

Dear Community,

Reading the parsha this week, we are immediately struck by the internal inconsistency of Lot. Here is a man who risks his life to help strangers. He sees two people--travelers, undesirables--and he invites them into his home at great risk to his family. When the community becomes aware of the great travesty that Lot has committed in their midst--an immigrant inviting parasites into his home--they take immediate action. Even though he faces a mob, Lot goes outside, locks the door behind him, and leaves himself at the mercy of the crowd.

At the height of his bravery and humanity, Lot offers his own daughters to the mob. The Medrash Tanchuma and the Ramban call out Lot for his callousness and disregard for his own family. The Tanchuma goes so far as to say that it is the basic instinct for a man to sacrifice himself for the safety of his wife and children. How could Lot, a man of such kindness and compassion for others, turn over his own flesh and blood?

How often do we seize upon a cause that we care about, devoting ourselves to it at the cost of other priorities? How often do we run to help others while abandoning our families? Don't we all suffer from tunnel vision at times, wrapping ourselves in projects and priorities what we consider important while losing sight of the bigger picture? At times, don't we sacrifice those near to us for the glamour and the emotional fulfillment that we get from 'big acts of kindness?' Lot had learned the value of hospitality from his uncle Abraham, but he missed the forest for the trees.

Let us make sure that the people we are closest to and the priorities we ought to hold most dear are not sacrificed on the altar of our altruism.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos,

Rabbi Shlomo Agishtein