

Table Talk: Parshat Lech Lecha

In this week's Torah reading, Abraham's shepherds and Lot's shepherds quarrel. The Torah tells us that there just wasn't enough grazing land for everyone's sheep when they traveled together. So Abraham told his nephew to go one way, and he would go the opposite way.

The Torah tells us that Lot saw the area of the plains of Jordan, right by Sdom and Ammorah, and wanted to live there. We learn right here, in this context, that the people of Sdom were "wicked and sinful towards Hashem" (Chapter 13 verse 14). Unfortunately, that didn't make Lot hesitate.

What is interesting is that in the middle of this story, the Torah describes the land Lot chose in great detail by saying that "it was well-watered everywhere...like the land of Egypt" (Chapter 13 verse 10).

Why is that necessary and significant information? Why is it important to tell us about the way in which Lot's choice of land was irrigated? And how is that like Egypt? What do we know about Egypt's water supply? They lived by the Nile and it supplied them with water. This river was so important to their society, they worshipped it. G-d actually chose the Nile as the target for the first plague. What other way might a country have/receive water?

Think of the land of Israel. The Torah in Sefer Dvarim, Chapter 11 Verse 10 tells us that Israel is a land that is "not like Egypt" because, unlike Egypt, "from the rain of the heavens it will drink water." Israel, we are told, needs rain. It does not have a guaranteed water supply like the Nile River in Egypt.

Why does all this matter? And why should we know that Lot chose a land that is like Egypt in how it receives water?

Discuss: What does relying on rain mean for a person? How does that impact a farmer's



life? How does it affect the farmer's relationship with G-d? What happens when there is no water? We all know we thank G-d for rain, and every day at the beginning of the Shmonah Esrei prayer we say G-d is the one who brings the rain. This week, on Friday (the 7th of Cheshven), people in Israel begin to insert the request for rain in the tenth blessing of the Shmonah Esrei. (In other countries one begins to insert that request in December.) The fact that we rely on G-d for rain creates a need that connects us to G-d. We need Him, and thus pray to Him and think about what He provides. We, thereby, actively engage in a relationship with Hashem. Without that need for rain, one can go weeks without thinking about G-d and all that He provides.

By choosing a land that is self-irrigated, Lot was, in essence, severing ties with G-d. We seek to find ways to need G-d, so that we can be sure we'll never stop thinking about Him and talking to Him. Living in Israel creates that opportunity, and Lot walked away from that!

Discuss: What other vulnerabilities, besides our dependence on rain, connect you to G-d daily? Weekly? Yearly? How are a grown-up's concerns different than a child's? (Illustrate for your children that the way they look to you to provide, support and care for them – that is how grownups turn to G-d to provide, support and care for them.)

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