

# Children of Avraham: Who Are We Really?

## Beraishit 12:5

(ה) ויקח אברם את-שרי אשתו ואת-לוט בן-אחיו ואת-כל-רכושם אשר רכשו ואת-הנפש אשר-עשו בתורו ויצאו ללכת ארצה כנען

(5) And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had made in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

### Rashi on Bereshit 12:5

"that they 'made' in Haran"-they brought them under the wings of the Shechina (God's presence); Abraham would convert the men and Sarah would convert the women, the Torah writes it as if they 'created' them (that's why it says 'made')...

### Radak on Bereshit 12:5

"that they 'made' in Haran"- ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן- the male and female servants they had acquired in Charan. The word עשו כל את לי עשה 8,17 must be understood as similar to D'varim, "has gotten me this wealth." According to Onkelos, the word עשו refers to the people whom Avram and Lot had succeeded in bringing back to monotheism, i.e. the same religion as that taught by Avram...

**Yevamot 79a** שלשה סימנים יש באומה זו הרחמנים והביישנים וגומלי חסדים... גומלי חסדים דכתיב (בראשית יח, יט) למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו וגו' כל ישיש בו שלשה סימנים הללו ראוי להדבק באומה זו...

Three signs there are for this nation (The Jewish People); [they are] merciful, bashful, and doers of kindness... doers of kindness, as it is written, "Because he (Avraham) commanded his children and his household, etc." [after him that they keep doing the way of Hashem – charity and justice...] Whoever has these three signs is fitting to [be part of] this nation... (And one who doesn't must not be part of it)

(יד) וישמע אברם בני נשבה אחיו ויבק את-חניכיו ולידי ביתו שמנה עשר ושלש מאות וירדף עד-דון: (טו) ויחלק עליהם לילה הוא ועבדיו ויבם וירדפם עד-חובה אשר משמאל לדמשק: (טז) וישב את פל-הרקש וגם את-לוט אחיו ורכשו השיב וגם את-הנשים ואת-העם:

**Bereshit 14:14-16** (14) And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. (15) And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. (16) And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women and the men.

(17) זכור את אשר-עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים: (18) אשר קרף בדרך ויזנב בך פל-הנחשלים אחריך ואתה עיף ויגע ולא ירא אל-יָ: (19) והלה בהניח ה' אל-יָ בך וְלָךְ מְכַל-אֲבִיךָ מִסְבִּיב בְּאַרְצֵי אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ נִחְלָה לְרַשְׁתָּהּ תִּמְחָה אֶת-נֶכְרְ עִמְלֶק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח:

(17) Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came forth out of Egypt; (18) how he met you by the way, and attacked the weak among you, when you were faint and weary; and he feared not God. (19) Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens; you shall not forget.

Be a Jew; be it really and truly; endeavor to attain to the ideal of the true Jew in fulfillment of the law of justice, righteousness, and love, then will you be respected, not in spite of the fact that you are a Jew, but because of it; comprehend yourself as Jew, and disseminate that comprehension by word and deed among your non-Jewish brethren, and you will have no occasion to complain that your Judaism cannot travel incognito.

**-Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, The Nineteen Letters, Letter 15**

## Children of Avraham: Who Are We Really? (Advisor Sheet)

The goal of this session is for the advisor to facilitate the discussion and debate the students' opinions and understanding of seemingly contradictory sources, while slowly leading the conversation in the right direction. Additional sources are provided on this sheet beyond what is on the student sheet for the advisor to add in. Advisors may also feel free to add in their own sources and opinions to the discussion beyond what is provided here.

First explore with the NCSYers the pasuk on Avram "making souls," and the Rashi and Radak. Explain that so many people wanted to follow Avram because of how loving and kind he was, and how he lived to help and do good for people, so they wanted to follow and learn from him.

(ה) וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בְּן־אָחָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנַּפְשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶצָה כְּנַעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶצָה כְּנַעַן:

(5) And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had made in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. (Bereshit 12:5)

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**Add in** the Midrash from Parshat Vayera as an example of Avraham's burning desire to help people even when he's sick: "As he sat in the door of his tent in the heat of the day... Behold, there were three men standing by him; he saw [them] and he ran to meet them (18: 1-2) ...G-d brought a fierce heat so that no guest would drop by and bother [Avraham]. But when He realized that Avraham was pained because he had no guests, He sent three angels in the guise of men.

**Introduce this Gemarrah** as teaching what makes up a Jew at his/her core and how we see that Avraham is the source of our trait as "doers of kindness."

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**The final two psukim** deal with an interesting contrast for discussion – the fact that even though Avraham and his people are the epitome of kindness, sometimes we go to war and destroy our enemies. Learn the psukim with your NCSYers, then discuss if we really are 100% pure kindness or if we have a mean side to us, and is that a good or bad thing? Wrap up with the final source from R' Hirsch.

(ד) וישמע אברהם כי נשבה אחיו ויצא את־הניכריו ולידו ביתו שמנה עשר ושלוש מאות וירדה עד־דון: (ט) ויחלק עליהם ו לגלה הוא ועבדיו ויבם וירדפם עד־חובה אשר משמאל לדמשק: (טז) וישב את פלי־הרקש וגם את־לוט אחיו ורכשו השיב וגם את־הנשים ואת־העמם:

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(17) Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came forth out of Egypt; (18) how he met you by the way, and attacked the weak among you, when you were faint and weary; and he feared not God. (19) Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens; you shall not forget.

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