

# The Angels Waited Until Evening

*Daily learning for 16 Cheshvan 5787: Rashi's angels of mercy, Lot in the gate, and the Rambam on words that can never be repaid.*

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Tuesday, 16 Cheshvan 5787 · 27 October 2026 · Vayeira, third portion (Genesis 19:1–20)

## I. Today's portions

- Chumash with Rashi: Vayeira, third portion, Genesis 19:1–20
- Tehillim: Psalms 79–82
- Tanya: Iggeret HaKodesh, end of Epistle 27
- Rambam, three chapters: Laws of Sales (Hilchot Mechirah), chapters 13–15
- Rambam, one chapter: Issurei Biah, chapter 8 (listed here; learn it in the beit midrash)
- Sefer HaMitzvot: Day 267, Negative Commandment 251
- Also today (Sefaria calendar): Daf Yomi Bekhorot 39; this week's Haftarah is II Kings 4:1–37

Links: Chabad.org day page for 27 Oct 2026 · Sefaria

Today in Jewish history (Lubavitch to Rostov, World War I): "With the approach of the German army during World War I, R. Sholom DovBer and his family left Lubavitch." They went to Rostov. "Lubavitch was the seat of the Chabad movement for 102 years, starting when R. DovBer, second Chabad Rebbe, settled there in 1813." A movement can lose its town and keep its mission. The address changed. The work went on.

## II. Hayom Yom

"Thought is a garment and servant of the intellect and emotions." When it has nothing to serve, it does not shut off. It keeps going, and then it is "not only devoid of content, but also open to depravement..."

The diagnosis is short: "alien or evil thoughts are caused by "emptiness of the head."" So is the cure: "For when the mind is occupied, the thought has something to serve, and there is no room for stupid and vain thoughts devoid of substance."

Today the whole country will spend a long evening waiting for numbers. An empty head fills up fast with rumor. Give your mind a job: a chapter of Tehillim, a page of Rambam, a phone call to your mother.

## III. Chumash with Rashi: the gate, the door and the mountain

"And the two angels came to Sodom in the evening." Why only in the evening? Rashi: "Now did the angels tarry so long from Hebron to Sodom? But they were angels of mercy, and they were waiting, perhaps Abraham would succeed in his defense for them [the cities]." In the original: **אֵלֶּא מִלְאָכֵי רַחֲמִים הָיוּ וּמִמְתִּינִים שָׂמָא יוֹכֵל אֲבָרְהָם לְלַמֵּד עֲלֵיהֶם סִגְוִרָא.** Yesterday the defender went quiet. Today we learn that Heaven held the door open as long as it could.

Lot is sitting in the gate. Rashi: "On that very day, they had appointed him judge over them." And when he sees the guests he gets up: "From Abraham's house he learned to look for wayfarers." Lot took one thing with him from his uncle's tent, and it saved his life.

The guests first say no to Lot. Rashi notes the difference: "But to Abraham they said, 'So shall you do...'" From here [we learn] that one may refuse an offer by a person of lesser importance, but should not refuse an offer by a great man."

Then the mob. The whole city surrounds the house, "From one end of the city to the other, for not one of them protested, because there was not even one righteous man among them." Yesterday we counted down to ten. Tonight we find out the number was zero.

When Lot argues for his guests, they turn on him: "This one came to sojourn, and he is judging!" Rashi fills in the sneer: "You intercede for the wayfarers? How dare you?!" And the angels ask him who else he has in the city. The Midrash reads it a second way, because Lot had been defending these people: "For the whole night he [Lot] was speaking in their favor. This may be read עַד מִי לֵךְ פֶּה: Do you still have a mouth?" At some point the defense runs out of words.

Lot warns his sons-in-law, "but he seemed like a comedian in the eyes of his sons-in-law." A warning nobody takes seriously is not much of a warning.

Even Lot hesitates. "But he tarried." Rashi: "in order to save his possessions." The angel's answer is the one to take home: "Let it suffice for you to save lives. Do not worry about possessions." Where should he run? "Flee to Abraham, who dwells on the mountain."

Lot is afraid of the mountain, and Rashi tells us why: "When I was among the people of Sodom, the Holy One, blessed be He, saw my deeds and the deeds of the people of the city, and I appeared righteous and worthy of being saved. But when I shall come alongside a righteous man, I shall be considered a wicked man." Next to Sodom he looked fine. Next to Avraham he could not stand. So he asks for the little town: "Is it not small?" Rashi: "Are not its iniquities few? Therefore, you can leave it alone."

#### **IV. Tanya: light from below the horizon**

Epistle 27 closes with "another kind of illumination [from the tzaddik] to his disciples." This one does not settle inside them. It "radiates over them from above, encompassing and transcending them, for its very loftiness inhibits it from descending and being integrated within them."

It reaches a lot of people: "The illumination of these supernal lights radiates over all his disciples, who became servants of G-d through his teachings and worship." And it works. It "is so powerful that it instills in their hearts thoughts of repentance and good deeds." The good deeds that come from it "are called "successive generations of offshoots.""

You may not see it happen. "This radiance is greatly hidden and concealed, just like the sun radiating to the stars from below the earth." The Alter Rebbe brings Moshe Rabbeinu as the model: "after his passing, his radiance extends in every generation to the six hundred thousand souls," "like the sun, which radiates to the six hundred thousand stars from below the earth." The addendum spells it out: "the radiance of Moses continues after his passing to illuminate generation after generation."

The sun is down, and the stars still shine. Lot carried one spark of Avraham's house into Sodom, and it was enough to get him to the gate.

## **V. Rambam: honest prices and honest words**

Chapter 13 is about when the one-sixth rule applies. One way out is full disclosure. "When a person buys and sells in a faithful manner, the laws of ona'ah do not apply." What does faithful mean? "The seller tells the purchaser: "I purchased this article for such and such, and I am making this and this amount of profit"" (13:5). Tell the truth about your margin, and nobody was cheated.

Chapter 14 starts there and adds a public duty. Even with honest disclosure, "the court is obligated to regulate prices and appoint officers of the law, so that people at large will not be able to reap whatever profit they desire" (14:1). That applies to "articles on which our lives depend - e.g., wine, oil and fine flour" (14:2). And in a drought, "one should not store even a small measure of carobs, because one brings a curse on the market prices" (14:6).

Then the Rambam turns from money to words, and this is today's mitzvah. "Just as the prohibition against ona'ah applies with regard to business transactions, it applies with regard to speech" (14:12). His examples: "If a person is one who has repented, one should not say: "Remember your initial deeds."" (14:13). And: "If donkey drivers are seeking grain, one should not tell them: "Go to so and so," if one knows that this person has never sold grain" (14:14).

Which is worse? "Verbally abusing a person is more severe than taking unfair advantage of him financially. For the latter can be repaid, while the former can never be repaid. The latter involves only the person's possessions, while the former involves his person" (14:18). And: "Whenever a person cries out because of verbal abuse, he is answered immediately" (14:18).

Chapter 15 covers mistakes in count and hidden flaws. "An error in calculation, by contrast, is always reason to seek redress" (15:1). Sell a man 100 nuts and give him 101 or 99, and "the extra or missing nut must be returned. This applies even if several years have passed" (15:2). A count is a count. A wrong count gets fixed, no matter how long ago it was.

Issurei Biah 8 is listed for completeness. These are laws of family purity, best learned with a teacher and not summarized in a public sheet.

## **VI. Sefer HaMitzvot: Negative Commandment 251**

"You shall not wrong one another and you shall fear your G-d"—Leviticus 25:17. "It is forbidden to verbally distress or humiliate another."

The full text: "The 251st prohibition is that we are forbidden from verbally wronging another person by telling him things that will distress and humiliate him, and make him discouraged." The footnote gives the literal meaning: "make him unable to encourage himself."

And the Sages' ranking: "Ona'as devarim is more serious than ona'as mamon, since regarding the former, the Torah says, 'and you shall fear your G-d.'" Yesterday it was cheating on price. Today it is cheating with words, and the Torah calls that the heavier one.

## VII. Tehillim 79–82

Psalm 79 is written from the ruins. "O G-d, heathens have entered Your domain, defiled Your holy temple, and turned Jerusalem into ruins" (79:1). "Their blood was shed like water around Jerusalem, with none to bury them" (79:3). We know that verse too well after the last three years. The ask is simple: "let Your compassion come swiftly toward us, for we have sunk very low" (79:8).

Psalm 80 repeats its chorus three times: "Restore us, O G-d; show Your favor that we may be delivered" (80:4). In the middle is the vine: "You plucked up a vine from Egypt; You expelled nations and planted it" (80:9). "it took deep root and filled the land" (80:10). And the promise back: "We will not turn away from You" (80:19).

Psalm 81 is the new moon and the feast: "Blow the horn on the new moon, on the full moon for our feast day" (81:4). Then comes G-d's own complaint: "If only My people would listen to Me, if Israel would follow My paths, then would I subdue their enemies at once" (81:14–15).

Psalm 82 is for every judge and every official. "How long will you judge perversely, showing favor to the wicked?" (82:2). "Judge the wretched and the orphan, vindicate the lowly and the poor" (82:3). It ends with the Judge above them all: "Arise, O G-d, judge the earth, for all the nations are Your possession" (82:8).

## VIII. Living with the day

- Keep the door open. The angels waited until evening, hoping for a defense. Give people time, and give them the benefit of the doubt.
- Take one thing from Avraham's house. Lot took hospitality and it saved him. Pick one good habit from your teachers and carry it everywhere.
- Save lives before things. "Let it suffice for you to save lives." When it matters, leave the bags behind.
- Fill your head. An empty mind fills up with rumor. On a long night of waiting, learn something.
- Watch your words tonight and tomorrow. Hurtful speech is worse than cheating on price. It "can never be repaid." Win or lose, don't say what you can't take back.
- Let the count be the count. A wrong count of nuts gets fixed years later. An honest count gets accepted.

*Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI*

*All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine*

Sources: Chumash and Rashi from Chabad.org (Judaica Press); Hayom Yom, Tanya (Iggeret HaKodesh 27, Kehot), Sefer HaMitzvot and Today in Jewish History from Chabad.org; Rambam, Laws of Sales 13–15, from Sefaria (Touger, Moznaim); Tehillim 79–82 from Sefaria (JPS).