

DAF TSAFON

16 November 2019

18 Cheshvan 5779

Parasha Vayeira

ArtScroll 78 Hertz 63



In this week's parasha, Vayeira, we read of the fascinating negotiations between Hashem and Avraham regarding the people of Sodom. As with Noah, Hashem appears before Avraham and reveals to him that he will destroy Sodom because of its wickedness. Avraham is unwilling to accept this and begins to argue with Hashem. Maybe there are fifty righteous people in the city? He suggests, maybe 45? 40? 30? 20? 10? In each case Hashem tells him, no, there aren't.

This story is indeed complex and raises a number of questions about prayer. What is prayer? In essence, is prayer not a conversation with Hashem? When we begin the Amidah, we always start with the declaration of the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I am speaking to the same God. And how did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob speak to God? We see from this week's parasha that Abraham was willing and indeed was permitted to argue with God. God wants us to engage with Him and to argue why things should be different. Is that not what we do when we ask Hashem to heal the sick? Or bring peace?

This is the first message of this story.

I heard a second understanding of the story from one of the speakers at this year's Yeshiva University Conference in Orlando. Professor Nechama Price has a beautiful insight into this story and negotiation. As we are aware from the biblical narrative from last week, Avraham has a nephew, Lot, who settles in Sodom. Lot had grown up in the home of Avraham and had for many years been his primary disciple. The commentaries even mention that Lot worked with Avraham in spreading the teachings of monotheism in the world.

When Lot leaves his uncle and settles in Sodom, he too will follow the practice of Avraham and welcome guests as we indeed see in our parasha.

Lot continues the job of bringing people closer to the Avrahamic code and belief of ethical monotheism.

Avraham is so convinced that this is what Lot is doing that when Hashem says He is going to destroy Sodom, Avraham says, you can't. Lot, surely there must be fifty righteous people in the city? Okay 45? 40 etc. Avraham cannot accept that Lot would have failed to inspire the people of Sodom. And yet this indeed is the case. Lot himself is saved but he fails to save the people of his town as Noah had failed in his time.

What went wrong? The commentators are divided in this. One interesting approach is offered by Rashi, who quotes the midrash. Why was Lot's wife turned to salt? Because she had gone around town asking for salt for her guests. When the neighbours asked why she needed the salt she mocked Lot, that he has a silly custom of welcoming in guests. This leads to a rabble gathering outside their home.

The Midrash is highlighting the following important message. That, when a husband and wife are on the same page so to speak, then they are able to educate their children and influence positively their society. However, if they are not, no matter if you are a student of Avraham, you cannot succeed.

Shabbat Shalom

Haftarah

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

ArtScroll 1134 Hertz 76

II Kings IV, I-37

Elisha, the prophet, miraculously saves a poor widow's two children from being sold for her debts. From the single vessel of oil she possesses she is able to fill numerous jars with its contents and repay her creditors.

The Shunammite woman yearns for a son. Elisha repays her hospitality by the promise of an heir in a year's time. (paralleled by the similar promise made to Sarah). The child is born and when a little older suffers from sunstroke and is seemingly dead. Elisha, responding to the mother's plea of anguish, comes to the child and revives him.

Our congregation acknowledges the following
yahrzeit anniversaries and wishes long life to those
who are commemorating a yahrzeit
during the coming week.

מזל טוב

Wedding anniversaries

Marianne and Simon Erder
Rebecca and Clifford Flax
Mervyn and Eda Millner
Maurie and Adrienne Swartz
Otto and Dolly Zeckendorf

מזל טוב

Bar Mitzvah anniversaries

Trevor Bulkin
Terry Davis
Ron Klinger
Daniel Stitz
Jordan Tofler

חיים ארוכים

Efraim Ernesto Alhassid	father of Asher Alhassid
Betty Challis	mother of Susan Bruck
Vera Franklin	mother of Alan Franklin
Moselle Isaac	mother of Myrtle Abeshouse
Percy Kaplan	father of Beulah Blieden
Margit Katz	grandmother of Robert Katz
Maja Klinger	grandmother of Ron Klinger
Hyman Lenn	father-in-law of Robyn Lenn OAM
Ernest Marx	father of Ian Marx
Elma Mendelsohn	grandmother of Ken Wolfsohn
Leonie Meth	mother-in-law of Barbara Meth
Abraham Milch	father-in-law of Ann Milch and Sharon Milch
Yitzchak Misrachi	father of Shavtay Misrachi
Rudolf Mosberg	grandfather of Ron Klinger
Aron Shapiro	father of Helen Layman, grandfather of Naomi Shacham
Jacob Slucki	father of Miriam Gelbart
Emanuel White	father of Susan Moses