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Haran: Unlocking the Secret DNA of Jewish History

We often read the genealogy lists at the end of Parshat Noach, *le'havdil*, like the unskippable ads before a YouTube video, eagerly waiting for the main story of Avraham in Parshat Lech Lecha. But every word of Torah is more precious than diamonds.

Look closely at Avraham's brother, Haran. Trace his lineage and you will discover an astounding fact: Haran is the father of Sarah, the grandfather of Rivkah (via Milkah and Betuel), and the great-grandfather of Rachel and Leah (via Lavan)! Furthermore, through his son Lot, Haran is the direct ancestor of Ruth, King David, and Mashiach!

This leads to an undeniable question: What extraordinary merit enabled this seemingly minor figure to become the sole biological ancestor of all our Matriarchs and the Davidic Dynasty?

THE CHOICE AT UR KASDIM

The answer emerges when we combine Rashi with the *Midrash Agada*. Prior to Avraham's rescue, Haran was known as a priest of fire-worship. When Nimrod threw Avraham into the fiery furnace and Avraham walked out unharmed, Nimrod turned

to Haran and asked, "Whose side are you on?"

Haran faced a profound dilemma. He knew that if he sided with idol worshippers, his life would be spared, but the pagans would then attribute Avraham's miraculous rescue to the supposed powers of his brother Haran, the priest of the fire-god.



Major Aryeh Ziering Hy"d

At the same time, Haran had come to recognize the truth of monotheism. He understood that if he openly declared his faith in Hashem and entered the furnace, Hashem would not perform a second miracle on his behalf. Saving Haran, the fire-priest, would only reinforce the people's false belief that both he and Avraham had been saved

through Haran's mystical power over fire, thereby undermining the entire miracle of *Ur Kasdim*.

Knowing with absolute certainty that he would die, Haran jumped into the flames anyway. Haran became the very first person in human history to consciously give up his life for Hashem, the pioneer of *mesirat nefesh*. When Avraham entered the furnace, there was still the possibility that he would be saved. When Haran entered,

he knew he would not.

THE LEGACY IN OUR DNA

Haran's ultimate sacrifice embedded the spiritual DNA of *mesirat nefesh* into his descendants. Sarah saw her father give up his life for Hashem, and demands the spiritual purity of her home, insisting that Yishmael be sent away. Rivkah realizes that Yaakov must receive the *brachos* and is willing to risk everything to make it happen. Rochel steals her father's *avodah zarah* and begs Hashem for children so that she can pass these values on to the next generation. Leah, who was destined for Eisav, marries Yaakov and is willing to remain the "hated wife" rather than build a home with Eisav. And generations later, Ruth declares her absolute devotion to a life of Torah and the Jewish people: "*Where you die, I will die.*"

Today in Israel, we walk among living angels who carry that very same legacy. A year ago on Sukkos, while eating at a restaurant in Jerusalem, I noticed that our waiter was wearing a necklace with a lion on it. When I inquired about it, he explained that he had served in *Oketz* and that the necklace was in memory of his fallen commander, Aryeh Ziering Hy"d.

Our entire table stopped, and together

we sang *Shir HaMa'alot* in Aryeh's memory. As we sang, tears began streaming down the waiter's face. In that moment, I realized once again that our nation is filled with seemingly ordinary people carrying extraordinary, ancient souls, the same spirit of *mesirat nefesh* that has defined our people for generations.

LIVING AL KIDDUSH HASHEM

For those of us not on the front lines, our daily calling is to **live** *al Kiddush Hashem*. It means winning the daily battles: *davening* with genuine focus, learning Torah, keeping the *mitzvos*, putting our phones away during family time, *benching* from a *ben-tcher*, or reaching out to check on a friend in need.

Haran taught us that some things are worth dying for. Let us honor that eternal flame by showing the world how magnificent it is to **live** for Hashem every single day! ■

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