



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"ל

A Lesson in Faith

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

"And Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains Mamre..." (18:1)

Parshas Vayeira begins with Hashem revealing Himself to Avraham as the latter was recuperating from his recent Bris Milah. The Torah goes out of its way to tell us that Avraham was in the plains of Mamre. Rashi explains that Mamre merited that Hashem appear to Avraham in his land because he gave Avraham advice regarding the Bris Milah. But what advice would Avraham have needed regarding the Bris Milah?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein posits that Avraham's dilemma was not whether or not to do the Bris Milah, but rather whether to do the Bris Milah privately or publicly. Avraham's life work was connecting with people and influencing them to serve Hashem. Avraham reasoned that if he performed the procedure publicly, people would begin to consider him differently, thus making it more difficult for him to connect with the public. Mamre countered, however, that the greatest lesson that Avraham could teach would be to show everyone how he followed Hashem's command without question, in spite of the great personal sacrifice and despite the Mitzvah lacking any obvious logical reason behind it. Ultimately, Avraham decided that Mamre was correct, and so Mamre is credited for his part in contributing to this vital lesson.

In the immediate, Avraham was teaching a lesson to the people of his generation, but it stands to reason that he had us, his descendants, in mind at least as much. May we all strive to be inspired by our Parsha to throw our lot in with Hashem and follow Him and His Mitzvos wherever they may lead us.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

"I (Hashem) will descend and see: If they (Sodom) act in accordance with the outcry that has come to Me..." (18:21)

Hashem Who sits on high, but lowers Himself to see what happens on heaven and earth (Tehillim 113:6).

Hashem always sees what we are doing here on earth – why does He need to descend to see Sodom?

Parsha Riddle

One who prays on behalf of someone else, and he needs that very same thing, will be answered first. (Bava Kama 92a)

Where do we see an application of this in this week's parsha?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Who was the father of Eliezer, the servant of Avraham?

Answer: Cham (according to Bereishis Raba 60:7 that Eliezer was Canaan).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parshas Vayeira relates Hashem's destruction of Sodom, in the course of which it states (19:26):

His [Lot's] wife peered behind him and she became (*va-tehi*) a pillar of salt.

The traditional interpretation of this verse understands the word "*va-tehi*" to refer to Lot's wife, who was miraculously transformed into a pillar of salt (*Targum Yerushalmi, Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* end of ch. 25). (R. David Luria to *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* concedes that no such pillar is visible today, and he explains that it was washed away by a Dead Sea tsunami caused by an earthquake.)

The Ralbag, however, understands "*va-tehi*" to refer to the land: the entire region was transformed into salt by the Divine destruction, and Lot's wife was simply caught up in the maelstrom and killed (and cf. Chizkuni). Similarly, R. Yosef Bechor Shor understands that Lot's wife was not actually transformed into salt, but merely completely covered with salt to the point that she appeared to be a mere mound of salt rather than a woman.

There are at least two Talmudic discussions of *halachos* involving Lot's wife. The Talmud (*Berachos* 54b) states that one recites the blessing of "Blessed ... the true Judge" upon seeing Lot's wife, due to the tragic nature of her fate. This certainly suggests that the Talmud understood that Lot's wife actually turned into a pillar of salt, or at least ended up entombed inside a mound of salt as per Bechor Shor.

The Talmud additionally states that "one who sees" Lot himself recites the blessing "Blessed ... Who remembers the righteous." Some understand this to refer to one who sees Lot's grave, while others apparently understand it to mean that one who sees Lot's wife recites two blessings: "Blessed ... the true Judge" upon her, and "Blessed ... Who remembers the righteous" upon him (*Tur* and *Beis Yosef OC* 218).

Elsewhere, the Talmud (*Niddah* 70b) relates that the sages of Alexandria asked R. Yehoshua whether the wife of Lot transmits ritual impurity as a corpse. He replied: "A corpse imparts ritual impurity, but a pillar of salt does not impart ritual impurity." This passage indicates that the Talmud understands that Lot's wife was actually transformed into salt. (I am indebted to my friend R. Daniel Z. Feldman for bringing this point to my attention.)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I am not Talmud Bavli.
2. I was turned upside down.
3. I was home to cruelty.
4. I was one of five.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. My parents' reaction caused my name.
2. I was the first for the eighth.
3. Many celebrated my birth.
4. I was the second of three.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Lot (I am not many, I confused the generations, I chose wickedness, My uncle was a father of nations.)

#2 Avraham's Ten Tests (We tested, We begin with fire (according to some), We end in a bind (according to some), Ten for Ten.)

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