



## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### פרשת וירא

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם. (בראשית יח, א)

*Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. (Bereishis 18:1)*

רש"י: ישב. "ישב" כתיב, בקש לעמוד, אמר לו הקב"ה שב ואני אעמוד, ואתה סימן לבניך, שעתיד אני להתיצב בעדת הדינים והן יושבין, שנאמר אלקים נצב בעדת קל.

*Rashi: It is spelled "ישב", without a "י", as if it is read "sat". Avrohom wanted to stand (out of respect for the Shechinah), Hashem said to him, "Sit, and I will stand. You are a symbol for your children, for I am destined to stand in the assembly of judges while they are sitting"; as it says: Hashem stands in the Divine assembly.*

When relating how Avrohom was sitting at the entrance to his tent, the Torah spells the word **ישב** without the usual "י", a spelling that could be interpreted as **ישב**, *he sat*. Rashi (following the Midrash) explains that when Hashem appeared to Avrohom, he wished to rise (so that his sitting would be **ישב**, a thing of the past). Hashem, however, told him to remain seated (so that he remained **יושב**, *still sitting*, even after Hashem appeared to him.) By this, Hashem implied that Avrohom will be an example for his descendants, as He will stand while the *dayonim* will sit.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* relates how he asked the following question to his father, R' Leib *zatzal*: At this juncture, Avrohom wasn't seated as a *dayan* during judgement. If so, how could Hashem's standing at this time set a precedent that He would stand during an assembly of judgement?

R' Leib answered by prefacing another question. Rashi (18:2) notes how three different *malochim* were sent because each had a different function since one *malach* cannot perform two missions. Michael's task was to inform Soroh that she would bear a child; Refoel was sent to heal Avrohom; and Gavriel's duty was to overthrow Sodom. Why was it necessary for Gavriel to visit Avrohom? Since his objective was to overthrow Sodom, why didn't he go straight there, without stopping on the way by Avrohom?

R' Leib answered that the final judgement for punishing Sodom took place in Avrohom's home. This can be understood with the comment of the Seforno (18:16) on the words **וַיִּקְמוּ מַשְׁחָם הַאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקְפוּ עַל פְּנֵי סְדֹם**, *The men got up from there, and gazed down toward Sodom*. The Seforno explains that the *malochim* looking down toward Sodom, offered a complete contrast from the pure atmosphere in the house of Avrohom. They were witnessing the greatest disparity possible. Avrohom, 100 years old and recovering from his *bris milah*, was severely troubled over the lack of guests. When guests did arrive, he hurried and provided them with a complete meal, tending personally to their needs. In contrast, Sodom was a place of great wealth with a surplus of food as the *possuk* in Yechezkel (16:49) testifies. Yet, they could not find room in their hearts to assist the poor and the needy, and they even brutally punished those who were found helping others. The difference in behaviour between Avrohom's house and that of Sodom provided the backdrop for Sodom's fate to be sealed. For this reason, Gavriel had to stop by Avrohom's house on the way to punish Sodom.

With this, R' Leib resolved the original question by explaining that the time when Avrohom eagerly awaited to do *hachnosas orchim*, even in his compromised state, was actually the time of judgement for Sodom. As a result, when Hashem instructed Avrohom to remain seated, it symbolised the *Shechinah* standing during the time of judgement.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* suggests an alternative explanation, based upon a Shelah HaKodosh which provides a homiletical interpretation of the *possuk* (Devorim 16:18): שִׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן לָךְ בְּכֹל שְׁעָרֶיךָ. Literally this translates as, *Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities*. The Shelah, however, explains that we are referring to a different type of שֹׁטְרִים, *gates*. Each person has various gateways to the world surrounding him, two eyes, two ears, a mouth, etc., and for all these openings one must be particular to set up judges and officers. One must be conscious of what he is allowing to enter or leave via these entryways. Man must train himself to remain on the correct path, and hold himself accountable for his all his actions and deeds. Briefly, a man should constantly be conducting himself as a judge of his behaviour. Avrohom, in whichever state he may have been, was in judgement, constantly examining his correct manner to serve Hashem. Therefore, Hashem standing while he was sitting was symbolic of what was to transpire, the *Shechinah* standing whilst the *dayonim* were sitting.

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