



Although Terach permanently settled in Charan. Lot joined Avraham on his journey to Eretz Canaan. It is unclear whether Avraham persuaded Lot to come, perhaps feeling responsible for his nephew after his brother Haran's death, or whether Lot was the one who displayed initiative in following Avraham when he decided to leave Charan and Avraham agreed to allow Lot, his brother-in-law, to come along. On one hand, the Torah tells us, "Avram went as Hashem had spoken to him and Lot went with him" (Beraishis 12:4), which implies Lot independently decided to travel with Avraham. Note that Avraham's wife Sarah is not mentioned. On the other hand, in the next Pasuk it says, "Avram took his wife Sarai and Lot his brother's son..." (ibid 12:5). 'Taking' would seem to imply that Avraham was proactive in persuading Lot to come (see Rashi to Vayikra 8:2 and Bamidbar 16:1). Note that the appositive 'his brother's son' rather than 'his wife's brother' or nothing at all, supporting the idea that Avraham took Lot with a sense of responsibility towards Haran.

There is a slight difference in language between when Lot traveled from Charan to Canaan "Lot went with him" וילך אתו (12:4) and when traveling from Egypt to Canaan "Lot was together with him" ולוט עמו. The Malbim explains that when Lot first went with Avraham, Lot was following Avraham's lead. Avraham being primary and Lot being ancillary. However, after Lot received wealth in Mitzrayim (see Beraishis 13:5), the Malbim explains that Lot felt like an equal to Avraham and no longer as Avraham's ward.

Aside from now being able to 'provide for himself', these feelings may have arisen from Lot receiving his wealth from Paro independent of Avraham. Since Avraham only received animals and servants from Paro when he was assumed to be Sarah's brother, it would follow that Lot, her actual brother, would have received the same. When Paro uncovers that Avraham was Sarah's husband and escorts them out of Mitzrayim, the Torah tells us, "Avraham was laden with livestock, silver and gold" (Beraishis 13:2), presumably receiving gold and silver as reparations from Paro. Lot on the other hand only had "flocks, cattle and tents (for servants)" (Beraishis 13:5).

Once Lot no longer felt that Avraham was his teacher and mentor, but as a peer and equal, this attitude trickled down to his shepherd servants as well. "There was quarreling between the shepherds of Avram's animals and the shepherds of Lot's animals...so Avram said to Lot: Please let there not be strife between me and you and/or between my shepherds and your shepherds, since we are brothers (in-law). Is not all the land before you? Please separate from me. If you go left then I will go right and if you go right then I will go left" (Beraishis 13:7-9). "Lot chose for himself the entire plain of the Yarden and Lot journeyed from Kedem, each man parted from his brother (in-law). Avraham dwelled in Eretz Canaan while Lot dwelled in the cities of the (Jordan) plains and pitched his tents in S'dom" (Beraishis 7:11).

Note that for the first time, Avraham refers to Lot as a 'brother', acknowledging Lot's projected feelings of equality. Rashi explains that the simple understanding of 'Kedem' is that Lot traveled west to S'dom, which means he traveled from Kedem, meaning from the east. Rashi then gives the Midrashic explanation that Lot traveled away from 'Kedem', meaning the Originator of the Universe. Lot no longer wanted to have anything to do with Avram or his G-d. From Rashi's comment, we see the unfortunate result that repeats often in Jewish history where wealth and the desire for more wealth combined with the need for honor and recognition leads a person away from the Chachamim and the path of Hashem.

Rashi cites the Midrash (Beraishis Raba 41:3) on the words "He proceeded on his journeys" (Beraishis 13:3) explaining that when Avraham returned to Canaan from Egypt, he went back to the same motels where he had spent the night on his way down to Egypt. One lesson is that it is Derech Eretz to frequent the same hosts rather than changing hosts (Erchin 16b). Additionally, Avraham needed to pay back those that extended him credit when he traveled down to Egypt. The Chasam Sofer wondered why people would extend credit to a stranger and foreigner like Avram and why the Midrash needed to tell us that a Tzadik like Avraham did in fact pay his debts.

The Chasam Sofer suggests that Avraham must have told the innkeepers that he was the same Avraham who had survived the fiery furnace of Nimrod and that Hashem, who is all powerful and all knowing, had assured him that he would receive great wealth in this land. Some innkeepers may have extended him credit based on this and some may not have. Either way, when Avraham returned from Egypt, he went out of his way to return to each and every innkeeper, both to those that he owed a financial debt, and to those who he owed a moral debt, to make a Kiddush Hashem and proclaim that Hashem had kept his promise. Note the contrast between Avraham, who attributes his wealth to Hashem, rather than to himself or to Paro, as opposed to Lot, who uses his new wealth as a pretext to break away from Avraham and from Hashem.

Perhaps both of our original assumptions are correct, perhaps Lot only wanted to accompany Avraham initially because of all the wealth and fame that Hashem promised Avraham with. He was willing to go along with Avraham's teachings and his G-d, if it meant wealth and honor down the road. Avraham was torn and agreed to take Lot with him out of a sense of responsibility to Haran. Perhaps, Lot would eventually serve Hashem for the right reasons, even if his initial excitement was for the wrong reasons (see Pesachim 50b). Avraham understood that the 'Torah argument' of Lot's shepherds (see Rashi to Beraishis 13:7) came from Lot himself and if Lot was going to openly go against his Rebbe and follow his own Halachic rulings in the presence of his Rebbe, then the only solution was to part ways.

May we all continue to follow our Mesorah and not allow wealth, honor, and other temptations to lead us astray down our own path of self-determination. In this merit may it be His will to bring about the Geulah Shlayma speedily in our days.