

# Pardes Yehuda

פרשת וירא  
Parshas "Tshu" Vayeira 5777

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Weekly Torah insights translated and revised by Dovid Pinchas Rose, based on the Yiddish יהודה פארדס by Yehuda Zvulun Klitnick

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## A snack but not a bed for the night? Avrohom knew his customers!

יָקַח-נָא מֵעֵט מִיָּמִים וַרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ: וְאָקַחָהּ פֶּתִי לָחֶם וְסָעֵדוּ לְבָכֶם אַחַר תִּעְבְּרוּ כִּי-עַל-כֵּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֹּן תַעֲשֶׂה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: (י"ח ד-ה)  
*Please let a little water be taken, and bathe your feet, and recline under the tree. And I will take a morsel of bread, and sustain your hearts; after[wards] you shall pass on, because you have passed by your servant. And they said, "So shall you do, as you have spoken."*(18:4-5)

We know that Avraham Avinu was the paragon of hospitality. He "wrote the book", as it were, about receiving and treating house guests honourably. (Words for "alacrity" and "running" occur five times in just the first seven pesukim (2,6,7) וירא... וימהר... מהרי... רץ... וימהר... (18:4-5))

And yet a question arises about his reception of his angelic guests. After zealously extending all the niceties of a fine meal, one cardinal aspect of hospitality is conspicuous by its absence: an offer of a place to lay their heads at night. Even the wicked Lot, a talmid of Avrohom Avinu, and far below his spiritual level, offered lodgings:

וְהָהָה נָא אֲדֹנָי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל בֵּית עַבְדְּכֶם וְלִינוּ וַרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁפַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם (לְדַרְכְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִי בְּרַחוּב נְלִין בְּרַחוּב נְלִין: (י"ט ב)  
*Behold now my lords, please turn to your servant's house and stay overnight and wash your feet,..., and you shall arise early and go on your way. And they said, No, but we will stay overnight in the street.*"(19:2)

It seems Avrohom's offer only extended as far as foot-washing! Note further that Avrohom stated explicitly that the wayfarers would continue on their journey after having eaten: on what grounds did he make that statement? The key lies in Avrohom's keen assessment of different personalities. There are two categories of transients. One group are true vagrants and have plenty of time on their hands for casual chit-chat about who they are and where they come from. Another type is people driven by a mission who really don't want to be detained by small talk from a meddlesome host about their background or destination. He sensed that these passers-by were loathe to tarry with him, so he pursued them with haste so that they would at least have a brief repast before continuing their journey. The text bears this out well: "You have passed by your servant. (עַבְרְתֶּם עַל עַבְדְּכֶם) Since you are in a hurry for something important, you don't want to delay. At least have a bite to eat, and then be on your way." אַחַר כֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ. Their response confirmed his hunch: "Exactly our intention -- not to 'sbmooze' nor to stay overnight." Avrohom's hospitality was fine-tuned to the needs of any type of guest.

(תפארת ישראל - הר"י ישראל שיינקמאן, מגיד משרים בעיר קובנא)

## The wayfarers: humans or malachim? -- Depends to whom!

וַרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם: (י"ח ד)  
*bathe your feet*(18:4) Rashi comments:  
כסבור שהם ערביים שמשתחווים לאבק רגליהם והקפיד שלא להכניס עבודה זרה לביתו *He thought that they were Arabs, who prostrate themselves to the dust of their feet, and he was strict not to allow any idolatry into his house.*  
How could Avrohom have misperceived the visitors as idolatrous Arabs? From what a malach told Avimelech, we know that he was a Navi/prophet (ועתה השב אשת האיש כי נביא הוא, (בראשית כ ז) *return the man's wife, because he is a prophet*(20:7)

As a Navi, he should have seen the truth. -- ? -- The answer lies in the unease Avrohom suffered owing to a lack of guests. In response, the Oibershter temporarily beclouded his prophetic spirit so that he would perceive the travelers as ordinary "men", albeit humble, even debased ones, whom he could receive as treasured guests. Avrohom Avinu's standard of hospitality encompassed even lowly idolaters. It is instructive that the apparitions presented themselves to Avrohom as flesh-and-blood people, whereas to Lot, they appeared in their true guise as malachim/angels (י"ט א) (ויבאו שני המלאכים סדמה י"ט א) The contrast was to prove Lot's depravity; he admitted them solely because they were Heavenly beings. Had he seen them as mere flesh-and-blood humans, he would have relegated them to the street. פנינים (תפ"ו)  
בשם הר"ק ר' יצחק מוואורקא זצוק"ל  
There is yet another point needing clarification: the evil Sodomites, Lot's fine neighbours, had no trouble viewing the visitors as actual people, and not malachim. They clamoured to Lot: (י"ט ה) *Where are the men who came to you tonight?* Lot perceived them as malachim, but only to his detriment, as learned earlier. But there could be no supposition that the sordid low-life's of Sodom could merit seeing a malach. Their vision encompassed only humans, and nothing beyond. (שמח זבולון י"ז קליטניק)

## Eating under the tree: a precursor of future glory

וַיָּקַח הַמָּאָה וְחֵלֶב וְגִבְיֵהֶבְקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנֵיהֶם וְהוּא עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ (ויאכלו: י"ח ח)  
*... he took cream and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and he placed [them] before them, and he was standing over them under the tree, and they ate* (18:8) Does it matter that Avrohom hovered over the visitors as they appeared to eat? And do we really have to know that the scene took place under a tree? The Torah does not waste words; there has to be a message here, and indeed there is a profound one. The events were a precursor for the epochal event centuries later of Matan Torah! How? Medrash Rabbah (Shemos, chap. 19, parsha 28b) describes an amazing interchange. The Malachim in Shomayim sought to block the transmission of Torah to Klal Yisroel through Moshe Rabbeinu, a mere mortal. HaKodosh Boruch Hu quashed their opposition by transforming Moshe's countenance to a clone of Avrohom Avinu's. "Are you malachim not embarrassed to oppose Avrohom? Three of your number ate in his house!" And to Moshe, He revealed, "Only in Avrohom's merit has the Torah been given through you." Now we see the splendour of our posuk. Avrohom Avinu stood over the guests to be certain that they "ate." And this was done under a tree, to which the Torah is likened: (משלי ג יח) *It is a tree of life for those who grasp it* (Mishlei 3:18) Avrohom's tree was a precursor, a foreshadowing of the Torah HaKedosha. The malachim's "eating", specifically under that "tree" enabled Moshe Rabbeinu's transmittal of the Torah centuries later, in line with the Medrash we have learned. (שמח זבולון י"ז קליטניק)



HaRav Boruch Avraham of Bardiyov, grandson of Rav Boruch miGorlitz, son of the Holy Divrei Chaim of Tzanz related an incident from his years learning in the Yeshiva in Bobov, Galicia, under the leadership of the Kedushas Tzion, Rav Benzion Halberstam. The world-famous chazzan Yossele Rosenblatt was visiting the town during the Nine Days leading up to Tisha B'Av. The bochurim asked "Yossele" to sing some appropriate cantorial selections for them, and he obliged. The Kedushas Tzion was a composer of liturgical melodies [which continue to be relished to this day among Bobover chassidim, with some, such as his *Kah Ribon, spreading far and wide among "heimishe Yidden" all over the world.* [DPR]] In response, he had the bochurim sing two of his own compositions which fit the mood of the sad Nine Days -- על נהרות בבל and קול בכי לאה. The niggunim appealed greatly to Rosenblatt, who reputedly remarked that they could only have been composed through ruach hakodesh. To this, the Bobover Rebbe commented, "If Yossele were as much of an expert in ruach hakodesh as he is in chazzonus, that would be a high compliment indeed!" Yossele Rosenblatt was thrilled by his encounter with Bobov and the Kedushas Tzion and became a steady supporter of the Yeshiva there by sending money via Elimelech Eluzar Ehrenberg. Yossele was once able to send an unusually large donation of four hundred dollars to Bobov, which was a formidable sum in those days, enough to keep the Yeshiva on an even keel financially for four months.

But before long, the Rebbe, who was a sharp judge of character and human events, detected a definite decline in the learning and davening of his prized bochurim. Greatly alarmed at any "yerida" in any sphere of Jewish life, the Rebbe looked high and low in the town for any bad influence which might have accounted for the lowering of standards. He could find no local cause for the lapses that were unfolding before his eyes. Then it dawned on him that the large infusion of cash from America might somehow have been to blame. He sent an urgent letter to the shliach Meilech Luzer telling him to get to the root of the matter by finding out from Yossele Rosenblatt exactly how the money had come into his hands. The chazzan revealed that he had earned a large sum for performing at a grandiose concert. The only problem was that men and women were seated together. The producers had promised a proper *mechitza*/separation in the audience, but when Rosenblatt arrived there was no such *mechitza*. At that late hour, he proceeded to perform, despite the mixing of genders. When the Kedushas Tzion learned of the tainted source of the donation, he called a

total halt to using any of the funds -- and the spiritual level of the bochurim took an immediate turn for the better. The Kedushas Tzion put matters into perspective by relating a story about a village decades earlier which had acquired a new Sefer Torah, ordinarily a source of great satisfaction for any community. Yet to the dismay of the townspeople, almost every week the Ba'al Koreh found a scribal error that invalidated the entire holy scroll until it was rectified. They feared purposeful sabotage of the Sefer and ran to consult the Holy Ba'al Shem Tov, who was then living, hoping he would assuage their suspicion. The Besh"t Z"L thought deeply and revealed the true story behind that flawed Sefer Torah. "No one is purposely sabotaging your Sefer, but it has a corrupt history. A certain innkeeper offered a warm and welcoming place for rest and refreshment to traveling Yidden. Because of his easy-going nature, his customer base grew steadily and he profited handsomely. If anything, he was spoiled by his success, because clients took to staying longer and longer, whiling away their time. Since they scarcely knew

how to learn Torah, they took to gambling at card games and the kretschma gained a reputation as a gambler's haven. The owner was a decent man and running a gambling den was not his intention. Yet he could not bring himself to turn the rascals out totally, so he instituted a new rule: every table was to have a tzedaka box, which would receive a certain percentage of all winnings. The innkeeper collected a tidy sum from the boxes which he used to commission a new Sefer Torah for a town that was in need of one. Now that is the Sefer which you have acquired.

Since it was funded by tainted gambling money, it is not surprising that it is riddled through with defects." The Kedushas Tzion connected this sorry tale to his own local situation. "Yeshiva money earned from a cantorial concert, impure because of mixed seating, which is against the Torah, cannot help but produce a spiritual decline among the bochurim of that Yeshiva. We reject that money." When Rav Boruch Avraham Halberstam related this story, his son Rav Dov Berel added a very relevant footnote. When the Bais Din Tzedek of Yerushalayim came to America in תשמ"ח to establish and promote "Keren Hatzalah" (which aids Yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel who refuse funding from Medinas Yisroel), Rav Moshe Aryeh Freund, head of the delegation, visited Rav Shlomo, famous Bobover Rebbe of the time to invite him to the public gathering. Rav Shlomo retold our story as a way of encouraging the new undertaking, which would channel pure, untainted tzedaka funds to Mosdos HaTorah in Eretz Yisrael.

(נדפוס ברשות מספר "מבית אבותי ורבותי" מאת הר"ר בערל הלברשטאם (צ"ל))

**STORY**  
**OF THE WEEK:**  
**The Kedushas Tzion of Bobov senses that tzedaka funds are tainted -- and cuts off the flow**

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