



Sermon Sparks
Parashat Lekh Lekha
By Rabbi Rafi Rank

A fugitive came to Abram the Hebrew (*haivri*)
who dwelt by Mamre the Amorite's terebinths...([Genesis 14:13](#))

The rabbis were curious as to why Abram was referred to as “the Hebrew.” In Hebrew, the term refers to “a side” like the side of a river or the side of a valley. In fact, the Sages thought Abram was “the Hebrew” because he was from “the other side” of the Euphrates. Rabbi Yehudah, however, claimed that Abram was a Hebrew because the entire world was on one side, the side of idolatry, and Abram stood on the opposite side, alone ([Genesis Rabbah 42:8](#)).

What may be obvious to us is clearly not obvious to others. That we may be outnumbered does not constitute a flaw in our thinking or arguments. If the many stand on one side, it will take moral courage to stand on the other. Our ancestor, Abraham, stood boldly against idolatry. So do we, for we stand opposed to organizations, ideas, and tactics that, like idolatry, achieve nothing, don't work, and cannot bring about salvation—for anyone. We are truly Abraham and Sarah's children.

Some have said that it all feels like the 1930's, the years of rampant antisemitism. It does, but there's a difference. Back then, we knew how bad things were, we just didn't know how bad things could get. Today, we know. We know that the world failed us back then, and so far, the lectures Israel has been subject to have not been encouraging. Some of us are scared, but some of us are really angry. For the angry among us, let's channel that anger and speak reasoned truth to power. If we are the only one in the room or the home or the club or the field or the theater or the gym or the office or the company that can speak the moral truth, the truth is—



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No one gets to murder Jewish babies.

No one gets to rape Jewish women.

No one gets to burn Jewish families alive.

No one gets to kidnap and hold hostage the elderly or toddlers or anyone else for that matter.

And no one who rationalizes this barbarism is qualified to give us any morality lectures.

Even if we are the only one speaking the truth, be clear and be firm, and Abraham our Father, the idol smasher, the Hebrew, will surely bless us from Heaven.

—

Dedicated to Omer Neutra

one of Midway Jewish Center's finest,

a happy, loving, smart, principled, courageous, moral, young man,

now held hostage by Hamas.