

Parsha QA



Parshas Lech Lecha

For the week ending 11 Cheshvan 5759
30 & 31 October 1998

Parsha Questions

1. What benefits did Hashem promise Avraham if he would leave his home?
2. "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." What does this mean?
3. Who were the souls that Avraham and Sarah "made?"
4. What were the Canaanites doing in the Land of Canaan when Avraham arrived?
5. Why did Avraham build an altar at Ai?
6. What two results did Avraham hope to achieve by saying that Sarah was his sister?
7. Why did Avraham's shepherds rebuke Lot's shepherds?
8. Who was Amrafel and why was he called that?
9. Verse 14:7 states that the four kings "smote all the country of the Amalekites." How is this possible since Amalek had not yet been born?
10. Why did the "palit" tell Avraham that Lot had been captured?
11. Who accompanied Avraham into battle against the four kings?
12. Why was Avraham unable to pursue the four kings past Dan?
13. Why did Avraham give "ma'aser" to Malki-Tzedek specifically?
14. Why didn't Avraham accept any money from the King of Sodom?
15. When did the decree of four hundred years of exile begin?
16. What did Hashem indicate with His promise to Avraham that he would "come to his ancestors in peace?"
17. How did Hashem fulfill His promise to Avraham that he would be buried in "a good old age?"
18. Why did the Jewish People need to wait until the fourth generation until they returned to *Eretz Canaan*?
19. Who was Hagar's father?
20. Why did Avraham fall on his face when Hashem appeared to him?

Sherlox Holmes and the Precision Mystery

Two figures sat in a coach on the rumbling train. "Good thing you and I arrived early at the train station," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes. "This train was scheduled to leave at 3:18, but in fact it left at 3:17. Had we been precisely on time, we would have missed it. It's not always good to be too precise."

"Speaking of the number 318, I'm puzzled by the following verse: Avraham armed his disciples — three hundred and eighteen.... (Bereshis 14:14)."

"What's puzzling?" asked Sherlox.

"It's Rashi's comment that confuses me. Rashi says that the plural word 'disciples' (chanichav) is written as though it were singular (chanicho), indicating that there was in fact only one disciple, Eliezer. To complicate matters, the verse states explicitly that there were 318 people. Rashi explains this by saying that the numerical value of Eliezer is exactly equal to 318."

"Brilliant observation!" said Sherlox.

"Perhaps, but why must Rashi depart from the straightforward explanation? Why must he resort to numerical values to explain a simple verse?"

"You answered that yourself, Dr. Watstein: The word disciples is written as though it were singular, indicating that it was indeed only one person."

"As you well know, Mr. Holmes, the Torah often writes plural words as though they were singular (for example, Shmos 27: 11 and Devarim 33:9) and Rashi makes no comment. So why here does Rashi comment?"

"It's not always good to be too precise, Dr. Watstein."

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Answer

"My intuition," said Sherlox, "tells me that the answer is as follows: Whenever the Torah counts soldiers, the Torah speaks in terms of round numbers. For example: In Bamidbar 1:20-43, each number is a multiple of fifty."

"Go on," said Watstein.

"It is quite out of character for the Torah to say that Avraham had precisely 318 men. The normal way would be to give a round number, such as 300."

"Come to think of it," said Watstein, "the same is true elsewhere in Tanach; for example: Gidon, and the three hundred men who were with him (Shoftim 8:4)."

"Yes, Tanach is replete with such examples. So, to say that Avraham took precisely 318 men is jarring to the ear sensitive to the Torah's subtle nuance."

"I see!" said Watstein. "If 318 refers to the actual number of people, it is too precise! Therefore, Rashi offers the midrashic explanation, one which seeks precision by being less precise!"

"Precisely, dear Watstein."

Sherlox is by Reuven Subar,
inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's "What's Bothering Rashi")

I Did Not Know That!

"And you will call his name Yitzchak...(17:19)"

Why was Avraham's name changed (from Avram - Bereishis 17:5) and Yaakov's name changed (to Yisrael - Bereishis 32:29), whereas Yitzchak's name remained unchanged?

Avraham and Yaakov received their names from their parents, while Yitzchak received his name from Hashem.

Jerusalem Talmud - Berachos 1:6

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

- 12:6 A Sign for the Children
- 12:8 Proclaiming the Name of Hashem
- 12:10 The Sin of Avram
- 13:7 The Quarrel of the Shepherds
- 14:1 The Four Kings
- 15:12 The Dreadful Vision
- 16:12 Yishmael

Sforno

- 12:17 Pharaoh's Plague
- 16:12 Yishmael
- 17:1 Attaining Perfection

Parshas Lech Lecha

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Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 12:1 - He would become a great nation, and his excellence would become known to the world, and he would be blessed with wealth.
2. 12:3 - A person will say to his child, "You should be like Avraham."
3. 12:5 - People they converted to the worship of Hashem.
4. 12:6 - They were in the process of conquering the land from the descendants of Shem.
5. 12:8 - He foresaw the Jewish People's defeat there in the days of Yehoshua due to the sin of Achan. He built an altar there to pray for them.
6. 12:13 - That the Egyptians would let him live and give him presents.
7. 13:7 - Lot's shepherds grazed their flocks in privately owned fields.
8. 14:1 - Amrafel was Nimrod. He said (*amar*) to Avraham to fall (*fel*) into the fiery furnace.
9. 14:7 - The Torah is using the name that the place would bear in the future.
10. 14:13- He hoped Avraham would die trying to save Lot, so that he himself might be able to marry Sarah.
11. 14:14 - His servant, Eliezer.
12. 14:14 - He saw prophetically that his descendants would erect a golden calf there. As a result his strength failed.
13. 14:20 - Because Malki-Tzedek was a *kohen*.
14. 14:23 - Hashem had promised Avraham wealth, and Avraham didn't want the King of Sodom to be the one to take credit for it.
15. 15:13 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
16. 15:15 - That his father, Terach, repented and became righteous.
17. 15:15 - Avraham lived to see his son, Yishmael, repent and become righteous, and he died before his grandson, Esav, became wicked.
18. 15:16 - They needed to wait until the Amorites had sinned sufficiently to deserve expulsion.
19. 16:1 - Pharaoh.
20. 17:3 - Because he was as yet uncircumcised.

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