



Parting of the Ways

Avraham and Lot decide to part company. One will go to the right, the other to the left.

The question is why their separation takes place when their shepherds have had a quarrel. Surely it is the two principals, Avraham and Lot, who should work out the situation: why let the servants, the shepherds, necessitate the decisions?

It is out of character for Avraham not to be tolerant and patient, even if Lot irks him.

The problem is that each group of shepherds backs their own employer. Lot has nasty, grasping servants for whom Avraham and his servants need to be put down.

Avraham's own workers are alarmed and they feel that the Lot brigade is unfair and unappreciative. Each group of servants defends their own employers.

With servants like these, it is best for Avraham and Lot to separate.

A GREAT NATION

B'reishit 12:2, the beginning of the sidra, promises that God will make us a great nation.

"Great" can have many meanings. Here, it cannot denote great in numbers, since the Torah itself says that Israel will be one of the smaller nations on earth.

"Great" cannot indicate fame or status, as if we had the right to advertise and show off our prestige, power and significance: that would be mere exhibitionism.

The best interpretation of the adjective great is ethical - a nation that strives for moral quality and ethical excellence.

Is this really true of the Land or People of Israel?

Maybe not (yet) - but we have a vision, a conscience, a dream, and we constantly do our best to be worthy of it.

Edmond Fleg wrote a book titled "The Land where God Dwells", and that title encapsulates our greatness as the land where the people endeavour to live an upright life that accords with the Divine ethical call.