



**RABBI SHALOM**

**ROSNER**

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh  
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org  
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

## Avraham's Acceptance and Rejection of Gifts

There are two situations in the parsha that at first glance seem to contradict each other, yet can be reconciled to be clearly identified with a common theme.

Following Avraham's victory on behalf of the five kings, the king of Sodom offers Avraham to partake in the spoils from the battle. Avraham refuses to accept any gift and states: "*Neither from a thread to a shoe strap, nor will I take from whatever is yours, that you should not say, 'I have made Avraham wealthy.'*" (Bereshis 14:23). Yet, while in Mitzrayim, Avraham receives gifts from Pharaoh in exchange for Sarah, as the Torah tells us: "*And he benefited Avraham for her sake, and he had flocks and cattle and donkeys and men servants and maid servants, and she donkeys and camels.*" (Bereshis 12: 16). Once Pharaoh was punished for having taken Avraham's wife and Sarah is returned to Avraham, shouldn't Avraham have returned the gifts? In fact, why did Avraham even accept the gifts at all? He had previously rejected gifts offered

by the King of Sodom, lest others speculate that Avraham was enriched by others rather than by Hashem. Why this seemingly conflicting behavior?

The Be'er Yosef offers a profound explanation. The gifts granted by Pharaoh to Avraham were not in exchange for Sara, rather they were to portray Pharaoh's appreciation of and infatuation with Sarah. We find a similar occurrence when Achashverosh throws a party on behalf of Esther to depict his love for her to the masses. Since it was not in exchange for Sarah, Avraham did not have a moral obligation to return the gifts. Yet, why did it not bother Avraham that others may perceive that Pharaoh made Avraham rich, as it perturbed him when offered gifts by the King of Sodom?

The Be'er Yosef suggests that Avraham's intention was to sanctify God's name. What transpired in Mitzrayim, that Pharaoh's palace was plagued due to having taken Avraham's wife was not publicized. Avraham accepted the cattle so that when he returned to Israel, everyone would see his riches and understand that they were received by Avraham from Pharaoh in a scenario where the hand of God acted to protect Avraham. The riches were a means to highlight the miracle that transpired in Mitzrayim.

With respect to the battle on behalf of the

kings, that itself was publicized by the proud kings and well celebrated in five kingdoms and there was no need to obtain riches to sanctify God's name in that instance. What we see is that Avraham utilized riches as a **means** to be *Mekadesh Shem Shamayim*. When assets would not enhance that cause, they were unnecessary.

A similar idea may be derived from another episode in the parsha as well. When Avraham initially sets out towards Israel Lot follows as is stated: “*And Avraham went, as Hashem had spoken to him, and Lot went with him*” (Bereshis 12:4). Yet, when Avraham returns from Mitzrayim, it seems like Lot's accompaniment is an afterthought “*And Avraham came up from Mitzrayim, he and his wife and all that was his, and Lot with him, to the south.*” (Bereshis 13:1).

The Birchas Yitzhak (citing Rav Yosef Soloveichik emphasizes that there is a reference to the riches that Avraham accumulated in Mitzrayim prior to the phrase that states that Lot joined the returning journey. Apparently in Mitzrayim, Lot was amazed by the luxuries and abundance of wealth. Whereas, on Avraham's initial journey Lot was a participant due to *ruchniyus*, on this second journey Lot was along for the *gashmiyus*. Lot ends up separating from Avraham and for materialistic considerations settles in the evil city of Sodom. The rest, as they say - is history.

Avraham used his wealth to sanctify God's name, through

displaying evidence of the miracle that had occurred in Mitzrayim. Avraham also used his wealth to enrich the lives of others through his acts of chesed. When being enriched did not serve this purpose, it was rejected by Avraham. In contrast, Lot was mesmerized by wealth and sought it as **ends** in itself rather than a **means** through which to sanctify God's name and enhance mankind.

May we follow in Avraham's footsteps and always recognize that all our gifts are from Hashem. We should utilize them in a way that can help others. Whether through charity for the sick and underprivileged or to strengthen Torah learning and Torah institutions. May we be blessed with the ability to use the gifts we are granted to be mekadesh shem shamayim! ■

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