

TORAH THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

PARSHAS VAYERA

(Genesis 18-22)

“Real Kindness”

Avraham came forward and said, “Will You also stamp out the righteous along with the wicked?” .
(18:23)

G-d revealed to Avraham his plan to destroy Sodom. As soon as Avraham heard the news he began praying for its survival. What is difficult to understand is that Sodom’s lifestyle was diametrically opposed to Avraham’s way of life and teachings. Avraham was the epitome of chesed (loving kindness). His whole life revolved around helping others. However, in Sodom chesed was considered a crime! One could get executed for just giving charity to a pauper. Why then did Avraham pray on behalf of the corrupt inhabitants of Sodom?

Often people preach kindness, but they get angry and hate those who dispute their values. This is because their kindness is coming from the love that they have for themselves. They are trying to build up their own confidence and self-esteem. Avraham’s kindness was based on his love for other people. It is true that the people of Sodom were doing wicked acts, but Avraham loved them and therefore anger and animosity did not play a role in whether or not to pray for them.¹

When doing acts of kindness out of love the kindness will continue even when it’s hard and difficult for you, such as when a person takes care of his children even when it’s difficult. His love for his child overrides any personal feelings he may have. Furthermore, this type of selfless kindness can really help someone grow and become a greater person. Similarly, the Talmud² relates that there were thugs frequenting R’ Meir’s neighborhood. They caused R’ Meir so much aggravation that he prayed they should die. R’ Meir’s wife, Bruria, said to him, “Instead of praying for their deaths pray that they should repent!” R’ Meir prayed on their behalf and they returned to G-d.

NOTES

¹ R’ Moshe Feinstein

² Berachos 10a