

Parsha Q&A



Parshat Vayera

For the week ending 20 Cheshvan 5760
29 & 30 October 1999

Parsha Questions

1. Why did Hashem appear to Avraham after the *brit 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 specifically Yishmael, and not someone else, to prepare food for the guests?
6. Why did the angels ask Avraham where Sarah was?
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 *matza*. 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)?

Kasha!

(kasha means "question")

How would you answer this question on the Parsha? "Behold! Three people stood upon him..." (Bereishet 18:2).

Rashi explains that these were angels. One angel came to announce Sarah's birth, one to destroy the city of Sodom, and one to heal Avraham. The angel who came to destroy Sodom, why did he need to visit Avraham first? What was the purpose?

Answer:

Sodom was destroyed because they did not act with kindness and charity to the poor and the stranger.

Their sin was multiplied many times by the fact that they lived near Avraham, the pillar of kindness and charity. They should have learned from his example, at least a little. Instead, they treated visitors cruelly as part of their law and culture.

So, in order to take away any excuse from the people of Sodom, the angel first needed to experience Avraham's hospitality. Once the angel saw Avraham's super-human kindness, Sodom could no longer claim that they had no example to learn from.

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I Did Not Know That!

Because Avraham invited the angels to “sit under the tree” (*Bereishet 18:4*) his offspring were rewarded with the mitzvah of succah.

Midrash Tanchuma

Recommended Reading List

<i>Sforno</i>		<i>Ramban</i>	
18:2	The Love of Kindness	18:7	The Love of Kindness
18:22	Persistence	18:13	For the Sake of Peace
19:8	Lot's Reasoning	18:15	Sarah's Laughter
19:11	The Nature of the Wicked	19:8	Lot's Disgrace
19:37-8	Meaning Well	22:1	The Meaning of a Trial
		22:16	The Promise of Eternity

Answers to this Week's Questions

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

1. 18:1 - Avraham was sick, so Hashem came to “visit” him.
2. 18:1 - He was looking for guests.
3. 18:2 - To announce Yitzchak's birth, to heal Avraham and to destroy Sodom.
4. 18:4 - He thought they were among those who worship the dust, and he didn't want any object of idolatry in his home.
5. 18:7 - To train him in the performance of *mitzvot*.
6. 18:9 - To call attention to Sarah's modesty, so as to endear her to her husband.
7. 18:13 - For the sake of peace.
8. 18:21 - The cry of a girl who was executed for giving food to the poor.
9. 19:1 - Two; one to destroy the city and one to save Lot.
10. 19:1 - He was a judge.
11. 19:3 - It was Passover.
12. 19:16 - He wanted to save his property.
13. 19:17 - As they, too, deserved to be punished, it wasn't fitting for them to witness the destruction of Sodom.
14. 19:26 - She was stingy, not wanting to give the guests salt.
15. 19:29 - Lot had protected Avraham by concealing from the Egyptians the fact that Sarah was his wife.
16. 20:1 - Because travel in the region ceased and Avraham could no longer find guests.
17. 20:14 - So that Avraham would pray for him.
18. 21:12 - Because she was greater in prophecy.
19. 21:17 - Because the prayer of a sick person is more readily accepted than the prayer of others on his behalf.
20. 22:3 - Yishmael and Eliezer.