

Parashat Vayera

<p style="text-align: center;">Sodom and Gemorrah Genesis 18:20 - Genesis 19: 30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Crime at Gibea Judges 19:1-30</p>
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Genesis 18:20-33 ²⁰ Then the LORD said, "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave! ²¹ I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note." ²² The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³ Abraham came forward and said, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? ²⁴ What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" ²⁶ And the LORD answered, "If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Abraham spoke up, saying, "Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes: ²⁸ What if the fifty innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" And He answered, "I will not destroy if I find forty-five there." ²⁹ But he spoke to Him again, and said, "What if forty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not do it, for the sake of the forty." ³⁰ And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I go on: What if thirty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." ³¹ And he said, "I venture again to speak to my Lord: What if twenty should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty." ³² And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time:</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a Levite residing at the other end of the hill country of Ephraim took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. ² Once his concubine deserted him, leaving him for her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah; and she stayed there a full four months. ³ Then her husband set out, with an attendant and a pair of donkeys, and went after her to woo her and to win her back. She admitted him into her father's house; and when the girl's father saw him, he received him warmly. ⁴ His father-in-law, the girl's father, pressed him, and he stayed with him three days; they ate and drank and lodged there. ⁵ Early in the morning of the fourth day, he started to leave; but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Eat something to give you strength, then you can leave." ⁶ So the two of them sat down and they feasted together. Then the girl's father said to the man, "Won't you stay overnight and enjoy yourself?" ⁷ The man started to leave, but his father-in-law kept urging him until he turned back and spent the night there. ⁸ Early in the morning of the fifth day, he was about to leave, when the girl's father said, "Come, have a bite." The two of them ate, dawdling until past noon. ⁹ Then the man, his concubine, and his attendant started to leave. His father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look, the day is waning toward evening; do stop for the night. See, the day is declining; spend the night here and enjoy yourself. You can start early tomorrow on your journey and head for home." ¹⁰ But the man refused to stay for the night. He set out and traveled as far as the vicinity of Jebus -- that is, Jerusalem; he had with him a pair of laden</p>

<p>What if ten should be found there?" And He answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten." ³³ When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.</p>	<p>donkeys, and his concubine was with him. ¹¹ Since they were close to Jebus, and the day was very far spent, the attendant said to his master, "Let us turn aside to this town of the Jebusites and spend the night in it." ¹² But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside to a town of aliens who are not of Israel, but will continue to Gibeah. ¹³ Come," he said to his attendant, "let us approach one of those places and spend the night either in Gibeah or in Ramah." ¹⁴ So they traveled on, and the sun set when they were near Gibeah of Benjamin.</p>
<p><i>Welcome to my home</i></p>	<p><i>Welcome to my home</i></p>
<p>The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them and, bowing low with his face to the ground, ² he said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house to spend the night, and bathe your feet; then you may be on your way early." But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the square." ³ But he urged them strongly, so they turned his way and entered his house. He prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate</p>	<p>¹⁵ They turned off there and went in to spend the night in Gibeah. He went and sat down in the town square, but nobody took them indoors to spend the night. ¹⁶ In the evening, an old man came along from his property outside the town. (This man hailed from the hill country of Ephraim and resided at Gibeah, where the townspeople were Benjaminites.) ¹⁷ He happened to see the wayfarer in the town square. "Where," the old man inquired, "are you going to, and where do you come from?" ¹⁸ He replied, "We are traveling from Bethlehem in Judah to the other end of the hill country of Ephraim. That is where I live. I made a journey to Bethlehem of Judah, and now I am on my way to the House of the LORD, and nobody has taken me indoors. ¹⁹ We have both bruised straw and feed for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and your handmaid, and for the attendant with your servants. We lack nothing." ²⁰ "Rest easy," said the old man. "Let me take care of all your needs. Do not on any account spend the night in the square." ²¹ And he took him into his house. He mixed fodder for the donkeys; then they bathed their feet and ate and drank.</p>

<p><i>The Depraved Group</i></p> <p>⁴ They had not yet lain down, when the townspeople, the men of Sodom, young and old -- all the people to the last man -- gathered about the house. ⁵ And they shouted to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may be intimate with them." ⁶ So Lot went out to them to the entrance, shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, "I beg you, my friends, do not commit such a wrong. ⁸ Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please; but do not do anything to these men, since they have come under the shelter of my roof." ⁹ But they said, "Stand back! The fellow," they said, "came here as an alien, and already he acts the ruler! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." And they pressed hard against the person of Lot, and moved forward to break the door.</p>	<p><i>The Depraved Group</i></p> <p>²² While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the town, a depraved lot, had gathered about the house and were pounding on the door. They called to the aged owner of the house, "Bring out the man who has come into your house, so that we can be intimate with him." ²³ The owner of the house went out and said to them, "Please, my friends, do not commit such a wrong. Since this man has entered my house, do not perpetrate this outrage. ²⁴ Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. Let me bring them out to you. Have your pleasure of them, do what you like with them; but don't do that outrageous thing to this man."</p>
<p><i>A Different Outcome</i></p> <p>¹⁰ But the men stretched out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ And the people who were at the entrance of the house, young and old, they struck with blinding light, so that they were helpless to find the entrance.</p>	<p><i>A Different Outcome</i></p> <p>²⁵ But the men would not listen to him, so the man seized his concubine and pushed her out to them. They raped her and abused her all night long until morning; and they let her go when dawn broke. ²⁶ Toward morning the woman came back; and as it was growing light, she collapsed at the entrance of the man's house where her husband was.</p>
<p><i>Conclusion</i></p> <p>¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? Sons-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else that you have in the city -- bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place; because the outcry against them before the LORD has become so great that the LORD has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he</p>	<p><i>Conclusion</i></p> <p>²⁷ When her husband arose in the morning, he opened the doors of the house and went out to continue his journey; and there was the woman, his concubine, lying at the entrance of the house, with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ "Get up," he said to her, "let us go." But there was no reply. So the man placed her on the donkey and set out for home. ²⁹ When he came home, he picked up a knife, and took hold of his concubine and cut her up limb by limb into twelve parts. He sent them</p>

seemed to his sons-in-law as one who jests. ¹⁵ As dawn broke, the angels urged Lot on, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two remaining daughters, lest you be swept away because of the iniquity of the city." ¹⁶ Still he delayed. So the men seized his hand, and the hands of his wife and his two daughters -- in the LORD's mercy on him -- and brought him out and left him outside the city. ¹⁷ When they had brought them outside, one said, "Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, lest you be swept away." ¹⁸ But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lord! ¹⁹ You have been so gracious to your servant, and have already shown me so much kindness in order to save my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. ²⁰ Look, that town there is near enough to flee to; it is such a little place! Let me flee there -- it is such a little place -- and let my life be saved." ²¹ He replied, "Very well, I will grant you this favor too, and I will not annihilate the town of which you have spoken. ²² Hurry, flee there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Hence the town came to be called Zoar. ²³ As the sun rose upon the earth and Lot entered Zoar, ²⁴ the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulfurous fire from the LORD out of heaven. ²⁵ He annihilated those cities and the entire Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation of the ground. ²⁶ Lot's wife looked back, and she thereupon turned into a pillar of salt. ²⁷ Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the LORD, ²⁸ and, looking down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the Plain, he saw the smoke of the land rising like the smoke of a kiln. ²⁹ Thus it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain and annihilated the cities where Lot dwelt, God was mindful of Abraham and removed Lot from the midst of the upheaval. ³⁰ Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the hill country with his two daughters, for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar; and he and his

throughout the territory of Israel. ³⁰ **And everyone who saw it cried out, "Never has such a thing happened or been seen from the day the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt to this day! Put your mind to this; take counsel and decide."**

two daughters lived in a cave.	
--------------------------------	--

RAMBAM – Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Teshuvah 3:2

A state whose iniquities are numerous perishes immediately, as it is said: "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, etc." (Gen. 18:20). Likewise for the entire world: if their iniquities outweigh their merits, they are immediately destroyed, as it is said: "Adonai saw how great was man's wickedness on earth." (Gen. 6:5) The consideration is not based on the number of merits and iniquities, but on their magnitude.

BT Sanhedrin 27b

"Is it not written, 'they shall stumble over one another' (Lev. 26:37), meaning, One will stumble through the sin of the other, which teaches **that all are held responsible for one another**. The reference there is to individuals who had the power to restrain [their fellows from evil] but did not."

BT Shabbat 55a

Never did a favorable word go forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be God, of which God retracted for evil, save for the following, where it is written, "and Adonai said to him, 'Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who moan and groan because of all the abominations that are committed in it' "(Ezek. 9:4). The Holy One, blessed be God, said to Gabriel, Go and set a mark of ink upon the foreheads of the righteous, that the destroying angels may have no power over them; and a mark of blood upon the foreheads of the wicked, that the destroying angels may have power over them. Said the Attribute of Justice before the Holy One, blessed be God, "Sovereign of the Universe! How are these truly different from those?" "Those are completely righteous men, while these are completely wicked," replied God. "Sovereign of the Universe!" it continued, "**they had the power to protest but did not.**"

II Kings 4:9-11

(9) And she said unto her husband: 'Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, that passeth by us continually. (10) Let us make, I pray thee, a little chamber on the roof; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in

מלכים ב ד' ט' - י"א

(ט) ותאמר אל אישה הנה נא ידעתי
כי איש אלהים קדוש הוא עבר עלינו
תמיד. (י) נעשה נא עלית קיר קטנה
ונשים לו נשם מטה ושלחן וכסא
ומנוחה והיה בבואו אלינו יסור שמה.
(יא) ויהי היום ויבא שמה ויסר אל
העליה וישכב שמה.

thither.' (11) And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the upper chamber and lay there.

Shabbat 127a:13-14

Rabbi Yochanan said: Welcoming guests is as great as rising early to go to the house of study, as it was taught: "because of the guests and because of missing time in the house of study." Rav Dimi of Nehardea said: Even more so than rising early to go to the house of study, as it was taught: Because of the guests, and then it returns and says because of missing time in the house of study. Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Welcoming guests is greater than receiving the presence of God, as it says: My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, pass not away, please, from your servant. Rav Yehudah son of Shila said in the name of Rabbi Assi who said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: There are six things of which a person eats the fruits in this world, and the principal remains for the world to come, and they are: Welcoming guests, visiting the sick, being focused in prayer, rising early to go to the house of study, raising children to study Torah, judging

שבת קכ"ז א:י"ג-י"ד

א"ר יוחנן גדולה הכנסת אורחין כהשכמת בית המדרש דקתני מפני האורחין ומפני בטול בית המדרש ורב דימי מנהרדעא אמר יותר מהשכמת בית המדרש דקתני מפני האורחין והדר ומפני בטול בית המדרש אמר רב יהודה אמר רב גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה דכתיב (בראשית יח, ג) ויאמר (ה') אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבור וגו' א"ר אלעזר בא וראה שלא כמדת הקב"ה מדת בשר ודם מדת ב"ו אין קטן יכול לומר לגדול המתן עד שאבא אצלך ואילו בהקדוש ברוך הוא הוא כתיב ויאמר (ה') אם נא מצאתי וגו' אמר רב יהודה בר שילא א"ר אסי א"ר יוחנן ששה דברים אדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא ואלו הן הכנסת אורחין וביקור חולים ועיון תפלה והשכמת בית המדרש והמגדל בניו לתלמוד תורה והדן את חברו לכף זכות...

one's companion favorably...

Shevuot 35b:9-10

All the names [of God] that are stated in the Torah with regard to Avraham are holy, except for those which are secular. As it is said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight...". Chanina ben Achi Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah in the name of Rabbi Elazar HaModai said: This too is holy. Who do they follow? As Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Welcoming guests is greater than receiving the presence of God.

Mishneh Torah, Mourning 14:2

And welcoming guests is greater than receiving the presence of God, as it says: And he saw and behold there were three men.

Chagigah 27a:2

Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish, who both said: At the time that the Temple stood, it atoned for people. Now, a person's table atones for him or her.

שבועות ל"ה ב:ט"י

כל שמות האמורים בתורה באברהם
קדש חוץ מזה שהוא חול שנאמר
(בראשית יח, ג) ויאמר יי' אם נא
מצאתי חן בעיניך חנינא בן אחי רבי
יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה משום
רבי אלעזר המודעי אמרו אף זה קדש
כמאן אזלא הא דאמר רב יהודה אמר
רב גדולה הכנסת אורחין יותר
מהקבלת פני שכינה כמאן כאותו
הזוג

משנה תורה, הלכות אבל י"ד:ב'

וגדולה הכנסת אורחים מהקבלת פני
שכינה שנאמר וירא והנה שלשה
אנשים

חגיגה כ"ז א:ב'

רבי יוחנן וריש לקיש דאמרי תרוייהו
בזמן שבית המקדש קיים מזבח מכפר
על אדם עכשיו שלחנו של אדם
מכפר עליו:

A PARABLE ON PERSECUTION

1. And it came to pass after these things, that Abraham sat in the door of his tent, about the going down of the sun.

2. And behold a man, bowed with age, came from the way of the wilderness, leaning on a staff.

3. And Abraham arose and met him, and said unto him: “Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy feet, and tarry all night, and thou shalt arise early on the morrow, and go on thy way.”

4. But the man said: “Nay, for I will abide under this tree.”

5. And Abraham pressed him greatly; so he turned and they went into the tent, and Abraham baked unleavened bread, and they did eat.

6. And when Abraham saw that the man blessed not God, he said unto him: “Wherefore dost thou not worship the most high God, Creator of heaven and earth?”

7. And the man answered and said: “I do not worship the God thou speakest of, neither do I call upon his name; for I have made to myself a god, which abideth always in mine house, and provideth me with all things.”

8. And Abraham’s zeal was kindled against the man, and he arose and fell upon him, and drove him forth with blows into the wilderness.

9. And at midnight God called unto Abraham, saying: “Abraham, where is the stranger?”

10. And Abraham answered and said: “Lord, he would not worship thee, neither would he call upon thy name; therefore have I driven him out from before my face into the wilderness.”

11. And God said: “Have I borne with him these hundred and ninety and eight years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his rebellion against me; and couldst not thou, that art thyself a sinner, bear with him one night?”

12. And Abraham said: “Let not the anger of the Lord wax hot against his servant; lo, I have sinned; lo, I have sinned; forgive me, I pray thee.”

13. And Abraham arose, and went forth into the wilderness, and sought diligently for the man, and found him, and returned with him to the tent; and when he had entreated him kindly, he sent him away on the morrow with gifts.

14. And God spake again unto Abraham, saying: “For this thy sin shall thy seed be afflicted four hundred years in a strange land.

15. “But for thy repentance will I deliver them; and they shall come forth with power, and with gladness of heart, and with much substance.”

Rav Soloveitchik, Abraham's Journey

The Almighty is the great *makhnis orchim*. His hospitality made it possible for humanity to exist, for the world to come into being. "To be" means to share in the infinite being of the Almighty. The Almighty, like Abraham, invites people to partake of His boundless existence. Creation is an act of *haknasat orchim*. Our sages (*Berakhot 7b*) said that Abraham was the first person to invoke God by the name A-donai. This name is of juridic origin; God owns the world in juridic terms...We are just strangers whom the Almighty has invited into his "tent," which is the universe. How beautiful is the doctrine of *tzimtzum*, of contraction....What is *haknasat orchim* if not withdrawal by the master from a part of his home so that a stranger can occupy the empty part he vacates?