



**“Elokim has heeded the cry of the youth [Yishmael] in his present state.” (21:17)**

*Rashi z”l* explains: He shall be judged according to his actions now, and not according to what he may do in future. The angels said: “Master of the Universe, for one whose descendants will kill your children through thirst [at the time of the destruction of the Temple] will You provide a well?” *Hashem* asked them, “What is he now, righteous or wicked?” They replied, “Righteous.” *Hashem* said to them, “I will judge him according to his present deeds.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Srayah Deblitzki z”l (1926-2018; Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: *Hashem* knows the future, but He chooses not to take that knowledge into account when judging a person. However, if the person being judged is already planning future wickedness, *Hashem* does take that into account.

R’ Deblitzki adds: It would seem that a person does not need to have positive thoughts in order to be judged favorably, as long as he does not have negative thoughts. This would explain our custom of adopting stringencies for the duration of the Ten Days of Repentance--for example, eating only Jewish-baked bread. Even though we have no plans to continue practicing this stringency after the High Holidays, our neutral thoughts combined with our positive action contribute to being judged favorably.

(*Ani L’dodi: L’nefesh Tidreshenu* p.218)

**“I shall surely bless you and greatly increase your offering like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on Sefat Ha’yam / the seashore.” (22:7)**

R’ Chaim Yaakov Safran z”l (1892-1969; *Komarno Rebbe* in New York) asks: What is the significance of Avraham’s descendants being as numerous as the sand “on the seashore,” as opposed to any other sand?

He explains: When Pharaoh related his dreams to Yosef, he said (*Bereishit* 41:17), “In my dream, behold! -- I was standing upon *Sefat* / the bank of the River.” But, when Yosef recalled this event, he said (*Tehilim* 81:6), “I heard ‘*Sefat*’ [literally, in that context, ‘a language’] that was unknown to me”--that is, Yosef did not believe that Pharaoh had dreamt about a riverbank. Why? Because the prophet says (*Yeshayah* 57:20), “The wicked will be driven like the sea.” The waves of the sea represent the desires that sweep the wicked along in their wake, while the sand on the seashore/riverbank represents the restraint that those who observe the Torah practice when confronted by those waves. In our verse, Avraham is promised that his descendants would have this trait, one that Yosef knew was foreign to Pharaoh.

The *Komarno Rebbe* adds that this is the symbolism in praying at a riverbank on *Rosh Hashanah*.  
(*Pri Chaim: Moadim* p. 90)

**“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.” (18:1)**

*Rashi z”l* writes: [*Hashem* came] *L’vaker* / to visit the sick. Rabbi Chama the son of Chanina said: It was the third day after his circumcision and *Hashem* came and inquired into the state of his health. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Daniel Feldman *shlita* (rabbi in Teaneck, N.J.) writes: Many commentaries write that the correct translation of “*L’vaker*” -- which has the same root as the first word of “*Bikur Cholim*” -- is not “visiting” but, rather, “checking into.” This supports the view that the *Mitzvah* of *Bikur Cholim* is not fulfilled by just visiting, but by looking into the patient’s needs and seeing how one can help. Here, for example, *Hashem* came to see what Avraham needed, and He saw that Avraham needed guests to whom he could provide hospitality.

At the same time, R’ Feldman notes, *Rambam z”l* ends his description of the *Mitzvah* of *Bikur Cholim* with the word “*V’yotzei*” / “And he leaves.” As much as a visitor believes he is helping the ill, part of the *Mitzvah* is, apparently, knowing when to leave.  
(*Divine Footsteps* p.45-46)



**“For we are about to destroy this place, for their outcry has become great before Hashem; so Hashem has sent us to destroy it.” (19:13)**

*Midrash Rabbah* teaches: Because the angels revealed *Hashem*’s secrets, they were not allowed to return to His inner sanctum for 138 years. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Chaim Zaichyk z”l (1906-1989; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) asks: Were the angels not sent to destroy S’dom; thus, would it not become public very soon why they were there? Moreover, did it not serve the evil people of S’dom right to hear about their fate and “twist in the wind” a bit before they were destroyed?

He explains: *Hashem* dispenses reward and punishment in precise measures, as He determines fits the good or bad deed that was done. For the people of S’dom, He determined that the suffering they would experience when their city was actually destroyed was all they deserved; apparently, they did not deserve the extra suffering of knowing their end was near. (If that knowledge would have caused them to repent, that would be a different story, but *Hashem* knew that was not the case.) Likewise, for Lot and his family, the actual fright they would experience at the moment of escaping S’dom was sufficient to atone for their sins; they also did not deserve the extra worry that the angels caused them. Therefore, the angels had no business revealing what their mission in S’dom was.

(*Ohr Chadash: Chanukah-Purim* p.7)