



DIVREI MENACHEM

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Give Us a Piece of Peace!

Lech Lecha! Avraham is instructed to leave his home and family and make his way to the “land which I will show you.” Like many Olim in our times, Avraham must have wondered what life would be like in the new land. Little would he know that some of the issues with which he contended portended similar challenges for Israeli citizens today.

For example, Avraham and his nephew Lot were both in possession of “flocks, cattle, and tents” such that there was not sufficient land to accommodate their respective holdings. As a result, the shepherds from each camp fought over the grazing fields, so much so that Lot’s herdsmen encroached on other people’s pastures (Rashi), including Avraham’s fields (Ramban).

Notably, the narrative adds that “the Canaanite and the Perizzite were then dwelling in the land.” Now, Avraham would have an additional worry on his head: The native residents would become aware of the extent of the land and riches over which the herdsmen were fighting. In their greed, these indigenous tribes would ‘defend their territory’ and attack Avraham and Lot’s properties with disastrous results (Ramban).

The strife between the shepherds might well induce us to reflect on the antagonism that some of the early religious kibbutz settlers faced from the left-wing socialist kibbutzniks. To explain this unfortunate episode, we need to recall that in their efforts to create a “New Jew,” the majority of left-wing kibbutzniks discarded the old traditions of their parents. For the most part, it appears that they could not bear seeing religious farmers in their midst.

However, little did these secular pioneers know that they were following in the footsteps of the biblical Lot who, having settled in the fertile lands of Sodom, abandoned his religious way of life.

Now, Avraham’s answer to Lot was as follows: “Please let there not be strife between me and you...for we are kinsmen.” Perhaps, it would be a good idea for all of us, in this day and age, to internalize that plea as we attempt to make sense of the reality in Israel. Therefore, let there be continuously on our lips the prayer עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל כל ישראל ואמרנו אמן - “May He who makes peace in high places, make peace for us and all of Israel – And [let us] say Amen.” ■

Shabbat Shalom! *Menachem Persoff*

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