

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter III: Lech Lecha (Gen. 12:1–17:27)

### Essay 15. Lot had the same appearance as Abraham

“The wicked in his arrogance pursues the oppressed; may they be caught in the schemes they devise.” – Ps. 10:2

**מדרש** ילקוט "בגאות רשע ידלק עני", זה לוט שנתפס בשביל אנשי סדום. "יתפשו במזמות זו תשובו" אלו השבטים עכ"ל. והזית רענן פירש, זה לוט שנתפס שהמלכים שבאו להלחם עם סדום תפשוהו אלו השבטים. צריך עיון מה ענין זה ללוט עכ"ל.

**Midrash Yalkot (Shimoni Psalms remez 748):** “ ‘The wicked in his arrogance pursues the oppressed:’ This [oppressed one] is Lot, who was apprehended because [of the sins] of Sodom. ‘May they be caught in the schemes they devise!’ These [refer to] the tribes.”

**The *Zayit Ra’a’nan* explains:** “This [oppressed one] is Lot, who was apprehended, for the kings who came to wage war with Sodom captured these tribes. This needs investigation, what relation this has to Lot.”<sup>1</sup>

ונראה לתרץ דאיתא במדרש שהטעם שאברהם הביא עצמו בסכנה כל כך גדולה לרדוף או עם אליעזר לבדו או עם שי"ח "לידי ביתו" נגד ארבעה מלכים שהיו כל כך חזקים, זה הנה לפי שהנה דיוקן של לוט דומה לדיוקן של אברהם. וזה שאמר הכתוב "נישמע אברהם פי נשבה אחיו" דהיינו אחיו בדיוקן שלו, והנה זה זלזולו של אברהם, כמו המשל של שני אחים תאומים שהביא רש"י על פסוק "כייקלת אלהים תלוי", שכל הרוצה אותו אמר המלך תלוי. ואף כאן כל הרוצה את לוט שבו אברהם שבו ויאמרו שחם ושלום אלוהו אינו יכול לעמוד לו, ושמא יתרגוהו והברייתו יאמרו שאברהם נהרג. ואף היודעים שהוא לוט יאמרו שנשבה לפי שאינו צדיק, ושאברהם גם כן אינו צדיק שהרי שנים הם בדיוקנם, והנה חלול השם בדבר, ומשום הכי סמך עצמו על הגס אף על פי שהיה דבר חוץ מן הטבע שהוא ינצח לארבעה מלכים.

**He appears to solve this as it is brought in the Midrash (Zohar, parashat Lech Lecha, page 66b, and see Yalkut Shimoni, Lech Lecha, remez 73).** The Midrash explains **that the reason**

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Avraham Abele Gombiner (c. 1635 – 5 October 1682). Nicknamed for his most famous work, *Magen Avraham*, a commentary on the *Orach Chaim* section of the *Shulchan Aruch*. He also wrote *Zayit Ra’a’nan*, a commentary on *Yalkut Shimoni*. *Zayit Ra’a’nan* was published in Dessau, Germany in 1704, and republished in Venice in 1743.

that Abraham brought himself to such danger, to chase—either with Eliezer alone, or with 318 members of his household—after four kings who were so powerful, was because the appearance of Lot was similar to the appearance of Abraham.

This is as Scripture says, “When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he mustered his retainers, born into his household, numbering 318, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.”<sup>2</sup> That is, his brother who had his likeness, and this similar appearance caused a great dishonor to Abraham, similar to the parable of the two twin brothers that Rashi brought on the verse, “You must not let the corpse remain on the tree overnight, but must bury it the same day; for a hanging body is an affront to G-d: you shall not defile the land that the L-rd your G-d is giving you to possess.”<sup>3</sup>

The parable, which Rashi brought from Sanhedrin 46b, was that there were twin brothers, and while one became king, the other was arrested for robbery and was hanged. **Everyone who saw the hanged brother on the gallows said the king had been hanged. Here too, everyone who saw Lot imprisoned said, “Abraham is imprisoned,” and said, G-d forbid, “his G-d is not able to stand up for him,”** i.e., to liberate him, and perhaps they would kill [Lot] and the people would say that Abraham had been killed. Even those who knew that [the imprisoned man] was Lot would say that he was imprisoned because he wasn’t righteous, and that Abraham also wasn’t righteous, because they were identical in their likeness, and that would be a matter of blasphemy.

Because of this, [Abraham] relied himself on the miracle that he would succeed, even though this was reliance on something supernatural, that he would be able to prevail against the four kings.

ומעתה קנשה על השבטים, שהרי יוסף הנה זיו איקונין שלו דומה לשל אביו, ולפי דבריהם שיוסף חטא אם כן אף הכריות יאמרו שאף יעקב חטא. ואם יתרגוהו יאמרו שיעקב נהרג. ונמצא שלא חששו כלל לכבוד אביהם.

Now, we have the question about the tribes being referenced in our Midrash regarding the verse, “May they be caught in the schemes they devise.” **For Joseph had a countenance similar to his father,<sup>4</sup> and according to their words, that Joseph sinned, if so, the people would say that even Jacob sinned. If [the brothers] would kill [Joseph],** i.e., either directly or indirectly, [the people] would say that Jacob had been killed. We find that they didn’t worry at all about the honor of their father, for through the brothers’ actions, people might have thought that their father had died—and through the actions of his own sons!

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<sup>2</sup> Gen. 14:14.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 21:23.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. Rabbah 84:8.

ועל זה אמר המדרש "בגאות רשע" זה נמרוד שהיה עושה עצמו אלוה, והוא אמרפל שאמר לאברהם פול וכו'. "ידלק עני" זה לוט שנתפס בידו בשביל שהיה בסדום, ועיקר זדונו וגאנותו במלחמה זו לפי שהיה משתבח להיות לו לעבד דיוקנו של אברהם, כדכתיב "וישמע אברהם כי נשבה אחיו". וזה גרם שאברהם יסמוך עצמו על הנס מחמת קדוש השם. ומטעם זה יתפסו השבטים "במזמות זו תשבו" על יוסף להמיתו, שהיה זלזול גדול בכבוד אביהם.

**On this, the Midrash states: “ ‘The wicked in his arrogance:’ This is [referring to] Nimrod, who made himself a god. This is [the same man who was also called] Amrafel [אמרפל],<sup>5</sup> who said [amar] [אמר] to Abraham, ‘Fall down’ [pol] [פול] into the fiery furnace.”<sup>6</sup>**

**“ ‘Pursues the oppressed:’ This [oppressed one] is Lot, who was captured by [Nimrod’s] hand because he was in Sodom.” The principal part of [Nimrod’s] intentional acts and pride in this war was because he was praised that he had a slave with the appearance of Abraham, as it is written, “When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive.” This caused Abraham to rely on the miracle [that he could overcome the four kings] for the sake of the sanctification of G-d’s Name.**

**For this reason, the tribes “would be caught in the schemes they devise” about killing Joseph, which was a great dishonor to the honor of their father, for as noted above, Joseph’s resemblance to Jacob would lead some people to believe that Jacob had died as a result of the actions of his own sons.**

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<sup>5</sup> Gen. 14:1, 14:9.

<sup>6</sup> The source is Eruvin 53a, except that it states, ‘He said [the command] and cast [hippil] [הפיל] our father Abraham into the fiery furnace.’ This is true not only for our current edition of Eruvin, but all versions reported on <https://bavli.genizah.org>. The imperative form, [pol] [פול] appears in Rashi’s commentary on Gen. 14:1.