Parsha Halacha – Parshat Vayeira

Davening Like Avraham Avinu

Fixing Your Place

Sponsored by Koby Assaraf in honor of his wife Becky (Gila) and their children; Ruthie, Mazal, Rena and David

Co-Sponsored by Rick and Renee Moore in honor of the 35th Yohrtzeit of Rick's father, Edward N. Moore – Yitzchok Nutta Ben Avraham – on Sunday, Cheshvan 21.

Parsha Halacha is underwritten by a grant from Dr. Stephen and Bella Brenner and Dr. Morton Borg in loving memory of Stephen's father, Shmuel Tzvi ben Pinchas, and Bella's and Morton's parents, Avraham ben Yitzchak and Leah bas HaRav Sholom Zev HaCohen.

To sponsor or subscribe, please email rabbicitron@hotmail.com

In the Torah portion of Vayeira we read that Avraham prayed to avert the destruction of Sodom and Amorrah.[1] The next morning, as Sodom and Amorrah were going up in smoke, he returned to the same place, as it says,[2] "Avraham got up early in the morning to return to the place where he had stood before the Presence of G-d."

There are various opinions as to why he came back to that spot that morning:

- **To See if the Destruction Happened**

The Alshich HaKadosh says that Avraham thought that Lot and his family may have numbered altogether 10 people. (Lot, his wife Irit, his two unmarried daughters, their fiancés, his two married daughters, and their husbands.[3] In addition, it seems that Lot had grandchildren from his married daughters.[4]) As such, since G-d had said that He would save (at least one city[5]) if

---

[1] Gen. 18:24.
[2] Ibid 19:27.
[3] See Rashi on 19:14.
[4] See Gen. 19:12 and commentaries. See Ramban there that the angels were willing to save all of Lot's family members. But see Alshich that the "*chatan*" (son-in-law) in the verse is Lot himself as, by having children with his daughters he became like his own son-in-law.
[5] According to Rashi, Avraham was praying that 10 tzadikim would save one city. According to Ramban, Avraham was asking that 10 tzadikim should save all of the cities.

there were 10 tzadikim, Avraham wasn't sure if the (complete) destruction would take place or not. When he saw the (utter) destruction, he prayed that, at the very least, Lot and his immediate family should be saved.

- **To Continue Praying for the Cities**

According to Seforno, Avraham went back to continue praying for the salvation of the cities despite his lack of success with the prayers of the previous day. The Malbim adds that it was only because of the prayers he uttered while the city was being destroyed that Lot was saved. For although Lot deserved to be saved before the destruction, he didn't have enough merit to be saved during that destruction.

- **Couldn't Sleep**

Rabbi Avraham Sabe (1440 – 1508 of Spain, Portugal, and Morrocco) says (Tzror HaMor), that Avraham got up early because he couldn't sleep while thinking about the destruction of the city. The possibility that his nephew Lot might die with them troubled him in particular and gave him goosebumps.

- **Got up to Pray Shacharit**

According to our sages[6] Avraham would pray every morning, thanking G-d for the new day[7] and asking that all his activities be successful. He also instituted that his children should do the same. The verse alludes to this by saying that he went back to where he had "stood" the previous day. The word "stood" is used in the context of prayer, as it says,[8] "And Pinchas stood and prayed and the plague ceased."

Vatikin

Avraham prayed early in the morning, as the best time to pray Shacharit is just as the sun rises (*vatikin*).[9] It's noteworthy that, according to the second Gerrer Rebbe,[10] it was Lot who first prayed *vatikin* (at sunrise) on that morning when he prayed that Tzo'ar be spared.[11] The second letter of each of the patriarch's names alludes to the prayer they established. Thus, the ב of

---

[6] Brachot 26b quoted in Radak on Gen. 19:27 and Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 4:1.
[7] See Jerusalem Talmud, Brachot 4:1 that in the morning one should say, "I thank you, Eternal, my G-d and G-d of my fathers, that you led me from darkness to light."
[8] Psalms 106:30.
[9] This is the simple understanding of the verse. See De'eh Chochma Lenaf'shecha, Sichot Kodesh 5775 by Rabbi Yitzchok Meir Morgenstern, page 49.
[10] Quoted by Rabbi Shaul Moshe Zilberman of Virvashov (Poland) and Tel Aviv in the notes on Pardes Yosef on Gen. 19:18.
[11] Gen. 19:18 as translated by the Targum Yonatan "And Lot said to him, I beseech of you, wait with me for a short time, until I have prayed for mercy from the L-rd." See verse 15 that this took place after "the morning broke." See also verse 23 that just after that "the sun had risen on the earth."

אברהם stands for בוקר (morning), the צ of יצחק stands for צהריים (afternoon) and the ע of יעקב stands for ערבית. In a similar vein, the ו of לוט stands for ותיקין.

Makom Kavu'a

Avraham went back to pray in the same place that he had prayed (mincha[12] on) the previous day because Avraham would always pray in the same spot (*Makom Kavu'a*). As the Talmud says,[13] "From where do we derive that Avraham,, our father set a fixed place for his prayer? As it is written, 'And Avraham rose in the morning to the place where he had stood.'" As such the Talmud says, "One who sets a fixed place for his prayer, the G-d of Abraham will assist him. And when he dies, they will say about him 'Where is the humble one, where is the pious one, of the disciples of our father Abraham?'" In addition, according to the Talmud,[14] if one has a fixed place for his prayers, his enemies will fall before him.

Why Have a Fixed Place for Prayers?

- **Out of Respect for the Prayers**

Some say that the purpose of having a fixed place is to give honor to the prayers. As the Sefer HaMichtam (on Brachot 6b) writes, "it's proper to set aside a ***fixed and honorable place*** to pray (in one's house – *see below*)."

- **To Minimize Distraction**

Other commentaries explain[15] that by always praying in the same place one is able to better concentrate as one will not have the distractions associated with being in a new environment. This is the why the Talmud says that a person who has a fixed place for prayers is called an *anav* (humble person) as he admits that small distractions will disturb his concentration in prayers. Such a prayer is accepted by G-d since he rests His *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) upon humble people.

- **A Fixed Place for the Shechinah**

The Arizal explains (quoted in Pardes Yosef) that in the time of exile the Jewish people are considered a Niddah (in terms of their relationship with G-d).[16] The Halacha states that a husband cannot sit on the same bench as his wife who is a Niddah unless that bench is fixed to

---

[12] Ha'amek Davar. See Yoma 28b that although Yitzchak established the Mincha prayer, Avraham would also pray Mincha. In fact, according to Maharsha (quoting sefer Ha'Aruch) Yitzchak learned about Minchah from his father Avraham.
[13] Brachot 6b.
[14] Ibid 7b.
[15] Petach Einayim on Brachot, ibid.
[16] Eicha 1:8.

the ground and doesn't move.[17] Similarly, G-d will only be present in our prayers if we pray in a fixed spot.

- **Holiness Begets Holiness**

According to our sages, whenever one does a mitzvah, it leaves a positive imprint in that place and if, G-d forbid one sins, this leaves a negative imprint on that place. As the Mishnah says (Avot 4:2) "One mitzvah leads to another, and one sin leads to another." Thus, we find that Shechem was a place that was associated with tragedy (see Rashi on Gen. 37:14). According to the Alshich (on Numbers 9:15), the reason that the Jewish people traveled 42 times in the desert is that, whenever they sinned, G-d would have them travel to another spot to free them from the negative influence of the place where they had transgressed. This is why one should do teshuvah in the very place that one sinned as this will destroy the negative energy created (and still present) there.[18] In a similar vein, the Zohar (Tazria page 50a) warns against living in a house previously occupied by a wicked person since there is negative energy there.

As such, every time one davens in a particular spot, that place becomes sanctified and is therefore the best place to continue praying.

- **Like a Korban**

The daily prayers correspond to the sacrifices. As such, just as the sacrifices had to be brought is specific areas, so too one's prayers should be in a designated area.[19]

In One's House

Rabbeinu Yonah is of the opinion that the importance of having a fixed place for prayer applies to praying in one's home, whereas when praying in shul, since the entire shul is sanctified for prayer, one need not have a fixed place.

Have a Fixed Shul and a Place in That Shul

On the other hand, the Rosh says that this obligation applies even in shul. He writes that in addition to having a fixed shul in which one prays, one should also have a fixed place to pray within that shul. This is the halachah.[20] The Shulchan Aruch HaRav adds,[21] "One should determine a fixed place in which to pray, and not change it unless there is a great necessity."

King David Did This

---

[17] Y.D. 195:5.
[18] See Ya'arot Devash, Derush 1 page 7.
[19] O.C. 98:4.
[20] Ibid. 90:19.
[21] 90:18.

The Jerusalem Talmud says[22] that one should have a fixed place within shul where he davens. This is derived from the verse, "When (King) David reached the top (of the mountain while fleeing Jerusalem from Avshalom) where he would prostrate to G-d," indicating that King David had prepared a specific place on that mountain where he would bow to G-d.[23]

Some Details

Here are some details regarding praying in a fixed spot:

- **Need Not Be Only One Spot**

Just as Avraham traveled to many areas and had a fixed place for prayer in all of those places, so too one need not pray in the same spot for their entire lives. Rather, wherever one goes to pray, even if it's only occasionally, one should have a fixed place to pray there.[24] In fact one can have a fixed spot for Shacharit in one shul, for Mincha in another and for Ma'ariv in a third. Similarly, one can have a fixed spot in one shul for the weekdays and a fixed spot in another shul for Shabbat.[25]

- **Within 4 Amot**

Any area within 4 amot (approximately 6 feet) is considered to be part of the same "fixed place."[26] Some say that anywhere within the same room is also considered to be part of that "fixed place."[27] Nevertheless it's customary to have a specific place within the room for one's prayers.

- **For Shmona Esrei or More?**

Some say[28] that it's only important to pray in a fixed place when davening the Amidah (the standing prayer known as *shmona esrei*). Others say that it's best to pray the entire davening in their fixed spot.[29]

May we merit to humbly follow in the path of Avraham Avinu!

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom Umevorach! Copyright 2026 by Rabbi Aryeh Citron

---

[22] Berachot 4:4.
[23] Penei Moshe.
[24] Eshel Avraham, Butchach, O.C. 90:19 and Eshel Avraham (Pri Megadim) 90:33.
[25] Halichot Shlomo (Tefillah chapter 5 footnote 2), quoted in the Yalkut Biurim on the Metivta Shas on Berachot, ibid.
[26] Magen Avraham, O.C. 90:34.
[27] Eshel Avrahm, Butchach, ibid.
[28] Rabbi Yaakov Shalom Sofer (1854–1921of Pest) in the name of his father Rabbi Chaim Sofer (Torat Chaim on Y.D. 90:25) and Ben Ish Chai (Miketz 4).
[29] Rabbi Yaakov Shalom Sofer's own opinion based on the language of the Tur and Rabbeinu Yonah.