

Lech Lecha

The Torah Verse That Hardly Needs A Commentary

In Parshat Lech Lecha, we find a verse which hardly needs any commentary. Avram and Sarah had just made Aliya - they had arrived in the Holy Land:

“וַיְהִי רִיב בֵּין רְעֵי מִקְנֵה אַבְרָם וּבֵין רְעֵי מִקְנֵה לוֹט”
“And there was a bitter feud between the shepherds of Avram and the shepherds of Lot.”

“וְהַכְנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי אֲזִי יֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ”
“And the Canaanites and the Perezites were then living in the land.”

This is a powerful message. When Avram and Sarah and those who accompanied them arrived in the land, they were surrounded by hostile neighbours. They were greeted with suspicion and envy.

And what was happening within the camp of our people at the very time when the Canaanites and the Perezites were in the land?

“וַיְהִי רִיב”
“There was a bitter feud”

We were fighting against our own. We were disunited. And therefore, right at the very beginning of our people's story, instead of uniting to confront our enemies without, we were tragically divided within.

Moses saw the same thing when he was in Egypt. When he went out to seek his brethren, as we are told in Parshat Shemot, he saw a taskmaster Egyptian beating an Israelite. He would have beaten him to death had Moses not come and saved the Israelite's life. But then the next day he saw:

“שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים עִבְרִים נֹצִים”
“There were two Hebrews who were fighting against each other.”

That same scenario has repeated itself time and again throughout our history; sometimes we are our own worst enemy. In the blessing of Sim Shalom, which we daven every day, to ask Hashem to help us to establish peace with our enemies, there is an intriguing text:

“בְּרַכְנוּ, אָבִינוּ, כָּלֵנוּ כְּאַחַד בְּאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ”
“Bless us, our father, all of us together, in the light of your countenance.”

Rav Jakobovits zt”l taught: when we are praying for peace between ourselves and our enemies, this blessing teaches us that we have to start within our own camp to guarantee that we are “כָּלֵנוּ כְּאַחַד” “all of us at one” - united as a powerful people together.

Therefore, let us never forget that crucially important message: united we stand, but divided we fall.

Shabbat Shalom.