven Shacharit. As I listened to the *baal koreh* read from the Torah the beginning of *Parshat Lech Lecha*, “G-d said to Avram: Go away from your land, and your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the Land that I will show you,” while standing where our forefathers and foremothers were buried, I was struck by the significance of beginning Avraham’s story in this place, at this time. The words took on new meaning for me. I began to meditate on the concepts I had just spoken about in the *Amidah*, the first *bracha* of *Magen Avraham*, and I thought about what Avraham did in his life that gave us such merit to return to our Land after two thousand years of exile.

After davening, as these thoughts swirled in my head, I saw my friend, Rabbi Simcha Hochbaum. He said to us, “Isn’t it interesting that this week’s parsha contains the first occurrence in the Torah of *pidyon shevuyim*, the redeeming of a hostage from captivity?” He was referring to how Lot was kidnapped and Avraham had to deal with this by fighting a war to bring him home. I agreed with him that that was indeed interesting, and it caused me to ruminate on these ideas even more.

Leaving *Ma'arat Hamachpelah*, we went to visit the mayor of Kiryat Arba, Eliyahu Leivman and his wife Avishag. Unfortunately, their son Elyakim Shlomo is one of the 239

Israeli captives being held in Gaza, along with his friend and neighbor Eitan Mor who was also taken captive. We sat with Eliyahu, Avishag and their 16 year old daughter Aviyah for a long while, but I could not shake the feeling in my heart of how significant this is. The same issues, the same dilemmas, of hostages and captivity and war, make their appearance in that week’s *parsha*, taking place in this exact location, as we sat in Hebron, in *Elonei Mamre*. We wondered what to do, just like Avraham must have in this place almost 4,000 years ago.

When I returned home, I decided to look into the story in the Torah while doing *shnayim mikra v’echad targum*, and I noticed a few details while reading the text. First of all, I realized that the reason why Lot wasn’t with Avraham, which put him in a situation where he could be kidnapped, was because of how Lot and Avraham had separated from each other. I looked back at how that separation is described by the Torah. Avraham tells Lot: “If you go left, I will go right. If you go right, I will go left” (Bereishit 13:9). While Avraham probably did not have in mind the modern political meaning of left and right, I nevertheless thought about the significance of the

Dedicated L’iluy Nishmat

חיה בת ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה  
HELEN SCHIFFMILLER a"h

כ"ו מרחשון whose 5th Yahrtzeit is on

separation between leftists and right-wingers in Israeli politics.

Another interesting detail is how Lot, Avraham's nephew, is described when Avraham hears he was taken captive: "And when Avram heard that his brother was taken captive..." (Bereishit 14:14). Why is Lot called Avraham's brother when he is, after all, Avraham's nephew? The reason

for this is clear to me. When any Jew is in trouble, we automatically feel that that Jew is a brother, a sister, a close family member. Lot may have been Avraham's nephew, but when he was in trouble, he felt

like a brother. There is no better proof for this than what is happening in *Klal Yisrael* right now in response to the crisis. I have no doubt that we are all feeling like brothers and sisters right now to each and every Jew. We are all in this together.

This isn't just a theme in *Lech Lecha*. This week's *parsha*, *Parshat Vayera*, opens with Avraham sitting in his tent after his covenant with Hashem and his *brit milah*. He's in tremendous pain. It's hot. Yet what Avraham Avinu is thinking about, while lying in pain, is "Where are my guests? How can I fulfill the precept of hospitality, *hachnasat orchim*, if there are no people passing by?" It is hard to guess what pained Avraham more.

There are so many acts of *chesed* occurring in our communities right now, but the amount of *hachnasat orchim* we are seeing

in Israel during these times is incredible. When you look at how many Jews living in the Diaspora have opened the homes they own in Israel to families from the north and south. Israelis who own second apartments have invited their brothers and sisters who need shelter and living space. Not only that, but so many living in their own homes have welcomed in one or even more families to live

with them. Everyone has gone the extra mile, making sure everything is there for these families. Even if the refrigerator is working, but a large family from the south is coming, they will replace the refrig-

erator with a larger one to fit their needs. People have bought new beds, tables, chairs, anything that is needed for their fellow Jew. This is true *hachnasat orchim* in action.

It is remarkable to see how the *middot* of Avraham Avinu can be seen in his descendants today. How much he cared for *pidyon*



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**המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים**

*shevuyim*. How much he focused on *hachnasat orchim*. We have a concept of *maaseh avot siman lebanim* - the actions of the forefathers is a sign for their children. That is truly how it is here.

The world is surprised how united we are. How we care for every single Jew. How much worry we have for 239 Israeli hostages, whom most don't even know and never met. It's because we have the *middot* of our forefathers and foremothers, of Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Rachel and Leah. They taught us what it means to be Jews, with Jewish hearts, and to act like a Jew should.

The fact that we can be here, 4,000 years later, and continue to follow in their footsteps, shows why Avraham was so happy last week at the *Brit Bein Habetarim*, the Covenant of the Pieces. Hashem told him that yes, his children will be in exile, in lands not their own. But they will remain his children. They will keep his covenant and act as he acted. But he also heard the same promise that Rachel Imenu would receive, "And there is hope for your future, says the Lord; and your children shall return to their own border" (Yirmiyahu 31:16). True, there will be struggles. There will be fighting. But so long as we continue with those *middot* exemplified by our forefathers, to help every Jew in need, we can show the world who we are at our best. Let us not forget where we got these *middot* from.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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