

## G-d remembered Avraham; so He sent Lot from amidst the upheaval. (19:29)

Lot was spared twice. First, he was taken captive by the four kings. From their perspective, he had a birds-eye view of Hashem's miracles, as Avraham *Avinu* with his makeshift army was able to vanquish the four mighty, bloodthirsty kings. Avraham came either with his trusted servant and student, Eliezer, or he rounded up 318 of his students and went to war. In any event, it was clearly a miracle in the merit of Avraham.

One would think that someone with a modicum of intelligence would realize this and repent. Not Lot. Forget about his sense of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude to Hashem and to his Uncle Avraham. Not Lot. He did not appreciate, nor did he repent. He did what he wanted. His desire for material wealth and a life of abandon overrode his sense of human decency. Repentance would be meaningless to the individual who is returning to a life of continued moral turpitude. So, he went to Sodom, the center of human indecency. Here, he would fit in perfectly – and he did.

Hashem was about to destroy Lot. Perhaps in Avraham's *z'chus*, merit, Hashem would once again spare Lot. Everyone is allowed one mistake. Lot should be no different, but he did it again. He allowed his *taavos*, passions, to get the better of him. His greed would not allow him to live comfortably in Sodom.

When the father was an ingrate and a lecher who resided in a morally depraved community, it was no wonder that he produced two daughters who were responsible for the births of Ammon and Moav. These two nations also had no clue concerning the *middah*, character trait, of *hakoras hatov*. When the Jewish People were traveling in the desert and asked them for water, they refused. How easily they forgot their origins. Had our Patriarch Avraham not saved Lot, they would have been nothing more than a figment of imagination. They owed their very existence to Avraham. This did not seem to deter them.

One who is an ingrate is an extremely low level of humanity. People cannot deal with an ingrate. Whatever one does for him is never enough. It is all about taking, because he does not know the meaning of giving. This is why we may not accept converts from Ammon and Moav. Their gene pool is tainted with ingratitude. It does not affect the women, since they did nothing wrong. *Klal Yisrael* is founded and nurtured upon the *middah* of *hakoras hatov*. Thus, we cannot allow someone who is missing this vital spiritual chromosome from joining our People.

Lot's actions teach us another important lesson. The power of base desire is overwhelming. The hold it has over a person is compelling. Lot followed the pagans, turning away from Avraham – his benefactor, mentor and closest friend, only to rejoin the paganist belief which allowed immorality. When a person is blinded by his passions; when his vision is stigmatized by desire, he can stand in the presence of angels and still continue the life of a moral profligate. This was Lot. He went with

Avraham only as long as Avraham was “going his way.”