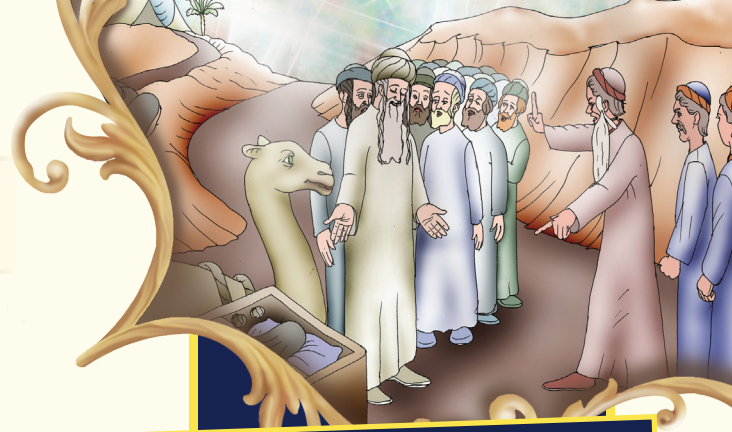


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Based on the lectures of the Rosh Yeshiva, **Hagoon Harav Menachem Boruch Yaveh shlit"א** talmid of Posek Hador Harav Shmuel Wasner ztz"l

LOT'S BETRAYAL VS. AVRAHAM'S LOYALTY...

Hashem told Avraham, *לך לך מארצך, וממולדתך אל הארץ אשר אראך*, "Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you;" that is – in order that I will show you and your glory to all the people of the land.

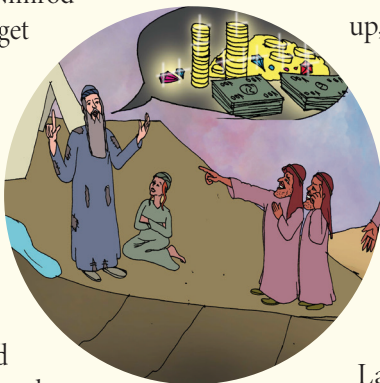
After many years that Nimrod promoted idol worship to the people of his generation, punishing anybody who dared to disagree by burning him in fire – which he claimed was god – there arose Avraham, who broke Nimrod's idols and claimed of a Great and Mighty G-d that ruled the world. From then on, Nimrod pursued every tactic to get rid of Avraham; first he tried killing him by casting him into the burning furnace but was amazed to see the wonderful miracle how Hashem protected him from the fire. However, it did nothing to soften him, and he did not yield but claimed that Hashem rules only over the fire. Then he expelled Avraham from Ur Casdim and decreed that nobody should give him any food, thus everybody would see that Avraham cannot live without Nimrod's support.

Avraham Has No Animal for His Altar...

In this week's *parsha* we learn in much detail, how Avraham had finally arrived in Eretz Canaan, but only to find there a famine that forced him to leave and go down to Mitzrayim in great poverty. This was a tremendous *nisayon* for him, because everybody would think that Nimrod was right, and here Avraham

is forced to travel far and wide in order to feed his family. However, Avraham borrowed money from every inn he came across, so he could continue with his custom of feeding the passerby and teaching them about Hashem. There, he built an altar where he gathered people to tell them about Hashem, though he couldn't afford to offer any sacrifice.

Everybody mocked him for his loyalty to Hashem, "Why doesn't Hashem who you trust so much give you money, and from where will you have the money to pay us back?" But Avraham did not give up, he only told everybody, "Hashem is now testing me with poverty, but surely one day He will give me great wealth and children, He will defeat Nimrod and show that He's the only power in the world."



Later indeed, the *parsha* describes how Hashem protected Avraham when he arrived in Mitzrayim and Sarah was taken away from him. The house of Pharaoh was afflicted with diseases, to prove to the world that nobody had touched her for bad. It was a tremendous *kidush Hashem*, how Hashem protected Sarah, and made them return her with lots of riches, sheep and cattle, gold and silver, slaves and maids. This way, Avraham could walk all the way back to Eretz Canaan with great honor and wealth that Pharaoh showered upon him, returning all his loans and showing everybody the great wonder how Hashem cares for His loyal people. This time he went back "To the site of the altar which he had erected there at first" – on his way

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MY STORY!

Break the Barrel
but Keep its Wine...

The day after Simchas Torah, I ordered a worker to take down my Sukkah. He brought all his tools with him and got right to work. My little son, Avi, who is four years old, was very interested in all the tools, so he played around him, and even

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climbed on the ladder after him. The worker was worried that he would get hurt, and tried to send him in the house. Nevertheless, Avi ignored him and came back outside quietly, when he saw the worker wasn't paying attention.

Avi, who wanted to imitate the worker, got on a chair and climbed onto the stone wall. That is when the worker peeked from above the *schach* and noticed Avi standing dangerously on the wall. He hurried down from his ladder quietly so as not to scare Avi who might lose balance and fall down. However, before he was close enough to catch Avi and bring him down, Avi leaned on a weak beam to look down, and lost his balance and fell two and a half flights, twenty feet on hard ground!

The horrified worker ran down all the stairs to see what happened to the child, only to find him lying on the cold ground, unconscious, squirming and bleeding from his head, and not breathing...

He immediately called Hatzala, who came within a minute, and

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down – in order to offer an animal and publicize Hashem's wonderful kindness, who never left him alone, and will surely grant him children very soon.

A MASHAL – Revive the Dead or Feed the Healthy?!

Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztz"l would wonder, why is the story of how Avraham became rich brought at such length, while the miracle of him being saved from the furnace is completely ignored; and Hashem's love toward him is expressed only with the riches He showered upon him – not by the great miracle of *techiyas hameisim*, reviving him from the death penalty?!

To explain this, we will begin with a *mashal*. The great king of a certain country had appointed his loyal minister to take care of his subjects. The minister took his job very seriously, caring for the needy with endless mercy, healing the sick, and protecting the unfortunate. However, when the great king questioned his

minister's leadership, he expressed his disappointment and said to him, "You are not merciful! You care only for the poor and helpless people – that does not prove your compassion. Let me see you caring for the healthy and successful, supporting them that they should maintain that state. Help them with their livelihood, teach them how to remain healthy and successful. That is true compassion."

THE NIMSHAL – Rain vs. Revival of the Dead...

We learn here that Hashem's love and kindness toward Avraham is not recognized through rescuing him from the furnace, because everybody has pity on the poor, every person feels compassion for a sick person or one who's about to die. Rather, Hashem's compassion is recognized through His caring for Avraham when he was well – to help him with his livelihood, that he should be even more successful and rich. For, "The day of rain is greater than the resurrection of the dead" (Taanis

THE BITTERNESS OF LOT'S BETRAYAL...

After Lot served Avraham Avinu for many years, learning from greatness and good deeds, he decided to go the other way. Lot thought himself wise just like Avraham if not even more, forgetting where all his wisdom came from.

Once he left Avraham, Lot became corrupt and judged

Sodom unfairly. When one would hurt his friend, making him bleed, Lot would rule that the one who was hurt has to pay for letting his blood, which is a healthy medical treatment.

One day, Avraham sent his loyal servant Eliezer to Sodom, to try and bring Lot back. When he got there, somebody hit him and made him bleed, so Eliezer took the man to court. At the court, Lot ordered Eliezer to pay his hitter, as the custom in Sodom. Eliezer took a stone and hit the judge, telling him, "The money you owe me, pay the one who I owe for hitting me." Eliezer wanted to indicate to Lot how the *Yetzer Hara* was blocking his mind, like a stone in his head.



7a). That is, the day when Hashem cares for our normal daily lives, for our livelihood and our welfare, is greater than when Hashem takes pity on the dead to revive them. That compassion is of greater level than the pity for the helpless.

Like the Midrash says (Bereishis Rabbah 78): **“From this that You renew us every single morning, we know that You are trusted to revive the dead.”** How is it so simple to learn *techiyas hameisim* from Hashem’s daily kindness to us? That is the proof – if Hashem has pity on us, the healthy and successful to arouse us from bed every morning, then certainly He will have pity on the dead, whom everybody has pity for, to raise them from their graves.

Regarding the greatness of one who supports another and helps him be successful, the Rambam says: **“The greatest level, higher than all the rest, is to fortify a fellow Jew and give him a gift, a loan, form a partnership with him, or find work for him, until he is strong enough so that he does not need to ask others. Of this it is said, ‘and you hold him as though a resident alien, let him live by your side.’ That is – ‘hold him up,’ so that he will not fall and be in need”** (Mishneh Torah, Gifts to the Poor 10).

Likewise, on Yom Kippur the Kohen Gadol would ask Hashem a short prayer. He did not mention *techiyas hameisim*, but only about the welfare of the Jews, that there should be lots of rain, and Hashem should not heed the prayers of the passerby to stop the rain. Because Hashem’s caring for our needs includes in it His compassion for the helpless and dead.

The Disloyal Servant...

Together with Avraham at the furnace, was Haran who wasn’t sure if he believed in Hashem or not, so he waited to see, and would follow whoever was to be proven correct. Since he saw the miracle that happened to Avraham, he decided to follow him, but it wasn’t with true good intentions, so he was burned to death. Lot, his son, inherited his father’s way and was never sure of his faith in Avraham, either.

After many years that Lot lived with Avraham, learned from his holy ways, and served him, he failed to appreciate Avraham’s wisdom and greatness. He felt himself on an equal level as Avraham, forgetting where all his wisdom came from, and therefore let his shepherds dispute with Avraham’s shepherds, disagreeing with him in whatever he thought was wrong. When he accompanied Avraham down to Egypt, he saw Avraham saying to Sarah, **“See now, I have known that you are a woman of beautiful appearance.”** In Lot’s eyes that seemed like Avraham was occupied with lowly things – instead of learning from the way Avraham respected his wife and complimented her as if it were the first time he encountered her, noticing her inner and outer beauty – before he had to tell her to hide in the box.

Avraham is Lying...

Later, when Avraham instructed Sarah, **“Please say that you are my sister,”** Lot couldn’t understand how Avraham would let go of his faith in Hashem in such a time and just lie; yet for what, in order to gain personal benefit – **“...That it may go well with me because of you,”** and they shall give me presents (Rashi). Lot was

in complete wonder – how Avraham could be so selfish, and not care for his wife, nor trust Hashem that everything would go just fine?! – instead of accepting that whatever his master decided to do is surely the right thing. For, if Avraham would have been killed when they found out he was her husband, then what a *chilul Hashem* it would have caused, that Nimrod succeeded and was right, G-d forbid. Certainly, Avraham wanted to gain from it, but what kind of gain was it, it wasn’t personal gain that he was after, but the great *kidush Hashem* in the world that would stem from this. When everybody would see how he leaves Mitzrayim with great wealth and honor, and how Hashem protected Sarah in the house of Pharaoh. That was the true gain that Avraham always sought to achieve.

Keeping Mitzvos in a Wrong Way...

Hoshea says (14:10), **“יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּרְכָיו יִצְדָּקִים לָכוּ בָם וּפְשָׁעֵים יִכְשְׁלוּ בָם”**, **“The ways of Hashem are straight; the righteous will walk in them and sinners will stumble over them.”** That is what happened to Lot, he went astray and thought himself of even superior greatness than Avraham, and came to dispute with him and leave him, losing his entire virtue. His name got now its Aramaic meaning, which is, *letusa*, ‘curse’. Even the good things he learned from Avraham he turned in the wrong way. He learned that Avraham is very careful with *hachnasas orchim*, so he also devoted himself to it, but in the wrong way – willing to abandon his own daughters in order to protect his guests, the angels who came to rescue him from the toppling of Sodom.

Lot became a leader and judge of Sodom, but his ruling was completely corrupt. When someone would hurt another and make him bleed, Lot, the judge, would command him to pay for the blood-letting. As the Gemara tells about Eliezer, when Avraham sent him to try and bring Lot back to the light of Hashem: **“Eliezer, servant of Avraham, happened to come there, and they wounded him. He came before the judge. The judge said to him: ‘give a fee, as he let your blood.’ He took a stone and wounded the judge. The judge said, ‘what is this?’ Eliezer said to him, ‘the fee that you should pay me, give to that person who wounded me, and my money will remain where it is.”** Eliezer wanted to indicate to Lot, how the *yetzer hara* is blocking his mind like a stone in his head, from noticing the corruption he sunk to since he left Avraham.

Lot an Equal to Avraham...?

Avraham saw that Lot let his shepherds dispute with his own, and so decided to put Lot on a final test. Thus, he told him, **“Please let there be no strife between me and you... for we are brothers [i.e. on equal level],”** and the proud Lot took the compliment and accepted the offer. Instead of grasping himself – responding to Avraham that there was no way he would leave him, and he is not equal to him – he convinced himself that he was even wiser than Avraham.

Once Avraham saw that this is the case he was determined on departing ways from Lot at any price, telling him, **“Please separate from me, if you go left then I will go right, and if you go right then I will go left.”** Since Lot **“Wandered away**

from the Originator of the Universe, saying, *I want neither Avraham nor his G-d*" (Rashi), therefore Avraham would distance himself from him at every price.

Lot's Prayer is Accepted...

Later, Avraham prayed for Sodom, that maybe there were some righteous in the city that could protect it from destruction. Hashem could not find any and therefore destroyed it, but in the merit of Avraham's davening, Lot's prayer that Tzoar be spared was accepted. Thanks to his loyalty to Avraham in earlier years, "*Hashem remembered Avraham, so He sent Lot from amidst the upheaval.*" Rashi explains, "*Hashem remembered that Lot knew that Sarah was Avraham's wife, and he did not betray him to reveal to the Egyptians; for this reason, Hashem had mercy upon him.*"

Hashem presented him with the city Tzoar, because "*Hashem does not withhold the reward due to any of His creatures,*" and to give Lot another chance to repent and come back to the light. This had also sanctified Hashem's name, for everybody knew he was saved and lived peacefully in Tzoar only in Avraham's merit. However, Lot was punished to get a city that devours its settlers, Like Targum Yonasan translates the *pasuk*, - "*מְלֶךְ בֹּלַע הַיָּא צֶעַר*" "*A city that devours its settlers is Zoar.*" This is evident also nowadays in the area near the Dead Sea, where there are many sinkholes, and the ground often opens up and swallows anything that comes its way. Just like Korach who wanted to be a leader and got an underground city to rule, so too, Lot who wanted to be his own guide received such an area for himself.

Avraham Risks Himself for Lot...

Avraham also took the trouble to rescue Lot when he was taken captive by the four kings. "*When Avram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his disciples...*

and he pursued them as far as Dan."

Because "*Lot's image was similar to that of Avraham,*" and people would think it was Avraham who was taken captive – thinking also that the leader in Sodom who did lots of wrongdoing was Avraham – therefore he went to rescue Lot. To publicize in the whole world that Avraham is not Lot, and to show how he puts himself in danger in order to pay back for Lot's service in earlier years. Later Avraham had sanctified Hashem's name again when he would not accept any of the booty from the king of Sodom, so that nobody would say, "*I made Avraham rich.*"

Nevertheless, Lot did have in him also good character traits that he got the chance to learn from Avraham. His good quality of shame that he feared to live near Avraham, saying "*Do not tell me to escape to the mountain*" (Rashi 19:18) – came out by his descendants Ruth HaMoavis [and her great-grandson David], and Naama HaAmonis [Shlomo Hamelech's wife]. But his bad side still stuck to him, and came out by his descendants, Amon and Moav, who were ungrateful to Avraham's descendants and did not greet them with bread and water, thus we do not accept any converts from them. His nature had also come out by his great-granddaughter Arpa, who had also abandoned the righteous of her time, Naomi.

We learn here that no good deed is lost, and they come out again later in the generations. All the years of loyal service that Lot gave Avraham, merited him to be rescued from Sodom and to have two tremendously great descendants from whom the line of *Malchus Beis David* began. However, we learn also that even a person as close as Lot, who went along with Avraham for so many years, is in danger of losing his loyalty to his master, as ungratefulness tips the scales and a man loses his entire world and all the good deeds he's acquired.

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summoned me urgently to the place. I drove off with the ambulance to Hadassah hospital. On the way, when I realized my son was coughing up blood, I asked the doctor, "What's his condition?" He said, "We cannot know anything yet, but every moment is critical, and anything can happen now." I am sure you can only imagine what I felt in these moments....

When we finally arrived at the hospital, my son was taken directly to the children's ICU. After a while I waited outside, the doctors came out and informed me that he has a big crack in his skull, and was bleeding in his brain, which made the left side of his head swell awfully...

We started davening intensely, telling all our friends and relatives to daven that Hashem should have mercy and cure him, leaving him with no brain damage, G-d forbid.

He was taken for CT, and *baruch* Hashem he needed no medicines other than an injection for his convulsion. Three hours later he was taken for another CT, to see if the bleeding in his brain worsened or got better; and as they were about to put him in the machine, Avi woke up to life! He was scared of the big machine, and asked for his *sefer* Torah toy. We were thrilled to see that not only was he awake, but his memory is working, as well!

However, since he was scared of going into the machine, an Arab doctor wanted to anesthetize him; but a Jewish doctor who was there whispered in my ear that it can be damaging to anesthetize a person while the brain is damaged. He recommended me not to let him do it, so I stopped that doctor, and convinced Avi not to be afraid. The results of the CT were even more exciting, the bleeding had stopped almost completely!

Later, I had the chance to speak with the head doctor. He marveled at the wonderful miracle that had occurred to us, that after such a terrible fall – on the head, the child survived with no brain damage. Even more amazing was the fact that nothing else was hurt; not the neck, nor the spine or any other bone in Avi's body. The wonders are too great to write them down; a little brain damage, G-d forbid, could have changed his life completely!

Baruch Hashem, one week and a day later we left the hospital, with my son Avi walking on his own at my side. But then, on our way out, a lowly man rushed near us and bumped into Avi, who fell hard on his fragile head. He started crying hysterically, but was all fine.

I have no words to express my thanks to Hashem for giving me my son anew. It feels like Hashem wanted to shake me up, but keep the wine in its barrel. "Back and front You have restricted me, and You have laid Your hand upon me," (Tehillim 139:5). The only way I can try to express it, is by keeping silent, as the *pasuk* (ibid 65:2), *לִי דָמָה, וְתִהְיֶה לְךָ*, "To You [Hashem], silence is praise."

M. Y. Jerusalem