



Sheltering Under His Wings Parshas Lech-Lechah

The young woman standing at the entrance to the room was telling an incredible story. Over the years I have become accustomed to learning of the plights of many people of all ages and from various social backgrounds. However, this specific case was extraordinary.

She was born in South America to non-Jewish parents. In high school she chose to write a school project about the Holocaust. She became engrossed in the topic and spent many months researching it. As time went on she became attached to the Jewish Nation, and soon she yearned to join them. In doing so, she hoped to execute revenge on the Nazi devil who hoped to make the world "Judenrein", clean of Jews. She shared her desire with her parents. They tried to dissuade her, her uncle, the local minister, was sent to talk her out of her going through with her intentions. When her parents realized she could not be convinced, they promptly threw her out of their home.

Undeterred, she continued with her plan and converted to Judaism, moving to Israel. She received an apartment from the Jewish agency and enlisted in the IDF.

After a difficult adjustment period she learned that her mother had become gravely ill. She wanted to return to her mother so that she could care for her. She had to pay for the air fare, and turned to the army for a long term loan. She was declined.

She tried various options, and finally a neighbor agreed to lend her the money if she promised to pay it back on her return.

She came to her mother to nurse her, but her family's persistent attempts to convert her back to her previous religion caused her to flee in the middle of the night, without even bidding her parents farewell.

Thereafter, she returned to Israel, her debt becoming a heavy burden upon her. She requested and was granted special permission from the army to work part time to cover her debt. She had to move off the base, and the neighbor who lent her the money thought she was trying to escape from returning the debt. Within a short time she found herself in the middle of the street, assaulted and injured. Someone saw a weeping soldier and referred her to Migdal Ha'Emek.

I could not bear to see the pain of someone who has willfully chosen to join the Jewish Nation and was suffering so extensively because of this choice. I told her what Boaz told Ruth: "May the Lord reward your deeds, and may your reward be full from the Lord G-d of Israel, under Whose wings you have come to take shelter"¹.

My wife invited her in and gave her a warm meal. Meantime, I contacted her officer in an attempt to obtain a clearer picture. When

her officer heard she was in Migdal Ha'Emek her response was "Praise the Lord". It turns out that the part time position she was to take was run by a cult of Buddhists. The officer said "I was sorry to hear that a girl who has made such a tremendous effort to cling to her Judaism should fall into the clutches of such a sect". Thank G-d she did not come under their influence.

I sent a messenger with a sum to repay her debt, and requested that the army extend her leave. She lived at our home for two years, learning at a nearby seminar. She accumulated much knowledge about her Judaism, and absorbed the essence of the Jewish life at my home. She would listen with great intent to the words of Torah I delivered at the Shabbos meals.

During one of the meals I told of Avraham Avinu who left everything. He was commanded by G-d to: "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you".² Why was Avraham's command given in this order? Because it is most difficult to leave one's parents. You are a hero, I told her, as Avraham Avinu, you to have left everything to cleave to the truth.

I read to her the words of the Zohar on these verses from our Parsha: "Hearken to me, you stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness",³ how hard are the hearts of the wicked, who see the paths and the ways of Torah, yet do not observe them. The wicked are stout, as they do not repent and turn back to their master".⁴

On the other hand, the Zohar continues, Avraham desired only to come closer to G-d, and therefore he is called "Avraham *Ohavy*, my beloved". I added and blessed her: Just as Avraham was blessed "and you shall be a blessing"⁵, so shall you too, who follows in his path, merit G-d's blessing and a G-d fearing groom".

Erev Shabbos, Shabbos evening, the atmosphere was serene; the tune of "Shalom Aleichem"⁶ was felt in the air. Knocks were heard at the door. The embarrassed young man standing at the door told an amazing story. He was the son of non-Jewish parents who came to volunteer on a Kibbutz; he had discovered the beauty of Judaism and had converted. He was quickly seated.

Around the Shabbos table and the light of the candles a new Jewish home was established. They built a beautiful Jewish family, and were repaid by G-d for their dedication and deeds.

² Beresheit, 12,1.

³ Yeshayahu, 46, 12.

⁴ Zohar Lech Lechah.

⁵ Beresheit, 12,2.

⁶ Shalom Aleichem is a traditional song sung Friday night at the beginning of Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath, welcoming the angels who accompany a person home on the eve of the Sabbath.

¹ Ruth, 2,12.