

בשבת

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WHAT THE CHILD LEARNED

Parshas Vayeira documents one of the most astounding events in history — the upheaval and destruction of Sodom. Though we are told the inhabitants of Sodom were wicked, we see it in action during the drama of Lot's escape. Three angels, in the guise of human beings, arrived at Lot's house. Lot hurriedly ushered them into the house, urging them to not make their presence known to the citizens of Sodom, as this would endanger their lives. Despite his desire for secrecy, the townsfolk were alerted, and made their way to Lot's home, demanding that he give his guests into their hands.

Lot risked his life for his guests. He pleaded with his neighbors, to the point where they said they would do worse to him than to his guests. If not for the angels striking the inhabitants of Sodom blind, Lot would surely have died at his neighbor's hands.¹

The story is harrowing, but it raises a basic question. What caused Lot to risk his life for his guests? This is the same Lot who left Avraham's side for the promise of riches and luxury. The same Lot who rose to prominence in Sodom, becoming a judge in their corrupt justice system. And yet, he was willing to risk everything for the strangers he had just met. Why?

R' Meir Rubman² (1895–1968) says the answer lies in Rashi. Rashi³ comments on Lot's actions when he went to greet the *malachim*, "Lot learned to run after guests from the house of Avraham." R' Rubman points out the importance of early *chinuch*. Despite Lot's greed, and willingness to leave the path of Hashem for money, he still could not shake his early education. *Hachnasos orchim* was in his bones, to the point that when his very life was on the line, he stood up for his guests.

A child may think that true *avodas Hashem* only starts once one is twelve or thirteen, or twenty, or has a job, etc. This is totally false. True *avodas Hashem* begins the moment a child is capable of being taught, and these early lessons are foundational and fundamental.

¹ Bereishis 19:1-11

² Zichron Meir, Bereishis 19:3

³ Bereishis 19:1, s.v. וירא לוט

What caused Lot to risk his life for his guests?

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

We know we are more impressionable as children but how does this help adults?

Of course, before discussing adults, it is important for the children among us to recognize — now is the time! Every ounce of Torah learning, of *avodas Hashem*, pays off dividends that you cannot fathom as you get older. Grab it by the fistfuls!

For the adults among us, raising a child is not just something we have to do, but it is the opportunity of a lifetime (literally) to make a person into a *mensh*. Is there any greater opportunity than that?

In addition, it must be noted that even once we pass into adulthood, it is still important to try to learn as much as we can in our younger years. The younger we are when we learn something, the greater the impact, even if we are already grown.¹

Don't put off that *shiur*, that growth opportunity! Grab it now, before you grow another day!

1 Shabbos 21b

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Chazon Ish, Emunah U'Bitachon 4:14

HASHEM IN OUR VEINS

Yoni Zweibel walked slowly — he was getting old, which would explain why he was in an old age home. But it wasn't just his physical age, ever since his wife of over fifty years passed away, he just wasn't the same.

The old age home provided various distractions, but his real joy came when his grandson arrived. Yoni and Moshe would learn every morning, before Moshe would head off to *yeshiva*. On Shabbos, Moshe would walk over with the entire family, and Yoni would spend time with his great-grandchildren, one of whom was named after his father. That was pure joy.

Yoni continued walking Moshe down the hallway, making their way to the front door after their daily study. "And Yisroel's getting big, he might be saying his first word, we're not sure. And how are you, Zeide?"

"*Boruch Hashem asher lo azuv chasdo!*" Yoni responded, as he often did, thanking Hashem for all the wonderful blessings in his life.

"Zeide, you say that so often. May I ask — how did you do it? How did you stay observant after the war, and with such a connection to Hashem?"

Yoni nodded, as Moshe's question took him back to another time and place. A lifetime of memories flew by in those few moments. "I think you just fall back on what you know," Yoni said with a shrug.

"Really, that's it?"

Yoni sighed. "Moshe, for two years after the war, I didn't want to have anything to do with Hashem. With the things that I experienced..." Yoni trailed off, shaking his head.

"What changed?"

"It's exactly what I said. I was lucky enough to go to *cheder* when I was young. I learned Torah, and grew up keeping the *mitzvos*. After the war, over time, I found myself doing what I always did, learning Torah, and keeping the *mitzvos*."

Moshe knew that his grandfather was a special man, and modest as well. Yet, there was truth to what he was saying — if not for his grandfather's Torah education as a young child, Moshe would likely not be heading off to *yeshiva* at that moment. "Thank you Zeide. I'll see you tomorrow!"

"Yes," nodded Yoni. "I would like that very much. Go learn Torah!"

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Torah studied when one is young is much more likely to be remembered than Torah studied when one is older.¹
- It is a basic obligation of *chinuch* to understand the roots of one's *middos*.²

¹ *Bartenura* on *Avos* 4:20, ס.ו. ע"ל ניר

² *Emunah U'Bitachon*, 4:12