

DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

The Lessons of Lot's Complacency Versus Abram's Engagement

The affairs of Abram's nephew Lot and the consequences in which they entangle Abram take up a good deal of our Parasha. Lot makes some fateful choices which, while not evil in themselves, expose Lot and his family to evil. While under Abram's wing, Lot prospers. But when Lot leaves Abram's sphere of protection, it proves disastrous and requires Abram's stepping up to his rescue.

Lot has come from Haran with Abram, and he presumably gained wealth in livestock along with Abram. Abram and Lot had some wealth, but we are told that Abram gained wealth in particular from the incident with Sarai and Pharaoh; presumably Lot also gained from that incident. But Lot's share of wealth leads to a split. The Torah describes the split as emanating from a dispute among Lot's and Abram's shepherds, not from Lot himself. But Lot fails to take charge of the dispute to resolve it or concede the dispute to Abram, leading Abram himself to suggest a territorial split. Lot chooses what seems to be a choice and very attractive piece of territory, a well-watered irrigated valley, but that most-attractive choice proves disastrous. Lot's neighbors in that region, we are told, were evil and sinful, and the Torah indicates that this evil is responsible for bringing destruction upon them, an evil in which Lot gets caught up, although he and his family survive. The "War of the Four Kings Against the Five" is the first wave of that destruction, which Lot and his neighbors survive only through Abram's coming to their rescue. Abram and Abram's God are recognized and rewarded, but Lot's neighbors don't truly repent of their ways. In the next parasha we are told of an even more devastating calamity which befalls Lot's land and all his neighbors, which he barely escapes.

Lot's family go on to form Israel's closest neighboring peoples, and they do go on later to prosper. But the implication here is that Lot and his family, due to their lack of leadership, their choice of the seemingly "easy" way, and their failure to protest evil, were likely to get caught up in calamity. Their failure to fully rally to Abram's side, the side of Good and Righteousness, is also notable. And also notable is Lot's utter dependence upon Abram for his rescue. Abram feels obliged to rescue his kinsman Lot and goes to great lengths to do so. Indeed, Abram goes to great length to respect, honor, and justify all those innocents who are not utterly complicit with evil. But nonetheless, Lot's taking what seemed like the "easiest" path and failure to exert leadership are apparent. Although Lot had come all the way from Haran with Abram, he settled for a life of complacency, a complacency which he thought would bring him tranquility and ease, but ultimately brought him weakness and calamity. Abram, on the other hand, chooses the "higher ground," rather than the well-watered valley. He chooses actively pursuing the cause of good and rescuing innocents from evil. He chooses a role of active engagement and concern. Although he heroically exposes himself to risk, he ends up all the stronger for it.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Lekh-Lekha

October 27-28, 2023 | 13 Marheshvan 5784

SCHEDULE

Kaplan: p. 52 | Haftarah: p. 1058

Hertz: p. 45 | Haftarah: p. 60

Candle Lighting | 5:41 pm

Friday Evening Services | 5:45 pm | Main Sanctuary

Friday Night Lights | Following Services | Main Sanctuary | "Bob Dylan's Zionist Song: A Message for our Moment" | *Session sponsored by Faith Fogelman, in memory of her father, Theodore Watkin | 5784 Season sponsored by the Julis-Rabinowitz family*

Zemirot | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Tot Shabbat | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Junior Congregation | 10:30 am | Small Synagogue

Kiddush | *Sponsored by the Tikvah Fund | Kiddush Contributors: Nicole Berk and Vivian Polak, in memory of their mother, Greta Polak*

Meet & Greet our Yoetzet Halakha, Ellin Cooper, at kiddush

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 4:50 pm | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | "The Haftarah of Abraham & of Chariots of Fire: A Reflection on Jewish Hope"

Evening Services | 5:35 pm

Habdala | 6:28 pm

Weekday Service Times

Sunday Morning: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday Mornings: 7:05 am

Minha & Arbit: **5:45 pm**

THIS SHABBAT

"Year of Hope" 10-Part Lecture Series

Judaica & Us:

The Story of the Jewish People in Ten Objects

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

This Shabbat | At Morning Services

LECTURE #2

The Jewish Calendar Made By a Catholic Priest:

A World War II Tale for Our Time

Meet & Greet Our Yoetzet Halakha, Ellin Cooper

This Shabbat | At Kiddush

Come chat with Yoetzet Cooper and see for yourself what a delightful and valuable resource she is.

COMING UP

How To Save The World In Six (Not So Easy) Steps:

Bringing Out The Best In Nonprofits

An Informative Book Event with Author David Schizer

Interviewed by Shearith Israel's Beth Goldman

Thursday, November 2 | 6:30 pm

Register to reserve your complimentary copy of the book (courtesy of the Columbia Center for Israeli Legal Studies) at shearithisrael.org/events/schizer.

EARLY BIRD DEADLINE: THIS WEDNESDAY, NOV. 1

CSI Young Professionals and Shearith Israel present:

Super-Shabbat Dinner with Guest Jordan Gorfinkel

author of the Graphic Novel Haggadah & Graphic Novel Megillat Esther

Friday Night, Nov. 10 | 6 pm, following 4:30 pm services | All ages welcome!

Preferred pricing for Early Birds, Young Professionals, and Families!

Register at shearithisrael.org/events/super-shabbat-dinner.

WE STAND WITH ISRAEL

Financial Support for Israel

- We have set up a special Israel Emergency Fund through the Rabbis Discretionary Fund - to contribute as a *kehillah*, go to shearithisrael.org/giving/rdf.
 - We've assembled an easily-shareable webpage of a few trusted organizations to which you can give directly - go to shearithisrael.org/giving/stand-with-israel.
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Send Letters to Active Soldiers in the IDF

Organized by the Sisterhood

Let's send as many letters and cards as we can. Children, teens, and adults: please prepare a letter or card, put it in an envelope, and drop it off in the collection box at the synagogue.

We'll deliver them to our contact in Israel who will ensure they reach IDF bases.

Misheberakh for Our Relatives in the IDF

Members, on Shabbat we will be reciting a Misheberakh for the IDF. It is very powerful to hear the names of our relatives recited aloud at Shabbat services in our Sanctuary.

If you have any relatives who are currently serving, please submit them at

shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/misheberakh-IDF

so that we can have them in mind.

We are collecting this information privately for our own internal use.

Members, do you have an Israel initiative you'd like to organize for our community??

Let us know!

עם ישראל חי!

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to the Tikvah Fund guests who are joining us for Shabbat.

Mazal tob to **Ruth Shapiro** & Irwin Shapiro, of blessed memory, upon the birth of a great granddaughter, Arielle Olivia (Ariella Nechama), born to their grandchildren, Rachel & Natan Bienstock.

We mourn the passing of our member, **Jale Turcihin**.

Condolences to **Valerie Feder**, upon the passing of her mother, Raymonde Schroeder.

Condolences to **Mitchell Presser**, upon the passing of his father, Stanley Presser.

Condolences to friends of Shearith Israel, Drs. Margo & Douglas Woll, upon the tragic loss of their daughter, Samantha Woll.