

פרשת לך לך

וה' אמר לאברם אחרי הפרד לוט מעמו וכו' [יג,יד]

רש"י notes that only after לוט departed from אברם did Hashem speak to him, because Hashem did not wish to speak to אברם in the presence of a רשע. רשע points out that although we find in the beginning of the Parsha that Hashem spoke to אברם, at that time לוט was still good. When did this transformation from good to bad take place? It would seem that it was when אברם and לוט had their argument. לוט allowed his animals to graze from other fields, and אברם held that it was stealing. For this the Torah referred to לוט as a רשע. But this would seem insufficient reason to call him a רשע. לוט wasn't stealing deliberately. He felt that he was entitled to let his animals graze there because, as רש"י explains, Hashem had promised the land to אברם and לוט at that time was אברם's only heir. Perhaps his logic was mistaken but does that qualify him as a רשע?

לוט certainly was influenced and educated by אברם and his ideals. רש"י in וירא פ' וירא tells us that לוט was trained with the מדה of חסד from אברם. He even went out of his way to bring home the three מלאכים with great מסירת נפש, knowingly placing him and his family in mortal danger. However, his חסד wasn't inherently a part of his persona, it was only superficial and out of habit. In fact, the Torah is critical of how לוט performed חסד because it wasn't the way אברהם did it. As long as he was connected to אברם and looked up to him as his mentor, he was considered a צדיק based on his closeness with אברם. Once he began to argue and wouldn't accept אברם's viewpoint, he disconnected himself from אברם and could not be considered מתלמידי אברהם. The Torah now viewed him based on his own merit. לוט himself did not inherently have the sterling qualities of אברם's מדה of חסד. On the contrary his true colors were revealed when he attached himself to סדום, a culture of רשעת and anti-חסדים.

כלל ישראל are different! We have an innate desire to do חסד and עבודת ה' that is part of our very being. Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes in מ"ג פ"ה מ"ג that the מדות, character traits, that our forefathers acquired through מסירת נפש, are passed down to us as part of our DNA, and with a small effort we can access them. Our חסד and מצוות have the potential to be on the level of אברהם אבינו, if only we tap into it.

Have a good Shabbos.

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