SIDRA OF THE WEEK : וירא

THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT — THE SEQUEL

It was after HaShem had destroyed the cities of the plain: HaShem had remembered Avraham and thus when He had overturned those cities in which Lot [Avrohom's nephew] lived, HaShem had allowed Lot to escape that destruction and upheaval and he had fled to Tso'ar. [But then those people of Tso'ar too had died and Lot was afraid to stay in Tso'ar and so] Lot went up fromTso'ar to the hill country and he lived in a cave there, alone with his two daughters. The older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is growing old, and there is no other man left in the world to marry us in a normal way. Come, therefore, let us get our father drunk with wine and we will sleep with him and through this we will survive through the children we will have from our father." So that night, they got their father drunk with wine and the older daughter went and slept with her father and he was not fully aware that she had lain down or gotten up. The next day, the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night it was I who slept with my father. Tonight, let's get him drunk with wine again and you go sleep with him, and we will survive through the children we will have from our father." And so that night they again made their father drunk with wine and the younger daughter got up and she slept with him and again he was not fully aware that she had lain down or gotten up. And so it came about that the two daughters of Lot became pregnant from their father. The older daughter had a son, and she named him "Mo'av" (meaning, "From father") — he is the ancestor of the nation of Mo'av that exists today. And the younger daughter also had a son, and she named him "Ben-Ami" (meaning, "From my own people") and he is the ancestor of the people of Ammon who exist today.

Berayshis, 19 : 29 — 38

Said Rabbi Yochonon: What is the meaning of this Possuk, "The paths of HaShem [along which people are to walk] are straight: the righteous will walk along them but the wicked [on those very same paths] will stumble on them" (Hoshea, 14 :10) ? Here, with Lot and his daughters, you have an example: The two daughters of Lot, who intended to do their deed for the sake of Heaven — they are an example of "the righteous will walk along them." But their dissolute father, who knew what was happening and while they meant well, he, to the contrary, intended to commit incest, is an example of "but the wicked [on those very same paths, in the very same act] will stumble on them."

Yalkut Shimoni to Sidra Vayayroh, Chapter 86
and see Talmud Bavli, Tractate Horiyos, 10b

The introduction to the eighth volume of the great work "Igros Mosheh" consists of a biography of the author, Rabbi Mosheh Feinstein, (1895 — 1986) of blessed memory. The writer tells us that in his younger years, Rabbi Feinstein served as Rav in the town of Lyuban, in Russia. It was a town where there were many great Torah personalities and Rabbi Feinstein would recount the following incident to show how some of these people were so great that they "almost attained Divine Inspiration."

For questions, comments or suggestions, or to be included on our e-mailing list and receive these Sheets, send an e-mail to: **oyb@seniors.org.uk**

SIDRA OF THE WEEK : וירא

THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT – THE SEQUEL

In 5682 (around 1921) when Reb Mosheh Feinstein was the Rav of the town Lyuban, somebody from the town fell ill with a very unusual disease in which his tongue swelled up.

The doctors could not figure it out but he was on his deathbed from this illness and Reb Mosheh went to visit him. When Reb Mosheh walked in, the man sent everyone else out of the room saying he had to talk to Reb Mosheh in private.

Everyone left and he turned to Reb Mosheh and he told him that he knows why this illness had come upon him. The week before (it was Parshas Vayayroh) he had given a Droshoh in which he had berated the daughters of Lot for what they had done. He spoke very harshly about their act and criticized them especially harshly for the brazenness of naming their children after their deed and thereby publicizing to everyone that their children were from their own father. He had even questioned why, considering the gravity of the sin itself and their brazenness, they merited to have Moshiach descend from them.

He told Reb Mosheh that the night before, two elderly women, their heads and faces covered, had come to him in a dream and they had told him that they were the daughters of Lot. They had heard his complaint, they told him, and he should not have criticized them for what they had done nor for naming their children as they had. They explained that they had thought that they were the last people on earth to survive the cataclysmic overturning of the whole plateau. They had committed their deed in the mistaken belief that there was no other way that the human race could be saved and that was why they had done what they had done, however horrible. When they had realized their mistake, they told him, they could so easily have said to everybody later that being from the family of Avrohom, for whom everybody knew that G-d performed miracles, they too had been saved from the overturning of S'dom by a miracle. They could have said further that their children had come about not as a result of incest but that they had been made pregnant from G-d Almighty or that their children had been born through some fabulous lie of a "virgin birth." But because this claim could in time become the basis of a new idolatrous religion — as in fact would happen a number of times, Christianity being a case in point — they had chosen to deliberately call their children names which publicized that their children had indeed come about from their father and were not the result of a "virgin birth." They had publicized what they did, no matter how shameful, to show everyone that there is no such thing as conception or pregnancy or birth without a mortal father. By rigorously asserting that the bogus claims by the false Messiah that he was born from a "vigin birth" were not possible, they told him, they had merited that the true Moshiach is destined to come from them.

They said that he had been very wrong to criticise them in the way that he had and that his illness was his punishment. In the same way as the spies were afflicted for their slander, so was he being punished with the same illness, for the same sin, for the harsh words he had spoken about them.

After he had concluded telling the story to Reb Mosheh, he turned to the wall and passed away.

Reb Mosheh said that what the man had said made good sense and he felt it was true.

Suggested by Mr Howard Turner of St John's Wood, London, to whom many thanks.