

VAYEIRA- 5774

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

“Three men”, who were actually Malachim (angels) in the “guise” of men, appear to Avraham Avinu, (18:1) whom the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 20) identifies as Micha’el, Gavri’el and Refa’el. Three Malachim had to be sent because, by definition, a Malach is a function that HaShem wishes to have performed and each function requires a new and distinct Malach, as the Midrash states, “One Malach does not perform two missions.”

In our case, Micha’el was assigned to bring the good news to Avraham and Sarah, that they would be the parents of a son (18:4). Gavri’el was commissioned to destroy Sedom and Amarah; while Refa’el was sent to heal the wounds of Avraham. Being there, Refa’el was also assigned to rescue Lot from the destruction of the city. Rashi immediately picks up on the question – what about the problem of not performing two tasks? Rashi answers that healing Avraham and saving Lot constitutes a single mission, for they both were for the sake of Hatzalah. As long as Refa’el is here to help Avraham he can also be called upon to help Lot.

Rav Shlomo Kluger,(1785-1869) a very young man, on the first week of being appointed as the Rav of Brod, was invited to serve as Sandek at the Brit of a child. Upon arriving at the house he noticed that the Brit was being delayed. In response to his question as to why they were waiting, the family replied that the father of the newborn was lying on his deathbed in another room of the house, and it was the custom of Brod to wait for him to die so that they could name his son after him.

Hearing this, Rav Shlomo Kluger angrily declared the abolishment of such a minhag, and instructed them to perform the Milah immediately. He explained, “I do not have the power to have Refa’el, the Malach in charge of healing make a special trip to heal the father. However, once the child is circumcised, the angel Refa’el will definitely be dispatched to heal him, together with Eliyahu HaNavi who comes to every Brit. Once Refa’el is here my prayer to G-d for the Refu’ah of the infant together with the father will most likely be accepted.

The people of Brod followed the Rav’s instruction, but were unhappy about changing a community Minhag. However, when after three days, the father was well enough to walk to the Beit Midrash, Rav Shlomo Kluger’s decision was there after unanimously accepted in Brod.