



Parshat HaShavuah

וַיֵּרָא

Vayeira

י"ח חשוון תשע"ג

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חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting
6:19
S"Z Kriat Shema
9:42

Sunset
6:37
Motzei
Shabbat
7:13



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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PASS IT ON
RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

In the middle of relating the destruction of Sodom and Amora, the pasuk mentions that Hashem remembers Avraham and saves Lot. Rashi questions why the pasuk has to mention Avraham at all? What does Avraham have to do with Lot being saved?

Rashi answers that Hashem remembers what Lot did for Avraham when they went to Egypt. When Avraham leads his family down to Egypt, he is afraid that if Pharoah knows that Sarah is his wife, Pharoah will kill him in order to take Sarah for himself. To prevent this, Avraham says that Sarah is his sister. Lot, who sees this, could have told Pharoah the truth but does not because he has compassion for Avraham. Therefore Hashem has compassion on Lot and saves him.

Many commentaries wonder why Hashem had to find such a relatively small kindness when Lot is credited with a much larger kindness. When Lot is hosting the visitors who come to warn him about the destruction of the city, the people of Sodom come to Lot's house and ask him to hand over his guests. Risking his life, Lot refuses. Lot even offers to give the people his two daughters to appease them. So Lot's hospitality should make him worthy of salvation, much more so than simply not revealing Avraham's deception.

While one could suggest that Lot's hospitality is corrupt and therefore not worthy of being rewarded, Rav Eliyahu Dessler offers a different possibility in his work *Strive for Truth*. He suggests that Lot could not receive reward for his kindness toward his visitors because Lot learns his hospitality from Avraham, who is the quintessential host.

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CONSIDER ALL OPTIONS

CHAIM BITTERMAN ('13)

This week's parsha includes the story of Avraham begging Hashem not to destroy Sodom. The Torah says, "*Vayigash Avraham*" – "And Avraham comes forward," in order to reason with Hashem. According to the Bereishit Rabbah, the word *vayigash* is used in three different contexts in the Torah: engaging in battle or debate, appeasement, and prayer.

When Avraham approaches Hashem in the hopes of saving Sodom from complete destruction, he has all three of these pillars in mind. While pleading for Sodom, Avraham suggests that perhaps there are 50 righteous people that would merit saving the city, and it would be a chillul Hashem if Hashem does not save it in their honor.

The question is obvious: Would Hashem really kill any righteous people along with the wicked? Surely not – of course Avraham knew this, so what was his argument? Avraham was not referring to actual righteous people, but rather to people who act as if they are righteous but are truly wicked. For Hashem, it is easy to see that these people are wicked and deserve to be destroyed, but to onlookers they may be perceived as truly righteous. To those onlookers who are unaware of the people's wicked status, it would seem to be a chilul Hashem that He is killing righteous people. Therefore, Avraham wants to make sure that nobody would even consider thinking badly of Hashem, and therefore pleads with Hashem to ensure that there will be no misunderstandings.

From this we learn that we too must always consider how our actions may be perceived by others. While we may believe that others understand or share our point of view, we must always try to see our actions from every perspective.

GRAB IT WHILE YOU STILL CAN

MICHALI MAZOR ('15)

In this week's parsha we read the story of Sodom, its annihilation, and Lot's last minute escape. The pasuk relates that after failing to convince his relatives to leave Sodom, Lot is told by the angels "*קוּמוּ וְצֵאוּ מִן הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי מִשְׁחִית ה' אֶת הָעִיר*" – "Get up and leave this place, for Hashem is about to destroy the city" (19:14).

Hashem presents Lot with the opportunity to escape death and save himself during the destruction of Sodom. However, being Avraham's nephew does not merit the superior treatment experienced by his uncle. One can easily observe a difference between the miracle that saves Lot and Hashem's handling of his ardent servant, Avraham. Avraham, whose life is full of challenges and dangerous altercations – from dealing with idol worshippers to his battle with the kings surrounding Canaan – merits Hashem's intervention on his behalf with undisputable conspicuous miracles. But for Lot, who is not as righteous, Hashem does not produce a miracle specifically for him; rather, He grants Lot an opportunity to save himself.

Lot dwells among the wicked and corrupt people of Sodom and is adversely influenced by his surroundings. Still, Lot must have done something to merit his escape from death. Indeed, Hashem remembers Lot's kindness toward Avraham. Lot saves Avraham's life by keeping his uncle's identity a secret during their travels to Egypt, when Avraham pretends to be Sarah's brother. This one kind deed by Lot, this one act of compassion toward his uncle, earns Lot Hashem's mercy.

Continued page 3





Mazor continued

A great lesson can be learned from the above. We see the value of one mitzvah, one tefillah, or one good deed. In Lot's case, one act of kindness saves his life despite later adoption of the depraved ways of the Sodomites.

Nowadays we are in exile from the Land of Israel and are strongly influenced by a society that values materialism and instant gratification over Torah ideals and spirituality. Yet, we still have opportunities to earn credits that we may need when we face adversity. May we all grab as many opportunities to fill our coffers with mitzvot and good deeds!

LOVE YOU LIKE A BROTHER

MOSHE WEISS ('15)

“And Avraham said: My masters, if I find favor in your eyes, please do not turn away from your servant” (Bereishit 18:3). This proclamation occurs during Avraham's recovery from his brit milah. According to the text, Avraham is talking to his three guests, requesting that they indulge in his hospitality before they continue on their journey.

Rashi, however, suggests a different interpretation. He states that Avraham is addressing Hashem when he voices this plea. He explains that Avraham is begging Hashem to put His conversation with Avraham on hold while Avraham tended to the needs of his three guests. The gemara states that: “Offering hospitality to travelers is greater than receiving the Divine Presence” (Masechet Shabbat). Avraham exemplifies this quality when he departs from the presence of Hashem to serve his guests.

One could ask: How could Avraham have known that hospitality is greater than Hashem's presence? The Slonimer Rebbe answers this question with a story. A man and his son are put up in two separate homes for the night, both owned by the father's friends. The father is pampered and given the choicest of everything: A California king bed with a Tempur—pedic mattress, the finest cuts of meat grilled to perfection, accompanied by a glass of red wine of the finest vintage. His every need is met.

The son is treated in the exact same manner. Which host earns more merit from these hospitable acts? The host who housed the son! While the father's host treated his own friend with generosity and kindness, the other host waited upon the son, a person whom he'd never met, simply because he was his friend's son.

This analogy explains Avraham's situation. Hashem is visiting Avraham because of Avraham's recent circumcision. Hashem has Avraham's full attention. But when Avraham is offered the opportunity to help Hashem's children, his fellow men, he implores Hashem to “not pass away from [His] servant.” This demonstrates Avraham's great love of kindness for his brethren, a trait which we should all strive to exemplify.



CHESED – A WAY OF LIFE

ARIELLA LEN ('13)

Our parsha begins with Avraham Avinu sitting at the entrance of his tent. Three travelers come along and Avraham immediately treats these three guests with overwhelming hospitality. Avraham invites them into his home, and the words “run” and “quick” are repeated over and over as Avraham hurries to attend to the needs of his guests. He makes sure that all the food is being prepared to perfection; he acts as a waiter serving their food; he accompanies them on their way out, not letting them leave without an escort.

Avraham is the epitome of chesed. As the Rambam explains, “The reward for escorting a visitor from one’s home is the greatest of all rewards for hospitality. This is a law set in place by Avraham Avinu and the charitable ways that he made his lifestyle. He would give wayfarers food and drink and would escort them on their way” (Mishna Torah Hilchot Avel 14:2).

Avraham teaches his children to do what is right. He establishes a family tradition of chesed that needs teaching, instruction, and growth. It does not come naturally. We are part of the legacy of Avraham Avinu. We should appreciate the essential role of chesed. The only way to pass on this tradition is to make our homes a welcoming place, a tent of Avraham. In Pirkei Avot (1:5), Rabbi Yosef ben Yochanan encourages us to open our homes at all times. Chesed is not just a trait done by individuals; it must become an integral part of a family and community. By doing so, we ensure that our children will cherish this legacy and continue it on forever.

Rabbi Horowitz continued

Lot grows up in Avraham's house and witnesses firsthand Avraham's tremendous kindness to others. Lot continues to do chesed even after moving to Sodom because he learns it from Avraham, and therefore while Lot still receives some reward, the true reward for Lot's actions is attributed to Avraham. That is why Hashem has to find a more worthy action in order to save Lot.

Rav Dessler's answer is very powerful. We are judged by what we do with what we are given, an idea which is both daunting and exciting. While we may not be licensed to take full credit for the actions we do simply because we were raised to do them, we are given an incredible responsibility. Any decision we make about how to live our lives that we then pass on to our children is now credited to our merit forever. Every choice we make has an awesome weight to it. We have the ability to put our stamp on our family's future.

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