

SUMMARY

This week's Torah portion is *Parashat Vayera*. It opens with Avraham sitting in the opening of his tent. He looks up to see three men. Avraham does not know right away that these men are messengers of God, but he offers them great hospitality - known in Hebrew as *hachnasat orcheem*. He runs to greet them, invites them to stay, and prepares a great meal for them. After they are appropriately welcomed and settled, they announce to Sarah and Avraham that a son will be born to them.

God tells Avraham that God will destroy the two cities of S'dom and Amorrhah because of their wickedness and injustice. Avraham argues with God, asking if God would destroy people who behave well along with those who behave badly. The conversation between God and Avraham ends with God telling Avraham that God would not destroy the cities if 10 people who behave well could be found there. In the end, though, God cannot find even 10 people who behave well and the cities are destroyed. Avraham's nephew, Lot, and his family are saved. Unfortunately as she was leaving Lot's wife looked back towards the cities--even though warned against it--and she turned into a pillar of salt.

Sarah becomes uncomfortable with the way that *Yishma'el* is playing with *Yitzhak* and tells *Avraham*. *Avraham* then sends *Hagar* and their son *Yishma'el* away. *Avraham* hears a command to bring his son, *Yitzhak*, as an offering, but he is stopped just in time before he does sacrifice *Yitzhak* and sacrifices a ram instead.

Questions

1) In this week's Torah portion God shares with Avraham that the people of *S'dom* and *Amorrah* are not behaving well and that God plans to destroy the cities. Several times Avraham chooses to stand up to God by asking if God will destroy good people all together with the people acting badly. Avraham argues with God and convinces God to double check *S'dom* and *Amorrah* and to NOT destroy these cities if there are at least 10 people acting appropriately there. How do you think Avraham felt about arguing with God? Do you think this was easy for him?

Talk with a friend about what you think. <<pick 3>>

Even though I bet Avraham was surprised to hear that God would destroy these cities and this might have given him courage to speak up, I think it was probably tough for Avraham to argue with God. God has a lot of power and could just destroy him like King Kong. Avraham must have felt that saving innocent people's lives was very important!

2) Later in my *parasha* we read the story of God testing *Avraham* by asking him to sacrifice his son, *Yitzhak*. In the end God provides *Avraham* a ram to sacrifice instead of *Yitzhak* and God blesses *Avraham* and his whole family.

When God first calls to *Avraham* to tell him to sacrifice *Yitzhak*, God says, “take your son, your only one, the one you love, *Yitzhak*.” Wouldn’t it have been enough just to tell *Avraham* to sacrifice *Yitzhak*? Why do you think God explains *Avraham*’s test to him in 4 different ways?

Please discuss your thoughts with a friend. <<pick 3>>

Maybe God had in mind what the test should be and what *Avraham* was supposed to do, but was not good at explaining it to *Avraham*. Even though God understood what God meant, maybe *Avraham* didn’t understand God at first. So God explained the test in 4 different ways until it was clear to *Avraham*. God acts a little like a teacher. Sometimes when teachers get everything ready for class and think about what they want students to do, they explain it one way and not all the students understand. Good teachers explain things in lots of different ways.