

Abraham - the first warrior

"As it happened in the days of Amraphel, King of Shinar, Arioch, King of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, and Tidal, King of Goiim. That these made war on Bera, King of Sodom; Bisha, King of Gomorrah, Shinab, King of Admah, Shemeber, King of Zebolim, and the King of Bela which is Zoar."
(14:1-2)

The War between the four kings and the five kings according to the Medrash Tanchuma was the first real war ever fought by mankind. Chazal say Amraphel was Abraham's old nemesis, Nimrod. He was the grandson of Ham. Nimrod had tried to kill Abraham by throwing him into the fiery furnace in Ur Kasdim (Babylonia/ Iraq).

He had killed Lot's father, Haran in the furnace and now held Lot captive. I could not find sources for why Nimrod had not killed Lot but I presume it was to either entrap Abraham or to extract a very high ransom from Abraham. Using the cover of night, "he with his servants deployed against them at night and struck them; he pursued them as far as Hobah which is to the North of Damascus." (14:15)

This was the first nighttime raid used in warfare. It was employed by none other than the first true warrior, Abraham. It brings to mind the quotation from Golda Meir lamenting war and sending our sons to war.

"We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children," Golda Meir said. "We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children. We will only have peace with the Arabs when they love their children more than they hate us."

Abraham being the epitome of kindness (chesed) was forced to become a warrior in order to save his nephew. War is not the way of a Jew but when push comes to shove, the chesed will be transformed into gevura (might), as it was with Abraham and I daresay with every member of the IDF. The haftorah on Parshat Lech Lecha, taken from Isaiah (40-41), develops this theme further and is one of the reasons this haftorah was selected for Parshat Lech Lecha. "Did you not know? Did you not hear? Hashem is the eternal G-d, the Creator

of the ends of the earth; He does not weary, He does not tire; there is no calculating His understanding. He gives strength to the weary and grants abundant might to the powerless."

"Youths may weary and tire and young men may constantly falter, but those whose hope is Hashem will have renewed strength...(40:28-31)" The Abrabanel points out that Isaiah is speaking about the Jewish People who grow weary waiting for the redemption. Despite the Jewish People's suffering, G-d has injected and infused a special power into the Jewish People to survive and overcome. This is why every morning we quote Isaiah at the outset of our tephilla (Birchat HaShachar) ("He gives strength to the weary"). Despite our being worn out, our age (over 4000 years old) carries us through. With age comes wisdom.

The nations of the world for the most part are relatively new on the scene. "Youths may weary and tire and young men may constantly falter." (40:30) This relates to the nations of the world (Rashi says relates to the Chaldeans who shook off the yoke of the commandments) who will weary and falter. Abraham had many struggles.

Nimrod was always after him. Abraham built the Jewish People who despite 2000 years of persecution and exile have overcome and built a beautiful and flourishing country. Nimrod's descendants are nowhere. As Isaiah says and in conclusion, "those whose hope is in Hashem will have renewed strength; they will grow a wing, like eagles; they will run and not grow tired, they will walk and not grow weary." (40:31)

Shabbat Shalom