



ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר בראשית

פרשת לך

SERIES 2: ISSUE 3

NIMROD'S REVENGE AGAINST AVRAM

Chapter 14

1) *It was in the time of Amraphel king of Shinar, Aryoch king of Elasar, Kedarla'omer king of Elam, and Tid'al king of Goyim –.*

א) וַיְהִי בִּימֵי אַמְרָפָל מֶלֶךְ שְׁנָعָר אַרְיוֹךְ מֶלֶךְ אַלְסָר כְּדָרְלָעָמֶר מֶלֶךְ עַילָּם וְתַדְעֵל מֶלֶךְ גּוּיִם.

2) *they made war on Bera king of Sedom, Birsha king of Amorah, Shinav king of Admah, Shemever king of Tzevoym, and the king of Bela, which is Tzo'ar.*

ב) עָשׂוּ מֶלֶחֶת מִנְחָמָה אֶת בָּרָע מֶלֶךְ סְדָם וְאֶת בָּרְשָׁע מֶלֶךְ עַמְרָה שְׁנָאָב מֶלֶךְ אַדְמָה וְשְׁמָאָבָר מֶלֶךְ צְבּוּיִם וְמֶלֶךְ בְּלָע הִיא צְעָה.

7) *They returned and came to Ein Mishpat which is Kadesh and they struck the entire countryside of the Amalekites as well as the Amorites who dwelled in Chatzetzon Tamar.*

ג) וַיֵּשֶׁבּוּ וַיָּבָאוּ אֶל עַיִן מִשְׁפָּט הַוְאָ קָדָשׁ וַיְכִיּוּ אֶת כָּל שְׂדָה הַעֲמָלָקִי וְגַם אֶת הַאֲמָרִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּחַצְצָן תָּמָר.

12) *They seized Lot, Avram's nephew and his possessions and they left – he was living in Sedom.*

ד) וַיִּקְחָהוּ אֶת לֹט וְאֶת רַכְשׁוֹ בְּן אָחִי אַבְרָם וַיַּלְכֹּו וְהַוָּא יַשֵּׁב בְּסָדָם.

14) *Avram heard that his kinsman had been taken prisoner and he armed those he had trained, who had been born in his house – three hundred and eighteen – and pursued [the captors] as far as Dan.*

ד) וַיַּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם פִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו וַיַּרְא אֶת חַנִּיכְיוֹ יַלְקִידִי בַּיּוֹם שֶׁמְנָה עָשָׂר וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וִירְצָף עַד דָן.

Our Sages (*Bereishis Rabbah* 42:3) tell us that the real reason the Four Kings went out to war was to kill Avram, not to suppress the rebellion of the Five Kings. Their plan was to take Lot prisoner because they knew Avram was his uncle and would attempt to rescue him; they would then overpower Avram and put him to death. Indeed, if God had not given Avram special protection that is exactly what would have happened.

Consider the following questions:

1. Why does it state in verse 7 that Kedarla'omer and his allies returned ... to Ein Mishpat, when as far as we know, this was the first time they had been there?
2. Why did the Four Kings hate Avram so much that they amassed a huge army just to kill him?
3. Why did they use such roundabout tactics to try and achieve their aim, waging a war against the Five Kings just to take Lot prisoner and trap Avram? They could have simply marched directly to Avram's home and attacked him there!

Breishis Rabbah 42:7 comments on verse 7 that there is no such place as Ein Mishpat. Rather, it is to be understood as a hint to the real purpose of the Four Kings. The word Ein (עַיִן) means eye, and the word Mishpat (מִשְׁפָּט) means judgment. As such, our Sages interpret the verse as saying that the Four Kings "sought to blind the eye that made *Middas HaDin* [take hold] in the world."

To explain further: These Sages tell us that *Amraphel king of Shinar* was another name for the wicked Nimrod, who had led the attempt to unite all nations in building the Tower of Bavel in order to increase the power of the negative spiritual forces in the world. He knew that Avram would be able to draw down the Divine Presence through his deeds and his service of Hashem and thus thwart all his evil plans, so he wanted to kill Avram. Avram hid from him for many years, but when he finally saw the tower, he told the workers they would not succeed in rebelling against God and invoked His Name to curse Nimrod. Immediately, God descended to see the city and the tower (*Bereishis* 11:5) and to execute judgment upon the world. In this way, Avram aroused the Attribute of Strict Justice against the tower's builders. If he had not prayed as he did, God would not have punished them so quickly, because they had the merit of being united. **[This answers Question 2.]**

This was why the Midrash explains verse 7 as it does. When the Four Kings, led by Nimrod, came to *Ein Mishpat*, they were seeking "to blind the eye" — that is, destroy the eye of Avram, who had observed the builders of the Tower and aroused Hashem's Attribute of Justice against them.

Similarly, the Sages expounded that the last words of the verse, "which is Kadesh," are not referring to a place but rather to the fact that Avram "sanctified (שָׁקַד) God's Name in the fiery furnace." This referred to the previous history between Avram and Nimrod, (when the king sought to burn Avram to death for smashing his father's idols but did not succeed). This is hinted to in the phrase *they returned and came to Ein Mishpat*, because now was the second time Nimrod, with his allies, was coming to take revenge on Avram. **[This answers Question 1.]**

Why didn't they just march directly to where Avram lived and attack him there?

The answer is two-fold. First, it is beneath the dignity of a king — let alone four kings — to chase after a single individual. But second, they did not want Avram to realize that they were planning to kill him. They did not want to give him sufficient time to prepare to defend himself. For since Avram was a world-renowned figure and influential amongst all the leaders of the world, he would have been able to amass a huge army of his own. Therefore, they acted in a deceptive way: Even though their immediate plan was to take Lot prisoner, they first marched against other nations (for example, the Amalekites and Amorites mentioned in verse 7) before swooping down on Sodom, where Lot lived. Avram would be surprised at his sudden capture and would be forced to respond quickly to the emergency, rushing out to save Lot without taking the time to amass an army. In this way Nimrod and his allies thought they would be able to kill him easily. **[This answers Question 3.]**

Thus, although according to the plain meaning in the Torah, the purpose of the war was to suppress a rebellion, this was far from the truth. The main purpose of the war was to enable Nimrod to exact revenge on his arch-enemy. Everything else was just a pretext.

THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508 - 1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title "HaKodosh" (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich's true greatness.