

*Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi*¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS:	Torah Lech Lecha:	Genesis 13:1-17
	Haftarah:	Isaiah 41:1-4
	B'rit Chadasha:	Romans 4:4-5

He continued on his journey, from the Negev toward Beit-El

[Genesis 13:3a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 107:8-9;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *Kadosh*, the Prayer of Holiness

Vaya'al Avram miMitzrayim – And Avram went up/ascended like a vapor from Egypt ... *hu v'ishto v'chol-asher-lo* – he, his wife, and all that was his Genesis 13:1a.

Conventional wisdom said that going to Egypt = the most powerful 'raging nation' in Avram's day – was the smart way win friends and influence people. After all, if the Holy One wanted to bless Avram financially, and make his name great, he needed, as the song goes, to "wake up in a city that doesn't sleep." Conventional wisdom was wrong – at least for covenant partners of the Most High. Egypt was – and every other 'most powerful nation' the world every has to offer will always be – a cesspool of *ra* (KJV 'evil' or 'wickedness'), *shachat* (KJV 'corruption'), and *chamas* (KJV 'violence'). Among the *goyim*, you see, the combination of money and power always brings out the worst in human beings. Enter any nation with a booming economy and a concentrated population, therefore, and you will inevitably encounter fallen humanity in its most toxic state. It seems that 'success' as the world defines it always breeds the 'big five' pathologies: (1) *greed* – yielding its inevitable fruit of oppression; (2) *lust* – and the endless varieties of sexual obsessions and perversions it invariably spawns; (3) *arrogance* – giving birth to conceit, haughtiness, exaggerated yet highly-fragile egotism, a sense of entitlement/privilege, obsession with *appearances over reality* and *form over substance*, and a strong bent toward sloth, overthinking, obsession over ethnicity, race, age, gender, philosophy, ideology, and religion, and both personal and group paranoia; (4) *high levels of stress/anxiety* – which manifest in self-medicating, substance abuse, irritability, short-temper, high levels of susceptibility to offense and outrage, complaining, accusing, profane ranting, the proliferation of hateful, derisive, and violence-inciting rhetoric; and (5) *the devaluing of human dignity* – resulting in bullying, harassment, stalking, assaults, batteries, rapes, murders, and all varieties of abuse.

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So it was with Egypt in the days of Avram and Sarai. Powerful nations to which the poor and disaffected flock always become vicious viper's dens of profane profiteering. Egypt's whole culture, its economy, its higher education system, its philosophy, its political system, and its religion were all driven by lust, greed, and xenophobic ethno-narcissism masquerading as cultural 'pride'. Obsessed with the temporal, fleshly pleasures of this world, Egypt was a marketplace of human trafficking, of pseudo-intellectual elitism, and of voyeuristic fascination with everything animalistic, perverse, occult, and/or macabre. How Avram and Sarai's sojourn there did not end in complete disaster is a testimony to one thing, and that alone – the STRENGTH OF THE COVENANT. Sure, Sarai became an object of lust and a victim of human trafficking. Sure, the entire entourage eventually incurred Pharaoh's wrath and got themselves expelled. But they did not let it break them. And when they went out they did not by any means go empty-handed. They walked away loaded down with gold, silver, garments, greatly increased flocks and herds, and an entourage of servants - including a beautiful Egyptian princess named Hagar, who was given to Sarai as a handmaid. Hmmm – perhaps there is really something to this *Covenant with the Creator of the Universe gig*, Avram and Sarai must have thought to themselves.

Oh Avram Avinu. Oh Sarah Imanu. You will soon learn this truth – as must we all: absolutely nothing any king or culture of this world ever offers you will bring you anything but grief, drama, angst, heartache, and misery. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of Lights, in Whom there is no vacillation or shadow of turning. **James 1:17**. As long as we lust after the things our pagan neighbors lust after, we will be content to do the things the pagans do to get those things.

On the Road Again – Back to the Future!

Finally the pyramids of Egypt – the monuments of that death-obsession and stranger-oppression – disappeared from sight. Good riddance! Our ancestors' sojourn in the land of idolators had, after all, been taken quite a toll. It had required a supernatural plague and an expulsion decree from a very angry Pharaoh to bring about our deliverance. Call it a hunch, but I suspect we just might meet that crusty old Pharaoh – or one or more of his descendants – again, and relive this horrible experience, somewhere down the road.

Introducing the “God of the Patriarchs” Paradigm, and the Prophetic Roadmap Function of Torah

Oh – did I perhaps forget to mention that little detail about the ‘**God of the Patriarchs’ paradigm** when we discussed that in earlier studies this week? Did I forget to mention that the Holy One has ordained that whenever we read in the

Torah about the experiences of our patriarchs and matriarchs, we are not merely learning interesting historical information about our family tree, but are *viewing a prophetic road map of our own destinies and those of our children?* Well, welcome to the prophetic road map aspect of Torah. The stories we are reading are not just interesting narratives of things experienced by Biblical characters in the ancient past – they are windows to your own present and prophecies about your future. The story of the patriarchs is not history. Nor is it literature. It is the blueprint for *YOUR LIFE!*

Getting a Grasp of Blowing It Horribly – and Being Forgiven, Redeemed, and Restored in Accordance With Covenant

While I am being up front with you about the prophetic significance of the patriarchal accounts we are going to be reading in Torah I guess I might as well go ahead and warn you of something else, Beloved. Here it is: if you believe the Holy One of the “Old Testament” is a God of *judgment*, and not *mercy* – if that’s *what you have been taught*, and if that is *what you believe and want to keep on believing* - you may not want to read the aliyah of Torah we encounter today. If you read the passage we will be studying and *really see what it says*, you see, the experience may be *extremely hazardous to your theology*. After all, Avram pretty much “blew it” yesterday - three times by my count! And yet the Holy One still has him and Sarai safely nuzzled in the middle of *a grace bubble of epic proportions*.

What am I talking about, you ask? How did our beloved ancestor ‘blow it’ – and *three times* no less? Well, first, he did not fully follow the Holy One’s instructions to “go out” from his father’s family - he took his nephew Lot (his brother’s son) with him, in direct disobedience of the Divine instruction. Secondly, when times got a little tough in the land the Holy One showed him (Eretz Yisrael), he bailed out and ran off to Egypt, where the Holy One *never told him to go*. Thirdly, when he got to Egypt he was not only dishonest but *completely dishonored his wife*, endangered her purity, and subjected her to the depraved lusts of Pharaoh and his harem attendants. Okay, that means God “pulls the plug” on him, right? He disobeyed “*the law*” and is therefore now under “the curse” of the law, right? *Three strikes and your out* – *isn’t that the way it works?* Surely God will find someone else now.

Grace is an Integral Part of the Avrahamic Covenant

The God of the collection of prophetic and wisdom writings many call the “Old Testament” is just as much a God of “grace” as the rabbi from Natzret about whom the collection of apostolic writings many call the “New Testament” was written. The perceived dichotomy between “law” and “grace”, you see, is a product of Hellenistic and Western philosophies, not present (as we understand them) in the Hebraic mindset. The issue, from a Hebraic perspective, is not ‘law’ and ‘grace’.

The issue is what is necessary to *keep the covenant relationship vital, alive, and moving forward.*

The way of the Holy One that is translated as ‘grace’ in our English Bibles is not definable as “*unmerited favor*”. What we have in parsha *Lech Lecha* is a Hebraic picture of the faithfulness of God to His Creation and His Long-Term Plans for it. No matter how many “strikes” any individual or community to whom one of His Promises was delivered/entrusted have against him or them, He will not abandon His Plan – nor anyone to whom, or any territory or sphere of influence to which, His Plan-Effectuating Promise was intended to extend. That is not because of human merit – it is solely because of HIS FAITHFULNESS to watch over and bring to fruition His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended state of Beauty and Fruitfulness. His Promises to men and nations are strategic downloads of Heavenly energy into our world. He knows no retreat, nor surrender; nor does He consider the possibility of failure. He sees the end from the beginning; so He doesn’t give up because at a given moment – or even for a given millennium – the humans He has called to serve as models and vessels of healing for Creation are out of sync with His Plan.

The Holy One’s type of *grace* is not a mushy sentimentalism, pity, or soft-heartedness. His grace is not a ‘Santa Claus’ type of grace. His type of grace involves a fierce loyalty to His promises, and to the individuals to whom He has made those promises AND TO THEIR PROGENY, and a fierce determination to protect His Honor. His grace is rooted and grounded and permeated by a steely form of determination that says ‘*whatever it takes to keep the relationship on course, that is what I’ll do! And whatever it costs, that is what I’ll spend.*’

Sometimes therefore the Holy One’s grace takes the form of ‘forgiveness’ – because that is what is necessary to keep the relationship on course. Other times, however, His grace takes the form of *strict discipline* – because under the circumstances that is what is necessary to keep the relationship on course. Similarly, sometimes the Holy One’s grace takes the form of *direct, supernatural intervention on our behalf* – because that is what it takes to keep the relationship on course. Other times however His grace takes the frightening form of *hiding His Face from us*, and appearing suddenly aloof and unapproachable towards us – because under the circumstances *that is what it takes* to keep the relationship on course. The Holy One’s grace, you see, is *the means by which He ensures that His Word will not return to Him void – i.e. without accomplishing its assigned task.* His grace is not an outgrowth of His ‘niceness’. It is instead an outgrowth of His *fierceness* and His *power* – and His *unshakeable dedication to see His covenant commitments through to the end.*

The Holy One's Bestows Grace Upon Avram

What does that discussion have to do with today's aliyah, you might wonder? As we start today's aliyah Avram finds himself 'on the road again' – heading back towards *Eretz Yisrael*. He must have been shaking his head. Quite without any effort or merit of his own, his wife had just been released from Pharaoh's harem untouched, and while he had been rudely evicted from his rather pleasant life of self-imposed exile in Egypt, when he left he found himself and his entire entourage not only *physically unharmed* but absolutely and inexplicably *loaded down with Egypt's wealth*. Hence Torah tells us: **v'Avram kaved me'od b'mikneh b'kesef uv'zahav** – *i.e. And now Abram was very rich, with livestock, silver and gold.*

Wow! Avram's absolute lowest moment – selling his wife into another man's harem for food to survive – has been miraculously converted by the Holy One into a triumph over and prophetic despoiling of the most powerful nation – and ruler – on the face of the earth. Now what was it the Holy One had said to him? Oh yes ... **v'avarecheicha** [*i.e. And I will bless you*], **v'agadeilah shemeicha** [*i.e. and I will make your name great*].

When the Holy One says He is going to bless someone ... well *watch out, world!* Avram now has a first real taste of what the Holy One's promise of blessing means. But what he has experienced so far is merely a *taste* – an appetizer, as it were. There is much, much, more to come – above all that Avram could ever ask or hope or think. The Holy One is writing on Avram's heart a 'resume' for Himself. Before He takes His budding relationship with Avram to the **b'rit** [covenant] stage He is *proving Himself to Avram as a worthy and faithful covenant partner*. How is the Holy One doing this? By making good on His promise to bless Avram in ways that Avram knows full well he did nothing to deserve and absolutely could not have accomplished on his own.

Avram *flirted with absolute disaster* – and came out smelling like a rose. He knew full well He had only the Holy One to thank. And he knew as well that it was not mere 'unmerited favor' which the Holy One has shown him - it was the Holy One's *fierce and unshakeable faithfulness to the promise* had made to Avram back in Charan! 'Unmerited favor', you see, can be here one day and gone the next. 'Unmerited favor' can disappear as quickly and capriciously as it appeared. The Holy One's faithfulness to His Word, on the other hand, is as steady and sure and trustworthy as the sunrise. It is *eternal, unshakeable, and non-forfeitable*.

How Should - and Should Not – A Human Being Respond to 'Grace'?

Now – how will Avram respond to this outpouring of 'grace'? And how, in contrast, will Lot and his herdsmen respond?

Avram was *changed forever*. He was appropriately humbled. And he was very, very, thankful. Hence he wasted no time rejoicing in his ‘freedom’. He was anxious to go back to the Land of Promise to give thanks to the Holy One the only way he knew how – on the altar he had built upon arriving in Kena’an for the first time.

V’yelech l’masa’av miNegev v’ad-Beit-El

He continued on his travels, from the Negev toward Bethel,

ad ha-makom asher-hayah sham aholoh b’tchilah
until [he came to] the place where he originally had his tent,

beyn Beit-El uveyn ha-Ai

between Bethel and Ai.

El-mekom ha-mizbe’ach asher-asah sham b’rishonah

the site of the altar that he had built there at first.

vayikra sham Avram b’shem Adonai

And [there] Avram called out in God's name.

Ready for Another Challenging Life Experience?

Fresh from one challenging life experience (a season hiding from famine in Egypt) Avram walked right into another. This time it involved *infighting in his own camp*. Upon returning to Kena’an from Egypt flush with a great increase in livestock to care for, Lot and his herdsmen quickly began to squabble with Avram and his herdsmen. Since neither of them owned any of the land on which they were trying to graze their animals (verse 7 tells us the *Kena’ani* and *Peritzi* were then in possession of the land) Avram and Lot found themselves competing for precious pasturage and the best places to set up their burgeoning entourage of tents. Ah COMPETITION, that’s the thing! Mine vs. yours. It hits everyone, doesn’t it? OFFENSE - woe to him by whom it comes! PERSONALITY CONFLICT - this town’s not big enough for the both of us! Here is how Torah describes this particular clash:

V’gam le-Lot ha-holech et-Avram hayah tzon uvakar v’ohalim

Lot, who accompanied Avram, also had sheep, cattle and tents.

V’lo-nasa otam ha-aretz l’shevet yachdav ki-hayah

The land could not support them living together;

rechusham rav v’lo yachlu l’shevet yachdav

their wealth was so great that they could not stay together.

Vayehi-riv beyn ro’ei mikneh-Avram uveyn ro’ei mikneh-Lot

Friction developed between the herdsmen of Abram's flocks and those of Lot.

We have no reason to believe that Avram and Lot were angry with each other. But we know there was serious friction between their respective herdsmen. This could

not be swept under the rug. Things could not go on like this. Something had to be done. But what? Avram and Lot could follow the human impulse to take up and personalize their herdsmen's offenses, and start arguing over who started it and who was right and wrong – or they could choose a more excellent way.

In the early days when the two first struck out together from Charan this kind of thing was simply not an issue. There were no separate herds back then. And there were no separate herdsmen. What has happened to change all that?

What On Earth Has Gotten Into Lot?

Even though Avraham and Lot traveled together to and from Egypt the *impact of that visit* on the two of them was profoundly different. Avraham returned to the land of Promise inspired with devotion for the Holy One, heading straight for *Beit-El* to call out in God's Name. In contrast, Lot appears to have been impressed by the 'good life' in Egypt – the bustling commerce, the extravagant wealth, the inviting tropical climate – and the mighty river that made it all possible. Notice that in the course of the eventual 'split' from Avram Lot chose as his 'portion' the thriving commercial center of Sodom, on the banks of the Jordan River.

Sounds to me like as close to Egypt as Lot could get². As Torah puts it:

*Lot lifted his eyes and saw the entire Jordan valley,
for it had plenty of water... like the LAND OF EGYPT...*
[Genesis 13:10]

Symbolically Lot's choice reflects his preference for a vastly different lifestyle than Avram's newly found 'faith walk'. Avraham accepted the challenge of the promised land – where life was dependent on *matar* (rain) and hence - dependent on God (see Devarim 11:13-16!). Lot, it appears, preferred a man-powered, man-focused way of life independent of the Holy One – the way of life epitomized by Sodom.

What 'got into' Lot? All the glitz and the glamour and the glory the secular world – be it Egypt or the cities of the plain - had to offer. It was, if you think about it, much the same thing that 'got into' Noach's contemporaries - and what later 'got into' the men and women on the plain of Shinar who built the city and tower of Bavel. The same thing will 'get into' you – and your children - too ... *if you let it.*

² Targum Unkelos explains that Avraham offered Lot to go either NORTH (left) or SOUTH (right, Hebrew *yamin*). Considering that they were standing in Beit-El, what Avraham was offering Lot was a choice between the hills of YEHUDAH or the hills of SHOMRON [the Galilean area]. Lot rejected both options of Avraham's offer. Instead, he decided to leave the hill country of the Promised land altogether, preferring the perverse but highly profitable cities of the Jordan River Valley.

Never forget – or let your children forget – we were created for something much, much better than anything the secular world has to offer. Always remember – and constantly remind your children – that we have been created and called forth from all the peoples of the earth to live out a covenant with the Creator of the Universe, becoming His Kingdom’s ambassadors on earth, reflecting His Divine light upon the earth ... at such a time as this. That is what stirred up the conflict between Lot and Avram. Lot had tasted and wanted to continue to experience all the ‘good life’ the thriving cities of this world had to offer. Avram on the other hand was looking for a city with eternal foundations, a city not built by human hands. And with one eye always on that eternal city, Avram’s focus was on becoming – and encouraging everyone else in his household to become - who he was created and called forth to be. Those different worldviews will bring about interpersonal conflict every time. If a conflict hasn’t been brought to a head by a confrontation between those two worldviews in your life yet, Dear Reader, trust me – IT WILL!

How would Avram respond to the conflict and offense? You see, Dear Reader, this was, for Avram, a “test”.

This Also is a Test

Personality conflicts and offenses are inevitable. As Messiah said: ***It is impossible that no offenses should come ...*** Luke 17:1[a]. Someone will do something that disturbs your peace and sense of being in control of your world. Someone will appropriate for himself or herself something you want. Someone will say something that hurts your feelings or impugns your integrity. Someone will ignore you – or refuse to listen to what you are trying to say. Someone will insult you, belittle you or disgust you. Someone will call you offensive names, accuse you of embarrassing things, or even threaten you. Perhaps they will even strike you in anger. This is ***a test***, Beloved! It is not about the provocation or the *provocateur* – it is about you and your walk with the Holy One. So when provocation comes into our lives the critical question is never who is to blame. The critical question for us is how the Holy One would have us respond.

In such situations even good people can quickly find themselves caught up in ‘drama’. Vain imaginations flood through the mind unchecked. Emotions are allowed to run wild. Tears flow. Heated words are exchanged. Hurtful accusations are levied. Blame games and exaggerations cloud reality. *Bitter roots of resentment* start to sprout. Fists may even fly. And suddenly neither the TRUTH nor the years of give and take in the relationship seem to matter; indeed, suddenly all that seems to matter to each party is that ‘his’ side is vindicated. This, Dear Reader, is ***lo tov*** [not good]. It is *tumah* - uncleanness - at its apex. Arguments and bitter controversy

turn the day the Holy One has made into a Serpent's Holiday. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil inside us immediately begins to assess blame – on the other person, of course. Drama is not the way a child of Avraham responds to provocation. Watch Avram. Learn from him. And compare the way of Avram in this circumstance with the way of Lot.

All inter-personal conflicts are tests. That is, in fact, what all offenses of every nature are. All irritations, provocations, and episodes of frustration are opportunities for growth – or signs that we, and probably someone else, have both missed important life-lessons along the way.

The Real Test Presented by Discord In Relationships

The kind of test personality conflicts like that which occurred between Avram and Lot are intended to present may surprise you. Most of us think the main issue how we can salvage the relationship with the person by whom we have been offended (and when personality conflicts start to surface is /or who is offended by us). As important as that is, however, *that is not the main issue*. So what is the 'main issue', you ask? The main issue is not whether we will salvage the relationship, but is *whether we will submit the relationship to the Holy One* (as Avram had apparently never done up to that point) - *or whether we will continue to elevate the relationship with the other person (or group of people) over the revelation we have received from the Holy One*.

Some relationships you see - those not based upon TRUTH - are more damaging than they are beneficial - to *both parties*. They may be comfortable, like an old shoe. They may have extensive blood, sweat and tear investments and emotional memories by the score. But the truth of the matter is this: *no relationship that is not founded in – and submitted to - the will of the Holy One is worth saving*.

How do you know if a relationship³ is – or is not – founded in and submitted to the will of the Holy One? Here is a good rule of thumb: *The better a relationship makes your flesh and ego feel, or the more guilt a relationship makes you feel, **the more dangerous it is**, and the less likely it is that continuation of the relationship is the Holy One's will.*

Co-Dependency – an Ancient Problem

Avram and Lot's relationship appears to be tainted by a hint of what we in today's terminology might call "codependence". Part of this I am sure stemmed from the

³ Please note that none of the comments here about relationships apply to marriage. A marriage is more than a relationship – it is a covenant. A covenant, founded upon a vow and oath, once made, is not to be discarded even if it later becomes obvious that the marriage was not God's highest and best will.

fact that Lot was fatherless. As we have discussed, Lot's dad, Avram's brother Charan, had died before the family ever left Ur of the Chaldees. Avram appears to have stepped into the void left in Lot's life by his father's death. And while this was much needed in Lot's early years, it seems to have *gone way too far, lasted way too long, and become a familiar and comfortable crutch* to both Lot and to Avram.

For Lot Avram's presence kept him tucked away in the shadows where he had not needed to – and therefore had not learned how to – make his own decisions in life and develop his own relationship with the Almighty. And for Avram Lot's 'tagging along' apparently met his perceived need to feel important and 'fatherly' by "watching out for" his deceased brother's son - so much so that Avram appears to have elevated that relationship and the feeling of self-importance it gave him over the words of the Holy One.

Avram, who himself was childless, probably believed Lot was to be his heir. He knew Lot had suffered tragedy, being bereaved of his father. He probably thought Lot 'needed' him - and at one time, for a season, Lot probably did. But extended dependence by one human being upon another human being is *abnormal* and dangerous to the destiny and calling of both the enabler and the enabled. Dependence, if it is necessary at all, is supposed to be a temporary, time-limited situation only. Much, much more will be said on that subject later in Torah.

It no doubt made Avram feel good about himself to do something 'nice' for Lot. And Lot on the other hand came to rely upon Avram - rather than on the Holy One. And therefore Avram held onto Lot even when the Holy One was telling him to let him go. So the Holy One stood by silently and allowed the relationship between the two of them to grow "sour" on its own and to bear fruit consistent with its essence (rebellion and self-will). Has that ever happened to any of your relationships? Is it happening right now? Remember this: the Holy One wants those who are needed to serve as *encouragers* and *inspirers* - not *enablers*.

Cutting It Off - Mercifully

It was finally time for Avram to break off his old soul tie with the son of his deceased brother. Lot had his assignment in the world, and Avram had his. Lot had to venture forth and stand on his own two feet. If Avram never saw Lot again, well ... so be it. He had to be faithful to the Holy One. He would not antagonize or be cruel to Lot, and he would always be there for his nephew if he needed anything – but it was time for the two households to divide, and go their separate ways. So, Avram smiled and said: ***Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.*** Genesis 13:9.

Words such as this can be painful – both to say and to hear. But sometimes, as in this case, they are absolutely necessary. When the Holy One says “*go out*”, He means it. Trying to be a “surrogate father” to Lot forever was *man’s* way. The Holy One had said: ***Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household, and go*** A soul tie with Lot was not supposed to be part of the deal.

Why Did the Relationship Have to Seemingly End, Rather Than He ‘Restored’?

Why did the Avram/Lot relationship have to end⁴? Mark it well, Dear Reader: from the Holy One’s perspective *Lot* (a man who consciously chose Sodom as his life environment) *could have no part in raising and training up the seed of promise who was to come – Yitzchak* [Isaac]. And Lot’s wife, whose fatalistic attraction to Sodom would later result in her becoming a pillar of salt, could have no access to or influence upon the child of Avram and Sarai.

If you want to see how confused and how dangerous to children and legitimate family values Lot really was, read ahead to Genesis 19 – where Lot wound up offering his own virgin daughters to the perverted men of Sodom, saying ‘*you can do what you like with them*’. **Genesis 19:8**. If Lot would [all in the course of trying to sound very pious] *surrender his own daughters to the perverse world in which he chose to live*, think what he would have done to the chosen seed, a mere cousin. And if you want to see what Lot’s wife’s priorities were, well, just look at what happens in Genesis 19:16 and 19:26. These two were – though they looked good on the outside – in some ways *very dangerous people*, especially where the welfare of children was involved. Their danger was well concealed - hidden from view – to everyone except the Holy One. But let’s explore their situation a little more closely.

Taking A Closer Look at Lot – And the Prophetic Role He is To Play In the Great Redemptive Plan

The name *Lot*⁵ is a name taken from a Hebrew verb root meaning to *veil*, to *cover*, and thereby to *hide*. Secretly, under a *veil*, or *false showing*, of attachment and commitment to Avram, Lot had been long been hiding *resentment* toward Avram. Now, the voice of discontent and resentment was coming through the veil. It became clear, that though Avram meant Lot only good, Lot wanted his own life and did not have the commitment to the Holy One, and could not handle the intimate walk with the Holy One that Avram was beginning to develop. Lot just

⁴ Even though Avram would rush to rescue Lot in chapter 14, and intercede [indirectly] for him and his family in Genesis 19, the relationship was effectively over the moment Lot took off for Sodom. There was never a reconciliation or restoration. Lot never went ‘Avram’s way’ again.

⁵ Lot is Hebrew *lamed, vav, tet*. Strong’s word #H 3876, it is pronounced *lote*, with a long “o” sound.

did not want to be wrapped up in Avram's life – or to have any part in Avram's ever-deepening walk with the Holy One - anymore.

And when after a high time in Egypt Lot finally began to show his true priorities, the Holy One took steps to make any further living together unbearable. Lot began to gather around him “herdsmen” [Hebrew *resh, ayin hey*⁶, from the root word which means to *watch*, or to *oversee*]. This word is often translated *shepherds*.

Lot looked at the fruitful plain of the Jordan and said basically [Rabbi's son paraphrase]: “have fun in the desert, Uncle! I'm headed for the land of wealth, commerce, and palm trees!”.

Please note that when he left Lot *took the “herdsmen”/shepherds with them*. And note as well that those “herdsmen”/shepherds followed Lot's lead - right to *captivity* [Genesis 14]), right to *depravity* [Genesis 18], and, ultimately, right to their own *destruction* [Genesis 19]. Alas, this seems to be a familiar pattern!

But Didn't the Holy One Love Lot and His Wife, Too?

The Holy One did not by any means hate or reject Lot. And neither did Avram. Both just determined that it was best to *let Lot have what he thought he wanted*. Lot made his own choice. People are always free to do that. Sometimes the choices men make do not turn out well for them. Stepping outside of Covenant is just like that. Remember what the Unseen Shepherd's Voice told Avram – ***I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you*** Lot chose the second option. And he will not by any means be the last one to do so. So you are free to pity Lot – and those of all generations who make a ‘Lot's choice’ - if you so desire. But do not for one second consider Lot – or those like him – to be a victim of anything done by Avram, or by those walking in the same Covenant in which he walked. If such a person is a victim, he is a victim of *his own bad choices*. And alas, *aren't we all?*

The Richest Blessing of Avram Truly Begins with Lot's Departure

And what of Avram? Now he's *really* blown it, right? In the eyes of men, yes he has - except for one thing – the unbreakable power of the COVENANT. In the midst of Avram's being humbled and slapped around, therefore, the Holy One speaks to him again—the deepest encounter yet. The words the Holy One speaks to Avram in this situation are nothing like what Avram might have cause to expect nor what the wagging self-righteous tongues around him were most likely “prophesying”. Instead of “*you blew it; now face the music*”, Avram hears this affirmation:

⁶ This word is Strong's word #H 7462. It is transliterated *ra`ah*, and pronounced *raw-aw'*.

Me'imo sa na eyneicha urei'eh min ha-makom asher-atah sham

'Raise your eyes, and, from the place where you are now [standing],

tzafonah v'negbah v'kedmah vayamah

look to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west.

Ki et-kol ha-aretz asher-atah ro'eh

For all the land that you see,

lecha eteneinah ul'zar'acha ad-olam

I will give to you and to your offspring forever.

Vesamti et-zar'acha ka'afar ha-aretz

I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth

asher im-yuchal ish limenot et-afar ha-aretz

if a man will be able to count [all] the grains of dust in the world

gam-zar'acha yimaneh

then your offspring also will be countable.

Kum hithalech b'aretz l'orkah ul'rochbah

Rise, walk the land, through its length and breadth,

ki lecha eteneinah

for I will give it [all] to you.

[Genesis 13:14-17]

And as we later are told, Avram – finally freed of Lot's negative, destructive, subversive influence – could, as the Holy One intended, ***teach his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Holy One, by doing what is right and just.*** Genesis 18:19.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Find the Negev, Bethel, Ai and S'dom [Sodom] on maps in your Bible Atlas.
2. In verses 2-9 we see what happens when the Holy One begins to unravel a co-dependent relationship.
[A] What circumstances did the Holy One arrange to bring the strife between Avram and Lot out in the open?
[B] Do you think there was something deeper that was going on? If so, what?
3. What land did Lot choose and why?
4. Probably while Avram was still at or near Bethel, after Lot leaves Avram has his third encounter with the Holy One [13:14-17]:

*The Holy One said to Avram, after Lot was separated from him,
"Now, lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are,*

*northward and southward and eastward and westward,
for all the land that you see, I will give to you and to your offspring forever.*

*I will make your offspring as the dust of the eretz,
so that if a man can number the dust of the eretz, then your seed may also be numbered.*

*Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it;
for I will give it to you."*

[A] How was this third encounter with the Holy One deeper and different than the first encounter [Genesis 12:1-3]?

[B] How was this third encounter with the Holy One deeper and different than the second encounter [Genesis 12:7]?

[C] Why do you think the split with Lot had to occur before this third, deeper encounter with the Holy One, could take place? What was it about Avram's relationship with Lot that prevented this from taking place?

5. Today's haftarah is taken from the 41st chapter of *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah]. This reading informs us that the events of human history (and interpersonal relationships, like Avram's and Lot's, for that matter) are being orchestrated by the Holy One, not by ha-Satan. In Isaiah 41:1-4 we read:

*Keep silence before me, **iyim** [islands/coastal lands].
and let the peoples renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak;
let us come near together to judgment.*

Who has raised up one from the east, whom he calls in righteousness to his foot?

*He gives nations before him, and makes him rule over kings;
he gives them as the dust to his sword as the driven stubble to his bow.*

*He pursues them, and passes on safely,
even by a way that he had not gone with his feet.*

Who has worked and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?

***Ani Adonai rishon** - I, the Holy One, am the first,*

***v'et-acharonim ani hu** - And unto the last, I am He.*

[A] List the things the Holy One is going to do for this "one from the East."

[B] List the things the "one from the East" is going to do.

[C] Read Psalm 2 and discuss how it relates to these verses.

[D] What do you think the Holy One is talking about in Isaiah 41:4?

6. In today's Brit Chadasha reading we learn more about the difference between Avram's *sh'ma* lifestyle and the way of the world. Shaul of Tarsus says:

*Now to him who works the reward is not counted as **grace**, but as **debt**.
But to him who doesn't work,
but believes in [*sh'ma*'s and therefore *aman*'s] him who justifies the ungodly,*

his faith is accounted for righteousness.

[A] What passage of the TaNaKh (often called the ‘*Old Testament*’) does Shaul of Tarsus quote?

[B] What according to the quoted verses are the two situations that make a man blessed?

*May the Holy One lead you in all your relationships,
and deal with you according to His Covenant.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 107:8-9

*Let them praise the Holy One for His lovingkindness,
For his wonderful works to the children of men!
For He satisfies the longing soul.
He fills the hungry soul with good.*