

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### WHERE ANGELS TREAD

**“And he saw and behold three men were standing over him.” (18:2)**

The three ‘men’ who stood over Avraham were incorporeal spiritual messengers (angels). Rashi tells us that one angel was to tell Sarah that she would conceive and give birth within the year; one was to overturn Sodom and destroy it; and one was to heal Avraham after the *bris mila*.

Why couldn’t one angel have done all this? Is this all too much work for the average angel?

Rashi tells us the reason is because an angel cannot perform two functions. *However, in the very next line, Rashi also tells us that after healing Avraham, the angel Raphael went on to rescue Lot from Sodom!*

If one angel cannot perform two functions, **why wasn’t a second angel dispatched to rescue Lot?**

To answer this puzzle let us understand why it was that Lot was rescued from Sodom in the first place:

#### THE LINEAGE OF KING DAVID

Lot’s most important descendant was King David, but David’s very worthiness to be king was called into question because he was descended from Ruth the Moavite.

The Moavites were descendants of Lot. They knew that the

Jewish People were descended from Avraham. And yet, at the time of the Exodus from Egypt they failed to greet the Jewish People with bread and water. This behavior was symptomatic of their chronic ingratitude, and thus the Moavites were forbidden to marry into the Jewish People.

However, it was subsequently clarified that only *male* Moavites were forbidden to marry in. The

*“The celestial court follows the earthly court. What happens in this world determines the halacha in the higher worlds.”*

women were permitted to enter the ranks of Israel. The reason being that *“All the honor of the daughter of the king is inwardness”* — i.e., only men are expected to go out to greet strangers; however, a woman — a daughter of the King — is not expected to rush out and greet passers-by. Thus, Ruth and her offspring — King David — were deemed free of the defect of ingratitude, and thus David could subsequently become King of Israel.

#### IN THE HEAVENS ABOVE, AND ON THE EARTH BENEATH

The celestial court follows the

earthly court. What happens in this world determines the halacha in the higher worlds.

At the time that the three angels were sent to Avraham, a crucial dialogue, a dialogue which was to affect the entire history of the Jewish People, had not yet taken place: When the angels came to Avraham they said *“Where is Sarah, your wife?”* To which Avraham replied *“Behold — in the tent!”* Rashi comments on why Sarah was in the tent — *“She was private and modest.”*

Only at the moment when Avraham said *“Behold — in the tent!”* was it halachically established that a woman is not expected to go out to greet strangers.

Now we can understand why only three angels were sent: At the time when the angels were dispatched, it was not yet clear whether Lot would have the merit to be saved from Sodom. For Lot’s merit was that he was the progenitor of Ruth and David. However, David was validated only by the principle that a woman isn’t obliged to go out to greet strangers.

Thus only when Avraham answered *“Behold — in the tent!”* was the halacha clarified that the female Moavites were permitted to marry into the Jewish People, and thus it became necessary for an angel to save Lot, the progenitor of King David.

• *Chidushei HaRim in Mayana shel Torah*

*continued on page four*

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

**T**hree days after performing *Bris Mila* on himself, *Avraham Avinu* is visited by Hashem. When three angels appear in human form, Avraham rushes to show them hospitality by bringing them into his tent, despite this being the most painful time after the operation. Sarah laughs when she hears from them that she will give birth to a son next year. Hashem reveals to Avraham that He will destroy Sodom, and Avraham pleads for Sodom to be spared. Hashem agrees that if there are fifty righteous men in Sodom, He will not destroy it. Avraham manages to 'bargain' Hashem down to ten righteous men. However, not even ten can be found. Lot, his wife and two daughters are rescued just before sulfur and fire rain down on Sodom and Amora. Lot's wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot's daughters fear that, as a result of the destruction, there will be no husbands for them. They decide to get their father drunk, and through him perpetuate the human race. From the elder daughter, Moav is born, and from the younger, Ammon. Avraham moves to Gerar, where Avimelech abducts Sarah. After Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream, he releases Sarah and appeases Avraham. As

promised, a son, Yitzchak, is born to Sarah and Avraham. At Hashem's command, on the eighth day after the birth, Avraham circumcises him. Avraham makes a feast the day Yitzchak is weaned. Sarah tells Avraham to banish Hagar and her son Yishmael because she sees in him signs of degeneracy. Avraham is distressed at the prospect of banishing his son, but Hashem tells him to listen to whatever Sarah tells him to do. After nearly dying of thirst in the desert, Yishmael is rescued by an angel, and Hashem promises that he will be the progenitor of a mighty nation. Avimelech enters into an alliance with Avraham when he sees that Hashem is with him. In a tenth and final test, Hashem instructs Avraham to take Yitzchak, who is now 37, to offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham does this, in spite of ostensibly aborting Jewish nationhood, and contradicting his life-long preaching against human sacrifice. At the last moment, Hashem sends an angel to stop Avraham. Because of his unquestioning obedience, Hashem now promises Avraham that even if the Jewish People sin, they will never be completely dominated by their foes. The Parsha ends with genealogy and the birth of Rivka.

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## SING My SOUL INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

### YOM ZEH MECHUBAD

*"THIS IS THE MOST PRECIOUS OF DAYS..."*

*"Six days shall you do your work... For He created all in six days..."*

In the Torah passage upon which this phrase is based (*Shmos 35:2*) the expression is: "Six days shall your work be done." The significance of this phrasing is understood in the light of what our Sages say (*Mesechta Berachos 35*): "When Jews do the will of Hashem their work is done for them by others." Hashem

does not require our efforts. If we are deserving, He will see that our work is done for us. The reminder is that He needed no help from us in the creation that took place in the first six days of history. He will likewise see to it that when we do His will, all our needs will be taken care of without our efforts.

לע"נ  
מרת פייגא בת ר' יששכר דוב הכהן ע"ה

לע"נ  
מרת יוטא רחל בת ר' יוסף חיים ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

# PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did Hashem appear to Avraham after the Bris Mila?
2. Why was Avraham sitting at the entrance to his tent?
3. What were the missions of the three angels?
4. Why did Avraham enjoin the guests to wash the dust off their feet?
5. Why did Avraham ask Yishmael to prepare the food for the guests?
6. The angels asked Avraham where Sarah was. Why?
7. When Hashem related Sarah's thoughts to Avraham, He did not relate them precisely. Why?
8. What "cry" from Sodom came before Hashem?
9. How many angels went to Sodom?
10. Why was Lot sitting at the gate of Sodom?
11. Lot served the angels *matzos*. Why?
12. Why did Lot delay when he left Sodom?
13. Why were Lot and his family not permitted to look back at Sodom?
14. Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Why was she punished in this particular way?
15. In what merit did Hashem save Lot?
16. Why did Avraham relocate after the destruction of Sodom?
17. Why did Avimelech give gifts to Avraham?
18. Why was Avraham told to listen to Sarah?
19. Why did Hashem listen to the prayer of Yishmael and not to that of Hagar?
20. Who accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak to the *Akeidah* (binding)?

## BONUS QUESTION?

Lot said to the angel "Behold, this city is nearby...let me escape there..." The angel responded, "Behold, I will grant your request in this matter, that I not destroy the city about which you have spoken (19:20,21)." It seems that Lot's prayer saved the city of *Tzo'ar*, while Avraham's prayer, which included *Tzo'ar*, was ineffective. How can this be?

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Avraham had received a command to sacrifice Yitzchak directly from Hashem. Yitzchak had only heard it from his father. Yet, "they went both of them together (22:6)" with the same zeal and determination.

• Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

## HAFTORAH: MELACHIM II 3:1-37

### RIGHTS AND DUTIES

It was not so long ago that the Torah was the only system in which a creditor has absolutely no rights over the physical person of a debtor. The spirit of the Torah insures a poor debtor against the unfeeling or inconsiderate use of a lien on the debtor's chattel. And even where the protection of the creditor stops, the obligation on the debtor to love his fellow Jew — the debtor — begins. For we are all the children of Avraham and Sarah. Such is the *tzedaka* of Avraham in contrast to the Sodomite insistence on the very last penny which can be wrung out through litigation.

### INSPIRATION - THE BREATH OF LIFE

Just as in the Parsha the angels promise Sarah that she will conceive and give birth to a child, similarly in the Haftorah the prophet Elisha promises a barren Shunamite woman that she will give birth.

The child (later to become the Prophet Yona) dies in his youth, and is resurrected by Elisha who revives him by placing himself on the lifeless child, implanting his own soul into the boy.

This is a lesson for all teachers: One has to 'inspire'

— to breathe one's own life into his pupils and to give over of one's own soul. Nothing less than this will do.

### WOMEN OF KINDNESS

Just as Avraham and Sarah were both old and yet Hashem gave them a child, similarly in this week's Haftorah, Hashem grants the Shunamite woman and her husband a child.

Why then does the Haftorah begin with an entirely different miracle, that of the miraculous oil filling pitcher after pitcher until the penniless widow of the prophet Ovadia became rich? What is the connection between these three women?

The answer is that they all excelled in *chesed* (kindness) to others. To this day Sarah is a role-model for the Jewish woman. Her life was an unceasing labor of welcoming guests and teaching them about Hashem. Ovadia's widow was also a heroine of *chesed* as depicted in the Haftorah, and the same was true of the Shunamite woman. All three cast the mold, the archetype of the Jewish woman for all generations.

• Adapted from R' Shimshon Rafael Hirsch and The Midrash Says

## WEEKLY DAF

### CHULLIN - 68-74

#### THE PERILS OF PURITY

May the pregnant wife of a *kohen* enter a hospital or any building where there is a dead person, because she is not bound by the prohibition against male *kohanim* coming in contact with the dead; or must she be concerned that she is causing her unborn child — who may be a male — to contract impurity?

One reason why it is permissible for her to do so is the rule stated by the Sage Rabba concerning two rings which have been swallowed by a man, one of them pure and the other impure. Even though the two touch, the state of impurity is not communicated, because an object which is absorbed inside another can neither affect nor be affected in regard to impurity. The unborn child inside his mother, even if he is a male, is therefore impervious to impurity.

Another reason is put forward by one of the early commentaries. There are two separate doubts pertaining to the unborn child contracting impurity. First of all, there is no certainty that the fetus is capable of surviving. Even if it does, there is no certainty that it is a male. In any

such case of “double doubt” a lenient course may be adopted.

But why does this commentary bother to formulate such a reason when there is one so readily available from the Talmud?

Many ingenious explanations have been offered. The simplest one is that the case which that commentary was discussing concerned a woman who wishes not to just **enter** a building where a dead person is, but to actually **give birth there**. The Talmud’s point about an absorbed object would no longer be applicable, but the “double doubt” reason would still be relevant.

• *Chullin 71b*

#### GARLIC-SKIN MODESTY

The extraordinary modesty of the Talmudic Sages finds interesting expression in the dialogue between Rabbi Yonasan and the Sage Shimon ben Azzai concerning a Torah source for the impurity of a carcass of a kosher beast which was not slaughtered.

After Rabbi Yonasan refuted Ben Azzai’s attempt to name a source, the latter, aware of his challenger’s close relation to the sage Rabbi Yishmael, asked him: “What does

Yishmael say about this matter?”

Upon hearing the source quoted in the name of that great sage, Ben Azzai exclaimed: “What a loss of you, Ben Azzai, that you did not study by Rabbi Yishmael!”

To appreciate the significance of this statement we must refer to another statement of this brilliant scholar who passed away so young that he had not even received his *semicha*, and is therefore not referred to as Rabbi. Ben Azzai once declared (*Mesechta Bechoros 58a*): “All the scholars of Israel, with the exception of one, are to me like the skin of garlic.”

The comparison to garlic skin rather than anything else has thus been explained: The garlic pulp is much sharper than the skin, but without this outer layer it cannot survive. Ben Azzai was aware that he was sharper in his logic than almost all his contemporaries, but he also realized that it was their superior knowledge which preserved his sharpness, the same way as the garlic skin preserves the sharpness of the garlic. This may very well have been the regret that Ben Azzai expressed in not having had the opportunity to learn from Rabbi Yishmael.

• *Chullin 70b*

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

continued from page one

### THE THIRD MAN

**“And he saw and behold three men were standing over him. He perceived, so he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent...” (18:2)**

Who were these three men standing over Avraham?

On a mystical level, Avraham perceived that these three were none other than himself, his son Yitzchak and his grandson Yaakov.

Avraham represents kindness and mercy — *rachmanus*. At that time, Avraham was recovering from the *bris mila* that he had performed on himself

three days previously: It is on the sick that mercy descends.

In spite of his pain, he steeled himself and ran to greet his guests. This characteristic of self-domination — *gevurah* — Avraham bequeathed to his son Yitzchak.

And wherever there is to be found the characteristics of Avraham and Yitzchak, there is also to be found their synthesis, Yaakov — to complete the three who stand.

• *Kedushas Levi*

### BAD COMPANY

**“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar (Yishmael)...playing.” (21:9)**

Kid’s play. Innocent rough and tumble. The nursery is the cradle of the developing personality. Lessons learned over “Lego” are for life.

Avraham saw that Yitzchak’s future character was in danger merely by playing with his brother Yishmael. And although Avraham was the pillar of kindness, when he recognized the threat to his son, he banished Yishmael and Hagar to the desert with no more than some bread and water.

It may be “only a game,” but playing with bad company is like playing with fire.

• *Heard from Michael Treblow*

## RAINDROPS KEEP FALLING ON YOUR SUCCAH

Eliyahu Shear <alshear@global.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Talmud says rain during Succot is considered a curse. I am aware of the analogy of the servant and his master asking for a jug of water etc. My question is this: The fact that it rains on Succot — is this considered a curse no matter which country one lives in, or does it only apply in Israel, being that at that time it is NOT yet the rainy season?

Dear Eliyahu,

Yes, rain during Succot is not a good 'omen.' The Sages compare it to a servant who comes to pour a drink for his master, but instead of accepting the cup, the master splashes water in the servant's face. Likewise, we desire to perform the mitzva of sitting in the succah, but instead, Hashem pours water on our heads.

So if it rains in Cleveland or Miami, is that a bad omen during Succot? It normally rains in those places during Succot. Or is it a bad omen only in Israel, where rain is highly unusual at that time of year? (I've lived in Israel seven years and remember only once feeling a few drops of rain on Succot.)

Logically, the bad omen should apply only in a land where it's not yet the rainy season. This would include not only Israel, but the whole Middle East and anywhere that isn't yet the rainy season.

However Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein writes that the 'bad omen' applies **only in Israel**. This can be explained as follows:

The mitzvot were chiefly intended for the Land of Israel. Even mitzvot having no obvious connection to the land — mitzvot such as Shabbat and Kashrut — were intended mainly for performance in Israel. Although mitzvot certainly apply wherever you are; nevertheless, the mitzvot are "laws of the G-d of the Land" and are performed ideally in 'The Land.'

Hence, the analogy of the servant and the master can be seen as applying specifically to Israel.

Sources:

- Aruch Hashulchan 639:20
- Ramban, Leviticus 18:25

thought of as proof that delivery of the letter has been paid for. If so, reusing a stamp is tricking the Postal Service into thinking the letter has been paid for, which in fact is not the case. This would be called 'genevat daat'— fraud — something that's certainly forbidden.

You suggested that perhaps the stamp could be used for sending money to charity. Sorry, but giving charity is not a proper way to launder stolen money.

I once heard this idea expressed by my teacher, Rabbi Shmuel Feivelson, *shlita*. He asked, "Why does the section of the Torah dealing with monetary laws (*Parshat Mishpatim*) precede the commandment to donate to the building of the Holy Sanctuary (*Parshat Terumah*)? Because, before you donate money to charity, you have to make sure it's rightfully yours."

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 348:2.

## POST POST

[Name withheld] wrote via the Internet:

*Is it permissible to re-use U. S. postage stamps that came through un-cancelled? What if the use is for sending charity?*

Dear [Name Withheld],

A postage stamp can be

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

*If a tree falls in a forest and there's nobody around to hear it, does it make a noise?*

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# PARSHA Q&A!

## Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

- 18:1 - Avraham was sick, so Hashem came to 'visit' him.
- 18:1 - He was looking for guests.
- 18:2 - To announce to Sarah that she would give birth, to heal Avraham and to destroy Sodom.
- 18:4 - He thought they were Arabians who worship the dust, and he didn't want any object of idolatry in his home.
- 18:7 - To train him in the performance of *mitzvos*.
- 18:9 - To call attention to Sarah's modesty, so as to endear her to her husband.
- 18:13 - For the sake of peace.
- 18:21 - The cry of a girl who was put to death because she gave food to a poor man.
- 19:1 - Two; one to destroy the city and one to save Lot.
- 19:1 - He was a judge.
- 19:3 - It was Passover.
- 19:16 - He wanted to save his property.
- 19:17 - Since they too really should have been punished, it wasn't fitting for them to witness the destruction of Sodom.
- 19:26 - She was stingy, not wanting to give the guests salt.
- 19:29 - Lot had protected Avraham by concealing from the Egyptians the fact that Sarah was his wife.
- 20:1 - Because travel in the region ceased and Avraham could no longer find guests.
- 20:14 - So that Avraham would pray for him.
- 21:12 - Because she was greater in prophecy.
- 21:17 - Because the prayer of a sick person is more readily accepted than the prayer of others on his behalf.
- 22:3 - Yishmael and Eliezer.

## BONUS ANSWER!

Lot and his daughter's arrival in Tzo'ar increased the city's merit, bringing to ten the number of righteous people there. As soon as there were ten righteous people in the city, it was saved in the merit of Avraham's prayer.

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

### RAMBAN

- 18:7 The Love of Kindness
- 18:13 For the Sake of Peace
- 18:15 Sarah's Laughter
- 19:8 Lot's Disgrace

- 22:1 The Meaning of a Trial
- 22:16 The Promise of Eternity

### SFORNO

- 18:2 The Love of Kindness

- 18:22 Persistence
- 19:8 Lot's Reasoning
- 19:11 The Nature of the Wicked
- 19:37-8 Meaning Well

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IN JERUSALEM

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