



October 28, 2023



Parshas Lech Lecha

13th of Cheshvan 5784

Do What's Right No Matter The Cost

I once walked into the BMG Otzar, looking for a sefer, and ran into my friend Reb Shmuel Bogart. After schmoozing for a few minutes, I asked him for a vort from his illustrious grandfather, Rabbi Bresler, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Scranton Yeshiva. He told me the following fantastic vort:

The famous giant Og desperately wanted to marry Avram's wife Sarah. The pasuk says, "*Vayavo Hapalit Vayaged l'Avram Ha'ivri*" (14, 13). Og ran with glee to tell Avram that his nephew, Lot, was captured by the mighty kings of those days. Og thought that Avram would run off to save his nephew, getting killed in the process, and Sarah would finally be his. Now we all know the story. Avram did not get killed. He successfully extracted Lot from his captives. Og's devious plan was foiled.

Let's take a step back for a second. What in the world was Og thinking with this plan? How crazy did he think Avram was that he would inject himself into an international war consisting of some of the mightiest and most brutal nations in human history? The modern-day equivalent would be one man attempting to save his relative being held captive by the North Korean army in an impenetrable fortress. What was Og thinking?

A Man on Fire

The answer, says Rabbi Bresler, lies in the word Ha'ivri. This pasuk is one of the only times in the entire Torah that Avram is called Avram Ha'ivri. Why is that? The word Ha'ivri literally means he came from the other side of the river, but it is used here to brand Avram as the one who had the courage to stand up for his beliefs, even if all the others were on the other side. He stood firm in his convictions even in the face of sneering, laughing and eye-rolling from others. He believed in it so deeply that no amount of ridicule and scorn could make him change his mind. That was Avram. He discovered monotheism in a world of polytheism and was mocked and laughed at the world over. He was persecuted and abused. He was thrown into fiery furnaces. But it made no difference to him. He was firm as a rock.

Og knew this about Avram. Og liked this trait very much in Avram, for it meant that when he would hear that his nephew's life was in danger, it would make no difference how crazy it would be to help him. Og knew that Avram was a man who did the right thing for one reason, and one reason only: because it's the right thing to do. Even if it meant waging a war, one on ten thousand. Some call it crazy, others call it dedication. Og happily ran to tell Avram **Ha'ivri**, the man of passion and motivation, that his nephew was captured, hoping Avram would die. But, he didn't, he survived.

The Hebrews

Jews throughout history have been called the Hebrews, a derivative of the word Ivri. It is because infused in our DNA is the passion and pride that Avram exuded. It doesn't bother us that the world thinks otherwise. It doesn't bother us that we get ridiculed and scorned. We are not deterred by such terror and discrimination that no other religion, ethnicity, country, sect, or nationality has ever gone through besides us. We have roots of pride that go back thousands of years. Avram taught us: Stand up for what is right, for it's the right thing to do.