

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"א, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



תשפ"א Vayeira

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

גלייך 110

אמרות שמשון

Why Lot's Wife Was Specifically Punished by Turning into Salt

וַתִּבֶּט אִשְׁתּוֹ מֵאַחֲרָיו וַתְּהִי נְצִיב מֶלַח (יט כו):

And his wife peered from behind him and she became a pillar of salt.

Rashi is bothered by an obvious question; why was Lot's wife punished by becoming, of all things, a pillar of salt. He explains it as follows, במלח חטאה ובמלח לקתה - *She sinned with salt and she was thus stricken with salt*, and quotes a Midrash which gives us details regarding her sin with the salt.

The Torah (יט ג) recounts an incident where two angels came to Sedom and Lot invited them over to his home. The Passuk goes on to describe how Lot took care of his guests, ויעש להם משתה ומצות אפה ויאכלו - *He prepared a feast for them and he baked matzos, and they ate*. The Midrash presents an interpretation on the word 'מצות' which means 'leavened bread', as if it were vowelized 'מצוֹת' which means a 'quarrel', and says as follows. אמר רבי יצחק, מצות עמדה על המלח, דהנה אמר לה, הב לאילן אַסְנִיָּא קליל מלח, והות אמרה ליה, אף הדיא סוניתא בישא את כְּעִי מלח. *R' Yitzchak said: a great quarrel arose at that time between Lot and his wife over salt. For during the meal, Lot would say to her, "Give a bit of salt to these guests", and she would angrily reply to him, "Do you wish to introduce this evil custom to this place"?! Rashi thus explains that it was as a punishment for this sin with the salt that Lot's wife became a pillar of salt.*

We need to understand what it was that caused Lot's wife to get angry. If it was the fact that Lot invited the guests over and served them a meal, why was she concerned about the salt that he gave them more than anything else that he prepared and served them?

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (קט ע"א) describes the arrogance of the people of Sedom during their time of tranquility, which was engendered by their feelings of complacency and security. *The people of Sedom became arrogant only because of the bounty that Hashem lavished upon them. What is written in the Torah concerning them? A land from which bread comes forth, has in its stead turned into scorched earth. Its' very stones yielded sapphires, its' very dust was gold. It was a path unknown to any robber; unobserved by any spy. Mighty beasts had not trod it, no lion ever traversed it.*



We can explain that Lot's wife wasn't upset about the guests that he invited nor was she upset about the food that he served them; she was upset about his bringing salt to the table. This was because of the motive that she knew was behind his bringing salt to the table, as the Rema in Shulchan Aruch (א"ח סי' קס"ז סי"ה) indeed explains. מצוה להביא על כל שלחן מלח קדם שיבצע, כי השלחן דומה למזבח והאכילה כקרבן, ונאמר על כל קרבן תקריב מלח. והוא מגן מן הפרעניות. *It is a Mitzvah to bring salt onto the table before one breaks the bread, for the table is likened to the Altar while the eating is likened to a Sacrifice, and it's stated, 'With all your sacrifices you should offer salt'. Furthermore, the salt is a protection against all calamities and misfortunes.*

When Lot's wife saw him bringing salt to their meals and understood the reason behind this practice, she got angry and arrogantly told him, "There is no need to bring salt to the table in order to protect us from any harm befalling us, for we, the people of Sedom, are protected in any case

from any and all mishaps and misfortunes. We are perfectly safe without your salt".

Furthermore, in her haughtiness, she was so certain of Sedom being safe from any tragedy, that she angrily told him, "Why do you wish to introduce this evil custom to this place"?! She was telling him that when he brought salt to the table even though they had no need for its' protection, he was essentially bringing upon them calamity, as the Gemara in Brachos (יט ע"א) says, *One*

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should never open his mouth to the Satan, i.e. one should never give the Satan an opening, for by talking or acting in a way which shows that there is a place for misfortune to occur, one essentially opens himself up to misfortune. Therefore, when Lot brought salt to the table in order to bring upon them protection, it was as if he admitted that they were indeed prone to tragedy and therefore needed the salt's protection; thereby inviting the Satan to bring upon them misfortune.

(זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות טז)

Why Hashem Waited So Many Years Before Commanding Avraham To Bring Yitzchak Upon the Alter

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהַאֱלֹקִים נִסְּהוּ אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי. וַיֹּאמֶר קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְ אֶת יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֶּתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלֹךְ לְךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֱלֹהֵי (בראשית כב א-ב):

And it happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham and He said to him, "Avraham", and he replied, "Here I am". And He said, "Please take your son, - your only one, whom you love - Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah, and bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell you".

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (פס ע"ב) tells us what it was that caused Avraham to be tested: *The Passuk says, 'And it happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham'. After which things? R' Yochanan said in the name of R' Yose ben Zimra: After the words of the Satan, who seized the opportunity to criticize Avraham before Hashem. For it is written, 'And the child [i.e. Yitzchak] grew and was weaned... And Avraham made a great feast on the day that Yitzchak was weaned'. The Satan said before Hashem, "Master of the Universe! You have graced this old man with a child at the age of a hundred years. From the entire feast that he made to celebrate, did he not have one turtledove or one young dove to offer before You?" Hashem said to him, "Did he make the feast for any reason other than for his son? Yet, if I would tell him, "Sacrifice your son before Me", he would do so immediately". Thereupon, the Passuk states: 'And Hashem tested Avraham'.*

In view of this episode, which took place when Yitzchak was but a young child, we need to understand why it was only so many years later, when Yitzchak was already thirty-seven years old, that Avraham was commanded to bring Yitzchak up as a sacrifice. If it was the Satan who waited all these years before presenting his argument against Avraham, it would certainly be hard to comprehend why the Satan would contain his case for so long. And if the Satan did present

his case immediately, it would be hard to understand why Hashem would wait all these years after hearing this argument before putting Avraham to this test. So, in either case, we need to understand why Avraham wasn't tested until so many years after the very episode that brought about the test.

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The Gemara in Sotah (נא ע"א) tells us that a man's mate is predestined from the time of his conception, and says as follows. *ארבעים יום קודם - Forty days before the formation of an embryo a Heavenly voice issues forth and proclaims, "The daughter of So-and-so is destined for So-and-so".* Tosfos explains that this designation is made irrespective of whether the mate has yet been born.

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In light of this we can explain as follows. Because we know that forty days before Yitzchak was born, a Heavenly voice issued forth and called out who his mate was destined to be, it was thus clear to all the angels in the heavenly court that Yitzchak was destined to get married to Rivka. And because this information was common knowledge between the angels, it unquestionably leaked down and became known to Avraham as well. Consequently, if Hashem were to command Avraham to bring Yitzchak up on the alter, this commandment would not be a test for him, as Avraham knew that it could not be that Yitzchak's destiny was to be slaughtered, for he knew that Yitzchak was predestined to marry Rivka.

Thus, all the years following the incident where the Satan had criticized Avraham, Hashem refrained from commanding Avraham to bring Yitzchak upon the alter, as this commandment would not have been a test for him at all. And although throughout all those years Rivka was not yet born, nevertheless Tosfos has stated that this designation is made even before the mate has been born, and therefore Avraham understood that the predetermined designation would still yet come true, when Rivka would be born and grow to marriageable age.

However, when so many years passed and Yitzchak's destined wife had not yet been born, it began to dawn upon Avraham that maybe there were some changes in the Heavenly master plan; for even if Yitzchak's destined wife was to be born now, there would still be a thirty-seven-year gap between the two, and with that in mind they would probably never marry, for such a great age gap between husband and wife is not very common. Consequently, commanding Avraham at this point to slaughter Yitzchak would all but attest to this change of plans, for if Avraham is commanded to slaughter Yitzchak it would clearly confirm that Yitzchak was no longer destined to marry Rivka. Thus, commanding Avraham at this point of time to bring Yitzchak upon the altar would indeed be a test placed before him.

(זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות כז)

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Translated and written by Rabbi Moshe Spira - yomospira@gmail.com

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USA - Rabbi Menachem Binyomin Paskesz 347-496-5657 mbpaskesz@gmail.com
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Eretz Yisroel - Rabbi Yisroel Silberberg
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