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Zerah Torah Limood

Bereisheit Chapter 19

Feeling Like A Failure / Coming Up A Little Short! ©

By Dr. Akiva Gamliel and Rebbetzin Revi Belk

This Zerah Torah Limood is in the loving memory of Helen bat Na'amah. Revi's Grandmother Gladys Ethel and father and step father, my mother and my father, Carrie bat Brachah Rivkah, Stephen ben Martha, Sharon bat Vivian, Florence Youman bat Chavah, Jeanne C. W. Pierre, Joseph Adam Pierre, Louella P. Bienvenu, Barbara Pierre, Terrill B. Thomas, Joyce Duff bat Na'amah and Michael and Channah Sakash may they rest in peace.

Dear Ones The paths of the righteous expose our failings. We can feel quite uncomfortable and self conscience among them. We feel a little numb. We are worried. We don't know how to act. We don't want to shame ourselves or to be embarrassed.

וַיְהִי כִּהְיוּצִיאֲם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְט עַל־נַפְשְׁךָ אֶל־תִּבְיֵט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶל־תֵּעַמַּד בְּכָל־הַכְּפֹר הַהָרָה הַמַּלְט פְּרִתְסָפָה: יח וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹט אֲלֵהֶם אֶל־נָא אֲדַנִּי: יט הִנֵּה־נָא מָצָא עֲבֹדְךָ חוֹ בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתִּגְדַּל חֲסִדְךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי לְהַחֲיוֹת אֶת־נַפְשִׁי וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא אוֹכַל לְהַמְלִט הַהָרָה פְּרִתְדַּבְּרָנִי הַרְעָה וְמָתִי:

And it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, Escape for your life; look not behind you, nor stay in the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed. 18 And Lot said to them, Oh, not so, my Lord; 19 Behold now, your servant has found grace in your sight, and you have magnified your mercy, which you have shown to me in saving my life; **I can not escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me and I die;**

[Lot thought] When I was with the Sedomites, G-d Saw my deeds an the deeds of the people of the city, and I appeared to be a righteous person and worthy of being rescued. But, when I will come to the righteous person [Avraham] I will be [seen] as an evil person. [The Mesudah Chumash A](#)

Dear Ones last week we shared that Avraham had a Spiritual visit from HaShem. How did Avraham feel. Over all he seemed quite comfortable. On the other hand Avraham's grandson, Yaakov had an encounter with the Creator. When He woke from his sleep He Said, *'In truth, HaShem is in this place and I did not know it. He was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of Elokim and this is the gate of heaven.'* Yet hours before Lot felt OK about inviting strangers to his home for Erev Passover... Lot invited Melachim to his home.. He did not seem nervous...

Yaakov was shaken. Here in our discussion Lot is shaken. It is Pesach day. He is standing outside the city broke... penniless. Hours earlier he was a wealthy Judge. How did Lot feel? We must ask ourselves, How would I feel?

Lot seemed set for retirement. Then Judgment from HaShem hits the city. Lot's life changes dramatically. Four of his children perish. Several grand children perish. His wife becomes a stone. He is survived by two young daughters. How was Lot feeling? Lot had herds and servants. He had many cattle and many servants. They were all gone. How did Lot feel? All the positions in his home were gone. Lot escaped... Dear Ones, ask, How did Lot feel? Lot was greatly humbled. He seemed like he was very grateful for being allowed to escape the destruction. Lot was frightened about being with a righteous person. He was frighten that he would be exposed as a sinner in the presence of a truly righteous individual. Was Lot self centered? He had just lost everything why would he be concerned about how he appeared to others? He was experiencing a major tragedy in his life.

Dear one we are trying to identify a feeling that exists. Some classmates feel like I could never write to the Rebbetzin or to myself. Why? They are worried about doing something wrong. They are concerned about making a mistake. It's Feeling Like A Failure or Coming Up A Little Short! Yet, Dear Ones, its important to speak up. Its important to speak out... It is important to ask questions... It is important to get clarification on possible misunderstandings...

Hashem Overthrows S'dom, Saving Lot

The two Angels arrived in S'dom around evening time' and Lot discovered the Angels while he was pacing up and down the streets. Why was Lot roaming the streets at night? Lot wished to invite guests, but he was afraid of taking anyone into his house because of the Sodomite laws; therefore he looked for travelers in the dark of the night in secret.

When Lot noticed the two strangers in the street, he ran towards them, bowed, and said 'Please, my lord come to my house and lodge with me overnight!'

Lot imitated Avraham's conduct towards guests. He had stayed in Avraham's house a long time, and although he had not adopted Avraham's way of life, he had learned from him to go out of his way to do kindness to others.

The Angels replied, "No, we will sleep in the street!"

"Please come to me, Lot persevered. When they were still reluctant, **he took their hands, forcing them to follow him.**

Walk to my house following a circuitous route and enter inconspicuously, Lot cautioned his guests. When they were safely inside his house, he instructed them. Do not wash the dust off your feet until tomorrow. I want the people of S'dom to notice the dust and think that you just recently arrived. We have to take this safety measure, for if they knew the truth, they would kill me! .

Lot prepared a good meal, as he had seen Avraham do for his guests. Since it was Pesach, he baked matzos. **Lot's wife, Eeris, who was a native of S'dom and did not share her husband's views on hospitality** said to him, "If the people of S'dom find out' they will kill you. You are endangering us! If you insist on having guests, divide the house between us. The guests will stay in your section!

It was the custom of Lot's wife to serve guests only saltless food. Now Lot told her, "serve these guests a little salt. Do you want to introduce this evil custom here?"

His wife shouted back, "We have no salt in the house!" She left the house with the words, "I shall borrow some from the neighbors". Eeris went around to the neighbors announcing, "We have guess!. Can you give me

some salt?" Within a short time the whole town knew that Lot had invited strangers!

The Angels questioned Lot, "What sort of people live in this city?"

"Well, answered Lot, in most places there are better and worse people. In this city, they are all wicked!"

His words were confirmed by the mob, consisting of the entire population of the city, young and old, rapping at his door and demanding that the guests be handed out to them. There was not a single person who protested.

Lot went outside the door to quiet them down. He thus endangered his own life for the mob could easily have killed him. "Please my brothers," he addressed the sodomites with gentle words' "Remember that the Generation of the Flood was wiped out for the type of sins that you are about to commit!

Lot was ready for an even greater sacrifice to maintain his hospitality. Listen to me!" He called, "I have two unmarried daughters! Let me bring them out to you and do to them as you see fit. Just do this kindness to me and leave my guests alone' since they have come to my section of the house!"

Hashem said, "Usually a man hands himself over to be killed for the sake of his wife and daughters. Lot, instead was ready to hand out his daughters to be abused. I swear, you keep them for yourself! Ultimately, all future generations will sneer at his vow, as they read in the Torah, "And the two daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father!" (19:36)

"Step back! " the rabble shouted at Lot, "Have we appointed you as a judge over us so that you should introduce new laws? Our law since ancient time is that every stranger who comes here is maltreated and robbed!"

Although Lot, upon his arrival in S'dom, had been made head of the court of law, they only accepted his opinion if it agreed with their way life but otherwise rejected his words.

They shouted, "Now we will do worse to you than to them!" They wanted

to break down the door, but the Angels protected Lot and his family in the merit of his hospitality. They took Lot back into the house and smote with blindness all men, young and old, who stood at the entrance of the house. The young ones had begun the wrong-doing, and therefore the punishment started with them.

The people, in spite of their blindness, were groping for the door, but eventually they gave up because they could not find it. As soon as Lot had realized that the Angels would destroy the inhabitants of S'dom for their wickedness, he had prayed on their behalf, pleading for mercy for them. Now the Angels said to Lot, "Do not continue to beg for mercy for them. They have asked you to hand us out to them for immoral purposes, a crime for which there is no defense. We will destroy this place. Just save yourself and your family!"

Lot had four daughters, two of whom were married. He went to inform his two Sodomite sons-in-law of the impending destruction, warning them to leave. But they laughed at his words. "There is music and festivity in the city, they said,, "and you speak about destruction?" Lot himself was also hesitant. "What about all my gold, silver, and pearls? He asked, bewildered. "How can I leave my fortune behind? Let me which I should choose to take along."

The morning dawned and Lot had still not decided which part of his riches to leave behind "Hurry," the Angels said, "or else you will be destroyed because of the iniquity of the city!"

When Lot still lingered, the Angels rewarded him for having taken them by the hand them to lodge in his house. Both Refael and Gavriel took his hand and that of his wife and his two daughters and pulled them away from the city!

Lot left S'dom penniless. This was his punishment for having settled in S'dom for material reasons.

"Escape for your life! the Angels warned Lot and his family. "Be happy that our life is spared and forget about your money! Do not look back because Hashem's Shechina will descend upon the city! Hashem's Shechina and a host of 12,000 Angels of Destruction descended upon the five cities to destroy them in a moment. All five cities were situated on one rock and the angel stretched out his hand and turned all of them over at

once, except for Tzoar which was spared so that Lot could flee there. Brimstone and fire rained down from Heaven and destroyed not only the houses, but even the vegetation. The earth and air of that region were polluted so that until this day nothing grows there.

Lot's wife, Eris, had pity on her two older daughters who were left behind. She turned around to see if they were following her and perceived the shechina, Immediately, she was converted into a pillar of salt. This was a punishment for revealing the presence of her guests as she went to her neighbors ostensibly to borrow salt.

One who sees the pillar of salt that was Lot's wife (the exact location of which was known to our sages) is obliged to recite two blessings:

1. "Blessed be the truthful Judge"

2. "Blessed be He Who remembers the tzaddikim"

He blesses Hashem, who, in the overthrow of S'dom' remembered Avraham's righteousness and saved Lot in the merit of the Tzaddik Avraham.

How does Lot's fate relate to us?

"One who walks with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall suffer harm" (Mishlai 13:20)'

If a man spends his time in a perfume shop, he will leave with the scent of perfume clinging to his clothes, even if he made no purchase at all. If a man chooses to stay in a tannery, an evil odor will cling to him even if he is not a tanner by profession. One who adheres to the company of those who study Torah will inevitably benefit, while those who stay with ignorant people are bound to be affected. Lot, who settled in S'dom a vicinity of sinners almost lost his life on their account.

Lot and His Daughters

The angel instructed Lot, "Flee to the mountain where Avraham lives." But Lot was afraid to move back to Avraham's neighborhood, thinking, "When I live among the wicked people of S'dom, Hashem compared me to them and found me to be relatively righteous. He therefore saved me. But if I move to the vicinity of the Tzaddik Avraham, I will be considered wicked next to him. Lot therefore begged Hashem to spare the city of Tzoar from destruction so that he could escape there. "Its sins are fewer than those of S'dom." Lot argued, "since it was more recently populated." Hashem granted his request and, for Lot's sake, did not destroy the city of Tzoar.

The Angel commanded Lot, "Make haste and escape to Tzoar because I cannot destroy S'dom before you get there!" Lot and his daughters hurried to Tzoar, but they did not remain there. Lot was afraid of settling in that city because it was too close to S'dom. Instead, he moved with his daughters to a cave in the mountains, thus disregarding the words of the Angel who had commanded him to escape to Tzoar. As a result, the shameful story of the events in the cave came about.

Two great women were destined to descend from Lot's daughters - -Ruth, the Moabite woman who was to be the ancestress of the dynasty of David and, ultimately, of Mashiach, and Na'ama the Ammonite woman who would marry King Shlomo and become the mother of King Rechavam. . Lot's daughters were allowed to survive the annihilation of S'dom for the sake of the two precious souls Ruth and Na'ama, who were later to emerge from them. Both of Lot's daughters were righteous and had learned in Avraham's house to love Hashem. After witnessing the destruction of four big cities and the earth's swallowing up all the inhabitants of Tzoar (even though it was not overthrown like S'dom), Lot's daughters were under the impression that a second Deluge had swept the world leaving them the sole survivors. "Our father is old," the older one said to her younger he might die. Unless a male child will be born from him soon, the human-race will perish!"

Lot's daughters acted as they did for the sake of Heaven, but Lot himself would not have been subjected to so disgraceful a situation were it not for his impure heart that really desired incest.

They found wine in the cave which Hashem had prepared especially for this purpose because He wanted the two nations of Ammon and Moav to come into existence. They Permitted their father to become intoxicated and seduced him. The older one set the example, and the younger daughter followed. Both of them became pregnant and bore sons. The older daughter, with unabashed immodesty called her son Moav, "born of the father," while the younger daughter named her son Ben-ami, "Son of my People."

Hashem, who records every pronouncement emanating from a person's lips, dealt with both daughters midda-keneged-midda. He commanded in the Torah that the people of Ammon-descendants of the younger, modest daughter – should not be attacked by the Bnai Yisrael. Against

Moav – the offspring of the older, shameless daughter – however, Hashem only forbade open warfare but did not prohibit provoking them and challenging them to battle. (Devarim 2:19). Rabbi Moshe Weissman, The Midrash Says (Brooklyn, New York: Benei Yakov Publications 1980), pp 173-179

May we be open and willing to ask questions and seek advise.

Blessings and peace,

Dr. Akiva Gamliel and Rebbetzin Revi