

## Avraham came forward and said, “Will You also stamp out the righteous along with the wicked?” (18:23)

Avraham’s love for all people is exemplified in its noblest form as he intercedes on behalf of the people of Sodom. Even the wicked inhabitants of Sodom were worthy of his sympathy. He prayed to Hashem to spare them from impending doom. Avraham *Avinu*’s most significant strength was his total devotion to Hashem. Representing the greatest aspect of his personality, this trait caused Hashem to say that during the ten generations from Noach until Avraham, He spoke to no one other than Avraham. Avraham’s commitment, to the point of self-sacrifice, was definitely the zenith of his life’s achievement. *Chazal*, however, imply that the apex of Avraham’s endeavor, the attribute for which Hashem rewarded him with *nevuah*, prophecy, was his caring for people, his tendency to view people through the prism of *tzedek*, to judge them in the most positive light.

Avraham emulated Hashem; as He is compassionate, so was Avraham. This is evidenced in his prayers on behalf of the wicked Sodomites. Avraham loved *chesed*, to perform acts of loving-kindness. Yet, he prayed for the people of Sodom who hated to act kindly to others. Their laws were the antithesis of social justice and, certainly, were counter to everything in which Avraham believed and for which he sacrificed himself.

Conversely, we find that for a comparatively minor infraction, Avraham severed his relationship with his cousin, Lot. The shepherds of Lot “allowed” their sheep to graze in property which was not theirs. These actions brought Avraham to tell Lot, “*Separate from me. If you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left.*” *Chazal* infer from Avraham’s words that he was totally severing his relationship with Lot. They could not assimilate with one another. Where is the consistency in Avraham’s actions? Does he care about all people, or is he particular about whom he cares for? Why does he pray for Sodom, but divorce himself from Lot?

**Horav Elchanan Sorotzkin, zl**, derives from here a compelling lesson regarding a Jew’s relationship with the rest of the world. Avraham cares deeply. He is devoted to helping humanity. He prays for them, he opens his home to them when they are in need; he seeks justice for all mankind. He draws the boundary, however, concerning living and interacting with them. *Klal Yisrael* must maintain a distance which does not permit assimilation to germinate and grow. The nation that sublimates itself to Hashem, that decries idol worship, does not mix with other nations. Avraham prayed for Lot. He even risked his life to fight for him, but he would never have become a single nation with him.