

And so it was when Hashem destroyed the cities of the plain that G-d remembered Avraham; so he sent Lot from amidst the upheaval. (19:29)

Rashi asks: What is the remembrance of Avraham concerning Lot? He explains that Hashem remembered that Lot was aware that Sarah was Avraham's wife, and he heard Avraham say (in Egypt) that she was his sister. Lot did not divulge that Sarah *Imeinu* was, indeed, Avraham *Avinu's* wife. Therefore, Hashem took pity on Lot. In other words, Lot was rewarded with his life because he did not inform the Egyptians that Sarah was actually Avraham's wife. If Lot would have spoken up, the Egyptians would have killed Avraham, leaving Sarah a widow. Sarah was really Yiskah, the daughter of Haran, sister of Lot, who was taken in by Terach, her grandfather, upon Haran's untimely death. What was so laudatory about Lot's silence? Should he be rewarded for not causing the death of his brother-in-law?

Concerning Noach, the Torah writes, "And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem" (Ibid. 6:5). *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 28:9) teach that actually Noach was not deserving of being spared the fate suffered by the rest of the world. Despite the fact that he was righteous and perfect, when the Destroyer is granted permission to devastate, one needs a special merit in order to be spared. Noach found favor. This is what protected him – not his righteousness! If so, asks *Horav Eliyahu Svei, zl*, how is it that such a minor act of silence – the act of not catalyzing Avraham *Avinu's* death – served to protect Lot from the devastation that wiped out Sodom?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* suggests that *Chazal* are teaching us an important principle concerning the extraordinary positive effect of even the slightest relationship with someone as holy and prestigious as Avraham *Avinu*. Lot did practically nothing. Indeed, he was passive, and his deference saved Avraham's life. This in and of itself is sufficient reason for him to have been saved from Sodom – at a time when everyone else was destroyed.

We find a similar instance concerning Og, King of Bashan. Moshe *Rabbeinu* feared initiating any altercation with Og due to Og's merit, earned when he informed Avraham that Lot had been taken captive. It was a simple act of decency, performed for the wrong reason. Actually, Og hoped that Avraham would rush into battle and lose his life, thus freeing him to marry Sarah. Nonetheless, the slightest relationship which benefitted Avraham was considered meritorious for Og – enough that Moshe feared his worthiness.

In connection with this concept, *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, comments, concerning *Chazal's* enjoinder, *Hevei zonav l'arrayos v'al tehi rosh la'shualim*; "Be a tail to lions, rather than a head to foxes" (*Pirkei Avos* 4:15). He explains that Lot was spared from certain death as a result of his connection to Avraham. When a person performs a favor for someone, it is considered as if he has given him a part of himself. Thus, he is bound to him and shares in his merits. Since Lot acted kindly to Avraham – even though it was not much – it was still considered as if he had given

Avraham a part of himself. This connection was his source of salvation. The *Mashgiach* cites the *Chasid Yaavetz* who explains the above quoted dictum from *Pirkei Avos*: “A tail of a lion is still a lion; and the head of a fox is still a fox.” This means that if one conjoins with a lion, regardless of where and how he is connected, he is a lion. Likewise, if he is joined only to a fox, he is a fox. Whatever the linkage, it creates a bond that makes one a part of the subject to whom he is fused.

We note that following the devastation of Sodom and Lot’s having been saved, the Angels wanted to take Lot and return him to Avraham *Avinu’s* proximity. Lot demurred, claiming that he was more comfortable and felt safer not being near Avraham. *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 50:11) explain Lot’s reasoning, “As long as I was in Sodom, I was compared to the evil Sodomites. Therefore, I appeared meritorious. In comparison to Avraham, however, I will pale.” What happened all of a sudden? He had been with Avraham prior to moving to Sodom. It did not seem to have been a problem then. Why would a relationship with Avraham now present itself as an issue?

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, explains that earlier Lot had been connected with Avraham. As such, he was a part of the Patriarch. Once they separated and Lot moved to Sodom, their relationship was severed. Therefore, despite his present realization of his earlier grievous error, it was too late. The prior connection could not be repaired to its previous state in which Lot was a part of Avraham. He would now have to fend for himself. This proved to be too much of a challenge for him to navigate. As long as one remains steadfastly connected to a pure and sacred source, he is included in it. Once the affiliation has been dissolved, he no longer enjoys the benefits.