

"One Man's Journey" - Blazing the Trail for a Nation

Sources: DBS Torah CD Rom Library; Machon Mamre.org; Chabad.org

Source #1: Bereishis Ch. 14 – The War of the Kings

1. Now it came to pass in the days of Amraphel the king of Shinar, Arioch the king of Ellasar, Chedorloemer the king of Elam, and Tidal the king of Goyim. **2.** That they waged war with Bera the king of Sodom and with Birsha the king of Gomorrah, Shineab the king of Admah, and Shemever the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar. **3.** All these joined in the valley of Siddim, which is the Dead Sea...

(יא) וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת כָּל רֶכֶשׁ סֹדִם וְעַמְרָה וְאֶת כָּל אֲכָלָם וַיֵּלְכוּ :
(יב) וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת לוֹט וְאֶת רְכֻשׁוֹ בֶּן אָחִי אַבְרָם וַיֵּלְכוּ וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּסֹדִם :
(יג) וַיָּבֵא הַפְּלִיט וַיַּגֵּד לְאַבְרָם הָעֵבְרִי וְהוּא שָׂכַן בְּאֵלְנֵי מְמֵרָה הָאֲמֹרִי אָחִי
אֲשֶׁר כָּל וְאָחִי עָנָר וְהֵם בְּעַלְי בְּרִית אַבְרָם : (יד) וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אָחִיו
וַיִּרְקֹק אֶת חַיִּיכָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ בֵּיתוֹ שְׂמֹנֶה עָשָׂר וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וַיִּרְדֹּף עַד דָּן :

11. And they took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food, and they departed. **12.** And they took Lot and his possessions, the son of Abram's brother, and they departed, and he was living in Sodom. **13.** And the fugitive came and he told Abram the Hebrew, and he was living in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshkol and the brother of Aner, who were Abram's confederates. **14.** And Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, and he armed his trained men, those born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and he pursued [them] until Dan.

Source #2: Midrash – Bereishis Rabbah 42:8

"ויגד לאברם העברי" ... ר' נחמיה אמר שהוא מבני בניו של
עבר...

"And he told Avram the Hebrew" –

R. Nechemia said: He was from the grandchildren of Ever

17. And Ever lived after he had begotten Peleg, four hundred and thirty years, and he begot sons and daughters. **18.** And Peleg lived thirty years, and he begot Reu. **19.** And Peleg lived after he had begotten Reu, two hundred and nine years, and he begot sons and daughters. **20.** And Reu lived thirty two years, and he begot Serug. **21.** And Reu lived after he had begotten Serug two hundred and seven years, and he begot sons and daughters. **22.** And Serug lived thirty years, and he begot Nahor. **23.** And Serug lived after he had begotten Nahor, two hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters. **24.** And Nahor lived twenty nine years, and he begot Terah. **25.** And Nahor lived after he had begotten Terah one hundred and nineteen years, and he begot sons and daughters. **26.** And Terah lived seventy years, and he begot Avram, Nahor, and Haran.

Another view in the midrash:

ויגד לאברם העברי... ורבנן אמרי שהוא מעבר הנהר.

“And he told Avram the Hebrew” –
The sages say that [he was given this name]
because he was from the other side of the river.

This view is cited by Rashi in his commentary on the Chumash

Source #3: Sefer Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:2-3

...בעבר הנהר ישבו אבותיכם מעולם תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור ויעבדו אלהים אחרים: ואקח את אביכם את אברהם מעבר הנהר ואולך אותו בכל ארץ פניען וארבה את זרעו ואתן לו את יצחק, ואתן ליצחק את יעקב ואת עשו, ואתן לעשו את הר שעיר לרשת אותו, ויעקב ובניו ירדו מצרים:

Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river in the distant past, Terach, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the river and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his seed (Joshua 24:2-3)

So what is the significance of the “other side of the river”?

Source #4: Rashi

אמרפל - הוא נמרוד שאמר לאברהם פול לתוך כבשן האש (בי"ר):

This is Nimrod, who said to Avraham: “Fall into the fiery furnace”

Source #5: Bereishis Rabbah 42:4

(ד) ויהי בימי אמרפל ג' שמות נקראו לו כוש ונמרוד ואמרפל ... נמרוד - שהעמיד מרד בעולם אמרפל ... ואפלי באברהם שאמר שירד לכבשן האש

And it was in the days of Amrafel – He had three names: Kush, Nimrod, and Amrafel.. “Nimrod” – He triggered a rebellion in the world...Amrafel, who said to Avraham, “Fall into the fiery furnace”

What is the significance of Avraham’s war being against Amrafel/Nimrod? What was the legendary conflict between Avraham and Nimrod?

Source #6: Bereishis Ch. 21

(לג) וַיִּטֵּעַ אֵשֶׁל בְּבֵאֵר שְׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא שְׁם בְּיָטֵם ה' אֵל עוֹלָם:

Source #7: Rashi, in his commentary on Chumash -
adopts the following Talmud Sotah 10a-b

אמר ריש לקיש אל תיקרי "ויקרא" אלא "ויקריא" -- מלמד שהקריא אברהם אבינו לשמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בפה כל עובר ושב כיצד לאחר שאכלו ושתו עמדו לברכו אמר להם וכי משלי אכלתם משל אלהי עולם אכלתם הודו ושבחו וברכו למי שאמר והיה העולם.

Reish Lakish said, don't read the verse as saying that he [Avraham] called, but that he caused it to be called out. **This teaches us that Avraham Avinu caused the Holy One, Blessed be He's name to be called out by every wayfarer.** How so? After they ate and drank and were about to thank him, he said to them, "Are you eating from my food? You are partaking in the food of the G-d of the world. Thank and praise the One who spoke and brought the world into existence.

- The midrash in Bereishis Rabba 41:6 also declares that **Avraham and Lot looked identical**
- The Psikta Rabti says that **Lot was taken captive only by mistake**; the kings thought that they had captured Avraham!!
- The Sforno notes that **Avram Ha'lvri refers to Avraham believing, like Lot, in the theology originally promoted by Ever.**

The Third view in the Midrash

ויגד לאברם העברי.

רבי יהודה ורבי נחמיה ורבנן רבי יהודה אומר כל העולם כולו מעבר אחד והוא מעבר אחד

R. Yehudah says,
The entire world is on one side and he is on the other

- *How could this view be understood?*
- *What's the difficulty with explaining this view this way?*

Source #8: R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin ("Netziv") "Ha'amek Davar"

לאברם העברי. לא שהלך להודיע צער ולבשר רעה בלי תועלת. אלא משום שהיה העברי וידוע היה שיש תקוה ממנו לשנות את הדבר גם בדרך נס:

To Avram the Hebrew: He did not go to give him the troubling information without purpose. Rather, because he was an Hebrew (Ivri) and he knew that there was hope that maybe **he would be able to affect the situation through a miracle.**

Source #9: Avraham's response to Lot's capture:

14. And Avram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, and he armed his trained men, those born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and he pursued [them] until Dan. 15. And he divided himself against them at night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them until Hobah, which is to the left of Damascus. 16. And he restored all the possessions, and also Lot his brother and his possessions he restored, and also the women and the people.

The Midrash, Aggadas Bereishis says that Avraham's soldiers backed down and only Eliezer, Avraham's servant, joined Avraham in the chase. The numerical value of Eliezer's name is 318

1 - א
30 - ל
10 - י
70 - ע
7 - ז
200 - ר

318

The Talmud in Sanhedrin 108b, based on verses in the book of Yeshaya, understands that miraculous things happened in the battle between Avraham and the Kings – dust was thrown into the air, and it turned into swords....

Source #10: Avraham Avinu's life also defies nature – according to Tehilim Ch. 16

אֲבָרְךָ אֵת ה' אֱשֶׁר יַעֲצֵנִי אֶף לַיְלֹת יִסְרוּנִי כְּלִיֹּתַי:

7. I will bless the Lord, Who counseled me; even at night my kidneys (conscience) instructs me.

Rashi: ... Our sages explained that this is a reference to Avraham Avinu who learned Torah on his own – prior to the Torah being given..

What is the concept of this supernatural power being granted to Avraham?

Source #11: Avraham's Ten Tests

– Rambam's commentary on Pirkei Avos 5:3:

Avraham was given ten tests and he withstood them all
And the fourth one – his battle with the four kings...the eighth, he sent out Hagar after he built [his family] from her. The ninth, he distanced his son Yishma'el, and this is what is meant by G-d's saying to him, "Don't feel badly about the lad, etc. The Torah notes how difficult it was in his eyes, when it says "And it was very bad in Avraham's eyes.." – but he followed Hashem's command and sent them away. The tenth – the Binding of Yitzchak.

- What do the various highlighted tests (above) have in common?
- What was Avraham known for – and how do these tests challenge that quality?
- Why was the Akeida the pinnacle of Avraham's tests?

Source #12: Avraham on the verge of the Akeida

4 On the third day
אֲבְרָהָם אָת-עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא
הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם--מֵרְחֹק.
Avraham lifted up his eyes,
and saw the place afar off.

Miriam stands on the side
as baby brother Moshe floats in a basket in the reeds

4 And his sister stood afar off,
לְדַעָה, מֵה-יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ.
to know what would be done to
him.