

Parshas Vayeira

This week's Parsha is Vayeira, the 4th Parsha in Chumash Bereishis, and the continuation of the Torah elaborating on Avraham's life and revealing his deep and unwavering middah of Chesed. The first point I want to elaborate on is the Rashi that explains that angels have a singular mission, for which Rashi explains nuances in the text, to highlight a single and plural role (that is, when the Angels were together, and when they were separate for their mission, Rashi to Posuk 2 chapter 18). Rashi derives his explanation from Bava Metzia 86b/87a.

The question is, if they are on a singular mission, how or why did they stop at Avraham's house first, that means that all the angels first had the mission to visit Avraham, then to continue onto their mission they had. (Michoel- for telling Sarah that she will bear a child, Rephoel to heal Avraham, and a second separate mission saving Lot from Sodom, and Gavriel to overturn Sodom). Rashi only uses Rephoel as an example in his explanation, because while optically one could posit that the angels were also there to visit the sick, perhaps not, as Hashem was already there visiting, fulfilling the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim.

The Gemara in Bava Metzia 86b states that Rav Yehuda says in the name of Rav, "that every action Avraham performed himself, Hashem did himself for Avraham and his descendants, and for every action that Avraham performed through a messenger, Hashem performed through a messenger."

Furthermore, the Posuk 18:4 Avraham strongly requests that the "men" be served

by Avraham, meaning they were not going to stop in (as evidenced by Gemara in Shavuos 35b from Rashi 18:3- they were to pass on and Avraham asked Hashem to wait) as they couldn't be due to their "missions" except for Michoel who was there to tell Sarah of her news. Yet, Rashi explains (on Kichom Hayom 18:1) that due to Avraham's discomfort for not being able to serve guests, Hashem sent the "angels in the form of men".

These multiple points show that on one hand the angels were going to pass by without stopping in, but their mission took them past Avraham's tent- so they were on their singular mission- Avraham had to ask them to deviate to fulfill his mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim. The fact that Hashem was with him, and waited, meant that Hashem was able to glimpse on the fact that Avraham himself served his guests, as opposed to asking his servant to complete the mission (which according to Rashi he asked his servant Eliezer (Bava Metzia 86b) to check outside for travelers, and when he didn't report that there were, Avraham didn't believe Eliezer and went out himself for which he saw the 'men'). On simple observation the angels were just going to pass, and this doesn't contradict the singular mission orientation of their being able to stop in. Except possibly for Rephoel, or Michoel who was there to heal Avraham or give news to Sarah of the birth of Yitzchak- for which it is unclear if he was the angel addressed by Avraham in posuk 3, on which Rashi explains, Avraham addressed, the primary one among them- perhaps we can translate this, as he addressed the angel who passing into the house on purpose, whereas the other 2 were going to continue on a different mission, and he didn't want to let them up, (and perhaps he was asking

for Hashem to hold them back, although we know what Rashi says- that he asked Hashem to wait (Shabbos 127a) as the Gemara says in Shavuot 35b, serving guests is greater than hosting Hashem). Avraham effectively gathered them as one, (which shares a similar word to Atem Nitzavim Hayom from parshas Nitzavim (Devorim 29:9) that the sum was singular comprised of all its parts, heads of the tribes etc. in front of Hashem as one, as Alshich seems to translate and explain there).

The angels (at least 2 of them) aren't there to visit Avraham, rather they are being taken in as guests (and in Avraham's case it wasn't just an expression of kindness it was to get them to serve Hashem, which we see Rashi explains on 18:4 washing their feet, to take the tuma of their idol worship away. Meaning Avraham wasn't just there to serve a meal as we know, he was there with the focused opportunity to get these 'men' to serve Hashem).

Whereas, just like Avraham served his guests directly, Hashem was there to comfort Avraham- Bikur Cholim. Hashem sent Rephoel to heal Avraham, rather than "do it Himself", because like Avraham, Hashem performed this act directly himself, as opposed to by a messenger. As Hashem's love for Avraham knew no bounds, as the posuk 18:19 states, "Ki Yidativ" - "because I know", Rashi explains, this is an expression of love.

The angels capitulated and stayed, and the posuk says in 18:5, v"saadu libchem" you will nourish your heart, and Rashi explains the word libchem as opposed to livavchem, or libosechem, to show that they were of "one heart" and that the Yetzer Hara cannot sway angels. It is at this point that Avraham

may have uncovered that they were angels and not people, but he got them to work as one, under the mission of Rephoel who came to Avraham to heal him, so they didn't deviate from their missions. Avraham stated to them "achar ta'avoru" afterwards you shall go, that is Avraham is re-empowering them to go on their missions, and with this the angels agreed to stay. To finally complete the picture, and to know now the missions weren't contradictory, Avraham says "Al Kein Avartem" for which Rashi explains, (and you can ask why Rashi or what Rashi is further explaining here) which is that you came here first, meaning Hashem *actually* sent you (angels) to come my way. That is your first mission to complete (to have passed before me), then you can go, and they agreed.

What we see, without Rashi, a lot of what we read wouldn't make sense, but also, Rashi preempts a question by explaining specific words in the Posuk. What we see is that Avraham and Hashem's relationship was incredibly close, and that the angels were sent by Hashem, which answers the question of their ability to stop into Avraham before continuing their way.

Good Shabbos