



PARSHAS VAYEIRA – MR GERSHON HEPNER (REPRINTED)

LOT'S WIFE TURNED INTO A PILLAR OF SALT... ...AND SHE'S NEVER LOOKED BACK SINCE.

He said, "Flee for your life, do not look behind you..." (19:17)
His wife looked behind him and she became a pillar of salt. (19:26)

The angel who rescued Lot and his family from Sodom gave an instruction not to look back at the destruction of the area. Lot's wife did not heed his command, looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Many obvious questions immediately arise. Why was this instruction given? The angel instructed Lot, so why was Lot's wife punished? When it says that Lot's wife looked "*behind him*" – behind whom? Why did her death take such a strange form? Here are some explanations of the incident.

Rashi

Lot was saved in Avrohom's merit, not his own. The angel commanded Lot not to look back, as this would be inappropriate and voyeuristic.

Targum Yonason

The angel's instruction was given to Lot specifically. Lot's wife was a native of Sodom, and she wanted to check on the state of her ancestral home.

Ibn Ezra

The angel's instruction was worded in the singular, but was intended for the entire family group.

Targum Yerushalmi

Lot's wife will be revived at the time of Techiyas Hameisim.

Ramban

Lot was at the rear of the refugee group, hurrying them all along. The destructive angel followed Lot destroying the area through which the family had just travelled. Lot's wife looked back at the destruction, and is therefore described as looking behind Lot. Both gazing upon a plague and thinking about it can cause natural harm to a person. Merely looking at a rabid dog or the reflection of its image can prove fatal to a person. The angel advised Lot's family not to look back upon Sodom so as to be spared such harm. Lot's wife did not pay attention to this advice, and suffered the natural consequences of her actions. Furthermore, the angel did not want the family to see the destructive angel hovering between heaven and earth as he carried out his duties. As the angel was a representative of the Shechinah, such a sight was not for human eyes.

Radak

The phrase in the possuk "*behind him*" is a description of Lot's wife's location. From her position as she stood "*behind him*", she looked back at Sodom.

Rabbeinu Bachye

The phrase in the possuk "*behind him*" is a pronoun to represent the destructive angel, who is the most recently mentioned subject in the previous possuk – "*He turned over these cities...*" (19:25)

Chizkuni

Lot's wife looked back, and *it* (the area of land) had turned into pillars of salt.

Rabbi Yitzchok in Midrash Rabbah

Lot asked his wife to provide some salt for their guests, whereupon she berated him for 'teaching such detestable customs in Sodom'. The night the angels arrived at Lot's home, his wife asked her neighbours for salt for their visitors. She knew that guests were unwelcome in Sodom, and her plan was to reveal the whereabouts of the visitors to her fellow citizens.

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (chapter 25)

Lot's wife's name was Idis and the pillar of salt still stands.