

In our parasha we read about the meritorious acts of the two daughters of Lot [19:31]. They thought their entire area was destroyed, and that only they and their father had survived. They truly believed that they were saving the world! The Gemara [Bava Kama 38b] points out that because the older daughter stepped forward on the first night to “save the world”, she was rewarded to a greater extent than the younger daughter.

When this event became public knowledge, Avraham Avinu, their great uncle, was so embarrassed, that he moved away from the neighborhood [Rashi 20:1]. The daughters mistakenly thought that the entire area had been destroyed, including Avraham and his family, and that only they and their father were meritorious enough to have been spared, and singled out by HaShem for the purpose of preserving humanity. They surmised that for the sake of truly saving the world, even incest would be permitted. They reasoned that since Kayin, the son of Adam HaRishon had children with his sister and GD referred to this act as a “chesed”, [Tehillim 89, *Olam Chesed Yibaneh*], they too have that mission in life. [see Rashi Vayikra 20:17]

In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 329:1) we permit one to violate the holy Shabbat to save the life of a Jew; any Jew whether religious or not-yet religious, male or female, young or old. And the Mishnah in Sanhedrin [37a] states, “Whoever preserves a single Jewish life is considered by Scriptures as if he had preserved an entire world.” Further more, the Mishnah in Yoma [85a] clearly states that not only for Piku’ach Nefesh [life threatening situation] can we override laws of Yom Kippur and laws of Shabbat but even if its only a Safek Piku’ach Nefesh [a doubtful chance of saving a life] we must set aside the laws of Shabbat and do everything in our power to try saving a life.

Certainly then, in the case of Lot’s two daughters, they were determined to save, not merely a single life, but an entire world of life. Their reasoning and their logic was solid and correct, and we have no reason to believe otherwise, that their motives were pure and holy. The only problem was that their facts were faulty and their information was incorrect.

The question now remains, how does HaShem judge these two women who committed a heinous sin of incest but whose intention was to save mankind? Apparently we find no words of criticism against them. Furthermore, Mo’av, the child born from this incestuous relationship (in GD’s scheme of planning our historical destiny) becomes the progenitor of our famous Rut-the Moavite and from her came forth non other than- Dovid HaMelech.

From this episode a halachic rule has been formulated. If we are in a situation on Shabbat where a person complains about sudden chest pains and “it seems to us” (it is a “Safek”) that this person is beginning to have heart attack it is incumbent upon us to immediately call for help; Hatzalah, Magen David Adom, or 911. Even if the victim insists that the pain is coming from indigestion or other factors, and that it’s not serious, nevertheless, if “it appears to us” that it’s a case of Cardiac arrest we must make that call on Shabbat. We need not look for a non-Jew to make the call but we do it ourselves-that is our Mitzvah. [See Shulchan Aruch, O’ch 328:12, Mishnah Berurah - 37]. If it turns out that we were correct then certainly we can credit ourselves for having saved a life of a human being. If it turns out that we were wrong –then we have committed no sin, and we are still credited for our intent and effort for attempting to save a human life.

Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh

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