

Parshas Vayeira

In this week's Parsha, we are told the recounting of Avraham sitting at his tent recovering from his Bris and three guests visiting him. Rashi explains that the guests were each on a singular mission, and the order Rashi says is the first is to give news to Sarah about the birth of Yitzchak, the second is to tell Avraham about the destruction of Sodom, and the third is to heal Avraham.

This seems out of order. If they greeted Avraham, presumably the first should have healed him, the second would be about Sarah giving birth, and the third would be about the destruction of Sodom.

The simple answer is that Rashi follows the subsequent order the Torah recounts, meaning the next pesukim after the visitation is the first Angel telling Sarah and Yitzchak, etc.

A more detailed answer could be that Avraham was, in fact, healed by serving the guests. Although he still needed to recover physically, he got up and served them. As uncomfortable as it may have been, Avraham was able to be himself (a Ba'al Chesed), so he was "healed." This means Rashi then needs to explain the other two visitors. And not to forget the mission of the third, he came last. Similarly, if it was so hot (as Rashi explains that Hashem made it so Avraham didn't have visitors while he healed), it was uncomfortably hot, so travellers were scarce. Why, then, did the Angels come in the heat of the day, which would have been uncomfortable for

Avraham? (defeating the purpose of Avraham not being visited). Obviously, it was to ensure that they had a private and focused audience with Avraham, so any other guests would have been a possible distraction.

This is actually supported by what Rashi says is a principle taught in the Gemara: that angels are only able to undertake one mission at a time. Rashi notes that the angel Raphael, who came to heal Avraham, also saved Lot from Sodom. If so, how could Raphael have come for two missions? This implies that the healing could result from their visit to Avraham, collectively fulfilling that singular mission (as explained by Rashi regarding the use of singular language).

Accordingly, there were two Melachim for the Sodom mission: one to destroy it and the other to save Lot. Why did they even come to Avraham and tell him about Sodom? What relevance did it have for Avraham (besides Lot being there)? As explained by Rashi, the fact that they travelled (until the evening) to get from Chevron to Sodom meant that the Malachim were giving time for Avraham to intercede on behalf of the city. This tells us that even if something seems lost, there is still hope for salvation- something a selfless Ba'al Chesed such as Avraham would try to ensure.

Yet, seemingly, Avraham wasn't successful; although, because of Rashi, we can see the importance of judges and rulings. That rulings are carried out if justice is enacted. Now, this would also be another explanation for why there needed to be three angels: Avraham was even apprised of Sodom's judgment. The

simplest form of a Beis Din is with three judges, and Avraham was brought in as the counsel on behalf of the defendant. This now makes sense for why there was a specific requirement to “heal” Avraham, and it is listed third in Rashi’s order. The first news to tell them about the birth of Yitzchak was good news, confirming that which they knew (i.e., from the end of the last parsha), and this can be completed when Avraham is healed. Second, he was told to be the legal representative of Sodom, i.e., that they are scheduled to be destroyed. Avraham had to be healed to ensure that he had clarity and the ability to try and defend them. Now, although the case was lost and Avraham conceded, we are told about the greatness of Avraham’s offspring following the Torah, unlike the ways of Sodom.

How does Avraham act? As a Ba’al Chesed. In a Sichra (chelek 1), the Rebbe points out that Avraham achieved completion and revelation through the Bris. We can do this by offering something greater than ourselves to the service of others (unlike Sodom’s way), and these historical recounts in the Torah aren’t just stories; they are meant to teach us a lesson on how to act and be. We should be like Avraham.

Good Shabbos