



Tiferet

ת פ א ר ת



TIFERET UPDATES

This Week in Tiferet

This past Tuesday, our Shana Alef students went on a “chesed tiyul”, spending the morning helping those in need. They visited the **Beit Bayer** home for the elderly in Yerushalayim, talking and spending time with the elderly there. And then we rushed over to **Yad Eliezer** to help package food for the poor of Yerushalayim. During a week of such great difficulties for America, we are proud that our students stepped up and showed that the best response is to increase our efforts on behalf of our fellow man!

תורת תפארת

Feeling Other's Pain

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Parashat Vayeira

One of the most dramatic dialogue's in Sefer Bereishit takes place in this week's parasha, when Avraham argues with G-d on behalf of the city of S'dom. Avraham boldly tries to convince G-d not to destroy the city, despite its inhabitants being described as "רעים וחטאים" "לה' מאד", "evil and sinning much against G-d." (Bereishit 13:13)

Avraham begins his argument with the rhetorical question, "האף תספה צדיק עם רשע?", "Will you even sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Bereishit 18: 23) The Ramban explains that Avraham was literally fearful for the destruction of the righteous who lived within the city of S'dom. Avraham was afraid that in His anger, G-d would punish the entire city, not differentiating between the different inhabitants. G-d answers, of course, that not only would He not punish the righteous, but He would even hold back from destroying the wicked if there was a significant enough number of *tzadikim* in the city.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch though rejects the Ramban's interpretation of Avraham's original question. He writes, "Avraham had no doubt in the matter, that the *tzadikim* would be saved from the catastrophe that would befall the *reshaim*.... Certainly even if destruction was decreed upon S'dom and its suburbs, the *tzadikim* in its midst would escape."

If so, then what was Avraham asking? According to Rav Hirsch, any *tzadik* living in S'dom would certainly be working tirelessly for the sake of his neighbors – encouraging them to change their ways and working for their salvation. And if finally, the *tzadik*'s efforts were unsuccessful and the city was still to be destroyed, "he would suffer due to the loss of life, which he had tried to save and at which he had hoped to succeed."

Avraham is asking G-d to save the city of S'dom, not to spare the lives of the righteous, but to spare the anguish of the escaping *tzadik*, who will be devastated by the catastrophe befalling so many of his neighbors.

All of us have read and seen the devastation caused in America by the hurricane which caused so much financial and personal damage, as well as the loss of lives, to Jews and non-Jews alike. And perhaps those of us who were not personally affected might be tempted to be thankful that we were spared – and move on. Rav Hirsch is teaching us that that is not the way of the righteous; they do not move on and forget those who have suffered. Those who were spared any sort of calamity should likewise be pained by the



A Valu(E)able Lesson Aliza Arbesfeld (Tiferet 5773)

ויאמר אברהם כי אמרתי רק אין יראת אלקים
במקום הזה

“And Avraham said, “For I thought, only there is no fear of the Lord in this place.” (20:11)

When Sarah’s true identity as a married woman became known to King Avimelech of Gerar, he became upset. Avraham had deceived him by saying that Sarah was his sister. When Avimelech came close to sinning with Sarah, G-d revealed her true identity to him. Avimelech said to Avraham “You almost got me into terrible trouble; you told me she was your sister when really she was your wife. Why didn’t you tell me the truth?”

“For I thought,” said Avraham, “only there is no fear of the Lord in this place.” (20:11)

This word “only” seems to be out of place. What is the purpose for this word “only”?

The Malbim gives an interpretation to what Avraham meant by using the word “only.” “Your city is wonderful,” Avraham was telling the people of Gerar. “It is a place of culture and refinement, of exemplary citizens. There is only one thing wrong with it. The Lord is not feared in your city. And if the Lord is not feared, then all your other refinements and accomplishments are meaningless.”

This explanation is very much applicable to us. You could be the most successful, cultural, polite person there is. However, one that does not fear G-d lives by their own rules. When people live by their own rules and not the rules of the Torah, all of their successes and acculturation are meaningless in the eyes of G-d. In addition, when one allows humans to determine morals and values and does not seek out the Torah’s understanding, that society is doomed to end up in a very bad way. Human understanding of what is right and wrong leads to tragedy and disaster. Only when we rely on Hashem's understanding can we build a truly good society.

תורת תפארת (המשך)

suffering of others. We should empathize with those around us, as if we too had experienced the same loss. Like Avraham Avinu, the paradigm of the man of chesed, instead of patting ourselves on the back for the good fortune of having been spared, we should instead focus on those who have suffered and redouble our efforts to help them in their time of need.

May we all merit a swift and full recovery from all the horrific damage suffered over the past week.

Shabbat Shalom