



Remarkable Recollections

“*Vayizkor Elokim et Avraham, vayishalach et Lot mitoch ha-hafecha* - Hashem remembered Avraham and allowed Lot to escape the upheaval.” (*Bereisheet* 19:29) Rashi explains this perplexing presentation to mean that Lot was saved in the merit of not revealing that Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu were husband and wife when they went down to Egypt. He is rewarded now for that moment of silence. The commentators wonder why this was the merit that saved Lot. Was not taking care of the visiting angels at the expense of his life a worthy merit in its own right?

Rav Weinberger in *Shemen Hatov* wonders why Lot was essentially worthy of being destroyed along with the residents of Sedom. After all, he did have several good qualities that could act in his favor. However, as Lot was a respected judge, explains Rav Weinberger, he had the responsibility to admonish the actions of his compatriots yet he did not do so; his silence condemned him. At the same time, Hashem recalled when Lot's silence was advantageous, thus, measure for measure, this is the merit that specifically saved him.

Many commentators view Lot's act of chesed with the angels as somewhat limited. The *Beit Halevi* remarks that one can't compare the way Lot performed the

mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* to the way Avraham Avinu did. Avraham's guests appeared as regular people, he served them royally with the finest foods and the greatest respect. When these same angels came to Lot, they looked like angels. Obviously, Lot was going to treat them with respect and even risk his life for them. It was therefore not considered enough of a merit to save him from destruction.

Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel, the *Saba* of Sladboka offers a very famous answer. Although every mitzvah generates a reward, it is only those mitzvot that involve *mesirut nefesh*, that challenge a person to go beyond his self-perception, that ultimately make enough of an impression to merit redemption. Lot grew up in Avraham Avinu's household where chesed and specifically inviting guests was a natural exercise. Lot never had to work hard to develop this *middah*. Money, however, and the prospect of riches was a great *nisayon* for him. Lot's silence in Egypt took significant will power and restraint to overcome his desire for material reward. This courageous effort affected his salvation from destruction with Sedom. Rav Dessler in *Michtav M'Eliyahu* adds that it is in the *nekudat habechira*, the place where one struggles, where reward is found. All areas

where one does mitzvot without struggle, where one has already conquered the conflict, merit reward, but the deeper reward comes from the growth found in struggling to decide what to do.

Now, when we are confronted with a real “*et tzarah*,” we must collect as much merit as we can to earn Divine protection. Our study of Lot’s salvation can serve as an inspiration for all of us to move beyond our comfort zone, to stretch ourselves and invest more in our *Avodat Hashem* and *bein adam lechavero*. May Hashem’s grace be forthcoming to grant us ultimate peace and salvation. ■

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