

Parsha Plug: Parshat Vayeira

Bereshit 19:15-29	בראשית יט:טו-כט
<p>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 Avraham and removed Lot from the midst of the upheaval.</p>	<p>טו וכמו השחר עלה, ויאיצו המלאכים בלוט לאמר: קום קח את-אשתך ואת-שתי בנותיך, הנמצאות--פן-תספה, בעון העיר. טז ויתמהמה--ויחזיקו האנשים בידו וביד-אשתו וביד שתי בנותיו, בתמלת ה' עליו; ויצאהו וינחהו, מחוץ לעיר. יז ויהי כהוציאם אתם החוצה, ויאמר המלט על-נפשך--אל-תביט אחריך, ואל-תעמד בכל-הפפר: ההרה המלט, פן-תספה. יח ויאמר לוט, אלהם: אל-נא, אדני. יט הנה-נא מצא עבדך חן, בעיניך, ותגדל חסדך אשר עשית עמדי, להחיות את-נפשי; ואנכי, לא אוכל להמלט ההרה--פן-תדבקני הרעה, ומתי. כ הנה-נא העיר הזאת קרבה, לנוס שמה--והוא מצער, אמלטה נא שמה, הלא מצער הוא--ותחי נפשי. כא ויאמר אליו--הנה נשאתי פניך, גם לדבר הזה: לבלתי הפכי את-העיר, אשר דברת. כב מהר, המלט שמה, כי לא אוכל לעשות דבר, עד-באך שמה; על-כן קרא שם-העיר, צוער. כג השמש, יצא על-הארץ; ולוט, בא צערה. כד וה', המטיר על-סדם ועל-עמרה--גפרית ואש: מאת ה', מן-השמים. כה ויהפך את-הערים האל, ואת כל-הפפר, ואת כל-ישבי הערים, וצמח האדמה. כו ותבט אשתו, מאחרי; ותהי, נציב מלח. כז וישכם אברהם, בבקר: אל-המקום--אשר-עמד שם, את-פני ה'. כח וישקף, על-פני סדם ועמרה, ועל-כל-פני ארץ הפפר; וירא, והנה עלה קיטר הארץ, כקיטר הפבשן. כט ויהי, בשחת אלקים את-ערי הפפר, ויזכר אלקים, את-אברהם; וישלח את-לוט, מתוך ההפכה, בהפך את-הערים, אשר-ישב בהן לוט.</p>

Rashi on Bereshit 19:17, 26	רש"י בראשית י"ט:י"ז, כ"ו
<p>Do not look behind you: You were wicked with them, but in Avraham's merit you are saved. You do not deserve to see their punishment while you are being saved. And his wife looked from behind him: from behind Lot. And she became a pillar of salt: She sinned with salt-- he said to her, "Give a little salt to these guests." She replied, "Also this evil custom you wish to introduce into this place?"</p>	<p>אל תבט אחריך – אתה הרשעת עמהם ובזכות אברהם אתה ניצול, אינך כדיי לראות בפורענותם ואתה ניצול. ותבט אשתו מאחרי – של לוט. ותהי נציב מלח – במלח חטאה, אמר לה תן מעט מלח לאורחים הללו, אמרה לו אף המנהג הזה הרע אתה בא להנהיג במקום הזה.</p>

Bereshit Rabbah 51:5	בראשית רבה נ"א:ה'
<p>His wife looked behind him: Rabbi Yitzchak said, "For she sinned with salt. That night when the angels came to Lot, what was she doing? Going to all her neighbors and saying to them, give me salt, because we have guests. And her intention was that the men of the city would come to know of them. Therefore 'she became a pillar of salt.'"</p>	<p>ותבט אשתו מאחרי – ר' יצחק אמר שחטאה במלח, באותו הלילה שבאו המלאכים אל לוט מה היא עושה הולכת אל כל שכינותיה ואומרת להן תנו לי מלח שיש לנו אורחים והיא מכוונת שיכירו בהן אנשי העיר על כן ותהי נציב מלח.</p>

Radak on Bereshit 19:26	רד"ק בראשית י"ט:כ"ו
<p>And his wife looked from behind him: Lot's wife who had been walking behind him turned around, for she had little faith and she looked to see if the city had been destroyed or not, even though she heard the angel's warning to Lot. This verse is written after the destruction for all of the inhabitants of the cities became partly pillars of salt and pillars of sulfur. And even though salt was not mentioned as part of the lethal rain (the Torah speaking of sulfur and fire), with the sulfur there was salt, as it says "sulfur and salt had burned up its entire land...it is like the overturning of Sdom and Amorrhah..." (Devarim 29:22). A pillar of salt: Like a mound of salt, and it says 'netziv' (from the root 'to stand') because exactly as she was standing when she looked back, so too the salt stood in that position.</p>	<p>ותבט אשתו מאחרי – אשתו שהיתה מאחרי לוט הביטה אחריה כי היתה קטנת אמונה והביטה אם נהפכה העיר ואם לא ואע"פ ששמעה אזהרת המלאך ללוט. ונכתוב זה הפסוק אחר ויהפוך, כי כל יושבי הערים כן היו מקצתם נציב מלח ומקצתם נציב גפרית, ואע"פ שלא נזכר מלח בהמטרה, עם הגפרית היה מלח, כי כן אמר הכתוב גפרית ומלח שריפה כל ארצה (דברים) ואמר כמהפכת סדום וגו'. נציב מלח – כמו תל מלח ואמר נציב לומר כי כמו שהיתה ניצבה עומדת כשהביטה אחריה כן שבה מלח בקומתה.</p>

Bekhor Shor on Bereshit 19:26	ר' יוסף בכור שור בראשית י"ט:כ"ו
<p>His wife looked: She looked back for she was not in a hurry to leave...Because she remained further back... 'she became a pillar of salt' as if to say, a monument and a mount, for all of the debris fell on her, for no one could recognize her, for she was completely covered, and it appeared just that there was salt there. This is the simple reading of the text to me. But most say that her body became salt, and she still remains there.</p>	<p>ותבט אשתו – הייתה מבטת {ו} מתאחרת, שלא היתה ממהרת לילך...עד שנשארה מאחרי...ותהי נציב מלח – כלומר: מצבה ותל, שכל {ה} נפל עליה מלח, שלא היה נראה שמעולם היתה שם אשה, שהיתה מכוסה כולה, ונראה שיש שם מלח. זנ"ל {=זה נראה לי}, לפי פשוטו של הפסוק. אבל העולם אומרים: כי גופה נהפך להיות מלח, ועדיין היא נראית בארץ ההיא.</p>

Ralbag on Bereshit 19: 17, 26, 38	רלב"ג בראשית ביאור הפרשה י"ט:י"ז, כ"ו, ל"ח
<p>When they brought him outside, they said to him that he should hurry and run in order to be saved-- and not to look back-- in order to not impede their escape...the land was like a pillar of salt because of the strength of the fire that was there. And we should not say that the phrase 'she became a pillar of salt' refers to the wife of Lot, for God does not cause wonders if they do not inspire awe for Him, and here there was no one who would see the wonder, and therefore it seems that this phrase refers to the land of Sdom and Amorrhah, for in the turning over of the place, it appeared as sulfur and ash, and this is what it means-- the land was like a pillar of salt.</p>	<p>(יז) וכאשר הוציאו אותם החוצה אמרו לו שימהר לרוץ - כדי שינצל; ולא יביט אחריו - כדי שלא יתעכב מהבריחה... (כו) והיתה הארץ ההיא כמו נציב מלח, לחזק השריפה אשר היתה שם. (לח) ולא הסכמנו גם כן שיהיה אומרו 'ותהי נציב מלח' (כו) שב לאשת לוט, כי ה' יתעלה לא יעשה המופתים אם לא לתועלת שייראו מלפניו, והנה לא היה שם מי שראה זה המופת, ולזה נראה לנו שאומרו 'ותהי נציב מלח' שב אל ארץ סדום ועמורה, כי בהתהפך המקום ההוא נראה בו גפרית ומלח, ולזה היה כמו נציב מלח.</p>

Pirkei DeRebbe Eliezer 25	פרקי דרבי אליעזר (היגר) כ"ה
<p>And they said to them: Do not look behind you, for the Shechinah of the Holy One, blessed be He, has descended in order to rain upon Sdom and upon Amorrhah brimstone and fire. The pity of Irit, the wife of Lot was stirred for her daughters, who were married in Sdom, and she looked back behind her to see if they were coming after her or not. And she saw behind the Shechinah, and she became a pillar of salt (And she stands there to this day, and the oxen which frequent that place daily, lick the salt pillar until they come to the toes of its feet, but until morning all they licked off would grow again), as it is said, "And his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."</p>	<p>אמ' להם אל תביטו לאחוריהם שהרי ירדה שכינתו של הב"ה להמטיר על סדום ועל עמורה גפרית ואש, עירית אשתו של לוט נכמרו רחמה על בנותיה הנשואות והביטה לאחריה לראות אם הולכות אחריה אם לא, וראת אחרי השכינה, ונעשית נציב מלח, (ועדיין היא עומדת כל היום לוחכים אותה השוורים ויורד' על רגליה ובבקר צומחת) שנ' ותבת אשתו מאחריו ותהי נציב מלח.</p>

Aish Kodesh by Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira (Excerpt from Chayei Sarah)
<p>"In the holy book Ma'or V'Shemesh, we find a quote from R. Menachem Mendel of Rymanov, taken from his commentary on the beginning of chapter 6 in Exodus. It concerns a teaching found in the Talmud (Berachot 5a). R. Simeon b. Lakish said, "The Torah uses the word 'covenant' in its description of salt (Leviticus 2:13). It also uses the word 'covenant' in its description of suffering (Deut. 28:69). This teaches us that just as salt purges meat, so does suffering purify a person."</p> <p>R. Menachem Mendel of Rymanov adds the following: "And similarly, just as meat is ruined when overly salted, so can a person be damaged by unbearable suffering. For a person to be properly seasoned by suffering, the suffering must be administered with mercy and properly offset against the person's ability to cope."</p> <p>(Translation from Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira & Hershy J. Worch. "Sacred Fire." iBooks. https://itun.es/us/1ueLFI)</p>

Masechet Berachot 54b	מסכת ברכות נד:
<p>And one must recite a blessing upon seeing Lot's wife, as it is stated: "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt"...The Gemara answers: Over Lot and his wife one recites two blessings. Over his wife he recites: Blessed...the true Judge, and on Lot he recites: Blessed...Who remembers the righteous. As Rabbi Yohanan said: From the story of Lot it is possible to learn that even during a time of wrath of the Holy One, Blessed be He, He remembers the righteous.</p>	<p>ואשתו של לוט שנאמר ותבט אשתו מאחוריו ותהי נציב מלח...תני על לוט ועל אשתו מברכים שנים על אשתו אומר ברוך דין האמת ועל לוט אומר ברוך זוכר את הצדיקים אמר רבי יוחנן אפילו בשעת כעסו של הקדוש ברוך הוא זוכר את הצדיקים.</p>

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, <i>Faith in the Future (Chayei Sarah 5776)</i>
<p>Two people in the Torah looked back, one explicitly, the other by implication. Noah, the most righteous man of his generation, ended his life by making wine and becoming drunk. The Torah does not say why but we can guess. He had lost an entire world. While he and his family were safe on board the ark, everyone else – all his contemporaries – had drowned. It is not hard to imagine this righteous man overwhelmed by grief as he replayed in his mind all that had happened, wondering whether he might have done something to save more lives or avert the catastrophe. Lot's wife, against the instruction of the angels, actually did look back as the cities of the plain disappeared under fire and brimstone and the anger of God. Immediately she was turned into a pillar of salt, the Torah's graphic description of a woman so overwhelmed by shock and grief as to be unable to move on. It is the background of these two stories that helps us understand Abraham after the death of Sarah. He set the precedent: first build the future, and only then can you mourn the past. If you reverse the order, you will be held captive by the past. You will be unable to move on. You will become like Lot's wife...Abraham heard the future calling to him. Sarah had died. Isaac was unmarried. Abraham had neither land nor grandchildren. He did not cry out, in anger or anguish, to God. Instead, he heard the still, small voice saying: <i>The next step depends on you</i>. You must create a future that I will fill with My spirit. That is how Abraham survived the shock and grief. God forbid that we experience any of this, but if we do, this is how to survive. <i>God enters our lives as a call from the future</i>. It is as if we hear him beckoning to us from the far horizon of time, urging us to take a journey and undertake a task that, in ways we cannot fully understand, we were created for...It is future-orientation that defines Judaism as a faith...So much of the anger, hatred and resentments of this world are brought about by people obsessed by the past and who, like Lot's wife, are unable to move on. There is no good ending to this kind of story, only more tears and more tragedy. The way of Abraham in <i>Chayei Sarah</i> is different. First build the future. Only then can you mourn the past.</p>