

Parshat Lech-Lecha

"Avram Heard that his Brother was Taken Captive" (Pollard)

Rav Meir Orlian

Kerem B'Yavneh, Israel



When Avraham Avinu set out to Eretz Canaan, he took with him his nephew Lot, the son of Haran. According to the Midrash, Haran was burned in the same furnace of Ur Kasdim that Avraham was saved from, and so Avraham raised his orphaned nephew.

The relationship between Avraham and Lot turned sour when Avraham and Lot return from Egypt laden with herds of cattle and sheep. Chazal explain that Lot's shepherds would graze their flock in the land of the local Canaanite population, whereas Avram considered this theft and sought unowned areas.

With a heavy heart, Avram turns to Lot, and says to him: "Please let there be no strife between me and you ... Please separate from me: If you go left, then I will go right, and if you go right then I will go left." Rashi comments that although Avraham felt it necessary to separate from Lot, he still promised to remain nearby to his right or left to help him as necessary.

Lot chose to settle in the (then) lush area of Sodom, despite the wickedness of its inhabitants: "Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed from the east (*mikedem*)."¹ (13:11) Chazal see in the word *mikedem* an allusion to G-d, *kadmono shel olam*. Thus, in choosing Sodom, Lot distanced himself from Hashem and rejected the teachings of Avram.

Yet, when Lot was captured by the four kings and hauled away to captivity, Avram immediately rose to action and headed out to battle with a small band of his household members: "When Avram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his disciples ... three hundred and eighteen, and he pursued them." Despite the danger and great odds, Avraham defeated the four mighty kings and their armies, rescued Lot, and returned him to Israel.

This episode takes on special significance now, as we approach twenty years since the imprisonment of Jonathan Pollard (November 21, '85)! Jonathan Pollard risked his freedom to rescue the people of Israel from the nuclear and chemical dangers posed by their Arab enemies. He has been held captive in the American prison system by a miscarriage of justice, and continues to serve a life-sentence without parole in a disproportionate punishment for his offence, passing classified information to an ally.

We must follow the model set by Avraham! We must not sit idly by and see our brother wasting away in captivity! We must get up and take action to redeem him from captivity!

Visit: www.jonathanpollard.org to find out more information about Jonathan Pollard and learn what you can do to help demand his release!

May we merit to see the fulfillment of the verse: "The nation said to Shaul, 'Shall Jonathan die, he who has achieved this great salvation for Israel? ... for he has acted for G-d's sake this day!' So the people redeemed Jonathan and he did not die." (Shmuel I 14:45)

"ופדויה ה' ישובון ובאו ציון ברנה ושמחת עולם על ראשם.
ששון ושמחה ישיגו ונסו יגון ואנחה."