

Kehillah #43



THE PERTINENT PARASHA

Two Types of Goodness and the Legacy of Avraham

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

“Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” We tend to begin from here: the Divine instruction to Avraham to leave his father’s home and travel to an unknown location. However, we forget that Avraham was already on the way and even knew where he was going!

At the end of *Parashas Noach*, we find Terach taking his son Avraham (then Avram), Sarah (then Sarai), and Lot on a journey from Ur Kasdim to Canaan. Yet, the Torah informs us that they only got halfway: “They arrived at Haran, and they settled there” (*Bereshis* 11:31). Terach died in Haran, after which Avraham received the Divine instruction to travel – in fact, to complete the journey he had initially intended.

Moreover, commentaries (see, for instance, Seforno) explain that Terach appreciated the elevation and holiness of Eretz Yisrael and wished to travel there with his family. This seems to belittle the Divine instruction to travel to Canaan: Avraham was on his way

there! What is the meaning behind this?

The answer to this question is that Eretz Yisrael is, indeed, objectively good and elevated, and it stands to reason that Terach wished to move there. Yet, it was imperative that Avraham Avinu move to Canaan not because of its inherent goodness but within the context of a connection with Hashem – the ultimate source of all good.

It was imperative that Avraham Avinu move to Canaan not because of its inherent goodness but within the context of a connection with Hashem – the ultimate source of all good.

This connection begins with Hashem’s instruction to Avraham and with the trust that Avraham placed in Hashem,





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which is why Hashem did not mention the destination. Relationships are based, first and foremost, on trust. Rather than going to Eretz Yisrael because of its elevation and goodness, Avraham had to travel there out of faith in Hashem, without knowing where he was going.

The good we do is a direct manifestation of Divine goodness, bringing *kedushah* into the world and realizing the relationship between Hashem and humanity for which the world was created.

Perhaps this is also why Terach had to die in Haran before completing his intended journey. Had Terach led his family to Canaan, this act of *aliya* – the first *aliya* in history – would have been achieved solely because of the goodness of the land. After Terach died, the trajectory changed dramatically: the journey was the same, but it was made in the context of a relationship with Hashem.

Much of our lives follow similar lines. Of course, we seek to do the good. We also expect others, Jewish or not, to follow the path of righteousness. We are shocked when the face of evil is

bare before our eyes, and we are inspired by good, whoever does it. So, what makes us different from everybody else?

We are different, of course, in Torah and mitzvos. But this difference goes beyond the technical. It means that all the good we do, whether in mitzvah observance or in all the good we're involved with, is done in the context of a covenant with Hashem – with the Divine source of all good.

The distinction is both qualitative and quantitative. It is quantitative because our knowledge of Hashem allows us to cling to goodness even when the going is tough, even when things look bleak. Though we cannot know how, we know that everything somehow fits into the Divine scheme of ultimate goodness, which drives us to the good.

But it is also qualitative, in that the good we do is a direct manifestation of Divine goodness, bringing *kedushah* into the world and realizing the relationship between Hashem and humanity for which the world was created.

Such is the legacy of Avraham Avinu. He was the first ambassador of Hashem to the world, manifesting His name in all he did. We follow his path. Even when it's tough. Even now.



Hashkafically Speaking

The Biblical Roots of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky – Dean/Rosh Yeshiva of Shapell's/Darche Noam

Our forefather Avraham was promised Eretz Yisrael as a legacy for his descendants, part of the eternal covenant between G-d and Avraham. Rabbinic sources foretell the ongoing struggle between the descendants of his two children, Yitzchak and Yishmael, over the right to inherit the land. This struggle has been playing out since the Jews began their return to Zion 150 years ago.

By examining sources in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and later commentaries, which discuss the roots of the prolonged conflict, we can shed light on what is increasingly revealing itself to be a deeply religious battle. This perspective can provide insights for a much-needed shift in the Jewish people's priorities at this critical juncture in our history.

We see from Chazal that we're dealing with a fundamental element in the history of the Jewish people. Understanding this can wean us from compulsively reading the daily news, providing a superficial perspective to also seeing this from an authentic Torah perspective.

Our sources show that we are living Torah history. They foretell how

Yishmael will cause us to turn in pain to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, that the win won't come only from military or political efforts, as necessary as they are, but through our fidelity to the covenant made with Avraham.

We need to reorient our focus from compulsively reading the daily news to realizing that what's going on in Israel today is not political or military at its root.

A Covenantal Act

We see in *Bereshis* (chapter 17) that there are three elements of the bris, the covenant between Hashem and Avraham and his descendants. These elements are Avraham and his descendants accepting Hashem as the One G-d, our receiving Eretz Yisrael, and circumcision. The Midrash in *Bereshis Rabba* tells us that it is through the merit of the bris that we enter Eretz Yisrael.

When Avraham was informed that Sarah would have a son at the age of ninety his response was "Would that





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Yishmael live before you.” The *Zohar* views this as the root of Yishmael – who was also circumcised – being given limited rights to Eretz Yisrael.

The Midrash tells of Yishmael’s claim that his bris was superior to Yitzchak’s since he, by choice had it done at 13 years old, while Yitzchak was an 8-day old baby. The *Zohar* tells of the angel of Yishmael arguing with G-d that Yishmael was circumcised and should also have a

We are destined to cry in response to the pain Yishmael’s descendants inflict on us. And Hashem promises to listen and answer those prayers.

connection to G-d.

The response was to award him a connection to G-d in the lower world, with his descendants having that connection through a limited claim to Eretz Yisrael. But that claim is limited to times when Eretz Yisrael is “empty.”

What does it mean that something is “empty?” My seventh-grade science teacher brought an empty glass milk bottle into school one day and asked us what was in the bottle. “Nothing,”

everybody answered. He told us we were wrong, that there is air in the bottle. But if we think deeply, he was wrong. A milk bottle without milk is empty since its role is to hold milk.

When would a *beis midrash* or shul be considered empty? From our perspective, as a place for Torah study or davening, with no people there, it is empty. But to a moving crew that moves furniture to a new venue, the chairs and tables within it means it is not empty. The role of Eretz Yisrael is to have Jews living Torah. When that is lacking, it can be considered empty.

Yishmael’s bris was not of the same quality as Yitzchak’s because it wasn’t a covenantal act but simply a physical one. Our bris milah – the first mitzvah commanded uniquely to Avraham – is a covenantal act. If we view circumcision as simply what we do to carry on tradition, as the descendants of Yishmael do, then his argument of being superior has merit. But as descendants of Yitzchak, we need to realize our connection to Eretz Yisrael is a function of our fidelity to the covenant with G-d.

The Promise of Redemption

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer states that six people were named before they were born, including Yitzchak and Yishmael. He was called Yishma-el,





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“the Almighty will hear,” as foretelling that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will listen to our cries in response to the pain his descendants will inflict on us in Israel at the end of days – and answering those prayers (*Tehillim* 55:20).

We are destined to cry in response to the pain Yishmael’s descendants will inflict on us.

And Hashem promises to listen and answer those prayers.

The army must conduct the most professional and successful battle possible. The nation must work to ensure fidelity to the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people. And each one of us must reach out in prayer beseeching the Almighty to alleviate the terrible tragedies that are unfolding before our eyes.



MEKOM AVODA Workplace Ethics & Halacha

Public and Private Property Rights

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

Our *parasha* tells of a dispute between Avram’s shepherds and those of Lot. Rashi explains that the dispute was halachic: Lot’s shepherds reasoned that the Eretz Yisrael is “an inheritance from their forefathers” (*Avoda Zara* 53b); hence grazing is permissible everywhere for Avram’s family. Avram’s shepherds understood that the rights stemming from this inheritance apply only when the land is conquered; therefore

Lot’s shepherds were violating the rights of the local landowners and needed to be reprovved.

The Ramban writes that the plain meaning is that the shepherds fought over scarce grazing lands. Avram’s shepherds were defending his property rights, not those of the neighbors. Such disputes over fair division of limited, vital public resources are a recurring theme in *sefer Bereshis*. Most prominent





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are water rights. Some of the wells Yitzchak dug caused disputes with other herders, due to the limited groundwater (*Bereshis* 26). And the *Midrash Hagadol* explains that the herders of Charan wouldn't draw water until all of them were present because the well water was rationed among them (*Bereshis* 29:2). (Presumably Yaakov's right to draw for Rachel first was because in his merit the waters welled up and increased, as the commentators explain on *Bereshis* 29:10.)

The halachos of the use of public resources can tell us something about how the grazing rights should ideally have been divided between Avram's camp and that of Lot.

The halachic default state seems to be that every natural resource either belongs to somebody (including possibly the public), in which case the owner has the right to exclude anyone from using his property, or else is unowned (*hefker*), in which case it can be acquired or exploited by anybody. But in fact there are many resources which most benefit us if they are available to everyone, within reasonable limits. Hence, *Chazal* inform us

(*Bava Kamma* 80b-81a) that when Yehoshua led the people of Israel into Eretz Yisrael, he made a series of enactments (*takanos*) which conditioned the appropriation of land by individuals and the tribes on various rights of public use.

Thus, a person is allowed to graze his animals in someone else's forest in a way that doesn't harm the forest; everyone may draw water from natural springs; anyone may fish with a fishing rod in a lake, but only the owner is allowed to use a net. In all these cases, the benefit to the user is immense compared to the harm to the owner, but selling the rights to every potential user is completely impractical.

While originally these were a small number of enumerated and narrowly defined rights, agreed upon at the time of acquisition, there is much evidence that *Chazal* viewed Yehoshua's rules as not merely inspired, but also inspiring. They serve as a worthy precedent, and highlight that in general it is appropriate for the community to make enactments or customs similarly balancing competing needs.

For instance, Shmuel (*Bava Kamma* 81b) states that Yehoshua's enactments are customary even



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outside Eretz Yisrael, and his opinion is brought down in the Rambam (*Nizkei Mamon* 5:5) and the *Tur* (*Choshen Mishpat* 274). Another example: a similar rule mentioned in the Mishna (*Bava Metzia* 118b) is described as a “stipulation of *beis din*” – not of Yehoshua (*Tur*, *Choshen Mishpat* 274). The rule is that it is generally forbidden to place manure in the public thoroughfare (to break it down), because it is a nuisance to pedestrians. But in the season when all farmers need to treat their manure in this way, it is permitted.

The *Perisha* (*Choshen Mishpat* 274:1) explains that Yehoshua certainly didn't make stipulations for the Jews outside of Eretz Yisrael; he did not imagine that they would ever be exiled. Likewise, Yehoshua himself did not institute the rule for manure in the public thoroughfare. Both were instituted *due to* Yehoshua's enactments, not as part of them.

Another ruling in the spirit of Yehoshua's enactments in light of changing public needs: The Mishna (*Bava Basra* 60a) forbids making tunnels under the public thoroughfare; but we learned a few weeks ago that the Rashba permitted this when plumbing

and drainage channels under the main street became commonplace (Responsa of the Rashba II:292).

Viewed in the light of Yehoshua's inspired rules, there is little difference between the understanding of Rashi and that of the Ramban. According to Rashi, Lot's camp was heedless of the rights of others in their *private* property. According to the Ramban,

Avram realized that the camp of Lot's cavalier attitude toward the property rights of others is more at home among the people of Sodom than among the people of the Avos.

Lot's camp was heedless of the rights of others in *public* property, by seeking to secure rights there using shouting and intimidation instead of equitable principles. Either way, Avram realized that such a cavalier attitude toward the property rights of others is more at home among the people of Sodom than among the people of the Avos.



Taking Interest

Heter Iska and Lack of Profit

Rabbi Shloimy Muller

Talmid of Rav Pinchas Vind *shlita*, founder of the Beis Horaah L'Inyanei Ribbis

We've explained that through the *heter iska* the borrower needs to pay the lender only the profits earned by his investment. Therefore, if the borrower did not profit, he may refuse to pay the (non-existent) dividends. However, to protect the lender, the *heter iska* requires the borrower to prove the lack of profit either through witnesses or by taking an oath. As long as the borrower does not swear in *beis din* to the contrary, it is assumed that he did profit and therefore must pay.

Last week we asked why we pay interest payments every month. Aren't there months where we lost money? There are several reasons why this isn't so simple.

First, the vast majority of people are very hesitant to swear and prefer to pay rather than take an oath claiming lack of profit. Moreover, the *heter iska* stipulates that the lender has a right to profit from any of the borrower's profitable assets. It's therefore very difficult to ascertain that none of the borrower's assets appreciated or profited during this time. Another point is that the lender is entitled to the rent of any of the borrower's properties and this profit is almost guaranteed.

Moreover, most banks in Israel have an additional stipulation in their *heter iska* requiring the borrower to report the lack of profits during that very month. The clause posits that the lack of a claim is an admission of profit. Meaning, if one did not report poor profits by the end of any given month, he may no longer contest the profits of that month, even by swearing. (This protects the banks immensely, because the maximum they stand to lose is one month's interest, and almost no one will put up a fight for that.)

Rav Moshe Shternbuch, *shlita*, strongly maintains that if one is unaware of this clause, he hasn't gained much from the *heter iska*, because he is unwittingly being forced to admit profit and therefore practically forced to pay interest. Once one is aware of this, the halachic complications are greatly reduced.

As we can see, before implementing a *heter iska*, it's highly recommended to read it through or have someone explain the basic ideas, the same way one would before signing any other legal contract. Doesn't *ribbis* deserve at least the same attention that we give our money?



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

Being a Team Player

Rabbi Tzvi Broker | Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

Being a team player is one of the most sought-out traits in the workplace today. This week's *parasha* defines what this means and shows how being a true team player is embedded into the DNA of a Jew.

The *Sefas Emes* (5641) explains that *Lech lecha*, "Go for you," was Hashem's directive to Avraham to do something that wasn't natural for him. It goes without saying that Avraham's desire wasn't his own personal gain or building his reputation. His natural desire was to harness his own potential to help uplift all of humanity. Through the command of *Lech Lecha*, Hashem was telling Avraham that He wanted him to change strategies. He wanted him to focus on developing his own offspring and fostering the nation of Yisrael. However, this didn't mean veering away from Avraham's ultimate desire to help uplift all of humanity. Hashem taught Avraham that the pathway to impacting the whole world begins with investing internally in building his own nation. Only once Yisrael succeeded in fulfilling its own role could the rest of humanity become transformed and uplifted.

This is the secret to true teamwork. Work environments are often made up of different departments, and each department is made up

of individuals. It's common for individuals to be focused on their own track record and success. While they may excel in communicating and working with others, their ultimate intention is their own personal gain.

Hashem taught Avraham that the pathway to impacting the whole world begins with investing in building his own nation.

Other individuals may have a wider vision than this and see themselves as part of their assigned teams or departments. They are able to put aside their own personal interests and invest their energies in ensuring the success of their team or department. They may value the importance of good communication with other departments, but their intention is limited to bringing the maximum benefit for the particular department or team they are involved in.

Avraham is teaching that to be Jewish is to be concerned with the well-being of everyone. Yet this doesn't mean spreading oneself too





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thin to be effective. Strategically, businesses must create departments and teams, and its members must prioritize their focus to their specific responsibilities and roles. This is exactly what Hashem was communicating to Avraham through His command of *Lech lecha*. This was a required step. At the same time, we can't lose sight of the ultimate

goal, which is for the greater benefit of the organization or company we work for. This is the meaning of true teamwork. When we succeed in working in this way, each part is able to thrive in its particular role while at the same time all parts are deeply connected working toward one unified goal.



BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi Herzog: Early Rabbinic Career

Rabbi Dov Loketch | Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit

Last week, we opened with the marriage and early career of Rabbi Herzog, and concluded with an offer he received to assume a distinguished religious leadership role in Eretz Yisrael. This week we'll describe his appointment to that position.

On Elul 3 (September 1), 1935, Rav Kook, who was appointed the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Palestine in 1921, passed away, leaving this position vacant. Rav Herzog, who, like Rav Kook, was a renowned Torah scholar, public figure, and passionate supporter of the cause to establish a Jewish state, was seen as a worthy candidate for the post of Ashkenazic chief rabbi.

The other candidate, however, was regarded by many as a more suitable successor of Rav Kook. Rav Yaakov

Moshe Charlap was Rav Kook's closest disciple and an outstanding *talmid chacham* and kabbalist who imbibed Rav Kook's Torah, thought, and ideology. It seemed only natural that he would succeed his illustrious mentor.

Nevertheless, Rav Herzog received the fervent support of many of the leading Torah figures of the time.

In the end, the committee elected Rav Herzog by a vote of 37 to 31. His formal *kesav rabbanus* was signed by leading figures representing





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the various streams of Orthodox Judaism, making it a remarkable display of *achdus*.

A Humble Servant

The investiture ceremony took place on Sunday, 5 Shevat 5697 (January 14, 1937) in the historic Churva Synagogue in the Old City of Jerusalem, which was then a vibrant center of Torah life in the city. Several of the speakers referred to Rav Herzog as the *Kohen Gadol*, a title by which many had referred to his predecessor, Rav Kook, who was a *Kohen* and a towering religious leader.

In his masterful acceptance *derasha*, Rav Herzog analyzed the role of the *Kohen Gadol* by noting the מנחת חביתין – the special offering that he was required to bring twice each day, consisting of just flour and oil (*Vayikra* 6:12-16). Rav Herzog observed that a *korban mincha*, an offering of flour, was normally the offering brought by the poor. One who wished to offer a voluntary sacrifice would bring an animal sacrifice, or, if he could not afford to bring an animal, a bird. It was only the most indigent among the nation, who could not afford even a bird sacrifice, who would bring a *minchah* instead.

Why, Rav Herzog asked, would the Torah want the *Kohen Gadol* to bring specifically a poor man's *korban*, a simple offering of flour and oil, each day? He explained that despite the grandeur and majesty associated

with the post of *Kohen Gadol*, the Torah wanted to remind him daily that ultimately, he was merely a humble servant of Hashem and His people. The *Kohen Gadol* occupied a prestigious office, but he was to conduct himself with humility, kindness, and sensitivity. Rav Herzog announced on that emotional occasion that he was committed to carrying out his duties as chief rabbi in this manner and with this mindset, as a humble servant of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and *Am Yisrael*. And this is precisely what he did throughout his three terms as chief rabbi.

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The Problem with Teenagers

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*

My kids like to tell me that there's Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. And then there's Israel. I guess I don't know that Israel very well. Jerusalem has always been my paradigm. So to spend a Shabbos in a really frum – but not Jerusalem-frum – yishuv was nothing less than an education.

Fascinating, it was, to see a social contract that's slightly different from the one we're used to. Everything, from the living standard of those in learning, to the attitude towards pets, to the relationship with the town council, to how acceptable barefoot play is, to the time for lunch on Shabbos (Kiddush from noon to 3:30pm, lunch served at 4pm, in case you were wondering) was just somewhat different. I mean, same Torah and mitzvos and all, just a different approach to, well, everything.

Curious, I asked my hostess what the yishuv's off-the-derech problem was like. She laughed and told me they don't really have an off-the-derech problem. When she caught the look in my face that must have said, "Ahem! You must be kidding! I've seen it!" she explained. "We don't have an off-the-derech issue. We just have teenagers."

My thoughts begin to wander. Vietnam veterans didn't come home

with PTSD. They came home with trauma. It became PTSD because of the reception they received. As with so many things in life, the event itself may be crucial but probably not as crucial as what happens next.

Curious, I asked my hostess what their off-the-derech problem was like. She laughed and told me they don't really have an off-the-derech problem.

"You see," (my musings rudely interrupted by the hostess with whom I was conversing) "over here, the kids don't get thrown out of their school. Or their home. Or their yishuv. When my kids are being teenagers, my neighbors and friends still love and accept them. And when my neighbors' kids are being teenagers, we still love them and accept them. And then when they're done being rebellious or stupid, no big deal is made of it. So they kind of pick up where they left off."

We as a community must ask ourselves a crucial question: At what point is the damage to our teenagers





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being done? Is the damage done when the dumb 15 year old behaves like a dumb 15 year old? Or is the problem in the reaction, when the parents and schools take the dumb 15 year old too seriously and respond as if they themselves were dumb 15 year olds? Wouldn't a blind eye turned sometimes be a little more helpful than an immediate expulsion?

I'm aware that sometimes teenage behavior isn't just dumb. It's dangerous and nerve-wracking. I'm aware of this. But I ask myself the question: what might happen should we, the adults, learn to freak out a little less? True, the kids are being ridiculous. And they're overreacting. But are we, perhaps, the greater issue when we respond in turn? Aren't teenagers kind of supposed to be a

bit stupid? Isn't that one of the ways they learn to navigate the difficult transition into adulthood? (You don't avoid the reality of raging hormones just because you're *frum*.)

But what's our excuse? And how much less dramatic might the whole problem be if we gave our teenagers a little more room to do their teenage thing while knowing that, during this tumultuous time, they can rely on their parents and communities to remain level-headed and stable? What if we stopped judging the off-the-derech issue, and, instead, started understanding the teenage child?

"We don't have an off-the-derech issue," she said. "We just have teenagers."



PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Parashas Lech Lecha

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story:

"Hello, everyone. I'm home," said Mr. Steiner, dripping raindrops on the floor as he entered the house.

"Daddy, we were worried about you!" exclaimed the children.

"Yes, there was a big thunderstorm

on the way home, but I drove carefully and *baruch Hashem* I'm fine."

As the family sat down for dinner, they noticed someone coming out of their garage holding a heavy box in his arms!

"Omigoodness, who is that?" asked one of the daughters.





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"And what is he taking out of our garage?" asked another.

Their brother stood up, "That stranger is stealing something from our garage!"

Mr. Steiner walked towards the front door and called out to the man. He recognized him as the quiet man who lived down the street. "Excuse me, sir," Mr Steiner called out. "Can I help you?"

The man stopped and turned around. "Hello! You are Mr. Steiner, right? I'm one of your neighbors. I think I've seen you in shul a few times. In this box is a computer that was just fixed on Main Street. When I was bringing it home, the heavy rain began. I was worried that the rain would soak through the box and damage the computer. I saw that your garage was open, so I put it in there. I figured I'd come back in a few hours once the rain stopped. So, here I am! I'm just taking it home now. Thanks!"

The youngest Steiner, a six-year-old

boy, could not hold back anymore. "You aren't allowed to do that! You didn't ask permission first!"

The neighbor smiled, "I'm sorry. No one was home. The garage had space, so I just left my box in there for a short time."

The boy wasn't satisfied. "It's still our property. And since you used it, you should pay us rent!"

The older siblings shushed their brother but wondered if he was right.

Mr. Steiner spoke up. "I apologize for my son's words, but I think he has a point. I'm sure that had we been home we would have allowed you to store your computer in our garage. But the fact is that we were not there. It's too bad that your computer would have been damaged, but you can't simply use someone's property without his permission."

"I see nothing wrong with what I did," said the neighbor. "It's not as if I caused you any loss. Let's ask the shul rabbi what the *halacha* says."

Discussion:

Q: Who do you think is right?

A: In *Parshas Lech Lecha*, we learn about the city of Sodom. It was full of bad people doing bad things (*Bereshis* 13:13). Even if someone

wanted to do something nice, the neighbors would get angry and hurt them for even trying! Our rabbis use the term *middas Sodom* "the trait of Sodom" to describe such behavior (*Mishna Avos* 5:10).

The Steiner garage was open and





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available. The Steiners did not lose anything by having their neighbor's box in it. If they had been living in that awful city of Sodom or Amarah, it would have been common (and encouraged) to refuse to help this neighbor. It would be showing *middas Sedom*. Our rabbis obviously want to stop such a terrible middah and created a rule called *kofin al middas Sedom* which means "we force people not to behave with the *midda* of Sodom" (*Eruvin* 49a). Since the neighbor got benefit and caused absolutely no harm to the

Steiners, Jewish law rules that he is allowed to protect his computer in their garage (*Choshen Mishpat* 363).

Q: What if the Steiners had specifically told their neighbor not to use their

garage beforehand?

A: In that case, the neighbor would have to respect their wishes (*Choshen Mishpat* 363).

Back to Our Story

After speaking to their rav, Mr. Steiner offered his apologies. "I am very sorry for our behavior. I certainly don't want my family to act like the people of Sodom. I'd like to take the opportunity to invite you to our home this Shabbos to be our guest for lunch."

"That would be wonderful," said the neighbor.

"Yes," smiled the rav, "but please leave your computer at home."

They all had a good laugh.



Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, *le'iluy nishmas Frumit bat Yosef* Based on an article by Rabbis Tzvi Shpitz and Aaron Tandler entitled "Traits of the Sodomites" on *Torah.org*.



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