TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



וירא

לעילוי נשמת



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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")



כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

"For I have loved him [Avraham], because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice ..." (18:19)

R' Kolonimus Kalman Shapiro z"l

(chassidic rebbe of Piasnecze, Poland; killed in the Holocaust)

addresses parents and teachers in strong language in the introduction to his classic work on chinuch / Jewish education as follows:

"We are accustomed to looking at today's youth who have thrown off the yoke of Torah as if they alone are responsible for their sorry spiritual state. However, the above verse teaches that it is not so. Every generation is a link in a chain that began with Avraham Avinu. Each generation derives its emunah / faith, Torah, and yir'ah / fear of G-d from the preceding generation. Are our youth not descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov? Do they not possess holy souls?

Let us not fool ourselves about who is responsible for the failures of our youth! Picture today's rebellious youth in a prior generation; would they not have been tzaddikim, or at least G d-fearing men and women? And why? Because their parents would have been more G-d-fearing than we are. Those generations would not have accepted the situation that we accept. They would never have shrugged their shoulders and neglected their duties. What excuses will we offer on the Day of Judgment?" R' Shapiro asks.

He continues: What causes youth to reject the ways of their parents? The primary cause is that they see themselves as mature adults when, in fact, they are still children. A young person who has such feelings cannot be taught to live a Torah life by being lectured about mitzvah observance. Habit, also, will not keep such a young person on the path of mitzvah- observance. Rather, it is necessary to appeal to the youth's feeling of self-importance. He must be convinced that he is a sapling that G-d Himself planted in the orchard that we call "the Jewish People." Only if the youth is made to feel that G-d truly cares about his success can there be hope.

Some teachers see their job as lecturing children about their mitzvah – obligations. Some parents see their task as helping children develop good habits. Neither of these practices is

"chinuch," declares R' Shapiro. Yes, they are tools of chinuch, but they are not the essence of chinuch.

A related mistake that many teachers and parents make, writes R' Shapiro, is to focus their efforts on raising good children. The true goal of parents and teachers should be to raise good adults. The job of teachers and parents is to help the flower within each child blossom, i.e., to give each child the tools he or she will need so that the child's holy neshamah will reach its full potential when the child does become an adult. This requires discovering the unique potential within each soul and facilitating its development. That is the essence of chinuch, and that is the true meaning of King Shlomo's famous dictum (Mishlei 22:6), "Train the youth according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it." (Chovat Ha'talmidim)

יֻקַּח־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם

At the beginning of this week's Parashah, Avraham welcomes his guests with the words (18:4), "***Let Me'at / a little water be brought*** ..." Why did he offer his guests only "a little" water?

Similarly, in next week's Parashah, when Eliezer goes in search of a wife for Yitzchak, he says (24:17): **הַגְמִיאִינִי נָא מְעַט־מַיִם מִכַּדֵּךְ** "***Let me sip, if you please, Me'at / a water from your jug***." Again, why "a little"?

R' Chaim Shorin z"l (mid-1800s; rabbi of Khaslavitch, Belarus) explains: In Tanach, the term "**מַיִם רַבִּים**" / "***many waters***" is used in reference to idolatrous nations (Tehilim 144:7) and the Yetzer Ha'ra (Shir Hashirim 8:7). These are called "many" because they turn man away from the "One" G-d. Similarly, we find that Esav's small family is referred to as (Bereishit 36:6), "Nafshot / the souls (plural) of his house," while Yaakov's larger family is called (Shmot 1:5), "seventy Nefesh / soul (singular)." Yaakov's family is one because of their shared belief in the One. Indeed, about the Jewish

People it says (Devarim 7:7), כִּי־אַתֶּם הַמְעַט מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים "***You are the Me'at / the few.***"

Avraham believed that his guests were idolators who worshiped the dust on their feet (see Rashi to 18:4), so he told them, "Let a little water be brought and wash your feet."

He meant: Wash away your false beliefs and accept the Oneness of G-d alluded to by "מְעַט" / "a little," not a multiplicity of beliefs or ideas.

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם

Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. (18:1)

Rashi writes: לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחוֹלֶה - Hashem came to visit the sick. Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: It was the 3rd day after his circumcision and Hashem came and inquired into the state of his health.

R' Daniel Feldman shlita, N.J writes: Commentaries write that the correct translation of "לְבַקֵּר" — which has the same root as the first word of "Bikur Cholim" — is not "visiting" but, rather, "checking into."

This supports the view that the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim is not fulfilled by just visiting, but by looking into the patient's needs and seeing how one can help. Here, for example, Hashem came to see what Avraham needed, and He saw that Avraham needed guests to whom he could provide hospitality.

At the same time, R' Feldman notes, **Rambam z"l** ends his description of the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim with the word "V'yotzei" / "And he leaves." As much as a visitor believes he is helping the ill, part of the Mitzvah is, apparently, knowing when to leave!

כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם ***"Elokim has heeded the cry of the youth [Yishmael] in his present state." (21:17)***

Rashi z"l explains: **לְפִי מַעֲשִׂים שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה עַכְשָׁו הוּא נִדּוֹן** - *He shall be judged according to his actions now, and not according to what he may do in future. The angels said: "Master of the Universe, for one whose descendants will kill your children through thirst [at the time of the destruction of the Temple] will You provide a well?" Hashem asked them, "What is he now, righteous or wicked?" They replied, "Righteous." Hashem said to them, "I will judge him according to his present deeds."* [Until here from Rashi]

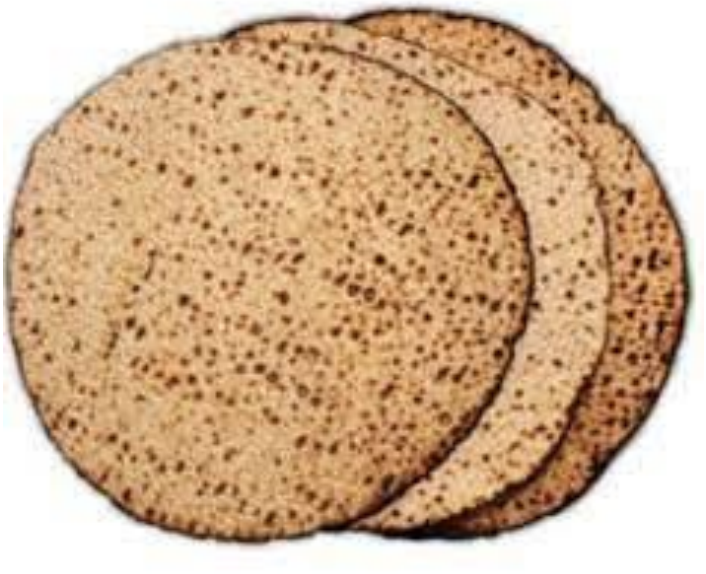
R' Srayah Deblitzki z"l (1926-2018; Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: Hashem knows the future, but He chooses not to take that knowledge into account when judging a person. However, if the person being judged is already planning future wickedness, Hashem does take that into account.

R' Deblitzki adds: It would seem that a person does not need to have positive thoughts in order to be judged favorably, as long as he does not have negative thoughts.

This would explain our custom of adopting stringencies for the duration of the Ten Days of Repentance–for example, eating only Jewish-baked bread. Even though we have no plans to continue practicing this stringency after the High Holidays, our neutral thoughts combined with our positive action contribute to being judged favorably. (Ani L'dodi: L'nefesh Tidreshenu p.218)

"Our friends do not always need to receive advice. Often, they only need an attentive ear to listen to them, with a strong hand to support them, and an open heart to understand them." ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l.

Matzah cakes



Our Parashah begins with three angels visiting Avraham. The Torah records that Avraham offered them bread, but, in the end, the dough became Tamei / ritually impure and could not be served (see Bava Metzia 67a).

It therefore is surprising that we read in the Pesach Haggadah (in the poem "Va'amartem Zevach Pesach"): "He [Avraham] served the shining ones [i.e., the angels] Matzah cakes." As noted, there were no Matzah cakes in the menu that Avraham served!

R' Ben Zion Nesher shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) explains: We read in Tehilim (78:25), as interpreted by the Gemara (Yoma 75b), that the Mahn that Bnei Yisrael ate in the desert was the "food of angels."

Of course, angels do not eat "food." Rather, explains **R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban**; 1194-1270), Mahn is a physical manifestation of Divine "light." In the desert, Bnei Yisrael were sustained by Hashem's light, to which He gave a physical form. Conversely, R' Nesher continues, when the Torah speaks of Avraham "feeding" the angels, it means that his performance of the Mitzvah of welcoming guests was on such a high level that he sanctified the physical world, which resulted in spiritual light that sustained the angels.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 38a) relates that the Matzah cakes that Bnei Yisrael baked when they left Egypt tasted like Mahn. How so? Because their faith in Hashem was so great–they even were willing

to follow Him into the desolate wilderness (see Yirmiyahu 2:2) — that they elevated their food to the level of Divine light, like the Mahn.

Based on this, we can understand the Haggadah as follows, R' Nesher concludes: The poem is not saying that Avraham fed the angels Matzah cakes. Rather, in the same way that Avraham was able to feed the angels, by elevating his physical act until it was Divine light, so his descendants in the desert elevated their Matzah cakes to a similar level on which they tasted like Mahn. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.116)

Chessed

Parashat Vayera is a Parashah of contrasts, all meant to teach us the importance of Chessed / kindness, writes **R' Moshe Almosnino z"l** (Turkey; 1510-1581).

On one extreme, we find the people of S'dom, who, say our Sages, outlawed the performance of any type of Chessed. On the other extreme, we find Avimelech, king of the Plishtim, who lavished exorbitant gifts on Avraham (see 20:16). [Even when such a person uses his resources for Chessed, it is likely that he is merely expending something that is not important to him, thus devaluing his kindness.]

In between the two extremes, writes R' Almosnino, we find Avraham Avinu. Specifically, our Parashah describes three acts of Chessed that Avraham performed: welcoming guests; praying for the people of S'dom, with whom he had no connection other than being a fellow human being; and praying for Avimelech, even though the latter had wronged Avraham.

Why is Chessed so important that Avraham is extolled for it and the people of S'dom deserved to be destroyed for not practicing it?

R' Almosnino explains: There is a well-known saying – '*The whole is greater than the sum of its parts*.' The truth of this saying is demonstrated by the fact that, on each day of Creation, Hashem saw that what He had made was "Good." However, when Creation was completed, He saw that it was "Very good" (1:31).

Each individual person is only a part of the whole. But, when he thinks of others and brings people together through acts of Chessed, he becomes part of something bigger than himself, i.e., the whole.

One who rejects Chessed, as S'dom did, prevents the Creation from being whole and has no right to exist, while one who embraces Chessed, as Avraham did, is deserving of the greatest admiration and praise. (Olat Shabbat)

כִּי־מַשְׁחִתִּים אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי־גָדְלָה צַעֲקָתָם אֶת־פְּנֵי ה' וַיְשַׁלְּחֵנוּ ה' לְשַׁחֲתָהּ *"For we are about to destroy this place; for their outcry has become great before Hashem, so Hashem has sent us to destroy it." (19:13)*

Midrash Bereishit Rabbah teaches: Because the angels revealed one of Hashem's secrets ("we are about to destroy this place"), they were exiled from His Presence for 138 years.

R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later, in Israel) explains: Apparently, the angels are faulted for revealing Hashem's plan to destroy S'dom just a few minutes before they were supposed to. The reason may be that the S'domites deserved to be destroyed, but, according to Hashem's very precise judgment, they did not deserve the few extra minutes of anxiety that would come from hearing prematurely about the impending destruction. (Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l)

וַיְהִי בְּשַׁחֵת אֱלֹקִים אֶת־עָרֵי הַכִּכָּר וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת־לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲפֵכָה בְּהַהְפֵךְ אֶת־הֶעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־יָשַׁב בָּהֶן לוֹט ***"And so it was when Elokim destroyed the cities of the plain that Elokim remembered Avraham; so He sent Lot from amidst the upheaval when He overturned the cities in which Lot had lived." (19:29)***

Rashi z"l writes: What bearing does G-d's remembering Avraham have upon the rescue of Lot? Hashem "remembered" that Lot knew that Sarah was Avraham's wife–yet, when Lot heard Avraham say in Egypt that Sarah was his sister, Lot did not betray Avraham, because he sympathized with him. For this reason, G-d had mercy on Lot. [Until here from Rashi]

R' David Halevi Bamberger shlita (Manchester) observes: Lot literally risked his life for the Mitzvah of taking in guests, but that did not give him sufficient merit to be saved. Only Lot's silence in Egypt saved him, which teaches us the incredible merit of guarding one's tongue. (*Nachalei Devash Al Ha'sefer Chafetz Chaim* p.3)

Thank G-d



The midrash relates that after Avraham would feed the guests who passed his way, he would say, "*Now thank G-d whose food you have eaten.*" If the guest refused, Avraham would say, "Then pay me! The wine costs such-and-such, the meat costs such-and-such, the bread costs such-and-such. Who would give you wine in the desert? Who would give you meat in the desert? Who would give you bread in the desert?" At that point, Avraham's guests would agree to thank G-d.

The commentaries ask: Of what value is a blessing which is extracted by financial duress?

R' Yitzchak Or Zarua z'l (13th century) explains that Avraham did not actually ask his guests for money. Rather he argued, "*Think about how much you would be willing to pay for food and drink in the desert. Behold! G-d has prepared that food and drink for you by causing me to be here in your time of need. Moreover, it's all free, although you would have paid a small fortune had I requested it.*"

Upon realizing that G-d indeed looks out for each person's needs, Avraham's guests would willingly thank G-d for their food. (Quoted in Otzrot Hatorah Vol. I. p.54)

From the Haftarah ...

"Elisha came into the house and behold! — the lad was dead, laid out on his bed. He entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to Hashem . . . and the lad opened his eyes." (Melachim II 4:32-35)

R' Daniel Movshovitz z"l Hy"d (1880-1941; a leading figure in the Kelm branch of the Mussar movement) teaches: Our Haftarah teaches the extent of the obligation of Hakarat Ha'tov / feeling and expressing gratitude.

This lad's mother had offered Elisha hospitality whenever he traveled past her home. She even set aside a room for him with a bed, table, and lamp. How did Elisha express his gratitude?

Not only did he thank her, and not only did he discern that the woman was childless and bless her and her husband that they would have a son, he even returned to perform Techiyat Ha'meitim / to revive the child after the boy had died! (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Kelm* p.112)

An Astonishing Midrash

"Avraham ate as much as 74 people."

The Vilna Gaon explains as follows: The Torah says (Shmot 24:9-11), "*Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu and the seventy elders ascended [Har Sinai]. They gazed at G-d, and they ate and drank.*" In these verses, appreciating the Shechinah is called "eating," and the verses refer to 74 people (Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu and the 70 elders).

Avraham's appreciation of G-d was greater than that of these 74 people combined. He "ate" more than they did. (Binat Nevonim)

R' Avraham Mordechai Alter z'l (the Gerrer Rebbe) explains this midrash in light of the mishnah (Avot 5:3) which states: There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham. Because these generations angered G-d, Avraham received the reward due all of them.

If you count, says R' Alter, you will find that 74 people are named in the Torah from those generations. (**Imrei Emet**)



"אַל־נָא תַּעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ/ please, do not pass away from Your servant." *(18:3)* - With these words, Avraham greeted the angels who came to his home after his circumcision.

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev z"l (1740-1809; early chassidic rebbe) writes that our verse alludes to Eliyahu Hanavi's attendance at every brit milah. How so?

We are taught that "Eliyahu was Pinchas" (either literally or because they shared a soul). And, Kabbalists teach that when Pinchas killed Zimri, as described in Parashat Balak, the souls of his deceased uncles Nadav and Avihu entered his body.

The initials of Avihu and Nadav are the same as the initials of "Al na" in our verse. Thus, Avraham's words may be interpreted (in the mode of drush / allegory and remez / allusion) - "Eliyahu Hanavi, who carries the souls of Nadav and Avihu, do not pass away from the place of a circumcision." (**Kedushat Levi**)



וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רַק אֵין יִרְאַת אֱלֹקִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָרָגוּנִי עַל דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי *'Avraham said, Because I said, There is but no fear of Elokim in this place and they will slay me because of my wife'.(20:11)*

R' Yerachmiel Shulman z"l Hy"d (Menahel Ruchani of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) comments: Gerar was a civilized society. However, without fear of G-d, even descending into outright murder is not farfetched. (*Peninei Ha'chochmah* 1:23)

R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz z"l (1847-1919; the Alter of Novardok) writes: With fear of G-d, one can make unbiased judgments. Without fear of G-d, one's ability to weigh choices and alternatives is corrupted by biases. (*Madregat Ha'adam: Ma'amar Yir'ah Va'ahavah* ch.10)



"When you are traveling and unable to pray or learn in the way to which you are accustomed, don't get yourself all distressed. Hashem desires that you serve Him in all modalities that exist, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another.

That is why you ended up in this situation, so that you can serve Him now in a different way." ~ Baal Shem Tov



כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה׳ לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט "***For I have loved him [Avraham], because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice*** . . ." (18:19)

R' Yisrael Meir Kagan z"l (Chafetz Chaim) asks: Seemingly, charity and justice are opposites. How could Avraham command his household to do charity and justice? He explains:

When another person's honor or property is involved, one must adhere to the way of "justice," i.e., the letter of the law. One may not impinge even one iota on another person's honor or property. One must know all of the laws of theft, lest one inadvertently use his friend's property and be considered a thief. One must not speak hurtful words to another person nor embarrass him.

On the other hand, when one's own honor and property are involved, the proper way is the way of "charity." If someone harms you or your property, don't demand adherence to the letter of the law. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 30b) teaches, "Yerushalayim was destroyed only because people demanded adherence to the letter of the law." On the other hand, the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17a) teaches, "If one overlooks his rights, Hashem will overlook his sins."

(Ahavat Chessed: Introduction)

"The awareness that 'all the Almighty does is for your benefit'. - This realization is a great wisdom that will help you in both this world and the next. There is no greater wealth than mastering this attitude. - When you reach this level, you will not be broken or become sad regardless of how the Almighty sets up your life. You will accept whatever happens with love." ~ R' Chaim Zaitchyk zt"l

וַיִּטַּע אֵשֶׁל בִּבְאֵר שָׁבַע "*He planted an `eshel' in Beer Sheva* ..." (21:33)

A midrash states that "eshel" [literally, a type of tree] is an acronym for "achilah, shetiyah, linah" / "food, drink, a place to sleep." Thus, the verse is describing Avraham's hospitality to travelers.

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) asks: Why does the Torah not mention the hospitality of the Patriarchs Yitzchak and Yaakov? Were they less righteous than Avraham?

He answers: Avraham had a greater obligation to perform kindness to other people because Avraham had benefited from other people. Specifically, he had become wealthy at the expense of Pharaoh and Avimelech.

In contrast, Yitzchak made his fortune in agriculture, and Yaakov, raising animals. Their debt to society was not as great; thus, they were less obligated than Avraham to perform chessed and they chose to serve Hashem in other ways. (Chochmat Ha'Torah)

כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט *For I have loved him, because he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem." (18:19)*

After all that Avraham did–allowing himself to be thrown into a furnace, leaving his homeland, etc.–the attribute that Hashem loves most about Avraham is that he will instruct his children to keep the way of Hashem!

This demonstrates, says **R' Aryeh Levin z"l** (1885-1969; known as the "Tzaddik of Yerushalayim" and as the "Father of the Prisoners" for his role as chaplain of the Yerushalayim prison), that all of Avraham's and our own tests and challenges are meaningful only if we successfully transmit our beliefs to the ensuing generations.

וְאֶל־הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן־בָּקָר רַךְ וָטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנַּעַר וַיְמַהֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ

"Then Avraham ran to the cattle, took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it." (18:7)

Rashi z"l comments: The youth was Yishmael, whom Avraham instructed to do this in order to train him in the performance of Mitzvot [in this case the Mitzvah of hospitality].

R' Yechiel Michel Zilber shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Zhvil Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) observes: We read at the end of last week's parashah (17:25), "*His son Yishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised.*"

This incident took place a few days later. From here we can learn that a father's obligation of Chinuch / instructing his son in the way of the Torah does not end when the child turns thirteen.

וַה' הִמְטִיר עַל־סְדֹם וְעַל־עֲמֹרָה גָּפְרִית וָאֵשׁ מֵאֵת ה' מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם "***Hashem rained on S'dom and Amorah sulphur and fire, from Hashem, out of heaven.***" (19:24)

Rashi writes: "First rain, then it became sulphur and fire." Why?

R' Shalom Mordechai Schwadron z"l (1913-1997) explains that this was a manifestation of Hashem's kindness.

When the rain started to fall, the people of S'dom and the neighboring towns had the opportunity to repent. [This occurred after the first day of Pesach, when rain is unusual in Eretz Yisrael.] When they failed to repent, the rain turned to sulphur and fire.

We find that the same thing occurred at the beginning of the Deluge. First the rain started lightly, and then, when the people did not take heed, the rain became heavier. (Lev Shalom)

"On the third day, Avraham raised his eyes and perceived the place from afar. Avraham said to his young men, `Stay here by yourselves with the donkey, while I and the lad will go until there; we will worship, and we will return to you.' . . . Then Yitzchak spoke to Avraham, his father, and said, `Father . . . Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?'" *(22:4-7)*

Why did Yitzchak wait until the third day to ask where the sheep for an offering was?

R' Yechezkel Abramsky z"l (rabbi in Poland and Dayan in London and rosh yeshiva in Israel; author of Chazon Yechezkel; died 1976) once said, "I learned from here that before one asks a question, he should look around to see if there are people there whose presence might discourage candour.

Yitzchak did not ask his question before the third day because he suspected that Avraham might not speak freely in the presence of Yishmael and Eliezer who accompanied them. (Peninei Rabbeinu Yechezkel)

Angel Bread

The Torah describes to us Avraham's greatness in that, despite his weakness and the unbearable heat, he was saddened that no guests arrived at his door. The Torah describes that when he saw three "men" approaching, he ran to them and invited them in. The Torah further describes in detail the food that he prepared for them and served them.

R' Shalom Mordechai Schwadron z"l ('The Maggid' 1913-1997) asks: Since Avraham was so hospitable, presumably he had overnight guests in his tent who had arrived on previous days. Why then was it so important to him that new guests come?

R' Schwadron explains that Avraham's goal in having guests was not merely to feed them. His goal was to teach them how a person should eat – not in a ravenous, animal-like manner, but in a refined way. He taught that eating should be part of man's spiritual life, not a physical activity. And, just as Hashem renews His creation every day, so Avraham wished to renew his own work every day.

The midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu states that although angels do not ordinarily eat, Hashem opened the "mouths" of the angels who came to Avraham's house, and they ate. R' Schwadron explains that this was a reward for Avraham. Since he taught men to behave like angels during their meals, his reward was that real angels ate in his house.

Chazal say that Avraham's descendants received the mahn in the desert as a reward for the bread which Avraham offered to the angels. Because Avraham fed human food to the angels while trying to teach humans to eat like angels, his descendants survived on the mahn, which was not real food and which Chazal refer to as the "bread of angels." (Lev Shalom p.145)

The Greatness of the Akeidah

R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l ("Chida"; 1724-1806) writes: **R' Moshe Almosnino z"l** (16th century) asks in his work, Yedei Moshe: Why is Avraham glorified so for his willingness to sacrifice his son? How many thousands of Jews sacrificed themselves for Hashem from ancient times until today?

R' Almosnino answers: Avraham's greatness was that he fulfilled Hashem's command joyfully. How do we know that he did? Because he experienced prophecy in the middle of the akeidah (see 22:11), and Chazal teach (Pesachim 117a) that prophecy can be experienced only when the prophet is in a joyful state. Surely one would have expected Avraham to experience sadness as he prepared to

sacrifice his son, but Avraham experienced only joy at fulfilling the word of Hashem.

Chida himself offers a different answer. Throughout Jewish history, when Jews went to martyrdom, they were forced to do so. Even Avraham, when he entered Nimrod's furnace as a child, was forced to enter it. Not so Avraham at the akeidah; nobody forced him to sacrifice his son, yet he did so willingly.

וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם

"It happened after these things, G-d tested Avraham . . ." (22:1)



What were "these things" which preceded the akeidah? Rashi explains **אַחַר דְּבָרָיו שֶׁל שָׂטָן** that the satan complained: "Avraham made a party in honor of Yitzchak [verse 21:8] and did not offer even one sacrifice." Hashem responded that Avraham would even sacrifice Yitzchak if he were so commanded.

R' Chaim Moshe Gostynski z"l (Poland and New York; 20th century) observes that if the names of the letters of the word "**עקידה**" are spelled out in full as follows: **עין קף יוד דלית הה** their gematria equals 784, the same as the gematria of the phrase, "**אַחַר דברי שָׂטָן**"/"after the words of the satan."

וַיִּטַּע אֶשֶׁל בִּבְאֵר שָׁבַע "***He planted an eshel in Beer Sheva, and there he proclaimed the Name of Hashem, Elokim of the Universe.***" (21:33)

Rashi z"l quotes the Gemara (Sotah 10b) which describes the eshel–according to one interpretation, a type of tree–as the center of Avraham's chessed and kiruv / outreach activities. There he would offer travelers food and then teach them to thank G-d for what they had received.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995) observes: Surely, Avraham engaged in these activities for decades, yet the Torah only hints at them in passing. In contrast, the visit of the angels at the beginning of our parashah was a one-time event, yet the Torah describes it in detail. Moreover, every action that Avraham did for the angels made an impression on the future (see, for example, Rashi to 18:14). Why?

R' Auerbach explains: Avraham's kindness for the angels was performed when he was weak from his brit milah, when every movement required tremendous effort. A mitzvah performed under such circumstances is far more beloved to Hashem than a mitzvah performed over and over without this level of effort.

"If you accept the standards of society, you will grow dizzy with changing trends. But G-d is One – one truth and one standard of right and wrong." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l

"When you are happy, you are able to cheer up others, which is a tremendous chesed. A happy person spreads positive feelings." ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l

וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם "He was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." (18:1)

Why, of all the acts of kindness that Avraham did in his life, does the Torah tell us only about the kindness that he did for angels, who did not need his kindness? Also, why was Avraham unhappy when he did not have guests? If no one needed his kindness, he was excused from performing the mitzvah at that moment!

R' Shlomo Heiman z"l (Rosh Yeshiva in Baranovitch, Poland and in Torah Voda'ath in Brooklyn; died 1944) explains that Avraham's purpose in performing acts of kindness was two-fold. One purpose was, of course, the kindness itself. The second purpose was to teach others the importance of doing kindness.

It is true that if no one needed his kindness, he was excused from performing the mitzvah at that moment. However, he was unhappy because he longed for opportunities to share his teachings with the world.

The Torah emphasizes Avraham's desire to teach others to do kindness by telling us that he did kindness for angels. As long as his guests looked like humans, people would believe that Avraham was performing acts of kindness and would learn from him.

R' Heiman added: Sometimes a person is tired and feels that he will not learn anything if he attends a shiur / Torah lecture that day. One should go anyway, because, like Avraham, a person should be conscious of two benefits that can arise from his mitzvot.

When one attends a shiur, he may learn something, but even if he doesn't, he sets an example for others. And, this latter purpose is accomplished even if he is too tired to understand the lecture. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Baranovitch p. 240)

וְאֶקְחָה פַת־לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לִבְּכֶם "***I will fetch a morsel of bread that you may sustain yourselves . . .***" *(18:5)*

Rashi comments: We find a source in each part of Tanach for the fact that bread sustains man. The source in the Torah is the above verse. The source in Nevi'im / Prophets is the verse (Shoftim 19:5), סְעָד לִבְּךָ פַּת־לֶחֶם - "***Sustain your heart with bread***." The source in Ketuvim / Writings is the verse (Tehilim 104:15), וְלֶחֶם לְבַב־אֱנוֹשׁ יִסְעָד "***And bread will sustain the heart of mankind***."

R' Asher Kalman Braun z"l (a rosh yeshiva in the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Lithuania) asks: Doesn't everyone know that bread sustains man?

He answers: The fact that man is sustained when he eats bread is anecdotal evidence, but it does not prove that bread can sustain any person. The fact that it is written in Tanach, however, is proof! (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Shai La'Torah p. 420)



יֻקַּח־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשָּׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ "***Wash your feet, and recline beneath the tree.***" (18:4)

R' Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein z"l (1890-1971; the Ozhorover Rebbe) writes: Look at the wonders of the Torah! Our Sages say that Avraham wanted the visitors to wash their feet because he was afraid that they belonged to a tribe that worshipped dust. In effect he told them, "Leave your idolatry and accept G-d." How did the Sages know this? It is alluded to in our verse.

First, "Wash your feet" ("וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם"), has a gematria of exactly 613, alluding to the mitzvot. Also, in the passage, ". . . ***your feet,***

and recline beneath the tree" ("רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשָּׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ"), the initial Hebrew letters are the letters of the word **תורה** - "Torah," while the final Hebrew letters are the letters of the word **מצות** -"mitzvot."

This is why the **Zohar** (I 102b) says that "recline beneath the tree" means, "Recline in the shade of the Holy One, and reject idolatry." (**Be'er Moshe**)

117th Anniversary of the Mishnah Berurah



"I have completed it through the kindness of Hashem, may He be blessed, on the 19th of the month of Cheshvan 5667." So wrote the author, **R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (better known as the "Chafetz Chaim")**, at the end of the sixth and final volume of the Mishnah Berurah. Since its completion 117 years ago this week, the Mishnah Berurah has become one of the most definitive sources of halachah in those areas which it covers-primarily the daily prayers and the laws of Shabbat and the holidays.

The Chafetz Chaim's son, **R' Aryeh Leib Hakohen z"l**, was an active participant in the writing and publication of some parts of the Mishnah Berurah. In his short biography of his father, he recorded some of his memories of that time, as follows:

'In 5644 [1884], my father published his work, Mishnah Berurah volume 1, which covered up to the laws of the Priestly Blessing.

During the printing process, he remained in Warsaw, and every day he was in and out of the printing shop to ensure that there would be no errors. He did not trust anyone else in this matter, unlike other authors who hand over the printing to an expert and do not supervise the work themselves.

He explained that because this is a work of halachah / law, it is particularly important for it to be error free. Even more, he worried about transgressing the sin of stealing if a volume would have unclear print or missing lines. Because of this, he refrained even from his regular Torah studies for several months. Such was his practice with each volume as it was printed.

I recall that after I settled in Warsaw in 5666 [1906], my father generally relied on me regarding the printing of his works. It happened once that a purchaser of the Mishnah Berurah wrote to him complaining that his set contained a signature [i.e., a unit of pages used in printing] with pages out of order.

I then received a letter from my father which said, "What have you done to me, my son? My entire life I worried about avoiding even the appearance of stealing (`avak gezel'), but I never imagined that I would one day commit actual theft!" Because of you, I have been entrapped into stealing."

My father commanded me to immediately print a new signature and to advertise in the newspapers that anyone who has a volume with pages out of order should contact me for a correction. And so I did.

My father was careful his entire life never to sell a book that had not been checked. He spent a great deal of money on proofreaders to ensure that no pages or signatures were reversed in the binding process or were unclear, as occurs in printing. Every book sold had the word "mugah" ("checked") written in it, and he was insistent about this.

He placed his name on the title page of the Mishnah Berurah [unlike on some of his other works] because he said, "It is a work of halachah. Maybe somebody will disagree with a conclusion of mine and they will know to contact me, if I am still living. Then I will reply to them to defend my view or, if in fact the law is not as I wrote, I will correct it in future editions."

In fact, some changes were made to the first volume in the second printing, but I do not know whether this was inspired by an outsider or if my father changed his mind on his own. (Kitzur Toldot He'Chafetz Chaim in Kol Kitvei Chafetz Chaim Vol.I)

וַיֹּ֣אמֶר כִּי֩ אֶת־שֶׁ֨בַע כְּבָשֹׂ֜ת תִּקַּ֣ח מִיָּדִ֗י בַּעֲבוּר֙ תִּֽהְיֶה־לִּ֣י לְעֵדָ֔ה כִּ֥י חָפַ֖רְתִּי אֶת־הַבְּאֵ֥ר הַזֹּֽאת **"[Avraham] replied, 'Because you are to take these seven ewes from me, that it may serve me as testimony that I dug this well'." (21:30)**



How did Avraham's giving Avimelech seven ewes prove that Avraham dug the well?

R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach z"l (Belzer Rebbe) explains: Surely Avraham's sheep would not drink from someone else's well. Avraham said, "Look! These sheep are drinking from this well. Now I will give them to you, and they no longer will drink from the well." That proves the well is mine. (Lekket Imrei Kodesh)

When you influence others, you can change the world in places you've never been and ways you never imagined.

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־עָמַד שָׁם אֶת־פְּנֵי ה׳ "***Avraham arose early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Hashem.***" (19:27)



Our Sages learn from this verse that one should have a makom kavuah / fixed place for prayer. Why is that important?

R' Avraham Meir Rosen z"l (Warsaw; 19th century) explains: Proper prayer requires subjugating oneself entirely to G-d, something that is impossible if one prays haphazardly. By having a fixed place for prayer, one indicates that his prayer is not haphazard. (Be'ur Amarim Al Midrash Tanchuma)

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּגָּמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גָּדוֹל בְּיוֹם הִגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק "***The child grew and was weaned, and Avraham made a great feast on the day Yitzchak `higamel' / was weaned.***" (21:8)

The midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (ch.29) writes that this verse is the source of the custom to make a festive meal at a berit milah.

Where in this verse is there an allusion to berit milah?

Rabbeinu Tam z"l (France; 1100-1171) explains that the word "**הִגָּמֵל**" (literally, "he was weaned") can be read: "**הג**" — 5+3, i.e., on the eighth day — "**מל**" — he was circumcised. (Tosafot to Shabbat 130a)

"Feeling for someone else is sympathy, but empathy means to be able to see things from the other person's perspective." ~ R' Dr. Avraham J. Twerski zt"l

וַיֹּאמֶר אַל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנַּעַר וְאַל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אַתָּה וְלֹא חָשַׂכְתָּ אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי "***Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him, for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man.***" (22:12)

Presumably, once Avraham passed the test by demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak, there was no longer a need to continue the test.

Accordingly, one would have expected the first and second parts of the verse to be reversed-"*Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man; [therefore], do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him.*" - As written, however, the verse seems to suggest that the proof of Avraham's devotion to G-d was his taking Yitzchak down from the altar!

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l explains: In this verse, the One Who Knows man's secrets is testifying that Avraham was not motivated by any personal sense of relief when he took Yitzchak from the altar. Rather, in the same way that he put Yitzchak on the altar only to fulfill Hashem's command, so he took Yitzchak down solely to fulfill Hashem's command.

Thus the verse says: From the fact that I see your motive in not stretching out your hand against the lad, now I know that you are truly G- d-fearing. (Tiferet Zion: Lech Lecha p.8)

"When you give something to a person in need, you are not only helping him; you yourself gain immensely from your act of kindness.

In this way, you are integrating the attribute of kindness into your personality and walking in the footsteps of our forefather Avraham." ~ R' Simcha Zissel Ziv zt"l

"A Statement Regarding the Holiness of Shabbat"

The following was published by **R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the "Chafetz Chaim")** in the summer of 1929.

"We have witnessed the great awakening which has taken place around the world to strengthen Shabbat observance. In all corners of the globe, people have gathered together for this holy undertaking, and in many countries, societies have been formed for this purpose. How our hearts rejoice to see the spirit of purity which was sent down from Above to awaken us regarding this great and holy matter, which encompasses within it both the entire Torah and everything we believe [because Shabbat testifies to our belief in Creation, which is the foundation of the Torah]! This gives us hope for the rebuilding of our faith, which is in ruins in our day, for our Sages have said, "If only Bnei Yisrael would keep two Shabbatot, they would be redeemed immediately." Even the prophet Yirmiyah, who prophesied regarding the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash [i.e., he lived at a time when Bnei Yisrael were very sinful], foretold that princes and nobles would return to the throne of King David if Shabbat were observed (see Yirmiyah 17:24-25).

Certainly, if we will strengthen ourselves in these days regarding Shabbat observance, this will be a catalyst to bring the Redemption closer. The first step has already taken place amidst great publicity around the world; now, we must strengthen ourselves and use the remnants of our strength to give this movement additional impetus. Whomever will involve himself with this, and will strengthen his friends, will experience the fulfillment of the prophecy of Azaryahu (Divrei Hayamim II 15:3, 7), "Many days have passed by for Yisrael without a true G-d . . . but you be strong, and do not lose resolve, for there is reward for your actions." (Kol Kitvei He'Chafetz Chaim Vol. I)

וַיֵּרָ֣א אֵלָ֔יו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵ֖י מַמְרֵ֑א וְה֣וּא יֹשֵׁ֔ב פֶּ֥תַח־הָאֹ֖הֶל כְּחֹ֥ם הַיּֽוֹם׃ וַיִּשָּׂ֤א עֵינָיו֙ וַיַּ֔רְא וְהִנֵּ֥ה שְׁלֹשָׁ֖ה אֲנָשִׁ֣ים נִצָּבִ֣ים עָלָ֑יו וַיַּ֙רְא֙ וַיָּ֣רָץ לִקְרָאתָ֔ם מִפֶּ֖תַח הָאֹ֑הֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּ֖חוּ אָ֥רְצָה

"***Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and saw – And behold! three men were standing over him***." (18:1-2)

Rashi z"l explains: *Avraham was sitting at the opening of his tent searching for passers-by that he could welcome into his home. Hashem had made it a burning hot day in order that no travelers would be out and about to trouble Avraham, who was recovering from his circumcision three days earlier. But, when Hashem saw Avraham's disappointment, He sent angels in the form of humans to visit Avraham.* [Until here from Rashi]

This requires explanation, for shouldn't Avraham have been happy that no one was out on such a hot day and, thus, no one needed hospitality?

R' Kalman Winter z"l (rabbi of Southeast Hebrew Congregation-Knesset Yehoshua in Silver Spring, Maryland) explained: Avraham wished to emulate G-d. We are taught that G-d created the world as an act of kindness toward mankind [see Tehilim 89:3, "**עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבָּנֶה**" / "***the world will be built with kindness***"].

Obviously, however, before mankind was created, there was no one who needed G-d's kindness. Why then did He create mankind? We see that one of G-d's attributes is that He creates opportunities for Himself to do chessed, and then He performs the chessed. Therefore, wanting to emulate G-d, Avraham, too, was not content when no opportunities for chessed existed. He wanted new opportunities for chessed to be created.

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקְרָא לְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת־כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיִּירְאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים מְאֹד ***And Abimelech arose early in the morning, and he summoned all his servants, and he spoke all these words in their ears; and the men were very frightened.***

וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֶה־עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ "***Avimelech summoned Avraham and said to him, 'What have you done to us?'***

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם מָה רָאִיתָ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה . . . ***Avimelech said to Avraham, 'What did you see that you did such a thing?'***" (20:8-10)



R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995) observed: Avimelech summons Avraham and speaks to him angrily. Then, the Torah again uses the introductory phrase, "Avimelech said," but this time Avimelech speaks more rationally.

What happened in between?

Only that Avraham was silent; he did not respond to Avimelech's anger. This demonstrates, concluded R' Auerbach, that silence is the most effective response to anger. (Minchat Avot p.37)

"When a neshamah comes down to the world, it comes along with a quota of pleasure. These pleasures are divided among his needs: Some degree of pleasure goes towards nachas from children, parnassah, health, honour, and so on.

But if you will take so much pleasure from honour, you are limiting yourself from attaining pleasure in the other areas." ~ Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt"l.

וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו "***And the two of them [Avraham and Yitzchak] went together.***" (22:6)

The Zohar comments: They were intertwined – Avraham had gevurah / strength, Yitzchak's trait. Yitzchak had chessed / kindness, Avraham's trait.

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (1923-1986; mashgiach ruchani in the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) explains: At the Akeidah, Avraham and Yitzchak each became complete. Avraham, whose mode of service was chessed, used gevurah to overcome his natural reluctance to sacrifice his son. Yitzchak, on the other hand, whose mode of service was gevurah, attained the pinnacle of love of Hashem when he allowed himself to be offered as a sacrifice–love being related to chessed.

It is as a result of this accomplishment of Yitzchak that the Jewish People inherited the ability to sacrifice themselves for G-d's Name. (Derech L'Chaim Al Derech Hashem p.243)

Isn't 3 Seah A Lot of Flour For Three Men?

וַיְמַהֵר אַבְרָהָם הָאֹהֱלָה אֶל־שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מַהֲרִי שְׁלֹשׁ סְאִים ׀ קֶמַח סֹלֶת לוּשִׁי וַעֲשִׂי עֻגוֹת ***And Avrohom hastened to the tent to Sarah, and he said, "Hasten three seah of meal [and] fine flour; knead and make cakes." (18:6)***

Summary: A seah is an enormous amount of grain. 1 seah = 6 kav. 1 kav = 24 eggs. Therefore, 1 seah = 144 eggs. And 3 seah is 432 eggs. And Avraham told Sarah to take 3 seah of meal and flour to prepare *ugot* for the angels. Are they truly such gluttons?

Ramban and Baal HaTurim grapple with this question. While Midrash Rabba increases the astonishing amount to 9 seah, the Ramban grapples with the huge amount, and suggests that others ate with them in their honor, or that one should parse it as

that she should take 3 seah of coarse flour and sift it to extract a far smaller amount of fine flour.



Ramban also suggests that Avraham was aware of the ethereal nature of his guests, and that they would then be able to 'eat' all of this, and it was like increasing burnt-offerings for the altar.

I could suggest that, since Avraham ate 74x as much as a normal person, as per the last *brayta* in Masechet Soferim, he estimated that each guest would eat that much as well. 144 / 74 ~= 2 eggs.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky associates it with a *halachic* concern: After citing the Ramban's concern, he writes that "one could say that behold, Avraham thought that they were Arabs, and it is forbidden to bake on Yom Tov for the sake of a gentile (and this works either according to the opinion that it was Pesach or the opinion that it was Succot). But in the gemara (Beitza 17a) they say that a woman may fill an oven with bread in order that the bread {in general} will bake well, when the oven is full. And therefore he needed to increase a lot of bread, so that the oven would be permitted to bake all of it."

He also has a suggestion within Ramban's suggestion that there was sifting of the 3 seah down to a smaller amount: Basically, an amount such that when it reached the smaller amount, there would be a full day's bread for each of them.

Radak suggests that each would get a single loaf the size of a seah, and this enormous loaf was *derech kavod*.

I would try to solve this in another way. Who says we know what a *seah* is? Yes, in Mishnaic Hebrew it has a definition of 6 kav, but that does not mean that it must have that definition in Tanach.

The word *seah* only occurs once the entirety of Torah and that is **here**. Even if the other few scattered examples of *seah* in Nach do mean this large measure, there is no certitude that the seah measure did not change.

What Did The Chofetz Chaim Say About Yishmaelim 90 Years Ago? [Aryeh Erlich /YWN]



The Chofetz Chaim at the first Knessia Gedolah of the World Agudas Yisrael in 1923 in Vienna. (Screenshot)

Chareidi journalist Aryeh Erlich posted the words of the Chofetz Chaim, z'tl, about the Yishmaelim 90 years ago.

Erlich wrote: "I'm not the one saying it, because it's not politically correct these days but look at what the Chofetz Chaim, z'tl, said 90 years ago."

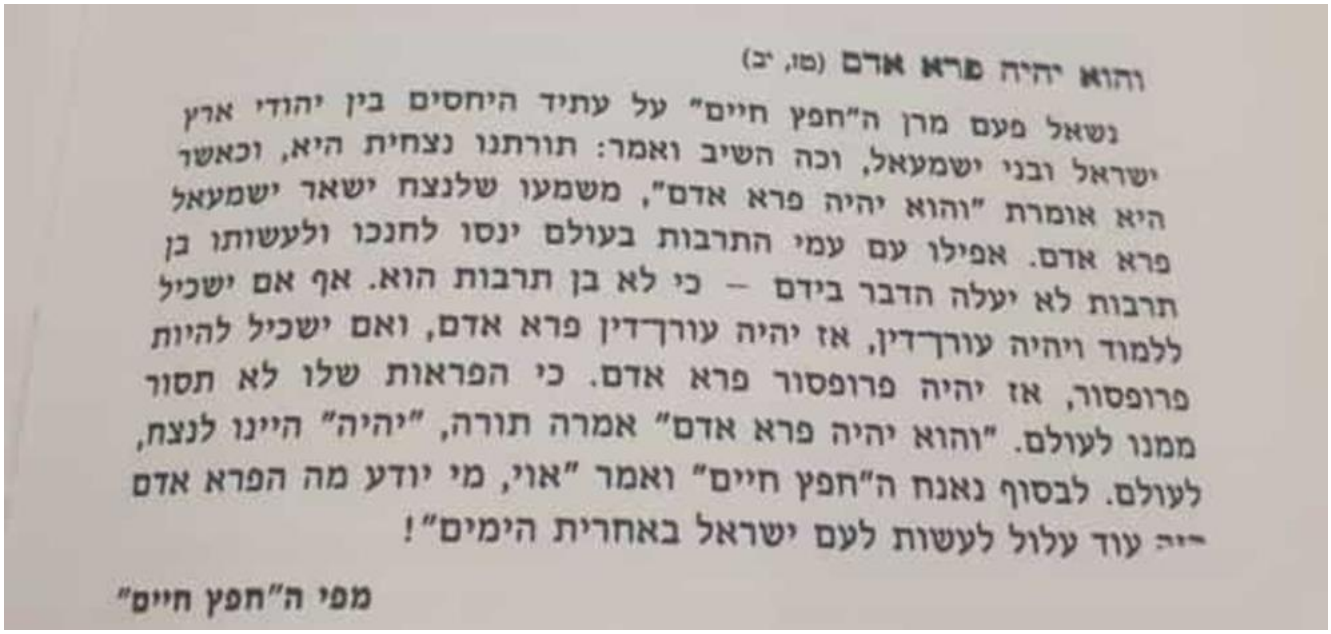
"The Chofetz Chaim was once asked about the future of the relationship between the Jews of Eretz Yisrael and Bnei Yishmael, and this is what he answered:

'Our Torah is eternal – when it says '**והוא יהיה פרא אדם**' – it means that Yishmael will always remain **פרא אדם**. Even if the civilized nations of the world will try to educate them, it will not succeed - because they are [inherently] uncivilized."

"Even if he [a Yishmaeli] receives an education and becomes an attorney – he'll be a **פרא אדם** attorney. And if he's educated to become a professor, then he'll be a **פרא אדם** professor."

"Because his savagery will never be removed from him. The Torah said '**והוא יהיה פרא אדם**' and '**יהיה**' means forever."

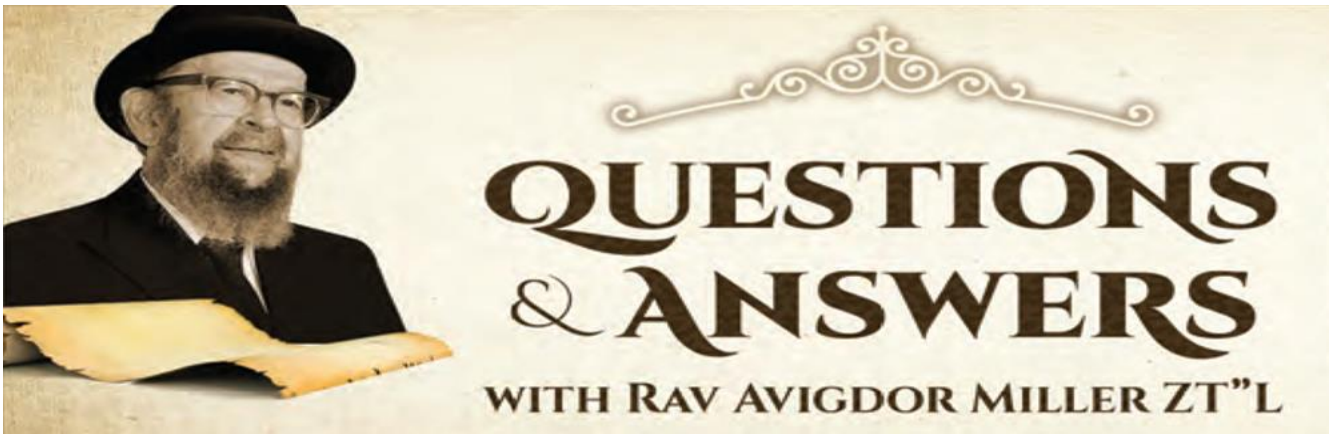
The Choefetz Chaim concluded by sighing and saying: "***Oiy, who knows what this פרא אדם will do to Am Yisrael at the end of days***!"



והוא יהיה פרא אדם (טז, יב)

נשאל פעם מרן ה"חפץ חיים" על עתיד היחסים בין יהודי ארץ ישראל ובני ישמעאל, וכה השיב ואמר: תורתנו נצחית היא, וכאשר היא אומרת "והוא יהיה פרא אדם", משמעו שלנצח ישאר ישמעאל פרא אדם. אפילו עם עמי התרבות בעולם ינסו לחנכו ולעשותו בן תרבות לא יעלה הדבר בידם – כי לא בן תרבות הוא. אף אם ישכיל ללמוד ויהיה עורך־דין, אז יהיה עורך־דין פרא אדם, ואם ישכיל להיות פרופסור, אז יהיה פרופסור פרא אדם. כי הפראות שלו לא תסור ממנו לעולם. "והוא יהיה פרא אדם" אמרה תורה, "יהיה" היינו לנצח, לעולם. לבסוף נאנח ה"חפץ חיים" ואמר "אוי, מי יודע מה הפרא אדם יהיה עוד עלול לעשות לעם ישראל באחרית הימים"!

מפי ה"חפץ חיים"





How does one deal with an abusive boss?

Always be nice to him. Always be nice to your boss. If you can, shake hands with him every morning when you come in to work and greet him warmly. Smile at him always. And whatever he says, you should say, "Yes, yes, yes." - And keep looking for a better job.

But he should not know that you're looking for a better job. No, not at all. He should just know that you're doing the best that you can right now. And that applies to all people.

No matter what type of job you have, you should always keep your eyes out for a better job. But while you're on this job, make sure that you're doing the best that you possibly can. You must always be a loyal employee.

Lavan was a very abusive boss. Much worse than your boss. And the pesukim tell us that Yakov Avinu remained a loyal worker till the end.

Loyalty is so important that the Torah goes out of its way to tell us details about Yakov Avinu's loyalty to Lavan. So, make sure to treat your boss well and work hard - And keep your eyes out for a new job.



A boy was insolent to his rebbi in the yeshiva. How should his parents react?

Look, the rebbi maybe didn't hit him, but the parents should hit him. When parents hit however, they should let the boy know that they're doing it al pi mishpat.

Here's how they should say: "My son, you did a very big aveirah! You were insolent to the rebbi. You deserve to be hit six times. But we're going to have pity on you and hit you only five times. It really should be one time more, so you're getting a bargain."

So he knows it's mishpat, not anger. And then hit him; one, two, three, four, five. And he'll appreciate it. He'll appreciate that. But if you just have a temper and without any hakdama, without any introduction, you start hitting him, so he thinks you're an enemy of his. But here he knows you're a dayan, you're a shofet 37zedek, a righteous judge, and you're giving him a bargain too, less than he's supposed to get.



What do you say about weddings that go till late at night?

Why should weddings take so long?! You need hundreds of people to ruin their health just because you want to make a wedding?!

People should go home early — it's a crime to keep two hundred people up till very late at night! The next day two hundred people will be walking around looking like ghosts because of you. It's a strain on the heart and a strain on the kidneys.

It's too much! The truth is that it's too much to expect even of a good friend. Even a good friend should sneak out! Don't bother to go over and excuse yourself. Because then he'll start importuning you. Just sneak out and forget about it.

He'll be angry? Your body will also be angry at you if you stay, and it's more important to be friends with your body.



What's the best way to deal with a father-in-law?

Don't laugh. That's a very important question. And the answer is that the very best way is to always honor him and to keep quiet.

Honor your father-in-law and keep your mouth shut. The less you say the more he'll like to you. He'll think you're a somebody if you keep your mouth closed. Open up your mouth, you'll begin to bray, and he sees that you're a donkey in disguise.

It's very important to know that with your wife's relatives you have to smile always, no matter what. Smile always and keep quiet. And they'll like you. They'll like you. If you open your mouth however, you're in trouble.

"It is worthwhile to deliver a lecture even if it will help just one person to pray the evening services with greater concentration. This holds true even if that one person is the lecturer himself." ~ R' Yisroel Salanter zt"l.



Should I continue praying for something that I desire to get, even though I've been praying for so long already and I haven't seen any results?

קַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ חֲזַק וְיַאֲמֵץ לִבֶּךָ וְקַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ Hope to Hashem, be strong and He will give your heart courage, and hope to Hashem. (Tehillim 27:14).

Yes - Never give up hope. Keep talking to Hashem. Now, there are two benefits. First of all, by continuously repeating your request, maybe Hakodosh Boruch Hu will consider you worthy just because of that – just because of your turning to Him all the time. Maybe He'll consider you worthy, and grant your request.

And even if, chalilah, Hakodosh Boruch Hu sees fit to ignore your requests, you have gained immensely! Because prayer changes a person.

When you call out to Hashem from the bottom of your heart, you're actually talking to Somebody, and you become more aware that He is standing in front of you , listening. And that's one of the greatest benefits that you could ever gain – more awareness of Hashem.

That's why davening to Hashem is so important. When a person stands up to say shemonah esrei, he's standing before the King. We don't see Him, but He sees us. He hears every word.

When people daven, and they daven again and again, they should know that they're learning a great lesson – the great lesson of believing in Hashem. And there's nothing greater in life than coming to a true belief in Hashem. And therefore, if Hashem will listen to you and grant you your request, very good. And if He won't, it's also good, because you have gained immensely.

Fake It 'til You Make It

Keep on deceiving yourself (by saying), "I'm eating l'shem shomayim. Of course you're bluffing! The first 10, 15, or 20 times, you don't mean it. But it's going to penetrate eventually.

That's the secret. You have to be a hypocrite in order to become a great man. Act like a somebody; only you know you're a nobody. Deceive people and after a while it's going to cause a change in you.

Don't be too hesitant to act the role of a good person, or a servant of Hashem, because sooner or later it's going to take. **~ R' Avigdor Miller zt"l.**

Make it More Manageable

The Chazon Ish zt"l once advised a student who had a hard time studying Torah for long periods of time to just learn a little bit from many different sefarim, because many short tasks are more manageable than one large task.

For example, studying 10 minutes of chumash, 10 minutes of Nach, then halacha, gemara, Mishna and mussar will add up to an hour, yet without the pressure and heaviness of a long chore.

This can be applied to *tefillah* as well. Instead of putting pressure on yourself to *daven* with *kavanah* for the entire *davening*, start with breaking it down into sections which is more manageable. Then work on the next section of *tefillah*.

"Somebody once asked a wise and deep man, "What is love?" and he answered, love is learning the song in another person's heart and singing it to them when they forget it." ~ R' YY Jacobson

The Weekly Vort

Fifty Signatures





At the height of the 1948 Israeli Independence War, as bombs and shells exploded throughout Jerusalem, a young Torah scholar risked his life to run through the streets towards the home of the city's Rav, **R' Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky**.

R' Chaim Brimm's young wife, Hindel, was laying gravely ill, and R' Chaim had come to R' Dushinsky for a blessing, for advice, for anything that would effect a cure for his young wife, the mother of small children.

R' Dushinsky suggested that he hurry to the holy Rebbe, **R' Gedaliah Moshe of Zhvil (son of the holy R' Shlom'ke of Zhvil)** and beg him to pray for his wife. R' Chaim flew to the Rebbe's home in Katamon,

which was farther away from the constant shelling. When R' Chaim poured out his tale of woe to the Rebbe, stating that R' Dushinsky had suggested he come, the Rebbe humbly said, "What does he want from me? Does he think I am like my father?"

R' Chaim understood that there was nothing more to say. The Rebbe had no intention of helping to affect a salvation. He left dejectedly, making his way back to R' Dushinsky's home. His sorrow made him oblivious to the menacing danger in the streets.

R' Dushinsky told R' Chaim, "Return to the Rebbe's house and tell him that I command him, in the name of the Mara D'Asra, to bring salvation to your sick wife."

R' Chaim was taken aback. Could the Rav actually decree that the Rebbe bring salvation? Though it was difficult to repeat such harsh words to the holy Rebbe, the thought of his poor wife hovering between life and death prodded him onwards.



This time, when R' Chaim conveyed R' Dushinsky's message, the Rebbe relented. "Your wife is in a state where only adding a name won't make a difference. What I need are fifty signatures, each of them from a man willing to donate one year of his own life, for the healing of Hindel, daughter of Sarah, may Hashem send her a speedy recovery. When I have the necessary signatures, we can, with heaven's help, do something together with a name change."

R' Chaim mentioned to the Rebbe that he felt he might have a hard time obtaining such signatures, as in these hard times when people were dying of hunger, thirst, illness and from the shelling, people were clinging to every moment of life. R' Chaim

was so distraught, that he burst into tears. - The Rebbe calmed him and said, "You can tell them, in my name, that I guarantee that anyone who signs up to give a year of life on behalf of your wife will emerge from this war unharmed."

R' Chaim figured that the quickest way to obtain the fifty signatures was to race to the nearest bomb shelter, where many Jews were congregated. R' Chaim entered one such crowded shelter and cried aloud, "*Gevald*!" Silence fell, and R' Chaim seized the temporary lull to plead, "My wife is very sick. She is the daughter of holy people, a modest and righteous woman. Please take pity on her. I need fifty people to donate one year of their lives for her. Here is the page in my hand. Please, I beg of you, fifty signatures. Save her!"

Based on his first impassioned plea, some people thought R' Chaim had lost his mind – for wasn't the Angel of Death picking new victims day by day during those dangerous times?

Then R' Chaim added, "The Rebbe of Zhvil guarantees that anyone who signs will survive the war unharmed!" There was a sudden surge in the crowded shelter, as everyone tried to reach R' Chaim at once, desperate to sign the life-saving document. Within minutes, he already had more than fifty signatures, and he hurried back to the Rebbe. Beneath the signatures, the Rebbe wrote, "***I hereby pledge myself as a guarantor that no harm will come to them. Gedaliah Moshe Goldman, the Rebbe of Zhvil***." The Rebbe then added the name "Ruchama" to R' Chaim's wife's name, and blessed her with a speedy recovery, a long life and good years.

Indeed, Rebbitzen Ruchama Hindel Brimm recovered from her illness. Within a short time, she left her sickbed. She lived 51 years longer, until her death in the year 1999. *The yahrzeit of R' Gedaliah Moshe ben R' Shlomo (Goldman) of Zhvil zt"l is on 24 Cheshvan (1950). May his merit protect us.* (Tales for the Soul Vol. 4)

● **וירא אליו – *He appeared to him*** (18:1).

Rashi says: To visit the sick. R' Chamma son of R' Chanina said – it was the third day after [Avrohom's] *bris milah*, and Hashem came to ask about his welfare.

The Rosh says that from the word *Vayeirah* it is understood that Hashem came for no other reason than to visit Avrohom (and ask of his welfare) – for following there are no words indicating that Hashem spoke to Avrohom.

This comes to teach us that a person should go to visit a sick person – even if he does not speak to him at all. For example, when the sick person is asleep, and others will tell the sick person that "so and so" came to visit him, he will derive pleasure and comfort from knowing that the person visited him. (**Rosh Al HaTorah**)

Fascinating INSIGHTS

A Junior Senior

For many, as they reach old age, they wither. Others, however, just get better with age. They fulfill **עוד ינובון בשיבה דשנים ורעננים יהיו** , they will still be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be.

It has been said, "*You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.*" In this way we can interpret **אל תשליכני לעת זקנה** , *do not cast me off in old age.*

If you keep an active life, you stay vernal and young. Someone once said, "Staying young means being willing to learn, evolve and be open to life."

After Rosh Hashanah in 1988, at the age of 86, **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** launched another major initiative. Noting his advanced age,

the Rebbe quipped, "I am not as old as it says on my passport. If you will carry out what I am requesting now, it will be a sign that you do not perceive me as an old Jew, but as a young man with young ideas."



[*When the Lubavitcher Rebbe suffered a heart attack in 1977,* ***R' Moshe Feinstein*** *penned a letter to his rabbinic colleagues asking them to make a public appeal for congregants to involve themselves in the mitzvah campaigns of Chabad such as tefillin, mezuza and Shabbos candles arguing that "since it is into this that the tzadik and genius of Lubavitch puts his entire soul…certainly every activity in these campaigns will strengthen his health."*]

The pasuk says in reference to the Akeida **ויקח את שני נעריו אתו** , Avraham took his two young men with him. An alternate explanation given is that Avraham took his younger years with him, as **שני נעריו** (literally it means two young men) can be translated as his vernal, youthful years.

When one is younger, he is more energetic and passionate, and thinks he can conquer the world. As he gets older, he has been demoralized by others and has run into dead ends. Avraham at the Akeida was old, as he was 137 years old. However, he acted young as the pasuk tells us that he took his younger youthful years with him.

Ever since the 1960s, **R' Dovid Kviat's** (1920–2009) hands would shake. Yet, he overcame this physical impediment and continued to write his own chidushim. However, very few people were able to decipher his handwriting, and therefore were unable to type them up.

Undeterred, R' Kviat was able to locate someone in Yerushalayim who could still read his writing. However, a few years before he died, R' Kviat's handwriting deteriorated further. Now, no one could decipher his handwriting, not even R' Kviat himself.



Undaunted, he continued to write, because writing helped him crystallize his Torah thoughts. It helped him further his understanding of the *sugya*.

Then, someone suggested that he learn how to type on a computer. His initial reaction was that he was too old to learn a new skill. He was almost eighty and the shaking in his hands was significant, not to mention his eyesight was now quite poor. Nevertheless, he tried his hand at typing, and in a matter of a few days, he was typing a few thousand words per day.

A few months and a few *sefarim* later, he called the person who taught him how to type and said, "I want a laptop!"

"A thousand years of continuous thanks is not enough to pay for our life, livelihood, our health, our families and every tiny Mitzvah and every word of Torah that Hashem enables us to learn and perform.

We must express gratitude for everything that we can think of.

Gratitude must be an integral part of our very being, for every breath and heartbeat." ~ R' Shalom Arush.



ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלקים נסה את אברהם ***And it happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham. (22:1)***

Our Patriarch, Avraham *Avinu*, had been tested ten times by Hashem as a means of confirming his commitment and as a vehicle for proclaiming to the world his abiding devotion to Hashem. Hashem was now asking him to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved with a love that went beyond words.

Actually, Avraham had already proven his commitment to Hashem, when he relinquished his life as he was prepared to die in the fiery cauldron of Uhr Kasdim. How often did Avraham have to prove his willingness to sacrifice on behalf of Hashem?

Mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, is a spiritual staple which is the barometer of Jewish commitment. It appears that our Patriarch could not prove his commitment in one trial. He required ten trials. Why is this?



Horav Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Ruderman, zl, explains that the test of the *Akeidah*, Binding of Yitzchak, did not only concern *mesiras nefesh*, but it was also a greater test than even relinquishing one's life. The test of the *Akeidah* determined how far Avraham would go to give up his love (son).

He waited for one hundred years to hold his Yitzchak, his son, heir, successor. Finally, he was blessed with a child, not just any child, but Yitzchak. One can only imagine the overreaching love that Avraham had for Yitzchak. There could be no love stronger, deeper, more powerful and all-encompassing than Avraham manifested for Yitzchak. Hashem tested Avraham to see if the love he had for Hashem superseded the love he had for Yitzchak.

Hashem was teaching Avraham that there can be no love in the world that competes with the love one must have for Hashem.

The *Akeidas Yitzchak* demanded of Avraham to demonstrate to the world that the love he had for Hashem transcended even the love he had for Yitzchak. *Ahavas Hashem*, love of the Almighty, must be the paradigm of unsurpassed love.

כִּ֣י יְדַעְתִּ֗יו לְמַ֤עַן אֲשֶׁר֙ יְצַוֶּ֣ה אֶת־בָּנָ֔יו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ֙ אַחֲרָ֔יו וְשָׁמְר֥וּ דֶּ֖רֶךְ ה֑' לַעֲשׂ֥וֹת צְדָקָ֖ה וּמִשְׁפָּ֛ט ***For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem.*** (18:19)

The literal translation of **יְדַעְתִּיו** (reference to knowledge) is, "I know him." Understandably, when one loves and cares for someone, he seeks to bring him close and know him better.

Hashem loved Avraham because he did not keep His teachings to himself. When one believes in something, he wants to shout it from the rooftops, to reach out to whomever he can, so that he can share these verities with him.

Interestingly, Avraham *Avinu* performed many *mitzvos* for which he achieved singular distinction. In addition, he kept the entire Torah even prior to its being given to *Klal Yisrael*. Yet, the only time that we find the *lashon* of *chibah*, term of love (Hashem loved Avraham), is with regard to *chinuch ha'banim*, educating his descendants.

Avraham was the first outreach expert; he wrote the book on *chesed*, but none of these wonderful *mitzvos* earned him the appellation of *yedaativ*, loved him. Each of the *Asarah Nisyonos*, Ten Trials, which Avraham successfully passed did not earn him the description, "loved by Hashem." Only one *mitzvah*, **לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת**־**בָּנָיו**, "because he commands his children," did. Why?

Acharav, "after him," is a powerful word which connotes Avraham's teaching method. He taught by example. He did not make demands; he showed the people that he, too, answered to a Higher Authority and that everything he was doing was in accordance with the *tzivui*, command, of Hashem. Avraham taught; he did not compel. He demonstrated his commitment by his actions which he welcomed and encouraged others to follow.

A father's traditions, the customs that were bequeathed to him by his own father, are (should be) sacrosanct. He must realize that his children derive incredible benefit from his adherence to these customs. In some situations, these customs are what keeps them attached to *Yiddishkeit*.

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, relates that he heard from a Holocaust survivor that throughout his years in the various Nazi concentration/labour camps, and despite being a teenager at the time, he never once ate non-kosher food. It was difficult for him, and, as a result, he endured much suffering, but he was unyielding in his tenacious commitment to keeping kosher. Indeed, he served as an inspiration to others, not only with regard to kosher food, but to *Yiddishkeit* as a whole.

The survivor explained that he was able to withstand all the pain and suffering only because he was raised in a home in which commitment to *kashrus* was sacrosanct. He remembered that once his father was quite ill, and the family fed him food that was of questionable origin (the *kashrus* had not been confirmed). As a result, when his father's health returned, his father accepted upon himself (as penance) to

fast on Mondays and Thursdays. It was such devotion that inspired his young son to keep kosher during the entire Holocaust.

A father should make sure never to belittle a *mitzvah*, custom, tradition, any Torah practice in general, especially when his children are watching. Children have a habit of outdoing their parents, by completely rejecting what their parents had only belittled.

A father and mother, both of *Chassidic* persuasion, came to *Rav* Gamliel to seek his counsel concerning their son who wanted to shave his beard. They were pained by his decision, which would bring tremendous shame and ridicule to their family. (In the *Chassidic* community, shaving one's beard is frowned upon. There is an element of holiness to the beard, as expressed by the *Zohar HaKadosh*. Therefore, when a boy of *Chassidic* upbringing shaves off his beard, it is cause for concern.)

Rav Gamliel met with the boy and expressed to him the pain that his decision was causing his parents. The boy responded that he was only changing *minhagim*, customs. He would not shave with a razor (which is prohibited), but with a shaver. From a *halachic* standpoint, he was doing nothing wrong.

"Regarding my family customs," the boy reiterated, "I have seen members of my own family veer many times from their customs. Why should I be held to a higher standard than they hold themselves? I am acting no different than they are acting!"

Sadly, this boy's claim was valid. By their own actions, parents set the standard for their children to emulate. If the standard is of a positive nature, we may hope that the child will follow. If it is of a negative nature, all we can do is hope that for once the child will "rebel."

Rav Gamliel believes the challenges which seem to appear in our generation may be attributed to a weakened and diminished relationship between children and their grandparents. Such children

have not been raised to respect the past, to respect the world of their grandparents. To them, their grandparents are mere relics of a lost generation. If we link ourselves firmly to our parents and grandparents, we may hope to see a continued relationship with our children, grandchildren and beyond.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, relates the story of a young boy who hailed from an unobservant home, who sought desperately to alter his life's trajectory by becoming *frum*, observant. He became close to *Rav* Galinsky and slowly began performing *mitzvos*, until he become completely observant.

His parents did not take kindly to their son's religious transformation. Indeed, they were so furious over their son's gravitation to an archaic lifestyle that they actually sued *Rav* Galinsky in court. They contended that by convincing their son to become observant, he had damaged him irreparably.

Rav Galinsky was summoned to court. When the judge explained the charges against him, *Rav* Galinsky vehemently denied them. He insisted that he was instructing and encouraging the boy to emulate his father, to actually follow in his footsteps. The judge was puzzled. "How could this be?" he asked. Anyone could see that the father was *chiloni*, totally secular, while his son dressed and acted like a true *ben* Torah.

Rav Galinsky explained, "This boy's grandfather was devoutly observant. He was meticulous in his *mitzvah* observance and diligently studied Torah daily. His recalcitrant son, the boy's father, rebelled against his father's principles and lifestyle. Thus, I told the boy to act exactly as his father had acted. Just as he rebelled against his father's values and lifestyle, so should he."

The court was impressed with *Rav* Galinsky's argument and found him innocent of any coercion.

וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו *He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold! Three men were standing over him*. (18:2)

Rashi explains that it was necessary to send three angels in the image of men because an angel performs only one mission. Thus, one angel came to heal Avraham *Avinu;* the second came to inform Sarah *Imeinu* of the impending birth of her son; the third came to destroy Sodom. Raphael, the angel who healed Avraham, went on to Sodom to save Lot form the conflagration that would destroy the city.

The question is obvious: If an angel performs only one mission (at a time), and Rapahel had gone on to destroy Sodom to save Lot, would it not have been more appropriate just to send another angel (rather than have Raphael undertake two missions)?

I think that an important principle may be derived from here. Avraham was the pillar of *chesed*, kindness. For him to be healed from his *bris milah*, while simultaneously knowing that his nephew, Lot, would soon be history, would undermine his healing process. Avraham could not recuperate knowing that his nephew was going to die a miserable death together with the inhabitants of Sodom. Thus, saving Lot was an intrinsic part of healing Avraham.

We must keep this idea in mind when we reach out to help those in need. We must take into consideration all of their needs, because inviting someone for a meal when he does not have any clothes to wear, or helping a child with issues at school when the problems at home are overwhelming, undermines the *chesed*.

When performing acts of kindness we must think broadly, and ask ourselves: What does this person really need? A quick fix is just that: a quick fix, not a lasting solution.

וירא אליו ד' באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום
Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. (18:1)



It was three days after Avraham *Avinu's bris milah*, circumcision. The third day is the most painful. Yet, our Patriarch was sitting at the entrance of his tent during an unusually warm time of the day.

Chazal teach that Hashem removed the sun from its protective casing in order to make it more powerful (and hotter), so that wayfarers would not travel. Thus, they would not inconvenience Avraham (by not creating an opportunity for him to serve them).

When Hashem saw that Avraham was actually pained by not having the opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *hachnosas orchim*, welcoming guests, to his home, He sent three angels in the guise of men to visit him.

It is understandable that Avraham, the *amud ha'chesed*, pillar of lovingkindness, would want to reach out to people and offer his brand of material/spiritual kindness. Why, however, was he so anxious, so desperate, to perform the *mitzvah* that Hashem was compelled to send angels in the form of men in order to satisfy Avraham's need to perform *chesed*? It is not as if Avraham had nothing to do. He was in pain. He could have rested until his strength returned. There is also the *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah*, Torah study, that is available at all times, under all conditions, in all places, which takes precedence over all other *mitzvos*. Why did he not put *chesed* on hold for a few days?

We observe from the above that *chesed* meant the world to Avraham. He even interrupted Hashem's visit with him to tend to the wayfarers that came by his tent, individuals who were miraculously present only to assuage the *chesed*/guilt feelings of Avraham.

Horav Levi Dicker, zl, explains this based upon the well-known axiom that the actions of our forefathers were not isolated activities performed in a vacuum. These actions were not performed for the personal spiritual benefit of the Patriarchs; rather, they were to set the tone and establish the spiritual, moral and ethical DNA of the Jewish people.

The spiritual strength that we had/have is our inheritance bequeathed to us from our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. The actions of our forefathers did not merely set an example for us to emulate; rather, their actions became forever imprinted on the Jewish soul, embedded deeply within the Jewish psyche, endowing the Jewish DNA with these traits for generations to come.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that Avraham *Avinu,* who achieved the epitome of *middas chesed*, understood that it was his responsibility to implant this *middah*, attribute, into his future descendants. When he performed *chesed*, he was not performing only for himself – he was in the process of imbuing generations of Jews with the *middah* of *chesed*. Since this was his specific *middah*, he dedicated his life to bequeathing the Jewish nation with the attribute of *chesed*. He succeeded. Indeed, *Chazal* (*Yevamos* 79a) teach that when one does not manifest a predilection for performing acts of lovingkindness, his Jewish pedigree is suspect. The *Talmud* (*Beitzah* 12:B) goes as far as to posit that one who does not perform acts of *chesed* is not from the progeny of Avraham.

We now understand why Avraham yearned to perform *chesed* on that third day following his *bris*. Veritably, Avraham could have opened his "*Gemorah*" and learned Torah all day in the safety and comfort of his tent. Instead, he sought opportunities for *chesed*.

Why? Because the future of *Klal Yisrael*, its internal character and mission in life, was at stake. He wanted to ensure that his descendants would be imbued with an innate proclivity towards acts of *chesed*.

As Jews, we may not waste the opportunities for *chesed* that emerge at various intervals in our lives. Although *chesed* in and of itself certainly does not take center stage in place of Torah learning, it is an inherent component of our DNA. We are *chesed*. Hashem is *chesed*. Acting as His children is our mission in this world.



אל תשלח ידך אל הנער... כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה *Do not stretch out your hand against the lad… for <u>now</u> I know that you are a G-d-fearing man*. (22:12)

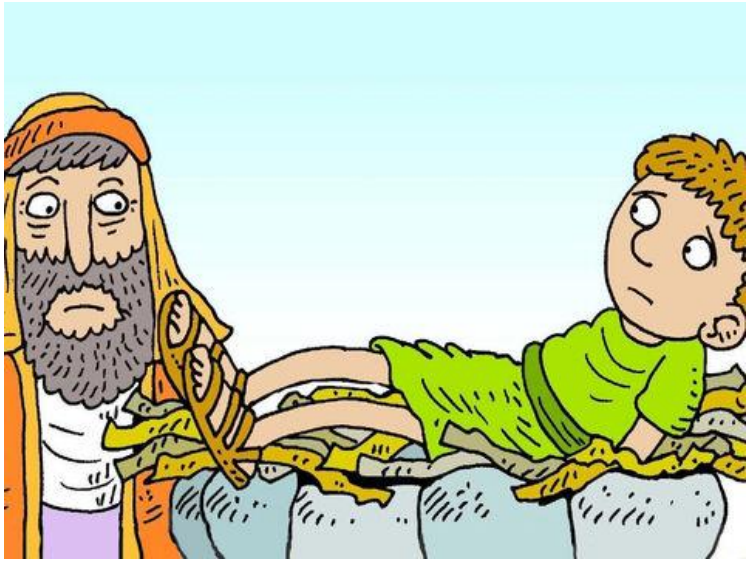
What was so special about "now"? What did Avraham *Avinu* do "now" that made such a strong impression that so underscored his fear of G-d?

The *Malbim* explains that Avraham had been tested twice. The primary objective of the *nisayon* of *Akeidas Yitzchak* was to see whether Avraham would carry out the *mitzvah* <u>purely</u> for the sake of Hashem: Would this *mitzvah* be the will of the Almighty – or would Avraham perform the *Akeidah* for ulterior motives? Would the Patriarch have a personal agenda included in his act for G-d, or would it be a pristine, unsullied act of glorifying Hashem's Name?

Avraham was commanded twice to carry out the will of G-d. First, he was told to place Yitzchak on the Altar and prepare for the sacrifice – which he did. Second, he was instructed to desist, to refrain from carrying out the first *mitzvah*. He was not to slaughter Yitzchak. The fact that Avraham carried out the first *mitzvah l'shem Shomayim*, purely for the sake of Heaven, is nothing novel. Clearly, there could be no personal interest in sacrificing his only son. It was undoubtedly for Hashem. Avraham would not benefit in any way by

slaughtering Yitzchak. Thus, this *mitzvah* does not yet indicate where Avraham *Avinu's* heart would lie.

The second *mitzvah* was much more difficult to execute *l'shem Shomayim*. When Avraham was instructed to refrain from killing *Yitzchak*, he must have been awash with joy: "*Baruch Hashem*, now Yitzchak will live; my legacy is preserved; the future of the Jewish nation is ensured. I can go home to Sarah (*Imeinu*) and tell her the good news: she did not lose her only child." This second *mitzvah* was replete with compelling reasons for Avraham to be focused on himself – not solely on the Almighty.



Hashem, Who knows what courses through the inner workings of a person's heart/emotions, knew for certain that everything that Avraham did – taking back his hand and desisting from killing Yitzchak – was not diminished in any way by any vestige of personal interest. Everything that Avraham did was *l'shem Shomayim*.

It was this second *nisayon* that demonstrated that Avraham's true commitment was solely for the sake of glorifying Hashem's Name. Thus, Hashem said, "for <u>now</u>" – after this second test, you have proven your devotion in acting מִמֶּנִּי – "for Me."

"Even if one has a weak mind, if he places all his strength in studying of Torah, he will receive siyata dishmaya and become a gadol in Torah even if it is beyond his natural abilities." ~ The Steipler Gaon zt"l

ויקרא אליו מלאך ד'... עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה ולא תשכת את בנך את יחידך ממני *And an Angel of Hashem called to him… For now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me*. (22:11,12)

The angel said to Avraham, "Since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me."

The *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*, wonders what the angel meant with the words, "From Me". If he meant Hashem, he should have said so. "Me" implies that he was talking about himself.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites *Maadanei Yosef*, who explains that every *mitzvah* a person performs catalyzes the creation of an angel. The quality, perfection of this angel, depends upon the quality of the *mitzvah*. A strong *mitzvah*, ie, one performed solely for the sake of Heaven, with alacrity and the proper intentions, creates a Heavenly angel that will be on a sublime level. If, however, the *mitzvah* that one performs is, at best, passable, but lacks spiritual substance, stability and energy, the angel will lack those same characteristics.

This is why we say in the *Tefillah*, prayer, *U'Nesaneh Tokef*, "Let us proclaim (the mighty holiness of this day)," "The angels tremble, fear and dread seize them." Why do the Heavenly angels tremble? It is not as if they have Torah and *mitzvos* to study and perform. What did they do wrong that would give them reason to tremble?

When the angels consider that they are the products of the *mitzvah* performance of man – they worry. If the *mitzvah* was performed listlessly – and the man repents, does *teshuvah*, they have nothing to worry about. The man has saved them. If, however, the man goes about his *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* in much the same manner as before, his *mitzvos* are executed perfunctorily, almost as if he were compelled to do so – no love, no passion, no excitement, no life – then the *Malach* has reason to tremble.

"We now understand," explains *Rav* Zilberstein, "what the angel intimated to Avraham: *Mimeni*, 'from Me,' I can tell from myself, from my lofty spiritual plateau, that you, Avraham, did well. You acted with alacrity to fulfil Hashem's Will. You did not deviate one iota from what He asked you to do. You imbued this *mitzvah* with fear of G-d, love and pure intention for the sake of Heaven. How do I know? I look at myself – *mimeni* – as the greatest indicator. I am the product of your *mitzvah*!"

This is something to consider when we next perform a *mitzvah*, such as going to *shul* to *daven*. When, how and what attitude we manifest determines the angel that we create. We might need that angel one day to be on our side, to support us in a critical time. The last thing we want is an angel that is too "weak" to help us. We will have no one to blame but ourselves.

ואל הבקר רץ אברהם *Then Avraham ran to the cattle*. (18:7)

The *Baal HaTurim* turns around the letters of the word, **הבקר** so that it becomes **הקבר**, the grave. The *Yalkut Shemoni* explains that the **בקר**, calf, that Avraham *Avinu* was prepared to slaughter ran away, and Avraham followed it into the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*, which then contained the graves of Adam and Chavah. When Avraham entered the cave, he saw a man and a woman lying there asleep. Next to them candles were burning, from which a pleasant odour permeated outward. This is why Avraham sought to make *Meoras HaMachpeilah* the place where he, too, wished to be buried.

Interestingly, as noted by the *Baal HaTurim*, the word **מכפלה** has the same *gematria*, numerical equivalent, as Avraham's age (175) when he left this world. Avraham chose his burial site. His choice was supported by his son, Yitzchak *Avinu*, and grandson, Yaakov *Avinu*.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates a story in which a distinguished *rav* selected his gravesite due to the *kedushah*, sanctity, which emanated from it.

The following story is recorded in the *pinkas*, diary, of the proceedings of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, Sacred Burial Society, of the town of Polna'ah, Ukraine.

When the *rav* of the city felt that his time on this world was slowly coming to a close, he went to the Jewish cemetery, accompanied by members of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, with the intention of picking out a gravesite. Obviously, he had certain criteria concerning next to whom he wanted to be buried. When they arrived at the cemetery, he soon pointed to a specific site, claiming that he had seen an unusual otherworldly light hovering over it.

The members of the *Chevra* searched through their records and discovered that that specific place had already been sold to a certain tailor. After more searching, they discovered that for the last ten years, this tailor had visited the site (where he would be buried) daily in order to recite the entire *Sefer Tehillim*.

When the *rav* heard this, he immediately proceeded to the home of the tailor and begged him to sell him the burial site. The tailor was immovable. The spot was not for sale. When the *rav* saw that the tailor was not selling, he instructed the *Chevra Kaddisha* to sell him the spot to the right of the tailor.

Ten years later, the elderly *rav* went to his rightful reward in *Gan Eden* and was buried in the spot (which was to the right of the tailor) that he had purchased.

Ten more years elapsed, and the venerable ***Horav Leib Mochiach***, one of the *talmidei* ***Baal Shem Tov***, asked the *Chevra Kaddisha* of Polna'ah to help him select a burial site. When he arrived at the cemetery, he, too, noticed the same extraordinary light that the *rav* of the city had observed twenty years earlier. He, too,

wanted to purchase this spot (where the tailor had been daily reciting *Tehillim* for the past twenty years). After he was informed that the spot had been sold, he attempted to convince the tailor to sell. His efforts also proved futile. He compromised and purchased the spot to the left of the tailor's site.

The tailor continued reciting *Tehillim* daily for eight more years – a total of (over) twenty-eight years, until he, too, was called to his rightful place in the *Yeshivah Shel Maalah*, Heavenly *Yeshivah*. He was buried between the *rav* of the city and *Rav* Leib Mochiach. The entire city was in awe of this simple (far from simple) tailor, who ended up being buried between these two holy men.

We may derive a powerful lesson concerning how much Heavenly illumination and *kedushah* is created, and from which one may draw and absorb unto himself – all from the recitation of *Sefer Tehillim*.

I grew up in a home in which *Tehillim* recitation was a daily staple. My father, a Holocaust survivor who did not have the good fortune of studying in a *yeshivah*, recited the entire *Sefer Tehillim* before *davening* – every day (and he did not *daven* at 9:00 a.m.).

Sefer Tehillim is David *Hamelech's* song of praise to Hashem. The 150 Divinely inspired *mizmorim* have served as the basis of the *tefillos* of *Klal Yisrael* throughout the millennia.

David *Hamelech* originally authored these *mizmorim* to express his personal love and devotion to Hashem, but, ultimately, he structured them in such a manner that they could be employed by any individual as a means of communicating with Hashem. What makes *Sefer Tehillim* so unique is the feeling that it generates within the psyche of the petitioner. An attitude of awareness of the Creator, His Presence throughout every moment of our lives, has made *Sefer Tehillim* the book that accompanies a Jew wherever and whenever throughout his life's journey.

The *mizmorim* convey a powerful point: Hashem is with us through periods of joy, as well as moments of sadness and pain. While we are quick to feel positive when life (seems) is good, as soon as a change in the other direction occurs, we tend to become anxious and depressed.

David went through so much. His ups and downs are our ups and downs. He teaches us that it all comes from Hashem, Who is a loving Father. There is a reason for everything. By accepting the will of Hashem, we become strengthened in the knowledge that we are not alone.

I conclude with the words of the ***Malbim*** (preface to his commentary on *Sefer Tehillim*), "Every person will see in it (*Sefer Tehillim*) every prayer, every supplication, every form of gratitude and praise for everything and every subject/issue (whatever it is) to cry out, to ask for salvation, in pain or (moments of) relief and respite, for the individual or the community, throughout our journey on the sea of life".

We now have an idea concerning the extraordinary power of reciting *Tehillim*, and how an ordinary Jew, through his passionate recital of *Tehillim*, merited to be buried between two *gedolei Yisrael.*



ויאמרו אליו איה שרה אשתך ויאמר הנה באהל *They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" and he said, "Behold! She is in the tent."* (18:9)

Three angels, disguised as Arabs, were welcomed by Avraham *Avinu* to his tent. After "partaking" of a luscious and satiating meal, the angels prepared for their real mission: to inform Avraham and Sarah *Imeinu* that they would soon be the progenitors of the next Patriarch. The angels inquired about Sarah's whereabouts, to which Avraham answered, "She is in the

tent." *Rashi* explains that the angels were quite aware that Sarah was in the tent. The intent of their query was merely to endear Sarah to Avraham by underscoring the fact that she was a *tznuah*, a modest/chaste woman. Avraham's vocalization of Sarah's qualities would enhance his appreciation of her.

Interestingly, we observe that the one quality which impressed Avraham was the *middah*, attribute, of *tznius*. I think this serves as a paradigm for marriage: a husband is (should be) proud when his wife is lauded for her adherence to the laws concerning *tznius*.

Tznius is a vital part of the Torah lifestyle, demanding modesty in all aspects of behavior. Hashem is everywhere: in everything we do, in every area of our lives. Our moral modesty allows us to have greater access to Him. The "smaller" we make ourselves, the more room we provide for Him.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, makes an insightful observation.

Chazal teach that Avraham was twenty-five years old when he married Sarah. When the angels paid their visit, the couple had been married just about seventy-five years! Endearing a wife to her husband would seem appropriate, perhaps even necessary, when they are a young couple, commencing the journey of married life – but not for a couple about to celebrate their seventy-fifth wedding anniversary!

The *Mashgiach* derives from here a powerful lesson: the closer the relationship between two people, the greater is their difficulty in showing and articulating the appreciation they have for one another. [After time, the pair become so used to one another and each one's contributions to the relationship that they begin to expect it.] Each party expects his/her spouse to give it his/her all. After all, it is his/her "obligation." Thus, when one fails to deliver, to provide, is late, or lacks enthusiasm, the relationship becomes damaged.

The *Sifri* teaches: "*Chesed* begins with those who are closest to us, and then spreads to encompass our neighbors, until we reach out to the entire world.

Jewish law demands that a man be as concerned about his wife as he is about himself. Indeed, it is only when each member of a married couple is concerned <u>for</u> the other that happiness reigns in their home, in their lives."

In other words, the most critical component of a happy marriage – and, by extension, a happy home – is *chesed*. The institution of marriage begins with *chesed*, because each one, husband and wife, is obligated to shift focus from him/herself to his/her spouse.

The *Mashgiach* explains that, regardless of the husband's avenue of *parnassah*, livelihood – whether he is gainfully employed, or he is learning full-time in *Kollel* – he spends his days toiling to deliver sustenance – be it material or spiritual – into the home.

The wife spends her days working – either within the home or outside of it; plus, she cares for and raises the children. Each member of the marriage unit, husband and wife, should show his/her spouse appreciation for everything that he/she does.

If we would only focus on the many positive contributions of the spouse, instead of the one thing or time that something was not done, we would have a better, more sustainable relationship.

Unfortunately, some people, by their very nature, always note what was not done and make the effort to harp on it all of the time. If the angels felt it necessary to endear Sarah to Avraham – after seventy-five years of marriage – we may be certain that acknowledgment and appreciation of a spouse's qualities and contributions are crucial to a good marriage – regardless how long one has been married.



וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם ***And G-d tested Avraham.* (22:1)**

Was it only Avraham Avinu's *nisayon*, test? One would think that Yitzchak *Avinu*, the *korban*, sacrifice-elect, was playing a leading role in this *nisayon*. Why is our Patriarch Avraham singled out – as opposed to Yitzchak?

Horav Moshe Neriyah, zl, offers an insightful explanation which underscores the significance of Torah *chinuch*, especially that which is taught at home from parent to child. Avraham taught his son, Yitzchak, to fear Hashem. He taught him well – to the point that our second Patriarch was prepared to become an *olah*, offering, to Hashem.

וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו "***And the two of them (father and son) went together***" (Ibid 22:6). They walked together as one: Avraham, who knew that he was about to sacrifice his son, went with the same *zerizus*, alacrity, as did Yitzchak, who thought that he was accompanying his father on the way to slaughter an animal.

In *pasuk* 8, the same phrase is repeated. Now Yitzchak was acutely aware that no lamb was being sacrificed. Indeed, he was the sacrifice. Yet, he walked with the same alacrity, same cadence as did his father. Why?

Because he was raised by his father and mother to love and fear Hashem. The *Akeidah* was the fruit of thirty-seven years of Torah *chinuch* in Avraham and Sarah's home. This was the pinnacle of their *chinuch*. The *Akeidah* was Avraham's test, because, ultimately, it all comes back to the parents.

"Nobody's perfect. Everyone makes mistakes, except for those who do not undertake anything." ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l.

ויאמר מהרי שלש סאים קמח סלת לושי ועשי עוגות *And he said, "Hurry! Three se'ahs of meal, fine flour!* (18:6)

Kemach is meal; *solas* is fine flour. They are not the same. The *Talmud Bava Metziah* 87a wonders how we reconcile these contrasting "flours" in the same cakes. They explain that Avraham *Avinu* asked for fine flour. Sarah *Imeinu* responded with inferior flour.

Chazal conclude from here, that we may derive that a woman is stingier than a man toward guests. Anyone who studies Torah understands that this dialogue between Avraham and Sarah contains more than meets the eye.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that Hashem had earlier instructed Avraham to listen to Sarah, because she was greater than him with regard to *nevuah*, prophecy. Moreover, we find in *Sefer Mishlei* that Avraham praised Sarah for her open hand in doling out food to travelers. As I said, this is another perspective which demands an additional level of understanding of the dialogue. For this, we must plumb the depths of Torah exposition.

The **Chasam Sofer** illuminates the debate (*Derashos chelek bais daf* 403), explaining that Avraham *Avinu's* hospitality towards wayfarers consisted of two components: physical nourishment; and spiritual sustenance. Indeed, Avraham would employ the physical provision to cultivate a conversation about G-d and spiritual growth.

Thus, the *Chasam Sofer* explains that the debate between Avraham and Sarah concerning the quality of flour to serve the guests was not referring to physical flour, but rather, the spiritual definition (with regard to Torah study) of *kemach*, inferior flour, and *solas*, fine flour.

In the *Talmud Nedarim* 38a, *Chazal* state that the laws of the Torah were intended for all of *Klal Yisrael*, with *pilpul*, dialectic, to be reserved for Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Hashem taught Moshe a methodology

by which to derive keen insights from the Torah's text. Moshe, however, generously imparted this methodology to all of *Klal Yisrael*.

The *Chasam Sofer* continues: Hashem sought to impart the Torah to *Klal Yisrael* in a clear-cut, unambiguous state, leaving no room for any logical dialectical. Moshe, however, was hoping to increase the nation's merits by giving each man the opportunity to delve deeper and deeper, plumbing the depths of Torah knowledge, exerting himself, diligently applying himself to its study and perfection of its knowledge.

Is this better than error-free, absolutely – perfect Torah? There is also the fear that, through the application of one's own logic, he might approach the *halachic* application with tainted logic. This was the "debate" between Hashem and Moshe, and, likewise, says the *Chasam Sofer*, it was the debate between Avraham and Sarah.

Our patriarch insisted on *solas*, fine flour, Torah in its pristine *halachic* form, leaving no room for dialectic, allowing for no false logic, no misguided analysis to creep in.

Sarah insisted on *kemach*. Let the people learn, study, exert effort, toil in Torah, submerge in its depths until they bring up its pearls of wisdom. Moshe *Rabbeinu* bequeathed the power of *pilpul*, dialectic, to *Klal Yisrael*. Avraham lauded Sarah, *piah paschah b'chochmah*, "She opens her mouth with wisdom." She disputed Avraham by insisting on *kemach*.

This was a wise choice. Our Matriarch saw the value of Torah <u>study</u> amid toil. Their debate was how to make the best "bread": Torah knowledge and observance.

Rabbi Kloynimus Kalman says – 'The greatest thing in the world is to do someone a favour!'

וירא אליו ד' ... והוא ישב פתח האהל *Hashem appeared to him…while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent*. (18:1)



Rashi's commentary to this *pasuk* is well known. Hashem appeared to Avraham *Avinu,* visiting him during the Patriarch's recuperation from his *Bris Milah*. It was the third day following the circumcision, a day which is especially painful, so Hashem was *mevaker choleh*, visited the sick.

Rashi's source is *Chazal,* who laud the exalted nature of this *mitzvah*. While everyone agrees that this *mitzvah* is meaningful, both to the beneficiary and benefactor, it is also a source of incredible reward to the individual who fulfills it.

The *Sefer HaMiddos* writes concerning the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*: "In the merit of *bikur cholim*, one will not leave this world amidst *yisurim*, pain and suffering." The reason for this is quite simple: The individual who alleviates another Jew's pain in some way will have his own pain alleviated. Hashem does not allow for any good deed to go unrequited. We are rewarded for the good we do for others, *b'middah k'neged middah*, on the scale of measure for measure. *Bikur cholim* is a prime example.

I think that a deeper meaning can be attributed to the *Sefer HaMiddos'* statement. We all accept that one who visits a sick person alleviates his pain in some way. As a result, he will not suffer when the time for his departure from this world arrives. It is "tit-for-tat", by doing for someone else one garners reward for himself.

Perhaps there is much more to this. When one empathizes with the pain endured by the *choleh*, he also experiences pain. He feels sad,

miserable, hurt that his friend is suffering. It takes a personal toll on him. Thus, since he has already suffered, he no longer is required to suffer for his own sake.

In other words, one does not simply visit the sick and then go about his day with business as usual. To visit, be *mevaker,* a sick person means to take something of the *choleh* back with him, to empathize with his predicament, to somehow feel his pain. Otherwise, it is a simple visit for which he will certainly be rewarded, but he is losing out on the depth and true meaning of the *mitzvah*.

I just came across a story I wrote a number of years ago which supports this idea. ***Horav Sholom Dov Ber, zl, m'Lubavitch***, was deeply engrossed in study as his young son slept in his crib in an adjacent room. The infant began to cry, but his father was so involved in his learning that he did not hear the child's cries.

The child's grandfather, the venerable founder of *Chabad chassidus*, the ***Baal HaTanya, zl,*** lived one floor above them. He was also studying Torah. Yet, he was able to hear his grandson's cries. He immediately went downstairs and discovered that the infant had fallen out of his crib. He picked up the child, took him into his arms and began to soothe him until the child fell asleep, after which he placed him back in the crib. He later went over to his son and said, "Torah study should not be an excuse for not hearing the cry of another fellow in need. Regardless of his age, you must reach out to him."

The above story is not a *bikur cholim* story. I write it because it is a story which defines how a Jew is to act. We all perform many acts of kindness. How do these acts of *chesed* affect us personally? Do they make us better, more caring people? As a result, have we developed greater sensitivity to the plight of those less fortunate than we are? How often do we really get involved in the acts of *chesed* to the point that they are on our minds all the time?

When we visit someone who is sick, it is often on automatic pilot. Everyone is busy; we all have places to go and things to do. Believe me, the fellow whom we are visiting wishes that he had things to do and places to go – and that he was able to go! It is all about listening, raising our awareness and empathizing with those in need. It makes such a difference, and quite possibly, it will be a *z'chus* that we will never have to undergo such travail personally.



וישלחו האנשים את ידם ויביאו את לוט אליהם הביתה ואת הדלת סגרו ואת האנשים אשר פתח הבית הכו בסנורים... וילאו למצא הפתח

The men stretched out their hand and brought Lot into the house with them and closed the door. And the men who were at the entrance of the house, they were struck with blindness…and they tried vainly to find the entrance. (19:10, 11)

The angels pulled Lot into the house making sure to close the door behind them. Immediately afterward, the angels struck the men at the door, blinding them. They no longer could locate the doorway to Lot's house.

One can only find what he can see. We wonder why the door had to be closed once the men had been blinded. They could no longer find the entrance. Lot was essentially protected. He could sit right in front of them, and they would not be aware of it.

Horav Shalom Schwadron, zl, explains that the door was not closed in order to save Lot. The door was closed so that Lot does not observe the Sodomites being punished. Lot merited being spared from death. He did not merit to watch the deaths of the evil citizens of Sodom.

Lot was far from a saint. He was saved because he had remained silent when Avraham *Avinu* told the *Plishtim* that Sarah *Imeinu* was his sister. Lot could easily have refuted Avraham, but he kept his peace, thereby earning incredible reward for himself. While the

reward was worth his life, it did not mitigate his evil streak. He was as wicked as the rest. Thus, he was allowed to live, but he could not watch the others die. The door was closed so that he could not watch his compatriots receiving their due.

Hashem's punishment is exacting, as is His reward. Lot was not allowed to watch; thus, the Sodomites died without having to experience the indignity of seeing one of their own spared. Lot's reward was life – nothing more, nothing less.

וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲפֵכָה ***G-d remembered Avraham; so He sent Lot from amidst the upheaval*****. (19:29)**

Lot was spared twice. First, he was taken captive by the four kings. From their perspective, he had a birds-eye view of Hashem's miracles, as Avraham *Avinu* with his makeshift army was able to vanquish the four mighty, bloodthirsty kings. Avraham came either with his trusted servant and student, Eliezer, or he rounded up 318 of his students and went to war. In any event, it was clearly a miracle in the merit of Avraham.

One would think that someone with a modicum of intelligence would realize this and repent. Not Lot. Forget about his sense of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude to Hashem and to his Uncle Avraham. Not Lot. He did not appreciate, nor did he repent. He did what he wanted. His desire for material wealth and a life of abandon overrode his sense of human decency. Repentance would be meaningless to the individual who is returning to a life of continued moral turpitude. So, he went to Sodom, the center of human indecency. Here, he would fit in perfectly – and he did.

Hashem was about to destroy Lot. Perhaps in Avraham's *z'chus*, merit, Hashem would once again spare Lot. Everyone is allowed one mistake. Lot should be no different, but he did it again. He allowed

his *taavos*, passions, to get the better of him. His greed would not allow him to live comfortably in Sodom.

When the father was an ingrate and a lecher who resided in a morally depraved community, it was no wonder that he produced two daughters who were responsible for the births of Ammon and Moav. These two nations also had no clue concerning the *middah*, character trait, of *hakoras hatov*. When the Jewish People were traveling in the desert and asked them for water, they refused. How easily they forgot their origins. Had our Patriarch Avraham not saved Lot, they would have been nothing more than a figment of imagination. They owed their very existence to Avraham. This did not seem to deter them.

One who is an ingrate is an extremely low level of humanity. People cannot deal with an ingrate. Whatever one does for him is never enough. It is all about taking, because he does not know the meaning of giving. This is why we may not accept converts from Ammon and Moav. Their gene pool is tainted with ingratitude. It does not affect the women, since they did nothing wrong. *Klal Yisrael* is founded and nurtured upon the *middah* of *hakoras hatov*. Thus, we cannot allow someone who is missing this vital spiritual chromosome from joining our People.

Lot's actions teach us another important lesson. The power of base desire is overwhelming. The hold it has over a person is compelling. Lot followed the pagans, turning away from Avraham – his benefactor, mentor and closest friend, only to rejoin the paganist belief which allowed immorality. When a person is blinded by his passions; when his vision is stigmatized by desire, he can stand in the presence of angels and continue the life of a moral profligate. This was Lot. He went with Avraham only as long as Avraham was "going his way."

***כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה׳ For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem.* (18:19)**

The angels had just recently informed Avraham *Avinu* of the wonderful news that Sarah would have a child. Yet, the Torah writes that Hashem loved Avraham for his parenting skills in imparting the way of Hashem to his offspring. Was this not a bit premature? Avraham did not yet have any children. The Patriarch was not yet a parent.

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, derives from here that one's focus on how he will raise his children begins prior to marriage. Everything depends upon one's purpose in marriage, what it means to him. If one's goal is to increase *kavod Shomayim*, the glory of Heaven, by producing and establishing generations of believing Jews who will continue in His way, then he is, by his very marriage, demonstrating his parenting skills.

Avraham was the *mechanech*, educator, who taught us on what a parent should focus, what is important and what is not. Monotheism-obedience to one G-d, emulating His ways, following His precepts-this comprised Avraham's mantra to the world – and his family. His offspring, descendants, would have to carry on his work. It is, therefore, no wonder that, when Avraham heard that his son Yishmael was not "with the program," he had gone off the *derech*, path, and had fallen into evil ways, he became distressed.

The Torah (*Bereishis* 21:11) writes, "And the matter greatly distressed Avraham regarding his son." Simply put, this means that Avraham was upset that Sarah *Imeinu* wanted Yishmael out of the house. The deeper meaning, however, as expounded by the *Midrash*, is that Avraham was disturbed by his son's behavior. He was not his only son – but he was his son! A child is a child, regardless of how large his family is. When a child veers from the prescribed Torah way, it destroys a parent! If the Torah feels it is important to relate

that Avraham was distressed concerning Yishmael's behavior, it is a lesson for us all. Parents should care – and they do. Some have difficulty showing the pain, the hurt, the humiliation, the distress, but it is there. Otherwise, they are not parents.

Rav Gamliel writes that he knew a man whose son had taken a "hiatus" from Judaism, eschewing observance and the way of life taught to him by his parents. His *yarmulka*, *kashrus*, and *Shabbos*, were all things of the past. After a while, his *Rosh Yeshivah* met the father and commented that he had noticed some positive movement on the part of his son. It appeared the crisis had passed, and he was slowly returning to traditional observance. "What happened?" he asked the father. "How were you able to stem the tide of his non-religious advances?"

The father's answer should inspire us all to some serious thought: "I approached anyone I knew – even people I did not know- and asked them to recite *Tehillim* for my son. I organized *minyanim*, quorums, all over, so that *Tehillim* could be recited in a communal fashion. I did all of this for one simple reason: If my son would have been physically ill and at the point of death, would I have done any less? Now that he is hovering at the precipice of spiritual extinction, should I sit by with folded hands and allow my child to waste his life away? Indeed, one who is spiritually ill is in worse shape than he who is gripped by physical illness. Spiritual disease affects eternity! I could not allow this to happen to my son!"

Thus, although Sarah *Imeinu* had achieved a greater spiritual plateau in *nevuah*, prophesy, Avraham still refused to accept *tanchumim*, words of consolation, from her. When a child goes out to *tarbus raah*, spiritually goes off the deep end– there is no accepting comfort. Only when Hashem told him, *Al yeira b'einecha*, "Be not distressed over the youth," *ki b'Yitzchak yikarei lecha zera*, "since through Yitzchak's offspring will be considered

yours," did Avraham accept *tanchumin*. He was assured that Yitzchak would be his son for eternity.

Rav Gamliel derives another important parenting lesson from Avraham's reaction to Sarah's demand that Yishmael be sent away. *Rashi* tells us that, although Sarah was greater than Avraham in *nevuah*, he listened only to Hashem. Until Hashem told him to listen to Sarah, the Patriarch was not closing the door on Yishmael. Despite his son's reprehensible behavior and his imminent negative influence on Yitzchak, Avraham was not prepared to shut Yishmael out of his life. Why? Because Yishmael was his son, and, even when a son strays from the path of observance, he is still a son. We do not close the door!

Lamentably, it happens—more often than we are willing to concede—that not all Jewish children are prepared to tow the line. Some break away; others snap. What is a parent to do? What should be his reaction?

Avraham *Avinu* showed us the way. He refused to send Yishmael from his home. He did not distance himself from him. He kept the light on, the door open. This is especially true in contemporary times, when sending a child away creates serious friction and even enmity, ingredients that generate more intense and lasting alienation from *Yiddishkeit*.

וימהר אברהם האהלה אל שרה...ואל הבקר רץ אברהם...ויתן אל הנער וימהר אתו ***So Avraham hastened to the tent of Sarah…Then Avraham ran to the cattle…and he gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it*****. (18:6, 7)**

There seems to be an unusual amount of "hurrying" and "running." Also, did Avrham *Avinu* have to serve his guests personally?

The **Alshich HaKadosh** writes: "Avraham teaches us two proper courses of action in carrying out *mitzvos*. First, *zerizus*, alacrity. Second, whatever one can do personally is preferred." The Patriarch ran personally to serve his guests. *Zerizus* is one of the fundamental attributes listed by Rabbi Pinchas *ben* Yair as leading up to *kedushah*, holiness. Indeed, alacrity/enthusiasm is a fundamental step in *mitzvah* observance and toward leading a productive life. One who acts with *zerizus* does not defer to tomorrow what can be done today. To do something at the first possible chance indicates that one cares.

Furthermore, *zerizus* is transformative, having the ability to change a person who is by nature slothful into one who is excited and eager, who promptly carries out his responsibilities. In the seventh *perek*, chapter, of *Mesillas Yesharim*, the author teaches us about one of the extraordinary benefits of *zerizus*. Acting externally with *zerizus* transforms a person internally into an individual who loves his Master and is eager to serve Him.

Ish L'Reiehu cites two inspirational stories which reflect the attitude of our *gedolim*, Torah leaders, concerning the *middah* of *zerizus*:

Once, a group representing the lay leadership of Bnei Brak came to the **Chazon Ish** to consult with him concerning a communal issue. The matter was discussed, and the sage issued his ruling. He observed, however, that these men were in no apparent hurry to carry out the decision. They seemed to be procrastinating.

The *Chazon Ish* looked at them with his penetrating eyes and commented, *Linu poh ha'laylah*, "'Spend the night here,'" was Bilaam's advice to the elders of Midyan (*Bamidbar* 22:8). Decisions that are reached should be carried out immediately. Pushing it off until the next day is the way Bilaam and his cohorts work."

A poignant lesson concerning the significance of alacrity is gleaned from the *Alter m'*Slabodka, **Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl**. When his son, the future *Rosh HaYeshivah* of Mir, ***Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl,*** was learning in *Yeshivah* away from home, his father would write him a short letter at various intervals. While each letter was a profound pedagogical masterpiece, one comment remained the same in each correspondence. The Alter would write: "My dear son, every subject that you confront; every question which you must answer; every issue that must be clarified – think how you would render a decision to this question if today happened to be the very last day of your life."

What a powerful and meaningful suggestion. We offer advice without thinking through the issue rationally. We make statements that often are without foundation, that lack prudence. If this were to be the very last decision that we render, our attitude would change quickly. In this sense, *zerizus* means aforethought, realizing the significance of what he is about to do. When one thinks before he acts, he acts differently. That makes all the difference.

וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם G-d tested Avraham. (22:1)

Chazal tell us that Avraham *Avinu* was tested ten times by Hashem. It seems strange that the Patriarch had to prove himself so many times. One test should have sufficed.

If he passed, it indicated that he believed and was committed. What more is necessary? Indeed, *Chazal* teach us that the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, 'Binding of Yitzchak', was the most difficult test, and it was through this test that Avraham successfully completed his trial period. He was "in." If the *Akeidah* was the turning point, if it was the final indication, why did Hashem not just test Avraham with the *Akeidah*?

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, derives an important lesson from here. A man may exist who, for all intents and purposes, is a great man, but this does not mean that he is not deficient in one area. On the one hand, he is a great man – a giant; on the other hand, in only one area, he is lacking, inadequate. Is this a contradiction? The *Mashgiach* says, "No." It is not necessary to qualify the paradoxes of man, because this is his composition. He is filled with contradiction. Both the good and the bad are part and parcel of the same individual.

In fact, *Chazal* teach us this lesson (*Sanhedrin* 74a) when they apply this idea to the seminal *pasuk*, "Love Hashem with all your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your resources" (*Devarim* 6:5). Why is it necessary to mention all three?

Chazal explain that there are people for whom money takes precedence over their lives, and vice versa. There may be an individual who is very pleasant and never loses his temper. However, he is quite frugal when it comes to sharing his wealth with the poor. He must work on his *chesed/tzedakah* issues. The list goes on.

We all know someone who lives a contradiction. He is normal. Human beings are filled with contradiction. Hashem has provided each and every one of us with the opportunity for growth, the opportunity to change something about ourselves, because we are not perfect.



וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רַק אֵין יִרְאַת אֱלֹקִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָרָגוּנִי עַל דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי ***"Because I said, '(Only) there is no fear of G-d in this place and they will kill me on account of my wife.'"*** **(20:11)**

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, z.l., had occasion to be in Germany a number of years prior to the Nazi implementation of their Master Plan.

At the time, Germany was considered among the most progressive and intellectual nations. Its culture and nobility presented a paradigm for others to emulate. As we know, however, it was all superficial. Something was missing from this cold, dispassionate culture. The Jews were an "accepted" part of society. This, of course, led to assimilation.

Little did they know the tragic events, the cataclysmic horrors, that were lurking right around the corner. *Rav* Elchanan delivered a lecture to the *Kollel*, post- graduate fellows, of the *Seminar L'Rabbanim* in Berlin.

He began his address by first citing Avraham's response to Avimelech, explaining why he claimed Sarah was his sister, rather than state the truth that she was his wife. Avraham feared for his life, since he was in a country in which the people did not fear G-d.

In making his statement, Avraham said רַק, "only," there is no fear in this place. Why does he add the word רַק, only? This word appears to be superfluous.

Rav Elchanan explained that Avraham *Avinu* was conveying an important principle/message to Avimelech. He told him, "You have an impressive community, cultured, intellectual; everything for which one can ask, רַק, only, there is one thing that is clearly missing – *yiraas Shomayim* – fear of Heaven. This is why I had decided that my wife and I are in mortal danger. If the base passions of any of your countrymen becomes ignited for my wife, I am as good as dead." In such a situation, culture, intellect and breeding have no value. Only one thing can prevent a tragedy: *yiraas Shomayim*.

With these words, *Rav* Elchonon was alluding to the danger lurking under the surface of the progressive and enlightened German culture. No one believed that such a refined nation could descend to the nadir of depravity, to rewrite the meaning of cruelty. The

Germans were missing one thing – one thing that distinguishes between a human being and an animal: *yiraas Shomayim.*

We derive from here an important lesson. Fear of Heaven is the key to humanness. It is the only way that one can control his base nature. Man needs discipline. This discipline can only come from a source whom man respects and fears. If there is no fear, there is no man.

In his "*Chaim Shel Torah*," ***Horav Yaakov Beifus, Shlita,*** analogizes this idea with an example from the world of vegetation. Trees are good for the environment. They provide shade; they enhance the beauty of their surroundings. One can even have fun climbing them. Fruit-bearing trees have an added benefit: they provide fruit, and, thereby, sustenance for us.

It goes without saying that the fruit-bearing quality of these trees is not simply just another benefit; it constitutes their essence. Without this quality, they are just plain trees! Likewise, man is comprised of various attributes. The virtue of *yiraas Shomayim* supercedes every other virtue, because, without it, he is not a human being.

Rav Elchanan supplements his thesis, citing the ***Zohar HaKadosh*** who suggests that Hashem wanted man to be comprised of <u>all</u> of the creatures in the world. He should be a veritable microcosm of the creations preceding him. This is why when Hashem was about to create man, He called together all creatures and said, *Naaseh Adam*, "Let <u>us</u> make man." He should have a bit of every creature in him. Thus, all the creatures "shared" in the creation of man.

With this in mind, we understand that man is a formidable creature. He is part lion, part leopard, part snake, part vulture, and part insect. He is a conglomerate of every animal, wild beast, fowl, insect, and fish. How is this creation known as "man" kept in check? What

chain do we tie on him to keep him from destroying everything around, if he so pleases? Only one thing: *yiraas Shomayim*, the chain of fear, the chain of discipline, the chain of respect.

What is *yiraas Shomayim*? *Rav* Beifus explains that it is the acute awareness that Hashem observes everything that we do. He witnesses every nuance, every movement. He knows every thought. This awareness inspires fear and awe, which in turn, evokes a sense of humility and shame if He sees us doing anything inappropriate. How does one acquire *yiraas Shomayim*? It's simple – by constant awareness and reiteration that Hashem is above us watching at all times. Awareness, however, is not sufficient. One must acquire this awareness and integrate it into his psyche.

A well-known incident occurred concerning the ***Chafetz Chaim, z.l.***, that supports this idea: The *Chafetz Chaim* was once traveling by wagon. While on the road, the wagon driver noticed a melon in someone's field by the side of the road. He quickly pulled over the wagon and jumped out. He was about to pick it up, when the *Chafetz Chaim* shouted, "They are watching!" When the driver heard this, he quickly returned to the wagon. Upon noticing again that no one seemed to be around, he made another attempt to retrieve the melon from the person's field. Once again, the *Chafetz Chaim* shouted, "They are watching!"

This happened a few times, until the wagon driver gave up trying to "appropriate" the melon for himself. As they continued their trip, the driver turned to the *Chafetz Chaim* and asked, "To what do you attribute the fact that each time I went to take the melon you saw someone watching while I saw no one?"

The *Chafetz Chaim's* response is something which should catalyze within us a heightened sense of awareness in regard to our daily endeavor. He said, "I also did not see any <u>man</u>. I meant that they are watching in Heaven!"

Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid, "I place Hashem before me constantly," should be the catch phrase by which we live. Our function is to remain resolute, so that when the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, begins with its blandishments, we respond, "They are watching!" This defines *yiraas Shomayim*. Thus, it is the essence of man.



וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹקִים אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאַמְהֹתָיו וַיֵּלֵדוּ *"Avraham prayed to G-d, and G-d healed Avimelech, and his wife, and his maids and they were relieved (literally, gave birth)."* (20:17)

Hashem punished Avimelech and his families for taking Sarah from Avraham. It is interesting to note Avraham's reaction when Avimelech realized that he had erred.

Avraham prayed that Avimelech be cured from his punishment. Avraham *Avinu*, the *amud ha'chesed*, pillar of kindness, conveys to us the appropriate response to hearing about someone else's misfortune – pray for him!

Avraham's sympathy set the standard for his descendants. How often do we hear about another Jew who has fallen ill or succumbed to another misfortune. While it is true that we feel for him, how many of us feel the pain as if it were our own? Avraham prayed for Avimelech, simply because it was the right thing to do.

Furthermore, Avraham prayed for Avimelech to be able to have children once again, a blessing that had eluded Avraham. He prayed for someone else, even though he himself would have been overjoyed to have children. According to human nature, if one hears about another person who has sustained the same illness from which he himself is suffering, he will not pray for his fellow. He might even feel that misery loves company. Avraham *Avinu* had every reason to disregard Avimelech's "situation." After all, it was not as if Avraham

had himself been blessed with children, that he should now concern himself with Avimelech.

This was not Avraham's manner, and this is not the way a Jew should respond. As descendants of Avraham *Avinu*, when we hear of another Jew's pain our immediate reaction should be to *daven* for them. Is that not what we do for ourselves?

Horav Moshe Leib Sasover, z.l., was wont to say, "***To know the needs of men and to bear the burdens of their sorrows – that is the true love of man***."

Avraham *Avinu* was rewarded for praying for Avimelech. *Chazal* tell us, "Anyone who prays for his friend, when he himself is in need of that mercy, he is answered first." Whether this is a reward, or Hashem's response to an act of total self-effacement, it is a wonderful *eitzah*, piece of advice, for those in need.

As mentioned before, it goes against the grain of human nature to rejoice in another person's joy when he personally is in need of that same blessing. If one can break away from his natural proclivity and elevate himself to pray for another person experiencing the same need, Hashem will certainly look favorably on his prayer – and He will bless that individual first.

Visiting the sick is not easy. To walk in, smile, convey best wishes and leave, does not constitute *bikur cholim*. To fulfill the *mitzvah* of visiting the sick, one must empathize with him; one must pray for him. To visit the sick means to pray for him. To care for the sick means to pray for them. One who feels for another Jew knows that there is only one "add ress" for assistance – Hashem – and he turns to Him.

Let me close with a notable *Midrash* regarding Avraham's prayer on behalf of Avimelech: *Chazal* portray the Heavenly angels crying out to Hashem, "*Ribono Shel Olam*! Sarah has been barren for so many years. Avraham prays for Avimelech's wife, and she becomes fertile

along with his other midwives. These women You remember, and You listen. Yet, Sarah remains infertile. Is this justice?" Immediately, Hashem remembered Sarah. This *Midrash* tells it all; we have only to listen.



יֻקַּח־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם ***"Let a little water now be taken and wash your feet***." (18:4)

The pasuk implies that Avraham sent an agent (Yishmael) to bring the water. Rashi states that Avraham should have personally attended to the guests. As a result of his personal non-involvement, when Hashem responded to Avraham's descendants, He also sent an agent (Moshe) to give water to them. Why is this? The act of chesed, kindness, was performed, albeit through an agent. Why then should there be negative repercussions?

The Chofetz Chaim offers two insights. First, it is always more propitious to personally attend to the mitzvah, rather than to delegate it to an intermediary.

Second, it is a greater courtesy for guests to be served by the master of the household. Avraham Avinu, who exemplified the middah of chesed, was impelled to perform this act of kindness, since he was setting the standard for future generations. Because Avraham did not perform this act of kindness to the highest degree possible, his reward was similarly imperfect.

Horav Moshe Feinstein z.l., questions this. The agent whom Avraham sent was Yishmael, his son. Obviously, Avraham's intent was to educate Yishmael in the middah of chesed. Was it so wrong for Avraham to permit his son to serve the guests?

Horav Feinstein asserts that the proper method of chinuch, education, is for the student/child to observe the teacher/parent involving himself in performing acts of kindness. It is not sufficient

for the child to merely hear lectures from the parent about the importance of being a baal chesed; he must see this attitude modeled in his own home.

A child growing up in a home in which the parents are actively involved in helping people will naturally gravitate to this way of life. We may add that this idea applies to every area of education. Parents who want their children to study Torah must do so themselves. Children learn to respect and emulate what they feel is valued and appreciated at home. Indeed, the primary classroom is the home.



וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת־לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲפֵכָה ***And Hashem remembered Avraham; so He sent Lot from amidst the upheaval***. (19:29)

The Ran infers from this pasuk that Lot was spared only because of Avraham. Chazal question what did Lot do that granted him such merit that he was saved from the destruction that befell Sodom.

They respond that when Avraham referred to Sarah as his "sister" in order to protect himself from the Egyptians, Lot did not utter a word in dispute. Since he was compassionate with Avraham, Hashem took pity and spared him.

The various commentators ask if this was the only merit that Lot possessed. Surely, he must have performed acts of chesed and good deeds that would distinguish him from the wicked people of Sodom.

In his sefer "L'maan Achai V'reiai" **Horav Elchanan Sorotzkin,zl** derives from here a remarkable lesson as to how much Hashem recognizes every good action and every good thought that one has.

Hashem does not overlook even a momentary triumph over the subconscious yetzer hora, evil inclination, to harm someone. Indeed, Lot certainly had other merits, more profound and more significant,

but the lesson of this merit is that nothing good is wasted. Lot was rewarded for his meritorious deed regardless of its simplicity.

We must remember that everything counts; we never know when that seemingly insignificant good deed will benefit us.



כִּי אָמְרָה אַל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב מִנֶּגֶד וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלָהּ וַתֵּבְךְּ... אַל־תִּירְאִי כִּי־ שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם "***For she said, 'Let me not see the death of the child', and she sat at a distance, lifted her voice and wept.... 'Fear not for Hashem has listened to the cry of the young boy because he is there***." (21:16,17)

The angel told Hagar not to worry, for Hashem had listened to the child. The Torah seems to imply that Hashem listened only to Yishmael, not to Hagar. Why were her cries ignored? Is there a more sensitive cry than a mother's anguished plea for the life of her child?

Horav Dovid Feinstein, responds that the answer lies in the text of the pasuk. Hashem answered Yishmael, "because he is there". He was praying for himself, not for anyone else.

This is consistent with the words of Chazal that Hashem listens to the prayers of someone who is sick more than to the individual who prays on his behalf. Hence, Yishmael's prayers for his own welfare were answered before his mother's.

Horav Feinstein explains that a mother's tormented cry for her suffering child is profound and intense. There are, however, personal concerns that cannot be divorced from the actual plea. This personal plea is what distinguishes a mother's cry for her child from the child's own prayer. Thus, when Hagar said, "Let me not see the death of the child," a tinge of personal pain was reflected, the pain she would feel if her child were to die.

The sincerity in one's own prayer for himself cannot be equalled. This, explains Horav Feinstein, is the reason behind the concept in Berachos 13a. Chazal say, "Whoever prays for someone else and he himself needs the same thing, he will be answered first." Only one who is in need of the exact same assistance that he is requesting for someone else can sensitize himself to pray emphatically and in the same manner as the one who is the object of his prayer. He can put himself in his friend's position and cry genuine tears. Hence, this supplicant will be answered first.

We may suggest another reason that Hashem responded to Yishmael more than He responded to Hagar. This writer once heard mentioned that the prayers of a sick person for himself are heeded first, because he cannot divorce himself from his illness. Others empathize with him, cry with and for him, but they can go home and have a respite from the tragedy. They can momentarily forget the disease that is destroying their friend.

One who is stricken with disease can never have a reprieve from his illness. It is always present. Thus, his prayer is more heartfelt. This is the meaning of the pasuk, "Because he is there." Yishmael cannot leave and "go away." He is there; he is stricken with the illness. It was his prayer to which Hashem listened.



וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו "***And they stood up and went together***." (22:19)

The Torah uses the phrase vayeilchu yachdav, they went together, three times in regard to the Akeidah.

The first time, when Avraham left his home together with Yitzchak on the way to the Akeidah, the Torah writes that "they walked together" (22:6). Rashi explains that "together" means that Avraham, who was acutely aware of his mission to slaughter his only son, went with the same good will and joy as Yitzchak, who knew nothing of Hashem's command.

The 2nd time (v.8) the Torah writes this phrase it is after Avraham had hinted to Yitzchak that he would be the sacrifice. Yet, Yitzchak accepted Hashem's command in such a manner that he continued "walking together" with Avraham, as one person with one sentiment.

The third time seems problematic, since it refers to Avraham and Yitzchak returning from the Akeidah together with his two lads, Yishmael and Eliezer (v.19). How are we to understand this "togetherness"?

Horav Aharon Kotler, z.l., explains that Eliezer and Yishmael were unaware of the heightened spiritual experience which they had missed, having no clue to what had transpired. Likewise, Avraham and Yitzchak, who played the leading roles in this drama, left the Akeidah without any feeling of haughtiness after having experienced this seminal event. Probably the best word that comes to mind is: equanimity. They acted as they were supposed to act. In no way did they feel that they deserved any special round of applause or unusual commendation. They did not bask in assumed glory. It was not a deed performed beyond the call of duty. It is for this very purpose that they were created. They were Jews, and a Jew follows Hashem's command – unequivocally, with equanimity, because that is what a Jew is supposed to do.

To put it in simple terms: a musician makes music; a physician heals; a teacher instructs; a Jew follows Hashem's command.



וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹקִים אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרֶא בְּאֵר מָיִם "***And Hashem opened her eyes and she saw a well of water***." (21:19)

The Midrash derives from this pasuk that everyone is "blind" until Hashem ultimately "opens their eyes." This means that Hashem did not suddenly create a new well or transfer it from another place. It was present the entire time that Hagar was there, but she was not "permitted" to see it until Hashem "opened her eyes."

The Sfas Emes cites his grandfather, the **Chidushei Ha'Rim**, who asserts that everyone's truly essential needs are provided for him. Indeed, the fulfilment of his needs is within the grasp of each individual, but he does not have the ability to recognize this reality until Hashem raises the curtain from his vision. In his anxiety an individual may wonder "from whence will come my salvation?" When he does not receive an answer to his request, he blames it on everything but the real problem-- himself.

Every attempt to solve his problem is futile. He stumbles as a blind person groping in the dark. The solution/salvation is right before his eyes. He must entreat Hashem to let him see, since "my salvation comes from Hashem."



אַל־תִּירְאִי כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם "***Fear not for Hashem has listened to the voice of the boy in the condition he is now***." (21:17)

After being ordered out of Avraham's house, Hagar and her son Yishmael stumbled through the wilderness. Yishmael became feverish and drank all the water available to quench his burning thirst. He could no longer walk by himself and his mother could not hold him any longer. She put him down under a bush, and moved away to pray for his life saying, "I can no longer watch the child dying." Yishmael also prayed and Hashem responded to his prayer, not Hagar's. This is because Yishmael had the merit of being Avraham's son, and also because he performed teshuva (repentance) at that moment.

Horav S.R. Hirsch Z"l notes that Hagar, an Egyptian woman, does not act as a Jewish mother would have acted under similar circumstances. A Jewish mother would not have abandoned her dying child saying she could no longer watch her child suffer. This is the

mark of a selfish person, one who is more concerned with her own emotional stability than her child's well-being.

A Jewish mother would have sat at her child's side, holding his hand, consoling and comforting him until the very end. Yet, Hagar was too anxious to remain with Yishmael. Overwhelmed with her own self-pity, she prayed to Hashem on behalf of her son. Hashem responded to Yishmael's prayers and not Hagar's, because she had been thinking of herself rather than her child. Hashem responded to Yishmael - בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם (in the condition he is now).

We may derive from here that Hashem is eager to judge a person in his newly purified form, disregarding past offenses. If one repents and puts his best forward, then Hashem views him positively, consistent with his current behavior. Thus, from this narrative we learn that if a person who is overwhelmed with anguish cries out to Hashem, Hashem will heed his prayer.

עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אַתָּה "***Now I know that you are a G-d fearing man***". (22:12)

Avrohom was tested by Hashem with ten trials, each one more difficult that the other. The tenth and most difficult one was the Akeidas Yitzchok. It was only after Avrohom passed this test that Hashem said to him, "Now I know that you are a G-d fearing man."

One may ask, what of Yitzchok's part in this test? Yitzchok's achievement in this test was awesome! His performance prior and during the actual Akeida remains as an everlasting merit for the Jewish people. Why then is the trial aspect of the Akeida not ascribed to Yitzchok as well?

Yitzchok was ready to offer his life, and all would have been over. He was ready to give up everything, but he would not have to deal with the aftermath. He would not have to go back and face the world

as Avrohom had, he would not have to face the bereaved mother. He would not have to answer "what have you done with your son"?

There is no question that the supreme sacrifice is not to be regarded lightly. But such acts of heroism are not uncommon. People risk their lives for various causes and are soon forgotten. What Yitzchok did was definitely a great trial and sacrifice on his part. But Avrohom would have to continue and face the world and rebuild his shattered life. He would have to continue preaching the word of Hashem to people who would call him a hypocrite. The trials and tribulations facing Avrohom would be continuous, while Yitzchok's test was over. Yitzchok fulfilled the obligation of dying as a Jew, while Avrohom had the greater task of living as a Jew.

וְאָנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר "***Who am I, but dust and ashes***." (18:27)

Rashi comments: "*I was already fit to be dust at the hands of the kings and ashes at the hands of Nimrod, were it not for Your mercy which stood by me.*"



There is an obvious perplexity in Rashi's commentary. The posuk implies that Avrohom is speaking in the present tense - "and I am", however, according to Rashi, Avrohom seems to be referring to what might have been had he not been spared by Hashem.

Rashi, is teaching us a great lesson regarding the character trait of hakoras hatov, gratitude. When one is spared from certain death, he has two ways of showing his appreciation to his benefactor. He can either thank him solely for the act of saving his life. Or he can broaden the scope of his appreciation by acknowledging that

everything that will happen throughout his lifetime is a result of the actions of his saviour.

If we examine these two approaches, we see that the latter is the more honourable one. According to the first approach, one gives thanks only for what has happened; However, the second approach, teaches us that life would never be the same had there not been this intervention on the part of his benefactor.

This is Rashi's lesson: One must remember to show gratitude not just for what happened, but for every moment of one's life, and for every good thing that has happened as a result of the actions of his original benefactor.



Rabbi Eli Shoshan of Beitar relates:

I am a resident of Beitar. Sadly, one of my sons, Yair, departed from the ways of the Torah. Fortunately for me, Yair has a sharp mind and is also an honest person by nature, and unlike many of his friends, he does not deceive himself to blame me and our family members for his challenges. He knows that his yetzer has trapped him in its net and he is having trouble overcoming it. He respects his father and mother, he shares with us what he experiences, and at home he tries his best to avoid causing us pain.

On the eve of Sukkot, I asked Yair what his plans were for the holidays. He answered me that on the first holiday he intends to be with us at home, while on Simchat Torah he is intending to be with friends in the south...

For some reason my heart revolted. Despite everything, Simchat Torah... a bad feeling also accompanied the thoughts. A dull and heavy feeling that I didn't know how to explain fairly.

I told Yair that I am asking him to do me a favor, I am begging you to stay with us at home also for the holiday of Simchat Torah. Yair was in no hurry to agree.

There is a big party, "something international, a nature party", it's not something you see every day... he wasn't ready to miss out on it.

I asked Yair what was there at this desirable party, and shamefully he explained that they bring a huge golden bhudda of avodah zoro, and dance around it after drinking for heavily, etc.

My stomach turned to hear about such a "plan" for Simchat Torah, but I conquered my feelings, and said: The Gemara says that whatever the Torah forbade, it also permitted its equivalent: it forbade eating blood but the eating of liver was permitted; forbade eating domestic animal cheilev (types of fats) but allowed non-domestic animals cheilev; Banned pork, but permitted brain of shibuta, and so on.

Let us find a substitute for the forbidden pleasures you seek, and we find a way to do them in a permitted fashion, here at home, the main thing is that you don't need to go to the shocking party in the south...

Yair looked at me surprised; how exactly will he enjoy Simchat Torah in a permitted manner?

I told him this: Here at the end of the street there is a large Chabad synagogue. On Simchat Torah, alcohol flows there like water, people drink and dance to their hearts content. You studied in Lithuanian yeshivas and grew up with the view that Chabad is idolatry, so here it is. All together: unlimited dancing, alcohol like water, and idolatry... everything you wanted, and more...

It is my duty to clarify, I have nothing against Chabad, I just borrowed this phrase to convince Yair.

Yair heard the words, thought a little, and then informed me that he was willing to agree to exchange programs, but on the condition that he is allowed to host a friend at home, the same friend with whom he planned to travel to the party in Kibbutz Reim.

Did I have a choice? I gave my consent.

On Hoshana Rabbah in the afternoon the duo arrived, Yair together with his friend, Adam. I invited them to the sukkah for a holiday meal, but I told them that before the meal they should bless the Lulav even if they're not so careful about it, but I'm careful about ninety omeins a day & I'm still missing some... The two friends blessed the Lulov, and Adam also Shehechiyonu. Then they beat the Hoshanos, and washed for a hearty meal with the blessing of "Leishev BaSukkah''.

After they ate and drank, we turned to say goodbye to the Sukkah, drank good wine, and danced around the table. The atmosphere was very pleasant, Adam held the Lulav in his hand and danced and danced... After resting, I sent the duo to the Chabad Synagogue as agreed, where they fit in perfectly, and late at night they returned home to rest.

On the morning of Simchat Torah we woke up together with the entire House of Israel to the sound of the wailing sirens... Adam is excited about the opportunity to turn on his phone, "it's a danger to life!"

Several minutes passed Adam returned from the room, his appearance strange, his face changing colors. Suddenly he jumped towards me and started hugging me, at first, we thought that he had lost his mind.- The siren goes off, and he decides it's time to shower hugs and kisses?

Adam began to cry out in a choked voice: The cursed party! Thank you! Thank you! You saved our lives! Yair's "honoring parents" saved my life and his life from terrible suffering and an unnatural death...

Today's dancing already had a different character, it was no longer a matter of alcohol. Adam also became the star of the evening at the Shul because he knew the news.

The next morning, Isru Chag, Adam asked to put on tefillin before saying goodbye to us. But Yair declared: Father, whatever happens, I'm staying home!



Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Imagine chas v'sholom that it was your daughter, grandchild or your mother being kept hostage in those tunnels in Gaza. Think about that for a moment. That's how we must daven, because that's who's there – We are all brothers and sisters.

Sometimes, I wake up in the middle of the night and try to imagine the fear of those hostages. They are all convinced that they're going to die - every one of them. Not one of them believes that they are going to make it out alive. We hope that they will, but what are the chances of that happening?

And that's how we have to daven – As if it was our father, mother, brother or sister who's in that tunnel as a hostage.

"True faith is greater than an actual observation of miracles, for with the power of faith, one can see what the eyes do not!" ~ Chiddushei Hari"m

My Soldier

A rebbe got a special call this week from an emotional woman who said she does not observe the Torah and mitzvot who lives in Jerusalem and shared this with him:

I went into the neighborhood grocery store to buy bread and milk and among the products and the shelves I see a little boy looking for something, I looked at him and saw a small but noticeable "tag" on his shirt. I am a very curious woman by nature, I continue to ask the boy what is this "tag"?

The sweet boy answers with a shy face and a special purity, this is my soldier!!!

what??? What do you mean? I asked...

This is the soldier I am responsible for, that he will return home to his mother at the end of the war...

How are you responsible for him? I continued... and the boy answers: I pray for him all day long, study for him, read Shma in bed for him and so through the prayers he will return home. Because he guards me near Gaza, I guard him from Jerusalem.

When he told me where he was studying - at Chazon Meir in Beit Yisrael, I asked him what his rabbi's phone number was, he didn't know... so I got your number through the Ministry of Education!

And she finished: It's a shame that I didn't get to educate my children in such a special way."

So, dear parents, thank you for making sure that the child goes with the "tag of Kidush Hashem" everywhere he goes.

The Rosh kollel in Ashkelon related the following episode:



Of all the cities and kibbutzim that were attacked on 7th Oct '23, there was one city that was left out – Netivot. It wasn't even touched; Hamas did not enter there.

When the IDF captured some of the terrorists, they interrogated them. They asked them, "Of all the places that you massacred, why didn't you go to Netivot? Why did you miss it out?"

The terrorists said, "We did go, but when we arrived at the entrance, there were three big Rabbis standing guard, warning us not to come in here."

They were asked, "Do you know what they look like?"

They answered, "Oh yes, we were frightened of them."

The interrogators brought out an album of photographs, and the terrorists identified them immediately:

The Baba Sali, who used to live in Netivot. The Rav in Netivot, and Rabbi Yissachar Meir, who was the Rosh Yeshiva in Netivot.

"Pleasant words are like honeycombs— sweetness to soul and health to body." ~~ Proverbs (Mishle) 16:24

"Jewellery is only elegant if the wearer is." ~~ Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim

זכרו תורת משה
לעילוי נשמת ר' משה בן החבר צבי זצ"ל ור' משה יצחק בן אברהם צבי הכהן זצ"ל
HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Dead Fish

"I had a student," says **R' YY Jacobson**, "who became a baal teshuvah. He grew up in an unreligious background, and within a short amount of time made a turnaround to begin a full commitment to Hashem and His mitzvos.



One day, when I felt it was the right time, I asked him what changed his life to turn him in the right direction. This was his story:

"When I was four years old, my parents got me a fish for my birthday. I was obsessed with it. I would sit and analyze the fish day and night. I noticed that he wouldn't move for the entire day. He parked himself in one spot for hours on end, and then would swim to another spot for a few more hours, and that was his whole day.

"I figured that he must be suffering from boredom, having nothing to do. So, as a cleaver four-year-old, I came up with a solution. I decided that I would keep him company. I would stick in my hand to take him out and play with him, and so I did. "I was so happy. I had a chance to make my fish happy. But that wasn't it. What made me even more excited was that when I took him out, he was jumping from joy. I saw how much he liked and needed this 'outlet.'

"Out of my excitement, I went running to tell my mother about the great 'chessed' that I'd done, expecting that she'd be impressed by

my care and concern. "But, to my surprise, that was not her response. She wasn't thrilled with my plan of action but told me that taking him out was not befriending the fish but the opposite—that I was killing it! I was taking away its source of sustenance, and that was why it was jumping. It was on the verge of dying and was jumping for its last breath! " - With that, I took the fish, replaced it in the water, its source of life, and it was able to regain its breath just before it had died.

"That served as a life lesson for me. Some people seem to be full of life, and we assume that they're the happiest, but essentially, they're just distracting themselves from their essence. When one's connected to mitzvos, that's when one is alive; when you're not, you're not. The people who I thought were full of 'life' were just filled with emptiness. They were living a life distracted from a meaningful, productive and fulfilling life. That is why I made a U-turn in my life and started living and more meaningful life."

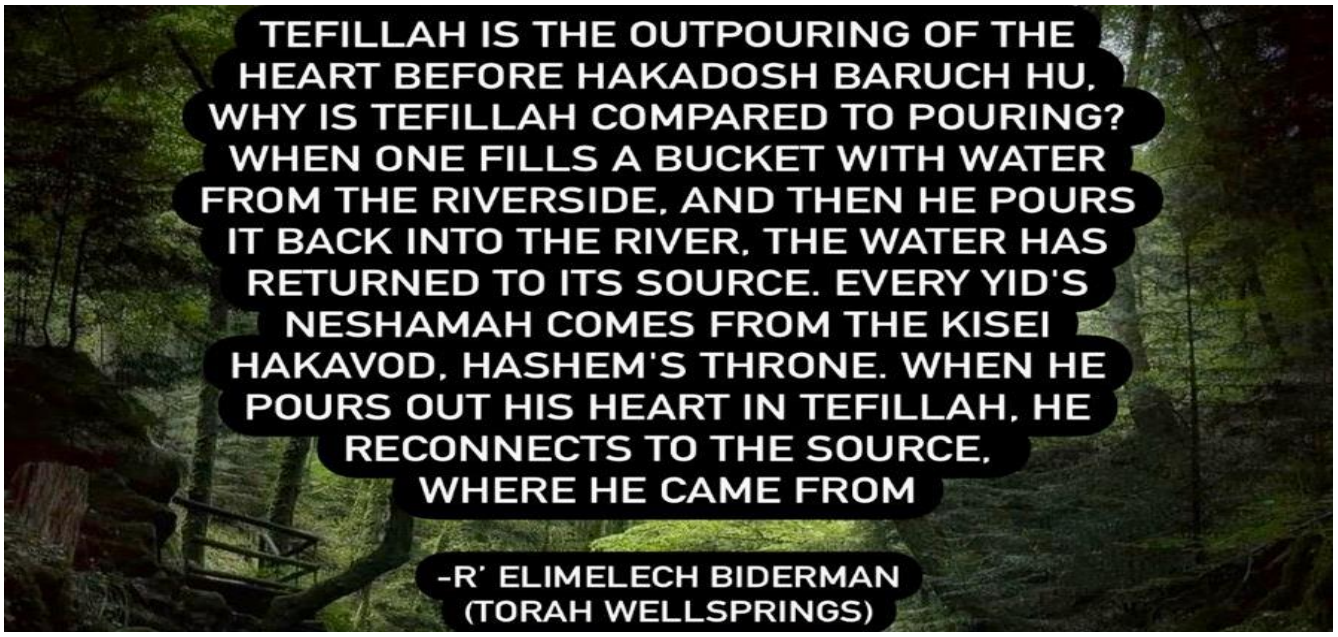
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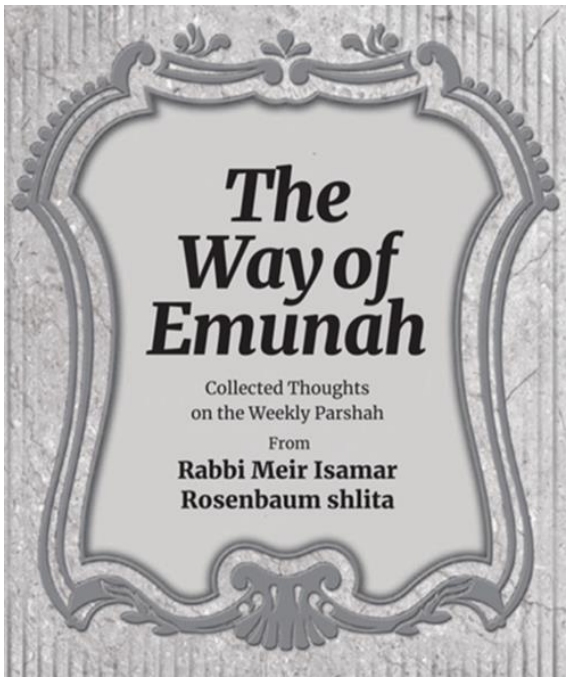
Rabbi Diamond was talking to a lady who had emotional issues that she said came from her mother not loving her. When Rabbi Diamond asked her why she thought her mother didn't love her, the lady answered that when she was a teenager and went out at night with friends, all her friends had a curfew and had to be home at 11 PM, while her mother didn't care what time she came home, even 3 AM.

We learn from this story that as much as our children may protest the boundaries we set for them, deep down they understand we are doing it out of our love and concern for them.

As adults, there's also a great lesson that can be learned from here, which is that boundaries given by the Torah don't mean that we're restricted. On the contrary: the boundary is there because of the love and care that Hashem has.

Like this lady who understood that the boundaries placed are for her sake, and if she's not given boundaries, she's missing love, we too must remember that the boundaries that we're given are coming out of the love that Hashem has for us, and we must "treasure" them.





The Reward for Welcoming Guests

וְאֶקְחָה פַת־לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לִבְּכֶם אַחַר תַּעֲבֹרוּ
And I will take a piece of bread and sustain your hearts; afterwards you shall pass. (18:3)

The Imrei Emes zy"a (quoted in Sefer Likutei Yehuda) asks why Avrohom said that he would "take" a piece of bread, rather than saying that he would "give" them a piece of bread.

He answers by quoting the Medrash (Vayikroh Rabbah 34:10 and Rus Rabbah 5:9) that states: "***More than what a homeowner does for a pauper, the pauper does for the homeowner***." In other words,

the host gets more reward from his mitzvah of feeding the poor than the poor man gets from him. Therefore, Avrohom said that he was "taking" because he was getting a lot of reward for his mitzvah.

He Welcomed Guests Even Though He Thought They Were Arabs

Sefer Maaseh Tzadikim quotes the following incredible story in the name of Sefer Devarim Aravim, which teaches us the importance of warmly welcoming guests.

Rav Leib Sarah's zt"l would often visit a certain city. Every time he went there, he was hosted by a local melamed, who was a big yarei Hashem. In that same city there lived a very wealthy man who hosted many guests, including many gedolei hador. The rich man once asked the melamed if he could host Rav Leib the next time he came to their town. He said, "The next time Rav Leib comes, can you ask him if he could please stay by me?"

When Rav Leib arrived, he agreed to stay by the wealthy man. He rode his horse and buggy to the man's yard, and the butler came out to take his personal items and bring them into the house. The servant also fed the horse and then led Rav Leib into the house.

Rav Leib found himself alone in the entranceway to the house. The man of the house was not home, and no one was around to tell him which room he would be sleeping in, so he stood by the door to wait.

The man's wife came to the door and saw him but did not recognize who he was. She saw a traveler dressed in simple clothes. To her, he looked like a vagabond who had wandered in on his own. She was hosting the **Apta Rov zy"a** that Shabbos and was very busy preparing the house for his arrival. She had no time for stragglers off the street and she yelled for the servant to remove him and his horse from the premises saying, "This is not a guesthouse!"

Rav Leib told her that her husband had invited him, but she screamed that she did not agree to host him and that he had to leave immediately. Rav Leib said to himself, "If I am not wanted here, I will go."

He got on his horse and went back to the home of the melamed. He told him all that had transpired and said that he would be staying by him. The melamed let the wealthy man know what had happened, and the man was extremely upset. He didn't know how to properly apologize to Rav Leib, so he brought his dilemma to his rebbi, the Apta Rov zy"a.

The Apta Rov told him, "Rav Leib will certainly come to my tish. You can apologize to him then." Rav Leib did, in fact, come to the tish and spent a good deal of time conversing with the Apta Rov. Meanwhile, the rich man stood to the side in a very sad mood. As they were speaking, the Apta Rov told Rav Leib that the rich man's wife did not know who he was and did not mean to insult him. He therefore asked him to forgive them for their inadvertent mistake.

Rav Leib replied, "Chazal refer to Avrohom Avinu as the greatest machnis orech. However, from reading the pesukim it seems that Lot was greater than him.

It says that Avrohom made his guests wash the dirt off their feet before entering his house. It also says that he offered them 'a bit of water', which he gave them through a messenger and not on his own. Lot, however, allowed his guests to come in with their dirty feet and he served them matzohs on his own, without the use of a messenger. He even risked his life and was willing to give up his daughters to save the lives of his guests. If so, why isn't Lot considered the greatest machnis orech? "

The answer is that when the angels came to Avrohom, they were disguised as Arabs. Still and all, he brought them into his own and took care of them. That is a true machnis orech. - When they came

to Lot, they came as angels. Lot was willing to host a 'rebbe' and take care of him, but that doesn't make him a true machnis orech. In truth, he was nothing more than a drunkard."

The Greatness of Welcoming Simple People as Guests

The following story illustrates the same point – that one must welcome all guests warmly, not only distinguished-looking people:

The Ropshitzer Rebbe zy"a was once traveling to visit the **Chozeh of Lublin zy"a**. As he traveled, he became very hungry, and he stopped at an inn for some food. However, the innkeeper refused to give him anything, and he was forced to continue traveling without any food until he arrived in Lublin. Several days later, he set out on a journey together with the Chozeh, and they stopped by the same inn. The innkeeper prepared a large meal in honor of the Chozeh, replete with many delicacies.

As he brought out the food on a fancy tray, the Ropshitzer pushed him, and all of the food fell on the floor. The innkeeper then prepared another tray of food, but the Ropshitzer pushed him again and caused that tray to fall as well. The innkeeper then became very angry and began to yell at the Ropshitzer. - When the Chozeh saw this, he understood there was a reason for the Ropshitzer's actions, and he asked for an explanation.

The Ropshitzer answered by asking the question of why the Torah considers Avrohom to be a greater machnis orech than Lot, and he explained that Avrohom welcomed guests whom he thought were Arabs, while Lot only welcomed guests because he knew they were angels.

He continued, "The first time I came to this inn, I was not given any food. But when the rebbe comes, this man prepares a huge seudah!"

Tzadikim in The Midst of the City

אִם־אֶמְצָא בִסְדֹם חֲמִשִּׁים צַדִּיקִם בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר ***If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men in the midst of the city…*** (18:26)

Rav Zushe of Anipoli zy"a (quoted in Sefer Toras Haremez) said that if someone secludes himself in his room and does not go out into the street at all, it is not so hard for him to watch his mouth and refrain from forbidden speech. But if someone goes out amongst other people, it is much harder.

Accordingly, Avrohom Avinu said that in order to save Sodom, he needed to find tzadikim "in the midst of the city, i.e., people who remained righteous even when they were amongst others, and not only when they were at home.

Torah Temimah

אָמַר רַבִּי תַּנְחוּם בַּר חֲנִילַאי לְעוֹלָם אַל יְשַׁנֶּה אָדָם מִן הַמִּנְהָג שֶׁהֲרֵי מֹשֶׁה עָלָה לַמָּרוֹם וְלֹא אָכַל לֶחֶם מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת יָרְדוּ לְמַטָּה וְאָכְלוּ לֶחֶם . בבא מציעא פו:
Although Hashem could have sent real guests to appease Avraham, He didn't hesitate to send malachim although they would have to act in a way which deviated from their own personal custom of conduct. - From this we see that a person should always act in accordance with the local custom so as not to appear different.

Every Friday morning, **Rav Moshe Feinstein** would give a shiur in his Yeshiva. When the shir was over, the earliest time to daven mincha had arrived and Reb Moshe would daven mincha. - In his own apartment building, there was a chasidish rebbe who had a minyan in his home every Friday night, and R' Moshe who join then for kabalas Shabbos and maariv but would arrive before they began mincha. Although Reb Moshe had already davened, and that minyan began well past shkiah, R' Moshe would don a gartel (which he never wore) and pretend to daven mincha again with them.

In times when being careful with *chodosh* wasn't so popular and it was confirmed that most grains in the US were from prior years' crops, R' Moshe was makpid to only consume products verified as yoshon.

At a Kiddush in the community, the baal simcha prepared platters of yoshon cakes for Reb Moshe to eat and pointed out to him that these platters were yoshon. R' Moshe inquired if everything was yoshon,, and when he was told that no, only those select platters were, he made his way to the other side of the hall, not to stand out as different than everyone else.

JEP 50 OVER 50 YEARS Jewish Education Program Queens

Rav Yisroel Brog quoted a true, fascinating story in the name of the **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l. Rabbi Eliyahu from Lita used to travel to different towns in Europe to strengthen their Torah and mitzvah observance.

Once he stayed in an inn in a small village that belonged to a Jew. Rabbi Eliyahu spoke to the Jew about having *bitachon*, having trust in Hashem and realizing that Hashem is the source of all blessing, including one's livelihood. The owner of the inn responded that thank G-D, he could take care of himself and did not need Hashem's help. He felt that he was a smart and successful businessman and did not require heavenly assistance. He owned fields, a forest, a mill that the whole village used, and an inn with a bar that all the villagers frequented. He was very wealthy. He felt that he had everything planned perfectly and that his wealth was guaranteed.

Rav Eliyahu told the innkeeper that he should take back his words before it was too late since Hashem was the only one who made one wealthy or poor. The innkeeper ignored the rebuke.

After his travels, Rabbi Eliyahu returned to his hometown. He visited the poor house where the poor of the city were able to get a bed to sleep on and a meal to eat. He went to see if there was anything that they needed. To his surprise, he met the innkeeper from the other village. He asked him what he was doing there. The innkeeper said that a platoon of Russian soldiers crossed the bridge near his mill. One of the slats on the bridge broke and the Russian officer fell through the hole, almost losing his life. The officer believed that the innkeeper had been negligent and had purposely wanted to prevent the Russian soldiers from crossing the bridge. The officer was planning to imprison the innkeeper and bring him to a military court, with a bad outcome likely. When the innkeeper found out about this, he ran away for his life. He was unable to return home and was now penniless. - He started crying.



Rabbi Eliyahu gently asked him if he still believed that a person can be rich or poor on his own, without Hashem. The innkeeper agreed that he had been wrong. One's income is totally from Hashem. Clearly, Hashem wanted him to understand that and that is why these events had occurred to the innkeeper.

Rav Eliyahu told the innkeeper to strengthen his belief in Hashem. Rav Eliyahu then invited the innkeeper to stay in his house while Rav Eliyahu contacted the Russian authorities. He was able to convince them that the bridge mishap had been a total accident. The innkeeper was, then, able to return home, back to his wealth.

Two angels came to Sodom. One came to destroy the city because of the cruelty of the people. The other angel came to save Lot. Lot had shown hospitality and had invited the angels into his home.

Almost immediately, the people of Sodom surrounded Lot's house. They demanded that Lot send the travelers out of his house so that the people of Sodom could molest them. Lot requested that they spare his guests since "after all, they came under the shelter of my [Lot's] roof." (Bereishis 19:8)

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah) explains that focal point of Lot's defence on behalf of his guests was that they relied on him to ensure that nothing would happen to them. Since Lot had invited them and they had put their trust in him, Lot felt responsible to do all that he could to save them.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l continues with comforting words. Lot felt responsible for his guests because they had put their trust in him. Therefore, he tried to save them.

Certainly, how much more so, if we rely on and put our trust and faith in Hashem, Hashem will protect us from all harm and will shower goodness on us.

The Siddur Speaks

In the Mishnah in Brachos (4:4), Rebbe Eliezer teaches that one must not make his Tefilah 'Keva', fixed. The Gemara gives a few different explanations as to what 'Keva' means.

One meaning is that Davening should not be something that is like a burden. For example, if one would feel that he has to get Davening over and done with, Chas V'Shalom. - Another explanation is that one shouldn't just say the same things every day, but he should always have something new to add in his Tefilos. Rav Matisyahu Gross gives a Mashal that he heard from his Rebbe to explain what this means:

A man once went into a store and bought a birthday card for his wife's birthday, and he then proceeded to give it to her as it was, a

prewritten card, without adding anything of his own to the content. Such a gesture certainly lacks meaning and care.

Rav Gross says that the same is true with Davening. The Anshei K'neses HaGedolah set up the text of the Siddur. However, we, on our own, should add something new and different in our Kavanos every day, and this will show that we are not Davening like someone who is pre-programmed, with 'fixed' Tefilos. Rather, it shows how much we care to put new meaning into our Tefilos every day!

L'Maaseh

Rav Shraga Freedman relates a beautiful story. The residents of the Ezras Torah community in Eretz Yisroel were bothered by a stranger who would drive around the neighbourhood every Shabbos.

Some people began protesting, but **Rav Hershel Zaks** took a different approach. He got a good look at the license plate number, and he memorized it. After Shabbos, he was able to use the license plate number to get this man's address. He then went over to his house and knocked on the door.

A little boy opened the door and called over his shoulder, "Some religious people are here!" His father shouted back, "Give them a Shekel!" However, Rav Zaks said to him, "We're not here for money. We would like to talk to your father."

The man came to the door. Rabbi Zaks gently explained how the Jews of Ezras Torah were pained by the car in their streets on Shabbos. The man replied, "You're crazy, but you're right. I won't drive on your streets any more on Shabbos."

About a year and a half later, Rabbi Zaks received an invitation to a Bar Mitzvah. At the Simchah, the father of the Bar Mitzvah boy approached him and said, "Rabbi, do you recognize me?"

Rav Zaks was not sure he could remember him, and the man said, "About two years ago, you came to my door and asked me not to drive in Ezras Torah on Shabbos. Because you cared enough to explain and talk to me like I mattered, I decided to find out more about being religious, and I am now Shomer Shabbos. I started sending my child to a religious school, because I want him to emulate you!"

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach says that we find something interesting in this week's sedra:

The first part of parshas Vaera describes the whole scene of 'Hachnosas Orchim.' **וְאֶל־הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם** - *And to the cattle did Abraham run…* **וַיְמַהֵר אַבְרָהָם** *And Avrohom hastened…* **וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנַּעַר וַיְמַהֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ** *and he gave it to the youth, and he hastened to prepare it.* – Four whole pesukim describing Avraham Avinu's hospitality – for whom? For guests who weren't even real people! – They were malachim! They just pretended to eat for Avraham Avinu's sake.

An entire section of the Torah is dedicated to this – Why? And furthermore, asks Reb Shlomo Zalman, "Avraham Avinu always cared for the needs of other people, and how does the Torah describe that?"

With one Roshei Teivos - **וַיִּטַּע אֶשֶׁל בִּבְאֵר שָׁבַע** ***And he planted an eishel in Beer-Sheba.*** The Gemara darshans that the word **אשל** is an acronym for **אכילה – שתייה - לינה** - food ,drink and lodging! Just one small acronym to describe all his regular chasadim! Why?

Rav Shlomo Zalman explains that the reason for this disparity is because the malachim's visit took place on the 3rd day after Avraham's Bris Milah, and it was difficult for him.

This is what the Torah values most! – The effort that you put into a mitzva, especially in difficult circumstances. It's the work that you put in when the mitzva is difficult to do. That's what the Torah cherishes!



Gaza's Long Jewish History by Dr. Yvette Alt Miller

A Jewish rabbi in Gaza? The great Gaza Yeshiva? Ancient Jewish Gazan villages? Yes, they were all real. Here are 10 surprising facts about Jews' long relationship with the region.

10 facts about Jewish communities in Gaza, from ancient to modern times.

1. Possession of the Tribe of Judah

The area of Gaza has been inhabited since Neolithic times. Four thousand years ago, during the time of the Jewish patriarch Jacob, it was inhabited by a tribe known as "***the Avvim who dwell in (unwalled) cities until Gaza"*** (Devorim 2:23).

וְהָעַוִּים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בַּחֲצֵרִים עַד עַזָּה כַּפְתֹרִים הַיֹּצְאִים מִכַּפְתֹּר הִשְׁמִידֵם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ תַּחְתָּם

When Jacob divided up the Land of Israel between his twelve sons, Gaza was allocated to Judah and his descendants.

The tribe of Judah didn't live in Gaza; it eventually passed into Canaanite hands, then was colonized by Egypt as an outpost of the Egyptian empire.

2. Ancient Greek Outpost

In the 13th Century BCE, a group of Greek sailors attacked and sacked Anatolia, Cyprus, and Syria, before attacking Egypt. The earliest mention of this group is recorded inside the mortuary temple of Ramses III in Egypt; King Ramses repulsed the would-be

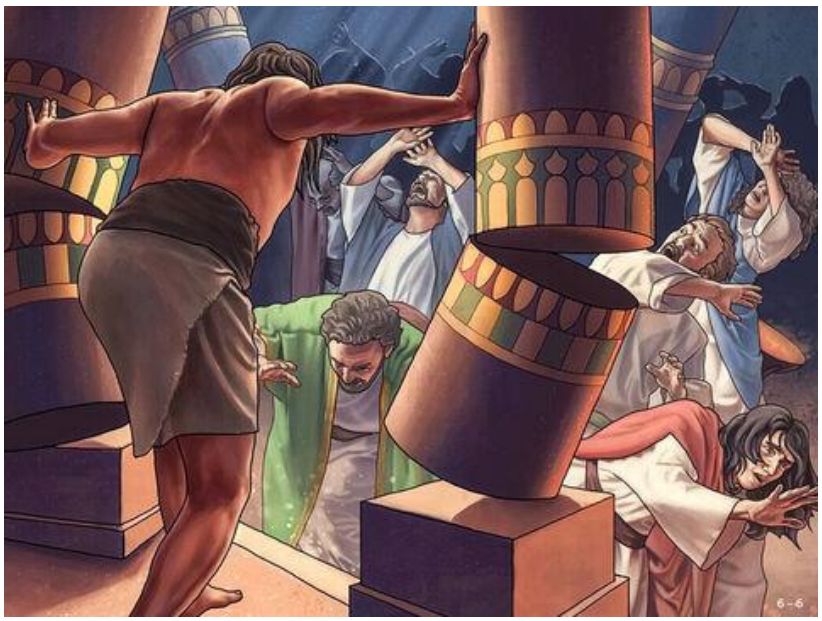
invaders and encouraged them to settle nearby in Gaza instead. There, the invaders called themselves Philistines (*Plishtim*).

The Philistines differed greatly from the Israelites who inhabited the area. Though they adopted some local customs, the Philistines continued to worship Greek gods. They also ate a diet heavy in pigs and dogs, as evidenced in archeological remains of their cities, in stark contrast to Jewish settlements of the same era.

Philistines built five cities which formed a Philistine political union: Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron, all in modern-day Israel, plus Gaza. The ancient Greeks called the area Philistia, which later evolved into the Greek name Palestine. Gaza became an outpost of Greek culture within ancient Judah.

3. Samson and Delilah in Gaza

Philistines were relentless enemies of the Jews; the Torah describes a terrible period in Jewish history when the "Children of Israel (were) delivered…into the hands of the Philistines" who oppressed them (Judges 13:1).



One of the most heartbreaking stories in Jewish history occurred in Gaza: Samson, a hero of Israel, went to Gaza and fell in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. Philistine leaders urged her to pretend to be in love with Samson and to find out what made him so strong: "The governors of the Philistines went up to her and said to her, 'Entice him and find out by what (means) his strength is so great, and by what means we may overpower him, so that we may

bind him, to afflict him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver" (Judges 16:1).

Delilah eventually learned Samson's secret: he possessed superhuman strength because he abstained from wine and had never cut his hair. While he was sleeping, Philistines cut off Samson's hair then tortured him. They brought him to one of their temples to continue his torture during a great feast there. In desperation, Samson asked G-d for one more moment of strength, and pushed down the pillars supporting the temple, killing himself along with all the revelers inside.

4. Jewish Conquest During the Time of Hanukkah

As a Greek outpost, Gaza was a center of Hellenizing influence in ancient Israel and became a battle zone during the revolt of the Maccabees. Jonathan the Hasmonean – Judah Maccabee's brother – conquered Gaza and moved there in the year 145 BCE, 20 years after the Temple in Jerusalem was captured and the miracle of one container of oil lasting for eight days. Gaza was absorbed into the Kingdom of Judah, ruled by the Jewish Hasmonean kings.

5. Why are There Jewish Symbols on the Great Mosque of Gaza?



Gaza became a major Jewish center during Talmudic times, boasting magnificent synagogues and a renowned Gaza Yeshiva (Jewish school). The city of Gaza was home to a large Jewish community; the Talmud also mentions a small Jewish town in the Gaza region called Kfar Darom. In 1965, Egyptian archeologists discovered the remains of an ancient synagogue near Gaza's harbor. Beautiful mosaic floors declared that the synagogue was built in 508-9 CE, and

depicted a picture of King David, with his name written in Hebrew above.

More evidence of Gaza's ancient Jewish roots can be found in the Great Mosque of Gaza: a pillar of this mosque contains carvings of Jewish symbols: a lulav and etrog, a shofar, a menorah, plus Hebrew inscriptions. Jewish life flourished in Gaza for hundreds of years, until Crusaders destroyed the area, putting a temporary stop to normal life in the area.

6. Famous Shabbat Song Written in Gaza

Jews returned to Gaza after the devastation of the Crusades, and once again built a flourishing Jewish community. The famous author and spiritual leader Rabbi Avraham Azoulai moved to Gaza from Morocco in the early 1600s and wrote his mystical work *Chesed l"Avraham* there.

Around the same time, Rabbi Yisrael Najara moved from Safed to Gaza. The popular Shabbat song he wrote, *Kah Ribon Olam*, is a fervent plea for G-d to rescue Jews from danger and exile; it beseeches the Divine to "save (Israel) Your sheep from the mouth of lions…." Its words are as true in Gaza today as they were 400 years ago when they were written.

7. 1929 Pogrom

After a decade of increasing anti-Jewish rhetoric from Arab leaders in Mandatory Palestine, armed Arab groups rose up to attack Jews in August 1929. Anti-Jewish riots began in late August in the new Jewish neighborhoods that were springing up around Jerusalem. The riots began to spread to other areas, including the cities of Safed and Hebron, and Gaza; scores of Jews were killed.

After taking no action for six days during the riots, on August 26, 1929, British soldiers stepped in to stop the riots - and to remove Jews from areas where they'd lived for centuries. All the Jews living

in Hebron and Gaza were forced from their homes and forbidden by the British authorities to return.

8. Rebuilding Jewish Gaza



Gaza ruins 1898

Jews soon returned to Gaza and established a kibbutz, or collective farm, there in 1946. They called it Kfar Darom, after an ancient Gazan Jewish town by that name. But Jewish life in Gaza was to be short-lived. In the United Nations' proposed division of Mandatory Palestine, Gaza itself was divided between a proposed Arab state and Israel.

Israel accepted the UN's plan, but the Arab states did not, attacking Israel the moment it declared independence in 1948. In the bitter fighting that followed, Israel captured Gaza. In subsequent ceasefire negotiations, Israel gave Gaza to Egypt in return for control over the nearby cities of Ashdod and Ashkelon. At the same time, the Arab population of Gaza swelled as Palestinians moved to Gaza from the newly founded State of Israel.

Israel conquered Gaza once more during its 1956 war with Egypt, and once again gave the territory to Egypt. During the 1967 Six Day War, Israel once again conquered Gaza. In the 1970s, Jews began to return to Gaza once again: over the next thirty years, Jews built 21 new farms and towns in Gaza. Gaza became home to most of Israel's organic farms and accounted for 15% of Israel's overall agricultural output.

9. Making Gaza "Jew-Free"

For over a decade, Arabs and Jews lived and farmed side by side in Gaza. With the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987, however, peaceful coexistence came to a halt. In the Oslo Accords of 1993, Israel promised to evacuate most of Gaza, giving way for it to be governed by the newly formed Palestinian Authority. That peace agreement fell apart, however, and tensions continued to rise.



Jewish children at a greenhouse in the Gadid settlement a week before disengagement

In 2005, after heavy political pressure from world leaders and domestically, Israel agreed to withdraw from all of Gaza and to force every Jew living there out of the territory. Gaza was to be entirely self-governed; Israel believed that by disengaging, they would be free of the terrorism and international opprobrium that governing Gaza had exposed them to.

Starting on August 17, 2005, Israel's army moved in to remove all of Gaza's Jews. The process was highly emotional and took a week. A total of 1,700 Jewish families left their farms and homes in Gaza. Knowing that Jewish graves would be desecrated, Israel's chief rabbis ordered all Jewish cemeteries to be dug up and their bodies reburied in Israel. .

Before Gaza became entirely "Jew free," American Jewish donors spent $14 million buying greenhouses from the Jewish farmers there and donated them to Gaza's new Arab government. Former

World Bank President James Wolfensohn even gave half a million of his own money to the scheme. Within moments of the final Jew leaving Gaza, however, the greenhouses were utterly destroyed, looted and smashed while Gaza's police officers stood watching.

10. Violence Out of Gaza

Since 2005, anti-Jewish sentiment has swelled in Gaza. With the election of Hamas to govern the region in 2007, attacks on Israeli targets from Gaza increased. In the past 18 years, dozens of Israelis - as well as many Palestinians in Gaza and in areas under Palestinian Authority control - have been killed and injured by tens of thousands of rockets launched from Gaza.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists entering Israel from Gaza perpetrated their worst massacre since the Holocaust, killing over 1,400 people and abducting over 220 prisoners.



The Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system (left) intercepts rockets fired by Hamas in the northern Gaza Strip toward southern Israel

Long a Jewish outpost, Gaza has also been the site of some of the most intense hatred against Jews throughout history. From the ancient Philistines to antisemitic Greeks during the Hanukkah era, to fanatical Islamist resentment today, Gaza has been a place where Jews have been targeted – and yet have managed to survive and even triumph. May it be so again soon.

Splitting of Wood Foreshadows Splitting of Reed Sea – Measure for Measure - Rabbi Yissocher Frand



The pasuk says וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲבשׁ אֶת־חֲמֹרוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נְעָרָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֵת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיְבַקַּע עֲצֵי עֹלָה "***And Avraham got up early in the morning, he saddled his donkey, he took his two lads with him, and his son Yitzchak, AND HE SPLIT WOOD FOR THE OLAH OFFERING…***" (Bereshis 22:3).

He is on the way to the Akeida, during which he expects to offer Yitzchak as a korban. Offerings are burnt on a mizbayach. Wood is needed for the fire. In order to prepare the wood, he split the wood before beginning his journey (וַיְבַקַּע עֲצֵי עֹלָה).

The Medrash says that Hashem proclaimed, "I will split for his descendants the Reed Sea in the merit of his having split the wood, as it is written "וַיְבַקַּע עֲצֵי עֹלָה" (Bereshis 22:3) and it is written "וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם" (Shemos 14:21).

The Torah uses the same root word by Krias Yam Suf to indicate splitting that it uses by Avraham's splitting wood for the Akeida. In the merit of Avraham's chopping the wood, the waters at Yaf Suf split!

If the Medrash would say that in the merit of the Akeidas Yitzchak the Yam split, I could understand that. The Akeida involved superhuman mesiras nefesh for Avraham to sacrifice his own son. But how does splitting the wood merit such a miracle? Avraham needed to cut the wood because he needed firewood! What was so special about that action that merited the great miracle of Krias Yam Suf?



Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960; Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) interpreted the Medrash as follows: The Gemara says that it is easier to carry fifty pounds of gold than fifty pounds of feathers. Why is that? Is it not the same fifty pounds whether it is feathers or gold? The answer is that an ingot of gold is dense and compact and easy to carry. However, fifty pounds of feathers is very bulky, and is far clumsier to transport.

Now if you were Avraham Avinu and you needed to sacrifice your son, and you knew that you needed firewood, so you needed to take some with you in case you would not find firewood on site, what would you do?

Does it make sense to take one compact log, or to cut up the log before leaving home and shlep all the fragments of twigs and wood that came out of the chopping activity? Obviously, it is much easier to take the hunk of wood and chop it when you get to your destination! Avraham travelled for three days carrying this clumsy sack of wood! Very inefficient!

Why did he do it that way? The answer is that when he arrived at the site of the Akeida and he put Yitzchak on the Mizbayach, he wanted to complete the job ASAP. He did not want to torment Yitzchak any more than necessary.

If Yitzchak is lying there on the Mizbayach and then his father needs to begin chopping wood, Yitzchak may panic, or at the very least there will be inui ha'din (psychological trauma as a result of delayed implementation of judgement). Avraham Avinu did not want to prolong the agony of his son. He had the sensitivity and foresight

to chop the wood before he left home so that when he arrived, everything would be ready.

Rav Tzvi Pesach cites a Medrash that when the Sea was split, they were supposed to step into the sea and then a little water would part. Then they would go further and more would part. With each step forward, more water would part. However, in the meantime, they would be surrounded by intimidating walls of water.

The Ribono shel Olam said, "Avraham Avinu had the sensitivity to do the Akeida in a fashion that his act of chopping would not cause undue stress. So too, "**וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם**", as soon as they entered the water, the entire sea split open, and they could immediately see the light at the end of the tunnel. This was the midah k'neged midah.

The sensitivity of Avraham by the Akeida to not inflict any more anguish than necessary was replicated by the Almighty when He split the sea in a way which diminished the anguish of Bnei Yisrael.

Midei Shabbos BeShabbato: by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler

Yishmael's 'Attachment' to the Beis-Hamidkash

וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מֵרָחֹק "And he (Avraham) saw the place from afar" (22:4). He actually saw a Cloud (symbolizing the presence of the Shechinah) hovering over the mountain.

The Medrash explains that when he asked Yitzchak what he saw, he replied that he too, saw the Cloud, but that when he asked Yishmael and Eliezer the same question, they replied that they saw nothing.

So much for the Arabs' claim that the location of the Beis-Hamikdash is holy to them too, comments the **Oznayim la'Torah**. Here we see that Yishmael openly admitted that he saw no Kedushah on the mountain, even when the Shechinah was resting on it!

Hidur Mitzvah

"And Avraham took the wood of the Olah and he placed it on Yitzchak his son … " (22:6).



The Oznayim la'Torah wonders at this, comparing it to the story cited in the Medrash of the spirit of a certain deceased sinner, whom R. Akiva once met, and whom the Heavenly Court had sentenced to carry a bundle of wood on his shoulders, one which would subsequently be used to burn him with.

Now Yitzchak was not a sinner, so why did Avraham force him to carry the wood with which he would subsequently be burned?

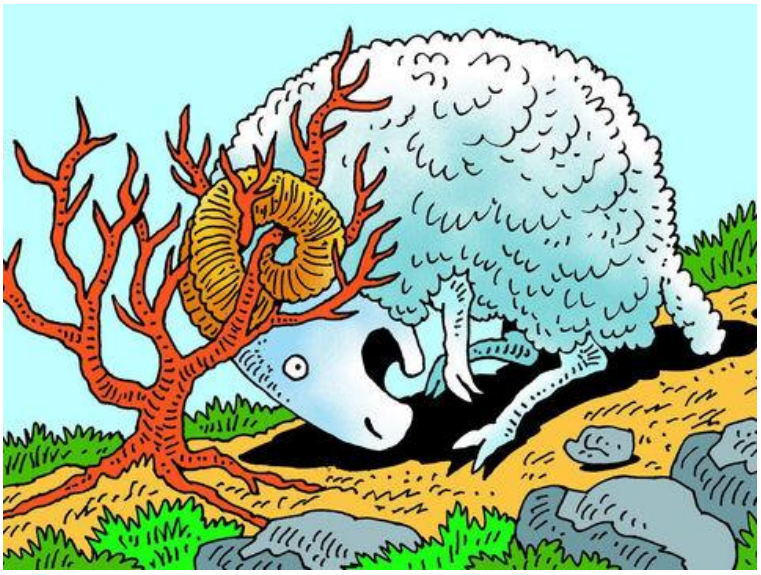
Eventually, he discovered a Selichah, which describes the wood that Yitzchak carried as an ornament. In other words, it was considered a Hidur Mitzvah to bring the Korban with the wood on his shoulders to the Mizbei'ach; much in the same way as they would adorn the basket containing the Bikurim before taking it into the Beis-Hamikdash.

Likewise, **וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מֵרָחֹק** - the moment Avraham saw the 'place from afar', he adorned 'the Korban' by placing the wood with which he was about to be burned on his shoulders.

"Everything is going according to schedule – Hashem's schedule."
~ Rabbi Fischel Shachter.

Second Time Lucky

"And an angel of Hashem called to Avraham a second time … and he said … because I will surely bless you … " (22:15-17).



The question arises as to why G-d did not bless Avraham when He spoke to him the first time and instructed him to desist from Shechting his son. Why did He do so only after the second time?

Says the **Oznayim la'Torah**, that a Korban that is brought satisfactorily is a catalyst to B'rachah; like we find in Shemini, when, on the eighth day of the Milu'im, Aharon blessed the people only after he had finished bringing the Korbanos of the day.

Here, it was only after Avraham had replaced Yitzchak with the ram, which he found and brought up in his stead, that G-d blessed him.

The Brisker Rav asked his son each Shabbos whether he wanted an apple or a pear. When he asked for a pear, his father gave him an apple. And each week, he would give him the opposite of what he wanted. Why did he act this way?

"It's to teach my son that in life, we don't always get what we want, and we must get used to that." Each person desires different things. If things don't go our way and we don't get what we want, then we must say to ourselves that Hashem made the best choice for us, and we must know how to accept that.

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ד׳ לעשות צדקה ומשפט ***For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice***. (18:19)

Chazal (Kesubos 8b) apply the above pasuk to Avraham Avinu's devotion to the middah of chesed.

Avraham's acts of lovingkindness were much more than a manifestation of a good middah. They established a bris between him and the Almighty.

This offers us a new vista of understanding regarding the concept of chesed, how it applied in practice to Avraham, and, by extension, to us, his descendants.

Avraham searched for every avenue to perform chesed. If the man never ate meat – he should by all means have a succulent steak. We see this from the manner in which Avraham served the angels, serving them himself and providing them with delicacies. Chesed was not something he had to do, but something he wanted to do. Avraham's attitude toward chesed was founded in ***v'halachta bidDrachav, "You shall follow/go in His ways."***

Hashem performs chesed because He "wants" to do so. It is part of the underlying principles of Creation. Altruism, magnanimity, is the expression of a desire to help others without being begrudging, and with selflessness. Thus, Avraham's acts of chesed are called a bris, covenant. This is what he shared with Hashem.

The following story illuminates a powerful side to chesed and altruistic care for a brother, but it could (and should) apply equally to all: A fellow purchased a shiny new car. Wherever he went, people stopped to look at and admire it. He stopped in a random neighborhood (not upper echelon) to get some groceries. He noticed

a young boy, clearly dressed in old, hand-me-down clothes, standing in front of the store, admiring his car. He asked the boy, "You like?" "Yes!" was the boy's immediate reply. "Where did you get it?" he asked. "My brother got it for me" was the fellow's reply.

Staring at the car with wide, longing eyes, the boy began, "I wish… wow, I wish…" At this point the owner of the car expected him to say, "That I had such a brother," but he did not. He said, "Wow, I wish I could be such a brother."

Surprised at such an insightful response from a young boy, the fellow decided to offer the boy a ride in his car. [before children were taught not to talk to strangers.] The boy's eyes went wide as he said, "I would love to take a ride in your car." As he climbed into the car, the boy asked, "Can we drive by my house?" "Sure," the fellow said, assuming that the boy wanted to show off to his friends that he had gotten a ride in a fancy, new car. The man was in for a surprise.

They arrived at the house, and the boy asked if he could run in for a moment. He soon returned carrying his little brother who was unable to walk. "You see that car, Billy! That man's brother bought him that car. One day, I will buy you a car. That way it will not be so hard for you to get around."

Many people perform acts of chesed, and, for some, at the expense of their time, money and even health. But how many eat, sleep and drink chesed? How many look for any opportunity which can serve as a platform for chesed? How many sit thinking for new ways to help others, to enable them to be like everyone else? Not many, but then Avraham was in a league all to himself.

"What matters in life is not what we say, but what we do." ~ R' Yosef Yitzchak Sitrul zt"l.

כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ד' לעשות צדקה ומשפט ***For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice***. (18:19)

Avraham Avinu is known as the amud, pillar, of chesed. He went beyond the call of duty in order to provide for the needs of those who were not as fortunate as he. It was this character trait which he introduced and inculcated into the psyche of his descendants. Chesed takes on many forms. It all depends on the attitude of the benefactor. For the most part, they see a need, and they immediately respond.

Then, there are those who innovate, who think before they act, who understand that chesed goes deeper than fulfilling a need. One must acknowledge the value of chesed and the extraordinary merit that it garners for one who extends himself. Successful chesed requires innovation and cognition, awareness of an opportunity for performing chesed and doing something about it. Understanding the extraordinary merit engendered by acts of chesed is what elevates a simple act of kindness onto a lofty spiritual plane.

Two stories capture these ideas: **Horav Chaim Kreisworth, zl**, was a brilliant gaon without peer. Equal to his erudition was his uncanny understanding of the value of chesed and employing every opportunity to act upon it. He was visiting London, and he arrived at the home of his host, one of Europe's greatest philanthropists, after every shul minyan had already davened Maariv.

Understandably upset, he knew that he was now compelled to daven Maariv b'yechidus, alone, without a minyan. As such, he sought a place/room in the house that was most propitious to daven, a place where his tefillos had greater efficacy. [While Hashem listens to all our sincere tefillos, regardless of the venue in which they are expressed, it helps to pray in a place mesugal, most meritorious, as a backdrop for his prayers.]

He went from room to room searching for that special place. One would think that it would be the study, filled with seforim, a place used for Torah study - Wrong… He chose the kitchen, since much of the food prepared, there was used to feed those in need. This was his depth of understanding the middah of chesed.



Horav Aizik Sher, zl, Rosh Yeshivah of Slabodka, was giving a fiery shmuess, mussar/character refinement, talk, to members of the Kollel, married men who devoted themselves 24/7 to Torah study. The Rosh Yeshivah was all fired up with his brilliant talk. Suddenly, the door to the room opened up and there stood his Rebbetzin, daughter of the Alter, zl, m'Slabodka.

She pointed to her watch and said, "It is Erev Shabbos, and these young men must go home to help their wives and families." Rav Aizik closed his sefer and bid everyone a Gutt Shabbos. This is how she thought: Mussar is vital, but not at the expense of chesed. Obviously, the Rosh Yeshivah concurred.

"It is easy for a rabbi to establish prohibitions, but a rabbi's real strength is to teach Torah and rule on law with an emphasis on what is permitted." ~ R' Ovadia Yosef zt"l

"Don't wait until you are free to learn, for your special task in life may be to learn while under stress and pressure. If you wait until the pressures subside, you may wait forever." ~ R' Mendel of Kotzk zt"l.

Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport

וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה (18:2)

Avrohom excelled in the mitzvah of hosting guests. Three days after he had circumcised himself at the age of 99, Hashem didn't want Avrohom to burden himself with caring for guests. He brought a heat wave to deter all travelers on that day. Still, the weak Avrohom's greatest concern was that the unusually hot weather would deny him the merit of welcoming guests. Avrohom decided to sit at the entrance of his tent in the hopes that he might spy a stray traveler.

When Hashem saw Avrohom's suffering over the lack of guests, He sent three angels in the guise of people. Rejoicing at this improbable turn of events, the elderly and weak Avrohom ran to personally invite them to his home to serve them, where he proceeded to serve them a lavish and abundant feast.

The midrash records that initially, Avrohom sent his trusted servant Eliezer outside to search for guests, but he returned to report that he was unable to find any. Avrohom responded by commenting that servants cannot be trusted. In other words, he felt that Eliezer hadn't tried hard enough and exhausted all of the possibilities, and as proof, Avrohom went outside personally and returned with three guests.

This midrash is difficult to understand. Eliezer was indeed Avrohom's trusted and reliable servant. He knew how valuable the mitzvah of hosting guests was to his master, and when he went outside to look for guests, he certainly looked in every possible location, but he was unsuccessful because, unbeknownst to him, Hashem had taken out the hot sun to keep the guests away from the ailing Avrohom. What was Avrohom's complaint against Eliezer, and what more could Eliezer realistically have done to locate guests?

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein recounts that when he was growing up in Yerushalayim, he and a group of boys studied together with a private teacher. At one point, they were studying tractate Shabbos during World War 2. At that time, it was virtually impossible to find complete Talmudic sets, and only the Rav possessed an entire set of the Talmud, which was shared by everybody.

The teacher requested each of the boys to bring his own Gemora to their class, but every boy returned to say that he had searched throughout the entire neighborhood and was unable to locate an available Gemora, as in fact there weren't any to be found. However, there was one boy who returned successfully with his own copy.

To the present day, Rav Zilberstein has no idea where the boy found it, but he explains that he was successful because he wanted more than any of the others to locate a Gemora. Because he desired the Gemora with his entire being, Hashem helped him to locate one where everybody else had failed. Not surprisingly, that boy grew up to become a well-known disseminator of Torah.

Similarly, Rav Zilberstein explains that although Eliezer indeed tried his utmost to locate guests, his lack of success emanated not from laziness or a half-hearted effort, but from a lack of desire. Avrohom understood that if Eliezer shared his burning desire to find guests, he would have been successful, as Avrohom subsequently was.

Although the circumstances in which we find ourselves are often beyond are control, when we truly want something badly enough and exert ourselves to the fullest, Hashem often miraculously sends us the results for which we yearn.

"You are wherever your thoughts are. Make sure your thoughts are where you want to be." ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l

Splendid Quote with Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"Share your encouragement; it will help others."

וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹקִים אֶל־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בַּחֲלוֹם הַלָּיְלָה - Hashem came to Avimelech at night to chastise him for taking Sarah (20:3). That morning, he shared with his servants what Hashem said, and they became afraid.

The Torah teaches us that if we get inspired, we should share it with others for them to also be inspired.

"One should be involved in avodas Hashem constantly. If you don't have strength to concentrate on Torah right now, you can still say Tehillim. And if you don't have strength for Tehillim either, you should give tzedakah…" but always be active and do something in Hashem's service." ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

"It is known just how important it is to honor parents. Honoring them is compared to honouring Hashem. To disgrace them is a grave sin…. Therefore, dear children of Bnei Yisrael, honor Hashem, and be careful to honor your father and mother. Listen to everything they say….

Each mitzvah has its mazal. People spend a lot of money to have the merit to open up the aron kodesh or to be a sandak, and the like, but these aren't mitzvos from the Torah or mitzvos of the rabbanan. They are chibuv mitzvah (a gesture, showing love for the mitzvos). Ashreihem Yisrael (they are fortunate)!

However, each time one obeys his father or his mother he is doing a mitzvah from the Torah! But the fools transgress, and they are punished." ~ The Pele Yoetz

TORAH TAVLIN

Don't Bow to the 'Dust of Your Feet'!

Rashi tells us that Avraham Avinu believed the three visitors who came to him in the desert were merchants, *'who bow down to the dust of their feet, and he was strict not to allow any idolatry into his house.'* Why would anyone bow down to the dust of their feet? Isn't that ridiculous?

The **Shinover Rov *zt"l*** answers that merchants who work themselves to the bone believing their parnassah comes from the amount of work in their hands or the lengths they go to with their feet, are wasting their time. They are self-serving - in this case serving the Avodah Zara known as 'self'! They bow down, in a sense, to the dust of their feet, for they believe in their own power to control their destiny. Avraham Avinu knew better and the first thing he told them was to wash off this dust! What a lesson for the ages!

Hu Haya Omer … He would Say

R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen Kagan *zt"l* (Chofetz Chaim) would say:

וַיִּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל- How did *Avraham Avinu* run toward the angels if he was in the third day after his *Bris*, which is the hardest and most painful day?

The angel that was sent to heal him was not going to use any sort of medicine or special remedy; rather, just the point of the angel meeting Avraham would be enough to heal him. That is why it says, *'He saw'* (the angels), Avraham became healed, and then he was able to 'run towards them.'"

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויטע אשל בבאר שבע ... (בא-לג)

There was once a *poritz* who needed to flee his hometown on very short notice. He approached Reb Yosef, a local Jew, and offered to sell him the entire village at a low price. Reb Yosef did not have anywhere near the sum the *poritz* was asking for, so he sold many of his possessions and took loans from various people. He then took all the money and made his way to the *poritz* house.

Suddenly he heard a woman sobbing bitterly. Upon investigation, he learned that the woman had just lost her husband. She had small children at home and no means to provide for them. Overcome with mercy, Reb Yosef gave her all the money in his pocket so she could raise her children in comfort.

Reb Yosef's deed caused a great tumult in *Shamayim*. Here was a man who had sacrificed a future of great wealth and honor to help a fellow Jew! Reb Yosef and his wife were childless, and the Heavenly Court decided that for his noble deed, he would have a son who would illuminate the world.

The *Satan*, however, vehemently argued that Reb Yosef's kind deed was a fluke; surely, he regretted his "foolish mistake." Reb Yosef needed to be tested. - An old man appeared to Reb Yosef and offered to purchase his *mitzvah* for whatever he paid. Reb Yosef refused, saying that all the gold and silver in the world could not compare in value to his *mitzvah*.

The old man then informed him who he was and blessed him with a baby boy in a year's time. The child born eventually became the great *tzaddik* and *Chassidic Rebbe*, **R' Menachem Mendel** of **Rimanov *zt"l***.

We learn from *Avraham Avinu's* "hotel" (אֶשֶׁל), that a person must always be prepared to help a fellow Jew. In this way, he won't become fazed when the opportunity arrives.

למודי משה

וירא - גליון קצ"ג

Why Avraham Avinu Never Had a Bris Seudah

In this week's *parsha* we learn about the first *bris seudah* that took place in the history of the world. The *pasuk* writes, in reference to Yitzchok: - **וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּגָּמַל וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גָּדוֹל בְּיוֹם הִגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק** "***The child grew and was weaned; and Avraham made a great feast on the day Yitzchok was weaned***" (*Bereishis* 21:8).

Some learn from the above *pasuk* the mitzvah to make a *bris seudah* [celebratory meal].

Although we translated **בְּיוֹם הִגָּמֵל**, to mean the day Yitzchok was weaned, the ***Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*** (*Perek* 29) translates it differently, and understands it refers to a *bris seudah.* The *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* writes as follows:

- "R' Yishmoel said: Avraham didn't delay with anything Hashem commanded him to do. As soon as Yitzchok was eight days old, Avraham performed bris milah as it says, "And Avraham circumcised his son Yitzchok when he was eight days old". He offered him up like one offers a mincha offering on the mizbe'ach and he made a great celebration and a party.

From here *Chazal* learn: One is obligated to make a celebration and a party on the day one merits to perform a *bris milah* on his son, like we find by Avraham Avinu as it says, "*Avraham made a great feast on the day he performed milah on his son Yitzchok*".

The obvious question is, why was Avraham Avinu not the first person to have a *bris seudah*? Perhaps the answer is based on the above.

The *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* (*Perek* 29) says that Avraham Avinu's *bris* took place on Yom Kippur. If we *pasken* that a *bris seudah* must take place on the day of a *bris,* then since Avraham Avinu's *bris* took place on Yom Kippur, it wasn't possible to have a *seudah*.

Remez

A hint to the obligation to make a *bris seudah* can be found in the word *milah* itself.

The *Zocher HaBris* (25:1) cites the ***Mateh Moshe*** who says, the word **מילה** stands for, **מַשתה יַעשה לַכל הַקרואים** – a feast shall be made for all those who are called.

Divrei Torah for the Shabbos Table

An incredible application of *Kofin Al Midas Sodom*

In this week's *Parsha*, Avraham Avinu *davened* for the people of Sodom, despite the fact that the Sodomites were polar opposites of him. Avraham Avinu was an *ish chessed* [the man of *chessed*]. The people of Sodom institutionalized "anti-*chessed* behavior." Avraham Avinu was renowned for his hospitality and practice of welcoming guests. Many Medrashim describe how they abused guests in Sodom. We know the fate of Sodom.

But we learn out a practical halachah from the Torah's narrative about Sodom. There is a principle called "***kofin al midas Sadom***" – there are certain situations where *Beis Din* has the ability to force a person to do a *chessed* if non-performance of such a kindness would fall into the category of "Sodomite attributes."

What is a classic example? "***Zeh ne'heneh v'zeh lo chossar***." [This person benefits and the other person suffers no loss.] Someone who refuses to let another person use his item, even though it will not cost him anything, is practicing Sodomite behavior. *Beis Din* is

allowed to step in and force the owner of the item to bestow the favour to his neighbour.

For example, if Reuven is driving somewhere and Shimon wants a ride in the same direction that Reuven is travelling, and it will cause no extra wear and tear or extra time or gas consumption on Reuven's part, refusing to take Shimon would be *midas Sodom*.

The Rambam wrote an interesting letter to one of his *talmidim* on this subject. The Rambam wrote a *sefer* called *Moreh Nevuchim*. It was a controversial *sefer*, and certain people viewed some of its ideas as heretical and condemned its author. Incredibly, they called the Rambam an *apikorus* for what he wrote in the *Moreh Nevuchim* (and for some of what he wrote in other places as well).

A talmid of the Rambam took up his Rebbe's honor and fought against these people. The Rambam wrote a letter to him and told him to leave these critics alone. He argued, "This is an example of *kofin al midas Sodom*." He said "What they say does not hurt me. It does not cost me anything. They want to do it, and they get pleasure from doing it." He said, "Let them go ahead, let them abuse me, let them call me a heretic. It makes no difference to me!"

This is an incredible application of *kofin al midas Sodom*. (**R' Frand**)

The Tefillos Helped…Eventually

The whole story of Avraham Avinu with Sodom is troublesome. Hashem says, "*Will I hide from Avraham that which I am going to do?*" (*Bereshis* 18:17). In other words, "Am I not going to tell him that I am about to destroy Sodom? I need to tell him!" Hashem knows what Avraham is going to do. It is that which in fact Avraham does – he is going to *daven* and bargain with Hashem NOT to destroy Sodom.

So Hashem knows what the end of the story is going to be. He also knows that there are not 50 righteous people in Sodom, nor are there 40 nor 30 nor 20 and not even 10 *tzaddikim* in the city. So why give Avraham Avinu the opportunity to *daven* when Hashem knows that his *tefillos* will be futile? What is the point?

The answer is a lesson that we all need to learn because it is so prevalent. The lesson is that no *tefillah* [prayer] ever goes to waste. The *tefillos* that Avraham Avinu offered for Sodom may not have helped for that situation but somewhere, sometime, some place those *tefillos* helped.

In fact, Rav Yonoson Eybeschutz in his *Tiferes Yonasan* says that this is similar to *ma'aseh avos siman l'banim* [the actions of the patriarchs foreshadow the actions of the descendants]. Just like the deeds of the fathers blaze the trail for similar deeds by their children in a more literal sense, so too there is a concept that when a city is in trouble or a community is in trouble, they go to a *tzaddik* and request that he *davens* for them.

Where does this come from? Rav Yonoson Eybeschutz says the original source for this custom is the action of Avraham in *davening* for Sodom. Avraham Avinu instituted the concept that a *tzaddik* can *daven* for a city in trouble to save them from their plight.

Hashem is saying the following: I am not going to hide from Avraham what I am about to do, and I know that Avraham is going to *daven*, and I know that his *tefillos* at this juncture are not going to help Sodom. However, a great and mighty nation will descend from Avraham. I know that this nation is going to need those *tefillos* at various times in the future. Let him verbalize those *tefillos* now for the welfare of his future descendants.

R' Frand relates an amazing story which he heard from Lev L'Achim workers in Eretz Yisroel, who were personally involved in this very incident:

There is a small *shul* on a street in Tel Aviv. It was *Mincha* time and they needed a tenth man. In the time-honoured tradition of Jews throughout the world, one of the nine assembled worshippers inside the *shul* went out to the street and looked for a "tenth man." They could not find a tenth man. Suddenly, a young fellow walks by – a typical secular Israeli, — long hair, the whole works. They said, "Could you come in and help us make a *minyan*?" He responded, "I am not interested." They pleaded, "We need a *minyan*. Someone has a *yahrtzeit*. He needs to say *kaddish*. Please come in for a short time." He was still not interested. Finally, they pestered the fellow so much that he agreed to come in.

He was totally unfamiliar with what was taking place inside. He just stood there. He stood there through *ashrei*, *kaddish*, etc. However, apparently, being in a *shul* for the first time in his life made an impression on him. One thing led to another. He contacted Lev L'Achim workers. The end of the story is that today this young man is an observant Jew.

However, this is not the whole story. This boy's parents are totally secular Jews. Their son went "off the path" and became *Chareidi* ["ultra-Orthodox"]. His former friends came to his parents and asked them "What happened? You raised you son well. How could this have happened?"

The father said, "Well, I know exactly what happened. This boy's grandfather – my own father – was a religious Jew. He came to Eretz Yisroel but his son (myself) wanted to have nothing to do with Judaism. The son grew up totally secular and went his own way and he was going to make sure that his children would follow in the same path. It has to do with his grandfather, I guess."

Here is the end of the story: The grandfather *davened* in this very *shul* in Tel Aviv that pulled his grandson in for the *minyan*! That was his *shul*!

Think about it. When this old Jew saw his son go "off the *derech*" and saw his grandson being raised as a secular Israeli – how many *tefillos* did this man offer that Hashem bring them back to Yiddishkeit? He *davened* and *davened* and *davened*. "It didn't help"… or so he thought! The grandfather never lived to see what happened. It did not happen then. It did not happen to his son. But apparently the *tefillos* helped for his grandson.

That is what this *pasuk* is about. Hashem knew that Avraham was going to *daven* after He told him what He was planning to do to Sodom. Hashem knew that these *tefillos* would be futile for Sodom, but Avraham was going to become a "great nation." And one day, one place, one time, somewhere, somehow, those *tefillos* would help his descendants.

There are many more stories of this kind, where *tefillos* of grandparents or even parents which seemingly went to waste, helped – two or even three generations later – as all *tefillos* do.

Why A Pillar of Salt?



In this week's *parsha* we learn about the destruction of the city of Sodom and its environs as punishment for their evildoing, in particular for their staunch opposition to doing acts of kindness for others. The angels that were tasked with destroying Sodom told Lot to flee with his wife and two daughters so they would be spared, but they were cautioned not to look behind them to witness what

was transpiring in Sodom. Lot's wife did not heed their warning, and when she turned to gaze at the destruction, she was transformed into a pillar of salt.

The Medrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 51:5) explains that because Lot's wife sinned with salt, this punishment was particularly fitting for her. In what way did she sin with salt?

When Lot brought the angels to his home as guests, his wife circulated to all her neighbors to ask if any of them had salt that she could borrow in order to serve her guests. Although her behavior seemed innocent her secret objective was to publicize to the townspeople of Sodom that she had guests, so that they would converge on her house and demand that the guests be handed over to them, which is indeed what occurred. Because she claimed to be out of salt in order to backhandedly announce the presence of her guests, she was punished by being turned into a pillar of salt.

This story is difficult to understand for two reasons. Firstly, how is it possible that a self-respecting housewife ran her kitchen without an essential spice like salt? Secondly, why is the fact that Lot's wife did not have salt a reason she was transformed into a pillar of salt? Had she been lacking potatoes; would she instead have become a potato? What is the deeper connection between her sin and her punishment?

Rav Chaim Zvi Senter explains that salt is a food that, if eaten by itself, lacks good taste and nutritional value. Paradoxically, it is also an essential ingredient in countless recipes, and if omitted, its absence is clearly detectable. Even though salt lacks value when viewed in a vacuum, it is an extremely versatile spice with the ability to enhance the flavour of other ingredients. In this sense, salt can be described as a food whose entire purpose is to serve other foods.

With this insight, it is completely understandable that Lot's wife was so steeped in the self-centred and stingy mindset that

permeated Sodom that she viewed salt, a food whose very essence is dedicated to benefiting others, as an alien product that had no place being stored in her home.

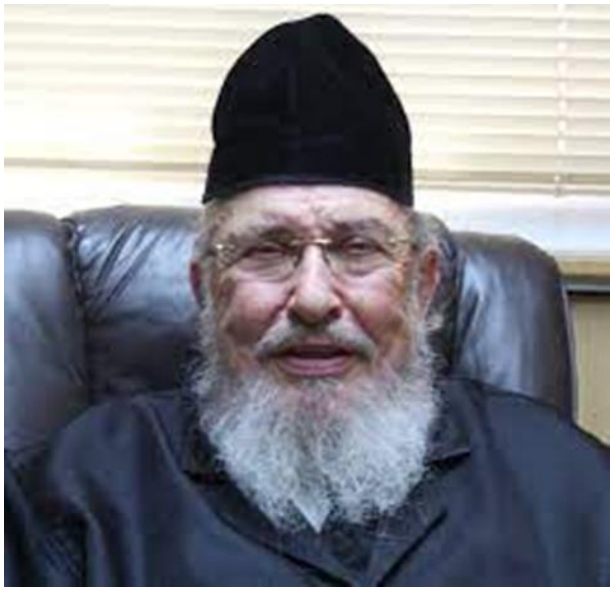
Similarly, her punishment of turning into a pillar of salt was particularly appropriate for her sin. Because she spent her life focused solely on her own selfish needs with an utter lack of concern for the less fortunate, she was transformed into an eternal monument to *chessed* by being forced to exist in the form of a food that serves no function other than assisting others. (**R' Ozer Alport**)

-English Weekly-

עץ החיים

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"A VORT A STORY & HALACHA"



Last week the entire world lost a great giant in our midst. The great Gaon and Tzaddik **HaRav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi זצוק"ל**.

HaRav Baruch Modcha's fire for Torah and milchomoh for Emes was felt in the entire Torah world! He was one of the Jewish leaders of our generation who passed down to thousands of Talmidim what it means to have true Ahavas HaTorah! He loved the Torah so much that he sometimes could not understand how anyone would ever want to stop. It was so geshmak and zeese the sweetest thing in the world.

Once, a Bochur was having a hard time and wanted to leave the Yeshiva forever and drop everything. (Hashem yerachem!) On his

way out he bumped into Rav Baruch Modcha. He noticed that something was the matter, and he asked him what it was. The bochur was very honest and told the Rosh Yeshiva that he was leaving.

The Rosh Yeshiva said, "I will let you leave only if you do one more thing for me before you leave." The Rosh Yeshiva told the bochur to go to the dorm and take a shower for an hour, and then to go straight to bed and just sleep and sleep as long as he possibly could 'till he just can't take staying in bed anymore. If he does that, then he could leave the Yeshiva.

The Bochur was shocked at the request, but he did it. The mashgiach of the Yeshiva said over that today that bochur has hundreds and hundreds of his own talmidim all in the merit of Rav Boruch Modcha who saved his life by understanding what the bochur needed at that moment!

BITACHON POWER!

"What is Bitachon?!"

A Meaningful "Quote" based on the Sefer Chovos Halevavos "Shaar Habitachan"

The Quote: What does it mean to have **בטחון** in Hashem? The answer is to have **בטחון** means that the person puts his complete reliance and trust **only** in Hashem Yisborach. How does one put one's complete reliance in Hashem?

#1- The first principle that one has to understand and realize is, that Hashem **only** has our good in mind and Hashem is the **only** One Who knows what is really for our ultimate good in all situations".

THE STORY: The heiligeh **Belzer Rov, Reb Ahrela**, lost all off his family and his entire Kehillah in the holocaust. Someone came to console him for all the troubles that Hashem had given him, and the Rebbe said, "Chas Veshalom to say such a thing. Hashem has never done anything bad to me my entire life."

THE STORY #2: It was the beginning when things started getting difficult in Germany. Rebbetzin Mirel Leah Hess **ע"ה** started working on getting papers, visas and tickets so they could move to a different location in Europe that was safer.

They bought tickets for a boat leaving on a Motzei Shabbos. On the Friday before, their bags were packed, the papers were in order, and all they needed was to get the last stamp on their visas.

Rebbetzin Hess went to the Embassy to get the stamp. She had everything organized and together, and she waited online for a long time. When her turn came, a Nazi officer **ימ"ש** was there. He looked at her papers and then proceeded to rip up every document, including their tickets, right in front of her face.

Rebbitzin Hess came home devastated and crying. She had just worked for six months and paid money to try to leave, and now it looked like their fate was hopeless.

When her husband **Harav Yosef Dov Hess זצוק"ל** heard what happened, he started dancing!!! And he explained to his bewildered wife, "We see so clearly that this was **רצון ה'** that this is what is best for us!" And he continued dancing.

- The boat left on Motzei Shabbos without them. The day that specific boat docked, sadly, the Nazi's invaded that area and they killed everyone who was on that boat. **הרב יוסף דוב**, with his strong Emunah understood that everything Hashem does is only good, even when it looked so dark.

"If you believe in Hashem when you see everything is good, that isn't emuna. That is knowledge. Emuna is when we don't understand, yet we believe that it's for the good." ~ The Bnei Yissaschar zt'l

צדיק גוזר והקב"ה מקיים: The Tzaddik's Bracha Behind Ori Magidish's Release



HaGaon HaRav Ben-Tzion Mutzafi giving a bracha to the father of Ori Magidish last week that she be freed from captivity safe and sound.

The miraculous rescue of Ori Magidish, 19, from captivity in Gaza caused a tremendous Kiddush Hashem after videos spread of her family davening and publicly thanking Hashem for her release. Another video that spread on social media showed the family, residents of Kiryat Gat, bringing in a Sefer Torah into Ori's room several days before her release and davening out loud for a yeshuah. And on Tuesday morning, Ori's mother made a short statement to the press, including: "***Thank You, Borei Olam, there's nothing beside You***."

But another incredible aspect of the story was published on Tuesday by *Kikar H'Shabbat*. Last Wednesday, HaGaon HaRav Ben-Tzion Mutzafi traveled to Kiryat Gat to deliver a shiur. Many people showed up, including Ori's father. At the end of the shiur, he

approached HaRav Mutzafi and asked for a bracha for a yeshuah and the release of his daughter from captivity.

HaRav Mutzafi, with great emotion, fulfilled his request, and then added: "I can't promise but b'ezras Hashem, there will be a yeshuah and she'll return home healthy and whole soon." The entire kehal answered "Amen!"

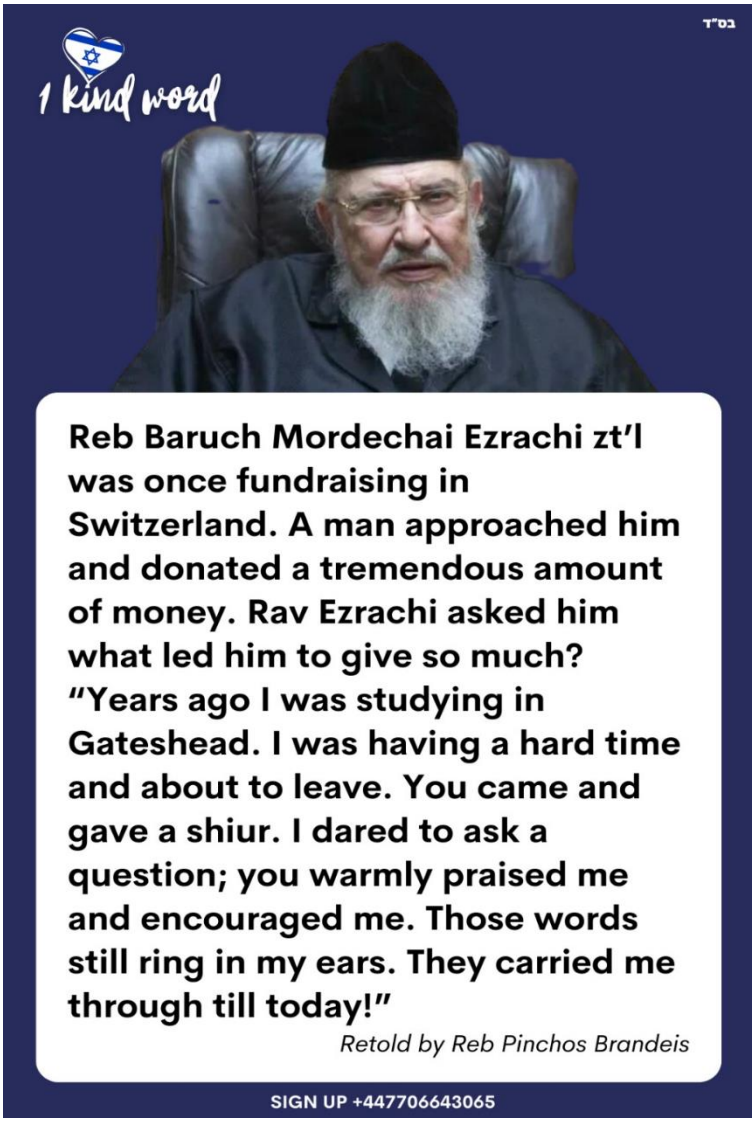
Following the announcement of Ori's release on Monday, one of HaRav Mutzafi's talmidim wrote to him: **לגדל ולרומם שמו יתברך, צדיק גוזר וה' מקיים**. A week ago, the Rav was in Kiryat Gat and gave a bracha to the father of the captive Ori Magidish. Today all of Am Yisrael heard about her return home safe and sound. **אין עוד מלבדו**.

HaRav Mutzafi responded to him: "It wasn't me – it was Abba above. On Wednesday evening, I arrived in Kiryat Gat to deliver a chizzuk shiur. The shul was full of people, there was a great hisorerus, and the father stood in front of me and cried. I leaned my head on his and I cried with him. Our tears intertwined and we davened that she'll return home soon and Hashem Yisbarach Rachum V'Chanun heard the tefillah and she was rescued. **ברוך פודה ומציל. ברוך שמו**. ***(YWN Israel Desk – Jerusalem)***

No Worries

In a personal letter, **R' Yechezkail Levenstein** wrote "Do not worry about anything. Someone who does not worry has much better chances of success in what he does."

He goes on to explains that being relaxed and free from any worry prevents a person from reacting hastily and putting himself in grave danger. ~ Ohr Yechezkail



"The more we become aware that our help can only come from Hashem, that He can and wants to give us everything, and the more we will tell Hashem how much we rely on Him, then the more He will testify to us how much we count for Him and He will assure us of His greatest blessings." ~ R' Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l.

A Jew should not ask himself what he's expecting from life, but rather, what life is expecting from him. ~ R' Yosef Chaim Sitruk zt"l

"Life makes us warriors. To wind up a winner, we must acquire the strongest of weapons. This weapon is prayer." ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l

"Smile even when you don't want to, and Hashem will give you all the reasons to smile." ~ Rebetzin Esther Jungreis

"A good deed is best remembered in Heaven when it is forgotten by the man who performed it." ~ R' Yisrael of Ruzhin zt"l



Laughing Last

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צְחֹק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים *Sarah said, "G-d made me laughter"*
(*Bereishis* 21:6)

Yitzchak Avinu is named after laughter, *tzechok*. There is an expression, "He who laughs last, laughs best." Yitzchak is the one who will have the last laugh. In the end, the Jewish people will laugh at all the pagan nations that oppressed them so.

Properly understood, laughter is evoked when we think back about a certain time in the past. Let's say a person was in a state of fear, and in the end it turned out that the situation was quite the opposite of what he had thought at the time. The supposed danger never even existed, it was a total misunderstanding, or a figment of his imagination. He did not overcome the threat; rather, he discovered that the threat never was there.

For instance, Reuven is fleeing from someone who is running after him, because Reuven thinks this person wants to kill him. In the end it turns out that the person came to give him a big gift. This causes Reuven to laugh about what happened.

Another example is that a person is walking down the street and a tank appears in front of him. He is shocked and shoots an anti-tank missile at it. Then it turns out that the whole "tank" was made of cardboard. This brings him to laugh, because it turns out that everything was false, no more than an optical illusion.

After it all, in the end of time, we will laugh about everything. All the troubles and all the suffering that we thought was so terrible – in the end we will laugh about all of it.

Now, we bless *Baruch Hayov Vehameiteiv* over good things, and *Baruch Dayan Ha'emes* over evil tidings. But in the future to come, when *Hashem* will be One and His Name will be One, we will bless *Baruch Hatov Vehameiteiv* over everything.

Hashem sits Above, in Heaven, and sees the whole picture, from beginning to end. He hears all the noise and the talk, he knows all the evil plans that the kings of the pagan nations plotted against us, and He makes a joke out of it all, so to speak. Not just that the plans came to naught, but they never even existed.

We are here on earth, so we don't laugh. We don't get the joke. But the day will come when we, too, will laugh, when the true picture will be revealed to us, in all its grandeur.

This glorious moment is alluded in the name Yitzchak.

Prayer Always Works

וַה' אָמָר הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה. וְאַבְרָהָם הָיוֹ יִהְיֶה לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעָצוּם וְנִבְרְכוּ־בוֹ כֹּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ

Hashem said, "How shall I hide from Avraham what I am doing, when Avraham is destined to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through him?" (*Bereishis* 18:17–18)

Where Did Avraham's Prayers Go?

The *Maggid* of Dubno asks: What is the logic of the above-quoted *pasuk?* Why should *Hashem* tell Avraham what He is about to do just because Avraham will someday become a great nation?

The *Dubner Maggid* answers with a parable.

An elderly man went to the tailor to buy a suit, and was hesitating whether the suit was the right size or not. After him, a youth came in and bought a suit, and then another suit, without even taking measurements. The elderly man asked him, "How can you buy without checking the size?" The youth answered, "If the suit is not good for me today, it will be good for me tomorrow. And if it will not be good for me at all, it will be good for my children. In any case, the suit will be put to good use."

Thus *Hashem* said, "How shall I hide from Avraham what I am doing – I will tell him about My decree to destroy Sedom." And lest we ask: What about all the heartfelt prayers that Avraham then prayed for Sedom, in order that it should be saved?

If *Hashem* had already decided definitely to destroy Sedom, why did He cause Avraham to pray so many *tefilos* in vain? Wasn't it a forgone conclusion that there were not enough *tzaddikim* in Sedom to justify saving the place?

The answer is, "Avraham is destined to become a great nation." The whole Jewish people will descend from him. Avraham's prayers are not in vain; they will be put to good use for his descendants.

Not one of all those fervent *tefilos* that Avraham prayed got lost. Nothing went to waste. Every *tefilah* like this is put into storage in *Hashem's* treasure houses. And it will produce rich benefits when the right time comes.

There's no imagining the enormous outpouring of blessing, *siyata d'Shmaya,* protection and salvation that will accrue to the descendants of Avraham, in the merit of the *tefilos* he offered for the sake of the people of Sedom.

This is why *Hashem* revealed to Avraham the decree to overturn Sedom. It brought him to *daven* valiantly and passionately. And this produced a rich treasure to be stored away in Heaven's storehouses. This enormous treasure will be put to good use at the right time.

We can learn from above teaching of the *Dubner Maggid* that every *tefilah* we pray, every request and supplication we utter to *Hashem*, is stored away in *Hashem's* great treasure house in Heaven. And it will produce glorious results when the time comes.

Hashem is our Father and He loves us infinitely. He will surely use these *tefilos* to bring us a great plenty of blessing and success when we need it. We just need to rely on Him, and deposit our *tefilos* in His storehouse, and believe with perfect faith that He will put their merit to good use at the best possible time.

Let's say we *daven* for a sick person, and he doesn't get better. We shouldn't assume that our *tefilos* were not accepted by *Hashem* and we prayed in vain. This is not so. *Tefilos* that did not help this sick person will help a different sick person. They will help the person who offered the prayer in his time of trouble. Maybe they will help the sick person himself, who passed away, in the form of *zechuyos,* when he comes to Heaven for judgment. - No prayer goes unanswered.

Storing Up

We need to know that our *tefilos* are being kept in a very secure storage facility in Heaven, and there is a good reason for this, as the following analogy describes.

At harvest time, enormous amounts of grain are hauled in from the fields. Why do we need all that grain? Just a few pounds of it will suffice for now.

The obvious answer is that we have a long winter ahead of us, and after that, several months of spring, and also the beginning of the summer season. Until the next harvest comes, a whole year will pass by. So we need to store up enough grain to last throughout this long period.

But all our efforts are only worthwhile if we have a good place to store this grain. If we do, then we may be sweating and toiling at harvest time, but afterwards, when winter comes, and then spring comes, we will be relaxed and confident, knowing we have all the food we need to make it through the whole period.

But if the silo in which we put the grain is no good, if it is mouldy and infested with mice, then the grain will go to waste, and we knocked ourselves out for nothing. In such a case it would be better to harvest just a few pounds for immediate use, rather than exert ourselves for no good reason.

We know that everything is stored away up in heaven under perfect conditions. We know that our *tefilos* are in the safekeeping of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and He won't let a single *tefilah* get lost. He saves them for the day when they can be used best.

This knowledge should strengthen our desire to invest more, to *daven* another *tefilah* and another *tefilah*. Because even if it doesn't help today, it will surely help as time goes on.

Trait of Avraham, Trait of Yitzchak

We will start by stating that the trait *Yitzchak Avinu* represents is *yiras Shamayim*. This means making oneself as nothing before *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

The trait that *Avraham Avinu* represents is *chesed*. Avraham was excited his whole life over how the entire world is so full of *chesed* in a most wondrous way. The very existence of heaven and earth, with the infinite individual objects and beings they contain, which come in endless variations and hues, are all acts of *Hashem's* great *chesed*.

Avraham's main *avodas Hashem* consisted of resembling *Hashem* by doing *chesed* as expansively as possible. Thus, Avraham brought in

the three guests he saw, even though they appeared to him as lowly Arabs who worship the dust on their own feet. And he valiantly struggled to rescue the people of Sedom from destruction, although they were as evil as could be.

Chesed is a trait that builds and provides benefit, as it says: עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבָּנֶה - The world is built through *chesed. Tehillim* 89:3.

Therefore, the main thing Avraham involved himself with was bringing people to *teshuvah,* because this is the greatest *chesed* that can be done, and the greatest and most beneficial thing that can be built.

By contrast, Yitzchak's main way of looking at the world was to perceive *Hashem's* absolute rule over His world. Yitzchak saw how all the laws of nature, by means of which the world was established, stand on the foundation of *yiras Shamayim. As Chazal* say, *the pillars of the heavens were weak and loose until Hakadosh Baruch Hu raised His voice and rebuked them.*

This expresses the idea that the fundamental laws of nature, which seem so strong and fixed and unchanging to us, are that way only because of the word of *Hashem* that is within them. It is the force of *Hashem's* glory that makes everything stand strong and immutable.

The whole world is thus full of *Hashem's* Divinity. His power grants life to all. This is what Yitzchak focused on.

We see the difference between Avraham and Yitzchak in how they related to the *Akeidah.*

It says regarding the *Akeidah* that *Hashem* tested Avraham, *Hashem* put him through a trial, and the Commentators ask why it was considered only Avraham's *nisayon* not Yitzchak's *nisayon.*

The answer is we need to understand what a *nisayon* is. It is called a *nisayon* only when it goes against a person's nature. The *Akeidah*

went totally against Avraham's nature. Avraham was involved his whole life with building up the world. Now he was asked to destroy everything he built.

Furthermore, as a true man of *chesed*, Avraham spread to everyone the proper views and outlook. He taught people his whole life that *Hashem* doesn't want human sacrifice; that's pagan. Now he was commanded to destroy all the positive influence he had on the world over the course of 135 years, and subject himself to public ridicule and humiliation to boot. Everyone will say he is a liar and that he was peddling a false doctrine all along. - All this, and more, was the *nisayon* of Avraham.

But Yitzchak wasn't involved with all these things. He had a different approach. He just did *Hashem's* Will without thinking twice, and this included getting on the *mizbeach* and being offered as a sacrifice to G-d.

The *Akeidah* did not go against Yitzchak's nature. It was not a contradiction to his approach. On the contrary, this is exactly what he had been doing the whole time. He was always giving himself totally to *Hashem*. So for him this was not called a *nisayon*.

Chazal recount that Yishmael boasted to Yitzchak that he underwent *milah* when he was thirteen years old, while Yitzchak was a mere baby when he was circumcised, to which Yitzchak responded, "If *Hashem* would tell me to offer my entire body to Him, it would be nothing for me." - This is how Yitzchak lived.

Chazal say that *Avraham Avinu* underwent ten *nisyonos*. This means that he was tested in ways that went against all his various traits and qualities.

The number ten represents a totality. It contains and sums up all the traits of the world and of the human being. Avraham withstood all ten *nisyonos*.

Yitzchak didn't have ten different traits and qualities. He didn't have traits and qualities at all. He just did one thing: *Hashem's* Will. He didn't need to undergo ten *nisyonos*, or even one *nisayon*, because for him, there was no such thing as doing *Hashem's* Will against his nature. For him, it was his nature to do whatever *Hashem* wants.



Rav Avrohom Pam זצ"ל was once informed that an elderly *Yied* who frequented the **ישיבה** was very ill in hospital. Rav Pam was himself frail and elderly at the time and couldn't leave his house to visit the sick man. Instead, he wrote the man a postcard, wishing him a **רפואה שלימה** and apologising that he was unable to visit him in person.

When the man received the letter, he was ecstatic. He kept the postcard under his pillow and informed all the nurses and doctors that he had received best wishes by none other than Rav Pam! He lovingly showed each visitor the cherished postcard.

Soon after, the man unfortunately passed away. At his **לוייה**, his children related the tremendous love that their father had for Rav Pam and told over the excitement of his last few weeks at receiving the letter. At the *shiva*, the family showed all the visitors the coveted postcard and each child secretly hoped that he would be able to keep the memento that had been so very cherished by their father.

One of Rav Pam's **תלמידים** relayed to his *Rebbe* how excited the sick man and his family had been at receiving the postcard. Rav Pam smiled but his smile was quickly replaced by a pensive frown. The **תלמיד** was taken aback and asked the **גדול** if he had said something

wrong? Rav Pam responded, "Look at how this simple postcard changed the final weeks of this man's life. See how much it comforted his family after his death. It took me all of two minutes to write this postcard! Look at how much one can accomplish in two minutes!"

We have so many of these 'two minutes' in our lives, waiting for us to grab them and to use them wisely! Let us make sure to cherish the potential in each minute we have and do something special with them especially during these difficult times…



Angels Here & There by Michael Winner

In this week's parsha, **Rav Pincus** brings in a very interesting piece from the "**Meshech Chachma**."

When Hagar is sent from Avraham's house, she wanders in the desert, and her son Yishmoel falls ill and is close to death. The pasuk says, "An angel of Hashem called to Hagar from Heaven." Yet, in last week's parsha, when she ran away from Sarah and she was out in the desert, and an angel called out to her, there was no mention of "from Heaven."

Later in this week's parsha, when Avraham was about to sacrifice Yitzchok, an angel "from Heaven" calls out to him. So, what's going on? When does one get called "from Heaven" and when does one speak to the angel himself?

The Meshech Chachma explains that when Hagar was first in the desert, she was in pain. She had just run from the home of Sarah

and she was alone. However, she was STILL part of Avraham's home. And since she still had that connection, she was on the level to converse with the angel "one-on-one" in this world.

If so, how do we explain Avraham? Here, he is committing the ultimate "mitzvah." He is sacrificing his son on the command of Hashem. Is there anything more difficult than this for a man of mercy? And yet he is NOT on the level to speak to an angel in this world; the angel must remain in heaven?

The Mesech Chachma explains that in this case, Avraham was a Kohen Gadol, and as we know, was standing on the same spot where the Holy of Holies of the Beis HaMikdash would be built. We also know that when the Kohen Gadol goes into this special place on Yom Kippur, no one else, including angels, are allowed in. It's only Hashem and the Kohen Gadol. So too here, the holiness of such a place and such an act forced the angel to stay in Heaven. He would have appeared in this world, but the holiness of the situation would not allow it.

So, that leads us to one last question. Why did Hagar speak to an angel "in Heaven." And not one-on-one in this world?

Answers Rav Pincus, that Hagar WOULD have been able to see. However, we learn from the Gemara in Shabbos (12a) that Hashem's presence rests over those that are sick. So, in this case, between's Yishmoel's sickness and the pain that Hagar was in after being kicked out to wander the desert, no angel could be there, since Hashem Himself was there, just like in the case of Avraham.

To a disciple who complained of his financial troubles: "You speak of what you need, but you say nothing of what you are needed for." ~ R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi

Parsha Points to Ponder by R' Ozer Alport

Just as Avrohom was about to kill Yitzchok, an angel called out and commanded him not to harm his son. Avrohom then looked up and saw a ram caught in the bushes by its horns, and he proceeded to sacrifice it in lieu of Yitzchok (22:12-13). How old was the substitute ram?

The Mishnah says that the ram offered by Avrohom at the Akeidah in place of Yitzchok was created at dusk on Erev Shabbos at the end of the week of Creation. Avrohom was born in the year 1948 and was 100 when Yitzchok was born (21:5) in the year 2048. Since Yitzchok was 37 at the Akeidah (Bereishis Rabbah 56:8), the ram was 2085 years old at that time!

How was it able to live for so long? The Ichud B'Chidud cites a sefer called Metzudos Dovid, who points out that Rashi writes that not only did Chava eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, but she also fed the forbidden fruit to every animal, which caused them to be included in the decree of death that resulted from the sin.

The Gemora states that Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge during the tenth hour of the day on that initial Erev Shabbos. Because the ram was not created until later in the day, it never consumed the forbidden fruit. Thus, it was exempt from the punishment of death and was theoretically capable of living forever.

Similarly, the Midrash says that the donkey on which Moshiach will ride (Zechariah 9:9) is the child of Bilaam's talking donkey. How will Moshiach's donkey live for so long? Since the Mishnah records that Bilaam's donkey was also created at dusk, it never ate from the Tree of Knowledge, in which case it and its progeny can live forever.

"The greatest gift of giving is the opportunity to give."

Chizuk - Inspiration

Moshe Minzberg was preparing for his bar mitzvah in 1957 and in honor of the upcoming occasion, a visit was scheduled with the **Brisker Rov, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik ZT"L** (the "Rov") at his home in Yerushalayim. Moshe was accompanied by his father and his Zaidey. Moshe's father turned to the Rov and said, "May Moshe tell the Rov his Bar Mitzvah P'shetel (speech)?" his father asked.

The Rov, who was elderly and not in good health, responded that he did not have the strength to hear all of the P'shetel but would relish the opportunity to hear a portion of it. Moshe proceeded to say his P'shetel. The Rov interjected several times, asking the young Bar Mitzvah boy questions, and was impressed with his answers. Toward the end of the P'shetel, the Rov suddenly turned white and covered his ears. "Stop! Stop!" said the Rov.

Moshe didn't know what to make of the Rav's sudden reaction. Had he said something wrong? He turned to his father and Zaide for a possible explanation, but they were just as puzzled as he was.

The Rov explained, "Ich vill nisht zein kein 'Dver Shekarim (Tehillim 101:7)'" - I do not want to be considered "One Who Speaks Falsehood." I said that I would not listen to the entire P'shetel, but only to a portion of it, and I can tell that we are coming to the end of the P'shetel so I needed to stop you.

The Rov's adherence to Emes, to the purest truth, had triggered his sudden reaction. How could he continue listening to the end of the P'shetel if he had said minutes before that he would only listen to a portion of it?

Every word that emerged from the Rov's mouth had to be truthful.

"An angel of G-d called to him...And he said: 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him.'" The order to bring Yitzchak as a burnt offering came directly from Hashem.

Q: Why did the stop-order come from an angel rather than from Hashem?

A: A Jew should never harm another Jew without a direct command from Hashem. To help another Jew, however, one needs no command. Therefore, to let Yitzchak live, the instruction of an angel sufficed.





The sorts of **tidbits**

my father, R' Meir Zlotowitz z"l, made sure his family was up to date on
from the mundane, to the profound, to the 'thanks for reminding me!'

For the Shabbos Table

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל - ***"They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' [Avraham] said, 'She is in the tent'"*** (18:9)

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 87a) explains that the Malachim knew of Sarah's whereabouts; yet they inquired in order to endear her to her husband by bringing attention to her excellence in the middah of Tznius. - Rashi adds that in this attribute Sarah was a Tz'nuah Yoser Meichavroseha, that her trait was extraordinary amongst her peers.

Rav Elya Baruch Finkel zt"l explains that even beyond complimenting a trait of Sarah's, the Malachim highlighted a unique characteristic that she possessed. One can continually strengthen a relationship with others by focusing on their unique attributes and abilities. This leads to genuine admiration and appreciation.

Rabbi Zlotowitz z"l would point out that we are discussing two of the greatest people in history, Avraham and Sarah, who at this point were married for many, many years. Yet still, a Malach sought to compliment her to her husband and this occurrence is noted in the Torah. How much more careful and proactive must spouses be nowadays in fostering mutual endearment!

"In judging yourself use your mind, in judging others, use your heart."

Parsha Pearls

וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי בְנִי ***And Yitzchak spoke to Avraham his father, and he said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son.***" (Bereishis 22:7)

Seforim tell us that when something appears in the Torah for the first time, it has great significance, because we learn its true meaning and definition. "Here I am, my son" are the first words recorded in the Torah where Avraham speaks to Yitzchak.

In fact, these are the first words in the Torah where a Jewish father speaks to his son! Hence, these words carry a fundamental lesson in them - they teach a person how he should view his role as a father in relation to his child:

It is a role of הִנֵּנִי בְנִי -" ***Here I am, my son***" - ***"I am here for you, always. I am always ready and prepared to give to you what you need, because you are my precious, dear son.***"

"The previous generations would close their eyes to see the Ribbono Shel Olam. Today, in order to see the Ribbono Shel Olam, a person needs to open their eyes.

Once their eyes are open, it is impossible not to see the wonders of Hashem." ~ R' Chaim Kanievsky in the name of the Chazon Ish.

The Levush writes that on Shabbos we can attain higher levels of wisdom as it is a day especially designated for this purpose. Therefore, we should seek ways to increase the amount of Torah that we discuss on this holy day.

The Origin of Terrorism – Rabbi Daniel Glatstein



וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב לָהּ מִנֶּגֶד הַרְחֵק כִּמְטַחֲוֵי קֶשֶׁת כִּי אָמְרָה אַל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב מִנֶּגֶד וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלָהּ וַתֵּבְךְּ 'And she went and sat down from afar, at about the distance of two bowshots, for she said, "Let me not see the child's death." And she sat from afar, and she raised her voice and wept.' (Beraishis 21:16)

When Yishmael was dying of thirst, Hagar, his mother cast him aside. The pasuk says הַרְחֵק כִּמְטַחֲוֵי קֶשֶׁת - she separated herself the distance of two bow (arrow) shots. Why? – Because she couldn't bear to see the suffering and death of her child.

So why is the Torah so specific with the distance? Why didn't she just distance herself far enough to not hear or see his suffering?

The Bartenurah says something astounding:

הרב עובדיה מברטנורא על התורה [ספר עמר נקא]

כמטחוי קשת כשתי טיחות מקשין העולם למה היתה צריכה להרחיק כשתי טיחות אם לא נתרחקה אלא על שאמרה אל אראה במות הילד. ומתרצין לפי שישמעאל היה רובה קשת ושמא מפני כובד החולי יצא מדעתו ויזרוק בה חץ לפיכך לא היה די לה להרחיק טיחה אחת ונתרחקה כשתי טיחות

He says that Hagar was afraid that in Yishmael's death throes, he might lose all sense of rational, and in a moment of insanity, he might conclude that once he is dying, he might as well take someone else with him – even his own mother! This is the way of the Yishmaelim! When they go down, they will take others with them! - This is possibly the origin of the concept of suicide bombers! –

Therefore, Yishmael's own mother was afraid of her own son. Therefore, to ensure that he couldn't harm her with his bow and arrow, she moved away this specific distance which was certainly out of his range!

Giving without Taking

When you do acts of kindness for people, show them that you personally derive pleasure from their acceptance of what you are giving. Do not boast or act in a conceited manner because you are helping someone.

We find in the Torah that Avraham conveyed to his guests that they were giving him a gift by consenting to be his guests. ~ Ralbag



וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סְדֹמָה בָּעֶרֶב – *'The two angels came to Sodom at evening.' (19:1)*

Here they are called angels, whereas earlier they were termed men?

Earlier, when the Divine Presence was above them, they were men; but as soon as the Divine Presence departed from them, they assumed the form of angels.

Rabbi Levi said: To Abraham, whose spiritual strength was great, they looked like men; but to Lot they appeared as angels, because his strength was feeble.

Rabbi Chunia said: Before they performed their mission they were called men; having performed their mission, they assumed the style of angels. ~ (**Midrash Rabbah**)

כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו - *'For I know him . . .' (18:19)*

Said the divine attribute of *chesed* (love): "As long as Abraham was around, there was nothing for me to do, for he did my work in my stead." ~ (**Sefer HaBahir**)

וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ - *'He bound Isaac his son.' (22:9)*

Can one bind a man thirty-seven years old without his consent?

But when Abraham came to slaughter his son Isaac, Isaac said to him: "Father, I am a young man, and I am afraid that my body may tremble through fear of the knife and I will grieve you, and then the slaughter may be rendered unfit and this will not count as a real sacrifice; therefore bind me very firmly." ~ (**Midrash Rabbah**)

"The concept of bitachon (that Hashem will provide for all the needs of one who truly trusts and relies on Him) is not dependent on merit, for even if he is a person who does not act properly, since he strengthened his bitachon in Hashem, the power of bitachon protects him, and Hashem will act kindly towards him." ~ Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, Sefer Shem Olam 2:8

"There is nothing that awakens the heart as much as songs do." ~ The Chinuch – mitzvah 384.

Fascinating INSIGHTS



Soldiers' Spare Time

R' Yissachar Dov of Belz was once in Vienna for health reasons when he became enchanted by the sound of someone learning gemara. Curious, he went to see who it was and was deeply moved by what he found. There, in military uniform, was a Jewish soldier in his uniform using his brief time off from duty to immerse himself in Torah learning.

The Rebbe remarked, "This Jew is holding back the redemption!" He explained that naturally a soldier on leave would seek rest or entertainment. But this soldier chose to learn gemara, bringing Hashem immeasurable joy.

"Imagine the pleasure this gives to Hashem. A pleasure so great that it may delay the redemption, because when Moshiach comes, Hashem will miss this precious joy."

This story remains as relevant today as ever, reminding us of the countless IDF soldiers in Gaza, Lebanon and elsewhere who devote their rare free moments to Torah study. - Imagine the immense pride and pleasure Hashem must feel!



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● How was Hashem's appearing to Avrohom here different from other occasions?

וַיֵּרָ֤א אֵלָיו֙ ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵ֣י מַמְרֵ֔א וְה֥וּא יֹשֵׁ֖ב פֶּ֣תַח־הָאֹ֑הֶל כְּחֹ֖ם הַיּֽוֹם (18,1) "***And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, and he was sitting in the entrance of the tent when the day was hot***."

The commentaries have explained that the difference between the prophecy of Moshe and the other prophets is that the other prophets needed preparation in order to receive their prophecy, and if they did not prepare themselves they did not merit the prophecy. But Moshe did not need preparation for prophecy, and Hashem spoke to him anytime. We see this from the matter of Miriam and Aharon, when Hashem called to them suddenly and demonstrated to them that they were not able to receive the prophecy suddenly like Moshe.

The same was true with Avrohom. Until now Hashem had not appeared to Avrohom except when Avrohom had prepared himself to receive the prophecy, and since he established the morning prayer we see that it was Avrohom's way to prepare himself in the morning. But in the middle of the day he did not prepare himself for this. But now, he was unexpectedly honoured that Hashem appeared to him suddenly without preparation.

This is the meaning of the posuk: "and Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent when the day was hot", and he had not prepared himself for this because it was when the day was hot, and the time of the morning prayers had passed. Therefore, it did not occur to him now that he would see the Divine Presence. But Hashem suddenly appeared to

him to honour him after the circumcision, or in order to visit the sick. In fact, this is why Rashi explained that it was to visit the sick, and therefore it was Hashem's initiative, and so it was not relevant that Avrohom should prepare himself.

● **Why does it repeat the phrase "he saw"?**

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָרְצָה (18,2) "***And he lifted his eyes and saw…and he saw, and he ran to meet them from the entrance of the tent, and he prostrated himself to the ground.***"

Chazal have already raised the question why it repeats the phrase "he saw", see what Rashi writes on this. But it seems to me that we can explain it in two ways. The first is according to Chazal who taught that walking with long strides removes one five hundredth of one's eyesight, but to run for the sake of a mitzvah is permitted. From this it is clear that if is for a mitzvah it does not do damage, and impair the eyesight, because "emissaries of a mitzvah will not get hurt".

This is why it repeats the phrase "he saw", so that you will not think that since he ran there must have been some damage to his eyes, and he would have not been able to see as well as before. Rather, since Avrohom's intention was to perform a mitzvah, his eyesight was not damaged at all, because one who keeps a mitzvah will know no evil. Therefore, it says here "and he saw and he ran to meet them" - even though he ran he saw as well as before, and his running did not harm his eyesight.

Another way to explain it is that it is normal behaviour to walk with one's eyes cast downward in order not to trip on something. Granted if a person walks slowly it is not necessary to look downwards, because even if he encounters a stone he will not be harmed since

he is walking slowly. But if he is running then he should look down and not up. This is also clear from Rashi in the gemora Shabbos.

Therefore, the posuk wanted to relate that the great righteousness of Avrohom, that he was so conscientious in his performance of mitzvos that he was not concerned about himself at all, and even when he ran he did not look downwards, but rather he continued looking at the wayfarers as before, because he was worried that if he would look down perhaps they would change direction and he would not know where they went. Therefore he kept his eyes solely on them to keep track of them in order to run and meet them, and did worry about hurting himself at all. Thus is what the posuk says "and he saw, and he ran to meet them", that even whilst he was running, he saw only them in order not to lose them, and from this we can see the great righteousness of Avrohom.

● **Why did Avrohom give preference to taking care of the guests?**

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָרְצָה (18,2) "***And he lifted his eyes and saw…and he saw, and he ran to meet them from the entrance of the tent, and he prostrated himself to the ground***."

The Midrash here comments: "and he saw and he ran to meet them" - he saw the Shechinah, he saw the angels. The meaning of this Midrash is not at all clear. But we can explain it according to that which I explained elsewhere, that the reason Chazal taught that taking care of guests takes precedence over welcoming the Shechinah, is that since the guests have Tzelem Elokim , therefore this is also like welcoming the Shechinah. Therefore, taking care of guests is both welcoming the Shechinah and welcoming guests.

However, this is true of a guest who has Tzelem Elokim, but with a wicked person who has had the Tzelem Elokim removed from him

because he has become corrupted by sin this reason is not applicable. We are not experts to know who has Tzelem Elokim or not, but if Avrohom Avinu was able to see the Shechinah, then all the more so he was able to discern who has Tzelem Elokim, especially when the Shechinah was present to make a comparison with.

And therefore "he saw the Shechinah and he saw the guests" whether they had a G-dly appearance. This is what the posuk is saying, that after "he saw" that they were similar, then "he ran to meet them", to do two things at one time - welcoming the Shechinah and the mitzvah to take care of guests.

● Why was Sarah in Avrohom's tent?

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל (18,9) "***And they said to him: Where is Sarah, your wife. And he said: Behold, in the tent*** (**באהל**)."

The word "behold" seems to be superfluous, since it should have been sufficient to simply say "in the tent".

But it seems to me that it was not normal for Sarah to be in Avrohom's tent because she had her own tent. Therefore, when it says earlier that "Avrohom hastened to the tent of Sarah (**האהלה של שרה**)", the word for tent is written with a letter **ה** at the end - a feminine ending, but in our posuk which is referring to Avrohom's tent it is written without this ending.

But right now, because Hashem wanted Sarah to hear the announcement from the mouth of the angel, He caused her to be brought into the tent of Avrohom. Thus Avrohom said "Behold, in the tent" - Behold! Unusually for her she is right now in my tent!

Working on our Middos

A certain Talmid Chacham once approached the **Steipler Gaon, zt"l**, and asked if he could Daven for his son, whose foot had become swollen. This boy had received an injury while he was on the way to do a Mitzvah, and it had become worse and he was in much pain.

The Steipler's reply surprised him. He said, "If your son got wounded while on the way to do a Mitzvah, then I am jealous of him. Hashem should help him recover! But you should know that it is a huge Zechus to be wounded on the way to do a Mitzvah, or while one is actually performing a Mitzvah.

We find in this in the Gemara in Chulin (7a), where we see that splitting one's toe by doing a Mitzvah brings forgiveness as if he offered a Korban Olah.

The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l, would go further and say that if one wounded his entire foot, this is an even greater Zechus. Your son's merit is even greater than one who brings a Korban!"

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages



Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, was often inspired during sunrise to express his great joy at the immense benefits that we get from sunshine. He would joyfully say, "How fortunate we all are! How thankful we must be to Hashem our Creator, for His infinite kindness in giving us such wonderful Brachos!"

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Kever Rochel

With the yartzheit of Rochel Imeinu approaching, let's share some insights and stories related to her. Kever Rochel is a special place of tefilla as the pasuk (Yirmiya 31:14) tells us that she cries for her children— **רחל מבכה על בניה** - **The Vilna Gaon** teaches that in times of pain the ultimate place for Jews to daven is at Kever Rochel.

When one cries, tears (**דמעה**) stream forth. **דמעה** has a gematria of 119. **דמעה** two times (because she had many tears and the minimum plural is two) yields the number 238. What totals 238? None other than the numerical value of **רחל**.

Why is she buried in Beis Lechem, and not Chevron? Because Hashem commanded Yaakov to bury her there by the roadside so that she could help the Jewish people when Nevuzaradan would lead the Jews into captivity after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. When the Jews were passing along the road to Beis Lechem, tormented and exhausted, Rochel's soul came to her grave and cried, begging for Hashem's mercy upon them. Hashem heard her plea.

The pasuk says **רחל מבכה על בניה** -It doesn't say **רחל בוכה**, 'Rochel is weeping [for her children]' rather **רחל מבכה**. This can be understood to mean "Rochel is bringing others to tears." - You can go there and pour out your heart!

"Life is fleeting, but embracing challenges with trust in Hashem, turns moments into eternal treasures." ~ **ספר לישועתך קויתי ה'**

Bullfighting and Wrestling



People often seek outlets by attending various events. Sometimes, even if there seems to be no explicit prohibition against attending these events, something about them just doesn't feel right.

R' Ovadia Yosef was asked if it was permitted from a *halachic* standpoint to go to a stadium to watch bullfighting. He unequivocally answered that this is completely against the ethos of the Torah.

He explained that bullfighting is part of the culture of sinners and cruel people, which is not in the portion of those who are descendants of Yaakov. As the gemara (Yevamos 79a) says there are three identifying marks of a Jew: merciful, bashful and they do acts of kindness… In bullfighting, the bull is starved and tortured before entering the arena and after they incite him… and we are taught that it is forbidden for a person to eat before he gives food to his animal. - One who enters a stadium to watch bullfighting and pays the entrance fee is a friend to a destructive person and is assisting those who commit transgressions…To go where people enjoy themselves on the cruelty of pain of animals implants that trait in the people who enjoy it and they destroy their souls. It is a mitzvah to promulgate not to attend such events.

Moving onto wrestling, a camp counselor once asked R' Mordechai Finkelman if he could go to a nearby wrestling match. R' Finkelman

responded with a question: "You want to watch people hurt each other?" The counselor admitted he did.

Rabbi Finkelman continued, "I've never been to a wrestling match, but I'm sure the crowd cheers and shouts things like, 'Hit him again!' Am I right?" The counselor nodded.

Rabbi Finkelman then said, "That's barbaric. A Jew should feel pain when someone else is hurt."

The Weekly Vort



The Mashgiach of Baranovich

◣ The students of the Baranovich Yeshiva in Poland would mention his name with awe and trepidation. They spoke of his *Ge'onus* in Torah, his sterling character traits, his deep humility. But above all, they spoke of his golden heart. **R' Yisroel Yakov Lubchansky**, the revered, beloved and holy Mashgiach of the Baranovich Yeshiva, was goodness itself. R' Yisroel Yakov once defined the word "good" as one who can forgive another who sinned against him and caused him to suffer; one who always feels unconditional love, friendship, peace and acts with truth towards others; and one who does not complain about his bitter fate, silently bearing the burden of his personal troubles. R' Yisroel Yakov was unknowingly characterizing himself. His fiery faith and efforts in character self-improvement, stirred his students to strive for greater heights. He lived in holiness and died in holiness when he was martyred by the Nazis y"s.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov was born in 1872 to his father, R' Chaim Leib, in a village near Baranovich. His father, the first Rav of Baranovich, was widely acclaimed as a *Gaon, tzaddik,* and one who deeply loved his fellow Jews. His parents' home was a hospitable center for wayfarers; they never sat down to a meal without at least one guest. Their son, Yisroel Yakov, was nurtured in this holy environment, emulating their worthy ways.

◣ As a young child, his talents and *middos* were already discernible. R' Yisroel Yakov learned in a number of yeshivos, where he amazed his fellow students and Rebbeim with his sharpness of mind and breadth of knowledge. He gained fame as a *tzaddik* and a man of *mussar*. He would exult in performing *tzedakah* and *chessed*. He would take pains never to hurt another person, holding even young children in high esteem. He would greet each person with genuine joy and happiness. He was a self-made *mentsh* of the highest caliber.

◣ When R' Yisroel Yakov reached marriageable age, the Alter of Novardok, R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz, chose him as a son-in-law. He was greatly influenced by the great *mussar* personality that was the Alter. During WWI, R' Yisroel Yakov assisted the Alter in running the Novardok Yeshiva in Charkov, Russia.

◣ When his father passed away, R' Yisroel Yakov was appointed Rav of Baranovich. He cared not only for the spiritual welfare of his kehillah, but for their physical well-being as well. He would often arise in the middle of the night to clandestinely draw water with which to fill the basin in the *Beis Medrash*.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov did not remain in his position as Rav for very long. As the Novardoker par excellence, he could only achieve the Novardoker goal of "Let your wellsprings flow outward" (Mishlei 5:16) within a yeshiva setting. Thus he became the Mashgiach of the Yeshiva Ohel Torah of Baranovich, headed by R' Elchonon Wasserman. There he deeply influenced and guided thousands of *talmidim*. But even as Mashgiach, he continued to care for the needs

of the people in the city. Every Erev Shabbos, right before candle lighting time, he would walk through the market place and streets, reminding the storekeepers to close in observance of the oncoming Shabbos. When the proprietors saw R' Yisroel Yakov approaching, they would immediately lock up their shops. Once, R' Yisroel Yakov was informed that one of the storeowners was planning to keep open his shop on Shabbos. He decided to have a heart-to-heart talk with this storeowner. But before he did so, R' Yisroel Yakov stood in front of the *Aron Kodesh*, crying for half an hour that his words find favor in the storekeeper's heart. He sighed and cried, until a number of people gathered around him, and followed as he walked towards the "delinquent" store. The impression of such a great crowd approaching startled the storekeeper so much, that he handed over the store keys to R' Yisroel Yakov.

◣ As Mashgiach, R' Yisroel Yakov provided for the needs of all students – especially the newly arrived ones. Only when he had seen to all the student's physical needs, would he speak to him of matters of *mussar* and fear of Hashem. His burning love for each of his students radiated into their hearts, thus motivating them to make every effort to find pleasure in his eyes through their behavior and diligence in Torah.

◣ Though his head reached the very heavens in his levels of Torah, *mussar* and *yiras Hashem*, he humbly regarded himself as a simple person. He often "announced" that he was not to be regarded as a *talmid chochom*. Once during a meal, a radish was opened and found to be rotten and wormy. R' Yisroel Yakov stood up, saying, "This radish is just like me. Everyone thinks I am a *tzaddik* while deep inside I am like that rotten radish."

◣ At the *Chanukas HaBayis* of the Yeshiva of Kletzk, R' Yisroel Yakov suddenly fell to the floor and began rolling near the feet of the *Gedolim* who had come to join in the *simcha*. He was fulfilling –

literally – the words of Pirkei Avos, which state, "and you shall cling to the dust of their feet."

◣ R' Elchonon Wasserman would say, "R' Yisroel Yakov has a *ta'avah* (a passion) for *mitzvos*!" Indeed, he passionately pursued any *mitzvah* opportunity and performed them with utter perfection. He honored his mother in an exceptional manner, never failing to pay her a daily visit. He would open the door, bow as if to a queen, and say "Good morning, Momma." If she would simply say, "sit down," R' Yisroel Yakov would knock over everything, making a beeline to the chair. He would then sit for hours, considering every moment of sitting part of the *mitzvah*.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov and his Rebbitzen remained childless. They raised his sister's young children, Vichna and Dovid Eisen, when they became doubly orphaned. Vichna grew to become Rebbitzen Vichna Kaplan, the outstanding disciple of the founder of the Bais Yakov movement, Sara Schenirer. Rebbitzen Kaplan, in turn, became the architect of Bais Yakov in America. When she spent time teaching in Brisk, prior to her marriage, the Brisker Rav, R' Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, was lavish in his praise of her love of Torah and *yiras Shomayim*. He would say that Rebbitzen Kaplan had a great advantage in that she was raised and educated in the home of her uncle, R' Yisroel Yakov, and that she had absorbed much Torah, *yiras Shomayim*, and exemplary *middos* from him, which she drew on to educate her students. Thus, R' Yisroel Yakov's influence continues to shape generations of Bais Yakov students and the families they build.

◣ Breaking one's nature – *shviras ha'middos* – was his favorite theme. He spent his lifetime breaking his in-born nature of anger. He was always biting his lips, for his father once told him, "When you get angry, bite your lips!" Thus, he simultaneously controlled his anger and fulfilled the *mitzvah* of honoring one's father. As the quintessential *Baal Mussar*, R' Yisroel Yakov knew that the antidote

for anger is humility and kindness. He practiced these traits gloriously throughout his entire life.

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov found unique ways to practice humility and kindness. While serving as Rav, he would walk the few miles to the railroad station to help people carry their packages to town, as they could not afford to hire a horse and buggy. Local people refused his help, but strangers, not realizing that a Torah giant was their volunteer porter, gladly accepted his offer. While walking with them to town, R' Yisroel Yakov would use the opportunity to strengthen their faith and trust in Hashem.

◣ It was the duty of the *shammash* of Baranovich to light the shul's oven early every morning. The *shammash*, slack in his duties, tended to rely on the overnight beggars to keep the oven burning. If there weren't any beggars, however, the shul would remain freezing, and complaints would abound. Soon, the oven was found burning hot every morning. No one suspected that R' Yisroel Yakov was doing the job! One morning, the *shammash* walked in as R' Yisroel Yakov's head was in the oven, blowing to try and ignite the wet firewood. Thinking he was a beggar, the *shammash* gave R' Yisroel Yakov a friendly kick. Knowing how ashamed the *shammash* would feel if he knew it was him, R' Yisroel Yakov stuck his head deeper into the oven. The smoke was burning his eyes and choking his lungs – but he would not remove his head until the *shammash* walked away. By the time he escaped from the shul, half of his beard had burned off!

◣ **R' Yisroel Yakov Lubchansky** was regarded as one of the key figures in the entire yeshiva world in the pre-WWII generation. He was so highly revered in the Novardok Yeshiva, that his appearance at their annual assembly, held in Bialystok on the Alter of Novardok's *yahrzeit*, was regarded as a special event.

◣ His love for the yeshiva's students was boundless. As lofty as R' Yisroel Yakov was, he regarded each of his much younger students as a great person. Dozens of students found food and shelter each

day in his home, all at R' Yisroel Yakov's personal expense. No one in need of attention escaped his sensitive and caring eyes. Once, a shy youngster entered his home, as 15 other students sat eating at the table. R' Yisroel Yakov, noticing the young boy slinking away to the corner, approached him with a water-filled mug and soothingly said, "Go and wash for the meal."

◣ His students will never forget R' Yisroel Yakov walking "long miles" up and down the aisles of the Baranovich Yeshiva for hours, biting his lips. The severity of a student's misconduct could be determined by the intensity of the Mashigiach's lip-biting during the rebuke.

◣ A person's dignity was priceless to him. He would avoid the slightest disrespect even to the youngest student. R' Yisroel Yakov would ask forgiveness from a student, in public, if he felt he had overreacted to some misconduct.

◣ Despite his extreme modesty, R' Yisroel Yakov showed firm resolution when upholding the Torah's honor. At the dedication of a new yeshivah building, R' Yisroel Yakov was called upon to speak immediately after a local Jewish activist, who had once been principal of the secular Jewish school. R' Yisroel Yakov refused to speak, saying, "At least some line of demarcation should have been drawn. They should first call upon a flour miller from the market, and then have me speak."

◣ R' Yisroel Yakov was once informed that a youth affair involving immodest activities was being planned to raise a large sum for Linas Hatzedek, the organization that benefited the sick. At the time, a respected Jewish lay leader, R' Eliyahu Shmuel Zackheim, had passed away. When eulogizing him at the *levayah*, which the majority of the community attended, R' Yisroel Yakov cried out, "Until now the *yetzer hara* found work for itself in Paris or in other similar places. Now, it seeks to attach itself to entities of holiness, such as the Linas Hatzedek (of Baranovich), and to render it a '*mitzvah* performed by transgression.'" His words created a furor, and the

affair was canceled. On the following Shabbos, he exhorted the townspeople to donate generously to the Linas Hatzedek and thereby negate the necessity of raising funds by such unworthy means.

◣ As he and his wife were childless, one could see the extra effort R' Yisroel Yakov would make to show his wife respect and honor. Once, the Rebbitzen put kerosene, instead of cooking oil, into the Shabbos *cholent*. The ever-present students at the table excused themselves politely, in various ways, for not eating. R' Yisroel Yakov ate his entire portion, purposely praising the *cholent*, and asking for seconds and thirds. By then, the Rebbitzen discovered her mistake, and grabbing the plate away from him, said, "Why are you all of a sudden so hungry for *cholent*? I have yet something else to serve in honor of the Shabbos!" Not a word was mentioned about the terrible mistake.

◣ Sometimes R' Yisroel Yakov would enter the *beis medrash* in the middle of the night, open the *Aron Kodesh*, and thrust his head inside, breaking into sobbing. He would be *davening* for a student who did not yet possess a burning desire for Torah study, or one who was excessively distracted by his inclinations.

◣ While he served as Rav in Baranovich, R' Yisroel Yakov delivered public addresses. Once, while davening *mincha* just prior to one such address, a brilliant idea flashed across his mind. He longed to incorporate this thought into his lecture. However, while still in Novardok, he had resolved to discard any idea that occurred to him during davening, especially during *Shemone Esrei*. He thus omitted the new idea, but nevertheless felt his mind opening up as other new and splendid ideas gushed forth. He delivered one of the best discourses of his life.

◣ His self-effacement in the presence of R' Elchonon Wasserman was a Torah lesson in itself. When R' Elchonon asked him to learn together *b'chavrusa*, R' Yisroel Yakov was so overawed that he sat

silently the entire time. R' Elchonon, wanting an active "give and take" learning session, terminated their *chavrusa* arrangement. R' Yisroel would humbly remark that he had been "fired" by R' Elchonon. The reverence of R' Elchonon for R' Yisroel Yakov was mutual. When R' Yisroel Yakov was dancing at the *sheva brachos* of R' Chaim Shmuelvitz (Rosh Yeshiva of Mir and a grandson of the Alter of Novardok), R' Elchonon bent down and kissed the corner of R' Yisroel Yakov's frock coat.

◣ At the outbreak of WWII, R' Yisroel Yakov escaped with the yeshiva students to Vilna, and subsequently to other smaller towns. Heroically, he continued to shoulder the burden of maintaining the yeshiva. When he learned that the communists were searching for him, he secretly fled to Kovno. There, in the Kovno ghetto, with his steadfast faith and lofty personality, he strengthened and encouraged the suffering people. Incredibly, his face radiated joy and gladness. When asked why he seemed so happy, he replied, "I am by nature a coward, but why should someone else suffer because of me? So, I try to suppress my fears and look cheerful so as not to demoralize others." He continued to exhibit a cheerful appearance until the very day he was executed by the Nazis y"s.

◣ The last time his student, Reb Chaim Shapiro, saw him was in Slobodka. Reb Chaim had escaped from Vilna, and on route to his home in Lomza, had stopped in Slobodka to rest. He was surprised to find the *beis medrash* empty, but nevertheless, sat down there to rest. Suddenly he heard someone calling to him from the shadows, warning him to escape as the communists would come to arrest anyone they found in the *beis medrash*. Reb Chaim quickly ran out into the street. From a distance, he saw someone walking alongside the outside of the Slobodka Yeshiva. The way he was walking looked unmistakably familiar. Yes – it was R' Yisroel Yakov! How could he forget his unique way of walking; he had watched him walk those "long miles" down the aisles of the yeshiva as he bit his lips! He ran over and found his beloved Mashgiach wearing a plain leather cap,

instead of his usual rabbinic black hat, obviously in disguise to avoid arrest. When R' Yisroel Yakov saw his beloved student, unchecked tears rolled copiously into his beard. He bit his lips so strongly that his lips bled. With little time to exchange words due to the ever-present danger, he asked Reb Chaim where he was headed. When Reb Chaim relayed that he was escaping to his home, R' Yisroel Yakov blessed him, "Run quickly! Run *l'chaim u'l'shalom*!" Reb Chaim quickly ran away. He felt strongly that it had been the Mashgiach who, in his typical fatherly way, had warned him to escape from the *beis medrash;* and it was the Mashgiach's heartfelt *brocha* that helped him to survive the subsequent grueling four years of war. It was the last time he ever saw his beloved Mashgiach.

During the second world war when Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky was incarcerated in the ghetto, his face constantly shined with joy. Wherever he went, he spread words of encouragement and hope. Rabbi Ephraim Oshry asked him how he could be so happy when the situation was so grim. Rabbi Lubchansky replied, "By nature I am easily frightened. Why should others have to suffer from my fears? I exert myself to remove any signs of fear so I should not cause anyone else to become afraid." ~ Hameoros Hagedolim

(Olomeinu, The Torah World, Reb Elchonon, The Torah Profile) *R' Yisroel Yakov ben R' Chaim Leib Lubchansky ztk"l was killed Al Kiddush Hashem in 1941. Hashem yinkom damo.*

"The importance of a prayer does not depend on the number of words uttered to invoke Hashem, but rather on the quality of the cry of the heart thrown towards Hashem." ~ R' Yechazkel Levenstein.

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Tales of Tzadikim - The Curse of Gold

לְזַרְעֲךָ֖ אֶתֵּ֑ן אֶת־הָאָ֣רֶץ הַזֹּ֔את ***"To your seed will I give this land"*** (12:7)



The following story was told by R' Yosef Chaim of Bavel, better known as the **Ben Ish Chai**: Yechezkel was a woodchopper. His father and grandfather before him had been woodchoppers and most probably his children would be woodchoppers. It was not easy work. Yechezkel had to rise early each morning and go to the forest. Here he would chop wood all morning. When the sun was overhead, he would tie up the wood into convenient bundles and take them to town to sell for firewood. Whatever he earned that day went to feed his wife and children. Nothing remained for a rainy day or for a better future.

One day, in the heat of summer, he went to the forest as usual to chop his daily amount of firewood. Even there it was scorching. Each time he lifted his axe it became increasingly difficult. Sweat poured down his back. By midday he was completely exhausted. "Is it the heat or am I getting old? Will things never change? Will life always be so difficult?" he asked himself.

He bent over to tie the sticks together. He was about to lift them to his back and begin walking home when he changed his mind. "It is much too hot to walk in the blazing sun. If I take a nap, under this tree, I will be able to walk twice as fast when I get up, for I will be refreshed."

He looked at the bundles of wood bitterly. They symbolized his fate. "Why am I such an unlucky man?" he thought. "Why must I work ceaselessly and not see any blessing in my labor? What do I have from life. A few limp vegetables at the end of the day to eat with a dry crust of bread?! Will I never be able to afford meat at my table? Never? Will I never know the taste of an apple, an orange, a banana? Why must I struggle so hard and get so little in return? It is not fair! Will I never feel the shiny hardness of a gold coin, only of small copper pennies? Why, Hashem? Tell me, why?"

No one was there to see, so he let his tears fall. Exhausted by work and tears, he leaned back against a tree trunk and fell asleep. He slept and had a dream. In his dream a handsome young lad appeared before him, holding a golden scepter in his hand. He was fair, with a noble forehead and beautiful eyes. When he smiled, it seemed like the sun was shining forth in full luster.

The youth spoke: "Hashem has heard your sigh of woe and has sent me to grant any one wish that you make..." The poor woodchopper did not even hesitate. He blurted out: "I want everything that I touch to turn to gold!" "Very well, so be it!" said the youth. He touched the woodchopper with his golden scepter and then disappeared.

The man realized that this had been a heavenly angel sent to help him. He was overjoyed. No longer would he and his family have to starve. They would be rich, if everything that he touched turned to gold.

To test his new powers, he touched a log from his bundle of firewood. And lo! It turned to pure gold. A gold log! "How wonderful!" the man exulted. "Now I need not even be a woodchopper. I can live a life of leisure! Let others do this lowly job. I am finished for life! I will build myself a mansion, hire servants and wear silk clothing just like the best of the nobility! All I need to do if I want money is to touch a stone, a stick, a clod of earth — and it will turn to gold!

Who can compare to me? I will be the richest person in the entire land! Will there be any king to compare with me in riches?!"

He got up and stretched, feeling refreshed after his nap. He reached over to take a sip from his water canteen, for it was hot. But as soon as he touched it, it turned to gold! How wonderful! He tipped it to his lips to drink. But no water came out! What had happened? The water had touched his lips and turned to gold. He turned to his knapsack to take out some bread but that, too, turned to gold.

Suddenly he realized how foolish he had been. He had been so eager for riches that he had forgotten to what ridiculous lengths one would go and what damage a love for gold could bring.

"What a fool I have been! What have I done? I will starve to death. Everything I touch will turn to gold and I will not be able to eat or drink anything! I have sold my soul for gold! But of what use will it be to me if I die of starvation? How will I enjoy my fortune? How much better it was when I labored for my daily bread — and was able to enjoy it!"

The man burst out crying — and woke up. - It had all been a dream He looked all around him, at his bundle of firewood, at his knapsack and his canteen. Everything was just as he had left it! Nothing had changed. Nothing had turned to gold. How thankful he was! - "It was all a dream. But it was meant to teach me a deep lesson. I must learn to be satisfied with my lot, to be grateful that I have work that feeds me and my family. I must no longer envy those with riches, for they are not necessarily any happier than I!"

"Vos vilst du fuhn di kinder? What do you want from the children?" ~ Rav Mattisyahu Salomon.

Tales of Tzadikim - The Father is Also Cured

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם "***And he saw and lo! there were three men standing by him. And he saw and he ran towards them.***" (18:2)

Two infants had been born on the same day in Brody and both were to be circumcised on the eighth day. The first bris took place immediately after the early dawn prayers. R' Avraham, the Maggid of Trisk, was the sandak. The second bris was being delayed. The infant's father lay on his deathbed and the custom in such a tragic situation had always been to postpone the bris until the father died so that the infant could bear his name. And so the family waited.

R' Shlomo Kluger, rabbi of Brody, had been invited to serve as the sandak of this child. When he learned that the family was waiting for the father to die, he was horrified. He went quickly to R' Avraham and urged that he come with him quickly. They went to the home of the dying man; they found him lying with his eyes tightly shut, his breathing very labored. A minyan of men stood around with candles lit, waiting for the soul to depart.

"Stop this! Extinguish those candles at once. We are about to perform a brisl" R' Shlomo commanded. At the word 'bris' the father's eyelids fluttered. R' Shlomo began the ceremony. Suddenly the father's eyes flew open and he asked for some water to wash his hands. After he had washed them, he said that he would like to recite the traditional father's blessing, "...to enter him into the covenant of Avraham Avinu." - The ceremony was concluded with great rejoicing. In the following days the father grew better and better until he recuperated completely and lived for many years.

When R' Shlomo Kluger left the house with R' Avraham of Trisk, he said, "Do not think for a moment that I have just performed a miracle in bringing about the father's amazing recovery. Not at all. I applied from the words of our Sages regarding the three angels

who visited Avraham. They say that one came to heal Avraham, another to destroy Sodom and a third to inform Sarah of the good news of the future birth of Yitzchak; the third one was also to rescue Lot. - Why thought I, was it necessary to send one angel to perform these two tasks? Is there a shortage of angels in heaven?! The answer is that Lot's merit alone would not have been enough to summon an angel down from heaven. But since he had already come to tell Sarah the good tidings, he was able to save Lot as well.

Here, too, perhaps, the father's merit alone may not have been enough to warrant a special angel coming to cure him. But when we began the bris ceremony, the Angel of the Covenant — Eliyahu Hanavi, came, as he always comes. And once he was here already, he was able to cure the father. And as you see, honored Maggid, my reasoning was correct!"

Tales of Tzadikim - Joining in the Mitzvah

R' Elimelech of Lizensk was a beloved and famous Rebbe. Wherever he went he was given a grand welcome and when he left, a honorable leavetaking. Jews everywhere flocked to receive his blessing or, at the least, to gaze at his holy face and be inspired.

One time when R' Elimelech was leaving a city, everyone turned out to see him on his way. R' Elimelech who was riding in his carriage chanced to glance back and saw the crowd of people streaming behind. Suddenly he turned to his driver and asked him to stop the coach. He got out and joined the crowd.

"What is the matter, R' Elimelech?" people asked. "Why did you get out to walk?" He smiled and answered, "I saw this large group of Jews eagerly performing the important mitzvah of seeing off guests, and I, too, wished to, somehow, join in the mitzvah.



◣ Just Getting Started - Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye

וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם "...***while he [Avraham] was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.***" (18:1)

It is the sign of a truly righteous person that he is always "at the entrance." This means that he is aware that he still has much to do and much to accomplish.

◣ Opening To Spirituality - Gerer Rebbe

וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם "...***while he [Avraham] was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.***" (18:1)

The reason Avraham kept an open door was to invite people to learn the true nature of G-d. He sat by the door to personally greet the passersby and teach that one should be free from pride, aloofness, and envy, for that would be the path to spiritual perfection.

◣ Patience is A Virtue - Reb Noson of Nemirov

וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם "...***while he [Avraham] was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.***" (18:1)

The Torah describes the extent of Avraham's desire for G-dliness: - "He was sitting at the opening to the tent in the heat of the day."

When a person seeks spirituality, he must learn to wait for an opening and never give up. He must wait patiently, despite the "heat"

- despite his burning desires. If he holds out, he merits that G-d will appear to him. "He saw three wayfarers" - for the ascent to holiness demands several efforts; one cannot enter on the first try. "He ran" - because Avraham performed the mitzvot with joy and zeal.

◣ Prepared For the Task - Toldos Yaakov Yosef

וְהִנֵּה֙ שְׁלֹשָׁ֣ה אֲנָשִׁ֔ים נִצָּבִ֖ים עָלָ֑יו וַיַּ֣רְא וַיָּ֤רָץ לִקְרָאתָם֙ "***And behold there were three men standing over him; he [Avraham] saw and ran towards them***..." (18:2)

The Mishnah in Avos (1:2) teaches that the world stands on three pillars: Torah, avodah, and gemilus chassadim. These three pillars correspond to our three forefathers: Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. - At this point, Yitzchak and Yaakov were not yet born, and the world only had the amud ha'chessed - the pillar of kindness that was embodied in Avraham - upon which to stand.

Avraham realized that the responsibilities of "three men" - himself, Yitzchak, and Yaakov - were "standing over him." They were relying on him to hold up the world, and, rather than shy away, he ran toward his responsibilities and eagerly fulfilled them.

◣ Life Saver - Trisker Maggid

וַיֹּאמַ֕ר אִם־נָ֥א מָצָ֖אתִי חֵ֣ן בְּעֵינֶ֑יךָ אַל־נָ֥א תַעֲבֹ֖ר מֵעַ֥ל עַבְדֶּֽךָ -"***He [Avraham] said, 'If I find favor in Your eyes, please do not pass your servant by.'***" (18:3)

The Trisker Maggid commented that he never understood the saying of our Sages (Shabbat 127a), "Greater is hospitality than accepting the Divine Countenance." Until there was one incident that made him see its significance.

He was traveling on an extremely cold day and he could not wait until he came to a Jewish inn. His gabbai knocked on the door but the innkeeper refused to let them in until he knew who they were. Upon entering the warmth of the inn, the Maggid realized the significance of the words '*The mitzvah of hospitality can save a human being from danger; however, the Divine Spirit is never in danger.*'

◣ Clear Contrast - Klei Chemdah

וַיָּקֻמוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּשְׁקִפוּ עַל־פְּנֵי סְדֹם - "*And the men rose up from there and looked out toward Sodom*..." (18:16)

What is the connotation of the expression "from there"?

To indicate the contrast between Avraham's hospitality and Sodom's evil. - When the three angels saw Avraham's righteousness and hospitality and then thought of Sodom's evil, their anger at Sodom grew more intense than before. – When the angels "rose up from there," from Avraham's house where they had seen true righteousness, they "looked out toward Sodom"; i.e., they were strengthened in their view that Sodom must be destroyed.

◣ Transcending Our Nature - Lubavitcher Rebbe

וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמַר הַאַף תִּסְפֶּה צַדִּיק עִם־רָשָׁע - "*[Avraham] came forward and said [to G-d], 'Would you obliterate the righteous along with the wicked?*!'" (18:23)

When Avraham saw that the angels were already headed toward Sodom in order to annihilate it, he realized that he had to go against his naturally kind disposition and that he could not mince words. He had to argue vehemently and demand of G-d that He annul His decree.

From Avraham's example we learn that when we are presented with the opportunity to save another person, either physically or spiritually, we must not hesitate. We should immediately do all in our power to come to the person's aid, even if that means acting in direct opposition to our natural dispositions. (Likutei Sichot vol. 10)

◣ A Time for Humility, A Time For Pride - Reb Simchah Bunim Of Pshischa

וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמַר הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאַלְתִּי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי וְאָנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר "***Avraham answered and said, 'Behold! I desired to speak to my Lord, though I am dust and ashes.***'" (18:27)

Every person must carry two notes in his pocket. On one should be written, "The world was created for me" and on the other, "I am but dust and ashes." And one must be judicious to read each note in its proper time.

◣ My Home Is Your Home - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֶּה נָא־אֲדֹנַי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל־בֵּית עַבְדְּכֶם - "***[Lot] said: 'Behold now, please my lords, turn aside, into your servant's house...***'" (19:2)

Lot requested his visitors to enter "your servant's house." Avraham, however, had said to his guests, **אַל־נָא תַּעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ** "...***please do not pass away from your servant.***" (18:3).

He made no mention of his house, for when he received visitors, he ceased to think of himself as master of his house but instead placed his home entirely at his guests disposal, regarding himself as nothing more than his guests' servant.

◣ Finding Refuge - Rebbe Nachman

וַיֹּאמֶר הִמָּלֵט עַל־נַפְשֶׁךָ אַל־תַּבִּיט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־הַכִּכָּר הָהָרָה הִמָּלֵט פֶּן תִּסָּפֶה - "***And he said, 'Flee for your life! Do not look back or stop anywhere in the plain. Flee to the mountain or else you will be swept away***!'" (19:17) -Flee to the "mountain" - to Avraham. (Rashi)

A mountain is a place of refuge. The Torah is compared to a "mountain," as is Avraham, the paradigm of kindness. - When a person faces difficulties, he can find refuge in the Torah and in acts of kindness. (See Likutey Moharan I, 38:7)

◣ Holy Joy - Reb Noson of Nemirov

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צְחֹק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים כָּל־הַשֹּׁמֵעַ יְצַחֵק־לִי - "***Sarah said, 'G-d has made me rejoice. Whoever hears, will laugh at me***.'" (21:6)

Yitzchak was the first child to be born Jewish. He was called Yitzchak (the root of which is **צחק** - laughter and joy), because the holiness of the Jewish nation depends on their joy when doing mitzvot and in their service of G-d. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 146a)

◣ Rectifying The Past - Vilna Gaon

וַיִּטַּע אֶשֶׁל בִּבְאֵר שָׁבַע - "***[Avraham] planted an Eshel [inn] in Be'er Sheva. There he proclaimed the name of G-d***." (21:33)

Avraham Avinu planted an **אשל** tree in Be'er Sheva, which stands for eating - **אכילה**, drinking - **שתיה** and lodging -**לינה**. - This was done as a tikkun for the three terrible acts that were done which brought tremendous damage to the world; Adam HaRishon who "ate" from the Tree of Knowledge; Noach who planted a vine and "drank" until he became drunk; The people of Sodom who never provided "lodging" for any guest or stranger.

◣ Chiddushei HaRim

קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ - "*Please take your son, your only one, the one you love*..." (22:2)

G-d commanded Avraham to offer up Yitzchak with all the love a father feels for his son.

Some people can bring themselves to be cruel, divesting themselves of all love for their children for G-d's sake. ("Black as ravens - these are Torah scholars who are like ravens in that they have no mercy on their children"

- Midrash Rabbah comment on Shir HaShirim.) Avraham, however, was explicitly asked to use all his strength to restrain - rather than to ignore - his love for Yitzchak and, in this state of mind, to offer him as a sacrifice to G-d. Therein lay the significance of the test to which G-d put Avraham.

◣ Hide And Seek - Reb Noson of Nemirov

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אַחַד הֶהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ 'Please take your son, your only one, the one you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah. Take him up there as an ascent-offering, on one of the mountains that I will designate to you.' (22:2)

G-d did not tell Avraham immediately which mountain he should ascend. This is G-d's way: He momentarily withholds information from tzaddikim and afterwards reveals it to them. This increases their reward. (Rashi)

G-d works the same way with us. He hides Himself to encourage us to seek and search for Him. Then, after we find G-d through our own efforts, we discover what He really wants from us.

◣ Accumulated Strength - Tiferes Yonasan

וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת "...***and he took in his hand the fire and the knife***..." (22:6)

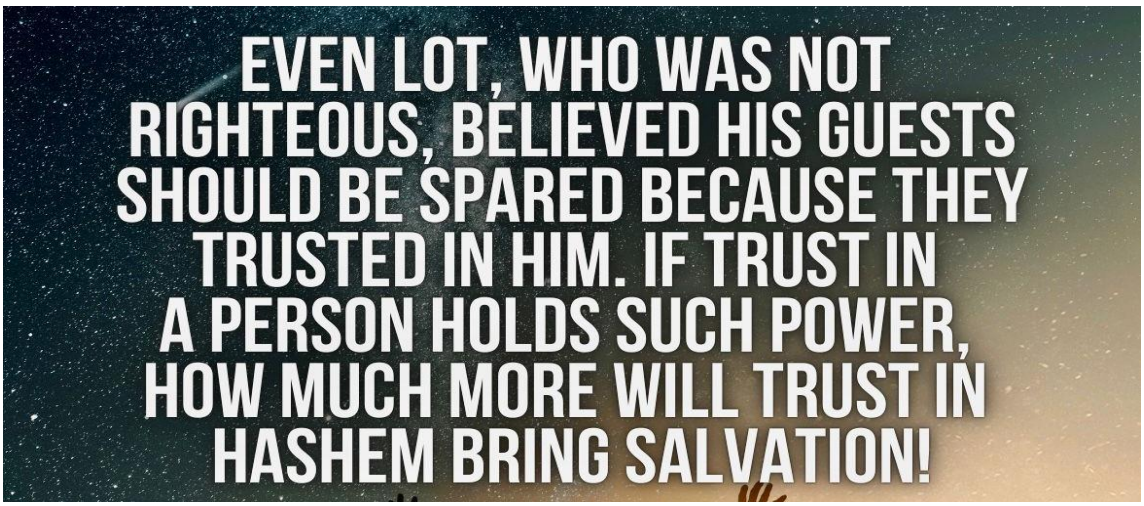
In order to be strong enough to perform the commandment to sacrifice his son wholeheartedly, Avraham took with him two of the merits he had accumulated. – The "fire" symbolized the fiery furnace into which he had cast himself previously to glorify G-d. The "knife" signified his hospitality in which he would hurry to prepare food for passing travelers.

◣ Never Abide by Cruelty - Devash Hasadeh

וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מַלְאַךְ ה' מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם -"***The angel of Hashem called to him out of Heaven***..." (22:11)

Why was the order to refrain from slaughtering Yitzchak given by a mere angel, when the command to sacrifice him had been pronounced by G-d Himself?

This teaches us that we must never obey anyone who commands us to harm a person, not even an angel. However, when the command is to desist from doing harm, even an angel's word is sufficient.



Rabbi Dov Rebenwurzel

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּה ***'Please take your son, your only one, the one you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah.*** (22:2)

Avrohom's love for his son Yitzchok was the ultimate love that a father can have for a child. Now Hashem is requesting that Avrohom shows his love for Hashem by sacrificing his son. – How does Avrom overcome this test of who to demonstrate more love for - to his son or to Hashem?

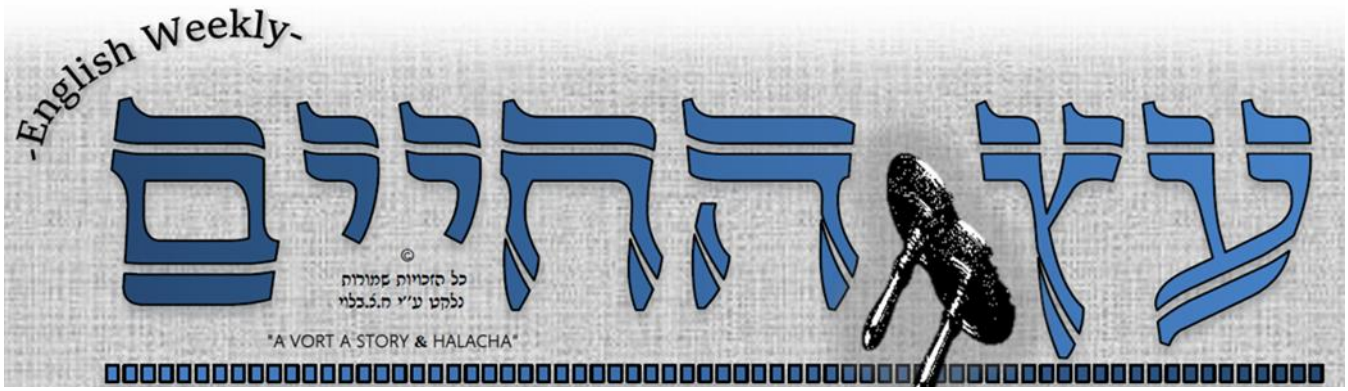


The answer is with **יראה** - fear. A father loves his son but doesn't fear him. However, Avrohom loved Hashem **and also** feared Him - **כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אַתָּה** – '*for now I know that you are a G-d fearing man.*' (22:12)

'**ספר עיון תפילה לבעל הכתב והקבלה**' by **הרב יעקב צבי מֶקְלֶנְבּוּרג** writes in his sefer that the proof of this is that straight after saying the Akeidas Yitzchok in Shacharis we say **לְעוֹלָם יְהֵא אָדָם יְרֵא שָׁמַיִם** – '***A person should always be in fear of Hashem***.'

"A Jew is never lost on their journey. Wherever he finds himself, hashem has a reason for placing him there." ~ Rabbi Mordechai Pogremansky (1903-1949)

"The Hebrew word for life, chayim, is in the plural form. Indeed, life is an experience to be shared." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe



A Yidisheh Frau

אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ - "*Where is Sara your wife?*"

Did they not know where Sara was?! One answer is that of course they knew where Sara was, but they wanted to show Avraham what a Tzanua his wife was in order to cause more chavivus in Avraham's eyes.

I have a question. The Malachim, I am sure, could have found many ma'alos to tell Avraham about his heilig'e wife Sara. If so, why did they specifically choose tznius as the thing to cause Avraham to get a greater chavivus toward Sara?

The answer clearly is that the Malachim knew what would actually be the thing that would be meaningful to Avraham, and they knew that reminding him about the tznius by Sara would be THE best thing to create that chavivus.

The Torah here wants to teach all husband and wives a tremendous lesson for all generations;Tznius should be the most special thing in the world in a husband's eyes. If he was zoche in having a wife who is tzanua, he is one lucky man! - This is the epitome of greatness! This is something which should cause all men for all time to feel the greatest chavivus towards their wives knowing what a tzanua she is, the Malachim and Avraham teach us this unbelievable lesson!

The Kli Yakar adds another explanation which is that the Malachim were telling Avraham that even though Sara had been an akara all the years, have no worries and have no fears, since look at her tznius!

In other words, the zchus of her tznius alone will surely grant her the merit to have a child. So, by asking "אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ?" they were hinting to Avraham that in the merit of your wife's tznius you will be zoicheh to a child.

We also find in the gemora in Yuma מז how kimchis merited 7 sons kohanem gedolem in the zchus of her tremendous tznius.

It is interesting to note that on the Yomim Noraim in the kedusha of Chazaras Hashatz the **Arizal** says to daven during the word "ayay" which is the same word the malachem used by sara, the Arizal says to daven for one of three things and one of them is to merit having good children.

I heard from my Zaida b'shem the **Gr"a** that just as the man's Mitzvah is limud HaTorah, the women's Mitzvah is Tznius.

It also says in the gemora in Megillah that the zchus of the tznius that Tamar had in her father-in-laws home is why she merited to have decedents who would become neviim and kings. We see again and again how the zchus of a woman's tznius goes a long way. In fact, from Tamar will come forth the mashiach!

There is a famous story of a girl named Sulika. An Arab saw her and tried forcing her to marry him, to the extent that they threatened the family that if she doesn't agree they will drag her body through the streets. She was moiser nefesh ad hasoif and would not agree to marry the Arab. Before she was killed, she went to the extent of sewing the bottom of her dress to her skin so that when she would be dragged through the streets she should still be modestly covered. Every year on her yahrtziet people go visit her grave.

We see from this girl's mesiras nefesh how tznius by Jewish girls is something that is literally passed down in our blood stream from mother to mother going all the way back to our mother Sara Imeinu!

All About the Akeidah (Oznayim la'Torah)

● Yishmael's 'Attachment' to the Beis-Hamidkash

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מֵרָחֹק - *"And he (Avraham) saw the place from afar"* (22:4). - He actually saw a Cloud (symbolizing the presence of the Shechinah) hovering over the mountain.

The Medrash explains that when he asked Yitzchak what he saw, he replied that he too, saw the Cloud, but that when he asked Yishmael and Eliezer the same question, they replied that they saw nothing.

So much for the Arabs' claim that the location of the Beis-Hamikdash is holy to them too, comments the Oznayim la'Torah. Here we see that their father Yishmael openly admitted that he saw no Kedushah on the mountain, even when the Shechinah was resting on it!

● Second Time Lucky

וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאַךְ ה' אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שֵׁנִית מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם. וַיֹּאמֶר. כִּי־בָרֵךְ אֲבָרֶכְךָ... – ***"And an angel of Hashem called to Avraham a second time … and he said … because I will surely bless you …*** " (22:15-17).

The question arises as to why G-d did not bless Avraham when He spoke to him the first time, and instructed him to desist from Shechting his son. Why did He do so only after the second time?

It appears, says the Oznayim la'Torah, that a Korban that is brought satisfactorily is a catalyst to B'rachah; like we find in Shemini, when, on the eighth day of the Milu'im, Aharon blessed the people only after he had finished bringing the Korbanos of the day.

Likewise, here, it was only after Avraham had replaced Yitzchak with the ram, which he found and brought up in his stead, that G-d blessed him.

Parsha Pearls ● Why Ask Avraham?

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לָמָּה זֶּה צָחֲקָה שָׂרָה -*"And Hashem said to Avraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh …?'* " (18:13).

Why, asks **R. Yisrael Salanter**, did G-d address these words to Avraham, rather than to Sarah herself?

And he answers with a parable from everyday life. If somebody walks into his friend's kitchen and discovers that his friend is not particular about Kashrus, he places the blame on the husband. Because when a man is lax in these matters, his wife is laxer still, and the servants are laxer still.

Here too, when Sarah laughed, Hashem immediately questioned Avraham, because if it was a flaw in Sarah's level of Emunah, then there must have been some flaw in Avraham's. And it was to teach us this lesson that G-d asked Avraham why Sarah laughed.

● Avraham's Humility

וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נְעָרָיו וַיָּקֻמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל־בְּאֵר שָׁבַע - *"And they went together to Be'er Sheva"* (22:19).

Avraham Avinu had just been through what was the most difficult Nisayon imaginable, and he had emerged with flying colours. He had reached the highest levels of spirituality that a human being can attain; yet there was not as much as a speck of pride to be found in him. - He went together with Yishmael and Eliezer (on a par with them) without any feelings of superiority, as if nothing had happened (R. Shalom mi'Kaminka).

"Hashem's love for us is like the sun - always shining, even on the cloudiest days." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

There was once a dinner in America, with many gedolim in attendance. Among them were the **Gaon HaRav Shimon Shwab and HaGaon Rav Moshe Feinstein**.

Rav Shimon Shwab spoke about a medrash in this week's sedra: The medrash says that Hashem told Avrohom Avinu - **קַח־נָ֣א אֶת־בִּנְךָ֗ אֶת־ יְחִֽידְךָ֙ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַ֣בְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָ֔ק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ֖ אֶל־אֶ֣רֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּ֑ה וְהַעֲלֵ֤הוּ שָׁם֙ לְעֹלָ֔ה** - "***Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, yea, Yitzchok, and go away to the land of Moriah and bring him up there for a burnt offering.***"

The word **נָא** suggests a plea. – Hashem pleaded with Avrohom Avinu, '*I have tested you nine times, and you have passed them all, - now , please pass this final test for Me. So they won't say that your previous accomplishments were worth nothing*!'

Rav Shimon Shwab asks, "Is this so? If a person passes 90% of his tests – it's worth nothing if he doesn't get 100%? If he passed 9 tests but not the 10th, it's worthless?

There is a similar medrash that says that Hashem told Avrohom Avinu that if he didn't pass this test, then it would be considered that he had failed all the previous tests as well.

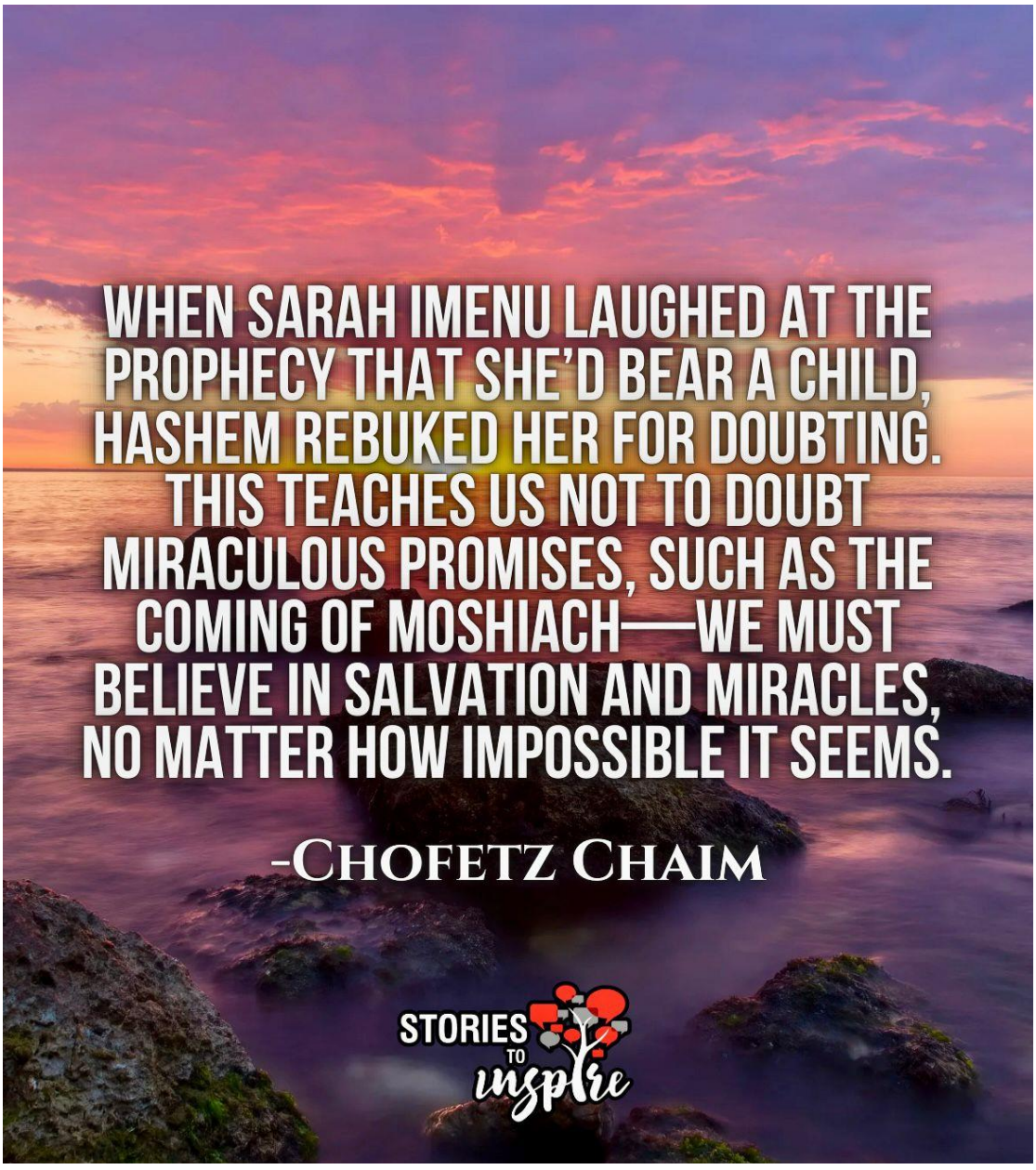
How does this make sense? He succeeded by 90%!

Rav Shimon explained that the first nine tests were all about Avrohom, but the 10th challenge was all about whether his Emuna would be passed on to his children. If it didn't continue to his children, then all his previous accomplishments were for nought! – They do not have lasting value!

Rav Moshe Feinstein then said to Rav Shimon Shwab, " According to my understanding, your question isn't even a question! 90% means nothing here. All the tests were in matters of Emuna. With regards

to Emuna, even if you have 90% Emuna and not the remaining 10% - your Emuna is not real - you have nothing! – That's not called having Emunah, that's a complete Apikorus!"

We must have Emuna in every situation. – We must always believe!



"Failure is not the end. But a stepping stone towards success. Learn from your mistakes, dust yourself off. And keep moving forward." Rabbi Avigdor Miller (1908-2001)

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

There is an amazing Midrash in this Parsha which we all would do well to know. - The Torah tells us of Hagar, cast out by Avraham, and her son Yishmael, who is feverish and ill. She wishes to give him water, but her flask is empty. She leaves the boy so she should not witness his suffering. An angel comes and announces that her son will live. - Then the Torah tells us, **וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹקִים אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ** And G-d opened up her eyes, **וַתֵּרֶא בְּאֵר מָיִם** and she saw a well of water. (21:19) The well had been there the whole time, but Hagar didn't see it until now.

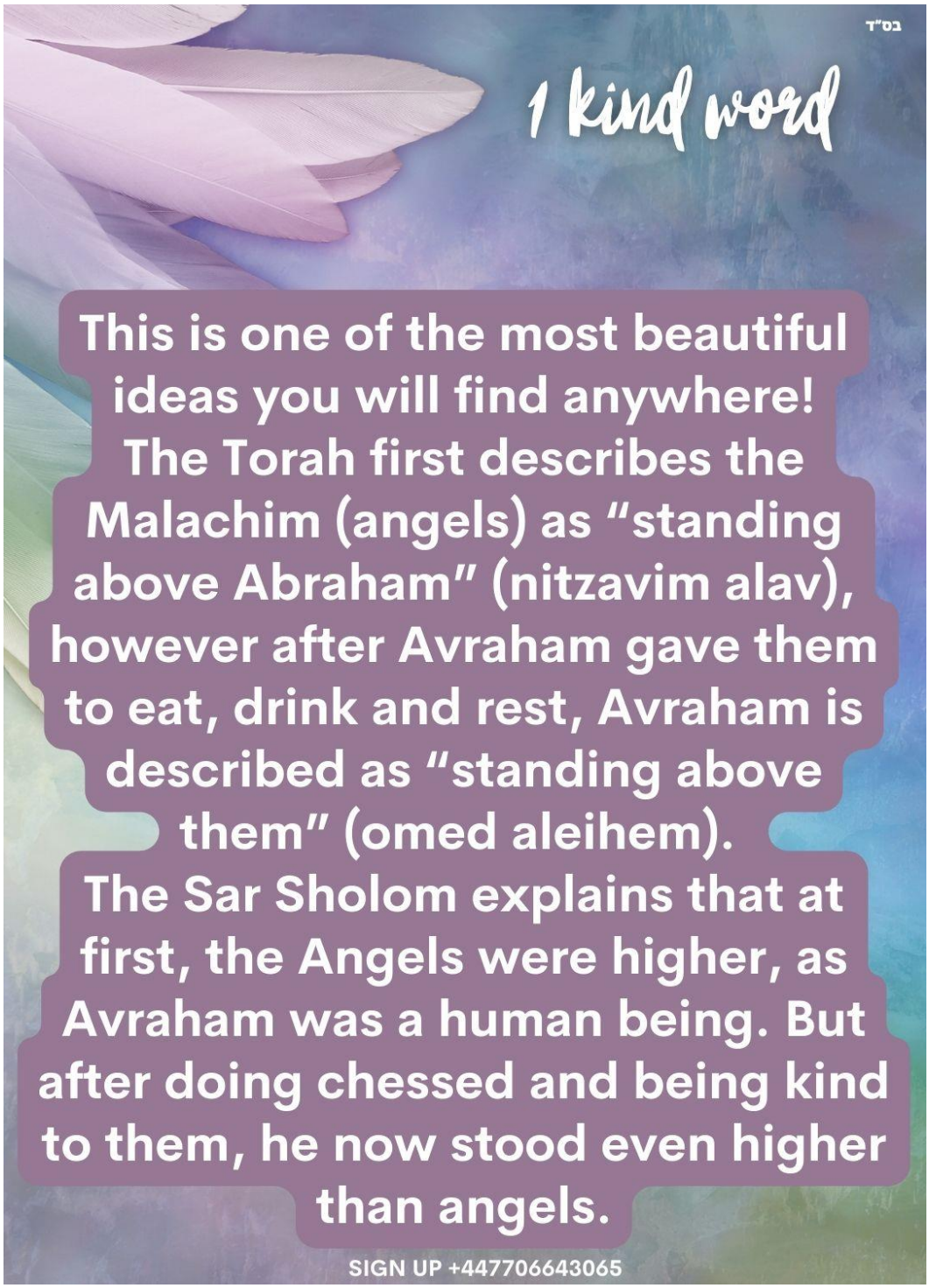
And this is where the Midrash starts **אמר רבי בנימין הכל בחזקת סומין עד שהקדוש ברוך הוא מאיר את עיניהם, מן הכא ויפקח אלוקים את עיניה, ותלך ותמלא החמת. אלהא דמאיר עניי, אלהא דמאיר עניי, אלהא דמאיר עניי. בזכות הצדקה שאני נודב לעילוי נשמת רבי מאיר בעל הנס, זכותו יגן עלינו למצוא את האבדה שאיבדתי**

מקור: (מדרש רבה בראשית נ"ג, י"ד)

- "***Says Rabbi Binyamin, everyone is categorized as blind, until the Holy One Blessed be He lightens up their eyes***." - The understanding is that things may be right in front of our noses, but if Hashem doesn't let us see them, we won't.

Reciting this Midrash 3 times has become a segula, an auspicious practice, for finding lost items. I have had many occasions to use this phrase and it works. Try it out and you'll see that when you leave your vision to G-d, He shows you what you need to see.

"Your potential is not determined by your circumstances, but by your mindset. Cultivate a positive mindset and believe in your capabilities." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980)



"Every person is different in their personality and innate abilities. Therefore, each person has the potential to serve hashem in a unique way according to his or her abilities and tests. - Serve Hashem in the way that only you can." ~ The Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (1899-1985).

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

◣ Quick Service - Avnei Ezel

וְהִנֵּה֙ שְׁלֹשָׁ֣ה אֲנָשִׁ֔ים נִצָּבִ֖ים עָלָ֑יו וַיַּ֣רְא וַיָּ֤רָץ לִקְרָאתָם֙ - "***And behold there were three men standing over him; he saw and ran towards them***…" (18:2)

The Torah teaches us that hospitality requires us to act quickly in order not to keep a hungry traveler waiting too long.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Coleman

Kofrim often say that what benefit is the Mitzvos and Torah of Tzadikim to the rest of us when it appears to only benefit themselves?

Rabeinu Yonah in Shaarei Teshuva brings a proof to counteract this notion from this week's sedra:

Hashem is about to destroy the city of Sodom. Avrohom Avinu is desperately in search of some way to save the people of Sodom, and petitions Hashem with the words… **אוּלַ֥י יֵשׁ֙ חֲמִשִּׁ֣ים צַדִּיקִ֔ם בְּת֖וֹךְ הָעִ֑יר הַאַ֤ף תִּסְפֶּה֙ וְלֹא־תִשָּׂ֣א לַמָּק֔וֹם לְמַ֥עַן חֲמִשִּׁ֖ים הַצַּדִּיקִ֑ם אֲשֶׁ֖ר בְּקִרְבָּֽהּ** – '***Perhaps there are fifty righteous men in the midst of the city; will You even destroy and not forgive the place for the sake of the fifty righteous men who are in its midst?' (18:24)***

This proves that the zechus and values of Tzadikim are beneficial to all people – not just to themselves!

"Never underestimate the power of a good deed. A simple person performing a basic mitzvah is dearer to the ruler of the universe than all the praises of the angel Michael." ~ The Baal Shem Tov

בס"ד



ACTIVE EMUNAH

…And She Became A Pillar Of Salt

Rashi explains the reason she received this punishment: "She sinned with salt, and she was punished with salt. Lot said to her, "Give a little bit of salt for these guests." She responded, "Even this bad minhag you want to do in this place?"

There are some very interesting things about this part of the episode of Sdom. One thing is that we know that that through the daughters of Lot came the lineage of Moshiach. It seems that if the wife of Lot had survived, this might never have happened! Had Lot not been careful about the salt, there might not have been a reason to punish her. (Even though she did look back, that might not have happened had she not protested about the salt.) If that is the case, the arrival of Moshiach might be somehow linked to this detail of the story.

It is also interesting that we don't find that Lot's wife protested when he made matzos for the "guests" – if she complained about a minhag, wouldn't she also complain about a actual mitzvah? (Rashi explains that the reason Lot baked matzos is because it was Pesach.)

The truth is though, that we do find this phenomenon. There are people who might "agree" with the letter of the law, but they sometimes aren't careful about the various customs that Clal Yisroel has adapted. We see from here that Lot's being careful about the salt, a minhag, is what helped to bring about the family of Moshiach!

One of the reasons that we keep salt on the table is mentioned in Tosfos. They explain that after we wash for bread, we are careful not to speak until we have said the bracha for the bread. That means

that during this time, no words of Torah can be spoken. Therefore, the Satan tries to be mekatreg against those partaking in the meal. But having salt on the table somehow prevents that.

The table is also compared to the mizbeach, which needed to have salt on it at all times. The Gemarah explains that when we had the mizbeach, the karbonos we brought atoned for our aveiros. But now, when a person makes a long meal, which allows extra time for someone who is hungry to still come and take part of it, the meal itself atones for the person, and he is granted long life.

The Tzaddikim explain that this "poor person" who might come to the meal also refers to someone who is "poor in daas" – and through the divrei Torah by the meal you are also "feeding his soul".

Rav Chaim Vital explains that that is the reason the we thank H-shem for the Torah during bircas hamazon – because the food feeds our body, and the Torah feeds our soul.

There is a Sefer writted by that Ben Ish Chai called "Ben Yehoyada" which is a very deep and sometimes Kabalistic commentary on the stories mentioned in the whole Shas. The source for many of these chiddushim is what came up during the daily public meal which he used to make in Bagdad, where many poor people attended. We see that having such a meal also allows for tremendous secrets of the Torah to be revealed!

The Arizal explains that you should dip the bread into the salt three times – each time corresponds to H-shem's name which is gematria 26 – and three times 26 is 78 – which is the gematria of "melach" – salt. Through doing this properly a person is able to remove harsh judgments.

In Pirkei Avos, it says "those who are brazen belong in Gehinom." The next Mishna seems to be out of place because it is not the end of the perek, but it says "May it be Your Will H-shem, that the Beis Hamikdash should be speedily rebuilt". The Tzaddikim explain that

the reason this is mentioned here is because the "Gehinom" that the previous Mishna mentioned is referring to the generation before Moshiach – only those we are "brazen" and have chutzpah against the yetzer harah and the trends of the time will be able to survive. The Tzaddikim also point out that the letters which make up "Gehinom" also make up the word "Minhag" – one explanation of this can be because in the last generation, those who are careful to keep their minhagim will be saved from the Gehinom of the time before Moshiach!

Look how Lot being careful about this minhag was able to set events into motion which will hopefully very soon result in the arrival of Moshiach, and may it be with chesed and rachamim!

Evil Versus Evil - Rabbi Pinny Neumann

Which generation was more evil? The Dor Haflaga, the Dor Hamabul or the people of Sodom?

The Rogatchover Gaon says that the Dor Hamabul was the worst. He proves this from the fact that Hashem came down himself at the time of the destruction/punishment of the others, to see for Himself if they really deserved annihilation. But the Dor Hamabul were so far gone, that they didn't even deserve that Hashem would come down as they were obviously past the stage of being saved.

The pasuk says re: The Dor Haflaga - **וַיֵּרֶד ה' לִרְאֹת אֶת־הָעִיר וְאֶת־הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם** - '***And Hashem descended to see the city and the tower that the sons of man had built***.' (11:5) [See Rashi]

The pasuk says re: The destruction of Sodom - **אֵרְדָה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה** - "***I will descend now and see***." (see Rashi) - The pasuk does not mention Hashem's coming down at all prior to the destruction at the time of the mabul!



וְאָנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר – '***I am dust and ashes***.' (18:27)

Rather than a mere poetic expression of humility before Hashem, the **Beis Halevi** explains the depth behind Avraham's claim that he is "like dirt and ash."

Dirt, explains the Beis Halevi, is something that was never anything important but has potential to grow things from it or have things built with it. Essentially, dirt has no significant past but has potential for the future.

Ash, on the other hand, is the opposite: it has no future, as nothing can grow from it, and it has no strength or density to build on it. However, ash used to be something. It was a table or a chair or a tree, and now it's nothing. In this regard, whereas dirt has no significant past, ash has no significant future. With this introduction, we can now develop a more refined understanding of Avraham's statement to Hashem.

Avraham was, effectively, saying to Hashem in his great humility that as an individual he was like someone who had no significant past or future. For, while he did not deny the greatness of his position in the world, he knew that his success — past and future — only came from Hashem.

We see from here the tremendous humility that Avraham displayed. Despite being the only person in the world to have found Hashem, and despite Hashem's promise of Avraham's success in the world, he still knows that without Hashem, none of this would have been possible. He did not consider himself significant in front of Hashem because he knew that whatever heights his mind could reach, everything he had was a gift from Hashem — even his ability to

discover Hashem and to perform the kindnesses that he became famous for.

When Avraham had guests in his home who thanked him, this is the message he would tell them. He would insist that they don't thank him, because ultimately it was Hashem Who was responsible for everything that they had.

While Avraham's humility was unmatched, perhaps the message that we can take from this is that even though we may have wonderful achievements. We may even have worked very hard for them. They may even be in Torah or mitzvos that we can say our freewill led to our greatness. Ultimately, however, without Hashem's kindness, we have no past claims and no future gains. Everything we have gained or achieved, we owe solely to Hashem's kindness. And in the future, too, we rely on Him for our success, because without His help, we are nothing but dirt and ash and cannot achieve anything.

Food for Thought

Chazal say - **א"ר תנחום בר חנילאי, לעולם אל ישנה אדם מן המנהג, שהרי משה עלה למרום ולא אכל לחם, מלאכי השרת ירדו למטה ואכלו לחם**

A person shouldn't behave differently to the custom of that place. ['*When in Rome, do as the Romans do*!].

The proof is that Moshe Rabeinu went up to heaven for 40 days and nights and didn't eat, because the angels don't eat up there! And when the three angels came to Avrohom, they actually ate the food although angels don't normally eat our mortal food.

The Shinover Rav in Divrei Yechezkiel asks, "How is Moshe Rabeinu a proof? The fact that he did not eat in heaven was since there was no need for food in heaven, Moshe Rabeinu didn't have a choice – there was no food for him anyway – it wasn't on the menu!

The real proof is that Moshe worked on himself to such a degree that he went beyond the physical and therefore he was just like an angel who did not require food to sustain himself – Hence he could survive all that time in the upper spheres. – But when Moshe came **back down** from shomayim, he started eating earthly food once again – although as mentioned above, he had no need to – he was only following the **מנהג** [way of earthlings!]

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא - ***"Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre…"*** (18:1)

Rashi cites the Medrash that Hashem appeared to Avraham on the territory of Mamre because Mamre gave Avraham the advice to perform the circumcision. Rav Yeruchim Levovitz zt"l stated that from here we see the great merit of giving people good advice. When Hashem commanded Avraham to be circumcised, others advised Avraham not to circumcise himself. When Mamre heard about the matter, however, he advised Avraham to do it and for this, he was greatly rewarded.

לַמּוֹעֵד אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כָּעֵת חַיָּה וּלְשָׂרָה בֵּן - ***"I will return to you at this time next year…"*** (18:14)

When Avraham was promised by an angel that he will have a child at 99 years old, he was told that the same angel would one day return. Interestingly, there is no record in the Torah of the angel returning.

I heard from Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlit"a that Rashi, in Pardes HaGadol, asks this question. He says that the Torah seemingly

doesn't record the angel resurfacing. The Torah says that the angel said, "I will return to you "Ka'eis Chaya", which can be interpreted to mean "at the time when one is in need of life." Rashi says that the angel did indeed come back to Avraham.

Just as Avraham is about to sacrifice Yitzchok, an angel appears on the scene cautioning him to spare Yitzchok's life and let him live. The same Malach, the same angel that accompanied Yitzchok for birth, reappeared, to save his life thirty-seven years later.

Every Jewish child has a Malach, an angel that teaches them Torah in utero and has faith in them to grow up as devout Jews. The Malach never gives up on the child and no matter the struggle or deviant behavior, may resurface years later to rekindle and reignite the dormant spirituality. The angel will return when a person needs help the most...



וַה' פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה - *"Hashem had remembered Sarah..."* (21:1)

The Chafetz Chaim writes that we read this section of the Torah on Rosh Hashanah. The reason for this is to develop hope and trust in Hashem. Nothing is impossible for Him. Sarah was already ninety years old and according to all the standard rules of nature it would have been impossible for her to give birth to a child. Nevertheless, since Hashem willed it, she gave birth to Yitzchok.

Even when a situation seems bleak and the probability for salvation seems unlikely, do not give up hope. Hashem's laws are more powerful than the law of averages. This awareness is so important for our daily lives that at the beginning of each year we repeat this message: never despair!

There was once a man who came to the Chazon Ish's house with a very heavy heart. When he came in, the Chazon Ish had just started reciting the blessing of Asher Yatzar (the blessing one recites after

using the restroom). The person was very impatient and before the Chazon Ish finished the blessing, he blurted out his problem. His young child had polio during the epidemic in Eretz Yisroel and the doctors were unable to do anything to help.

The Chazon Ish indicated to him with his finger that he wanted to complete the blessing. Reciting each word loudly and clearly, the Chazon Ish emphasized the final words: *"The healer of all flesh, and He does wonders."* In a very gentle tone, the Chazon Ish turned to the man and said, "You hear that the Almighty makes wonders." - This is all the Chazon Ish said and in a very short time, the child completely recovered.

Hashem Will Appear to You



In this week's Parsha, Avraham is recovering a heroic feat. He did something exceedingly brave, courageous, and holy. He circumcised himself at the age of ninety-nine. Avraham went under the knife and received a bris milah. This resulted into a Divine Revelation where Hashem appeared to him. The pasuk says, Vayeira eilav Hashem – Hashem appeared to him.

There is a big question here: The pasuk doesn't say who Hashem appears to! Why the anonymity? Why the ambiguity? The pasuk should say Vayeira Hashem el Avraham, that Hashem appeared to Avraham. Shouldn't the Torah specify who Hashem appeared to? Doesn't Avraham deserve the credit? He did something so valiant. He put himself under the knife! Doesn't he deserve the accolades

and tribute? Why does the pasuk say Hashem appeared to him? Shouldn't it say who that "him" was?

I would like to share with you a powerful answer that I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita: Rav Mottel of Chornobyl says that the pasuk says Vayeira eilav – that Hashem appeared to him because "him" can be anybody. The pasuk intentionally leaves it ambiguous because him could be you! It's a fill-in-the-blanks!

Rav Mottel says that if you do something for Hashem – if you extend yourself and go above and beyond, then Hashem will appear in a sense to you! If you are willing to go outside of your comfort zone and you work on yourself then Vayeira eilav – Hashem will appear to you! He will do wonders for you! You are that him! What an amazing thing!

I would like to share with you an unbelievable story: There was a Yid from Brooklyn, a young man who was totally secular. He came to our Shul, BJX, to explore his roots. His soul thirsted for Yiddishkeit. His mind opened, his horizons expanded, and he wanted more. He wanted Yiddishkeit, but he was torn. For five years he's been dating a non-Jewish girl. A girl who he said was flawless. It was a huge nisayon for him. He was struggling. My father suggested that he should go to Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel for a bit, and he agreed. Later that week, my father was about to book his ticket, but he needed some details from him. My father called him, but he couldn't reach him. He called again the next day, but it went straight to voicemail. My father couldn't reach him for days.

Finally, almost a week later he called my father. My father said, "Where were you? Is everything ok?" He said, "Rabbi, I had to make the decision of a lifetime. I really didn't know what to do with my life, so I went to the Poconos to meditate and get clarity. I sat there, and I davened. I prayed to Hashem. I brought with me a Tanach and I decided that I was going to open it randomly, for Hashem to guide me." He said, Rabbi, you won't believe what happened. "I opened the Tanach, and it opened exactly in Sefer

Ezra, perek tes, where it speaks about the Jewish people returning to Eretz Yisroel, and giving up their non-Jewish woman. With tears in his eyes, he said to my father, "Rabbi, please book my flight. I'm going to Israel!"

This was a revealed, open miracle. Why did he merit this? He merited this because he was moser nefesh – He sacrificed for Hashem, and when one sacrifices for Hashem, Hashem does wonders for him. Hashem can do anything. Hashem can help us with whatever we may need. When we face our own personal crises or nisayonos we must try to persevere and stay strong. We must keep fighting and with Hashem's help we too will see miracles!



◣ Just Getting Started - Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye

וַיֵּרָ֥א אֵלָ֛יו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵ֥י מַמְרֵ֖א וְה֣וּא יֹשֵׁ֑ב פֶּ֥תַח־הָאֹ֖הֶל כְּחֹ֥ם הַיּֽוֹם - "***G-d appeared to him [Avraham] in the Plains of Mamrei while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.***" (18:1)

It is the sign of a truly righteous person that he is always "at the entrance." This means that he is aware that he still has much to do and much to accomplish.

"There are very few guarantees in life. The one constant is that Hashem will always be there for you." ~ Rabbi Yaacov Haber.

◣ Quick Service - Avnei Ezel

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם - "***And behold there were three men standing over him; he saw and ran towards them***…" (18:2)

The Torah teaches us that hospitality requires us to act quickly in order not to keep a hungry traveller waiting too long.



The Loyal Nation

In Parshas Vayeira when Hakodosh Boruch describes His eternal covenant with our forefathers, He says as follows: **אברהם היו יהיה לגוי גדול** – "Avraham, you're going to become a great nation" (Bereishis 18:18). One day there will be a tremendous people that will look back to you as their first father, as the progenitor of the eternal nation.

And listen to what Hashem said at that time about Avraham Avinu: **כי ידעתיו**, "Because I know him (ibid. 19). Now what does it mean when Hashem says "I know him"? And who doesn't Hakodosh Boruch Hu know?! He knows every bird and every blade of grass. He knows every

microorganism, every cell. What doesn't he know? The Almighty's mind is infinite, and He could think about everything at once. And He does – all the factors of the universe, every detail of whatever is taking place, whatever will take place, and whatever did take place, it's all included in the intelligence of the Infinite Mind. There's nothing that He's not thinking about right now! Nothing! And so what does He mean when He says **כי ידעתיו**, that it's Avraham that I know? And the answer is that "I know him," means I'm interested in him. "As far as I'm concerned," said Hashem, "Avraham is the center of the universe. **כי ידעתיו** – "My da'as is on him. He is the one that I love and I'm most interested in."(Rashi ibid.)

Now, such an idea, that there is one man out of millions that Hashem pays most attention to, that takes a lot of talking and a lot of thinking before it will penetrate our minds. And it would be wise of us to try to better understand why is it that Hashem was especially interested in Avraham? It's an important question because that's what we want as well; we want Hashem to be interested in us too. We also want that Hashem should know us, that we should be on His mind more than anything else. And although the end of the possuk briefly tells us the answer, **למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו** – "Because he will command his sons and his household after him," we have to first understand a little bit of the greatness of Avraham in order to understand these few words.

Avraham's Home Schooling

Now, our father Avraham was a great theorist. Many people don't know that. He was an extraordinary and original thinker. The Rambam in Hilchos Avodah Zarah describes how Avraham developed as he lived among idolaters. He had no teacher. Of course he had teachers, but they taught him idol worship. There was no one to teach him the truth. His parents insisted on idolatry. Not only his parents, but all of society around him revolved around the worship of the moon and and other gods. And yet this boy when he was very

young began to look around and use his eyes and his mind and he began to free himself from the errors of his countrymen. He saw that the world demonstrated purposefulness that it was not a chaotic world supervised by a pantheon of warring gods. He saw cause and effect, and infinite planning and purpose in all the phenomenon that he observed. And he began to ask questions. "How could this be? Who made all this?" And finally he arrived at this great world concept, the chiddush of the ba'al habirah, that there is One Hashem, the Hashem Echad who is in control of all phenomena, and whose wisdom and kindliness is fathomless. Avraham Avinu developed the outlook on the universe which the Jewish nation still follows today.

But you have to know that this alone, the recognition of Hashem, and even living with the ideals that he discovered, wasn't the reason why Hashem chose Avraham. The recognition of the truth was only a drop in the bucket of who Avraham was and why he was chosen.

If You Come Late, You Miss Out

The truth is that we say every day in davening why Hakodosh Boruch Hu chose Avraham. And if you would come to shul on time and have time to think about the words that you're rattling off, you wouldn't need to hear it from me in this place. But just in case I'll tell you anyhow. Every day we say: **אתה השם אשר בחרת באברם**, You Hashem chose Avraham and his descendents to be Yours forever. It's final, there's no going back on the choice of the Am Yisroel. And why did You choose Him? Because **מצאת את לבבו נאמן לפניך** – You found that His heart, his mind, was ne'eman before You. Now what does that mean he was "ne'eman before you"? So let's study what the word emunah really means.

You remember that after leaving Mitzrayim the bnei Yisroel waged a battle against Amalek when they encountered them in the wilderness. And you'll recall that in that story Moshe raised up his hands in supplication to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that He should come to

the help of the bnei Yisroel. And as long as his hands were held up in prayer to the Almighty, the bnei Yisroel were winning the battle (Rosh hashanah 29a).

And in order that his hands should not weaken and be lowered, they put stones under his arms, under each arm, and his hands were therefore supported by the stones. And that's how Moshe Rabeinu remained the whole day, with his hands raised in tefillah. Now listen to the language of the possuk. **ויהי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש** – "His hands were emunah until the sun set" (Shemos 17:12).

His Hands Believed?!

What does that mean "his hands were emunah"? His hands believed?! So we know that the only way to translate the possuk is that "his hands remained steadfast", they didn't budge. Emunah doesn't mean "to believe" but "to remain steadfast." And so when the Navi tells us that Hashem chose Avraham Avinu because he was **נאמן לפניך**, we understand that we are being told not that Avraham was a believer, but that he was loyal; "You found that his heart was loyal to You." And how did He find that? He saw persistence of this lonely man, a man who stood on one side, while the world battled and belittled him from the other side. The loyal Avraham didn't budge from the truth. Throughout everything, Avraham remained steadfast, and stubbornly held tight to his ideals. And he carried it out at the greatest sacrifices. He never yielded!

In order to follow the truths that he had discovered, Avraham did not hesitate to offer his life. He demonstrated his loyalty by undergoing ordeals of the worst kind. He stubbornly fought the whole world, he turned his back to everyone, and he suffered greatly because of that. He was put into danger constantly. Did you know that Avraham was put in prison for ten years? And for part of his life he was a refugee in the wilderness. He was hiding in caves and in thickets. The Rambam says that. He fought, he argued, he was ridiculed, he was threatened, and at the end, when Nimrod had had

enough of this little "apikoris" he was finally thrown into a fire pit to be burned to death.

Avraham Doesn't Miss His Appointment

You all know about how Nimrod offered Avraham Avinu the choice, "Bow down to my idol or else take a look at this pit of fire that's been burning for seven days. The stones are white hot and I'm going to treat you to an appointment with these stones if you don't bow down." Now Avraham Avinu had a choice – he could have backed down. He didn't have a Torah; it was only that his clear thinking mind had told him that he should be serving the Creator of the whole universe instead of idols. Now it's a nice idea, a beautiful and true idea, but it's no easy feat to put that into practice – not when you're staring down at a flaming pit of fire. But still Avraham Avinu was so loyal to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and His ideals that he looked at the white hot stones, he thought it over, and he told Nimrod, "I choose the stones!"

And that made Avraham so great that he became chosen by Hashem. "A man who chooses the fire pit over bowing down to an idol, a man who is that loyal to Me, that's My man," said Hashem. And that's what the Navi meant when he said that Hashem "found Avraham's mind to be loyal and steadfast in front of Him." Not simply that he believed, but that he stubbornly believed and wouldn't budge from the truth.

And so now we can better understand the possuk that we mentioned before: **כי ידעתיו** – "Avraham is the one I'm interested in." And why? **למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו**, because he is going to command his children and his household after him, **ושמרו דרך השם**, and they will guard the way of Hashem. Not only did Avraham arrive at the truth while living among the falsehoods of the environment, and not only was he dedicated to his ideals with his blood, his life, but he was so stubbornly dedicated to these ideas that he was willing to do anything to make it last forever. He knew that Avraham would apply

himself to teaching his children, the same way he applied himself to teaching himself the truths. And he would see to it that everything is so arranged that they're going to do it. He'll exert the greatest efforts to make sure that it happens – to make sure that these ideals will be attached to his children and children's children forever.

What's Your Dearest Wish?

That's what the Rambam says in his Moreh Nevuchim. He says there that the chief desire of Avraham Avinu was **להעמיד אומה העובדת את השם** – to raise up a nation that would serve Hashem. His greatest longing was for a large nation that would stubbornly persist in the ways he had discovered. Because the true idealist, the one who is truly loyal to his ideals, is not satisfied that he alone should cherish his ideals in privacy. The fire of loyal enthusiasm burned so hotly in Avraham Avinu's heart that it became his dearest wish to raise up a nation to follow in his footsteps. And that's what Hashem found in Avraham – the man so loyal, so stubborn, and so idealistic, that He knew that this was the man He had been waiting for. This was the man upon whom He could say, "I know that **יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו**. And that **ושמרו דרך השם** – "I know that they're going to carry it out. Avraham can be relied upon to transmit to his posterity forever the teachings of My ways."

And it's still going today. Avraham gave such an impetus; with his great heart and great spirit, he gave such a push that we're still running from that push! When you see a Jew running to the shul, it's Avraham who gave him that push. And we'll be "running" till the end of time. Till the end of history we'll be around. Like Hashem promised us; listen to these words: **אני השם לא שניתי**, "I Hashem have never changed, and I'm not going to change." **ואתם בני ישראל לא כיליתם**, "And you bnei Yisroel will never come to an end. "That's a promise. "You'll be around here as long as I am," says Hashem, which means forever and ever.

Let The Gates Open Wide!

And those demonstrations of loyalty, as it permeates your life, that will be the quality that opens the gates when Moshiach comes. We've followed in the path that Avraham Avinu forged for his descendants and we've been the **שומר אמונים** since then. And just like Hashem said about Avraham Avinu: **כי ידעתיו** – "It's only him that I think about," so too Hashem says about Avraham's descendants, His loyal nation, "It's only you that I'm interested in." Because that is the Jewish nation, ma'aminim bnei ma'aminim, the loyal ones, the nation that refuses to yield and stubbornly keeps the same Torah today exactly as when they first received it on Har Sinai.

The Rosh Yeshiva and The Secretary

Many years ago when I was still raw – I'm still raw but I was even more raw then – I received a rebuke from a certain Rosh Yeshiva who was in his office and together with him was sitting one of his male secretaries, and at one point in the conversation I directed my remarks to the secretary; on the side'. The Rosh Yeshiva corrected me. "You don't talk to the secretary when the Rosh Yeshiva is here. When the Rosh Yeshiva is here, you speak only to him."

I learned an important lesson that day. In the presence of somebody important you don't talk to someone else. Because by acknowledging someone else's presence, you are already mitigating his dignity. You are belittling the honor of the more important person.

Derech Eretz and Democracy

Let's say you walk into a physician's office and the doctor is there, but also there's a girl there who is cleaning up. So you don't say, "Good morning. How are both of you this kind morning?" That's bad manners. You don't include the physician together with the maid. She's nobody in comparison to him.

Now, to hear such things seems jarring to our American ears; it just doesn't seem democratic enough if you don't include the cleaning girl and the doctor in the same greeting. But that's because America is not necessarily a land that's so proficient in derech eretz. And therefore the first order of the night is to forget about democracy. Torah is more important than democracy and derech eretz is one of the foundations of Torah. And if you direct your remarks to the great man together with the one who accompanies him, that's already equivalent to belittling him; it's a lack of derech eretz.

Greeting Moshiach

You know who we learn that from? From Avrohom Avinu. You remember when the three malachim were passing his tent **וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם**, and he ran out to greet them? But we find that he spoke only to the one in the center **אִם נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אַל נָא תַּעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ**, because naturally that's the one who was most important. Why was he in the center? Because he's the more important one.

I explained this to you once, if you're walking down Thirteenth Avenue and you see three people coming towards you. Let's say on one side, you recognize it's the Satmerer Rav, and on the other side is, let's say, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. And walking right in between them, in the middle, there's an unknown person. So you understand right away that if he's in the middle of these two great people, then he must be more important than both of them. If he's between those two, probably he's Moshiach! And therefore he's the one you greet. Otherwise you're lacking in derech eretz.

Now, if you came here just to hear that, very good. You can be a baal derech eretz now. So if you meet your father in the street tomorrow morning and together with him someone else is walking, the person who deserves your attention is your father. "Good morning Papa." That's how to greet them the Torah way.



Enthusiasm

When Hashem commands Avraham to go and sacrifice his son Yitzchak, Avraham responds, "**הנני**" – I am here. I am willing to listen to all that Hashem asks of me, even though it will be emotionally devastating for me as Yitzchak is my only progeny. Furthermore, intellectually it made no sense as in the previous verses, Hashem already made it clear to Avraham that he planned for Yitzchak to be the one to carry on his lineage.

We find that the commandment to Avraham was not only to sacrifice his only beloved son, but to preserve the love that he had for him and to still do the Mitzvah. The Passuk says **קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת** – Take the son that you **Love**. A normal person in this situation would attempt to emotionally detach themselves from their son before performing such a difficult act. The commandment was to not do this, but to sacrifice him while preserving all of the love of a father to an only son.

The Midrash brings down then when Avraham was about to perform the sacrifice, he was aroused into a powerful cry with flowing tears. Nonetheless he continued with the act with great Simcha to do the will of Hashem - To preserve his love for his child, and at the same time, to serve Hashem with joy. From here perhaps we can begin to appreciate how dominant Avraham's desire was to serve his creator.

Another facet of Avraham's Mitzvah was that he even preformed this seemingly impossible act with *enthusiasm*. We see this enthusiasm illustrated in three ways. The Torah teaches us that he got up early in the morning to prepare for his journey. Additionally

he even saddled his own donkey and chopped his own wood. One could ask, certainly he could have found wood on the way to the mountain where he was going to sacrifice Yitchak, and even if not, he didn't have to chop it right away. Yet his deep desire to fulfill every aspect of Hashem's commandment personally and as early as possible motivated him to do this.

There is a Midrash in the **Yalkut Shimoni** which says that the Jews merited the splitting of the sea through Avraham's "chopping of the wood". This Midrash seems bizarre for certainly the actual sacrificing of his son should have generated a greater merit then the "chopping of the wood". Perhaps we could answer that it was specifically this chopping which portrayed Avraham's enthusiasm for the Mitzvah more than anything else and spawned the splitting of the sea many years later.

Altruism

This week's Parsha tells us about the tragic end of the 5 cities of Sedom. Hashem rained fiery sulphur upon them which totally annihilated them from the face of the earth as punishment for their wicked ways. However, Hashem decided to save the family of Avraham's nephew Lot.

Rashi brings the Midrash which asks why it was that Hashem deemed Lot worthy of survival. The Midrash answers that when Sarah was taken captive in Egypt, and Avraham falsely claimed to the Egyptians that Sarah was his sister, Lot could have spoken up and blown their cover. But in the merit that he kept silent, Hashem decided to save him from the horrifying end of the city of Sedom.

R' Ahron Kotler asks a very blatant difficulty on this Midrash. We know that Lot excelled in the commandment of hospitality. In fact, Lot was even willing to sacrifice his two daughters in order to protect the guests that were staying in his home from the evil

Sodomites. Now granted that this seems like a twisted method of performing kindness, and is certainly misguided, but we see how much he was willing to sacrifice for the commandment to perform hospitality. Why then was the only merit that the Midrash could come up with was that he shut his mouth and didn't rat out his holy uncle? Was this the sole merit that Lot was worthy to be saved?

R' Aharon explains beautifully in the name of his Rebbe, **the Saba from Slobodka**, that we have clear indication that Lot's kindness was not generated from his desire to keep Hashem's law, but was rather a mere imitation of Avraham's kindness. It was nothing more than Lot's attempt to reproduce what he saw in his uncle's house.

R' Aharon explains that a facsimile of anotherr person's good deeds is not considered a merit because its source is not authentic. Hashem desires that we serve him with our hearts, with a genuine understanding and appreciation of what that means, and if we can't provide that kind of legitimate service, Hashem does not want it.

The Gemorah in Pesachim, (50) says that a person should try to perform righteous deeds even if they are not for the sake of heaven, because by doing so, he will eventually reach the level where he is indeed doing them for the sake of heaven.

R' Simcha Zissel qualifies this Gemorah by saying that this will only happen if there is an aspect of his "non-Lishma" which is Lishma. In other words, he knows that he is not yet at the level where his intentions are fully altruistic, but his goal is to get there. However, explains R' Simcha, if a person does a good deed with absolutely no thought in it whatsoever, or worse, with negative intentions such as for honor or respect, there is no question about it that this kind of "good deed" will never lead to altruism!

May Hashem help us to merit to serve Him authentically, with all the right intentions!

Love For Hashem

This week's Parsha concludes the ten trials of Avraham Avinu, culminating with his being asked by Hashem to offer up his only son as a sacrifice on the altar on Mt. Moriah.

The lesson which the **Rambam** derives from these events is the Avos' incredible love for their Maker. Avraham waited for almost a century for Yitzchak to be born. Who knows how many tears he cried of frustration and anxiety about not having an heir or somebody from his own blood to continue his life's work, and just the simple pain of being childless? How could he do this to his dedicated and loving wife Sarah? It didn't make any sense on an intellectual level, it was unimaginably painful on an emotional level, yet the minute Avraham determined that this was what Hashem wanted from him, he embarked on his mission without any hesitation.

Furthermore, it took him three days to arrive at his destination, proving that it wasn't a whimsical act which he would have regretted later, rather it was a well thought out action, done with premeditation and serenity. How could he have done this were it not for his indescribable and unquenchable love for Hashem who had commanded him to do it!

The Slonimer Rebbe says that in fact, the entire test of Avraham Avinu was not whether he would carry through with the instruction or not, but rather how he would do it!

In truth, all Jews are required to attempt to emulate Avraham and generate as much love as they can for their Creator and allow this love to translate into action. The primary way to do this is to focus one's thoughts on how much Hashem does for him and has always done for him since he was a fetus, and how much He will continue to do for him during the natural course of his life. This love should in turn generate a powerful desire to serve that entity that has provided him with so much good.

R' Tzaddok Hakohen says that while we think that our thoughts are random and come and go from our brains as they please, this is not so. Every human being has the ability to control his thoughts by choosing what to focus on, thereby effectively placing in his mind on exactly what he wants to.

For example, if a person chooses to focus on how to increase his pleasure or comforts in life, this is probably what will occupy most of his imagination. Whereas if a person realizes that in truth, Hashem is the only real focus in his life, as Avraham did, even things like family, relationships, and livelihood, will all take a backseat compared to Hashem.

This is the love we are describing which a person must strive to reach in order to properly serve Hashem. There must be literally nothing else in his life.

R' Tzaddok offers a practical piece of advice to help a person reach this lofty state. He says that when a person wakes up in the morning, he should spend a few moments contemplating his love for Hashem, and doing a mental virtual walkthrough of his day, visualizing how he could serve Hashem at each point during the expected events of that day. What he can give up, or how he can tweak his service, and fine tune his actions so that they adequately reflect that love which he feels. This will certainly aid a person in this elusive goal.

May we all merit to strive for the love of Hashem that Avraham had, and to properly express that love in everything we do!

"The Torah teaches us to live a life of love; to love Hashem, to love people - and no less important - to love yourself." ~ Based on the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Yisrael ben Eliezer (1698-1760)



The Best Education for Children: Do As I Do

The Gemara says in Bava Metziah [86b], that everything that Avraham prepared for the Angels by himself, G-d prepared for Klal Yisroel in the Wilderness by Himself and everything that Avraham prepared for the Angels through an agent, G-d prepared for Klal Yisroel through an agent.

I once heard a comment from Rav Chatzkel Sarna: It says in the pasuk that Avraham asked Yishmael to help out in the preparations for the Angels. According to the principle of the above-mentioned Gemara, this was an inferior way of doing the mitzvah. Rather than doing it himself, he delegated it to an agent — Yishmael.

Rav Chatzkel Sarna asks, how can this be a complaint against Avraham? Why did he delegate the mitzvah to Yishmael? He wanted to educate him in the practice of extending hospitality to guests! How can we find basis for criticizing such a motive? Avraham wasn't being lazy by delegating the tasks to Yishmael. Avraham wanted to educated Yishmael. This is explicit in the Medrash.

Rav Sarna answers with a basic principle: The best way to educate your children — is to do it yourself! This is even better than to instruct them that they should do acts of kindness. Theoretical teaching is far surpassed by setting an example of what to do.

A Jew once came into the Chofetz Chaim and complained that his son was not learning. He said he could not understand why his son was not learning. "He certainly sees in me the importance of learning. I appreciate Rabbis, I give honor to Talmidei Chachomim, I give to

Yeshivas, I support Torah. Why doen't my son have a desire to learn?"

The Chofetz Chaim asked, "Do you learn?"

The man explained, "You know how it is, I'm busy…".

The Chofetz Chaim said, "You're going to raise a fine child. He's going to appreciate Rabbis, he's going to give honor to Talmidei Chachomim, he's going to support Torah and Yeshivas. Why? Because that's what you taught him. You want to teach him to learn? You have to learn!"

The best education is to do it yourself. If one learns himself — that is the best education for his children – that they should learn. If you do acts of chesed by yourself, that's the best education for your children – that they should do acts of chesed.

Chinuch can't be done on a theoretical basis. The best chinuch is to do it by yourself!

Wasted Chessed?

The pasuk in Micha says, תִּתֵּ֤ן אֱמֶת֙ לְיַעֲקֹ֔ב חֶ֖סֶד לְאַבְרָהָ֑ם "Give Truth (Emes) to Yakov, Kindness (Chessed) to Avraham…" [7:20]. That pasuk teaches us that the fundamental attribute of our first patriarch was his attribute of Chessed. Of the three parshiyos that deal with Avraham Avinu, Lech Lecha, Vayeira, Chayei Sarah, it is in Vayiera that the Torah chooses to highlight examples of this primary characteristic of his.

One example is providing hospitality on a hot day, 3 days after surgery as an old man, to three strangers. Another example is praying for the welfare of the people of Sodom, despite the fact that those people stand at the polar opposite of what he represents. These are the two primary examples from throughout the Torah's

narration of Avraham's life where we see his dedication to the attribute of kindness.

Is it not ironic that in both these incidents, the effort exerted by Avraham went virtually for naught? The angels did not need the food Avraham labored to prepare for him. Angels don't need food. They are not physical creatures! Again, all his prayers for Sodom were apparently wasted. Ten righteous people were NOT found in the city and so the city was destroyed. So, is it not strange that the two representative incidents of Chessed from the life of Avraham which the Torah highlights are incidents where the recipient did not really benefit from the kindness? Why then did the Torah choose these acts of chessed as "classic" depictions of Avraham's primary attribute?

The answer is that the Torah is instructing us what Chessed is all about. Chessed is not about what it does for the "other person", it is what it does for the person doing the act of kindness. Chessed is about being self-less. It is not about making someone feel good. Chessed is one of the acts through which a person can emulate the Almighty who "built the world with Chessed" [Tehillim 89:3].

When the Almighty does Chessed for us, it is totally selfless. Therefore, the Torah specifically picked these two incidents, where the act was totally selfless and not at all beneficial to the recipients, to demonstrate Avraham's emulation of this Divine attribute.

A person must realize that "chessed is not for the other guy, it is for me!" That is how we become G-d like. That is how we become self-less, rather than self-ish.

Unity is not sameness; unity is love that makes room for difference. ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson

Don't Look Back

In this week's Parsha, we learn of the destruction of the cities of Sodom, Amorah, Admah, and Tzvayim. The angels came and miraculously saved Lot and his daughters from the destruction of Sodom. They gave Lot only one instruction as they were saving him: **Don't look back!** He was told to head for the hills and run for his life and he would be saved, provided that he did not turn around to look at the destruction that was befalling his former neighbors.

Rashi explains the reason for this command was that Lot himself was not much better than the people of Sodom. Really, he should have been punished with the rest of the Sodomites and should have been part of the destruction. He was Only being saved in the merit of Uncle Avraham was he being saved; therefore he did not deserve to look back and watch the fate that was befalling those who were not much worse spiritually speaking than he was.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski offers another reason into why Lot was warned not to look back. As is his wont (k'darko b'kodesh), Rabbi Twerski offers a psychological insight into how to deal with one's evil inclination: Many times the greatest impediment to doing Teshuva [repentance] and to changing one's behavior is the fact that a person feels burdened by his past.

When a person looks back at his past and sees how he has sullied himself and the baggage which he carries from what he has committed in the past, he is overcome with feelings of despair and will likely say: How can I ever approach the Master of the World? How can I ever consider myself to be a righteous person? My past is just too sordid to ever become close to the Ribono shel Olam or make any kind of spiritual advance.

Because a person has these feelings of despair, he does not even try to do Teshuva or become closer because "How could the Holy One

Blessed Be He ever want a person like me?" Such a person is making one of the fundamental errors when it comes to Teshuva.

The way to save one's soul (via doing Teshuva) is to not look back and dwell on one's past mistakes. Lot, if you want to break away from your association with the people of Sodom and move forward with your life, don't dwell mentally on the fact that you were part and parcel of that evil society, lest you despair of being able to turn over a new leaf in your life.

In the evening prayers we say the expression "And remove Satan from before us and from behind us." This is because many times this is the approach of the Satan and the evil inclination: It is hopeless, you are beyond hope! This is the meaning of "Remove Satan from behind us" — Don't let the Evil Inclination convince us that because of our past (what is behind us) we cannot move forward. So too, that is what the angel meant when he told Lot: "Do not look behind you".

Exploring the Depth of Heavenly Mercy



The Be'er Mayim Chayim is a Chassidishe sefer, which is usually not my forte, but he has a beautiful insight here, which I would like to share.

The *Ribono shel Olam* informs Avraham that He was about to destroy Sodom. Avraham starts pleading with *Hashem*: Will you destroy Sodom even if there are 50 righteous people there? "No!" What about 45? "No!" Do I hear 40? Do I hear 30?

The Be'er Mayim Chayim says this is beginning to sound like the *shuk* (where haggling over purchase prices in the Arab market is

an everyday occurrence.) What is all this bargaining about? Avraham Avinu is not in the *shuk*. He is talking with the *Ribono shel Olam*! Why does it seem like an auction here – actually a 'reverse auction' where the numbers are going down rather than up?

The Be'er Mayim Chayim says that Avraham Avinu looked at this not only as an opportunity to save the people of Sodom. He viewed it as an opportunity to explore the extent of the *rachamei shamayim* (Divine Mercy). He knew "I need to emulate the *Ribono shel Olam*. I need to be a *rachaman*." Avraham wanted to see how deep and how profound the *Ribono shel Olam*'s *rachmanus* went.

Avraham gets into this "bidding" with the *Ribono shel Olam* not to "cut a better deal" or whatever. He does this to learn the depth of Heavenly Mercy. For that, Avraham Avinu says, "What about 45? What about 40? What about 30 and 20 and 10?

Rav Hutner's "Mitzvah L'Farsem" [Mitzvah To Publicize] Story

When Rav Hutner was learning in Slabodka he remembers that Rav Avraham Elya Kaplan went from Slabodka, Lithuania to Berlin to be with Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman. He came back to Slabodka for an Ellul [the month before Rosh Hashana] and the Alter from Slabodka asked for his impressions of the German people.

Among other things, Rav Kaplan told them that the Germans were a kind people. They had a polite way of speaking. If someone asks directions from a German, he doesn't just give orders (go two blocks and take a right); after he finishes the instructions, he will politely ask "nicht wahr?" (Is this not so?) This showed refinement. He would not say anything definitive; he would always end the sentence with a tentative, 'nicht wahr?'

At that point an argument broke out between the students of the Yeshiva. Was it right to praise the Germans? There were those who argued that it is wrong to praise them. We don't learn manners from other communities.



There was one student who persisted and argued that if one sees something nice in another culture, that should be learned and accepted and even praised. "Nicht wahr?" is a sign of politeness and thoughtfulness. It showed modesty and was admirable – why not learn it from the Germans?

Fifty years later, Rav Hutner was saying a shiur in the Chaim Berlin Yeshiva. A Jew walked in and said, "Do you remember me? I was that student in Slabodka that complemented the custom of the Germans and insisted that their way of speaking showed how gentle and fine a people they were."

Rav Hutner indicated that he did remember this student and he stuck out his hand to greet him. The Jew stuck out his hand and there was a hook in place of a hand. He lost his hand in the concentration camp.

He told Rav Hutner, "When the German cut off my hand in the concentration camp, do you know what he said?" The German said, "It hurts – nicht wahr? – Is it not so?"

"You, Rav Hutner were right, and I was wrong."

When there is no Fear of G-d, when there is no Divine Authority, then there are no guarantees. It is not up to us to decide "Never Again". We cannot guarantee that it will be "Never Again". Only the Ribbono shel Olam can determine whether it will be "Never Again".

Splitting of Wood Foreshadows Splitting of Reed Sea – Measure for Measure

The *pasuk* says "And Avraham got up early in the morning, he saddled his donkey, he took his two lads with him, and his son Yitzchak, **and he split wood for the olah offering**…" (Bereshis 22:3). He is on the way to the *Akeida*, during which he expects to offer Yitzchak as a *korban*. Offerings are burnt on a *mizbayach*. Wood is needed for the fire. In order to prepare the wood, he split the wood before beginning his journey (*Va'Yevaka atzei Olah*).

The Medrash says that *Hashem* proclaimed, "I will split for *his* descendants the Reed Sea in the merit of his having split the wood, as it is written "*Va'Yevaka atzei Olah*" (Bereshis 22:3) and it is written "*Va'Yebaku haMayim*" (Shemos 14:21). The Torah uses the same root word by *Krias Yam Suf* to indicate splitting that it uses by Avraham's splitting wood for the *Akeida*. In the merit of Avraham's chopping the wood, the waters at Yaf Suf split!

If the Medrash would say that in the merit of the *Akeidas Yitzchak* the *Yam* split, I could understand that. The *Akeida* involved superhuman *mesiras nefesh* for Avraham to sacrifice his own son. But how does splitting the wood merit such a miracle? Avraham needed to cut the wood because he needed firewood! What was so special about that action that merited the great miracle of *Krias Yam Suf*?

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960) interpreted the Medrash as follows: The Gemara says that it is easier to carry fifty pounds of gold than fifty pounds of feathers. Why is that? Is it not the same fifty pounds whether it is feathers or gold? The answer is that an ingot of gold is dense and compact and easy to carry. However, fifty pounds of feathers is very bulky, and is far clumsier to transport.

Now if you were Avraham Avinu and you needed to sacrifice your son, and you knew that you needed firewood, so you needed to take

some with you in case you would not find firewood on site, what should you do? Does it make sense to take one compact log, or to cut up the log before leaving home and shlep all the fragments of twigs and wood that came out of the chopping activity? Obviously, it is much easier to take the hunk of wood and chop it when you get to your destination! Avraham travelled for three days carrying this clumsy sack of wood! Very inefficient!

Why did he do it that way? The answer is that when he arrived at the *Akeida* and he put Yitzchak on the *Mizbayach*, he wanted to complete the job ASAP. He did not want to torment Yitzchak any more than necessary. If Yitzchak is lying there and then his father needs to begin chopping wood, Yitzchak may panic, or at the very least there will be *inui ha'din* (psychological trauma as a result of delayed implementation of judgement). Avraham Avinu did not want to prolong the agony of his son. He had the sensitivity and foresight to chop the wood before he left home so that when he arrived, everything would be ready.

Rav Tzvi Pesach cites a Medrash that when the Sea was split, they were supposed to step into the sea and then a little water would part. Then they would go further and more would part. With each step forward, more water would part. However, in the meantime, they would be surrounded by intimidating walls of water. The *Ribono shel Olam* said, "Avraham Avinu had the sensitivity to do the *Akeida* in a fashion that his act of chopping would not cause undue stress. So too, *Va'Yibaku HaMayim,* as soon as they entered the water, the entire sea split open, and they could immediately see the light at the end of the tunnel. This was the *midah k'neged midah*. The sensitivity of Avraham by the *Akeida* to not inflict any more anguish than necessary was replicated by the Almighty when He split the sea in a way which diminished the anguish of *Bnei Yisrael*.

The Name of The Game is Hishtadlus [Making the Effort]

I would like to quote a letter that **Rav Yitzchak Hutner, zt"l**, sent to **Rav Moshe Sherer, zt"l**. Rav Sherer wrote that in 1971 Agudath Israel of America, of which he was President, suffered a terrible setback. For years they worked on trying to pass legislation that would permit governmental aid to private education. Finally, after many years, they were able to pass a law that they felt met the constitutional requirements for preserving the separation of Church and State. However, the United States Supreme Court struck down this law in the summer of 1971. Literally years of work and money went down the drain with one decision.

Rav Sherer wrote that he received a letter that summer from Rav Hutner. Rav Hutner wrote, "When I heard the negative ruling of the Supreme Court, I saw an image of you and how you must have felt when you received that decision."

Rav Hutner quoted an insight from Reb Yisroel Salanter: When it comes to Community work, one must accept upon himself 3 resolutions: Never lose one's temper; never get tired; and never want to win.

'Winning isn't everything – winning is the Only thing' - Reb Yisrael Salanter says that the truth is just the opposite. When it comes to communal work, a person should not expect or even want to win — he just has to try!

Rav Hutner wrote, "I've seen you over the years and have noticed that in the face of adversity you haven't gotten angry. Over the 40 years that you've been in communal service, you have never gotten tired either. But now you must try to pass the most difficult of tests in communal endeavors. You have to learn that it is not crucial to win — it is only crucial to try."

Rav Hutner continued, "How do we see that this is a Jewish trait? Every single Rosh HaShannah we ask G-d for Mercy and invoke the

memory of Akeidas Yitzchak. But what happened at Akeidas Yitzchak? It never happened. The Akeida was 'aborted' in the middle of the mission. Avraham never killed Yitzchak! True, the mission was never accomplished — but Avraham received credit for trying! In this merit we seek Mercy every year. The clear lesson is that the importance lies not in seeing the final victory. The importance lies in putting forth the effort."

Success is for the football field, but for community efforts and 'holy work' the only thing that truly matters is 'how you play the game' — and the intensity and sincerity of the effort invested.

The Legacy of Avrohom and the Legacy of Yitzchak

There is a concept in Jewish thought called Emunas Chachamim. We must trust our leaders, even if their advice sometimes flies in the face of what we consider the right approach. From where do Jews get this ability to "blindly" listen to the Chachamim?

I once heard an explanation in the name of the **Chasam Sofer**. Yitzchak's test was, in a sense, even greater than the test faced by Avraham. Avraham heard from G-d Himself, that he was to sacrifice Yitzchak. But who told Yitzchak that he was to be a sacrifice? Yitzchak must have considered it awfully strange that Hashem who values life, wants a human sacrifice. Such ritual, after all, is an anathema to all that Torah stands for. But Yitzchak listened to the Chacham of his day. He had belief in the "Wise Ones".

This act on Yitzchak's part — to trust in his Chacham — is the original source of the character trait passed down by legacy to later generations of Jews — to have Emunas Chachamim, even in the face of apparent illogical reasoning.

At times, blindly following the advice of our Chachamim is no less a test than "Lech Lecha" [Go forth from your land]. But just as we

received the power to withstand the trials of "Lech Lecha" from Avraham, we received the power to withstand the trials of "Emunas Chachamim" from Yitzchak.

Let Them Eat Leftovers!

"Please take a bit of water, wash your feet, rest under the tree, and I will give you a little bread" [18:4]. We would think that the person who epitomized welcoming guests into his home would speak differently. Rather than promising a bit of water and a little bread and offering them rest under the tree, we would have expected that Avraham would invite them directly into his house, promise them a nice meal, and put them up in the finest accommodations.

Rav Nissan Alpert explains that many times we are hesitant to take guests into our house. Our excuse is that we really cannot do them justice. We cannot serve a meal that is appropriate for them. "We are having leftovers tonight." "We cannot serve tuna fish to the guests!" "We cannot give them the accommodations that they deserve." "I would rather not invite guests at all than invite them and not give them the honor that they deserve."

We learn just the opposite from Avraham Avinu. Proper hospitality is to invite the guests when they "show up". Let them eat Rice Krispies — a bit of water, a little bread — but invite them in. The lesson that our patriarch is teaching us regarding Hachnasas Orchim is to always be ready to have guests. People do not need sumptuous meals. People are even happy with tuna fish. They do not need more. They do not want more.

Rabbi Alpert said that his father used to say "One should never PREPARE for company; but one should always BE PREPARED for company."

Avraham's Prayers For Sodom Did Help

When Hashem was about to destroy Sodom, He said "Will I hide from Avraham that which I am about to do?" [18:17]. He then told Avraham about the imminent destruction of Sodom. Avraham prayed…Ultimately G-d destroyed Sodom anyway.

This narration is hard to understand. G-d knew that he was going to destroy Sodom. G-d knew up front that Sodom did not possess 50 or 40 or even 10 righteous people. So what was He doing? Was He playing games with Avraham? It seems as if He was dangling a little prize called Sodom in front of Avraham, challenging him to save the city. It seems as if He was teasing Avraham, because there was no way that Avraham could win the prize! Avraham grasped for the prize, as it were, but could never catch it! It appears as if G-d was setting Avraham up for disappointment.

The fact is that it is possible that G-d was actually doing a tremendous service to Avraham. This exercise helped Avraham to become the pillar of Chessed [altruistic kindness] that he would ultimately represent. We fail to realize that when we pray for something or for someone, those prayers have an effect on us regardless of whether those prayers are answered or not.

How many times have we come together as individuals or as a group and poured out our prayers for somebody? There are unfortunately times when "it did not work" and the effort was seemingly to no avail. We ask ourselves "What did we do?" We did what we could. We fasted. We cried. We gave charity. But it did not help!

This is a tremendous mistake. It did help. Even if it did not help anyone else, at least it helped us! We became better people because we were concerned about somebody else. We prayed and we gave our hearts. We did something. We became better.

This is what Hashem was telling Avraham. "Pray! I will not destroy Sodom until you pray. Why? I know your prayers will not be

effective. I know Sodom is doomed. But that is irrelevant. You, Avraham, will become a different person as a result of those prayers. You will perfect your attribute of Chessed, your attribute of caring and compassion. That is what it is all about."

This is so important when we pray for something or someone. We should never think that the prayers are for naught. We do not know what the prayers accomplished — even for the person for whom we are praying. Maybe, somehow, they lightened the load. We can only speculate about that. But there is one thing regarding which we can be certain — we became different people because of those prayers.

If Avraham Worries About Mustard, Then So Must We



Our Rabbis tell us that when Avraham served the Angels, he gave them tongue with mustard. **Rav Pam**, of Blessed Memory, once expressed surprise that Avraham had mustard available. We can understand that if we peek into the refrigerator of a 'normal' person, we will find pickle relish, sandwich spread, pickled artichoke hearts, and all similar type of foods. However we might imagine that if we looked into the refrigerator of an individual known for his righteousness and piety we would find just the basics. We can assume that he would not be 'into' all the condiments that are available. If we would not expect to find pickle relish in the refrigerator of a contemporary Gadol HaDor, why did Avraham Avinu have mustard in his refrigerator?

Is this telling us that Avraham Avinu only ate his hot dogs with mustard? He was certainly beyond that. He was a holy individual! Why did he have mustard in the house?

Rav Pam explained that the answer is obvious. The bigger and the more holy a person becomes, the more he becomes aware of the needs of others. Of course, he personally did not care to spread mustard on his piece of tongue. But precisely because he is this giant of kindness, he knows that although he does not need mustard, the average guest coming down the road does want mustard. He therefore feels that he must have mustard in his kitchen to be prepared for that simple guest who does put more emphasis on the taste of his food. Not everyone is an Avraham Avinu.

We must always deal with others with kindness and with empathy. Furthermore, in doing acts of Chessed, we must remember that a primary responsibility for delivering kindness is in one's home. "From your flesh you should not keep yourself aloof" [Isaiah 58:7]. We must take the lesson of the parsha to heart — it is our responsibility to worry about everyone's mustard.

On January 1st, 2000 the New York Times ran a millennium edition. It featured three cover pages. One had the news from January 1, 1900; the second one was the actual news of the day; and the third one projected future events of the year 2100, like welcoming Cuba as a new state, robots demanding equality and voting rights.

But there was one more thing. There was an ad. Nobody paid for it. It was a fictional ad. It was put in there by the New York Times. So, what was it? -It was Candle Lighting for Shabbos January 1, 2100.

When asked about it, the publisher (an Irish-Catholic) commented, "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain. That in the year 2100, Jewish women will be lighting Shabbat candles."

In the 6th Verse, the Anonymous Host Suddenly Becomes "Avraham"

The first five pasukim of the Parsha do not mention the name Avraham. In the entire narration — in which Avraham clearly plays the primary role — the pasuk only uses the pronoun 'he' or 'to him'. Then, the sixth pasuk suddenly says, "And Avraham speedily went to the tent of Sarah and said 'Quickly knead three measures of fine flour and make rolls.'" [Bereishis 18:6].

Stylistically, this seems strange. If it is important to know the main character involved in this narration, the Parsha should have begun with the words "And G-d appeared to Avraham" (rather than "And G-d appeared to him"). We would have expected the name Avraham to appear at least once in the first five pasukim. If, on the other hand, we can assume that we know who the protagonist is in this Parsha without mentioning his name, then why did the Torah need to suddenly mention Avraham's namein the sixth pasuk?

The answer is another lesson in hospitality. Guests should never be made to feel that the host is personally being made to serve them. When he began to serve them, it was not 'Avraham' – the famous 'Avraham,' the father of many nations – who was serving them. They did not even realize who their host was. The pasuk speaks anonymously because that is how our Patriarch Avraham acted. He did not want his guests to feel uncomfortable with the idea that he was serving them himself.

However, in the sixth pasuk, Avraham wanted to encourage his wife and children to get involved in the act. Therefore, he emphasized his personality. The Prince of Many Nations himself was running and enthusiastically participating in this mitzvah of hospitality in order that he might inspire his wife and children to do likewise. He thereby impressed upon his family members the idea that these guests are truly worthy of being served by an important individual such as

himself — and implicitly are worthy of being served by individuals such as themselves as well.

The lesson that the Torah is teaching is that a host should always "blend into the woodwork" rather than make it seem like he is going through great effort to accommodate his visitors. This is how Avraham conducted himself and we should emulate his behavior.

Sarah Should Have Said 'Amen'

This week's Parsha contains a comment of the **Ramba"n** that is very novel.

Sarah overhears the news that the "guests" delivered to her husband that she would become pregnant and have a child. She laughed inwardly asking incredulously, "After I have withered shall I again have clear skin? And my husband is old!" [Bereishis 18:12]

The Almighty was apparently upset with her reaction. In the very next pasuk Hashem asks Avraham, "Why did Sarah laugh saying: 'Is it even true that I shall give birth though I have aged?' Is anything beyond Hashem? [Bereishis 18:13]

The Ramba"n asks why the Almighty was upset at Sarah's quite natural reaction. The "news" that she heard was not delivered (according to her perception) by great individuals or even by righteous people. As far as she knew, an idol-worshipping Arab delivered this message.

This would be as if we found ourselves walking on the street and some nut would approach us and announce to us that we will soon win the lottery. Would we be expected upon hearing such 'news' to bow down and express gratitude to the Master of the Universe? We would more than likely dismiss our "good tidings bearer" as some kind of lunatic!

Sarah had such characters coming through her house every day. Why should the Almighty have complaints against Sarah for not taking the news seriously? She did not know they were Angels. She thought they were crazy!

The Ramba"n teaches us an interesting lesson. He says that Sarah should have said "Amen! May this be G-d's Will!"

The implication is that the next time we walk on the streets of Baltimore and some panhandler asks for a quarter and we give him a quarter and the panhandler says, "You should win the Maryland State Lottery" our answer should be "Amen!"

If we fail to respond "Amen" to such a situation, G-d may have complaints against us.

The complaint is not that Sarah did not BELIEVE the blessing of the Arab would come true. The complaint is that she did not HOPE that it would come true. The complaint is that she did not respond with the word "Amen".

The Tenth Test Validated The First Nine

The parsha of the Akeida is well known. Not only does it appear prominently at the end of this week's parsha, and is part of the Torah reading on Rosh Hashana, some people have the custom to recite it daily.

Avraham is told "Kach Nah es bincha es yechidcha asher ahavta es Yitzchak" – please take your son, your only son, whom you love — Yitzchak. The Gemara [Sanhedin 89b] comments on the expression "nah" [please]: This is comparable to a king who had to fight many wars to protect his kingdom. He had a mighty warrior in charge of his battles who was always successful in his military efforts. Apparently, this mighty warrior got older, peace reined for many years and the warrior was in semi-retirement. Then another war

loomed on the horizon. The king went back to his trusted warrior and asked "please do me a personal favor, come back and fight one more war for me, so people will not say 'the first battles mean nothing'. If you cannot win this last war for me, my whole reputation will be destroyed."

So too, G-d comes to Avraham and tells him "I have tested you with many tests and you have withstood all of them. But I need you to undergo just one more test so that it not be said that the first tests were insignificant."

How could anyone say after the 9 tests that Avraham already underwent that "the first tests were insignificant?"

Rav Yosef Grossman quotes Rav Schwab as giving the following answer to this question: People would say "Avraham, no matter how great you are and no matter how much you achieved in your lifetime, if you are not successful in passing the tradition over to your children then what came before is insignificant." Now G-d was giving a test to Avraham that would be a test not only of his own dedication, but also of the dedication of his 37-year-old son, Yitzchak. If Yitzchak would tell his father "Dad, I am not buying into this; this is not for me; this is your religion, not mine" then in effect, Avraham's valiant success in passing all his other spiritual tests would have been insignificant.

Avraham Avinu is not only about personal perfection. Avraham Avinu is about creating a legacy that he passes on to his children and his children's children. Avraham Avinu was not only successful in creating a religion but in passing it on to his offspring. Had he been unsuccessful in this last test, the value of his success in passing all of the previous test could indeed be questioned.

Rashi in Lech Lecha cites the idea that each letter in Yitzchak's name was symbolic. The Tzadee alludes to the fact that his mother was 90 years old when she bore him. The Ches refers to the fact

that he was circumcised on the 8th day of his life. The Kuf symbolizes the fact that his father was 100 years old when he was born. Finally, the Yud symbolizes the fact that his father Avraham withstood ten tests.

Rav Yosef Grossman asks how the Yud referring to the ten tests of Avraham relates to Yitzchak. It seems to relate to Avraham, rather than to Yitzchak.

The answer is that Yitzchak validated all ten tests. If not for Yitzchak cooperating willingly at the Akeida, others could rightfully consider the first nine tests insignificant. Therefore, the Yud is an appropriate part of Yitzchak's name. He had a crucial role in confirming the validity of all of the previous tests that his father withstood.

The True Proof That Avraham Was A True Baal Chessed

Parsha Vayera is known as the parsha portraying the great hospitality and acts of Gemillas Chesed of Avraham Avinu. It is in this parsha that, even though he was ill and suffering, Avraham went out of his way to seek guests to host in his tent. Avraham was the archetypical "benefactor of kindness" (gomel chessed).

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, in his Emes L'Yakov, makes the following observation. The Medrashim are replete with the various types of hospitality that Avraham demonstrated. "He planted an Eishel in Beer Sheva" [Bereishis 21:33]. Chazal tell us that the word Eishel [Aleph-shin-lamed] (which superficially refers to a tree planted for shade) is an acronym for Achilah [food], Shtiyah [drink], and Levaya [accompaniment]. Avraham's tent was open to all four sides, to make sure he would catch the guests from whichever direction they approached. Throughout the words of our Sages, Avraham is associated with the Divine Attribute of Chessed.

Yet it seems that this is the only parsha where we see explicitly that Avraham engaged in acts of kindness. This incident at the start of Vayera is the paradigm of Avraham Avinu's chessed. We find no mention of it in Lech Lecha or in Chayei Sarah.

Rav Yaakov also wonders about the juxtaposition of this act of kindness to the story of the destruction of Sodom. Rav Yaakov suggests that the Biblical proof that Avraham Avinu was such a master of kindness is not from the brief incident with the Angels at the start of the parsha. Rather, the proof emerges from the juxtaposition of the two stories — that of hosting the guests and that of the destruction of Sodom.

Sodom was noteworthy for their lack of hospitality. They had mandated local legislation prohibiting hospitality. Any person caught practicing acts of chessed in Sodom was severely punished. This society did not only have laws forbidding loitering and all kinds of other things — they actually had anti-chessed laws!

The nature of human beings is that if one has a proclivity to act in a certain way and someone else acts in a diametrically opposite fashion then by nature they have negative feelings towards each other. The people of Sodom represented the very antithesis of Avraham's personality. All that he preached and practiced throughout his lifetime — regarding kindness towards one's fellow man — was mocked and rejected in its entirety by the Sodomite society. They negated and undermined all the influence Avraham was trying to exert in the world by acting in the way they did.

It would be only natural and understandable for Avraham's reaction to be one of joy and jubilation upon hearing the news from the Almighty that "I am going to destroy Sodom". At the very least, we would have expected an attitude of "Good riddance! Go for it!"

Rashi (on the words Vayigash Avraham) states that the word Vayigash connotes three different things. It can mean drawing near

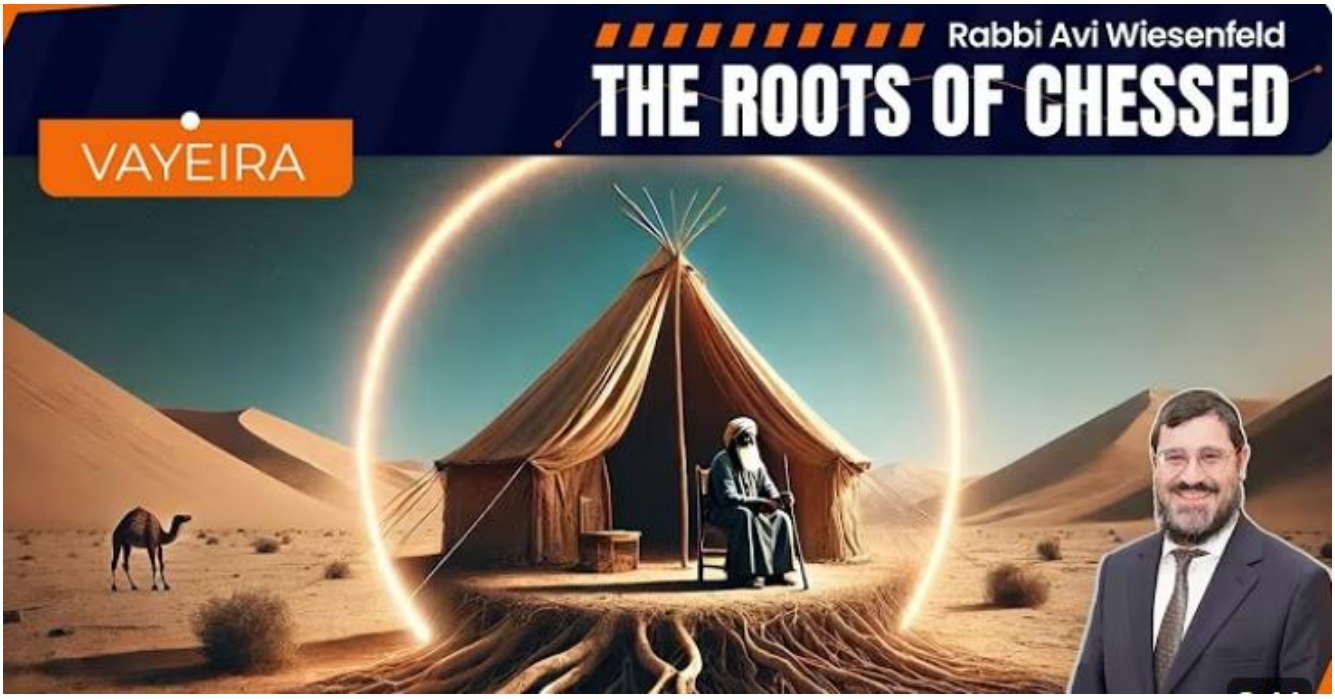
for the sake of war, for the sake of prayer, or for the sake of seeking to appease.

We can understand how Avraham's approach before the Almighty might be for prayer or might be to seek to mollify Him. However, how shall we understand the third connotation of the word — drawing near to do battle?

I saw once a comment that this was a personal battle that Avraham had to fight within himself. He was torn. On the one hand, he felt "Get rid of these people. They deserve to be wiped out for their meanness and selfishness." On the other hand, Avraham overcame this emotion and countered it with his plea on behalf of the Sodomites which was the other (victorious) side of his personal battle regarding the matter.

This is the paradigm of Avraham's great attribute of Chessed. It is not merely that as an ill and elderly man, he rushed to serve three travelers on a hot day when he was suffering from recent surgery. The paradigm is the juxtaposition of the two incidents. Immediately after being introduced to Avraham's propensity for hospitality, which might lead us to assume Avraham would be satisfied with the demise of an anti-hospitality society, we see that Avraham wrestles with that natural inclination and prays for the welfare even of the Sodomites. He does this not in a perfunctory fashion, but in a long and eloquent dialog with the Almighty, pleading for the welfare of the Sodomites. He begs for them!

This is the quintessential Baal Chessed — one whose love of people is so great that it overrides every other intellectual or emotional consideration that he might have. This is why Parshas Vayera is known as the parsha which personifies the great attributed of Chessed manifested by Avraham Avinu.



We are introduced to Avrohom Avinu. This pillar of chessed, taking advantage of every opportunity to do a kindness with anyone that he met, paving the way for the chessed that Klal Yisrael are known to do so well.

We are told in this week's parsha, the way that he treated these Arabs that were really angels, in such an incredible way, running and serving them whilst he was ill, to give them what they needed.

What's so strange is that when we come to the episode of a city called Sedom that is about to be destroyed, and it comes to the attention of Avrom Avinu, he is devastated, and he almost begs The Ribboino Shel Olam – "Please save the city of Sedom."

Now, the values that Sedom had were completely diametrically opposed to the values of Avrohom Avinu. He should have been overjoyed that Sedom was to be destroyed. Yet, Avrohom Avinu was trying desperately trying to save it. – Why?

Explains the **Slonimer Rebbe** (Nesivos Sholom) because Avrohom Avinu had chessed infused in every fibre of his body.

There was a very wealthy couple that were known to give tzedakah generously throughout the world. Unfortunately, they experienced

a tragedy – The wife died at a very young age. The community were shocked, and people around the world were broken-hearted.

Stories had come out about how the wife had been secretly sending money to all sorts of people that she had met over the years, just to help them out and give them what they needed.

People wondered about the age difference of this couple – which was huge. How did they get together?

At the shiva, the husband explained the following: He had been previously married. He hired a young girl to work for him in his office. One day, they were walking together in the street to a business-related meeting, when they came across a beggar requesting money. I gave the beggar generously.

The woman turns to her boss, and says, "Tell me, would you be willing to lend me a large sum of money now?"

He said, "Sure", – wondering why she needed it now. He gives it over to her, and straight away she hands it to the beggar!

He said, "Why did you do that?, I just gave him nicely."

She answered, "What you gave him was indeed very generous, and it will certainly make a difference to him for today, but it won't help him in his life moving forward."

That man tragically lost his wife at a young age, and he remarried that young woman. That's how they got together. He said, "Her heart was bigger than my heart." - It's one thing to help people, but it's another thing to feel it in your heart.

This tells us the Torah is the middo of Avrohom Avinu. Every fibre of his body infused with chessed, paving the path for every single one of us. Not only to do the chessed, but also to feel the pain of every single Yid. – Have a wonderful Shabbos.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

Down from Heaven

On the eve of 5 Shvat, 5744/1984, the Baba Sali, Rabbi Yisrael Abuchatzeira, returned his pristine soul to Shamayim. It was clear that with the passing of this holy tzaddik, middas hadin had prevailed upon middas harachamim, and on the way home from his funeral, four righteous Jews were killed in a gruesome car accident.

The car held five men: Rav Yehoshua Blas, a noted member of the chevrah kaddisha; Rav Yehoshua Margalit, founder and director of Yad Ezra; Rav Yitzchok Eizik Weiss, son of the Spinka Rebbe; and another talmid chacham named Reb Yaakov Berkowitz. The fifth person in the car was Meir Abish Weiss, an eleven-year-old grandson of the Spinka Rebbe. This boy was the sole survivor of the fatal crash that left his father and another three dead.

Paramedics and rescue forces reached the accident scene minutes after the frightening crash. While searching for survivors, one paramedic found a little boy whose internal organs were jutting out. Due to the child's critical state, the medic was reluctant to attend to him, yet realizing that it was a matter of minutes, he returned the organs to their places and stanched the massive blood flow.

The patient was rushed to Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon, where the doctors took one look at the child's injuries and professed that it was beyond their capacity. He was then flown by helicopter to Hadassah Ein Kerem in Jerusalem.

While the boy hovered between life and death in Jerusalem, his family was preparing for his father's funeral in Bnei Brak. The doctors had gently warned the family that the boy would not survive the injury, and the family was now struggling with the heart-wrenching debate of whether to conduct the father's funeral

immediately or to wait several hours and then conduct both simultaneously.

When they approached the Spinka Rebbe with the question, he ruled that under no circumstances should they postpone the levayah. Turning to his daughter-in-law, the fresh almanah, he instructed gently, "You should not sit shivah. You have eight children, kein ayin hara, and your son is in the hospital. You're engaged in a mitzvah and exempt from the mitzvah. Go to Yerushalayim. Your place right now is with your son."

The rebbe proceeded to the massive levayah, where he delivered a tearful eulogy for his beloved son. In the midst of the hesped, he shouted, "Ribono Shel Olam! You wrote in Your holy Torah, 'Do not slaughter him and his son on the same day!' Please, Hashem, have mercy on the family! Today, the father became a korban tzibbur! Will the son perish on the same day? Ribono Shel Olam, I'm asking in public that You fulfill the words of Your Torah here in This World!"

Shortly afterward, the boy's condition stabilized, and he merited a miraculous recovery. Upon arrival, the doctors averred that the paramedic who had replaced his internal organs had undoubtedly saved his life in the short term. However, the boy's liver and kidneys were permanently damaged, and he would require dialysis; his intestines were so severely injured that, even if he survived, he would never be able to eat again. Yet, miraculously, the child merited a full recovery.

The family was eager to meet the paramedic who had saved the boy's life, and they placed large newspaper ads in Ashkelon and the surrounding areas announcing that they were searching for him. - Several days later, a bareheaded Sephardic man walked into the Spinka court and introduced himself as the paramedic who had treated the young victim of the car crash. A Moroccan immigrant and resident of Ashkelon, he was remote from Torah Judaism, and

stumbled over the pronunciation of "Spinka," which, unsurprisingly, he had never heard of.

The visitor was welcomed royally, and the family thanked him profusely and tearfully for saving the child's life.

At one point during the meeting, the paramedic was asked, "Why did you decide to treat him when it was obvious that death was imminent?"

"You want to know why?" the paramedic replied. "I'll tell you.

When I reached the accident scene, I found four adults already dead, and a little boy who was taking his last breaths. His internal organs were spilling out of his body, and I saw that there was nothing to do. I stood there waiting for the ambulance to arrive, but an old man with a beard who stood beside me urged me to try. 'Why aren't you helping the boy? He's still alive! Do something!'

"It's a lost case. Unfortunately, it's too late for him,' I explained.

"Don't give up! Even if you don't succeed, you'll know that you tried!' the man argued.

Unable to withstand his entreaties, I decided to give it a try. Gently, I pressed the organs back into place and tried getting a pulse."

"Who is this man? What did he look like?" the rebbe asked eagerly. But the paramedic only shrugged. "I don't know. I never saw him before in my life."

The guest lingered for a little longer, and just as he was about to depart, he spied a large, framed photo hanging on the wall. "That's him!" he cried, pointing in surprise.

His shout startled the others.

"Who?"
"I don't believe it! He's younger, but it's definitely him!"

"Who?!"

"The old man who was at the accident scene-the same old man who begged me to try to save the boy's life."

"Are you sure?" the rebbe asked in a trembling voice.

"I have no doubt about it!"

The color drained from the rebbe's face. The man in the photo was the Chakal Yitzchok of Spinka, who had perished forty years earlier in the Holocaust!

It was an hour of middas hadin. The Baba Sali had just passed away, and four righteous Jews, all shluchei mitzvah who devoted their lives to Klal Yisrael, had died a grisly death. One little boy was in critical condition, and even the paramedic who had rushed to the scene to save his life despaired.

At this painful hour, when all seemed lost, Hakadosh Baruch Hu proclaimed, "Now, when things are at their worst, I am sending the child's grandfather from Shamayim to save his life!"

Today, nearly forty years after this accident took place, the surviving grandson serves as a rav of a beis medrash in Bnei Brak.

Make Yourself at HoMe!

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו ***"…And behold, three men were standing over him…"*** *(18:2)*

There are some people who look like they're giving but they're really taking. And there are some people who look like they're taking when they're really giving.

Anyone who buys a $5,000-a-plate charity dinner is giving a lot of charity, but he's also getting a lot of status mixed in with his sushi.

On the other hand there are people who look like they're takers but they're really giving. Once there was a Jewish traveling salesman who found himself in a largely non-Jewish town on Friday afternoon. His business had delayed him way beyond his expectations and there was now no way he could get home for Shabbat.

He had heard that there was just one Orthodox family in town where he could spend Shabbat, and as the sun was starting to set he made his way there.

The owner of the house opened the door to him and showed him into the front parlour. "Can I stay here for Shabbat?" asked the traveling salesman. "If you like," replied the host. "The price is $200."

"$200!" exclaimed the travelling salesman. "That's more than a first-class hotel!"

"Suit yourself," replied the host.

Realizing that he had no option, the salesman reluctantly agreed. In the short time left before Shabbat the host showed the salesman his room and the kitchen and the other facilities for his Shabbat stay.

As soon as the host had left the room the salesman sat down and thought to himself. "Well, if this is going to cost me $200 I'm going to get my money's worth." And for the whole of the Shabbat he availed himself unstintingly of the house's considerable facilities. He helped himself to the delicious food in the fridge. He had a long luxurious shower before and after Shabbat. He really made himself "at home."

When he had showered and packed he made his way downstairs and plunked two crisp $100 bills down on the table in front of his host.

"What's this?" enquired the host. "That's the money I owe you," replied the salesman.

"You don't owe me anything. Do you really think I would take money from a fellow Jew for the mitzvah of hospitality."

"But you told me that Shabbat here costs $200." "I only told you that to be sure that you would make yourself at home."

When a guest comes to your home, his natural feeling is one of embarrassment. No one likes being a taker. When a guest brings a present the worst thing you can say is "You shouldn't have done that!" Rather, take the bottle of wine (or whatever it is), open it up and put in the middle of the table and say "Thank you so much."

By allowing him to contribute to the meal, you will mitigate his feeling of being a taker and you will have done the mitzvah of hospitality to a higher degree.

The mitzvah of hospitality is greater than receiving the Divine Presence. We learn this from the beginning of this week's Torah portion. G-d had come to visit Avraham on the third day after his *brit mila*— the most painful day. G-d made the day extremely hot so that Avraham should not be bothered by guests.

When G-d saw that Avraham was experiencing more pain from his inability to do the mitzvah of hospitality than the pain of the *brit mila,* He sent three angels who appeared as men so that Avraham could do the mitzvah of hospitality. When these 'men' appeared, Avraham got up from in front of the Divine Presence to greet his guests. Hospitality is greater than receiving the Divine Presence.

"בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם"

"Hashem's love for us surpasses the love a parent has for his children. Think about that for a moment – It is the greatest happiness in the world." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

Rabbi Yosef Weiss ZT"L -Shabbos Food from Heaven!



There was once a salesman from Deal, New Jersey, whose business required him to travel around the country for several weeks at a time. He was an observant Jew, and he always tried to schedule his trips around stops for the Sabbath in places where kosher food was more readily available. This way he could stock up for the coming week. One of his usual stops for Shabbos was in Memphis, Tennessee. On one of his trips to Birmingham, Alabama, he contacted the president of a company which he was hoping to get an account with. His attempts in the previous years had been unsuccessful. However, this particular year he was pleasantly surprised. The president wanted to meet with him, and he made an appointment for that day. Unfortunately, the president was in a meeting which took longer than he had expected, and the salesman was told to return the next morning, which was Friday.

The same scene repeated itself the next morning, and the salesman needed to get to Memphis, pick up his food, and check into his hotel before sundown. He burst into the president's office and told him it was now or never. He received a small order and left. He made it to Memphis too late to get his food, but he decided to at least spend the Sabbath in the better hotel across the street.

Embittered by the "mess" he had gotten himself into he took a room and began to unpack. To his utter disbelief, he found in the closet of room a certified kosher meal enough to serve ten people. He even found wine! He could not imagine where it came from, but it had

obviously been abandoned. He thanked G-d for the wonderful gift and enjoyed the Sabbath.

Some weeks later he was back home with some friends, and he overheard them speaking about their trip to Memphis, and how it had been cut short by a health problem. "What ever happened to all that food we brought in?" one of them said.

The salesman interrupted. "I know what happened to it." All eyes were now on him. "I ate it." *[The story is taken from the book Visions of Greatness, by Rabbi Yosef Weiss ZT"L.]*

Was Yitzchok slaughtered at the Akaida?



1) Before Avraham was about to slaughter Yitzchok, he was told do not stretch your hand out against the boy- **אל תשלח ידך אל הנער**. The Midrash says that from here we see a hint from the Torah to **תחית המתים** ; resurrection of the dead. Continues the Midrash- even Yitzchok said **ברוך...מחיה המתים** How do we see from this Pasuk a hint to **תחית המתים** ?

2) The Pasuk states **לספד לשרה ולבכתה** ; Avraham eulogized Sarah. **The Megale Amukos** wonders why didn't Yitzchok- an only child to Sarah- also eulogize her?

3) Seeing Yitzchok, Rivka said **מי האיש הלזה ההלך בשדה לקראתנו** who is that man walking in the field toward us. How are we to grasp the holy Rivka inquiring about one of the opposite gender?

4) Rashi tells us on **ויגדלו הנערים**; the boys grew up, that Yaakov and Esav were 13 years old at the time. However, when we do the calculation, we see that they were actually 15! This is because Avraham was 100 when Yitzchok was born and Yitzchok was 60 when his children- Yaakov and Esav- were born. 100 and 60 is 160. 13 years later would make Avraham 173. Yet we know that he was 175 when-he died?

5) The Yerushalmi says that the lives of the Avos come to a total of 500 years. However, adding up the years of the Avos- Avraham was 175, Yitzchok 180 and Yaakov 147- we arrive at a total of 502, not 500?

Although we commonly think that Yitzchok wasn't slaughtered at the Akaida, the Midrash informs us of an opinion that he actually was slaughtered. This fits with the terminology we find in Chazal **לפני אפרו של יצחק נראה**... ; the ashes of Yitzchok are before me on the **מזבח** since he was actually slaughtered.

It is also implicit in the phrasing of Rashi who says through hearing the news of the Akaida that her son was ready for slaughter **וכמעט שלא נשחט** ... , she passed away. Rashi should say **כמעט נשחט** if he was nearly slaughtered. **כמעט שלא נשחט** implies that he was slaughtered at the Akaida.

R' Yeshaya Hertz from Dinov in his Sefer **הנותן אמרי שפר** explains really Yitzchok was slaughtered at the Akaida and was later brought back to life by Hashem. If so, how do we explain **אל תשלח ידך אל הנער וגו'** ; don't slaughter Yitzchok. This was said after Hashem resurrected him, as Hashem was saying to Avraham don't send forth your hand for a second time.

From here we see a hint to **תחית המתים** from the Torah! Yitzchok was the first one to have such a miracle like this happen to him. Indeed, we find a hint to the resurrection in his name as **יצחק** rearranged spells **קץ חי** - after he dies, he is then brought back to

life. Furthermore, the second Bracha of Shemona Esrei- the Bracha of **תחית המתים** - corresponds to Yitzchok.

From the wound he sustained at the Akaida, he needed to be healed. He was thus taken to Gan Eden for 2 years to be healed, says the Midrash. This is why after the Akaida it says **וישב אברהם** - Avraham returned, since Yitzchok wasn't with him as he was in Gan Eden. We can now explain how Yitzchok recognized the smell of Gan Eden on Yaakov, when he gave him the Brachos- **וירח את ריח בגדיו** ; he smelled the fragrance of his garments. When it says Yitzchok was 60 when Yaakov and Esav were born, it doesn't include the two years he was in Gan Eden. He therefore was really 62. Consequently, Avraham was 162 when they were born. 13 years later make Avraham 175.

We can now comprehend why the Yerushalmi says only 500 years and not 502, regarding the years of the lives of the Avos, as it doesn't include the two years that Yitzchok was in Gan Eden. It was at this time in Gan Eden that Yitzchok's mother died. He therefore didn't eulogize his mother. This also explains why upon seeing Ytzchok, Rivka commented **מי האיש הלזה ההלך בשדה לקראתנו** as he was just in Gan Eden.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The *Baal Shem Tov* gives us an insight into the concept of *V'Ahavta L'Rei'acha Kamocha*, 'loving your friend as you would love yourself'.

When a person gets up in the morning and takes stock of himself, he thinks, "I am basically a good person. I have my faults, weaknesses, and shortcomings, and I am not perfect. But I am more good than bad."

This, the *Baal Shem Tov* says, is how we must evaluate others. We must say, "He is basically good, and I can overlook any of his faults!"

Rabbi Leibie Sternberg



There was a bochur who became a very big Masmid, staying up all night, sleeping during the day, and when the **Steipler** heard about it, he asked the bochur to come see him. The Gaon started out by quoting the Gemara and Rambam regarding the importance of learning at night. The bochur felt justified hearing this, after all the ridicule he endured. The Steipler continued: "Imagine such nonsense ! When going to sleep, people take off their shoes, change into pyjamas, etc..

R' Itzile Ponovezher would fall asleep with his glasses on – if he had had the strength to remove them, he would have continued learning". The Gaon went on. "But the main thing is that one must be NORMAL ! What may have been normal when I was a bochur is not normal today. You must learn by day and sleep at night, in pyjamas, like everyone else. If not, your learning will not have Hatzlacha !"

אורחות צדיקים שער התשיעי - שער השמחה

וכל העושה המצוות בשמחה – יש לו שכר אלף ידות יותר ממי שהמצוות עליו למשא

"And everyone who fulfils the Commandments with joy has a thousand times the reward of one to whom the Commandments are a burden!" (9:68)

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Avraham brings water for his guests to wash their feet. Rashi (Bereishis 18:4) writes, "He thought they were Arabs who bow to the dust on their feet, and Avraham was cautious that avodah zarah shouldn't enter his home." We have no other reference to such a form of avodah zarah; of people bowing down to the dust on their feet.



The **Divrei Yechezkel (Shinover Rav zt'l)** explains that he thought they were merchants, and merchants, so to speak, bow down to the dust on their feet, because they think their successes and their wealth is because they went here or there. Avraham had them wash their feet, to remove this form of avodah zarah, for it isn't one's feet that go to this place or to that place that causes wealth, and it isn't one's hands that bring wealth and success. Everything is up to Hashem.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter -A Light In The Dark

We have a custom on the night of the Seder to eat eggs. Among the various reasons offered is that the more an egg is cooked the harder it gets.

The same can be said of us Jews that the more we have been persecuted and the like, the firmer we have been in our service of Hashem. Indeed, this is what is meant in our title **עם קשה ערף**, a stubborn nation.

In this light, we can grasp **וכאשר יענו אתו כן ירבה וכן יפרץ**—the more we are afflicted the more we increase in our service of Hashem and the like.

A Russian boy who had his Bris performed at the age of 14 desired for his 12-year-old brother to follow suit. His father who was extremely anti-religious threatened his 14-year-old son that he would physically harm him if he would do the same to his brother. This 14-year-old at the time was learning in a Yeshiva which was a one-day travel from his house. He asked a Mohel to let him know when he would be in the neighbourhood of the home where his brother was. A few months later, he received the call from the Mohel that he will be there. The boy, unknown to anyone, left Yeshiva that day to go home. Upon arriving, he smuggled his brother out the window followed by the Bris being performed.

With this we can grasp why we are compared to stars— **ככוכבי השמים**—since in dark times, we truly see the light of our people, just like a star that shines at night.



*It was on Shabbos in a Siberian camp, when a guard approached the **Zvhiller Rebbe** who was with an older Jew and said that if he agrees to sign a paper, he will be let free. The Rebbe refused as he said for the older Jew he would sign since he wouldn't be able to survive in such a camp, making the situation life-threatening for him. The Rebbe himself who was younger felt he had enough energy to survive and thus didn't want to desecrate Shabbos. What was the outcome? The guard was so impressed that he released them both!*



During World War II, **R' Yisrael Yaakov Lubchanski** was incarcerated in the ghetto, his face constantly shined with joy in addition to spreading words of hope. **R' Efraim Oshry** asked how he could be so happy in this situation. R' Lubchanski said that by nature I am easily frightened. Why should others have to suffer because of my fears? I exert myself to remove any signs of fear so it should not cause anyone else to become afraid.

What Did She Say?

Hashem tells Avraham **שמע בְּקלה**; heed Sarah's voice. Shouldn't it say **שמע לְקלה**; listen to her voice, since that is the proper grammar?

The Pasuk says **נשאלה את פיה**; they asked Rivka her decision regarding Yitzchok. The word **פיה** seems unnecessary?

Any married man knows that women speak indirectly. This comes from the **צניעות** of women as **כל בת מלך פנימה** since **צניעות** is keeping things hidden just as is the idea of speaking indirectly. Nevertheless, men must learn to break this barrier and understand what their wives are saying. For this reason, it doesn't say **שמע לְקלה**; listen to her voice rather **שמע בְּקלה**; **in** her voice. That means to what she implies. In the same vein, we can grasp why it says **נשאלה את פיה**

When Sarah told Avraham to take Hagar as a wife in order to have children. He complied with Sarah's request. However, he didn't discern her true desire which was that he daven for her that she may conceive which would avoid the need to take her maidservant-Hagar- as a second wife.

Rav Avigdor Miller - Roasted Pigeons and The Audubon Society



QUESTION: Can a frum person be a vegetarian if he wishes?

ANSWER: It depends. If a person is a vegetarian because on principle, he thinks that it's wrong to slaughter animals, then he's an apikoris and he doesn't belong to the Jewish people. Anybody who goes overboard for animals shows that he doesn't have Torah in his mind. He's lacking a Torah mind.

People who think of dogs as companions?! I was once walking on the street and I saw a couple who were saying farewell to their parents, so he kissed his parents goodbye, and then he kissed his parent's dog goodbye too. These are dogs; they are beheimos! You don't kiss a dog goodbye.

Here's a man who is enamored with horses. He can tell you all about horses. It's a waste of a mind. Some people are enamored with birds. Birds! The Audubon Society, ah! It's a sign of an aristocrat; you're an intellectual, you're a liberal, if you belong to the Audubon Society. Love birds, and write letters to the New York Times protesting about the mistreatment of pigeons, and so on. All this artificial baloney is a sign that a person's mind has become corrupted by garbage. We also love birds. We love birds when they're served, let's say, as roasted chicken. We love those kind of birds. We want chickens to increase and multiply; why not? We want pigeons to increase. Pigeons are also delectable to eat. Did you ever eat a roasted pigeon? It tastes good too. It's a kosher bird; why not?

But just to be interested in birds for the sake of birds, because of an artificial interest in something that's far away from Torah attitudes, that's nothing. I'm not saying it's a big sin, but it's silly as can be, and it's certainly not a Torah attitude. When a person has pity on animals because he thinks it's wrong to slaughter them for human consumption, then of course, that person is against the Torah.

Now, if a person feels that it's better for his health to be a vegetarian, that's something else. We have no quarrel with him. It doesn't mean that he's right, but still, we're not interested in quarreling with him about that.

Teaching Children by Example

The Torah tells us **ואל הבקר רץ**... ; Avraham ran to the cattle, took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it. Rashi comments that he gave it to Yishmael, to train him in the fulfilment of Mitzvos. If Avraham wanted to train Yishmael, he could have instructed him to bring the animal. So, why did Avraham run to the cattle himself?

The Noam Megadim says that no one should see your Avoda other than Hashem. Don't do your Avoda in front of others so that they should be impressed and the like.

However, when it comes to educating your children, they should see you in action. For one to transfer Torah to his children he must live it as is implied from **והיו הדברים האלה...ושננתם לבניך** ; these matters that I command you today shall be upon your heart, you shall teach them thoroughly to your children. "Children don't hear what you say, they see what you do."

Avraham's running to the calf was also a part of the Chinuch. He was 100 years old and sick, as it was the third day after his Mila. Yet, he

ran to do Chessed. He demonstrated his love and devotion for Chessed, the ultimate lesson in Chinuch.

A father complained to the **Yismach Yisrael of Alexander** that his son wasn't reciting Birchas Hamazon. The Rebbe replied not to worry. Rather just be cautious yourself to say Birchas Hamazon with concentration and you will see that your son will soon follow. A wise man once said, "Every father should remember that one day his son will follow his example instead of his advice.

A father once said to his son, "Be careful where you walk." The son responded: "You be careful, I walk in your footsteps!"

Opportunity



One day, in his later years, **R' Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna**, was seen to be holding his tzitzis and crying. His students asked what was wrong. "Ach," he sighed. "Look what a world of opportunity we live in. For a few pennies, one can buy tzitzis for his garment and earn an eternity of rewards for this easy mitzvah. It's so easy to earn Olam HaBa in this base world. But," he continued, "one day that comes to an end, and we reach a place where we can no longer achieve anything on our own. This is a sobering thought and that is why I cry."

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה (18:2)



Avrohom excelled in the mitzvah of hosting guests. Three days after he had circumcised himself at the age of 99, Hashem didn't want Avrohom to burden himself with caring for guests. He brought a heat wave to deter all travelers on that day. Still, the weak Avrohom's greatest concern was that the unusually hot weather would deny him the merit of welcoming guests. Avrohom decided to sit at the entrance of his tent in the hopes that he might spy a stray traveller.

When Hashem saw Avrohom's suffering over the lack of guests, He sent three angels in the guise of people. Rejoicing at this improbable turn of events, the elderly and weak Avrohom ran to personally invite them to his home to serve them, where he proceeded to serve them a lavish and abundant feast.

The midrash records that initially, Avrohom sent his trusted servant Eliezer outside to search for guests, but he returned to report that he was unable to find any. Avrohom responded by commenting that servants cannot be trusted. In other words, he felt that Eliezer hadn't tried hard enough and exhausted all of the possibilities, and as proof, Avrohom went outside personally and returned with three guests.

This midrash is difficult to understand. Eliezer was indeed Avrohom's trusted and reliable servant. He knew how valuable the mitzvah of hosting guests was to his master, and when he went outside to look for guests, he certainly looked in every possible location, but he was unsuccessful because, unbeknownst to him, Hashem had taken out the hot sun to keep the guests away from the ailing Avrohom. What was Avrohom's complaint against Eliezer, and what more could Eliezer realistically have done to locate guests?



Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein recounts that when he was growing up in Yerushalayim, he and a group of boys studied together with a private teacher. At one point, they were studying tractate Shabbos during World War 2. At that time, it was virtually impossible to find complete Talmudic sets, and only the Rav of his neighborhood possessed an entire set of the Talmud, which was shared by everybody.

The teacher requested each of the boys to bring his own Gemora to their class, but every boy returned to say that he had searched throughout the entire neighborhood and was unable to locate an available Gemora, as in fact there weren't any to be found. However, there was one boy who returned successfully with his own copy. To the present day, Rav Zilberstein has no idea where the boy found it, but he explains that he was successful because he wanted more than any of the others to locate a Gemora. Because he desired the Gemora with his entire being, Hashem helped him to locate one where everybody else had failed. Not surprisingly, that boy grew up to become a well-known disseminator of Torah.

Similarly, Rav Zilberstein explains that although Eliezer indeed tried his utmost to locate guests, his lack of success emanated not from laziness or a half-hearted effort, but from a lack of desire. Avrohom understood that if Eliezer shared his burning desire to find guests, he would have been successful, as Avrohom subsequently was. Although the circumstances in which we find ourselves are often beyond are control, when we truly want something badly enough and exert ourselves to the fullest, Hashem often miraculously sends us the results for which we yearn.



וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה...*יקח־נא מעט־מים*... ואקחה פת־לחם וסעדו לבכם

"*And he (Avraham) lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing over him, and he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent and bowed toward the ground … Let a little water be brought … and I will fetch bread so that you may nourish yourselves.*" *(Bereishit 18:2-5)*

Abraham excelled in the mitzvah of hosting guests. Three days after he had circumcised himself at the age of 99, G-d didn't want Abraham to burden himself with caring for guests. He brought a heat wave to deter all travelers on that day. Still, the weak Abraham's greatest concern was that the unusually hot weather would deny him the merit of welcoming guests. Abraham decided to sit at the entrance of his tent in the hopes that he might spy a stray traveler. When G-d saw Abraham's suffering over the lack of guests, He sent three angels in the guise of people.

Rejoicing at this improbable turn of events, the elderly and weak Abraham ran to personally invite them to his home to serve them. Abraham proceeded to serve them a lavish and abundant feast with one exception: although he was generous with all of the other courses, he instructed that only a small amount of water be brought for them. As caring for guests was Abraham's raison d'etre and he

was so generous with all of the other portions, why wasn't he as generous when it came to the water?



The following story will help us answer this question. On one of his travels, **Rabbi Yisrael Salanter** (1810-1883) spent Shabbat in a small village. The locals were excited about the opportunity to host the renowned Rabbi in their community and to learn from his pious ways. When the time came to wash his hands prior to the meal, his hosts were surprised to notice that he used a very small amount of water.

Worried that they had done something wrong or offended the Rabbi in some way, they respectfully asked for an explanation of his behavior. Rabbi Salanter explained that the water in this village was drawn from a distant well. Carrying the water over this long distance was a very difficult task. Although he was normally accustomed to washing his hands with more water, in this case it would be inappropriate to do so at the expense of the watercarrier.

In light of this story, **Rabbi Yaakov Neiman** in his work Darkei Mussar explains that almost all of the preparations for the meal were performed by Abraham. The actions which he did on behalf of the guests were done with great alacrity and revealed a giving spirit. The water, on the other hand, was the one item which Abraham asked somebody else to bring. As much as he wanted to offer the guests generous portions, he understood, as did Rabbi Salanter, that it would be inappropriate to do so at someone else's expense.

Parsha Points to Ponder

There are 14 people who got drunk in Sefer Bereishis, and one of them appears in Parshas Vayeira. How many of them can you identify?

In Parshas Vayeira (19:33-35), Lot's daughters got him drunk after Sodom was destroyed. Noach became intoxicated after drinking from the wine of the vineyard he planted after the flood (9:20-21), as did Yosef and his 11 brothers at the meal they ate together after Binyomin was brought to Egypt (43:34).

Hamaayan: Hachnassat Orchim, by R' Shlomo Katz

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." (18:1)



The Midrash explains that Hashem appeared to Avraham to visit the sick, for it was the third day after Avraham's circumcision and he was in pain. The Gemara says that Avraham had a gem that hung at his throat, and anyone who looked at it was healed from any injuries he had suffered. When Avraham passed away, Hashem hung that gem from the sun.

If so, asks **R' Bezalel Darshan z"l** (Poland; 16th century), why was Avraham still in pain three days after his circumcision? Why didn't he just look at the stone that hung around his neck?

R' Bezalel explains: Avraham did not literally have a gem hanging on a necklace. Rather, the Gemara means that Avraham's throat, i.e., his voice, spoke "gems" of truth about G-d that cured idolators of their spiritual ills. After Avraham died, that gem was hung from the sun, meaning that a person who wished to find G-d could do so through an intensive study of nature, represented by the sun in the Gemara's statement.

In this light, says R' Bezalel, we can understand another Midrash which emphasizes that Avraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent in order to "open a door" through which travellers and converts could enter the service of the One G-d.

The Midrash means to answer the same question we asked above, i.e., why didn't Avraham look at his gem and heal himself? The answer is that Avraham did not have a real gem. Rather, the gem referred to was his voice, which he used to "open doors" for converts, and the healing referred to was spiritual healing. *(Amudehah Shivah)*

Rabbi Yitzchok Fingerer- A Very Important Person



It was a known fact in the school. One particular boy was notorious for being a difficult student who wouldn't follow school rules and classroom directions. Teachers were not too thrilled to have him as their student each year, considering that they could just imagine the challenges they were bound to confront.

But one day during his sixth-grade year, it all changed. The surprising thing was that it literally changed overnight. One day he

was misbehaving, non-compliant and disruptive, and the next he was respectful, attentive and studious. His friends and even more so his teachers were at a loss to explain the cause for such a turnaround in his behaviour and attitude. A few years later, after developing even more as an excellent student, he went on to become the 8th grade valedictorian and serve as the recognized pride of the entire school. It was quite phenomenal.

While he and his friends and teachers placed his past history of elementary school years behind him, one teacher was particularly interested in something. No one had ever asked the boy what was it that brought him to where he was that day of graduation? It was a puzzling mystery that no one had ever understood. What was the impetus for him completely changing and becoming such a great a student? That was the million-dollar question.

"No one has ever asked me about this," the boy told the teacher, "but I'm glad you have." The boy then went on to explain. "There was a day in my life when things were pretty rough. I had gotten into trouble in class, and I knew the principal wanted to have a talk with me. I was called into the office and the principal sat me down. We began talking until, suddenly, he received a phone call, to which he answered. But the conversation did not last that long.

"Excuse me," the principal told the other person on the line, "would you be able to call me back later; right now I have someone very important in my office." And with that, the principal hung up the phone and turned back to me to resume our discussion. I ended up not getting expelled from the school, although I was not in the greatest position at that time.

That night I went home a bit confused. Who was the very important person in the principal's office that he was referring to? As far as I knew, it was only the principal and I in the room. I tossed and turned at the thought of who he could have meant, but it simply baffled me. Until, to my surprise, I figured it out. He must have been

referring to me. I was the very important person. I had never before been called important, let alone by the principal or any other esteemed authority figure. But there must be something to it.

I began thinking of why I was in the principal's office altogether, and if the very important person I was understood to be in fact belonged there. I rightfully concluded that I could expect much more from myself, and ought to in fact try to do so. I decided to do my best to improve my behaviour and work harder to become a better student. Sure enough, I began to see improvements, which my teachers also noticed. By the end of the year, I was looked upon as a completely different student than I had been before. And things only progressively got better from there. I scaled up and up the academic ladder of achievement and proved to myself and everyone else that I did have the capability to be an exceptional student.

It all began at that moment in the principal's office - "Excuse me, would you be able to call me back later; right now, I have someone very important in my office." Those words were seared into my heart and mind and provided me with the motivation to achieve extraordinary results, the likes of which neither my teachers nor I ever anticipated.

We are all important. Our children are important, because they come from parents who are important and are surrounded by friends, family and teachers who are also important. It is precisely this attitude which creates standards which we strive to attain and sets goals which will propel us to heights that we never imagined we were even capable of. But indeed, we are.

"A chavrusa (study partner) is like a stone: on its own it has no value but rub it against another stone and sparks fly!"

Mrs. Shira Smiles Living in the Moment



One beautiful concept in Yiddishkeit is for an individual to take upon themselves a particular mitzvah which deeply resonates with them and they feel a special connection to. Whatever it may be, that one mitzvah is something which a person adheres to carefully and closely and holds dear to his or her heart.

For one elderly 87-year-old grandfather, that mitzvah was tefillin. Since his bar mitzvah, a day had not gone by in which he missed the cherished opportunity to don his precious tefillin. One day, though, his tefillin were accidently swapped with the tefiliin of another man in shul, leaving each of them with the other's tefillin.

And as it so happened, the other man decided that day to have his tefillin checked, as he had not done so in many years. But of course, little did he know, that they were really not his own. When the report came back about his tefillin's status, he was obviously taken aback. They were invalid, and in fact had never been valid even to begin with. Yet rather quickly, it was realized that a slight mix-up had occurred. They were not his own tefillin, but rather those of the 87-year-old man.

Now, the obvious dilemma arose as how to break the news to the elderly man, whose entire life had been marked by devotion to this special mitzvah. With a group of family and friends gathered around him, they proceeded to gently relay the news, slowly but surely.And then there was silence. Worried that he hadn't heard them clearly, one of the family members repeated the news about the invalid

tefillin, raising his voice just a bit louder. But that wasn't the problem. "I heard you the first time," replied the grandfather. Unsure what to make of everything, the family remained silently still. And then the grandfather began to dance. Now thinking that he had really lost it, just about everyone looked at each other with a blank and confused stare. But then the grandfather began to explain the motivation behind his behaviour.

"For my whole life, I was under the impression that I was performing the mitzvah of tefillin to the utmost degree of refinement. Yet now I have discovered that such has not been the case. But you know what? Now I have much reason to rejoice. For the first time in my life, I will finally be able to perform the mitzvah of tefillin correctly with a kosher pair of tefillin. Shouldn't I be happy and dance?"

Here was a person who lived in the moment. He understood his past, yet more importantly, understood his future. Part of living in the moment includes not carrying the heavy baggage of past experiences and lost opportunities.

We must never forget and disregard our past, yet simultaneously, we can never let it hamper us from optimistically moving forward. Life is not all about sighing, "What if…I should have… I could have…" Where you are today is exactly where you need to be.

All that you are asked to do is pick yourself up, hold your head high and look brightly and vibrantly towards the future. Because without question, many wonderful opportunities await you…

Time can be an ally or an enemy. What it becomes depends entirely upon you, your goals, and your determination to use every available minute.

Rabbi YY Jacobson- Leading with Wisdom and Warmth



It happened at Yeshivas Ohr Yisroel, led and directed under the auspices of its rosh yeshiva, **Rav Yaakov Naiman *zt"l***. As a masterful pedagogue who exuded wisdom and warmth, it was not surprising that so many boys wished to create a personal relationship with him. But the way that materialized was not always in the expected, conventional way. Sometimes, in fact, it came about in a rather interesting, yet ever impactful way.

"Rebbe," one boy remarked one day to Rav Naiman. "I feel the need to tell you for the sake of all of us in the yeshiva that one of our students goes to the movie theatre every Saturday night. He surreptitiously hops on a bus and makes his way to the theatre."

Rav Naiman was quite surprised to hear this, though he didn't panic or react in shock. "Next Saturday night, when the boy is about to leave, just tell me," requested Rav Naiman. Sure enough, the following week, as the boy began preparing for his weekly outing, Rav Naiman was notified and began doing the same.

It was a cold, wintery night and the boy quickly boarded the bus and took a seat. Minutes later, Rav Naiman followed suit and flagged down a taxi, asking to be taken to the same movie theatre.

Now, as he was accustomed, Rav Naiman wore a heavy, cushioned fur coat, the likes of which clearly indicated its wearer was someone of prominent stature. The scene of Rabbi Naiman walking into the theatre was clearly out of place, although he had an important

purpose in mind. By this time, the boy had already comfortably settled in his seat and was just about ready for the film to begin. But such comfort was soon to change.

Suddenly, the boy noticed an eerily familiar face. And that was because it was familiar. It was Rav Naiman. The boy froze in his seat, filled with both confusion and apprehension. He had been "caught." The boy looked at Rav Naiman and Rav Naiman looked at him. One moment seemed like a millennium.

"I don't understand!" blurted out Rav Naiman. "Where is your coat? It's extremely cold outside!" The boy, unsure if he had heard what he actually thought he heard, fumbled with his words. "I…I… didn't take one," he replied. Rav Naiman looked at him with a stare that sent a message. "You need to stay healthy, strong and warm! I can't afford having any of my students getting sick!"

The boy could not believe what was happening. Not even in his wildest dreams did he imagine that his Saturday night would be spent with Rav Naiman at his side in a movie theatre. "It looks like you have a long night ahead of you," continued Rav Naiman, "so I'll tell you what…" - Rav Naiman proceeded to take off his hefty pelt coat and hand it to the boy. "Wherever you go tonight, wear this. It will keep you nice and warm. Don't take it off…" "But Rebbe," piped up the boy, "what about you? You also need a coat…" "I'm already on my way back to the yeshiva. Tomorrow morning, just leave it on my office." Rav Naiman proceeded to give the boy a hug and a kiss and wish him well. And with that, Rav Naiman headed out.

Years later, as the grown-up boy would recount this story, he would always emphasize, "I in fact did stay to watch the movie for the next couple of hours. But throughout it all, all I could think about was the big fur coat I was wearing. My eyes saw the film, but my mind didn't. It was elsewhere, replaying the gentle words of my Rebbe, "This coat will keep you nice and warm; don't take it off…" I may have been

sitting in a theatre breaking yeshiva's policy, but I sure learned one of my biggest life lessons that night.

And that is what it means to be a teacher and an educator. It doesn't merely mean teaching classroom lessons, but life lessons. It means that you understand the soul, sensitivities and struggles of a child, and show that you love them and care for them. Those lessons will last far beyond the classroom; they will last for life.

"Rav Naiman figured that I would probably continue on to watch the film that night, but he wanted me to remember, all the while, who I deep down was. I was a Jew who lived identified by Torah values and principles and viewed life through the prism of what Hashem wanted me to do. And Rav Naiman knew that such a message would make a far greater impact on my present and future life if he would couch it with figurative and literal warmth, than were he to scold and censure me. I would learn the important lesson of never to escape from yeshiva again and go to the theatre, and the even more important lesson of never to escape from who I could rise to be as a Jew. And to this very day that loving lesson warms my heart."



R' Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel zt"l would say:

19:16- The Targum points out that Lot delayed – **וַיִּתְמַהְמָּהּ ; וְאִתְעַכַּב** ***He hesitated***.

The trop on this word is a Shalsheles which also indicates that there was delay on the part of Lot. One of the lessons for the success of Avraham and failure on the part of Lot is hidden here. Avraham moved without delay. Lot did not. Although he learned in Avraham's home, he did not embody the message. Hence, although he did engage in Mesiras Nefesh for chessed, he did not hurry to do it, unlike Avraham Avinu."





Rabbi Label Lam- Profound Approach, Profound Results

It was Shabbos in Israel as cars drove up, down and around the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Ramot. With large crowds of religious Jews likewise filling the streets, it frequently became a source of contention and protest as cars would pass by. "Shabbos!" they would yell. "Shabbos!"

But for **Rav Zaks**, grandson of the **Chofetz Chaim**, such reactions to the breaking of Shabbos fell short. There was a far better and more effective way of impacting and impressing upon others the importance and beauty of Shabbos. "Come with me," he once told a group of students on Shabbos, "let me show you what you can do." And so, one Shabbos, Rav Zaks led a number of boys outside and stood at a strategically positioned corner where cars were sure to pass by. "The next car that passes by," he said, "one of you remember the first three digits of the license plate and another remember the last four digits of the license plate."

And so it happened. When Shabbos came to an end, Rabbi Zaks, prepared with the full license plate number, headed to police station where the location of the car with those numbers was eventually tracked down. And with that, Rabbi Zaks headed to the home of a supposed irreligious Jew. After tapping on the door, a young secular boy opened, only to see Rabbi Zaks flanked by a few other boys dressed in their accustomed yeshiva clothes. It was certainly an unfamiliar sight to the boy, who summarily called upon his father.

"How can I help you rabbi?" asked the irreligious fellow. After some brief introductory remarks, Rav Zaks got to the point. "After the

war, my family along with many others moved here and began rebuilding our lives. Our religious life in Europe had been rich and vitalizing, yet new challenges have arisen in Israel. We have a *shul* and community, yet there is something that has been particularly disturbing here for some time.

I don't want to tell you what to do, but the cars disturb us and disturb the serenity, and it is an affront to our Shabbos. We are not going to throw anything, but I just wanted to let you know that this is how we feel, and perhaps if you choose to drive, you can take an alternate route that avoids travelling through the main Jewish neighbourhoods."

The fellow looked at Rav Zaks, a certain twinkle in his eyes. "I don't exactly know what I am going to do, but I like your approach and I appreciate it." And with that, the conversation ended and Rav Zaks and the irreligious fellow bid each other farewell.

A few months later, the same man tracked down Rav Zaks' phone number and gave him a call. "Rabbi Zaks, my son is turning thirteen soon and we would like him to receive a bar *mitzvah*. I do not know how to approach the subject and was wondering if you could help me navigate through it." Rav Zaks was pleasantly surprised to hear from the man again and went on to help him and his son purchase *tefillin*.

Shortly thereafter, the man called once again, this time with a different question. "My wife and I never grew up in a home with a Kosher kitchen and we decided that we would like to buy some new dishes and turn our current kitchen into one that is Kosher. Would you be able to help guide us?" Sooner than later, the *bar mitzvah* boy was registering in a yeshiva and the family began keeping Shabbos.

Such was the *kiruv* approach of Rav Zaks, the grandson of the Chofetz Chaim. One which humbly and subtlety guides the way to change with inspiring and beautiful words of empowerment.

Torah Tavlin



R' Moshe Bogomilsky shlit'a (Vedibarta Bam) would say: ויקח בנ בקר רך וטוב. Rashi says that Avraham served his guests 'three tongues in mustard.' Wouldn't one tongue have sufficed for all three angels? Tongues are big! Whenever Avraham had guests, he would not only sustain them with physical food, but also encouraged them to live a meaningful and spiritually enriched life.

Chazal tell us that the disciples of Avraham were exemplified with three attributes: **עין טוב** - good eye, **רוח נמוכה** - humble spirit, **נפש שפלה** - meek soul.

The word **בחרדל** - 'in mustard' - can be rearranged as two words to imply three different meanings. 1. **בחר דל** - 'choose the poor.' Have a good eye towards the poor. 2. **חרד לב** - 'G-d-fearing heart.' This leads to a humble spirit. 3. **חדל רב** - 'avoid having too much.' Be modest and meek of spirit. Don't be greedy and over-ambitious. Be satisfied with your blessings."

"The entire purpose of our existence is to overcome our negative habits." ~ Vilna Goan, Commentary to Mishlei 4:13

"The trip is never too hard, if you know you're going home." ~~ The Chofetz Chaim

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָרְצָה 18;2



The curtain opens on this week's parsha with a picture of Avraham Avinu sitting outside his tent disappointed that he has no guests to cater to. Hashem has mercy on him and as he lifts his eyes, "he saw three men standing in front of him." The posuk then continues, "and he saw and he ran towards them." Why does the posuk say **וַיַּרְא** - "he saw" twice? What does it add?



I once heard a derasha from **R' Meir Bergman shlit'a,** a son-in-law of **Rav Shach zt"l**. He said that a kind heart does not make one a baal chessed. One must also focus on perceiving another Yid's actual needs.

Many times, we lose a chessed opportunity because we do not grasp the urgency of the matter. Rashi answers our question here and says that the first **וַיַּרְא** refers to when Avraham Avinu saw the 3 people standing before him, while the second **וַיַּרְא** refers to Avraham perceiving and realizing what their needs were.

The Torah teaches us, that just like Avraham saw two things, we too must look twice. In order for a Yid to be a true baal chessed, he must open his eyes twice. Once to see and once to perceive what the other truly needs. In fact, the Gemara (Kesuvos 68) refers to a person who is not a baal chessed as someone who is **עוצם עיניו** - one who "shuts his eyes" to the plight of others. The fact of the matter is: Tzedakah does not start with the wallet - it starts with the eyes!

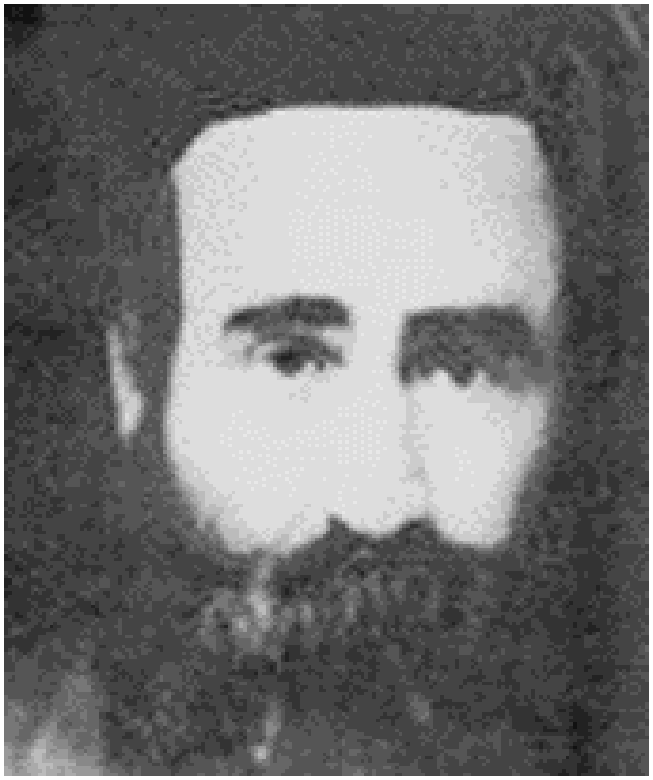


There is a story about a poor Jew who came to the Beis Halevi, **R' Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l** before Pesach asking whether milk has the status of **חמר מדינה** which would qualify it as a wine substitute for the Arba Kosos (4 cups). The Beis Halevi answered immediately that it did. As soon as the man left, the Beis Halevi sent him enough money that would not only cover the cost of the wine but also the other Yom Tov needs, explaining that if this man was asking if he could drink milk on the night of Pesach for the Arba Kosos, he was obviously so poor that he surely didn't have chicken or meat on his menu. We must all daven that our children follow in our footsteps of tzedakah and chessed, and Hashem should give them insight to understand another person's needs which will hasten our escape from this quagmire called golus.

Times of stress are also times that are signals for growth. If we use adversity properly, we can grow through adversity. ~ R' Dr. Avraham J. Twerski zt"l.

Dust

R' Yechezkel Halberstam of Shinov zt"l (Divrei Yechezkel) would say: יֻקַּח־נָא מְעַט־מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם- Rashi tells us that Avraham Avinu believed the three visitors were merchants, 'who bow down to the dust of their feet, and he was strict not to allow any idolatry into his house.'



Why would anyone bow down to the dust of their feet? Isn't that ridiculous? The answer is that merchants who work themselves to the bone believing their parnassah comes from the amount of work in their hands or the lengths they go to with their feet, are wasting their time. They are self-serving - in this case serving the Avodah Zara known as 'self'! They bow down, in a sense, to the dust of their feet, for they believe in their own power to control their destiny. Thus, Avraham told them to wash off this dust!"

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל 18:9

The three Malachim asked Avraham Avinu where his wife Sarah was. He told them that she is in the tent. Rashi quotes the gemara (BM 87a) which teaches us that in truth, the angels really knew where Sarah was. Nevertheless, they asked this question to make it known to Avraham that she was a **צנוע** (modest). Why? In order to make her more precious and endearing to her husband, Avraham Avinu.

R' Shlomo Wolbe zt"l once gave a shiur to talmidim who were engaged and asked a question: Avraham Avinu was already 100 old, and Sarah was almost 90! You would think that by now, Sarah was endeared enough to Avraham Avinu! What is the need for the angels to further endear her to her husband?



He answered that from here it is abundantly clear that increasing endearment is something that is necessary for the entire lifespan of a couple, even when they are married fifty or sixty years! Rashi also states that the word **אֵלָיו** has dots on top of it and quotes Rav Shimon that the malachim asked Sarah as well where Avraham was, even though they already knew. They did this in order to endear Avraham to Sarah.

A beautiful homiletic machshava came to me while I was davening Mussaf on Yom Kippur, that I would like to share with you. There is a well-known custom that when the chazzan recites the word **איה** in Kedusha, he stretches it out a bit so the people can say the **יהי רצון** which is a request for three things: **עשירות** (wealth), **רוח הקודש** (Divine Spirit) and **בנים טובים וכשרים** (good children).

Just as the angels asked Avraham: **אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ** every chosson and kallah should likewise ask each other: **איה** - where is this marriage heading? What do we want for ourselves? Wealth? Homes? Cars? Or ... special children to follow in our footsteps who will bring us nachas and continue our great mesora? Hopefully, the young couple will make the right choice and be zoche to a wonderful life together with healthy, beautiful, Torahdika children, amen!

The Golden Age of Spain produced some magnificent Jewish scholars. One of these was **R' Avraham Ibn Ezra zt"l**. He was born in 1089 and lived a life of extreme poverty and deprivation. No matter what sort of enterprise he tried his hand at, he was never successful. All his life, he barely scraped together enough money to live, and he once joked that if he would try to sell candles, the sun would never set at night and if he would sell Tachrichim, people would stop dying!

His good friend, **R' Yehuda HaLevi zt"l** once tried to help the Ibn Ezra out and he took a pouch of gold coins and sprinkled them out in front of R' Avraham's house, so that when he came home, he would find the coins and have some money to live on. He waited to see what would happen and was shocked when the Ibn Ezra came to his house and groped along the wall until he reached the front door never seeing the coins. Later, he asked him why he behaved that way.

The Ibn Ezra said, "While I was walking home, I wondered about my bad mazel and why I have no money. Then, I thought, 'I have no right to complain - look, I have my health!' So, I decided to act like a blind man to feel what he's going through, so I can appreciate all that I have!"

It is undeniable that if Hashem does not want you to have something, you won't get it. And if Hashem doesn't want people to perpetrate a specific act, he will make sure it doesn't get done. Thus, when the people of Sodom surrounded Lot's house with the intention of breaking down the door and apprehending his guest, Hashem made them all go blind, and they couldn't find the front door!

"In the journey of the soul, every setback is a setup for a comeback." ~ Baal Shem Tov, Reb Yisrael ben Eliezer.

Hachnosas Orchim

The Baba Sali, Rabbeinu Yisroel Abuchatzeira zt"l would say:



"Chazal tell us: 'Hachnosas Orchim is greater than Kabolas Pnei HaShechina (welcoming the Divine Presence) since the Holy One blessed be He revealed Himself to Avraham Avinu, yet he ran out to invite visitors.'

Of course, we learn this great lesson from Avraham Avinu - but how did Avraham know this in the first place?

In truth, he realized this on his own. When Hashem came to visit him, he was weak and sick. But the moment he saw visitors off in the distance, he suddenly became infused with strength and energy which allowed him to run towards them. From this Avraham realized on his own that the mitzvah of Hachnosas Orchim is greater than welcoming the Shechina."

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָרְצָה 18:2

Rashi writes: "Why is וַיַּרְא written twice in this posuk? The first is to be understood according to its literal meaning, and the second means 'understanding.' He (Avraham) observed that they were standing in one place, and he understood that they did not wish to burden him. And although they knew that he would come out toward them, they stood in their place out of respect for him, to show him that they did not wish to trouble him, and he went out first and ran toward them."

Rashi seems to be addressing the viewpoint of Avraham Avinu. What he saw and what he perceived. The first time Avraham "saw" - he saw the angels in the distance, it was an actual vision that he beheld. He literally saw three men standing in one spot. The second time Avraham "saw" it means he understood, it dawned on him that the visitors did not wish to trouble him.

In fact, there is a deeper meaning to what Avraham saw, denotes **Rabbi Dovid Gurwitz shlit'a**. If we look back to the beginning of the posuk, it states: וַיִּשָּׂא אברהם אֶת עֵינָיו- ***"And Avraham lifted his eyes."*** Avraham sought to bring the truth of Hashem to a world of scoffers. He was the only individual who recognized the truth of the Omnipresent G-d.



Notice that the last three letters of the first three words spell the word אמת - TRUTH! The next word עֵינָיו contains the numerical value of 146, which is the exact same gematria as חכמה ובינה - wisdom and understanding.

Avraham had such eyes. Avraham saw deeply into the world. He is attributed to authoring Sefer Yetzira, the kabbalistic "Book of Formation." Thus, when Avraham lifted his eyes and "saw" he did not simply view his surroundings. He gazed at the world through a prism of Chochma - wisdom, and Bina - understanding. And what was it that he actually saw? Emes - the truth of Hashem!

One song can change a moment. One idea can change a world. One step can start a journey. But one prayer can change the impossible!

Fixed Place

The Gemara tells us: "Rav Chelbo, in the name of Rav Huna, says: Whoever has a fixed place for his prayer the G-d of Avraham will be his Helper...

How do we know that our father Avraham had a fixed place (for prayer)? For it is written: '***And Avraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood.***' The word 'standing' means prayer, for it says, 'Then Pinchos stood up and prayed.'



In April 1945, a few days before WWII officially ended, the Allies liberated the Muldorf Concentration Camp in which the Rebbe had been imprisoned for over nine months. After the initial shock of freedom and liberation, the survivors were transported via military trucks to the Feldafing DP camp near Munich, Germany. As they stood on line waiting to board the trucks, **The Klausenberger Rebbe, R' Yekusiel Halberstam zt"l** suddenly turned to the man next to him and said, 'Please hold my place on line. I forgot something in the barracks and I will be right back!'

The man looked at the Rebbe with incredulity. 'What could you have possibly forgotten in this terrible place? The sooner we leave here the better!' But the Rebbe insisted and hurried away. "Almost twenty minutes later, the Rebbe reappeared and boarded the waiting truck. When asked repeatedly, "Rebbe, vos hut ir shoin fargessen?" (What did you forget?)

He refused to answer and the matter remained sealed until many years later, when this same individual came to visit the Klausenberger Rebbe in the U.S. and reminded him of that incident. "This time, the Rebbe looked at the man and nodded. 'I will tell you what happened that day,' said the Rebbe. 'So many Yidden lost their lives and so many others suffered horribly. The war was especially cruel to me. I lost my wife and eleven children. I lost thousands of chassidim. I was beaten, starved and enslaved. I had nothing left in this world - except for the Ribono shel Olam.

Every single day, I davened to Him and cried my eyes out. As per the halacha, I set aside a specific place in the barracks - a 'Makom Kavua' - where I davened and where I felt the love and protection of the Almighty. But as were standing inline waiting to leave the camp, I suddenly realized that I would never stand in my Makom Kavua again.

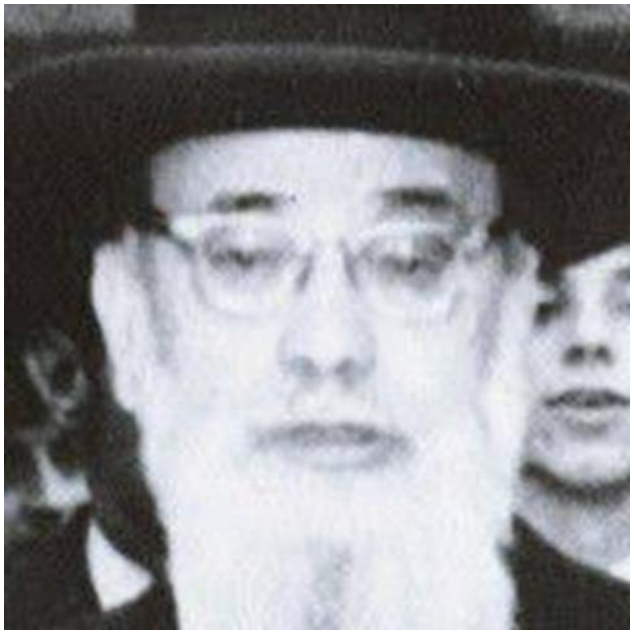
That place where I felt Hashem, where I connected to Hashem - as hard as it was for me in Muldorf, I wanted one more moment alone with the Borei Oilam, to conjure up that feeling of closeness I shared with Him, and thus take it with me for the rest of my life! That is where I went on that day,' concluded the Rebbe, as he wiped away a tear."

Parsha Pages

כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו 18:19

That he will command his sons and his household – It is insufficient to educate one's sons only. One must pass on Torah values and ideals to his daughters as well, "v'es beiso."

The Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh only had daughters. He taught them Chumash and marked down his insights that he taught them. This developed into the commentary that we now have, the Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh on the Torah. [**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**]



R' Simcha Ziskind Broide ZT"L (Chevron Rosh Yeshivah) would says - The Sages state that although the people of Sodom and Amorah committed many sins, their fate was sealed because they were cruel to the poor. We see from here that failing to observe a mitzvah that common sense requires is far worse than even a grave sin such as murder. Why?

Because a person's failure to follow the dictates of common sense shows that his very core is rotten, as it says in Koheles, 'Hashem has made man straight **ישר** but they sought many intrigues.' Such rottenness cannot be tolerated."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַה' פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמָר וַיַּעַשׂ ה' לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֵּר 21:1

After ninety years of praying, begging, pleading, crying, and waiting for a child, Sarah finally became pregnant. What a tremendous miracle! This occurred after Avraham Avinu prayed on behalf of Avimelech's household whose bodily functions had shut down, and Rashi quotes the Gemara (Bk 92a) that derives that if a person davens for his friend and he is in need of the same thing, he is answered first!

Is it really as simple as that? Does this mean that all I have to do to get what I need is to find a person who has the same need as me and just daven for him? And then, automatically, I am answered?

The Tiferes Shmuel explains that the great merit of this segula is in the sincerity of the prayer. In other words, if one davens for his

friend as INTENSELY as he davens for himself, then yes, such a prayer is answered first! But how can a person reach that same level of intensity for his friend? ONLY, he says, if he truly loves that person! ONLY if he deeply cares for his friend! ONLY then, can he daven with great intensity for another person and be answered first! ONLY then!



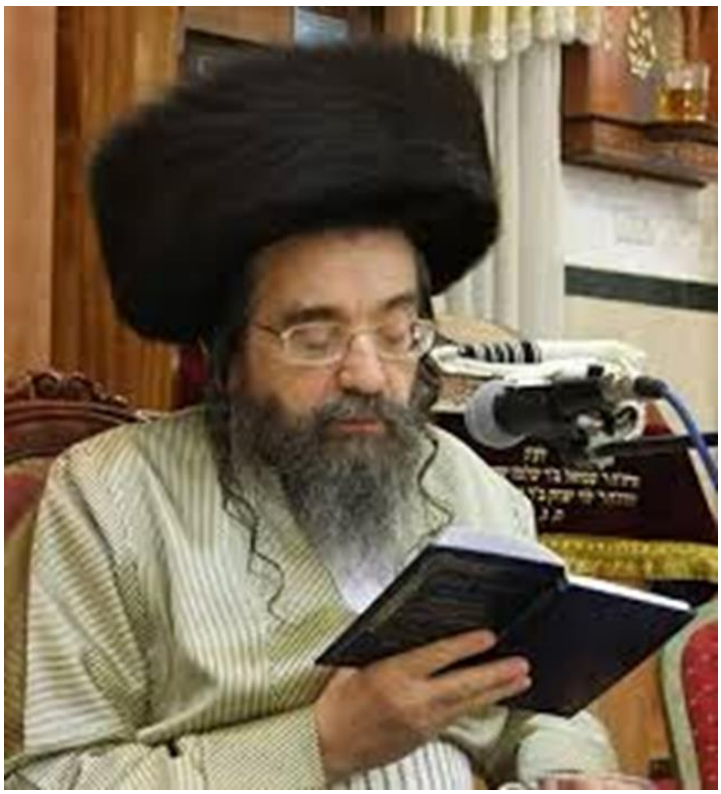
We see the same depth of caring in Sarah Imeinu! Chazal tell us that when Sarah gave birth to Yitzchok, many barren women suddenly also gave birth. We understand that Hashem made a miracle and Yitzchok was born, but why did He bring salvation to so many others? The answer is because Sarah's joy at her own simcha would have never been complete if she knew of others who needed the same thing that she did and were not answered! Her joy would have been marred by the fact that she was answered and they were not! This lofty level of caring for another is not out of our reach - it is realizing the words of the Torah: "Love your fellow as you love yourself." Imagine that the other person is you! This is the way Hashem sees us. We are all connected and intertwined. Let us try to feel that closeness and truly wish for others what we wish for ourselves!

R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov ZT"L would say:

"Hashem's love for every Jew is greater than the love of elderly parents for an only child born in their later years."

Look Hard

Many times in life, we find that the answers to our greatest difficulties, whether physical or spiritual, lie right under our noses. We just didn't see it. Chazal tell us: "Everyone is presumed to be blind, until Hashem opens their eyes." In other words, people do not see things until Hashem opens the mind's eye and graces a person with insight and understanding to save him from his troubles.



This, explains **R' Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlit'a**, is what happened to Yishmael and Hagar. Soon after being sent away from Avraham's house, Yishmael and Hagar became lost in the desert and ran out of water. They had actually come upon a well, but because they were already sentenced to death, they could not see it. Only when Hagar abandoned all other hope and threw herself completely upon Hashem's compassion, that "Hashem heard the voice of the lad, where he was ... and Hashem opened her eyes, and she beheld a well of water." Hashem did not create a new well, He simply opened her eyes. He lifted the concealment, and the point that never broke was revealed. Now that she saw the well, she was able to give her child to drink and the boy lived. "And Hashem was with the lad, and he grew."

"If things do not go your way in reality, then allow yourself to desire the way things are in reality." ~ R' Mordechai Levovitz.

21:8 וַיִּגְדַּ֤ל הַיֶּ֙לֶד֙ וַיִּגָּמַ֔ל וַיַּ֥עַשׂ אַבְרָהָ֖ם מִשְׁתֶּ֣ה גָּד֑וֹל בְּי֖וֹם הִגָּמֵ֥ל אֶת־יִצְחָֽק׃



The Medrash says an amazing thing: "And the child grew, and he was weaned; a crib was rocked for the first time in the home of Avraham Avinu."

Apparently, cribs that were used for infants in ancient times did not rock - they were stationary containers where babies slept in peace. Avraham Avinu understood that a baby sometimes needs movement to settle him down and he was the first person to institute a rocking crib, to lull his baby son Yitzchok to sleep.

The Gaon, R' Meir ben Yitzchok of Copenhagen ZT"L learns a deeper understanding of this Medrash. When a Jew learns Torah or davens, he tends to "shuckle" - to sway back and forth in deep contemplation. This is quite unlike the manner in which the other nations of the world pray. The reason is because this tendency was initiated back in the times of Avraham Avinu, who was the first person to rock his son Yitzchok in his crib. This gentle soothing motion calms an infant and puts him to sleep.

For this reason, writes R' Meir, the Jewish people serve Hashem differently than the gentiles of the world. They stand erect, with precise movement, whereas Yidden need to shuckle, or sway, or pace back and forth, when they are davening or learning Torah.

This was instilled into our collective psyche thousands of years ago by Avraham Avinu, who rocked his baby to sleep, thereby conditioning his descendants to be active and full of energy.

וְאֶקְחָה פַת־לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לִבְּכֶם אַחַר תַּעֲבֹרוּ 18:5

With the sun blazing down; in the midst of a conversation with the Almighty Himself; three days removed from a painful procedure; Avraham Avinu, the paragon of kindness in the world, runs outside to invite three wayward travellers into his tent.

Once situated, he hovers over them, providing them with water to wash themselves, preparing food for them to feast upon. Truly, Avraham exemplifies the highest level of chessed there is, living up to his billing as the pillar of good deeds in the world.

Why, then, would he not invite his guests to stay over and sleep the night? Why does he tell them: **אַחַר תַּעֲבֹרוּ** - "*afterwards, move on,*" seemingly not even giving them the option to stay if they wanted?



The Vizhnitzer Rebbe, R' Chaim Meir Hager ZT"L, would often repeat in the name of his father, **R' Yisroel Hager ZT"L (Ahavas Yisroel)**, the following quote in Yiddish: **זיין גוט צו ייעדען אבער נישט זיין גוט מיט ייעדען** - ***"You have to be good <u>to</u> others, but not good <u>with</u> others."*** In other words, a Jew must always act kindly to other Jews, assisting them wherever necessary, being gracious and forthcoming in all dealings, and promoting the inherent values of chessed and maasim tovim to the greatest extent.

However, this does not mean that one must integrate and associate with every person. One may be kind to a rasha but he still must keep his distance from him. As the posuk says: ***"If your enemy is hungry, feed him bread."*** (Mishlei 25:23)

In much the same manner, Avraham Avinu took the three Arab merchants to be idol-worshippers who were just passing through. Thus, he went above and beyond - just as he always did - to invite them in, clean them up, serve them and feed them because he wished to do chessed and assist every single person who needed it.

But at the same time, he had no intention of allowing these idolatrous pagans to make themselves comfortable in his home, possibly effecting a negative influence on his family and friends.

Pillar Of Salt



As Lot, his wife and two daughters, were beating a hasty retreat from the ongoing destruction of Sodom, Lot's wife Irit, in a moment of parental weakness, turned back to look at her hometown in the hope that the two daughters she left behind would now come to their senses, and escape the fiery inferno. This was, however, in direct contravention of the angel's dire warning not to look back, and Irit was punished; she turned into a pillar of salt and remains there till this day.

Why a **נציב מלח** - "pillar of salt"? As we know, she was punished for not providing even a bit of salt to her guests. This would explain the measure for measure of salt. But what is the significance of the pillar? She could have just as easily been reduced to a heap of salt, to be blown away by the wind. The posuk could have read: "She turned to salt," or "a mound of salt." Why did she become a pillar?

R' Chaim Yirmiyah Flossenberg ZT"L (Divrei Yirmiyah) is nothing if not practical in his response. One must picture the frightening scene: The sky was crimson red as fire lashed out from Heaven, scorching the city of Sodom and all its inhabitants. Horrific cries, combined with the furious sound of sulfuric wind, uprooting the bedrock upon which the city lay.

Lot and his family had their backs turned and were running away from the inferno. When Irit looked back and immediately turned into salt, none of her surviving family members were able to help her. They had to keep running and thoughts of the fate of their mother were far from their minds. They didn't even know what had happened to her. It was only much later, when the conflagration had died down and they went to search for her, that they found Irit dead.

And how did they know it was their poor mother? Because she had become a **נציב מלח** - a full-length pillar in the form, shape and appearance of a human being, a woman that was once their mother. Had she been turned into a mound of salt; they never would have found her!



22;1 **וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם**
In this week's parsha, the power and inner strength to overcome personal desires in order to do the will of Hashem, is born and genetically passed down to all Jews by Avraham Avinu. This ability is even more profound due to the fact that Hashem tested Avraham in an attribute that completely went against his nature.

In fact, we see this with many of the tests that Hashem used for Avraham; he was to do the exact opposite of all that he stood for, believed in, preached about, and lived by.

To sacrifice a child that he loved and waited 100 years for was hard enough, but the fact that Hashem told him that from Yitzchok a nation will be born, was a complete contradiction! Avraham never

flinched. How Hashem would reconcile this obvious paradox he did not know - He has the solution! - but the fact that he would do exactly what Hashem told him was not a question!

R' Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlit'a notes that often Hashem tests those whom he loves by expecting them to do something that goes completely against their nature. Avraham had to suppress his middah of Chessed and do something that appeared antithetical to him. Yitzchok, the paragon of Gevura, was given the formidable task of loving a child like Esav!



Yaakov was tested in the area of Emes when he was forced to say that he was Esav in order to receive the berachos! Moshe had to write about himself that he was humble!

So, if you find yourself constantly being tested in a certain area that makes it necessary for you to do the exact opposite of everything you believe in, don't get frustrated or upset. Realize that this is Hashem's way of helping you transcend and uplift yourself - to become the greatest human being that you can be!

Hachnasas Orchim

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes that it says **ויטע** twice in sefer Bereishis. Once in this pasuk, **ויטע אשל** , and the other time is in Bereishis (2:8) **ויטע ה' אלקים גן בעדן** . This is to tell us that those who do *hachnasas orchim* will merit Gan Eden.

וְאֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת הִכּוּ בַּסַּנְוֵרִים מִקָּטֹן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וַיִּלְאוּ לִמְצֹא הַפָּתַח 19:11

In the hakdama to his sefer, "Tzel Kessef," **Chacham Avraham Gatinyo ZT"L** writes about an occurrence that happened to him while he was travelling with a caravan of Jews on his way home to Salonika, Greece.

As fate would have it, a group of prisoners escaped from a nearby prison and armed with knives, sticks and ferocious zeal, they attacked the helpless caravan.

Chacham Avraham writes that a massacre was underway, and innocent people were stabbed and beaten, bleeding profusely from many wounds. Meanwhile, the chacham himself was standing in the midst of the melee, casualties piling up all about him, but incredibly, he was not touched. In fact, it appeared as if he wasn't even noticed by the raiders! As people were falling on both sides of him, he just stood there erect, invisible to both the attacked and the attackers.

Immediately, he lifted up his eyes to Heaven and prayed for divine intervention. Suddenly, the attackers sensed a wagon coming and they quickly fled. In the wagon, was a doctor who was adept at treating wounded patients. He got right down to work and managed to save many of the victims.

Hashem protects the righteous, and, in the case of Lot, he was saved in the merit of Avraham. As the townspeople of Sodom gathered around Lot's house and wished to do him and his guests harm, Hashem struck them with blindness, and they could not see, let alone attack, Lot and the angels.

Symbolically, the wicked of Sodom refused to be kind, not seeing the G-dliness in others. Hashem punished them by taking away their ability to see anything.

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת־קוֹל הַנַּעַר וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאַךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶל־הָגָר מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ
מַה־לָּךְ הָגָר אַל־תִּירְאִי כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם 21:17

The Ramban writes that Sarah was at fault for sending away Hagar in the previous parsha: "*Our matriarch sinned in this affliction, as did Avraham in permitting it. Hashem heard (Hagar's) affliction and gave her a son who would be a wild man, afflicting the offspring of Avraham and Sarah with all manner of afflictions.*"

If we ever wonder why Jews have so much trouble from the Arabs, it may be traced back - as the **Ramban** points out - to this lack of compassion by Sarah as the cause of the persecution manifested by the descendants of Yishmael on the Jewish people. (***Rabbi Y. Frand Shlit'a***)



A well-respected man, a leader and overseer of a large and thriving Jewish community, once came to visit the holy **Chofetz Chaim, R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen Kagan ZT"L**. Expecting to be welcomed with honour and respect befitting an important man such as himself, he was shocked when the tzaddik took one look at him, turned his head away and had him unceremoniously escorted from his presence. Such a thing was rare, if not unheard of, especially for a community leader who was widely recognized throughout Poland and its environs. Even more than being insulted, though, the man was frightened at the reaction of the Gadol Hador to his presence. What had he done to bring on such a reaction? To incur the wrath and ire of the great man?

He racked his memory for any sort of incident, but he came up empty. Trembling, he decided that he could not leave Radin without finding out the source of the tzaddik's displeasure with him. With a faltering step, he tepidly knocked on the Chofetz Chaim's door and begged to be given one more chance to talk with the tzaddik. He finally managed to persuade his way inside and once again came face to face with the tzaddik.

"Rebbi!" he cried, "What have I done? What was my sin, that I was pushed away and removed from your home?"

The Chofetz Chaim's gaze turned steely. Then, he spoke in an icy tone: "You should just know - that it is all your fault, all your responsibility! The fact that more than three million of our Jewish brethren are suffocating under the harsh yoke of the Communists! All the affliction, all the oppression, all the pain and suffering - it's all your fault!" All your fault! All your fault!

The Chofetz Chaim's words rang out with the force of an locomotive train! The fate of millions of suffering Jews was on his shoulders! How can this be? What had he done? "But Rebbi," he began, a stifled sob of protest erupted from his lips, but the Chofetz Chaim cut him off. "Now? Now you cry? Of course, now you lead a large kehillah, you oversee the workings of your community and surely you wouldn't want any harm to come to them. But what about then? What about all those years ago?"

The man was unable to open his mouth. He truly had no idea what the tzaddik was referring to. "Surely you remember," continued the Chofetz Chaim, "all those years ago, when you worked as the administrator of the local Talmud Torah! There was a young boy in your yeshivah, a small child who had lost his father and lived with his struggling mother. Under his unfortunate circumstances, it was no wonder that the boy tended to act out and make trouble. He was wild, sharp-tongued and difficult to control.

In the end, you lost patience with him and had him thrown out!" The man thought long and hard. Then he asked cautiously, "What was the boy's name?" "Laibel," said the tzaddik. "His name was Laibel. Since the yeshivah wouldn't keep him, his mother had no choice but to put him in a non-Jewish school.

The boy was brilliant perhaps; he may have even become a Rosh Yeshivah given the proper guidance. Instead, his sharp mind absorbed secular knowledge and he grew to become a leader among the gentiles.

This young Jewish boy, **Laibel - Leon Trotzky** - became the supreme commander of the Red Army during the Bolshevik Revolution, and one of the founders of Communism, an ideology he spawned after being spurned from your Talmud Torah. How many countless neshamos have suffered due to this insidious ideology?"

"Now I ask you," concluded the Chofetz Chaim, "who is to blame? At whose feet is the enormous weight of history's unforgiving irony placed - if not yours? Leave! I cannot bear to even look at your face!"

R' Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa ZT"L (Toldos Yaakov Yosef)

"'And behold there were three men standing over him; he (Avraham) saw and ran towards them.' The mishna in Avos (1:2) teaches that the world stands on three pillars: Torah, Avodah, and Gemilas Chasadim. corresponding to Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov.

Now, at this point, Yitzchok and Yaakov were not yet born, and the world only had the Amud Hachessed - Pillar of Kindness, embodied in Avraham, upon which to stand. Avraham realized that the responsibilities of 'three men' - Himself, Yitzchok, and Yaakov - were 'standing over him' - relying on him and rather than shy away, 'he ran' - he rushed towards his responsibilities and eagerly fulfilled them."

20:17 וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם... וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹקִים אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאַמְהֹתָיו וַיֵּלֵדוּ



The relatives of a mentally-ill woman approached **R' Yechezkel Landau** - "We know that the Rav objects vehemently to distributing amulets and segulos," they said, "but our relative has recently begun complaining about all sorts of imaginary aches and pains. We tried to tell her that it was nothing, but she insists that they are real and the only thing that can cure her is an amulet from the Noda B'Yehuda himself. We beg of your honour, to please give her one, just this one time!" R' Yechezkel thought about this for a few minutes and then came up with an idea. He excused himself and went into an adjoining room. Then, he rolled up a blank piece of parchment that he had laying around and wrapped it in a bit of cloth. He walked back into the room and handed it to them. "Let the sick woman wear this around her neck for one month's time," he told the anxious relatives. "After thirty days, you can open the amulet. If the writing on the amulet has disappeared, it is a sign that she has recovered from her disease." A month later, she was all cured!

As descendants of Avraham Avinu, when we hear of another Jew's pain our immediate reaction should be to pray for them. Chazal tell us: "One who prays for his friend, when he himself is in need of that mercy, he is answered first." Segulos and amulets are fine. Running all over the world for yeshuos and salvation is commendable. But what happened to good, old-fashioned prayer for another in need? This is our most powerful weapon! If one can pray for another person in the same need, Hashem will certainly look favourably on his prayer, and He will even bless that individual first.

Nothing Happens by Chance

Sarah, the wife of Avraham, insisted that he banish Hagar and her son Yishmael from their home. Hashem agreed with Sarah, and Avraham subsequently sent them off. Hagar strayed in the desert; Rashi enigmatically points out that upon leaving the house of Avraham Avinu, Hagar returned to the practice of idol-worship. From whence does Rashi derive this fact?

R' Mordechai Pogromansky ZT"L explained that a person who truly believes in Hashem understands that nothing happens by chance. Hashem dictates a unique path for each individual with every detail precisely mapped out. A true - believer in Hashem, can never take a wrong turn, and is never lost; he simply finds himself in the situation which was Divinely predestined for him.



Thus, the fact that the posuk employs the term **ותתע** - Hagar "wandered" as a displaced person, is evidence that she had stooped and veered from the path of Avraham Avinu. Describing Hagar as "lost" is the equivalent of saying that she severed her connection with Hashem and lacked belief in His Divine guidance.

There is a famous story told about **R' Mordechai Pogromansky (R' Mottel,** as he was universally known), who was a great Torah scholar and famous in the world of the Lithuanian yeshivos before the second world war. Caught in the Nazi vice, he spent the war years in the Kovna ghetto where he was scrupulous in preserving a life of Torah in the ghetto with great devotion.

Miraculously, he managed to escape and fled to Poland when Lithuania was annexed by Russia after the war. Eventually, he made

his way to Czechoslovakia, and later into France, where he moved to Aix Les Bains and thereafter to Versailles, heading up the yeshivah there.

The war took its toll on R' Mottel and the state of his health was bad. The renowned Sternbuch family brought him to Switzerland, to be treated by the top doctors. In 1949, R' Mottel passed away.

Shortly after World War II, R' Mottel was travelling on a train and happened to be sitting next to another Jew who was a Shochet and a Mohel. They began talking and got involved in a deep discussion. They became so engrossed in the topic that they missed their stop. The train continued on to another city. It was Erev Shabbos and they had no other choice but to get off the train in a strange location. By the time they disembarked, it was almost Shabbos, and they had no idea where they were!

What would they do? Shabbos was approaching, and they were nowhere near a Jewish community. But R' Mottel reassured his friend, "A Jew is never lost! If we are here, it is not because we are lost; it is because we are meant to be here!"

He proved his point from the story of Hagar, about whom the Torah writes that she was lost. Rashi comments that she was lost in that she returned to the house of her father and to a life of idol-worship.

This didn't seem to calm down the other man, who insisted, "R' Mottel, mir zennen fort farblundget - we are still lost!" Not one to give up hope, R' Mottel inquired and discovered that there was indeed one solitary Jewish family in the small town.

Hastily, the two travellers went to his home and knocked on the door. When the man opened the door, he was stunned to find two religious Jews on his doorstep. He could not believe his eyes. "Are you Eliyahu HaNavi?" he asked the strangers in shock. R' Mottel informed the man that he was just a Jew by the name of Mottel Pogromansky and he introduced his friend.

The host invited them in and explained that his wife had given birth to a baby boy the Shabbos before. He was unable to take his wife and child to a larger city where the bris could be performed, and he could not arrange for a mohel to come to them for Shabbos to perform the bris. "Would either of you happen to be a mohel?" he asked hopefully. R' Mottel smiled. He informed their host that indeed his friend was a mohel and wouldn't you know - he even had his circumcision equipment with him. Remarkably, the little baby merited to be circumcised on Shabbos, the eighth day!

This vignette was retold by **R' Mordechai Gifter ZT"L,** the Telzer Rosh Yeshivah, when he wished to highlight the emunah of R' Mottel Pogromansky, a man who always felt that he was in the Hands of the Almighty. What a fortunate villager! Hashem sent him not only a mohel but also R' Mottel Pogromansky - one of the great rabbinic personalities of his time - to be the sandek!

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם 18:2

The lesson that the beginning of Parshas Vayera imparts us is one of staggering proportions. The posuk relates how Avrohom Avinu sat at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. This was the third day after his bris milah and he was in terrible pain. Hashem, Himself, came to visit Avrohom - obviously an unbelievable honour.

In fact, this is the source in the Torah from where we learn the mitzvah of bikur cholim - visiting the sick. But then, something remarkable occurs. In the midst of the Almighty's visit, Avrohom suddenly spots three men walking towards his tent.

This is the moment he's been waiting for. He jumps up and runs toward his guests, no doubt apologizing to Hashem for running out on Him like this, and he welcomes in the guests.

Of course, one might think it is rude to abandon someone who comes to visit you - how much more so the Divine Presence itself! - but we see that Hashem did not feel slighted at all; on the contrary, Hashem was happy to see how Avrohom performs His will through the mitzvah of Hachnossas Orchim.

The Medrash teaches: "Greater is welcoming guests, than greeting the shechina itself." It means that Hashem himself would prefer that we show love and kindness to one another even before we show honour and respect for Hakadosh Boruch Hu!

This is truly a remarkable and fundamental point in our Avodas Hashem. Our Beloved Father wishes more than ANYTHING that we put each other's needs before any other priority and that we truly care about one another. When we do this, we will surely bring the greatest nachas and honour to Hashem.

R' Yissachar Frand Shlit'a would say:



"**The Ramban** writes that Sarah was rebuked for sending away Hagar. As a result, Hashem gave Hagar a son who was a 'Pere Adam' - who will afflict Sarah's descendants with cruelty for all generations. If we ever wonder why Jews have so much trouble from the Arabs, it can be traced back to this lack of compassion that was manifested by Sarah, as the cause - as the Ramban points out - of the persecution manifested by the descendants of Yishmael to the Jewish people."

Bikur Cholim

There are many aspects of Bikur Cholim that we derive from Hashem's visit to Avraham Avinu.

In halacha we learn that it is never beneath one's dignity to visit a sick person. Even the most esteemed and honored rabbi has a mitzvah of visiting simple people and bringing them food or anything that will alleviate their suffering.

It is specifically the fact that an honoured guest takes the time and makes the effort to come, that brings much joy to the one who is ill.

R' Isaac Sher ZT"L once met a bochur who was carrying an uncovered plate of food to a sick friend and felt embarrassed. R' Isaac told him "You have nothing to be ashamed of. Carrying food to a sick person is like carrying a Lulav and Esrog on Sukkos."

A story is told about the beloved **Rebbitzen Batsheva Kanievsky A"H** who told a young man who was having a health issue about a certain segula that would help him. She described to him the exact ingredients of this special potion and told him to prepare it and swallow it every day for 30 days and he will have a refuah.



The boy, who was learning in yeshivah and sleeping in a dormitory, had no access to a kitchen where he could prepare this treatment. He told this to the Rebbitzen, and with her wonderful smile she answered him, "Don't worry, come here every night after seder and I will prepare it for you."

The main ingredient in visiting or helping a sick person, is to truly care about their well-being. This

is why the Bais Yosef writes that one who does not daven that a person should get well, does not fulfil the mitzvah of bikur cholim even if he went to visit him. Let us all embrace this mitzvah and emulate Hashem by finding every opportunity to visit, help and pray for the sick.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְּט עַל־נַפְשֶׁךָ אַל־תַּבֵּט אַחֲרֶיךָ 19:17 ***And he said, "Flee for your life, do not look behind you"***

We each have a yetzer hara who tries to ensure that we do not succeed in our Avodas Hashem. It is shrewd and conniving and manages to disguise itself in many shapes and forms. Often it causes that which is forbidden to become so tempting that one simply cannot withstand it. When this does not work it will switch tactics and make what is forbidden seem like a righteous and pious act. The yetzer hara can make someone feel so conceited that he believes he has nothing left to work on, to improve.



However, says **R' Dr. Abraham J. Twerski**, one of the most common and dangerous schemes of the evil inclination is when it makes one feel so depressed that he has no desire, no energy, to do anything at all. It tells him, "Look at all the terrible things you've done. How can you possibly have a relationship with Hashem?"

It is not apparent that this is the workings of the evil forces inside us. In fact, we often believe that such inner voices are coming from the yetzer tov urging us to repent. The way to avoid being trapped by the yetzer hara, is to heed the advice that the angel gave Lot:

"Escape with your life, do not look behind you!" Don't dwell on your past mistakes. There is a fine line between introspection and inner destruction! If your thoughts are causing you to feel uplifted, then you are on the right track. But if your feelings are causing you to feel worthless and depressed, know that this could only be the work of the yetzer hara and you must stop looking at the past and focus on building a better future.

Like Rabbi Twerski says: "If you fall into mud, get up and wash yourself off. Don't dwell on how you fell in and how it felt to wallow in it." We must look forward if we wish to escape the wily tactics of the evil inclination.



וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רַק אֵין יִרְאַת אֱלֹקִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה 20:11

In 5532 (1772), **R' Tzvi Hirsch Levin ZT"L** was appointed as the Rav of Berlin, Germany, which at the time had a very large Jewish community and many scholars of note. With great pomp, Berlin welcomed its new Rav, whose fame was known the world over. However, the Reform Jews who comprised the majority in Berlin, rose up against him, and made his life miserable. He was unafraid of them and continually faced them head on, defending Torah Judaism, until eventually, he had to leave Berlin entirely. R' Tzvi Hirsch was once asked his overall opinion of the Berlin community. He thought for a moment and then said, "I believe that Berlin has more Yiras Shamayim (Fear of Heaven) than any other city in the world!"



The questioner was surprised, especially due to the troubles that R' Tzvi Hirsch went through in Berlin, and questioned how such a thing can be true. "It's very simple," replied R' Tzvi Hirsch. "Every Jew who comes to Berlin with any amount of Yiras Shamayim shakes it off and leaves it here. Therefore, as I said, Berlin has the most Yiras Shamayim from any other city!"

The city of Gerar was unique. It was the most advanced, the most intellectual, the most modernized centre of civilization in ancient times. With all that, it was outstanding for another reason: It was a city where no person felt the slightest allegiance to a higher power. The people had no regard for an Almighty G-d and no regard for Divine law. Thus, Avraham recognized that just as they lacked respect for Hashem, they lacked proper conduct between one another.

R' Meir Yechiel of Ostrovtza ZT"L would say:



"The Medrash writes that Avrohom asked for 3 measures of flour for each angel. As we know, there were 318 men in Avrohom's household (14:14) and with Avrohom, Eliezer, Yishmael and the three angels, it now totalled 324. The measure of a **סאה** is the size of 144 eggs - one **סאה** equals 6 **קב**, a **קב** totals 4 **לג** and one **לג** is 6 eggs.

Thus, nine **סאים** totals 1296 eggs (144 x 9). Chazal say that a standard meal is the size of four eggs. Now, 1296 divided by 4 equals 324. Hence, there were 4 eggs - precisely a standard meal - for each man in the house!"

The gemara states: "*And he called out in the name of Hashem, G-d of the world.*"

Resh Lakish said: Do not read it - *and he called out*, rather - *and he caused it to be called*. This teaches us that Avraham Avinu caused Hakadosh Boruch Hu's Name to be uttered by all those who passed by. How did he accomplish this?

After (his guests) had eaten and quenched their thirst, they stood up to bless Avraham. But he said to them, 'Have you eaten my food? You have eaten the food of the Master of the World! Give thanks, and praise, and bless the One Who spoke and brought the world into existence!'"



R' Yaakov Kaminetzky ZT"L explains that by introducing his guests to the idea of belief in Hashem, Avraham Avinu took his chessed and concern for them one step further. He saw that the greatest act he could perform was to direct and educate them away from the falsehood that governed their lives.

From the moment the holy **Baba Sali, Rabbeinu Yisroel Abuchatzera ZT"L**, arrived in the Southern Israeli city of Netivot, in 5724 (1963-64), large numbers of people lined up at his door, seeking his help and salvation. His exalted prayers led to a great many amazing miracles and resulted in a tremendous Kiddush Hashem among the observant, and even the non-observant Jews in Israel. In fact, many people also returned to their roots as a result of his influence.

One of the most famous incidents at that time, involved a young Israeli soldier who was injured in battle. The young man arrived at the Chacham's home in Netivot in a wheelchair. He told R' Yisroel his story:

"I was injured by a bullet in my back during the Yom Kippur War. Although I underwent a series of operations, I am still a cripple and cannot stand up. One of my legs is injured so badly, that the doctors want to amputate it. The doctors do not believe I will ever walk again and by removing my leg, it will stave off further infection and disease.

A friend suggested that I visit the Rav, who is supposed to work wonders with his prayers. I have a hard time believing, but in my despair, I decided to give it a try." The Baba Sali spoke softly. "Do you put on tefillin every day?" "No," replied the soldier truthfully. "Do you keep Shabbos?" Again, the man responded in the negative. "If such is the case," R' Yisroel replied sharply, "You should be thankful that only one leg is in such a serious condition.

A Jew believes that Hashem gives us healthy limbs so that we may serve Him. Those who don't keep the mitzvos should regard their healthy limbs as gifts. In your case, you may lose this gift." At that, the young man burst into tears. After a few minutes of silence, the Baba Sali looked at the young man and now he felt his true sincerity.

Gazing directly into his eyes, he asked, "If I bless you that you will be able to stand, will you begin to observe the mitzvos?" "Yes," the young man eagerly replied, tearful eyes brimming with hope. "Then give me your hand."

The Chacham took hold of his hand, and said, "May you have a refuah shleima." After the young man kissed the Rav's hand and wheeled himself out of the room, Rebbetzin Abuchatzeira told him to try and stand up. To his surprise, with little effort, he managed to stand up immediately, and even take a number of steps without assistance.

Startled by the remarkable change in his situation, the soldier left the house in search of a telephone. The nearest telephone was in Yeshivat Hanegev, not far from the Rav's home. The young man raced over to the yeshivah and called his family to tell them about the miracle. The yeshivah students, who overheard the conversation, were stunned. Taking him by the hand, they broke out into a fervent dance.

A short while later, the young man returned to the Baba Sali's house with many of the yeshivah students, and a special festive meal was held in honour of the miracle. The young man's story spread like wildfire throughout the country and caused many previously unobservant Jews to adopt a Torah lifestyle.



וַיִּקַּח חֶמְאָה וְחָלָב וּבֶן־הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם וְהוּא־עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכֵלוּ 18:8

Avrohom Avinu had been sitting anxiously at the entrance to his tent, scouring the countryside looking for guests. When he finally spotted the three wayfarers in the distance, he was overjoyed and quickly brought them into his home where he served them food and drink and waited on them hand and foot.

The posuk tells us, however, that while they ate, **וְהוּא־עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם**- ***"He stood over them."*** Would that not be considered a bit rude on the part of the host to stand and stare at his guests while they're eating?

In order to answer this question, writes the Maggid of Brody, **R' Aryeh Leib Halevi ZT"L**, we must first answer another question. Chazal tell us that Avrohom Avinu kept all the mitzvos even before they were formally given. This includes the Rabbinic prohibition against placing milk and meat on the same table . If so, how could he have served his guests, **חֶמְאָה וְחָלָב וּבֶן־הַבָּקָר**- ***"Cream, milk and a young calf"***; even if they ate the milk before the meat (which would

not have been forbidden), how could the two items have been served simultaneously?

The reason for the Rabbinic decree is to safeguard against the milk and meat coming into contact with one another, causing a person to transgress the Torah prohibition of **בשר בחלב**. But if another person is standing guard to ensure that the two never come in contact, the purpose of the decree becomes null and void.



For this reason, the posuk tells us that when Avrohom served his guests milk and meat, "*He stood over them*" - he wasn't rude. He was acting as the mashgiach on premises, to ensure that the two never come into contact and that his guests would not G-d forbid transgress and eat milk with meat!

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

The Torah tells us that Sarah Imeinu became pregnant after Avrohom davened for Avimelech. Hashem answered Avrohom's tefillos by granting him his own heart's desire: a child. Rashi impresses upon us the importance of true Ahavas Yisroel by stating: "*One who prays for his friend and he needs the same thing, he is answered first.*"

The Tiferes Shmuel points out that the "kuntz" is to daven for your friend the same way you daven for yourself! There is nothing so dear to Hashem than sincere love for another person. This is the greatest **נחת רוח** we can give to our Father in Heaven!



The Noam Elimelech writes that chessed with other people and love of Hashem is directly proportional. If you want to know how much Ahavas Hashem you have, consider how much you truly love other people. How much do you love to do chessed? How much do you feel another's pain or joy? This reveals a lot about your relationship with Hashem.

It is told that **R' Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT"L** went into exile for 2 years. He wandered from place to place until he finally returned home. When he entered his town, he heard that Eliezer is sick. He ran into his home and was greatly relieved to find out that the sick child was not his son Eliezer. After a moment, though, he berated himself. "Elimelech, if after 2 years of golus to improve your ruchnius, you still differentiate between your child and someone else's child, then you have not accomplished anything!"

Immediately, he walked out, and went into golus for another full year! Let us elevate our **בין אדם לחבירו** so that we may cultivate a loving relationship with our Creator – **בין אדם למקום.**

"The root of the tree is deep in the earth, but a man's is above; for the soul is his root and it is from heaven." ~ Maharal

"If a man sees that his prayer was not granted, let him pray again!" ~~ Talmud, Berakhot.

R' Yosef Schwartz of Grosswardein ZT"L (Ginzei Yosef)



"When a sick person davens on his own behalf, his prayers are accepted quicker since Chazal tell us that the Shechinah rests at the head of a choleh (ill person). Thus, when Yishmael cried out in the desert, the posuk states: **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת־קוֹל הַנַּעַר ...אַל־תִּירְאִי כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם**: - ***'Hashem heard the cry of the lad as he is there.'*** In other words, Hashem heard the boy's cry since He - Hashem - was right there and accepted his heartfelt cries immediately."

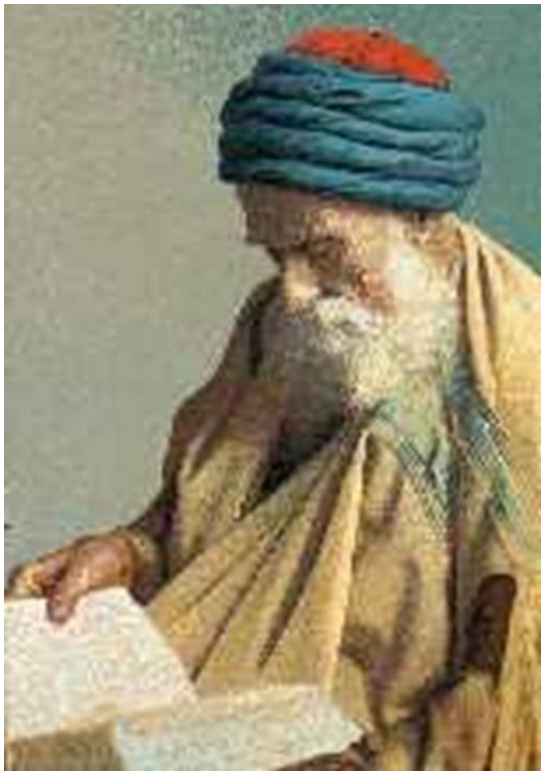
וַיֹּאמֶר הִמָּלֵט עַל־נַפְשְׁךָ אַל־תַּבִּיט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־הַכִּכָּר 19:17

When the Malachim were about to give their final instructions to Lot, regarding the impending destruction of Sodom, they made it very clear that he and his family were not to look at the maelstrom that was to become of their hometown. They told him: "*You were wicked together with them, and only in the merit of Avrohom are you to be saved; you have no right to watch their suffering as you escape.*" (Rashi)

The Meforshim all ask: Later on in the parsha, the posuk tells us: "*Hashem remembered Avrohom and sent out Lot from amidst the upheaval.*" Hashem recalled how Lot protected Avrohom's identity when he pretended to be Sarah's brother, thereby saving his life. Since Lot acted with kindness to his uncle, Avrohom, Hashem took pity on him and saved him from death in Sodom. Thus, Lot was saved through his own merit and not solely on the merit of Avrohom Avinu.

If so, why was he specifically denied the right to look back and watch the destruction of Sodom? From here, we can learn a tremendous insight into the physiology and makeup of a human being.

A person's face is called **פנים** (Ponim) and is spelled the same as the word **פנים** (P'nim) which means "interior," because the inner feelings and character of a person are displayed on his face.



For this reason, writes the holy **Ohr Hachaim, R' Chaim Ben Attar ZT"L**, Lot and his family were told not to turn around and gaze at Sodom because if their countenance would face Sodom, the Angels that were sent to destroy the wicked inhabitants of the city would see their faces.

Since the face reveals the inner self, the Angels would detect the corruption of Lot and his family and destroy them together with Sodom.

R' Shimshon of Ostropolier ZT"L would say:

"Rashi says that Lot's wife looked **אחריו** - 'behind Lot' and instantly turned into a pillar of salt. She thought that she was impervious to the angel's warning in the merit of looking 'behind Lot' - at the future generations of great people who were destined to emerge from Lot: Ruth the Moavite and Dovid Hamelech.

However, although righteous descendants did emerge from her offspring, she herself was unworthy and perished."

A man suffered from crushing afflictions. He endured numerous physical ailments, and it was a wonder that he managed to survive at all, with all the terrible maladies that he had contracted.



R' Isser Zalman Meltzer ZT"L, Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Eitz Chaim, once came to visit the sick man and for a long time, R' Isser Zalman sat quietly by the man's bed, just like the companions of Iyov did when he was in the midst of his fiercest afflictions, unsure of how to begin. What could he say to buoy the man's spirits, what words of cheer could he bring to this unfortunate man? Finally, he told him, "Reb Yid, you should never give up hope. Hashem's salvation can come at any moment and there is certainly no reason to allow your trust in Him to weaken."

The man strained in his bed and finally answered R' Isser Zalman. "Rebbi, if you're trying to tell me to rejoice in my afflictions, you're wasting your breath. The reason is because I've never stopped rejoicing in my tribulations for one moment, even when they were as strong and as fearful as could possibly be. My happiness is not because I believe that a better future awaits me or that Hashem's salvation will come at any moment. No, of course not, because this is something that I already know. So what am I happy about? I'll tell you." With this, the man prepared to tell his tale.

"I once heard a story about an individual who became mixed up in criminal activities. Of course, he eventually was caught by the authorities and convicted of a serious crime against the regime. He was sentenced to many years in prison and was unlikely to taste freedom for a long time to come."

The sick man looked at R' Isser Zalman Meltzer and asked, "Rebbi, do you know what this man's reaction was? A smile of total relief came over his face!" The sick man, too, attempted to smile. "This man had been caught committing a very serious crime for which the normal punishment was a life sentence of backbreaking labour in Siberia. Almost nothing could be as devastating as serving out such an interminable term, so a long jail sentence came as a wonderful surprise for him. He was actually happy that it wasn't any worse!"

Without even the hint of a groan, the man shifted in his sick-bed. "Do you understand, Rebbi? Anyone who suffers in this world can compare himself to that prisoner. Everything is a test from the Ribono Shel Olam and any suffering one has to bear is a priceless opportunity to avoid the unendurable misery he would otherwise have in the next world.

The Ramban says that what awaits us there is so horrible that even one moment is worse than 70 years of suffering like Iyov's. If so, surely there can be no greater joy than to exchange punishment in the World to Come for a relatively light and short punishment in this world. So why should you need to bolster my morale?"

As he repeated this story, the Ponovezher Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Elazar Menachem Mann Shach ZT"L** cried and said, "We too have to feel joy in our trials and tribulations and bear them with love. We must know that Hashem tests us and punishes us out of love, just as a father punishes his son for the son's ultimate benefit."

As youngsters, my mother taught her children that while we might not be the smartest people around, we could be courteous, polite and considerate of others.



R' Eliyohu of Vilna ZT"L (Vilna Gaon) would say:

"Avrohom Avinu planted an **אשל** tree in Be'er Sheva, which stands for eating (**א**), drinking (**ש**) and lodging (**ל**). **ראשי תיבות של אכילה, שתייה, ולינה**.This was done as a tikkun for the three terrible acts that were done which brought tremendous damage to the world; Adam Harishon who 'ate' from the **עץ הדעת**; Noach who planted a vine and 'drank' until he became drunk; The people of Sodom who never provided 'lodging' for any guest or stranger." - (Kol Eliyahu on Vayeira)

Kivrei Tzaddikim



A middle-aged man recently travelled with a tour group to a number of countries in Eastern Europe, to visit and be mispallel by Kivrei Tzaddikim.

They drove By bus through parts of Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, etc. stopping at the graves of many great Gedolim of yesteryear who were buried in the various towns and cities.He was inspired at each stop, but one place was different. When the group arrived in Uhel and stood at the gravesite of the holy **Yismach Moshe, R' Moshe Teitelbaum ZT"L**, the man felt more than inspiration.

In his own words, "I couldn't stop crying. I could barely breathe!" He hadn't felt this way by any of the other kevorim, and could not understand what brought about this subconscious emotional reaction, specifically in Uhel, which caused him to become short of breath.

When he arrived back home, he mentioned this unusual phenomenon to his elderly father, a man of ninety-three years old who spent his entire life steeped in Torah and Avodas Hashem. At once, the sharp and fully cognizant man replied, "I know exactly what happened. I have no doubt!" A great story was sure to follow, and the man waited expectantly to hear his father's words. "I probably should have told you this story earlier but now I am certain that you must hear this." The elderly man looked wistful and continued.

"When the war (WWII) finally hit us in Hungary in 1944, I was learning in Yeshivah. The German army ploughed through Hungary with incredible speed and there was little time for anyone to try to get away or escape. A friend of mine and I managed to just slip out their evil grasp and we began a trek that took us through village after village all along the Hungarian countryside, trying to remain out of sight and away from the advancing Nazis.

"One night, we came to the small town of Sembaty and what we saw was heart-breaking. The Germans destroyed everything Jewish within the town and deported all the residents. The Shul was totally wrecked, all the benches overturned and the seforim thrown about haphazardly. As a final insult to the Jews, though, the Nazis removed one of the large Sifrei Torah, unrolled the parchment and stood it up outside the door of the shul for everyone to see. It was an absolute disgrace and my friend and I decided right then and there that we could not allow this desecration of a Sefer Torah to remain.

"Although it weighed us down heavily, we struggled to lift the desecrated Torah and we carried it in our arms as we continued on

our trek. For a while we managed to elude the Germans but finally, we realized that there really was no more place for us to hide. We reached Uhel and made a decision: Since our capture was imminent, we wanted to do one final mitzvah with extreme Mesiras nefesh and devotion. We reached the cemetery in Uhel and began digging with our bare hands in the dirt right next to the grave of the tzaddik, the Yismach Moshe. Then, we took out the rescued Sefer Torah that we had been carrying with us and laid it to rest in that shallow grave.

After the terrible destruction and desecration that the Nazis did to our people and to our Torah, our final act of Mesiras Nefesh was to be the restoration - however small it was - of Kavod Hatorah - the honour of the Torah. We buried the Sefer Torah with tears streaming down our cheeks and covered over the shallow grave. From there we ran away and with the miraculous assistance of Hashem, we survived."

After a moment of stunned silence, the father concluded, "Chazal tell us that when Avrohom Avinu led Yitzchok to the Akeidah, he raised his eyes and "saw the place from a distance." The place he saw was the holy site of the Bais Hamikdosh and he felt the spirituality and kedusha emanating from there not just for himself, but for the many distant generations of Klal Yisroel that will come to pass and will likewise be nurtured and contained by the holiness therein." He looked at his son and said, "I have no doubt that what you felt standing there in front of the kever of the Yismach Moshe, was the electric current derived from the mitzvah of Mesiras Nefesh, that I performed over sixty years ago!"

Be as a bird perched on a frail branch that she feels bending beneath her, still she sings away all the same, knowing she has wings.

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

Hashem informed Avrohom Avinu that He was about to destroy the city of Sodom. Its community of sinners had gone too far, elevating sin to the level of cultural acceptance. It had become a way of life. The Torah teaches that Hashem's intention in notifying Avrohom of His plans was to inform Avrohom about his future as Patriarch of a large nation.

Is this the reason that Hashem informed Avrohom of His plans? True, Hashem wanted Avrohom to pray for the people of Sodom, to teach the Patriarch the significance of prayer and its ability to rescind a decree, even when it appears to be too late. In this situation however, Hashem knew that Sodom lacked the minimum number of righteous persons to ward off the decree. So why bother to pray? Hashem could have taught Avrohom the significance of prayer in any other of a number of instances, ones in which prayer seemed to have greater efficacy than it would have for Sodom.

Hashem sought Avrohom Avinu's prayer. He wanted to hear numerous supplications from the Patriarch. True, they might not "fit" the needs of Sodom, but Avrohom would be the progenitor of a large nation. Somewhere, someone would need his prayer.

Horav Shlomo Halevy Levinstein, shlit"a, quotes **Horav Shimshon Pincus, zt"l**, who reiterated the idea that no prayer is wasted, when he eulogised his mother-in-law, **Rebbetzin Mann**. When she became ill and required emergency brain surgery, she survived the surgery but never woke up, lying in a comatose state for a week before her holy neshamah – soul, ascended to its rightful place in Heaven. During her illness, prayers were recited throughout the Holy Land on her behalf, entreating the Al-mighty for her recovery.

Hashem listened; regrettably, the answer was "No." Rav Pincus explained that chas v'shalom – Heaven forbid, should anyone think for a moment that the tefillos were wasted. No prayer is ever

wasted! Hashem saves and stores them until they are needed for another Jew who is missing the necessary prayers on his behalf. *When a person harvests his crops, he certainly gathers much more than he needs at the moment. He stores the remainder in a reinforced silo to maintain the grain for a later date. Our tefillos are stored, put away until that time in which they can save another Jew in need.*

Rabbi Paysach Krohn relates the following story:



Sometime before the Communist Revolution of 1917, there was a Cheder Rebbe who tried with great effort to control a very rambunctious student, in the small group of children he used to teach in the back of the local Shul. Everyday this boy had a mischievous prank up his sleeve. But it was not until one day, when this child pulled his worst prank, that the Rebbe decided he couldn't handle this child's tricks anymore.

Early one morning, before anyone arrived at Shul, this boy brought a small baby goat into the Shul and hid it in the Aron HaKodesh.

Soon, the children arrived, but they couldn't hear the sounds of the frightened goat because it was drowned out by their Davening. When it came time to open the Aron to read the Torah, the little goat jumped out of the Aron and started running around the Shul!

The Rebbi nearly fainted from fright while the rest of the children howled with laughter. Before the Rebbe had caught the goat and regained control of the children, he had figured out who the culprit behind this was. He told the young troublemaker to follow him, and

he went and brought him directly to the Rav of the town. This boy's history was well known, and this latest stunt was the last straw. The Rebbi told the boy that he was going to be expelled from the Cheder, but there was a slight restriction.

No child in that part of Russia could be expelled from a Jewish Cheder without the explicit consent of **Rav Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson**, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe. When the child was brought before the Rebbe and his teacher detailed his past history and the current episode, the Rebbe explained to the child that given the situation, there was no choice but to agree with the teacher, and he had to leave the Cheder. The boy listened intently and then looked up and asked, "Rebbe, may I say something in my defense?" The Rebbe agreed. "Rebbe," the boy explained with a sense of urgency, "If you throw me out of Cheder, you are also throwing out my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren for all eternity! What did they do wrong to deserve to be thrown out of Cheder?"



The Rebbe was stunned by the remark of this child, and indeed, the Rebbe retracted his decision and allowed the boy to continue.

Rabbi Krohn adds that this tale was told over at an engagement party, and one of the Mechutanim jumped up and said, "This is no fairy tale. The boy in the story is my great grandfather!

Who knows where I would be today without his youthful foresight for his future family, and the compassion of the Rebbe to allow him to stay in Cheder?"

וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוֹב אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כָּעֵת חַיָּה וְהִנֵּה־בֵן לְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ 18;10



And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son."

R' Yisroel of Rizhin ZT"L (Rizhiner Rebbe) asks where do we find that he ever returned? However, **the Zohar** explains that the three angels who came to Avrohom, represented the souls of the three Avos - Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Thus, the angel who made the promise to return a year later must have been representing the soul of Yitzchok who, in fact, made his worldly entrance exactly one year later!"

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

ותבט אשתו מאחריו ותהי נציב מלח 26:19. - Parshas Vayeira details the destruction of the wicked city of Sodom and its environs as punishment for their evildoing, in particular for their staunch opposition to doing acts of kindness for others. The angels that were tasked with destroying Sodom told Lot to flee with his wife and two daughters in order to be spared, but they were cautioned not to look behind them to witness what was transpiring in Sodom. Lot's wife did not heed their warning, and when she turned to gaze at the destruction, she was transformed into a pillar of salt.

The Medrash *(Bereishis Rabbah 51:5)* explains that because Lot's wife had sinned with salt, this punishment was particularly fitting for her. In what way did she sin with salt?

When Lot brought the angels to his home as guests, his wife circulated to her neighbours to ask if any of them had salt that she could borrow in order to serve her guests. Although her behaviour seemed innocent, in reality, her secret objective was to publicize to the townspeople of Sodom that she had guests, so that they would converge on her house and demand that the guests be handed over to them, which is indeed what occurred.

Because she claimed to be out of salt in order to backhandedly announce the presence of her guests, she was punished by being turned into a pillar of salt. This story is difficult to understand for two reasons. First, how is it possible that a self-respecting housewife ran her kitchen without such an essential spice as salt? Second, why is the fact that Lot's wife didn't have salt a reason that she was transformed into a pillar of salt? Had she been lacking potatoes; would she instead have become a potato? What is the deeper connection between her sin and her punishment?



Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter explains that salt is a food which, if eaten by itself, lacks good taste and nutritional value. Paradoxically, it is also an essential ingredient in countless recipes, and if omitted, its absence is clearly detectable. Even though salt seems to lack value when viewed in a vacuum, it is in reality an extremely versatile spice with the ability to enhance the flavour of other ingredients.

In this sense, salt can be described as a food whose entire purpose is to serve other foods. In light of this insight, it is completely understandable that Lot's wife was so steeped in the self-centred and stingy mindset that permeated Sodom that she viewed salt, a food whose very essence is dedicated to benefiting others, as an alien product which had no place being stored in her home.

Her punishment of turning into a pillar of salt was particularly appropriate for her sin. Because she spent her life focused solely on her own selfish needs with an utter lack of concern for the less fortunate, she was transformed into an eternal monument to chesed by being forced to exist in the form of a food which serves no function other than assisting others.

וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת־יָדָם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־לוֹט אֲלֵיהֶם הַבָּיְתָה וְאֶת־הַדֶּלֶת סָגָרוּ ***And the men stretched out their hand and brought Lot into the house.*** *(19:10)*

The angels pulled Lot into the house making sure to close the door behind them. Immediately afterwards, the angels struck the men at the door, blinding them. They no longer could locate the doorway to Lot's house. One can only find what he can see. We wonder why the door had to be closed once the men had been blinded. They could no longer find the entrance. Lot was essentially protected. He could sit right in front of them and they would not be aware of it.



Horav Shalom Schwadron, ZT"L, explains that the door was not closed in order to save Lot. The door was closed so that Lot should not observe the Sodomites being punished. Lot merited being spared from death. He did not merit watching the deaths of the evil citizens of Sodom.

Lot was far from a saint. He was saved because he had remained silent when Avrohom Avinu told the Plishtim that Sarah Imeinu was his sister. Lot could easily have refuted Avrohom but he kept his peace, thereby earning incredible reward for himself.

While the reward was worth his life, it did not mitigate his evil streak. He was as wicked as the rest. Thus, he was allowed to live but he could not watch the others die. The door was closed so that he could not watch his compatriots receiving their due.

Hashem's punishment is exacting, as is His reward. Lot was not allowed to watch; thus, the Sodomites died without having to experience the indignity of seeing one of their own spared. Lot's reward was life; nothing more, nothing less.

Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah





Rabbi Elimelech Biderman says that this weeks parsha talks about Akeidas Yitzchok and the great Nisoyoin of Avrohom Avinu and also his great Hachnosos Orchim towards the three Malochim (he thought that they were arabs). However, both of these things did not come to fruition.

The Akeida didn't happen because the malach told Avraham to refrain from shechting Yitzchok. Yet we know that the desire that Avrohom had in carrying out this test still stands by us till today.

Also the Malochim didn't actually eat anything, because they are not capable of eating. So Avrom wanted to invite them and gave them tremendous amounts of food, but it didn't happen.

We learn from this that the main thing is to ***want to do*** the Rotzon Hashem. Many times, we want to do things, but it just doesn't work

out. But Hashem gives us great reward for wanting to do the right thing.

There is a Gemara that mentions we have a zechus through the Eifer (ashes) of Yitzchok. But there were no ashes, no korban, no Akeida? Because Avrohom and Yitzchok desired to carry out the will of Hashem, it is reckoned as if it actually happened.

We need to continue to want to do the right thing, and this is what Hashem desires more than anything else.



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Why were Avraham and Sarah awarded for their Hachnasas Orchim? Chazal tell us that for the water that Avraham fetched for the angels, the Yidden received the Well of Miriam in the desert (see Rashi 18:4). For the bread that Sarah prepared, Mann fell in the desert. And for the three calves that Avraham prepared, the Yidden had slav.

It seems strange that they were rewarded so greatly, for a deed that really wasn't necessary, which didn't really help anyone.

Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen answers, that the Torah is showing us here, that it isn't the outcome of our deeds which is important to Hashem; it is our exertion, our effort. Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen writes: "*From all the gemilus chessed that Avraham Avinu performed…the Torah only mentions the time he served the angels. However, in reality, there wasn't any gemilus chessed there at all,*

because the angels didn't need it. The angels pretended to eat in honor of Avraham …This demonstrates to us that good intentions is the main part of man's service. He doesn't have to look at the outcome…" (Divrei Sofrim 21).

Avraham didn't know that they were malachim, he thought that they were travellers hungry for a meal, so he served them. The Torah tells us at length what Avraham prepared for them to show us that our attempts are important, not the results.

The Chofetz Chaim said, ***"A yid must do; not accomplish."*** It is certainly very good when our deeds develop into accomplishments, and we merit helping people, but the Torah is showing us that it is our desire to help, and our efforts, which are most important. We may fail, but we tried, and we did the best we could, and this is what's precious to Hashem. For this, we will be greatly rewarded.

This lesson is also seen at the end of the parashah when the Torah tells us about the Akeidah. The Akeidah was a very momentous moment, and we receive endless brachos and protection in its merit. But when we study the Akeidah, we realize that the sacrifice never occurred!

Avraham placed Yitzchok on the altar, and before he was sacrificed, the malach told Avraham to take him off. Yet this is the Akeidah which is so precious to Hashem, and so beneficial for Klal Yisrael. So many blessings and salvations come to the world, because of the Akeidah.

The explanation is that most important is our desire to serve Hashem. Even more than our successes, Hashem wants to see our attempts.

If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

Torah U' Tefilah -The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The challah on Shabbos should have a cover spread both above it and below it (Orach Chaim 271:9). The Mishnah Brurah explains that this is done for two reasons. Firstly, we cover the challah so that it is not 'embarrassed' by the Kiddush, since we say the brachah of Ha'gafen first. According to Halachah, the brachah of Ha'motzi should be said first, but because Kiddush is so special, we say Ha'gafen ahead of Ha'motzi.

Another reason is that the cover is a way to remember the Monn that fell in the Midbar, which had a layer of frost covering it on top and on bottom, and our double cover represents this. A question arises. Does challah have feelings? Will the challah really be upset if we don't cover it for Kiddush? Of course not, but we can learn a valuable lesson from this.



Rav Eliyahu Dessler, zt"l, teaches *(Michtav M'Eliyahu III, p. 101)* that good middos and sensitivity show how we really feel inside. We can only be sensitive if we are sensitive. Therefore, we must act in ways that will help us acquire sensitivity, even by showing this sensitivity to things, like challah, which has no feelings. Rav Dessler teaches that if we are sensitive when it comes to items, how much more sensitive and caring should we be to each other, people who do have feelings! Thinking like this helps us get closer to Hashem, because being sensitive to others is very precious to Hashem.

A Second Bowl of Soup- By Gitty Bald

Song and dance filled the huge brightly illuminated ballroom. The musicians played their instruments with great zeal. Thousands upon thousands of chassidim sang, their swaying bodies and dancing legs remaining in the bleachers. Only the saintly Rebbes, fathers of the chassan and kallah, with several honoured relatives, sat at the single table in the center of the hall.

Waiters carefully climbed the bleachers time and again, distributing food to all the guests. The chassidim ate their portions hurriedly so that they could continue singing.



Reb Yankel was standing on a bench situated directly above the head-table. He had just received his portion. Suddenly the full bowl of boiling hot soup spilled directly onto the shtreimel of the father of the kallah, the holy **Rebbe, R' Yochanon of Rachmastrivk!** The chassidim standing nearby gasped in horror. The Rebbe's shtreimel was soaked through and through. The soup was slowly dripping down onto the Rebbe's radiant face and black satin bekeshe. R' Yankel felt faint. The Rebbe turned his head, in the direction of R' Yankel. R' Yankel shut his eyes tightly in shame and fearful trepidation. He felt the Rebbe would surely mete out some strict punishment for his negligence. If only he could simply disappear! R' Yankel slowly gathered the courage to speak up. "Rebbe, Forgive me please. It was my fault. Please forgive me!"With a wave of his hand the Rebbe interrupted R' Yankel's pleading as if to say that there was no need for an apology.

"Oh so it was your plate of soup which spilled?" the Rebbe asked. "Then you haven't yet eaten any soup." Immediately turning to a

nearby waiter the Rebbe requested that R' Yankel be given a second portion of soup. There was no further mention of the incident. The Rebbe remained seated calmly at the head table during the entire simcha, despite his soup-soaked shtreimel.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter



יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם, והשענו תחת העץ –18:4 **זוהר– The Zohar Hakodosh** tells us that "Avrohom Avinu had a special tree that enabled him to identify who was attached to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and who was attached to Avodah Zarah. When one who was attached to Hashem would sit under the tree, the tree would spread out its leaves to cover the person and create nice shade for him. When one who was an Oved Avodah Zarah would sit under the tree, the tree would raise its leaves upward, so that it provided no shade or protection for the one underneath.

There was also a spring of water below the tree. If the tree was not providing shade and one was in need of Tevilah, the water would rise towards him. Avrohom would know that the individual was Tamei, impure, and needed Tevilah to become purified. If however the spring dried up, that indicated that the person was not ready for Tevilah and needed to wait seven days before becoming purified.

When these guests came to visit Avrohom, he had them sit under the tree to determine if they were attached to Hakodosh Boruch Hu or not.

Cave of Machpelah - וְאֶל־הַבָּקָר רָץ יח:ז



The *Baal haTurim* points out the letters of **הבקר** can be rearranged to spell **הקבר** (the grave). Thus, one could read the phrase that Avrohom ran to the specific gravesite (cave of Machpelah) after the calf. In fact, the phase **ואל הבקר רץ** (634) is equivalent to the phrase **רץ למערה** (ran to the cave).

The Medrash relates that when Avrohom attempted to take a particular calf from his herds, the calf ran away from him. Avrohom ran after it and pursued it into the Cave of Machpelah. There he came upon Adam and Chavah resting on couches with burning candles a delightful aroma like the aroma from the korbanos. From that time Avrohom desired this to be his family burial site.

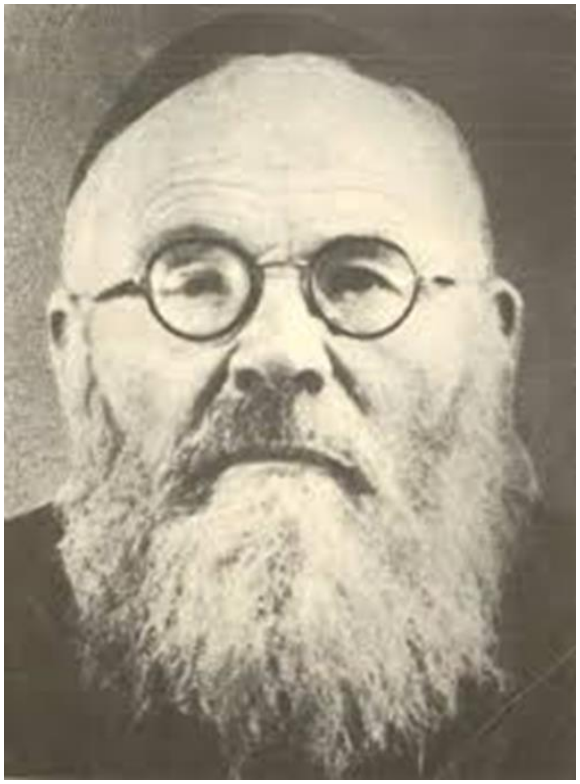
Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבש את חמרו So Avraham woke up early in the morning, and he saddled his donkey. *(22:3)*

The above pasuk teaches us about Avraham Avinu's alacrity to serve Hashem. The Almighty instructed him regarding a mission. Avraham did not tarry. He went about performing the mission at the earliest possible moment.

The Tur Orach Chaim 1:1 begins with this idea: "*That you should 'wake' the morning – rather than (have) the morning wake you.*" Likewise, in Shulchan Aruch 1:1, the Bais Yosef writes his well-known opening words: "Arise like a lion, to get up in the morning to serve his Creator; that you should wake up the morning." While this

concept is probably the last thing that goes through our minds when the alarm rings in the morning, when the last thing we feel like doing is getting up and out of a warm bed. Perhaps the following vignette will give us a reason to rethink our morning wake-up call.



Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, shared the following thought concerning his revered Rebbe, **Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl** (related by **Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita**, in Nifleosecha Asichah), "I merited to be with Rav Elya for a period of six months, during which I was able to see his unique activities with regard to his serving Hashem. Among those which impressed me the most was his meticulous diligence to arise early in the morning. This went on without fail, regardless of how late he had retired to bed the night before and continued when the venerable Mashgiach was in the later days of his life, when he was quite aged.

"I once asked him to explain why arising so early was so much a part of his service to Hashem. (After all, it was not as if he did not have a legitimate excuse to sleep a little bit longer, or had problems locating a later minyan for Shacharis.) "He replied with the following, 'After my one hundred and twenty, and I will be called before the Heavenly Tribunal, they will question me concerning my carrying out the laws of the Shulchan Aruch: "Did you fulfil each and every halachah in the Shulchan Aruch?" is a weighty and demanding question. It makes sense that they will ask in order of sequence beginning with the very first halachah: – "Arise like a lion to serve his Creator that you should wake-up the morning." Imagine how I will appear if I cannot give a positive reply to the very first question! Therefore, I have decided that arising in the morning, before

daybreak, is a requirement I cannot chance failing to respond to affirmatively. At least I will have one positive answer/merit in my behalf.'" Life is a gift, which must be appreciated.

Napoleon said, "Every moment that I am awake I can bask in the glory of being the king, but, when I sleep, I lose the experience. What a shame to miss it!" Certainly, one must get his rest to function properly.

There is a concept, however, of squandering away life. Time is life. It was given to us to serve Hashem and fulfil our mission in the world. If this notion would be coursing through our minds in the morning when the alarm rings, we would race to shul with excitement. People who have nowhere to go and nothing to do tend to, sleep a lot. Sleep becomes their escape from the reality of life. Someone who is excited about living, about serving, about doing and achieving, cannot wait to get up and go.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Don't Look Back

Moments before Sedom would be overturned, the malach said to Lot, ***"Run for your life. Don't look behind you and don't stand in the entire plain. Flee to the mountain, lest you will be smitten… Lot's wife looked…and she became a pillar of salt"*** *(19: 17, 26).*

The Divrei Shmuel zt'l teaches a fundamental concept in avodas Hashem. These words hint that one should always look ahead; he shouldn't look back and focus on the sins and errors he committed in the past, as this will draw him into yeush.

It's important to clarify, there are thoughts that come into our mind that we think is the yetzer tov speaking to us, or that Hashem Himself is calling us to teshuvah, but really it's the yetzer hara. How do we know the difference? Thoughts from the yetzer hara lead to feelings of depression and yeush, despair.

Tzaddikim taught us that the yetzer hara desires the yeush that follows sins more than the sins itself. Sometimes, the yetzer hara lures a person to sin primarily for the depression that will follow. This lesson is also alluded to by the letter **ב** . The **ב** is closed on three sides, and its opening faces forward. This indicates that a person's focus should be on the future, and not on the past.

It is important to have set times for reflection and teshuvah; however, this shouldn't be one's constant focus. Most of the time one should forget about the past and concentrate on the present and on the future.

Hot Water



The Gemoro in Maseches Shabbos [119b] states that hot water on Motza'ei Shabbos can heal a person. **חַמִּין בְּמוֹצָאֵי שַׁבָּת מְלוּגְמָא** – . Rashi adds that this means both a hot drink and bathing in hot water.

One of the reasons for this idea derives from the **Rebbe Reb Zyshe**, who says that hot drinks are a cure for sadness. He brings a remez for this from the words in the possuk in Tehillim [147:3] **הָרוֹפֵא לִשְׁבוּרֵי לֵב וּמְחַבֵּשׁ לְעַצְּבוֹתָם** – ***He is the healer of the broken-hearted and binds up their sorrows.***

Reb Zyshe says that mechabesh is roshei teivos (an acronym) for ches – chamim, beis – be'motza'ei, shin - Shabbos, mem – melugma, meaning that the hot water of Motza'ei Shabbos is a balm for sadness.

Take a Message

Shimon was lying in his hospital bed trying to take his mind off his pain. He began to have a conversation with Hashem. "I am so lonely here in this hospital. I have been here for 3 days, and no one has come to visit me yet. I promise that when I get out of here, I will do bikur cholim at least once a week." Baruch Hashem, he had a full recovery and he made good on his promise to fulfil the mitzvah of bikur cholim.

One week, however, he was very busy and he only was able to go to the hospital on Friday morning. The person he was planning on visiting was sleeping. This was the only time he would have time to visit anyone that week.



He called **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein, shlita**, and asked if visiting someone who is sleeping is considered a fulfilment of the mitzvah of bikur cholim? Rav Zilberstein answered that the answer to this question lies in this week's parsha. When Hashem came to visit Avraham the pasuk writes "Va'yei'raeh " (and he appeared) and Rashi comments that Hashem was coming to visit Avraham who was healing from the bris milah .

The Rosh (Rav Asher ben Yechiel) asks how Rashi knew that Hashem was coming just for bikur cholim, maybe He was coming to bestow on him prophecy?

He answers with a simple proof, from the fact the ensuing pssukim do not record any conversation between Hashem and Avraham, clearly alludes to Rashi's idea that Hashem for no other reason but to visit Avraham".

R' Zilberstein says from this Rosh we see that the mitzvah can be done even if you don't speak to the choleh, which would include, if the person is sleeping, and telling someone to relay the message that you came to visit.

Rabbi Y Richtman - Giving it Your All



A little girl named Aliza had contracted a rare and serious disease and was being kept in a special hospital ward for seriously ill children. Aliza understood that the situation was quite grave. The doctor delicately told her parents that their daughter's only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion. There seemed to be no other choice.

After each family member was tested, it was determined that her 5-year-old brother, who miraculously survived the same disease had developed the right anti-bodies needed to combat the illness, possessed a matching blood type, and he was the only family member whose blood could be used to help his sister.

The Doctor explained the situation to the parents, stressing that is was important that they explain to their young son what was needed of him. The parents took their little boy aside and asked him if he would be willing to donate blood to his sister. He hesitated for only a minute and said, "Yes, I will do it if it will save Aliza."

The little 5-year-old boy was led to a bed in his sister's room. A nurse administered him, talking and smiling as she worked, in effort

to ease the whole family's nervousness. "You'll see everything will be just fine," she said quietly to the little boy trying to get him to relax.

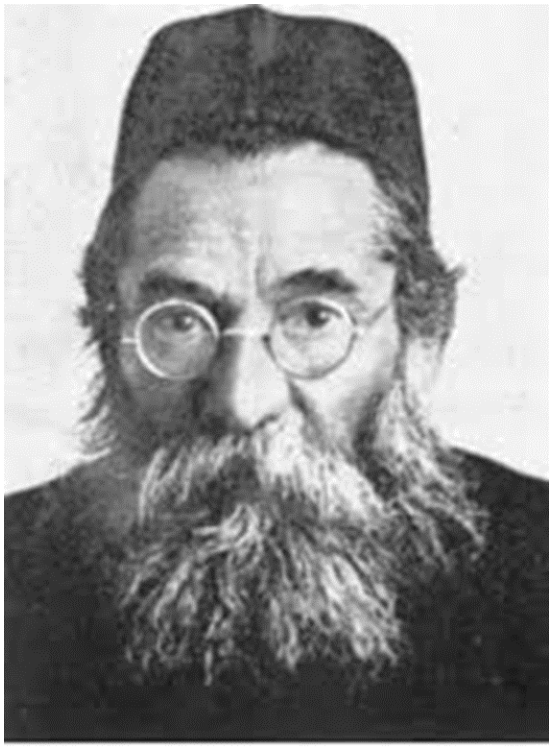
As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed and smiled bravely, seeing that the colour was returning to his sister's cheeks. This had a positive effect on everyone present. Then without warning, the little boy turned pale, and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor standing nearby and asked in a trembling voice, "***Will I start to die right away?"***

This child's pure intention can teach us all a lesson on mesiras nefesh. Being young, the boy misunderstood what his parents had told him; he thought that in order to save his sister, he was going to give her all of his blood and he would die. But he was willing to do it anyway!

Take a lesson from Avraham and Yitzchok Avinu. After waiting for so long Avraham finally had a child and he was willing to give him as a Korban for Hashem! With the right attitude, one of selflessness, is all one needs to pass a test that Hashem sends him. Passing a test however, doesn't mean you have to do something as drastic as bringing your child as a korbon. Passing a test can mean you overcoming something that is hard for you, and when you overcome that; you are sending it up as your personal Korbon for Hashem. (Torah Tavlin)

Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh- Distance yourself from Ga'avah—pride, arrogance, and haughtiness, as much as possible

Sefer Orach Yesharim comments that removing one's pride means to not consider oneself important, and any talents that one has should be looked at like gifts from Hashem. Just like everything one has is from Hashem, one's talents are no different and there is no reason to feel pride because of them.



Rav Leib Chasman points out, however, that humility does not mean that one should not know and appreciate what he is. It is a terrible mistake for someone to deny who he is, and one that does is not being modest, rather he is being foolish! A person who denies his own identity and talents is not humble, and he is only deceiving himself. A humble person can and should know precisely who he is.

Rav Chatzkel Abramsky, zt"l, was once called on to testify at a court hearing and present the Torah view when a ban was considered being placed on Shechitah in England. As the head of the Bais Din, Rav Abramsky had no choice, and was required to testify in secular court. When he was on the witness stand, his attorney asked him to state his name and his position. The attorney then asked, "Is it true that you are the greatest living Halachic authority on the European continent?" Rav Abramsky said, "Yes. That is true." At hearing this, the judge became bewildered and interjected, "Rabbi Abramsky, is that not rather haughty on your part? I thought that your Jewish laws and ethics teach you to be humble." Without any hesitation, Rav Abramsky responded, "I am aware that we are taught to be humble. However, I am under oath, and I may not lie." Rav Chatzkel Abramsky was well aware that he was the greatest Poseik living in Europe, and recognizing the fact of his true status was not haughtiness.



R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

וירע השבר מאד בעיני אברהם על אודות בנו כא:יא *The matter was very bad in the eyes of Avraham regarding his son* *(21:11)*

Why was the matter bad "in the eyes of Avraham"? It is brought down in the Sefer "Hamaskilim Yazhiru": Chazal said (Megillah 28a): 'A person may not gaze at the face of a wicked person' for his eyesight is dimmed, as it states (Bereishis 27:1) *'And it came to pass when Yitzchak became old and his eyes dimmed from seeing'*, because he gazed at the wicked Eisav.

According to this we can explain why 'the matter was bad in the eyes of Avraham', he was concerned that his eyes would dim "regarding his son", since his son Yishmael was wicked and he served idols, and it is not possible for a father to not look at his son, he was concerned that his eyes would dim.

One time, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, O"BM, was staying in one of the homes he visited during his travels around Europe. According to the Sages, washing hands with a lot of water in the performance of a Mitzvah is rewarded by wealth, and the host wanted Rabbi Salanter to feel free to use as much water as he liked.

He informed Rabbi Salanter that he had just hired a young Jewish girl to help with the heavy work in the kitchen and that more than enough water is available for all their needs. Rabbi Salanter, however, declined the offer. He did not care to enrich himself, he said, at the expense of the back-breaking labors of the poor Jewish orphan girl who worked in the kitchen and used the minimum amount of water. (Story from the Talelei Oros). Comment: When serving the guests, Avraham Avinu asked for "a little water to be brought" (Bereishis 18:4). **The Nachal Eliyahu** explains that since a servant was bringing water, Avraham didn't want to over-work him.

This is another area when one should put another's wellbeing over their own spiritual benefit. Let us keep this message in mind when we make requests or demands of our hired help, especially - but not only - if the help is Jewish. It's sometimes simply better to do without.

אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל עבדיך יח:ג "*If I find favour in your eyes please don't turn away from your servant".*

Avraham made it sound as if they were doing the **חסד** for him by coming to his home . We see from here how one should do **חסד** ,to do it in a sensitive manner, and to be careful the other person does not feel like what people call "a chessed case".



Harav Yosef Stern Zt"L had a famous Simcha Gemach which carried all sorts of china and glassware. A man once borrowed four hundred glass cups for his Simcha. When he returned them R' Yosef was surprised to see that he returned all four hundred in perfect condition. R' Yosef commented that it was amazing that not one broke. The man replied and said that a few had broken and he replaced them. When R' Yosef asked him if he toveled them, he said no. R' Yosef thanked him for returning the glasses. R' Yosef then went without saying a word and toiveled all four hundred glasses himself.

Harav Yakov Yosef Herman had a **מנהג** to personally serve his guests. One Shabbos as he served his many guests, wearing a brand new kapote, a guest took his plate of hot cholent and threw it right

back into Rav Yakov Yosef's face. The guest complained, "You did not give me enough meat!" Rav Yakov Yosef did not utter a word. He simply walked back into the kitchen and cleaned himself off. He then apologized to his guest and served him a new portion with more meat.



Rav Yisrael Salanter, zt"l, once left his town and went to Konigsberg, Germany, where a tightrope walker was giving exhibitions, and Rav Yisroel wanted to see this feat. He found a place among the audience and gazed with wonder at the amazing tightrope walker, who risked his life four times each day by walking on a rope that was tightly drawn, about a hundred feet in the air. If he made one false move, took one misstep, or got distracted for even a moment, he would fall from the high rope and would instantly die. After the show, Rav Yisrael returned home. It did not take long for word of his trip to spread. Many people could not understand how such a great Rav and Tzadik who was the Gadol HaDor, was able to find the time to leave his home town and his Torah learning to travel away just to watch a ropewalker do his performance.

Rav Yisroel explained, "For years, I found it almost impossible to concentrate for five minutes straight on my Tefilos by Davening. As soon as I would begin Shemoneh Esrei or sit down for other Tefilos, all kinds of thoughts started to creep into my mind. I heard about the tightrope walker, who was just an ordinary man and how he risked his life every day by walking on a high rope for just a few

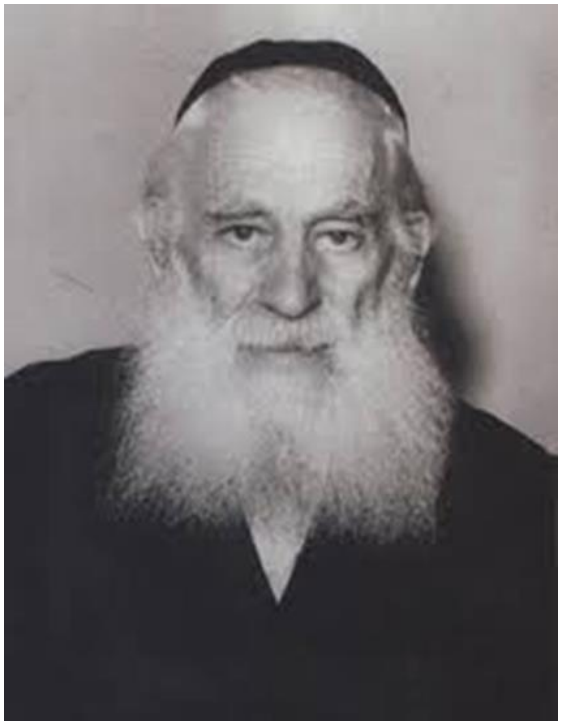
rubles! The slightest distraction would mean certain suffering and even death!

I thought to myself, 'I am not risking my life here when I Daven, but I am risking my eternal life in Olam Haba by being distracted, and I still can't concentrate for a few moments!'

I had to see for myself how someone can concentrate so intently and not be distracted, and I went to see the tightrope walker. While I was there, I went to the man after his show, and I asked him what the key to his success was.

His response was inspiring to me. He said, 'When I am up there on the rope, I only see one thing before me, and that is the rope. I look at nothing else and I hear nothing else, because I know that if my eyes or focus wavers from the rope, I am going to die.'

I learned from this that when I Daven or serve Hashem, my focus must be on nothing else but Hashem, and that is the key to not being distracted!"



In the early 20th Century, **The Ponovezher Rav, Rav Yosef Kahaneman, O"BM**, was waiting to speak with **the Chofetz Chaim**, **O"BM**, in his home, when an elderly man arrived and asked his permission to go ahead. The door opened, and the Chofetz Chaim ushered the man into his room.

After some time, the door opened again, and the Chofetz Chaim accompanied his guest not only out the door of his home, but to the edge of town. Upon the Chofetz Chaim's

return home, Rav Kahaneman inquired about the identity of his visitor, and the Chofetz Chaim said that because Rav Kahaneman had seen him, he could reveal that it was Eliyahu Hanavi who had paid him a visit!

Emerging from his meeting with the Chofetz Chaim, Rav Kahaneman asked the others waiting there if they, too, had seen that older Jew and every person he asked replied they had seen no such person!



Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series [לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה]

The beginning of the parsha relates the unbelievable Hachnosas Orchim of Avrohom Avinu. He goes out of his way to look for guests when he was in a situation of extreme pain from his Milah and had every reason to be absolved from doing any mitzvas at all. He was attending to himself, changing his bandages. It was extremely hot outside with no passers-bye. He was desperate to perform the mitzva of Hachnossas Orchim.

Chazal tell us in the gemarah ***גדולה הכנסת אורחין מהקבלת פני שכינה*** . Where does Chazal know this from? **שבת קכז.**

They get the source from our parsha. **The Vilna Gaon** explains in a beautiful way. He explains that Avrohom is sitting at the entrance of his tent awaiting guests on the third and most painful time after a Bris Milah. HaKodosh BaruchHu came to be mevaker choilim (to teach us the importance of this mitzva). Avrohom is engaged in conversation with Hashem with Nevuah, when he sees three passers-

bye. How did he notice the guests when he was engaged in the middle of a Nevuah with Hashem?

[*The Baal Hatanya was once in the middle of learning and a child was crying. He noticed this and called for help. How did he notice when he was so engrossed and emersed in his learning? Because he was attuned to helping others, his Ahavas Yisrael was so great that it automatically overrode anything else.]*

Similarly Avrohom was so desperate and attuned to carrying out his life's mission of Hachnossas Orchim, that he could sense that he had visitors even in the midst of a Nevuah with Hashem. The Vilna Gaon says that when a person leaves Shul, the halacha is that he should walk backwards, not with his back facing the holy area (or *Gadol*).

Avrohom is in the middle of talking to Hashem, and he leaves the tent from where the Shechinah was, to meet his *orchim*. He should have walked backwards out of his tent. However the Pasuk says that **וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם**: He ran **towards them** with his back to the Shechinah. This is the *Mekor* and proves that **גדולה הכנסת אורכין מהקבלת פני שכינה.**

However, in realty, we are talking about The Ribono Shel Oilam. How could Avrohom do this? The answer is that we as Yidden, have a deep relationship with Hashem. When we are kind and look after another Yid, this displays our love for Hashem Himself.

To express this strong bond, we can either honour Him, or his children. This shows how much we love Hashem. So, by turning his back on Hashem and running off to meet the orchim in the middle of conversing with Him, was not an affront, but rather a display of deep love towards Hashem.

" Speak wisely or keep silent! "

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה יקח נא מעט מים (18:2-4) ...

Avrohom excelled in the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim (hosting guests). Three days after he circumcised himself at the age of 99, Hashem did not want Avrohom to burden himself with taking care of guests, so He brought a powerful heat wave that deterred all travelers on that day.

Still, the weak Avrohom's greatest concern was that the unusually hot weather would deny him the merit of welcoming guests, so he decided to sit at the entrance of his tent in the hopes that he might spy a stray traveler.

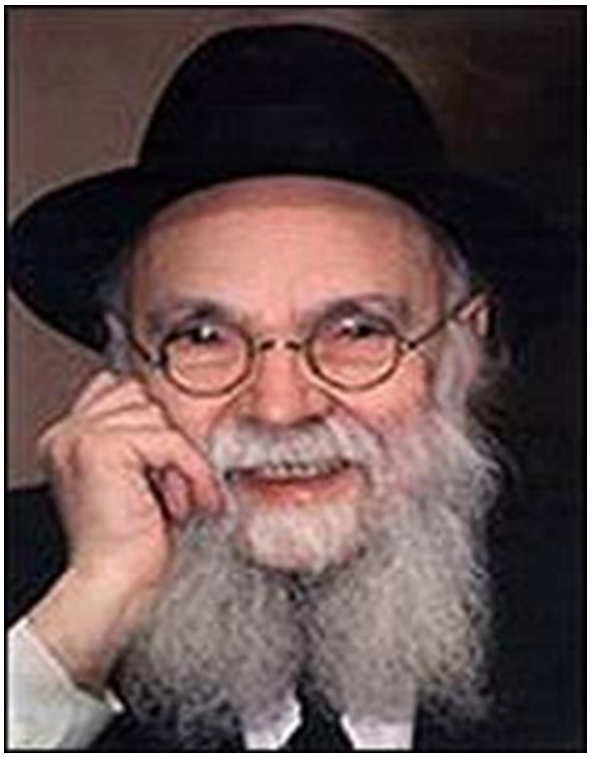
When Hashem saw Avrohom suffering over his lack of guests, He sent three angels in the guise of people. Rejoicing at this improbable turn of events, the elderly and frail Avrohom ran to personally invite them to his home and proceeded to serve them a lavish and abundant feast.

Rav Yissocher Frand recounts a powerful story regarding the importance of the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim. One morning in Toronto, a local man noticed a visiting meshulach and invited him to his home for breakfast. He asked the fundraiser about his itinerary, to which he responded that he intended to spend most of the day circulating around Toronto, after which he would move on to his next destination that evening.

The local man begged the meshulach to change his plans and to instead sleep in his house that night. The collector resisted, explaining that his time was extremely limited, and he could not afford to spend another night in Toronto. However, the host persisted and told the collector that if he stayed with him that evening, he would give him a larger cheque than he would ever receive in the next city, an offer to which the fundraiser acquiesced. The

following morning, the host gave his guest an extremely generous cheque as he had promised, jotted down his contact information, and sent him on his way.

A year later, the host in Toronto called the meshulach and informed him that he would be making a bris for his newborn son the following week, and that he would be sending an airplane ticket so that the collector could fly in for the occasion and serve as sandek. The meshulach was speechless. He barely knew the man and couldn't fathom why he wanted to fly him in and honour him as sandek. Nevertheless, the host was determined, and the incredulous fundraiser ultimately agreed to come in for the occasion. After the bris was over, the new father called over the collector to explain his actions. He said that he had been married for many years but had not been blessed with children.



He shared his plight with **Rav Avrohom Yaakov Pam**, who advised him that the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim is a segulah for having children. Where did Rav Pam get this segulah?

In Tefillas Geshem (the prayer for rain that is said on Shemini Atzeres), we invoke the water-related virtues of our righteous ancestors and beseech Hashem to grant us water in their merits. The stanza pertaining to Yitzchok begins, **זכור הנולד בבשורת יקח נא מעט מים**– Remember the one who was born with the tidings of, "Let some water be brought." Avrohom and Sorah were married for many years without children, yet after they hosted the angels with tremendous self-sacrifice, their guests immediately informed them that at this time the following year, they would have a son.

Rav Frand suggests that this may be the source for Rav Pam's advice that just as the heretofore barren Avrohom and Sorah were blessed with the news of Yitzchok's birth through their hachnasas orchim, so too would the merit of the hospitality of the couple in Toronto enable them to have a long-awaited child of their own.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld- *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid* - Weekly Parsha Message



וְעַתָּה הָשֵׁב אֵשֶׁת־הָאִישׁ כִּי־נָבִיא הוּא וְיִתְפַּלֵּל בַּעַדְךָ

And now, return the man's wife, because he is a prophet, and he will pray for you *20:7*

The Torah attaches a huge amount of significance to the power of Tefilla. It is interesting to note, that over the last 20 or 30 years, scientific research has been carried out on the power of prayer. This has grown at a tremendous pace. In the USA, the government has spent over 2.3 million Dollars into research on prayer since the year 2000. See below excerpts from some of these studies: The focus of these articles is on non-Jews, however it shows us how much more **we** can accomplish through Tefilla.

There was a study carried out in 1988 called the "Double Blind Study" by Dr Randolph C. Byrd. University of California Medical School. He studied 393 patients admitted to the San Francisco general hospital. All these patients were given state of the art treatment. In addition, half of them, chosen at random, were prayed for by prayer groups across the USA. Importantly, none of the Doctors, patients or nurses knew who was being prayed for or who was praying for them. Hence the "Double Blind Study". The results were incredible. The patients that had people praying for them, had

fewer deaths and instances of resuscitation, less requirements for ventilators or anti-biotics.

Larry Dossey Md. said that the outcome of this study was so significant, that if the method being investigated had been a new drug, or surgical technique, it would have undoubtedly been a scientific breakthrough.

In fact Dr Willam A Nolan [author of *The Making of a Surgeon]* suggested that maybe doctors should always write on their orders, "Pray for patients three times a day".



Rav Elya Lopian Zt'l [Lev Eliyahu] brings down that our avos- Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov who instituted Tefilla, are very similar to the pioneers of the telecoms industry who had to initially lay wires and cables for the initial infrastructure to enable distant telephone conversations to take place for many years to come.

This is what the Avos did for us. The Koach of Tefillah that they created on this world is so incredible so that we have the opportunity to speak to the Ribono Shel Olam and to communicate with our creator and to ask for anything we want. And he is waiting to hear from us. We see that even the Goyim understand and believe in this concept. How much more so , that the Yidden can utilise this special gift and strength of Tefillah and incorporate it into our everyday lives.

Have a great Shabbos!

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו 18:2 ***He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold! Three men were standing over him.***

If Lot had learned one thing from his uncle, Avraham *Avinu*, it was to adhere meticulously to the *mitzvah* of *hachnosas orchim,* hospitality to wayfarers – and anyone in need of a bed or a meal. *Hachnosas orchim* is just one of the many activities that fall under the rubric of *chesed*. Avraham was the *amud ha'chesed*, pillar of lovingkindness. Avraham devoted himself to it to the point of self-sacrifice. *Chesed* also gave him the opportunity to reach out to the pagan world spiritually and to teach the pagans about Hashem.

Chazal laud Avraham for his extraordinary dedication to serving the three travellers that presented themselves at the door of his tent. This occurred while Avraham was recuperating from his *Bris Milah*, circumcision. While one cannot argue that Avraham deserves recognition for his actions, we cannot ignore the fact that Lot did the same thing when the angels visited his home in Sodom. Indeed, Lot risked his life to protect them. What distinguishes Lot's act of *chesed* from that of Avraham?

The *Kedushas Levi* (also attributed to ***Horav* Leib Sorah**) explains that Avraham did not have a selective policy concerning his *hachnosas orchim*. He was hospitable to anyone and everyone who came to his door – rich, poor, pagan; his door was always open and welcoming. Lot, however, knew his guests were Heavenly angels. It is no wonder that he bent over backwards to serve them. Angels did not visit him every day.

Lot's *chesed* was discriminating. Avraham's *chesed* was open and indiscriminate. He acted in order to do a *mitzvah*. Lot acted in order to promote himself. He felt good when he reached out, but he was not prepared to reach out to just anyone.

The *Mararil Diskin, zl*, was a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of Torah was peerless. He spent every waking moment deeply engrossed in Torah study. He was a saintly Jew whose self-abrogation of materialism and physicality paralleled his devotion to Torah and *mitzvos*.



He was also a *gaon* in *chesed*. He did not just "give"; he thought before he gave. He empathised with those who came to him and sought the most beneficial avenue to help them. When he left Brisk, he established the Diskin Orphanage, where he and his *rebbetzin* became surrogate parents to those helpless children. The *Rav's* home was open to anyone. At any time, one could find individuals who had been struck by life's adversities, sitting in his home, being served by the *rebbetzin*, while he continued with his learning.

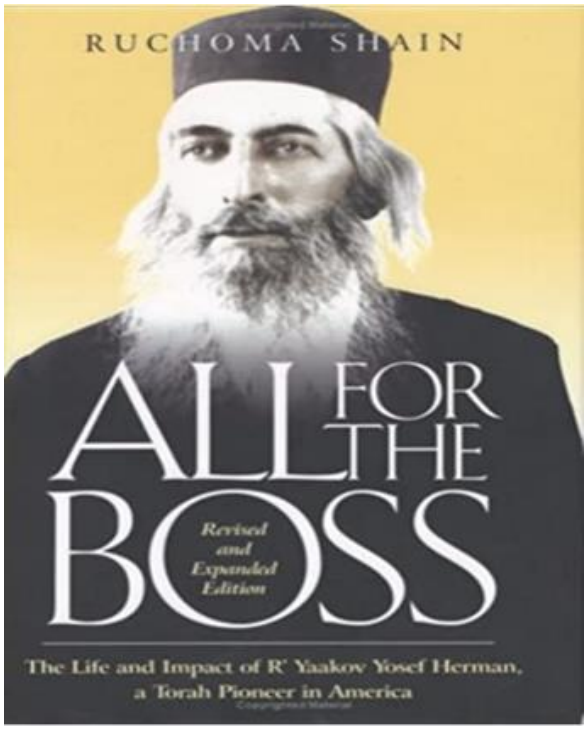
Once, the *Rav* noticed that an elderly, impoverished Jew was having great difficulty chewing his bread. The man no longer had teeth, and the bread was too hard for his gums. The *Rav* sat down next to the man, took a slice of bread, removed its hard crust, and gave the bread back to the man. The man's face lit up, realising that he could now eat the bread. This went on for an hour. Furthermore, how in the midst of his learning was he able to notice that the man as unable to chew because the crust was too hard? One of the *Rav's* students questioned his *Rebbe's* taking an hour off from his precious learning to feed an elderly Jew. The *Rav* replied, "Good question! This question, however, should have been posed to Avraham *Avinu*, who, while being visited by Hashem Himself, interrupted the conversation to attend to three angels disguised as Arabs. When Avraham was

speaking with the *Shechinah*, he became devoid of all physicality. How was he even able to perceive the guests that stood at the doorway to his tent?

"The answer to both questions (the *Rav's* noticing the poor man's chewing problem and how to alleviate it, and Avraham's perceiving the angels while he was so engrossed in his meeting with Hashem) is: when one must perform *chesed* – he sees!

If you want to do *chesed* and your heart empathises with the plight of your brethren, then, even when you are in the midst of your *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty – you will sense the needs of another Jew!"

Sensitivity for another Jew should permeate a person to the point that it breaches through anything in which he is involved – even *avodas Hashem*!



The Hermans, **Horav Yaakov Yosef Herman and his wife**, were unusual baalei chesed; their kindness knew no bounds. Rav Yaakov Yosef was a demandingperson – of himself, and of those whom he educated. The family took in an orphaned boy, Avreml, whom they raised as their own. Indeed, he required the firm, demanding discipline manifest by Rav Yaakov Yosef, coupled with the extraordinary love showed to him by Mrs. Herman.

One day, Rav Herman made what Avreml felt was too strong of a demand on him, and Avreml refused to carry out his surrogate's instructions. Avreml went so far as to complain, "Do you know that I

am an orphan? Why are you so demanding? It is not right!" Mrs. Herman attempted to sooth Avreml's feelings – to no avail. He knew that his surrogate father was upset.

Finally, Avreml announced, "I have decided to move out! I am leaving your house." He collected his few belongings, placed them into a duffle bag and went to the door – all the while turning his head back to see if Rav Herman would "beg" him to stay. He did not. Reluctantly, he went down the stairs. When he reached street level, he heard Rav Herman calling after him as he ran down the stairs, "Avreml! Wait a moment!"

Avreml waited, hoping deep down that now Rav Herman would ask him to stay, perhaps even apologise for his demands on him. He was wrong. Rav Herman, the educator par excellence, caught up with Avreml, and, in his hand, he had a little bag, "Mother and I would like you to have these cookies in case you get hungry." Then, Rav Herman took out a few dollars from his pocket and said, "Here, in case you need some money."

No apology; no lessening of his demands; just love and more love. Avreml came back, realising that, indeed, he was being treated just like their child: demands coupled with love.

Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky

The Torah tells us that, **וַיֵּלֶךְ ה' כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלָּה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לִמְקֹמוֹ *"Hashem departed after he finished speaking to Avraham and Avraham returned to his place."*** (18:33).

What does the Torah mean, "Avraham returned to his place"? Where else should he go? To watch the fireworks that once was Sedom? This is not the only time that Avraham returns. At the end of the portion, we read of Avraham's great faith and fortitude. He is told by Hashem to sacrifice his only son, Yitzchak up on a mountain the

Akeida. Unquestioning and determined, Avraham embarks to fulfil Hashem's wishes. Before the knife reaches his son's neck, an angel stops Avraham AND tells him that he has passed the test of commitment. Hashem promises to increase Avraham's offspring like the stars and declares that all the nations of the world will bless themselves by Avraham's offspring. After the remarkable incident the Torah tells us that "Avraham returned to his young men. " What does the Torah mean? Of course he returned. Should he stay on the mountain forever? Of course he returned!

The Story **Rabbi Dovid Koppleman** tells the story of **Rabbi Abish, the Rav of Frankfurt** who was known for his extraordinary humility. In addition, he would often raise funds for the needy families of his city. Once he heard that a wealthy man was on business in town and went to the man's hotel suite to ask him for a donation. The tycoon was arrogant and assumed that the Rav was a poor shnorrer, and after a few moments drove him out of his room. A few minutes later the man went to leave his suite and looked for his silver cane. Noticing it was gone, he immediately suspected that Reb Abish took it during his brief visit. Quickly, the man bolted toward the lobby of the hotel where he accosted Reb Abish. "Thief ," the man shouted while pushing the Rav, "give me back my cane!" Reb Abish calmly pleaded. "I did not steal your cane. Please do not accuse me! Please believe me. I did not steal your cane!" The man was adamant in his arrogance and began to beat the Rav while onlookers recoiled in horror. Reb Abish, despite the pain, remained steadfast in his humble demeanour. "Please believe me. I did not steal your cane!" Finally, the man realized he was getting nowhere and left Reb Abish in disgust.

That Saturday was Shabbos Shuva. The entire community, including the wealthy visitor, packed Franfurt's main synagogue for the traditional Shabbos Shuva Speech. Horror gripped the visitor as a familiar looking figure rose to the podium and mesmerized the vast

audience with an eloquent oration. It was the very shnorrer he had accosted in the hotel!

As soon as the speech ended, the man pushed his way toward the podium and in a tearful voice tried to attract the Rabbi's attention. He was about to plead forgiveness for his terrible behavior when Reb Abish noticed the man. In all sincerity Reb Abish began to softly plead with him. "I beg of you please do not hit me. I truly did not steal your cane."

The Message Avraham's greatness engendered his humility in every circumstance, in victory and defeat. After losing the case of Sodom, he returns. After his amazing accomplishment of the Akeida, he returns. Avraham returns home, never showing the haughty spoils of victory or the despondent embarrassment of defeat. He remained constant in his service to Hashem and in his attitude to his family and peers. Avraham does not revel in victory nor despair in defeat. He returns the same way as he leaves. Steadfast in faith and constant in character.

Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon (*Sefer Masiyos* ד״ה אמרו חכמינו)

A wealthy yid thought to himself, "A person doesn't live forever. One day I will be in the grave, and I won't take a penny with me. What can I do with my wealth so it can help me even then?" His advisors told him, "Help the poor, and that merit will be taken with you in Olam HaBa."

The wealthy yid decided to give his money to a pauper who is wholly in *yeush*, without any trace of hope. When he finds such a person, he will give him a lot of money and make him wealthy in a moment. He began speaking with paupers, asking them how they manage, and none of them had lost hope. One is relying on a wealthy uncle who might help him. Another is planning to find a job, etc.

He became frustrated. "Can't I find someone who has lost hope?" Then he saw someone dressed in rags, sitting on top of a garbage heap, rummaging for something to eat. "Can there be anyone poorer than him?" he thought. "This person has certainly lost all hope" and he gave him a hundred silver coins. The pauper asked, "Why did you give me so much money?"

"I made a vow that I will give a lot of money to the pauper who has lost all hope". The pauper replied, "Only a fool loses hope. I didn't lose hope. I trust in Hashem who is (*Tehillim* 113:7) **מאשפות ירים אביון**, ***raises the poor out of the garbage heap***. If Hashem wills it, nothing can prevent Hashem from making me wealthy." The wealthy man realized that he will never find a person who lost all hope, so he dug a pit in the cemetery and hid his money there.

The wheel of fortune turned. Eventually this wealthy man became very poor, and he went from door to door, collecting food and money. He reminded himself that he once buried a large sum of money in the cemetery. So, he went to the cemetery and started digging, but then the police arrived. He was arrested and brought before the mayor. He explained to the mayor that he was once wealthy, and now he is poor, he goes collecting from door to door. He remembered that he hid in the cemetery, and he was digging there to retrieve it.

The mayor asked, "Don't you remember me? Years ago, you found me in the garbage heap, rummaging around for food. I told you that I trust in Hashem. I told you that if He wills it, He can make me wealthy. Now look at where my *bitachon* brought me!"

Because Hashem can do anything and everything. If we trust in Him, we will enjoy His salvations. This lesson was taught to us from the beginning of our nation. According to nature, Avraham and Sarah couldn't have children. Klal Yisrael could never be. But if Hashem wills it, miracles can happen beyond nature.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Hashem Can Do Everything – Don't Lose Hope



Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen (*Divrei Sofrim* 16) writes: "When it comes to matters of this world, a yid should never lose hope… As Chazal (*Brachos* 10:) say, **על אפילו חרב ימנע עצמו חדה מונחת על צווארו של מרחמים אדם**, ***'Even when a sharp sword is placed upon one's neck, one shouldn't lose hope…'*** *"This also applies to matters of spirituality. Even if one is steeped in sin – including the sins that Chazal (Zohar vol.1, 219:) say that teshuvah doesn't help or is very difficult to attain – one still shouldn't lose hope* ***'because the concept of yeush doesn't apply for a yid.'***

"The Jewish nation was built after a *yeush*… No one thought Avraham and Sarah could bear children. Hashem planned that the growth of the Jewish nation should come specifically after a period of *yeush*. Because a yid must believe that Hashem can always help – for there is nothing He cannot do. Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen explains that their similarity lies in the fact that both matters were unexpected.

Avraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety! The Midrashim say that naturally, Avraham and Sarah couldn't bear children. Therefore, Avraham, Sarah, and all who knew them lost hope.

When the *malachim* told Sarah that she would have a child, it states **ותצחק שרה בקרבה לאמר אחרי בלתי היתה לי עדנה ואדני זקן** "Sarah laughed in her heart. She said, ***'After I'm shrivelled up, shall I become young again? And my husband is old."*** (18:12) Sarah despaired of ever carrying a child. She experienced *yeush*, but the impossible happened!

Many people have lost hope in the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. Almost two thousand years have passed since we had our Beis HaMikdash. We went through so much, and the *geulah* has not yet come. There seems to be no light at the end of this long tunnel. The *pasuk* is talking to us and telling us that for Avraham and Sarah, all seemed lost as well, yet they bore a child in their old age.

There will also come a time when Moshiach will come. We must not despair. However, when we contemplate Avraham and Sarah's miracles, we realize that miracles are awaiting us too! As it states (*Yeshaya)* **הביטו אל אברהם אביכם ואל שרה תחוללכם *'Look at Avraham, your forefather, and at Sarah who gave birth to you.'*** (51:2) Your origin is from a place of *yeush*. Naturally, you shouldn't have come into existence. But Hashem saved Avraham and Sarah beyond the rules of nature, and He will redeem you, too.

Rebbe Tzaddok writes: "The mantra of Avraham Avinu, the head of the nation, was never to lose hope. Lot was captured; everyone thought it was impossible to save him… But Avraham girded his loins, took 318 men, and chased after the four kings [and saved Lot].

The *gematria* of **אליעזר** is 318. The definition of **אליעזר** is **אלקי אבי בעזרי**, ***'The G-d of my father is my helper'*** *(see Shemos 18:4)…"* With this awareness that Hashem is his helper, and that anything is possible Avraham battled a war against the four mighty kings.

The *gematria* of **יאוש** is 317. If one adds one more, it is equal to 318- the *gematria* of **אליעזר**, which stands for **אלקי אבי בעזרי**. When one knows that Hashem is helping him, he won't have *yeush*.

The Avodas Yisrael *zt'l* *[Yisroel Hopstein (1737–1814), the Maggid of Kozhnitz]* notes that Hashem's name **הוי"ה** isn't mentioned in the *parashios* of *Mikeitz* or *Vayigash* until *Vayichi*, where it states, **לישועתך קויתי ה' *"I await Your salvation, Hashem."***

This is because these *pesukim* tell the story of the exile to Mitzrayim: The seven plentiful years followed by the bad years (stated in *Mikeitz*), ending with Yaakov Avinu and his family coming down to Mitzrayim (stated in *Vayigash*). It wasn't a happy time; therefore, Hashem's name **הוי"ה** of compassion isn't mentioned.

If one counts the number of these *pesukim* (that Hashem's name isn't mentioned) he will get the sum of 318! This hints to us that even when Hashem's compassion is concealed, it is always , – **אליעזר אלקי אבי בעזרי** that Hashem is helping us, from behind the scenes. And since Hashem is with us, there is never a reason for *yeush*.

Hachnasas Orchim



It states (*Bereishis* 21:33), **ויטע אשל בבאר שבע**, ***"Avraham planted an eishel in Be'er Sheva."*** What was this *eishel*? The Gemara (*Sotah* 10.) gives two explanations. Reish Lakish says, "Avraham planted an orchard of all kinds of sweet fruits." Rashi explains that Avraham did this, **לההנות עוברים ושבים**, ***"To give pleasure to the people passing by."***

Avraham cared about people, and he knew that they would appreciate sweet fruits while travelling, so he supplied this service

for them. Travellers stopped to enjoy grapes, figs, pomegranates, esrogim, and all good fruits.

The Gemara's second translation of **אשל** is an inn. Avraham set up an inn, so those tired from their travels could rest up. Rashi writes that **אשל** stands for **אֲכילה, שְׁתיה, לְוויה**. Avraham provided food and drink for the travellers, and Avraham also escorted them when they left. Avraham provided all these services for free – truly marvellous!

The beginning of the *parashah* also elaborates on Avraham's *hachnasas orchim*. At least eight or nine *pesukim* discuss Avraham's love for and perfection in this mitzvah. The holy *sefarim* say that when a tzaddik excels in a mitzvah during his lifetime, he continues to perform this mitzvah after his *petirah* together with Yidden who perform this mitzvah. The tzaddik's *neshamah* comes to a Yid who performs this mitzvah that he excelled in, to help that Yid perform the mitzvah better.

Based on this principle, **Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l*** says that Avraham Avinu continues to do the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*. Whenever a Yid takes care of guests, Avraham Avinu is present, and he participates in the mitzvah. The story of Avraham Avinu's *hachnasas orchim* and the three *malachim* is written in the past tense: "He took… He went… He hurried… etc. The exception is the words **והוא עומד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו**, ***"[Avraham] stands above them…"*** (18:8), These words are written in the present tense. This implies that until today, whenever Yidden do *hachnasas orchim*, Avraham stands right there. He is present, for he wants to partake in the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim of Brisk *zt'l* was extremely ill as a child, and all doctors lost hope. **Rebbe Moshe Kobriner** was visiting Brisk at the time and stayed in the home of Reb Chaim's grandfather (Reb Itche Efron *z'l*, the father-in-law of the Beis HaLevi). The grandfather said to the Rebbe, "What's going to be with my Chaimke?" Rebbe Moshe

Kobriner told him the *vort*, that **אברהם עומד** indicates that Avraham is present at every *hachnasas orchim*.

He added, "Chazal (*Bava Basra* 16:) say, 'A precious stone hung from Avraham Avinu's neck. Whoever saw it was healed.' Since you are hosting me and performing *hachnasas orchim*, this means Avraham Avinu is right here, in this home. Avraham has with him the gem that brings *refuah*. Your Chaimke will surely have a refuah sheleimah." And indeed, he did.

Once, Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was a guest in the home of **Rebbe Aharon Karliner *zt'l***. Reb Aharon told him that his daughter was ill. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner said to the ill girl, "Your father is performing *hachnasas orchim*. This means right now, he has the stone of healing hanging on his neck. Look at your father, and you will be healed."

V'Chol Maaminim- Answering Amen Continues the Healing

וירא אליו ה' באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום (יח א) . *"To visit the sick"* (Rashi, on Sotah 14a)



The Rebbe of Brizdovitz, shlita, says: It is known from the holy sefarim (see Imrei Aharon, Beshalach) that answering amen draws healing to a person, both physical healing and emotional healing. This is alluded by the name of the place where Hashem revealed Himself to visit Avraham Avinu when he was ill: "Elonei Mamrei" **אלני** is numerically equivalent to **אמן** amen. **ממרא** is numerically equivalent to **רפא**.

Amen – A Segulah for Finding Favour

ויאמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל עבדך (יח ג) Harav Noach Gad Weintraub: אם נא מצאתי is an acronym for "amen" [and the words **אם נא** also contain the word amen.] Thus the Torah alluded that one who is careful about amen mentions to find favour in the Eyes of Hashem, even if he sinned, chalilah.

As Chazal say (Tikkunei Zohar 40 1): "One who answers amen with all his might has his decree of seventy years torn up." Some explain this passuk as a directive for generations to come: "Vayomer A-donai" – when you hear a person making a brachah with Hashem's Name, "im na matzasi" – answer after him amen.

Having Guests

Avraham told the guests **ואקחה פת לחם** , ***"I will take bread…"*** (18:5) . It seems that he should have said, **ואתנה פת לחם** , ***"I will give you bread."*** .

The Ahavas Yisrael *zt'l* replied that when one gives bread to the hungry, he is the one who is "taking." As Chazal say, *"More than the wealthy do with the pauper, the pauper does for the wealthy"* as he gave them the opportunity to do a mitzvah.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 127.) states,

גדולה הכנסת אורחים יותר מקבלת פני השכינה , ***"Taking in guests is greater than greeting the Shechinah."***

"Repentance and good deeds are a man's best lawyer." ~~ Talmud, Shabbos

The Wholeness of the Angel Indicates the Wholeness of the Mitzvah

ויקרא אליו מלאך ה' מן השמים...כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה ולא חשכת את בנך את יחידך ממני כא יא-יב . Why did the angel say to Avraham: "Velo chasachta…mimeni"? Did Avraham sacrifice his son before the angel?



The Gra explains: The angel speaking here to Avraham was the one formed by the mitzvah of the Akeidah. Because this mitzvah was done in a complete way, the angel that was created by it was also complete in all its virtues.

It says "mimeni" – meaning from the fact that I was created so perfectly we can learn that you did the mitzvah with perfection.

Furthermore, **Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg** taught that the creation of the angel that results from saying a brachah is only completed if there is an amen answered to that brachah.

Being Sensitive To Other People's Feelings

The great Rabbi, **Rav Shalom Yosef Elyashiv Zya'a** was famous not only for his great knowledge in all the aspects of the holy Torah, but also for his great characteristics regarding matters between man and his fellow.

One time, a person entered Rav Elyashiv's house with a question, "Rebbe! Right now, Hashem blessed me with a son, and I want to call him Yehonatan, but my wife is opposed to naming him this, arguing

that the neighbour's son who passed away at a young age was named Yehonatan and she is afraid for our son's life. What does the Rav think"?



Rav Elyashiv Zt'l thought about this and then answered, "It is worthwhile to call him Betzalel". The man went on his way and did as the Rav said. After a while, the man met Rav Elyashiv and asked him, "Why? Why did the Rav decide at that time to call him Betzalel and not Yehonatan"?

The Rav answered him, "Since you said that the neighbour's son is named Yehonatan, I was afraid that when your son would get older and you would call his name and say, "Yehonatan! Come upstairs" or Yehonatan! Come eat" or even if you were to yell at him and say, "Yehonatan! Stop acting up", I was sure that every time you would call his name, the neighbour would remember her son who passed away and she would grieve.

Since I did not want to cause her more sorrow, I advised you to call him Betzalel since whoever prevents causing anguish to another Jew will merit to sit "BeTzel E-l" – in the shadow of Hashem"!

Whenever anyone has offended me, I try to raise my soul so high that the offence cannot reach it.

As we mark the sheloshim of the passing of the Pittsburger Rebbe, zt"l, we want to share an excerpt from his inspiring speech at the Bney Emunim convention that took place in Av 5776:



The tremendous virtue and power of answering amen is well known. The reason is because answering amen is l'Shem Shamayim, as one who answers amen has no personal benefit from it. He is testifying that the words of the one making the brachah are true. Such a cry evokes Heavenly mercy and brings down an abundance of gifts to the creations of the world.



The Legacy of Nachshon Waxman, Hy"d

On Motzei Shabbos, October 8, 1994, Nachshon Waxman left his home in Yerushalayim to attend a special one-day course in Northern Israel, for select IDF soldiers. He had been home for Shabbos, and told his mother that he would return on Sunday night. Nachshon never came home. On Monday, word of the kidnapping of Nachshon by Hamas terrorists spread throughout Israel and the world. Nachshon's parents, Yehuda and Esther

Waxman, spoke with powerful emunah as they stressed repeatedly in interviews, broadcast throughout Eretz Yisrael, that only Hashem could save their son. They beseeched the entire nation, religious and secular alike, to pray that their son be saved.

Throughout the week that followed, Mrs. Waxman told the people of Israel that all world leaders involved in trying to secure her son's release were but messengers of Hashem; one could only pray that Hashem grant them the wisdom to take the steps to ensure her son's survival.

In an unprecedented show of unity, secular & religious Jews united to pray together for Nachshon Waxman. The feeling of brotherhood was intense, tangible. Schools across the spectrum recited Tehillim; small children at home organized groups to say Tehillim. On Thursday of that week, 100,000 people assembled at the Kosel for heartfelt Tehillim on behalf of 19-year-old Nachshon, with Jews from all spectrums standing shoulder to shoulder, pouring their hearts and tears out in prayer.

That Friday night, in a tragic failed attempt at his rescue by IDF forces, Nachshon was murdered by Hamas terrorists. When news of his murder became known, all of Eretz Yisrael, and Jews throughout the world, felt as if they had lost a brother, a son.

Before the funeral on Motzei Shabbos, Nachshon's father spoke to his son's rosh yeshiva & told him an important message he wanted conveyed at the massive funeral: One thing worries me. Nachshon succeeded in raising the Jewish People to a high level of emunah and tefillah. Now we have the responsibility to maintain this heightened level. People will ask, "How is it that we were not answered from Above in spite of all the countless prayers?" But, you know, I asked Hashem for many things in my life, & He always granted them. I asked Him for good health… for a family such as I have merited, & He gave them to me. Now, if they will ask why our prayers did not earn us the reply we sought from our Father in Heaven, I will tell

them, "We did receive a response, we did get an answer. The answer was 'No.' Because sometimes a father can answer, 'No.'"

In an interview following the funeral, Mr. Waxman relayed: The cruel & vicious band of thugs who kidnapped my son was a group that did not care even for its own lives – they were barricaded behind booby-trapped steel doors while holding Nachshon in captivity. It is clear that the prayers for my son were not in vain. Many more soldiers could have lost their lives [in the rescue mission].

The many prayers were a factor in sparing their lives. I'm telling you again, most of the time when I have asked Hashem for something, I received 'Yes' for an answer. This time, the answer to me personally was, 'No,' but the answer to the prayers in general was a positive one.

Mrs. Esther Waxman added: We are an ordinary family... We aren't special. This could have happened to anyone. The only thing that kept us sane and functioning through all this was our faith. We believe that our years are numbered. When a person fulfils his mission, then that is the end... Our faith tells us that these were the years allotted to our son & he fulfilled what he was supposed to fulfil. Our faith is what kept us going... The yahrzeit of Nachshon (ben Yehuda) Waxman hy"d is on 10 Cheshvan (1994).

Rabbi J. Gewirtz- Migdal Ohr

וְאֶל־הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן־בָּקָר רַךְ וָטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנַּעַר וַיְמַהֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ
"*To the cattle ran Avraham, and he took a young calf, soft and good, and gave it to the lad; and he hastened to prepare it.*"
18:7

The paradigm of chesed, Avraham hurried to see to his guests' needs, ensuring they received the best treatment possible. He had asked Sarah to prepare the bread, and now he went to get meat for the guests. Rashi points out that the lad Avraham gave it to for

preparation was Yishmael, as a form of chinuch, training him into Avraham's profession of hospitality. We know that nothing in the Torah is extra. Why did we need to have a blow-by-blow description of everything that took place? Obviously there's a lesson that we need to learn for posterity.

R' Ovadia Mi'Bartenura says that Avraham was doing everything by himself, why would he delegate this step to someone else, especially a young boy? That's how we know it must have been Yishmael and that Avraham was doing this for chinuch. Otherwise, it would have been denigrating to Avraham that he shirked part of this duty. We learn from this episode some fascinating insights about teaching, chinuch, and getting your message across. First of all, Avraham didn't say to Yishmael, "Run to the barn and get a calf." It's easy to bark orders and expect people to jump. What they will learn from this is to bark orders and expect people to jump. Therefore, Avraham himself ran to get the calf and made sure it was the best. Only after setting the example did Avraham give it to Yishmael for the next step.

Why Yishmael? Not only to train his son, but there was a specific reason to give it to Yishmael for slaughtering. At that time, the bechorim, firstborns, were still supposed to perform the service in the Bais HaMikdash. Avraham was telling Yishmael how special he was and how fortunate to be able to offer korbanos.

He further implied that serving guests was akin to offering sacrifices to Hashem. We learn from here that when providing chinuch to our children, we must lift them up, not beat them down. So, did it work? Yes! The Torah then says, ***"And he hurried to prepare it."*** Yishmael, the boy charged with preparing the meat at its next step had learned the lesson properly. He saw how Avraham ran to take care of the guests. He saw that Avraham didn't trust anyone else to choose the quality of the animals. He understood that this was a lofty mission and he wanted to be a part of it.

In fact, even today, thousands of years later, Yishmael's descendants still practice hospitality. That's because they got chinuch from Avraham Avinu. If we learn these lessons and set the right example for our children, then they will become the people we want them to become, and, in the process, so will we.

No Time for Putting on Tefillin By Jack E. Rahmey



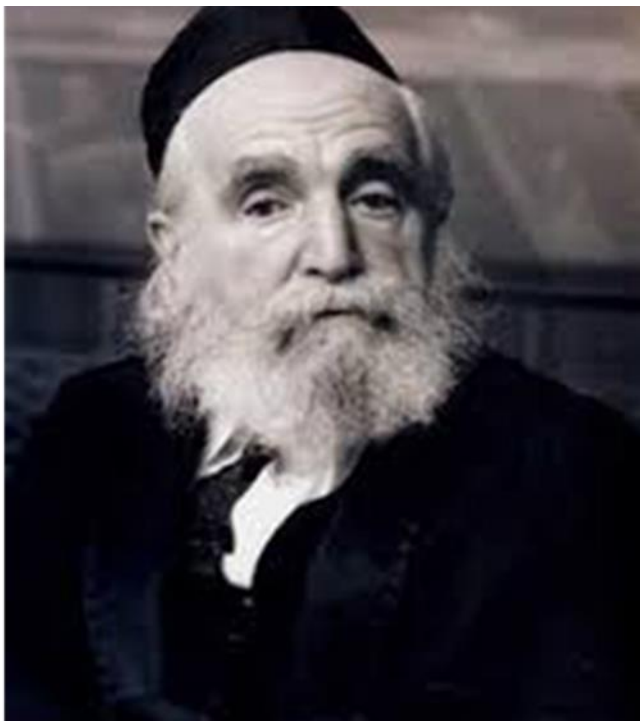
There's a story **Rabbi Yoel Gold** told of a young soldier who was training for Shayetet 13, the most elite combat unit in the Israeli Defence Forces, and the world. In order to get into this unit, gruelling training is required. One of the final tests was an exhausting task of proving survival skills. Soldiers would hike 40 miles with 40 pounds on their backs, without drinking water for a full day. This boy life's dream was to get into Shayetet 13.

He was religious, and the test started before dawn. As he noticed the sun making its way up, he said to his officer, "Can we stop just for a minute, I have to put on my tefillin." The officer said to him, "Not now, maybe soon, just a little while longer," and they kept going. After another hour he asked again, "Please Sir, I want to stop for one moment just to put on my tefillin." The officer said to him, "Kid, not now, you're leading the pack, and we have to keep going."

Again, a few hours later the young soldier said, "Please, Sir. I never missed a day of tefillin in my life, please let me stop for one minute. I can only put them on until nightfall." The commander did not allow him to stop. Nightfall was rapidly approaching. With only a few

minutes left, the soldier declared, "Mefaked (officer), I need to stop." The officer turned around and said, "You want to stop? You want to give up all your years of training? For tefillin? My friend, right now you have a good chance of making it into this elite unit. It is not going to look good if you fall behind now." Without thinking much the boy said, "OK that's fine. I have to stop."

The unit kept walking without him. The young soldier sat down, took out his tefillin, slowly wrapped it on his arm, and watched as soldier by soldier walked by him, watched his opportunity to become next elite combat soldier pass him by. The boy prayed, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad." He put his tefillin away and saw his Mefaked standing in front of him, waiting. He said, "Welcome to Shayetet 13. Congratulations." The soldier was at a loss, not understanding why he passed if he did not complete the test. The Mefaked responded, "Who would you want standing behind you up in the field, someone who is willing to give up everything he believes in, or someone who stays strong even under great pressure?"



High Rise Building

A close student of Rav Moshe Feinstein came to him with a dilemma: Boruch Hashem, his family was growing and needed more space.

Until now, they had managed in a small two-bedroom apartment on the second floor, but a great opportunity came up to move to a place with three spacious bedrooms. It was affordable, and just what they needed. The problem was that it was on the fifth floor.

Although the family was willing to deal with climbing many flights on Shabbos, the problem was, that he would often bring guests home from shul on Shabbos and yom tov and feared that this 'luxury' would be at the expense of his hachnasas orchim.

After hearing the question, R' Moshe was adamant that he should take that apartment for the good of his own family. As for the guests, R' Moshe told the man to simply schmooze with his guests about ordinary things, since people tend not to notice distances etc, when they are busy talking to their friends.

Indeed, good advice, but R' Moshe added one more point and told his student that he shouldn't be concerned that talking about mundane matters should be considered bitul Torah, because anything someone says to make another Jew more comfortable and relaxed is a tremendous chessed and mitzva.

Behaviour Prerequisite to The Acquisition Of Torah Knowledge

Visiting the Sick – (Bereshis 18,1) HaShem visits Avrohom, who is recovering from his circumcision at the age of 99. **HaKaros HaTov** – (Bereshis 18,1) HaShem visited Avrohom in Mamre's territory as a reward for Mamre's assistance in Avrohom's circumcision.

Honour Elders – (Bereshis 18,3) Avrohom addressed the three guests in the singular indicating that he honoured the oldest of the guests.

Welcoming Guests – (Bereshis 18,3) In the middle of talking with HaShem, Avrohom left Him to welcome the guests. Thus, HaChnosas Orchim is greater than involvement with the Divine Presence.

Speak Little but Do Much – (Bereshis 18,4) Avrohom offers the guests only some water to drink and some bread to eat, but then preceded to serve them a feast.

Proper Etiquette at a Meal – (Bereshis 18,5) It is proper for the host to "break bread" for one's guests, as Avrohom said "I will take the bread" and then, "and you shall partake of the food."

Be Quick to Serve Guests – (Bereshis 18,6) Avrohom immediately hurried to provide the food.

Avoid Possible Offense or Injured Pride – (Bereshis 18,7) Avrohom slaughtered three calves to provide an equal delicacy of tongue to each guest. If Avrohom had only prepared one tongue, then the each guest would have to decide how much to take and how much to leave for the others.

Adhere to Local Customs – (Bereshis 18,8) Although the angels do not require physical food, they pretended to eat to adhere to the local customs of people.

Endear One to Their Spouse – (Bereshis 18,9) Rashi explains the unusual dots on top of the word **אליו** to teach that the angels inquired of Avrohom about the welfare of his wife, Sarah. This inquiry intended to remind Avrohom of Sarah's exemplary trait of modesty, further endearing her to him.

Escorting Guests Out -(18:16) When it came time for the angels/guests to leave, Avrohom escorted them on their way.

Covenants

During the early 1900's **Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld** (1848-1932) served as Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. He lived in the Old City but would travel anywhere to perform a Bris milah.

One day, Reb Yosef Chaim was asked to perform a Bris milah on an infant whose parents lived in one of the poverty-stricken areas of the city. On the designated day, he made his way to the neighborhood of the young couple. He knew there would be very few

people at the milah, for the family had no money to tender a festive meal afterwards.

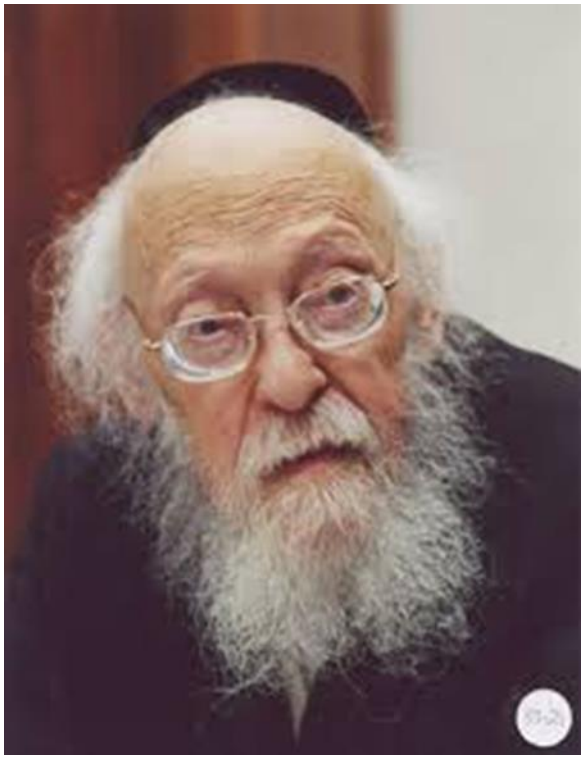


As Reb Yosef Chaim entered the courtyard of the apartment complex, he heard a baby cry. The sound was coming from the building where the milah was to be. He followed the voice and knocked on the door. A young woman answered the door. "Mazal tov," said Reb Yosef Chaim. "I am here to do the berit milah for your son." "Oy, Rebbi," sighed the woman. "I only wish you were in the right house!" Seeing the great Rabbi unexpectedly, the woman started crying. "Rebbi, I have been married so many years and my husband and I have no children. Please bless me." Then she added, "The child is next door; it's my neighbour who had the baby." She turned away, wiping her tears in embarrassment for her brazenness in asking the great Tzadik for a berachah. She was ashamed that she had broken down and revealed her plight. Reb Yosef Chaim felt terrible that he had been the cause of the woman's anguish. By walking into the wrong apartment he had inadvertently brought forth her sad situation.

Reb Yosef Chaim said softly and compassionately, "I give you a berachah that I should come back to your home next year and it won't be a mistake. It will be for a simchah."

A year later the woman had a little boy, and Reb Yosef Chaim was called to perform the berit milah. It was the only child the woman ever had. (*Reflections of the Maggid*)

Brief Visit



Anyone who has ever visited **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l** will recall that the visit was usually quite brief. A question was asked, a terse response was give, often followed by a beracha, and there was very little conversation after that. This was Rav Elyashiv's way; as soon as the shaila was asked, he quickly turned back to the sefer he was learning.

During the Gulf War, as dozens of scud missiles were fired from Iraq into Eretz Yisroel, with the intention of causing death and damage to Jews, people hurriedly rushed into their "sealed rooms" with gas masks and other paraphernalia, unsure of how long they would have to hunker down in their makeshift bunkers.

Rav Elyashiv, too, would rush out of his home and head down into the miklat together with numerous other people who had come to his home with shailos. However, the moment the Rav entered the shelter, a noticeable change came over him. He began to converse with people, asking about them and their families, and suddenly his short answers turned into long conversational paragraphs.

Later, a family member asked the Rav about it and he replied, "The people who come to ask me shailos generally come and go. But once the (air raid) siren came on, they could not leave and were forced to come into my shelter. They now became my 'guests' and thus, I have a chiyuv of hachnosas orchim. So, as their host, I spoke to them, asking how they were doing like a host would normally do with his guest."

The manner in which Avraham Avinu performed the mitzvah of Hachnosas Orchim is held up as the symbol of greatness from which we all should learn. This mitzvah can manifest itself in all shapes and sizes, and it takes a great person to recognize that even in the midst of a panic and with people hunkering down in a shelter, it is a ripe opportunity to fulfil the mitzvah in the best way one knows possible.

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"וישא עיניו ויראוהנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו"
***"He lifted his eyes and saw, and behold three men [angels] were standing over him."* (18:2)**







According to *Midrash Rabbah* (48:9) the three angels appeared as a desert merchant, a produce merchant, and a captain of a ship. Why did the angels appear in these three disguises?

The world is divided into three parts: water, desert, and inhabited land (see *Pesachim* 94a, *Tosafot*). Each part of the world has an angel in heaven appointed over it. Thus, the three disguised angels represented the entire creation. The one dressed as a desert merchant was for the deserts, the captain was for the oceans, and the produce merchant represented the inhabited section of the world.

On the passage **"אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם"** — "These are the chronicles of the heavens and the earth when they were created" (2:4) — the *Zohar* (*Bereishit* 86b) says, "Read not *'behibaram'* (**בהבראם**), but read *'beAvraham'* (**באברהם**).

This alludes to the fact that the entire world was created for the sake of Avraham. Therefore, the three angels, as representatives of the entire world, came to visit Avraham in whose merit the entire world was created. (**מעינה של תורה בשם זרע ברך**)

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

***"והוא ישב פתח האהל" "While he was sitting at the entrance to the tent."* (18:1)**

Rashi explains, **"לראות אם יש עובר ושב ויכנסם בביתו"** — "To see if there is a passer-by and take him into his home." Why does Rashi call a guest *"over veshav"* — "passer-by" — and not the popular term *"orei'ach"* — *"guest"?*

Some people feel very uncomfortable as guests at others' tables. Even when they are on the way to the houses of their hosts, they sometimes become shy and turn away.

Avraham was very great in the *mitzvah* of hospitality and wanted everyone to feel comfortable in his home. Therefore, he would sit at the entrance of the tent in order to spot the person who is *"over veshav"* — keeps passing "back and forth" — and is ashamed to come in. (**פון אונזער אלטען אוצר - אמרי מהרא"ז**)

When you make a promise, keep it.

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"וירא אליו ה' באלני ממרא" ***"Hashem revealed Himself to him in the plains of Mamrei."*** **(18:1)**

Rashi comments, "Mamrei who advised Avraham concerning the *brit*." If Hashem instructed Avraham to do the bris, why would he seek advice from Mamrei?

Indeed Avraham did not ask Mamrei whether he should listen to Hashem. He only asked him if he should circumcise himself publicly or privately.

Avraham heeded his advice and did it publicly. The members of his household were greatly impressed with Avraham's courage and emulated him (17:27). **(דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות)**

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויאמר שוב אשוב אליך כעת חיה והנה בן לשרה אשתך"
"And he [the angel] said, 'I shall return according to this time of life and your wife Sarah will have a son.'" **(18:10)**

When / where did the angel return? At the *Akeidah*, Avraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son Yitzchak. At that moment an angel called to him saying, "Stop, do not do anything." This was the same angel who 37 years earlier had told him that he would bring a living child into the world. Now he came to give Yitzchak an extension of life.

With the words *"ka'eit chayah"* — lit. "at the time of life" — the angel hinted to Avraham that he would reappear at the time when Yitzchak would be in need of life. **(פרדס הגדול לרש"י)**

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ותבט אשתו מאחריו ותהי נציב מלח" *"And his wife looked behind him and she became a pillar of salt."* (19:26)



Rashi comments, *"mei'acharav shel Lot"* — "[She turned and looked] behind Lot." Why not simply say that she turned back and looked behind herself?

In *Chumash Bamidbar* we learn of a dispute which took place between Korach and Moshe. Rashi asks, "Since Korach was intelligent, why did he commit such a foolish act?" Rashi explains that "His eye deceived him." Korach saw that the prophet Shmuel would be his descendant. Therefore, he was confident that he could do whatever he wanted, and in the merit of his great descendant, he would be saved (16:7).

Here too, Rashi is explaining why Lot's wife acted so foolishly and ignored instructions not to look behind. The reason is that she "looked" and relied on *"acharav shel Lot"* — the great people of the future who would be descendants of Lot. ("*Acharav*" can mean "after him" as well as "behind him.")

She knew that one of Lot's daughters would be the ancestor of Eglon the king of Moab and his daughter Ruth. Consequently, King David and *Mashiach* would be his descendants. Lot's wife figured that because her husband would have such great children, she could do whatever she wanted and be saved in their merit. (**ר' שמשון מאסטראפאלי זצ"ל**)

"ותהי נציב מלח" "She became a pillar of salt." (19:26)



Rashi explains that she was given such a strange punishment because she committed a sin through salt. Therefore, her punishment was connected to salt.

Like her neighbours in Sodom, she was totally against *hachnasat orchim* — hospitality. When Lot invited the Angels, he asked his wife to give them some salt in which to dip their bread (for "*Hamotzi*"). She responded, "Even these bad customs you want to bring into this place?!"

Before reciting the *Birkat Hamazon* , we wash our fingers. This is known as *mayim acharonim*. One of the reasons for this is *melach Sedomit* — Sodomite salt. The salt of Sodom is very strong and potentially dangerous. It can, G-d forbid, blind a person who has it on his fingers and touches his eyes.

Why, throughout the entire world, even when one lives thousands of miles away from Sodom, does one wash his fingers because of the Sodomite salt? (See *Shulchan Aruch Harav* 181:1:8.)

Salt itself is not nourishing; it only adds taste to other foods. The people of Sodom were evil and refused to give food to nourish a guest. Moreover, they even refused to give salt, which has no nourishment value, to a stranger.

"Sodomite salt" is a metaphor for the wicked philosophy of the people of Sodom, who were totally "blind" to the needs of others and refused to practice hospitality. A hungry person has sympathy for someone who is in need. When sated and satisfied, he may become insensitive to the suffering of the needy and, like the people of Sodom, he may become blind to the needs of others.

Our sages want us to always have compassion for the needy. Therefore, they instructed, that upon the completion of our meal, when we are full and satisfied, we must cleanse ourselves, and make sure that the philosophy of Sodom (Sodomite salt) does not stick to us and, G-d forbid, blind us. We must be hospitable at all times and "see" the plight of the less fortunate. (**ואני תפלתי**)



Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ותאמר שרה צחק עשה לי אלקים כל השומע יצחק לי"
***"Sarah said, 'G-d made laughter for me. Everyone who will hear will be happy for me.'"* (21:6)**

How was Sarah so sure that whoever would hear of the birth of Yitzchak would be happy?

The *Midrash Rabbah* (53:7) writes about the name "Yitzchak" that the "**י**" stands for the ten commandments, which all the Jewish people would hear on Mount Sinai. The "**צ**" represents the fact that Sarah was 90 years old when he was born. The "**ח**", which equals eight, is for his *brit*. He was the first Jewish child to have a *brit* on the eighth day. The "**ק**" represents the fact that Avraham was 100 years old when Yitzchak was born.

When the baby was born, Avraham gave him the name "Yitzchak." When Sarah was asked by her neighbours the meaning of her son's name, she replied '**צחק עשה לי אלקים**' — What the **צ** and the **ח** and the **ק** represent, Hashem already did for me. However, due to **' כל השומע'** — ***'Everyone who will hear'*** — all the Jewish people who will be at Sinai and hear the *ten* commandments — therefore, '**יצחק לי**' — I have a child named 'Yitzchak.' " (**דרוש שמואל**)



Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויאמר...אולי ימצאון שם עשרה" *"And he said...suppose ten [tzaddikim] are found there?"* [Would that prevent You from going through with Your plans of destruction?] (18:32)

Sodom was not far away from where Avraham lived. How is it possible that he should not know the *tzaddikim* of Sodom?

The inhabitants of Sodom were extremely wicked. Kindness and righteousness were against the law of the land. People who welcomed strangers or gave charity to the poor were immediately tortured to death. *A tzaddik* dwelling in Sodom and remaining alive had to be extremely discreet. Therefore, Avraham was saying to Hashem, "Possibly there are some hidden *tzaddikim* unknown to me. You, however, are certainly aware of them — please spare the city in their merit." (**שער בת רבים - שושנת אברהם**)

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו" *"And behold; three men were standing over him."* (18:2)

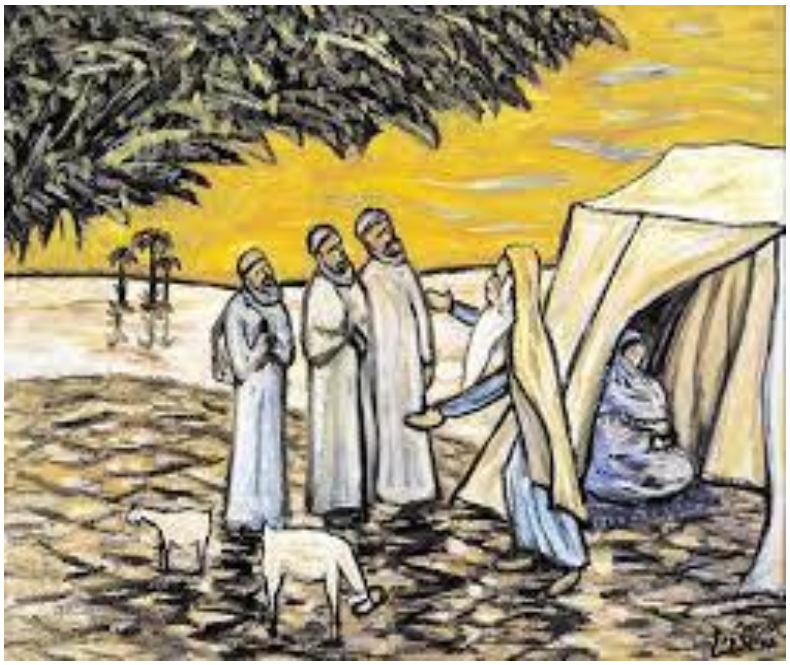
When two of them afterwards went to Lot, the *pasuk* says, "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening...Lot saw them and got up to greet them" (19:1).

In reference to Avraham why does the Torah call them "*anashim*" — "ordinary men"— while in reference to Lot it refers to them as "angels?"

Avraham was a *tzaddik* and very great in the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim* — hospitality. To him it made absolutely no difference who a guest was. Even if the guest was just an ordinary person, Avraham would take him into his home, treat him with the greatest respect, and give him the best of everything. - Lot was different. When a

prominent person would come to town, Lot would take him into his home because it was an honour for him to have important people visiting. If a simple person would come to town and he would stand nothing to gain by taking him in, Lot would not bother with him at all. Therefore, when Lot saw that the visitors were angels and that it would add to his prestige to have such guests, only then did he invite them to his house. (**פרדס יוסף**)

"וירא וירץ לקראתם" ***"And he saw, and he ran towards them."***



Rashi (18:2) explains that Avraham had to run because when the angels saw that he was sick, they began to go away. Not wanting to lose the opportunity to fulfil the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*, he ran after them. Since the people began to go away, the *pasuk* should have read **"וירץ אחריהם"** — "And he ran *after* them" — instead of, "And he ran *towards* them"?

When one leaves the presence of a prominent person, it is not proper to turn one's back. Instead, even when leaving, one faces the person and walks backwards. - When the angels came to Avraham, they noticed that Hashem was also there. Realizing that Avraham was very sick, they decided to go away and not bother him. However, since it is improper to turn their backs to Hashem, they walked away backwards. Avraham, noticing this, ran *towards* them to bring them into his home. (**ר' שמשון מאסטראפאלי זצ"ל**)

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"וישלח אברהם את ידו ויקח את המאכלת לשחט את בנו"
***"And Avraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."* (22:10)**



This is the assigned Torah reading for the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*. One reason is that the *shofar* we blow on *Rosh Hashanah* commemorates the horn of the ram which was brought as an offering in lieu of Yitzchak. Consequently, we ask Hashem to do good for the Jewish people in the merit of our Patriarch Yitzchak.

If this is so, why do we not lift a big knife to portray Yitzchak's willingness to be an offering to Hashem?

With the knife, Avraham would have, G-d forbid, brought the life of Yitzchak to an end. Thanks to the ram, which suddenly appeared, Yitzchak's life was spared. Thus, the *shofar* expresses life, and the knife the opposite.

We blow the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* and do not display a knife because we emphasize living as a Jew, and not, G-d forbid, *dying* as a Jew.

The wicked prophet Bilaam expressed the wish "*Tamot nafshi mot yesharim*" — "*Let me die the death of the righteous*" (*Bamidbar* 23:10). Contrary to Bilam's philosophy, Torah requires that the 120 years allotted to the individual should be ***lived*** in accordance with Jewish tradition.

ופלגשו ושמה ראומה ותלד גם הוא...ואת מעכה ***And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children and Maacah.*** **(22:24)**

The Torah reading for *Rosh Hashanah* is the *akeidah* and concludes with this *pasuk*. What does it have to do with *Rosh Hashanah?*

On *Rosh Hashanah* we beseech *A*-mighty *G*-d to grant us a good year and resolve to repent and improve our ways. The words **ואת מעכה** are an acronym for **וִידוּי אַחַר תְּשׁוּבָה מֵגַעַת עַד כִּסֵּא הַכָּבוֹד** — the verbal confession after the experience of *Teshuvah* reaches His throne of *G*lory. (**תולדות לוי יצחק**)

*A*lternatively: *Rosh Hashanah* is the day of the coronation of Hashem as King. The word **מעכה** is an acronym for **מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ** — King over the whole earth. (**ספר השיחות**)



וישלח אברהם את ידו ויקח את המאכלת לשחט את בנו ***"And Avraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."*** **(22:10) -**

The *Midrash Rabbah* (*Bereishis* 56:8) says, "He stretched forth his hand to take the knife while the tears streamed from his eyes — yet, even so, his heart rejoiced to obey the will of his Creator."

Avraham's crying seems to cast a doubt on his sincerity and eagerness to fulfil Hashem's will. Wouldn't it have been better if he had not even shed one tear?

Many wonder how it is possible for a father to bring his beloved, only child as an offering to Hashem and conclude that he had lost his paternal instincts and therefore did not exhibit greatness.

To refute this argument, the *Midrash* tells us that when Avraham stretched forth his hand to take the knife, tears streamed from his eyes. He was a genuine father who loved his child dearly and who was filled with compassion for him. Nevertheless, he did not permit his fatherly instincts and love for his child to prevent him from fulfilling the command of Hashem. (**מצאתי בכתבי אבי הרב שמואל פסח ז"ל באגאמילסקי**)



Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

ויקרא מלאך אלקים מן השמים...ויאמר לה מה לך הגר
***"G-d's angel called Hagar from heaven and said to her 'What troubles you, Hagar?'"* (21:17)**

Wouldn't anyone seeing a child crying for water in a desert understand why the mother was crying?

The reason for Hagar's crying was indeed obvious to the angel, and he was not *asking* her *why* she was crying. On the contrary, he was *telling* her that she was not fulfilling her maternal obligation to her child! The words of the angel, "*Mah lach Hagar*" (literally, "What is with you, Hagar") can be translated to mean, "Hagar, what kind of mother are you? When your child is dying of thirst, the lack of water in the desert does not excuse you from turning over every stone and searching! Sitting in the near distance and crying will not help the situation: A sincere parent does everything for the sake of her child, including what may seem to strangers as the impossible!"

Immediately afterwards we read, "And Hashem opened her eyes and she saw a well of water" (21:19). According to ***Soforno***, this was not a miracle; the well was there all the time. She had taken it for granted that there would not be any water in the dessert and had therefore made no effort to search. (**הרב דוב ארי' ז"ל בערזאן**)



Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

"וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא והנה איל אחר נאחז בסבך בקרניו"
***"And Avraham lifted up his eyes, and saw, behold a ram afterwards, caught in the thicket by its horns."* (22:13)**



What does the word *"achar"* — "afterwards" — allude to? It seems to be superfluous, because the *pasuk* could merely have said "Behold a ram caught in the thicket." (See Rashi.)

On the sixth day of creation animals were created. Afterwards man (Adam) was created. On *Erev Shabbat, bein hashemashot,* (immediately before nightfall), the ram which Avraham used for the *Akeidah* was created (*Pirkei Avot* 5:6).

Thus, this ram was created *after* all animals. The Torah is hinting this by saying, *Va'yar vehinei ayil* — "Avraham saw a ram" — which was *"achar"* — "after" (created after all other animals). He realized that there was something unique about the ram and used it therefore as an offering in lieu of his son. (של"ה)

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

ויקרא אליו מלאך ה'.... ויאמר אל תשלח ידך אל הנער ואל תעש לו מאומה
***"An angel of G-d called to him...And he said: 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him.'"* (22:11-12)**

The order to bring Yitzchak as a burnt-offering came directly from Hashem (22:2). Why did the stop-order come from an angel rather than from Hashem?

A Jew should never harm another Jew without a direct command from Hashem. To help another Jew, however, one needs no command. Therefore, to let Yitzchak live, the instruction of an angel sufficed. (דבש השדה)

Vedibarta Bam by Moshe Bogomilsky

ויאמר אל תשלח ידך אל הנער ואל תעש לו מאומה כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה ולא חשכת את בנך את יחידך ממני ***"And he said: 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him; for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.***

The word *"mimeni"* — "from me" (22:12) — seems superfluous. Would it not have been sufficient to say: "you have not withheld your son, your only son"? In fact, further on (22:16), the word *"mimeni"* is not used.

For every *mitzvah* a Jew fulfils, an angel is created in heaven (*Pirkei Avot* 4:11). When one performs a *mitzvah*, but does not do so properly, or without all the details, the angel created is incomplete. Thanks to Avraham's passing the test of the *Akeidah* with flying colours, a perfect angel was born. It was this angel who appeared and instructed him "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him."

Avraham was reluctant to listen to the angel because he was uncertain as to whether he had fulfilled Hashem's wish, since Yitzchak was still alive. The angel assured Avraham: "I know that you are a G-d-fearing man and that you were wholeheartedly prepared to offer your son to Hashem. I know this *'mimeni'* — 'from me' — from the fact that I was created a completely strong and healthy angel. (הרב מאיר ז"ל שאפירא מלובלין)

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Blessing in Disguise

Sora, the 90-year-old wife of Avraham, receives a most surprising piece of information from an even more surprising source. She is told by Arab nomads, who had found obliging accommodation in Avraham's house, that in one year she will have a child. Instinctively, she reacts in disbelief to this prediction. She laughs. - Immediately, Hashem appears to Avraham He is upset. "***Why did Sora laugh? Is there something that is beyond the Almighty? At the appointed time I shall return and behold Sora will have a son*** (Genesis 18:12-13).

Hashem's ire must be explained. After all, Sora was not told by Hashem that she will have a baby. She was informed by what appeared to be Arab wanderers. And though the Talmud explains that the three nomads were indeed angels sent by the Almighty, they did not identify themselves as such. So what does G-d want from Sora?



A man once entered the small study of the revered the **Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievski** with a plea. "I'd like a blessing from the Rav. My daughter has been looking to get married for several years. All her friends are married, and she would like to get married too, but nothing is working. Can the Rosh Yeshiva bless her to find her bashert? " he asked.

The Steipler turned to the man and asked, "Is this your first daughter?"

"No," replied the distraught parent, "Why do you ask?"

"When she was born did you celebrate with a kiddush?"

The man was perplexed. "No, but, that was 27 years ago," he stammered, "and she was my third girl. I may have made a l'chayim while the minyan was leaving shul, but I never made a proper kiddush. But what does a missed kiddush 27 years ago have to do with my daughter's shidduch today?"

"When one makes a kiddush at a festive occasion," explained Rav Kanievski," each l'chayim he receives is accompanied by myriad blessings. Some are from friends, others from relatives, and those blessings given by total strangers. Among those blessings are definitely the perfunctory wishes for an easy time in getting married. By not making a kiddush for your daughter, how many blessings did you deprive her of? I suggest you make your daughter the kiddush that she never had."

The man followed the advice, and sure enough within weeks after the kiddush the girl had met her mate.

At the bris of his first son (after ten girls), my uncle, Rabbi Dovid Speigel, the Ostrove-Kalushin Rebbe of Cedarhurst, Long Island, quoted the **Ramban** in this week's portion.



The reason that Hashem was upset at Sora was that even if an Arab nomad gives the blessing, one must be duly vigilant to respond, "Amen." One never knows the true vehicle of blessing and salvation. Hashem has many conduits and messengers. Some of those messengers' divinity is inversely proportional to their appearance.

We must wait, listen, and pray that our prospective exalter is the carrier of the true blessing. And then, we must believe.

We have ample opportunities to be blessed. Whether it is from the aunt who offers her graces at a family gathering or the simple beggar standing outside a doorway on a freezing winter day, blessings always come our way. Sometimes they come from the co-worker who cheers you on at the end of a long day or the mail carrier who greets you with the perfunctory "have a nice day" as he brings today's tidings. Each blessing is an opportunity that knocks. And each acknowledgment and look to heaven may open the door to great salvation. The only thing left for us to do is let those blessings in.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

Once, a woman was in desperate need of a *brachah* for a very sick child, and she turned to the *heilige* ***Chofetz Chaim*** for help. After hearing her painful story, the *Chofetz Chaim* told her that if she accepts to do two things, everything will be fine. The woman said that she is willing to do and take on almost anything that might help her and waited anxiously for the *Chofetz Chaim's* instructions.

"The first thing you must agree to do", said the *Chafetz Chaim*, "is to make sure that the Shabbos table is set with a tablecloth and *leichter* on Friday *before chatzos*, midday". The woman was relieved. That wasn't so difficult to do, but she waited for the second instruction.

"Second", continued the *Chofetz Chaim*, "From the time the candles are lit, there can be no more work done in the house by anyone." The woman readily agreed and as a result of her new efforts *l'kavod Shabbos*, she saw the miraculous complete recovery of her child! Shabbos is indeed the source of all blessings!

Parshah Thoughts by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*



The Gemara (Sotah 14a) teaches us that our parshah opens with Hashem visiting Avraham who was recuperating on the third day after his bris. Based on the fact that the Torah does not note any interaction between Hashem and Avraham, the Rosh understands from this some of the parameters of the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick.

When one visits an ill person, even if they have no conversation with them, or the ill person is sleeping, he still fulfils his obligation and has done the mitzvah. When the person awakes, he will appreciate knowing that his guest came to visit him. The most important point is that the ill person will feel that people care about them.

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

In this week's *Parshah*, Avraham *Avinu* tells the angels that visited him to take water and wash their feet (18:4). *Rashi* points out that Avraham did this through a messenger, his son Yishmael, and therefore Hashem acted similarly with Avraham's descendants—when Moshe hit the rock and water came out, instead of giving the water directly (*Bamidbar* 20).

What did Avraham do that may have been somewhat inappropriate? Furthermore, Avraham's sole intention of sending a messenger was

to educate Yishmael in the *Middah* of *Chesed*, kindness (as *Rashi* points out in *pasuk* 7)?

Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, has a beautiful thought to explain this. Avraham's main goal was to educate someone else, his son. The most ideal way to do this is to show by example, as opposed to delegating. Avraham may have better taught this lesson by doing it himself instead of instructing Yishmael to do it.

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ויקח את שני נעריו אתו ואת יצחק בנו כב:ג ***He took his two young men with him, and Yitzchak, his son*** (22:3)

Rashi explains that the two young men were Yishmael and Eliezer.

R' Yehonasan Eibshitz, zt"l, asks, how did Rashi know who these two young men were? Didn't Avraham have other young men?

R' Yehonasan explains that when the Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Avraham (22:2): *'Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak'*, even though the intention of the Holy One, Blessed is He, was directed only at Yitzchak, Avraham wanted to fulfil the directive literally. That is, *'your son, your only one'* – refers to Yishmael who was his son and his only one when he was still called 'Avram', before he became a new creature, for Yitzchak was only born after his name was changed to 'Avraham'.

'Whom you love' – refers to Eliezer who he loved more than anything that he owned, therefore it is obvious that 'the two young men' were Yishmael and Eliezer. (Peninim al HaTorah)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

An elderly man once visited **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** and asked for a *Brachah* for *Arichas Yamim,* long life. After Rav Chaim gave him a *Brachah*, he asked Rav Chaim what the secret was behind the unusual long life of his father-in-law, **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, *zt"l***.

Rav Chaim replied that a possible reason might be based on the words of the *Gemara* which says regarding *Torah*, " **כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לְמֹצְאֵיהֶם**", "***For they are life to those who find them***" (*Mishlei* 4:22).

The *Gemara* learns from these words that a person should actually enunciate with his mouth the words of *Torah* that he is learning.

Throughout his life, Rav Elyashiv had always been very strict to read out loud the words of *Torah* that he was learning, and as the *Pasuk* says, 'they are life'. Rav Chaim said, "If you would like a *Segulah* for long life, this one is certainly tried and tested!"

Middos

Rav Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*, was once asked, "If travel, and movies, and eating out are *'Goyish'*, where should people go for entertainment?" Rav Miller answered, "Let me teach you a lesson. Ahh!

What a good world this is! The *Pasuk* says, **והנה טוב מאד**, the whole world is good. If only you would learn to walk, and to enjoy life while you're walking. For instance, if you are walking in the autumn now, and as your feet are wading through the leaves, you're kicking the leaves on the sidewalk. Isn't that fun? You're breathing the brisk fresh air of autumn and you're seeing the beautiful colours of the leaves and you're thinking, every leaf that falls from the tree is a miracle. Why did it fall? You think the leaf got tired and finally fell down?



When a leaf falls from a tree, it's a *Neis*, a miracle! Abscission cells develop at the end of the stem where it's connected to the twig and these cells do a most purposeful performance of cutting off the leaf from the twig. When it falls, it's a marvel! A remarkable marvel of precision! Why do leaves change colours in autumn? Because they have to let us know that time is passing, and that we're not going to live forever. And even more important, they tell the squirrels to get busy and bury acorns because winter is coming. While the squirrels are burying acorns, they're actually planting future oak trees for us. The squirrel thinks the acorns are for him to eat, but sometimes the squirrel doesn't live until the springtime, and the acorns he buried will take root, and that's how oak trees grow.

While you're walking, you'll notice seeds falling to the ground with wings attached to them. All kinds of various machinery to cause the seeds to fly, different kinds for different seeds. How did it happen that the tree had the wisdom to attach flying gliders to the seeds in order that the seeds should fly away from the mother tree, so it won't have to compete with the mother tree for materials?

Instead, it falls down on an open space and grows. And as you're walking in autumn and your mind is filling with the wisdom that you see all around you, you're also breathing the fresh air. It's not hot now. It's not too cold. This is the time of year to get the most out of life.

Of course, if you'll ask me in the springtime, I'll tell you how to get the most out of life then too. In July, I'll tell you how to get the

most out of life then as well. It's always good. Nissan is good, and Iyar is good, and Sivan is good, and Tamuz is good, and Av is good.

The *Pasuk* says that *Hashem* saw that everything that He made is good. When people learn how to enjoy life, they'll see how silly it is to go to a movie. Why coop yourself up in a movie theatre where there's no fresh air, and it costs money too, while your eyes are feasting on garbage? *HaKol Hevel*! Everything is pointless and meaningless!

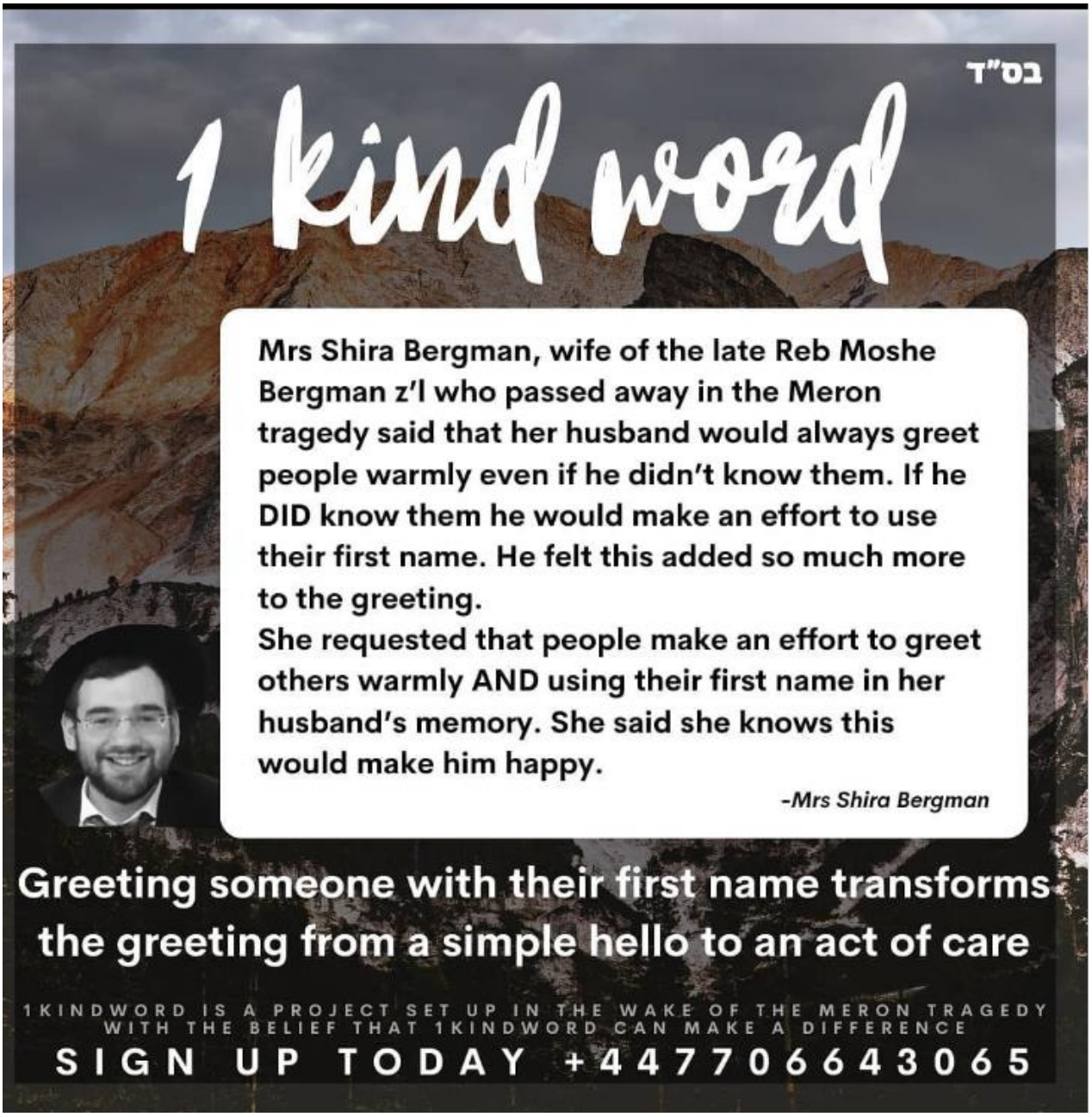
You go to a place to eat for entertainment? Why should you go out to eat? You think the restaurants can give you any food that is more wholesome than what you have in your own kitchen? Most of the food in the restaurants, you have to know, is not as clean as your home food. Many times, the people that you don't see, they take food out of a big pot with their hands and they put it on a plate to serve you. And they wipe their noses with the same hand. Go behind the scenes in the restaurant kitchen. You won't eat there anymore!

And what does travel mean? As I've said many times, travel to Hong Kong and go to a hotel room. You'll pay a lot of money to see bigger cockroaches than you ever saw before at home, not to mention that you may contract foreign diseases too. And so, it's all imagination. It's all selling. People sell you the *Sheker*, the lies and falsehood, and you pay for it out of your nose! You pay and pay and then you come back knocked out. And sometimes you come back sick. I know cases where people travelled and came back with sicknesses, only that they wanted to get their money's worth so they rave for the rest of their life about the good time they had while they were in those places.

Life is full of innocent *Kosher* pleasures and *Gashmiyus*. Of course, life is not for that alone, but it's possible to live happily without spending a nickel!"

1KindWord

1KindWord is a project set up in the wake of the Meron tragedy with the belief that 1 kind word can make a difference.



A BIG lesson from a little water by S Bodner

Avrohom Avinu was the greatest host there could be and he would make these extravagant meals for all types of people as we see by the Melochim, tongue and mustard sandwiches and cakes and butter and only a little bit of water…WHOH!!- only a little bit of water?!?!

Why was he so cheap on the water? Everything else was in great abundance- of all things water?!?!?!?

R' Yisrael Salanter answers beautifully-



He was once passing through a small town and stopped with his friend to daven Mincha, when his friend washed his hands, he washed with a lot of water as usual, but when R' Yisrael washed he only used a little bit, and he explained that this is a small shul and the Gabbai probably only brought enough for the amount of people that always come so why should he make the Gabbai go get more.

So it was by Avrohom- all the food and delicacies HE brought in great abundance but the water that he asked Yishmael to bring and at someone else's expense he wasn't going to need a lot and make Yishmael carry more water, even for Hachnasos Archim which was so dear to him!! He had his priorities straight!!

L'Maaseh

Rav Paysach Krohn relates a story about **Rav Elazar Shach, zt"l**, that in his old age, he attended the funeral of a woman in Haifa who had very few relatives. When he was asked why he made such an effort to attend this Levayah, Rav Shach explained who the woman was.

He said that when he was younger, learning in Yeshivah, the conditions were almost intolerable. As one of the younger boys in a Yeshivah that was filled to capacity, he had to sleep on a cold, hard

floor. In the frigid winter with no heat and no blankets, he was suffering.

One day, he received a letter from his uncle inviting him to come join him in his business. He was a successful blacksmith who was not *bentched* with children, and he assured his nephew that he would teach him the trade, and the business would eventually become his. His uncle asked him, "Why stay where you are in poverty and hunger? Work for me and your life will be set."

The young Rav Shach thought about it for a day, and by Thursday night, he decided his uncle was right. He was going to leave Yeshivah.

The next morning, a woman came to the Yeshivah and said that her husband, who was a blanket salesman, had recently passed away. She was in town sitting Shivah with his family, and she had some extra blankets that she wanted to donate to the Yeshivah. They were thick, heavy blankets, filled with goose down, and one of them was given to the young Rav Shach.

That Shabbos night, he was warmer than he had been all winter, and he decided to stay in Yeshivah. He eventually grew up to become the Gadol HaDor— a Rav who impacted generations of people to live Torah lives.

That woman lived a quiet and seemingly uneventful life. Little did she know that her small act of kindness changed the world, and she will reap the rewards for eternity.

Many people ignore the 'blankets' sent to them by Hashem, not recognizing the hidden miracles in their lives. Rav Shach, however, recognized the messages and Brachos that Hashem was sending him, and he displayed tremendous Hakaras Ha'tov to Hashem's worthy messenger!

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



The yetzer hara is brilliant. Rather than engaging in endless warfare, all he does is rob a person of his appreciation for truth.

Once that appreciation has been eliminated, the yetzer hara no longer cares what mitzvos the person performs! [**Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk**]

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP] - Making the Impossible, Possible!

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לָמָּה זֶּה צָחֲקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הַאַף אֱמְנָם אֵלֵד וַאֲנִי זָקַנְתִּי
"And Hashem said to Avraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh', saying, 'Shall I in truth bear a child, though I have aged?' " (18:13)



On a dark and cold night in the Jankowska Road Camp, the S.S. guards woke up all the Jewish prisoners. The prisoners were taken to a field where there were two pits. "Each of you dogs who values his miserable life… must jump over one of the pits and land on the other side." Whoever misses will be shot. It was clear to all the exhausted and emaciated prisoners that this was an ***impossible*** *task, especially on such a freezing cold night. The pits started filling up with bodies.* ***Rabbi Israel Spira, the Bluzhov Rebbe*** *walked towards the pit, closed his eyes and jumped. When he opened his eyes, he was on the other side of the pit.* Hashem helped Rabbi Spira to do the "impossible".

A few days after having his bris mila, Avraham invited three "Arab" travellers into his home. The travellers were actually angels, disguised as Arabs. After they "ate", one of the Arabs said that in exactly one year, Sarah will give birth to a boy. Sarah, who was at the entrance, outside the tent, heard these words and laughed. She looked at her aged body and thought that there was no way that she and her aged husband Avraham, could possibly have a child at this point in their lives. Hashem then turned to Avraham, asking why Sarah had laughed.

Hashem said, "**Is anything beyond Me?**" Apparently, Hashem was disturbed by Sarah's slight lack of belief that she could have a child.

The **Ramban** questions why Hashem was upset at Sarah's disbelief. Sarah didn't know that the guests were angels; she thought that they were Arabs who were trying to say something nice! The **Ramban** answers that even though it was said by Arabs, Sarah should **still** have believed that it was **possible**. Minimally she should have said, "Amen. May it be Hashem's will [that I have a child]."

HaRav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l explains this **Ramban**. He says that one who has 1000%, total belief in Hashem is **OBLIGATED** to believe that Hashem can change Nature for his benefit. Therefore, Sarah should have responded, "Amen. May it be Hashem's will [that I have a child]." That would have constituted a prayer that Hashem change Nature for her and enable her to give birth. When we are given an unlikely blessing, we too should respond "Amen. May it be Hashem's will", asking Hashem to change Nature to help us.

We see from this that belief in Hashem obligates us to never give up, however hopeless our situation may seem. As the Talmud (Brachos 10A) quotes, "Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person's neck he should NEVER despair of mercy." Hashem can save him in an instant!

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

A Recipe for a Happy Marriage!



וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל

"And they [the 3 angels] said to him [Avraham], 'Where is Sara your wife?' And he said, 'She is in the tent'". Bereishis (18:9) "And Hashem said to Avraham, "Why did Sara laugh, saying ,'Can I in truth bear a child when I am so old'?"

Yosef and Sara were very poor. The only real meal that they ate the entire week was on Shabbos. One Friday night, as Sara was bringing the food to the table she slipped. All the food spilled to the floor and could not be salvaged. Sara was so sad that she stayed on the floor, with her head down, ready to cry. She felt, how could she look at her husband's face when she just ruined **ALL** their food. There was no more food to bring in from the kitchen. As she sat on the floor, her husband started singing Aishel Chayil ("a Woman of Valour" a special song many husbands sing to their wives on Friday night). Yosef sang the song slowly and with love in his voice. Sara looked up and smiled. Yosef's reaction could have been to tell his wife to be more careful or even to just show her a sad face. Either reaction would have been a normal response. Yet, either action would have also made Sara feel bad and sad. Instead, Yosef **IGNORED** what had happened and **didn't even show any displeasure**. He changed the uncomfortable moment to one that made his wife feel happy and loved. He built and strengthened their relationship instead of somewhat weakening it. There was something that Yosef and Sara had wanted very much and for which

they had davened to Hashem repeatedly. After this incident of inner greatness, Yosef's prayers were answered.

The three guests asked Avraham where his wife was. **Rashi** quotes the **Talmud** as saying that the guests knew where Sara was. They knew that she remained in her tent, due to modesty. If so, why did they ask Avraham where she was? They wanted to emphasize her modesty to Avraham. They wanted him to feel good about his wife's modesty and further endear her to him.

Rabbi Henach Leibowitz zt"l pointed out the following. Avraham and Sara had been married for many years. They already had a close relationship with each other. Yet, the first words the angels said were meant to endear Sara to Avraham even more. How much more could their words have made a difference in Avraham's relationship with Sara? Especially since Avraham already knew that Sara was a tznua, a very modest woman (see **Rashi**, perek 12 pasuk 11). We learn from this episode a fundamental principle in the relationship between husband and wife (or in the relationship of any two people who are close to each other). Every positive comment, albeit small, can affect a relationship. **Even a strong, loving relationship can be enhanced by a compliment made <u>about</u> a spouse or <u>to</u> a spouse.**

A few p'sukim later Hashem asked Avraham why Sara laughed at the news that she would have a child, saying that she was too old. **Rashi** quotes the **Talmud** as saying that Hashem changed her statement for the sake of maintaining peace. Sara had actually said that she was too old, **and** that Avraham was also too old. When Hashem had repeated her words to Avraham, Hashem left out her words that her husband was also too old. This omission was considered a lack of truth and would have been forbidden if not for the fact that it was said to maintain peace.

Rav Henach Leibowitz zt"l, again, pointed out that Avraham and Sara had a very close relationship with each other. Furthermore, obviously Avraham was very old and not likely to beget children. Also,

Sara had said, "*And my master* [Avraham] *is old*". She prefaced her comment about Avraham being aged with a term of total respect. Why did Hashem feel it necessary to modify her statement for the sake of maintaining peace? Again, we see a fundamental principle in the relationship between husband and wife. We see the importance of Shalom Bayis, a peaceful relationship. Even if the relationship is excellent, any small comment, even seemingly insignificant, can have an impact. Even such a small comment could have potentially made a tiny impact on the peaceful relationship between Avraham and Sara. That is why Hashem omitted those words from Sara's initial statement.

We must be so sensitive to the feelings of others. Even a small, negative comment can hurt another person's feelings. On the other hand, every smile or compliment can make someone else feel good. Our actions and words make such a difference to others!

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP] - Save the Other Half of the Blanket!



וַיֵּרָ֣א אֵלָ֔יו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵ֖י מַמְרֵ֑א

"And Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] in the Plains of Mamre…" (18:1)

Rashi is bothered by the following question: Why was it necessary for the Torah to specify that Hashem appeared to Avraham in the Plains of Mamre? We already know from last week's parsha where Avraham was!

Rashi answers that the Torah wanted to give Mamre special mention and credit for advising Avram about the Bris Mila.

The Da'as Zekanim quotes a Midrash that asks, how is it possible that such a great tzadik, as Avraham, who passed all of Hashem's tests without needing advice, should suddenly need advice when it came to doing the Bris Mila?

The Da'as Zekanim answers that Avraham was not asking for advice if he should do the Bris Mila. Certainly, he would do it. He just wanted a suggestion how to encourage his household to perform this special mitzvah since they had initially refused. Mamre advised Avraham that first he should perform the Bris Mila on himself and his son Yishmael. When Avraham's household would see that he did it, they too would follow suit. The suggestion worked, and they accepted the mitzvah of Bris Mila upon themselves.

We see a beautiful lesson from this Midrash: To encourage a specific action, **teach by example**. Don't ask someone to act one way while you, yourself, act the opposite. The way to teach a child to act with respect, to love mitzvos, to pray with concentration… is by setting an example and acting that way ourselves.

A couple was once discussing what to do with an elderly parent who lived with them and they no longer wanted to "bother" to care for. They decided to send him to a nursing home, along with a special, warm blanket. Their young son, hearing their decision, burst into the room, unhappily. He loved his grandfather and was unhappy with their decision. He told his parents to save one half of the blanket. When his parents questioned him, he explained that he wanted to have something to give them when they got old and he sent them away.

What a powerful, negative lesson this boy's parents were teaching him through their example. What a powerful lesson the son was teaching them with his response.

What message are we sending to others by our actions? Are we asking them to act one way while we act differently?

As parents, what lessons and messages do we want to give to our children? Do we want them to act one way while we, ourselves, at times, act in just the opposite way?

We teach by example. May Hashem bless us with family and friends who follow the proper example and remain on the true path of closeness with Hashem.

Case Closed by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Though this week's portion is packed with messages and moral examples that we can garner from our forefather, Avram, there is, however, a small lesson I'd like to share learned from none other than the ancient Egyptian customs agents.

Avram is forced to leave Canaan due to a famine and travel the only country that has food, Egypt. The Torah tells us that Avram was afraid. His wife Sora was beautiful, and he feared that she would be taken to Pharaoh as a wife or concubine. Avram would be killed. So Avram devised a ploy to spare his life from certain harm.

But that was not his first strategy. The Torah tells us, "And it was when Avram came to Egypt, and the Egyptians saw the woman that she was very beautiful (Braishis 12:14). Rashi quotes the Medrash's question. Why doesn't the Torah say, "And it was when they came to Egypt?" After all, Sora came too?

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (12:67) explains that Avram actually arrived alone at the border. Sora was hidden in a crate.

It chronicles the account: Avram arrived, and the customs agents stare at the large crate and demand, "Pay a duty! You are carrying a crate of utensils! Avram gladly agreed. Seeing Avram's acquiescence, the agents were not pleased. "You must be importing expensive silk garments," they declared. Avram once again agreed to pay the tax on a crate of silk garments. Again they became suspicious. You are

carrying a crate of jewels! Pay tax on jewels!" And again Avram readily accepted the enormous financial burden. At that point the agents expressed their skepticism and pried the crate open. The Medrash continues to tell us that a great light illuminated Egypt. What they found was Sora, hidden in the box.

Now, I am not sure of the procedures of customs agents. But from the Medrash it surely seems that they lost out on the biggest booty they could possibly have snared. Avram was willing to pay tax on a crate of jewels, the most valuable entity that the agents had known. Why open the box and risk finding a box filled with pebbles?



Financier J.P. Morgan wanted to give his wife a gift, so he called a jeweller and asked him to send a beautiful jewelled ring for his wife.

"Send the ring to me," he barked, "put the bill in the package, and I'll send you out a cheque immediately."

Two days later a box arrived. Mr. Morgan inspected the contents and found a beautifully crafted ring with an enormous diamond in the centre. Along with it came an equally enormous bill for $25,000. Morgan stared in disbelief, as he removed the stone and wrote a cheque. Then he thought for a moment and re-wrapped the gift box with ornate, monogrammed gift-paper and sealed it with his inimitable JP Morgan cachet. He sent it back to the jeweller with a cheque and instructions.

"Dear Friend,"The ring was magnificent; however your bill was exorbitant. Enclosed please find a cheque for $12,000, which I hope, will meet your approval. If it does, please return the gift, untouched, in its personalized gift-wrap and seal. Then you may cash the cheque. If my amount does not suffice, please rip up my cheque and return it. Feel free to remove the stone and keep the wrapping as a token for your good intentions. J.P. Morgan."

The jeweller was incensed at the amount on the cheque. He ripped up the $12,000 cheque and mailed the shreds back to Morgan. He then proceeded to carefully remove the ornate gift-wrapping that ensconced his precious jewel box. He walked toward his safe and opened the gift box and was about to put the ring into his safe when he was startled.

The ring was not in the box. In its stead was a small rock. Around the rock a cheque was wrapped. It was signed by Mr. J.P. Morgan — for $25,000.

Even the repartee between Avram and the customs agents can teach us a lesson. There can be something even more valuable than what is found in one's imagination. And as the item in question is under wrap and seal, you never know its true value. Because the contents of simple crate can never be estimated. You may even fantasize that it is filled with jewels, and you will still be underestimating.

R' Shamshon M'Ostropolier zt"l would say:

וירא וירץ לקראתם - Rashi explains that Avraham had to run because when the angels saw that he was sick, they began to walk away. Not wanting to lose the opportunity to fulfil the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim, he ran after them.

When one leaves the presence of a prominent person, it is not proper to turn one's back. Instead, even when leaving, one faces the person and walks backwards. When the angels came to Avraham, they noticed that Hashem was also there. Realizing that Avraham was very sick, they decided to go away and not bother him. However, since it is improper to turn their backs to Hashem, they walked away backwards. Avraham, noticing this, ran towards (**לקראתם**) them to bring them into his home."

Thoughts that Count

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָרְצָה - *And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed to the ground* (18:2)

The great Sage Shammai said: "Greet every man with a pleasant countenance." Should a person give his friend every gift in the world, yet greet him with a scowl, it is considered as if he gave him nothing.

But if he greets him with a smile, it is considered as if he gave the other person everything, even if he is empty-handed. *(Avot D'Rabbi Natan)*

Peninim On The Torah

וישם אותו על המזבח ממעל לעצים *And he placed him on the altar atop the wood. (22:9)*

The *Yalkut Shemoni* (*Parashas Vayeira* 101) teaches that Avraham *Avinu's* eyes looked into Yitzchak *Avinu's* eyes, while Yitzchak's eyes gazed up at the Heavens. Tears dropped incessantly from Avraham's eyes. We derive from here that Avraham did not abrogate his human emotions. He was a father whose overwhelming love for his son was evident throughout the *Akeidah*. His love for Hashem was evidently greater. Avraham wanted to carry out Hashem's command with total equanimity and joy. Nonetheless, it pained him greatly that executing the command meant slaughtering his son.

The *Alter m'Slabodka* wonders why Avraham did not subdue his emotions altogether in order to perform the *mitzvah* in total *simchah*. - He explains that Avraham refused to subdue his emotions totally, because this would involve uprooting his unparalleled love for his son to an extent. Hashem imbues a father with love for his child. It is wrong for a parent to uproot this love, because doing so would make his service to the Almighty almost mechanical in nature.

Hashem does not want robots without feeling and sensitivity. He wants us to be normal and to serve Him amid normalcy. On the contrary, Hashem commanded Avraham to sacrifice the son whom ***he loves***.

One whose relationship with Hashem causes him to become emotionless, unfeeling, uncaring and robot-like is missing the point. This is not what Hashem asks of us. He wants normal human beings – not angels.



Ms.communication

Hashem tells Avraham **שמע בקלה**, heed Sarah's voice. Shouldn't it say **שמע לקלה**, listen to her voice, since that is the proper grammar?

The Pasuk says **ונשאלה את פיה**, they asked Rivka her decision concerning Yitzchok. The word **פיה** ("her mouth") seems unnecessary?

It is known that women speak indirectly. This comes from the **צניעות** ("modesty") of women as **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה**. This is because **צניעות** is keeping things hidden just as is the idea of speaking indirectly. Nevertheless, men must learn to break this barrier and understand what their wives are saying. For this reason, it doesn't say **שמע לקלה** , listen to her voice rather **שמע בקלה**, in her voice. That means to what she implies. In the same vein, we can grasp why it says **ונשאלה את פיה** —to discern what she is truly saying.

We see this in the episode where Sarah told Avraham to take Hagar as a wife in order to have children. He complied with Sarah's request. However, he didn't discern her true desire which was that he daven for her that she may conceive which would avoid the need to take her maidservant, Hagar, as a second wife.



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Targum Yonason (22:10) writes that during *akeidas Yitzchak*, "Avraham was looking into Yitzchak's eyes, Yitzchak was looking up at the *malachim* in heaven, but Avraham didn't see the *malachim*." Why did Yitzchak see the *malachim* and not Avraham?

Targum Yonason writes that Yitzchak asked his father to tie him down well on the *mizbeiach* so that he shouldn't jump from the pain and disqualify the *korban*. Yitzchak was tied down, and there was nothing he could do to prevent the *akeidah*. His part of the test was already completed. Therefore, he was permitted to see the great revelations that were happening at that time. But Avraham was in the middle of the test, therefore he couldn't see the *malachim*. If he would see all that was transpiring in *shomayim*, there wouldn't be a test.

Akeidas Yitzchok Today

It states (22:13) **והנה איל אחר נאחז בסבך בקרניו** - ***"Avraham saw another ram caught in the bushes by its horns."*** Avraham sacrificed this animal instead of Yitzchak. The *meforshim* seek to understand the word **אחר**, "another," because there was only one ram.

The Or LaShamayim חוקת ד"ה עלי באר answers in the name of the **Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*** that there is more than one *akeidas Yitzchak*. Because whenever a person overcomes his *yetzer hara*, that is another *akeidas Yitzchak*.

The Chozeh explains the pasuk as follows: **והנה איל אחר** , there are other *akeidas Yitzchaks*. **נאחז בסבך** when one is trapped in the lure of temptation and bad habits and he overcomes them, that is another *akeidas Yitzchak*. **בקרניו** , the Or LaShamayim explains that **קרניו** can also mean shine (as in *Shemos 34:35* **כי קרן עור פניו**,

Moshe's face shone). Because when one passes his tests **תהל הכבוד אורו עד כסא**, "His light shines up to Hashem's throne."

It is encouraging to know that we can perform an *akeidas Yitzchak* even in our times. Whatever level you are on, when you overcome your nature and take a step forward, that is a sacrifice, an *akeidas Yitzchak*.

Miracles and Salvations

When a person goes beyond the limits of his nature to serve Hashem, Hashem, in return, will perform miracles beyond nature for him.

This is his reward **מדה כנגד מדה**. He went beyond his standard nature to serve Hashem, so Hashem will alter the rules of nature to help him.

The malachim asked Avraham (18:9) **איה שרה אשתך** "Where is Sarah?" **The Ksav Sofer** explains that when the *malachim* saw the large meal that was served to them – three tongues with mustard, etc. – they asked, "Where is Sarah? She certainly isn't at home because if she is, she wouldn't have permitted you to give us so much."

As Chazal (*Bava Metzia* 85.) say, **אשה עיניה צרה באורחים** , a woman is stingy towards the guests. Avraham replied **הנה היא באוהל** -"Sarah is at home, and ***she*** prepared this generous meal for you. She overcame her nature of stinginess, and she performs *hachnasas orchim* generously."

The *malachim* said, "If she changed her nature, heaven will treat her beyond the rules of nature. Naturally, Sarah cannot bear children, but nature will be altered, and she will miraculously bear a child."

Torah Tavlin-Don't Bow to the 'Dust of Your Feet'!



Rashi tells us that Avraham Avinu believed the three visitors who came to him in the desert were merchants, 'who bow down to the dust of their feet, and he was strict not to allow any idolatry into his house.' Why would anyone bow down to the dust of their feet? Isn't that ridiculous?

The Shinover Rov zt"l answers that merchants who work themselves to the bone believing their parnassah comes from the amount of work in their hands or the lengths they go to with their feet, are wasting their time. They are self-serving - in this case serving the Avodah Zara known as 'self'! They bow down, in a sense, to the dust of their feet, for they believe in their own power to control their destiny. Avraham Avinu knew better and the first thing he told them was to wash off this dust! What a lesson for the ages!

Toil

After the **Chozeh**'s *petirah*, a wealthy person told the Rebbetzin that he wanted to buy the Chozeh's *yarmulke*. She asked for two thousand gold coins, and the rich person agreed. He went home to get the money, and in the meanwhile, the Rebbetzin decided she should wash the yarmulke. She figured that since he was paying so much money, it should be clean and fresh.

When the wealthy man returned and saw the clean yarmulke, he exclaimed, "I agreed to buy the yarmulke that was drenched with the Chozeh's sweat. I don't want to pay so much for this yarmulke." It is the sweat and hard work that make a mitzvah precious.

The *parashah* begins, **וירא אליו ה'**, Hashem came to visit Avraham when he was ill (after the *milah*, see *Rashi*).

The **Imrei Emes *zt'l*** explains that Hashem came to see how Avraham served Him even when he was ill. Because some people only serve Hashem when everything goes well for them. Hashem wanted to see Avraham serve Him when he was going through hard times.



It states (21:33), **ויטע אשל** and **אשל** is *roshei teivos* for **אֲכִילה שֲתִיה לַוויה**, referring to Avraham's *hachnasas orchim* for tired and hungry travellers who benefited immensely from Avraham's kind service. However, the elaboration of Avraham's hospitable deeds is specifically at the beginning of the *parashah*, when he served the three *malachim* who don't need to eat or drink!

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* explains that the Torah wanted to elaborate on when Avraham performed *hachnasas orchim* when he was weak, on the third day after his *milah* because a mitzvah is measured according to how hard it is to perform it.

The holy sefarim write that one can determine the importance of a mitzvah based on how much opposition he experiences. Because when a mitzvah is very important, the yetzer hara will try harder to prevent you from performing it.

Initiative is doing the right thing without being told.

Rav Menachem Yechiel Dovid Trenk zt"l

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ

On Rosh Hashana, Reb Dovid spoke before Tekias Shofar, discussing Akeidas Yitzchok. Which had been in that day's kriyas HaTorah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Avraham Avinu to sacrifice his son, and Avraham asks which son. Hashem says, "The son that you love.". and Avraham Avinu says that he loves them both.

Rabbi Trenk said, "let's be honest. Here he had one son who embodied pertect yirah, he'd never done an Aveiro hand the other one who was a *pere adam*, wild and disobedient- is it possible that a tzaddik like Avraham didn't know which son he loved more?"



The answer, Reb Dovid banged on the shtender, the answer is that he loved them both equally, he saw the good side of Yishmael just as he saw the good side of Yitzchak; he saw the potential in Yishmael just as he did in Yitzchak. He loved both his sons.

It was quiet in the room, and then Reb Dovid concluded, "And that's why Rashi tells us at the end of the parashah that we see that Yishmael did teshuvah... of course he did teshuuah!

His father loved him and his father believed in him, he had where to come back to..."

With that message - his unconditional love for his talmidim and fervent belief in them he was ready to blow shofar, ushering in the moment of teshuvah.

Rabbi Shlome Zalman Hoff Shlita – Kriyas Yam Suf



Rabbeinu Bachya on Shemos 14:21 -

וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם – לשון בקיעה הוא,

שֶׁנִּבְקַע הַיָּם בְּחָזְקָה פִּתְאֹם,

וְיֵשׁ לוֹמַר שֶׁהָיוּ הַמַּיִם נִפְתָּחִים וְהוֹלְכִים לִפְנֵיהֶם כְּפִי הִלּוּכָם.

There are two ways of interpreting how Kriyas Yam Suf actually took place. According to one pshat, the waters tore a bit at a time as the Yidden walked through - just like a rip/tear. [**Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, Beshalach**] The other pshat is that the sea split in one go – with a chopping action. [**Shemos Rabbah 21:8**]

Kriyas Yam Suf occurred in the z'chus of Avrohom Avinu. [**Bereishis Rabbah 56:3**]

While preparing for the Akeida, the Pasuk says - **וַיְבַקַּע עֲצֵי עֹלָה וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים** – ***and he split wood for a burnt offering***.22:3

This splitting of the wood was the reason that we were zoche to **קריעת ים סוף,** as it says in the Pasuk (Shemos 14:21) **וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם... וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם** ***And Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea… the waters split.***

The **בקע** that Avrohom did resulted in the **בקע** that Moshe did. Many Acharonim (**Maharal, Sfas Emes** etc.) treat this as :*measure-for-measure and an action creating cosmic precedent.*

- But what was so special about Avraham Avinu chopping wood in preparation of the Akeida that it resulted in us being zoche to **קריעת ים סוף**?

The answer is that Avraham went to extreme lengths to ensure that Yitzchak would not encounter any additional mental suffering and distress when it was revealed to him that he would actually be the Korban! So instead of prolonging Yitzchok's agony by looking for some wood at the mizbeach, he prepared it before they even went!

This can be inferred from the Gemarah in Sanhedrin [45a] that discusses that when Beis Din had an occasion to put someone to death, they had to ensure that the g'mar din was carried out straight away without delay, as this would unnecessarily add to the mental agony. The principle *ve-ahavta le-re'akhah kamokhah* – you should love your neighbour as yourself – applies even when a person is condemned to death. Even here the Torah requires that the court concern itself with the condemned man's best interests, to the best of its ability.

So we are Zoche to **קריעת ים סוף** because Avraham Avinu thought very carefully about Yitzchok's feelings.

We should all learn from this, that it is so important not to hurt another person's feelings.

Short Story by Yoni Schwartz

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, ZT"L, was known as an incredible ba'al bitachon. He would spend each day learning Torah every second he could. Unfortunately, the economic situation of pre-state Israel was awful, and he lived in dire poverty. His wife was a complete tzadekes, and day after day she did everything to make it possible for him not have to interrupt his Torah learning for even one second.

One time, however, it got to the point where they had no bread to feed the kids, so she decided to speak with her husband. Understanding the situation, right after their conversation, Rav Sonnenfeld put on his coat and walked outside in search of livelihood.

A curious Jew who knew what a tremendous ba'al bitachon and tzaddik Rav Sonnenfeld was, overheard that he was about to start looking for parnassah. Unable to restrain his curiosity, he decided to follow from a distance to see what the Rav would do.

A few minutes later, the Rav bent down to pick something up from the middle of the street. Bursting from curiosity, the yid repositioned himself to get a better view and he saw that the Rav had just picked up two gold Napoleon coins!

This Jew thought, "We each must do our hishtadlus, but the more we trust in Hashem, the less hishtadlus we have to put in. The Rav's level of bitachon must be extraordinary!"

Worshipping the Dust of One's Feet

יֻקַּח־נָ֣א מְעַט־מַ֔יִם וְרַחֲצ֖וּ רַגְלֵיכֶֽם 18:4



Rashi says כסבור שהם ערביים שמשתחוים לאבק רגליהם והקפיד שלא להכניס עבודה זרה לביתו - *He thought that they were Arabs, who prostrate themselves to the dust of their feet, and he was strict not to allow any idolatry into his house.*

R' Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam zt"l, known to his followers as **R' Chatzkele Shinever**, asked his students: "When Avraham Avinu saw the three angels coming to his tent, he thought they were Arab merchants who worshiped the dust on their feet, so he offered them water to wash off this dust outside. What sort of unusual "god" was this, to worship the dust on their feet?"

R' Chatzkele explained: "It was not typical idolatry, praying to an inanimate object. Rather, these men believed in themselves. They were convinced that one's success is determined by how hard he works or how many miles he walks - hence the "dust on their feet." Such a belief is heresy!"

SEFAS TAMIM
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Chizuk - Inspiration

Reb Yehoshua Ozer Halperin of Manchester was a close Talmud and later a Gabbai of the **Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Yehuda Zev Segal ZT'L** ("Rosh Yeshiva").



It wasn't surprising then, that when Reb Yehoshua Ozer got married in Montreal, the Rosh Yeshiva agreed to fly in from England for the wedding.

As is often the case, things were delayed at the wedding hall and the wedding got off to a very late start. At 11:30 PM, the Rosh Yeshiva informed his host Reb Yoni Leibowitz* that he was ready to be taken back to Reb Yoni's house.

"But we haven't even benched yet," protested Reb Yoni, who was a close friend of the Baal Simcha and therefore had intended to remain until the wedding was over. Reb Yoni was surprised that the Rosh Yeshiva wanted to leave early, especially after making a special trip from England for the wedding.

"It's all right. I have benched already," replied the Rosh Yeshiva. "You can drop me back at your house and then return to the hall."

Reb Yoni tried convincing the Rosh Yeshiva to remain a little longer but to no avail. The Rosh Yeshiva insisted that he be brought back to his host's home. Reb Yoni had no choice but to bring his esteemed guest back to his home. When the car pulled up in front of the house, the Rosh Yeshiva encouraged Reb Yoni to return to the wedding hall which he did.

The next morning, the Rosh Yeshiva provided Reb Yoni with the following explanation of why he wanted to be brought back home when he did. "As we stepped out the door to go to the wedding last night, one of your children asked you when you would be returning home. You answered, 'Go to sleep before we come home. But don't worry, someone will be home by midnight.'

When I saw that the wedding was running late and we were getting close to midnight, I realized that you no longer had any intention of returning home by that time. I insisted on being driven home to ensure that someone would be home by midnight, so you would not be guilty of telling a lie.

A Yid Can Never Be Lost

וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּתַע בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֵר שָׁבַע ***And she went and wandered in the desert of Beer sheva.*** 21:14

Hagar went and strayed. She got lost.

Rashi explains: חזרה לגלולי בית אביה - ***She reverted to the idols of her father's house.*** She became a Goy again.

However, a yid can never get lost.

Rabbi Yosef Brandeiss -Rosh HaYeshiva Yeshivah L'zeirim Manchester

18:2 **וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו**



Both Avrohom Avinu and Lot did **הכנסת אורחים** with malachim. Lot's **הכנסת אורחים** was seemingly better than Avraham Avinu's, as it was done under the spectre of death. [**Beis Halevi**]

The Beis Halevi answers that by Avraham, the Pasuk says **שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים** - ***three men***. The visitors appeared as travel weary Arabs, and yet he treated them with the utmost care and attention, whereas with Lot the Pasuk says **וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סְדֹמָה** 19:1 - ***two angels*** - they appeared as angels.

Anyone who has actual malachim (who look like and are the real deal) appear to them, will invite them in under any circumstances. Even under threat of death!

The Benefits of Tests

The Maharal writes that the purpose of tests isn't to let Hashem know where we are up to in our avodas Hashem because Hashem knows this information even before we are tested.

The purpose of the tests is to help us bring out our potential to reality. Tests can bring out the best in people. The potential which was there beforehand is brought out, which develops your personality and spiritual growth.

The Ramban writes that there were other tzaddikim in Avraham Avinu's era who kept the Torah, but they didn't reach his level

because they didn't pass ten tests (*asarah nisyonos*) just as Avraham had.

Avraham Avinu had ten trials, and he passed them all successfully. This made Avraham unique and greater than all other tzaddikim of his generation.

Reb Aryeh Levine zt'l would visit the Yidden of Yerushalayim who were in jail. When one prisoner was freed, someone asked him whether he planned to steal again. He replied that he wouldn't turn to crime again. And then he said, "Maybe I will steal once more. Reb Aryeh Levine doesn't have a watch, and I want to get him one. If I can't get it for him in legal ways, I will steal. But after that, I won't do it again."

The man asked Reb Aryeh Levine, "What type of students do you have? I just spoke to one, and he said he would steal to get you a watch."

Reb Aryeh Levine replied, "I don't give them mussar, and I don't tell them not to steal. I teach them one thing: They must be cautious about speaking the truth. And as you saw, this person was very truthful. He admitted that he would steal once.

If someone is careful never to lie, he won't steal. He knows that if he is asked whether he stole, he will have to admit the truth, so with this one precaution, he will be protected from thefts and all other aveiros.

Once, a man was smoking a cigarette on the street on Shabbos, and Reb Aryeh Levine was approaching from the other side. One of Reb Aryeh Levine's post-jail friends went over to hear what Reb Aryeh Levine would tell the smoker. Reb Aryeh said, "I won't tell you to stop smoking because you know on your own that it is Shabbos, and you are smoking, regardless. But Iwill tell you that you shouldn't extinguish the cigarette when you finish smoking it. Let the coal

extinguish on its own. That way, you will have one aveirah less on Shabbos."



A couple of weeks later, this man said (to the person who had gone over to listen to the conversation): "Now, not only do I not smoke on Shabbos, but I also don't smoke during the weekdays, either."

This story has several lessons. It reminds us that we can grow with small steps, and it is a lesson in ahavas Yisrael. It demonstrates how R' Aryeh gave *tochachah* with *chachmah* with the potential to bring out the best in people. This person passed his test. He didn't extinguish the cigarettes on Shabbos, which later brought him to higher and better madreigos.

A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וַיַּ֣רְא וַיָּ֤רָץ לִקְרָאתָם֙ "***He noticed this, so he ran toward them"*** (18:2)



Chazal teach us (Bava Metzia 86b) that Avraham served his guests three tongues in mustard **להאכילן שלש לשונות בחרדל** — one for each guest.

The Vilna Gaon was sitting and teaching Torah to a group of students. Said the Gaon, "We find that there are three positive characteristics that can be found in all righteous men:

1. They feel compassion for the poor.

2. They suffice with little.

3. Their hearts quake with fear of Hashem,

These qualities are alluded to in the word **בחרדל**, as the Hebrew letters of this word can be rearranged in three different ways:

1. bachar-dal - they choose the poor and love them,

2. chadal-rav - they shun excessive lifestyles and make do with less.

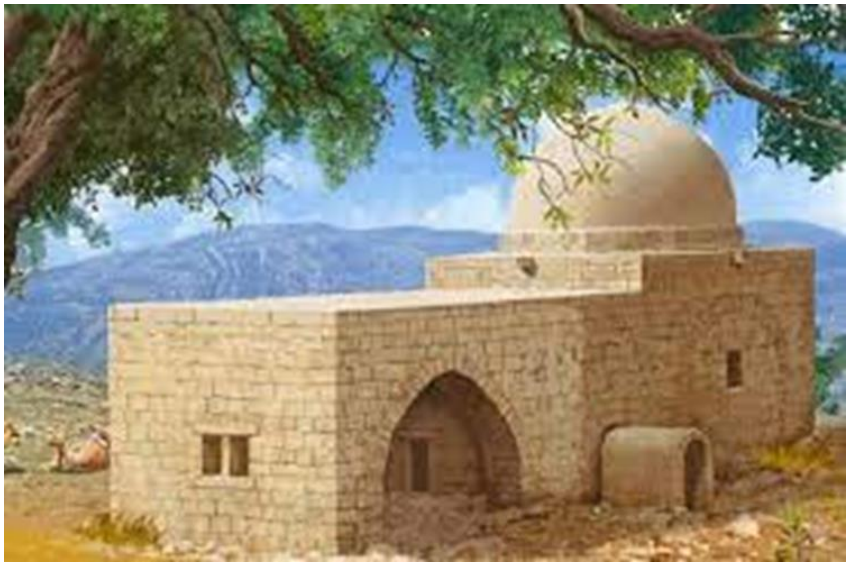
3. charad-lev - their hearts quake with the fear of Heaven.



Kever Rochel -Fascinating Insights – R' Yehoshua Alt

Kever Rochel is a special place of tefilla as the pasuk tells us that she cries for her children — **רחל מבכה על בניה** [Yirmiya 31:14.]

When one cries, tears (**דמעה**) stream forth. **דמעה** has a gematria of 119. **דמעה** two times (because she had many tears and the minimum plural is two) yields the number 238. What totals 238? None other than the numerical value of **רחל** !



Why is she buried in Beis Lechem, and not Chevron? Because Hashem commanded Yaakov to bury her there by the roadside so that she could help the Jewish people when Nevuzaradan would lead the Jews into captivity after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. When the Jews were passing along the road to Beis Lechem, tormented and exhausted, Rochel's soul came to her grave and cried, begging for Hashem's mercy upon them. Hashem heard her plea.

The pasuk says **רחל מבכה על בניה** It doesn't say **רחל בוכה**, Rochel is weeping [for her children] rather **רחל מבכה**. This can be understood to mean "Rochel is bringing others to tears." You can go there and pour out your heart!

A boy named Yehuda was raised in a religious Jewish home but drifted from that path. He got a job and moved away from home. He eventually got so depressed that he decided to commit suicide. His plan was to jump from a high floor in a tall building in Tel Aviv. As he walked toward the elevator that would transport him to the high floor, he saw fliers, "The eleventh Day of Cheshvan, today, is the

yahrtzeit of Rochel Imeinu. Buses from all parts of Israel will take you to the kever of Rochel Imeinu. Come talk to our mother, Rochel!"

Yehuda had a change of heart and decided to travel to Kever Rochel. He arrived at the kever to daven and once inside he fainted. After they revived him, he explained what happened. While he davened, believing that he had no one in the world who cared about him, he suddenly heard a voice begging Mama Rochel to have compassion on her son, "Yehuda Menachem ben Chava." He realized it was his mother's voice and he felt her care. Those tears of love and longing brought Yehuda back on track until he returned to the fold.

During the Rabin administration, Kever Rochel was slated to fall under full Arab civil and military control. In response to this, Knesset Member Chanan Porat decided to speak with Rabin hoping to change his mind. As Porat was walking to Rabin's office, Rabbi Menachem Porush who was the head of Agudah at the time asked to join in the meeting.

Many years earlier, right after the Six-Day War, when we regained access to Kever Rochel Rabbi Porush had been one of the first to arrive there. He came with R' Aryeh Levin and Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz. He marked the spot with a piece of cardboard that said: 'Here is the Kever of Rochel'. That was when R' Chaim Shmuelevitz famously cried "Mama, Hashem told you to stop crying – but I say Keep on crying for your children."

Several decades later, the two members of Knesset made strong arguments to preserve Jewish presence at Kever Rochel. Rabin was not convinced. Then Rabin noticed that Menachem Porush was crying. Porush held Rabin's hands and with tears streaming down his face, said: 'Yitzchak, it's Mamma Rochel, Mamma Rochel.' At that moment Rabin's heart opened, and he altered the map so that Rochel's Tomb would remain in Jewish hands!"



Akeidas Yitzchok

When Avraham Avinu lived in Ur Kasdim, Nimrod threatened Avraham that if he didn't bow to idols, he would be thrown into a fiery furnace. Avraham passed this test and chose the furnace over bowing down to idols. This story, while very well-known, isn't explicitly written in the Torah, and according to the Rambam, this test doesn't count as one of Avraham's ten major tests.



We wonder, why is that? It sure seems like a very difficult test! We also wonder why *akeidas* Yitzchak is considered Avraham's test and not Yitzchak's. As the Torah says (22:1), **והאלקים נסה את אברהם**, "Hashem tested Avraham." - Avraham was tested, not Yitzchak, although it was Yitzchak's life that was on the line.

The Shem Mishmuel answers that it was easy for the holy avos to be moser nefesh for Hashem because their emunah was on a very high level. Ur Kasdim isn't counted among Avraham Avinu's ten tests because, of course, Avraham preferred to give up his life for the sake of Hashem Echad. Akeidas Yitzchak was also an easy test for Yitzchak Avinu.

However, at the time of the akeidah, Hashem took away Avraham Avinu's clarity in emunah. He was plagued with questions and contradictions. That was Avraham's test.

The Yesod HaAvodah writes, "A human mouth cannot express the high levels that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov attained. There isn't a man in the world who can comprehend it. Even malachim cannot grasp their greatness. Nevertheless, they only passed the test of the akeidah thanks to their temimus and Emunah peshutah." This is because at that time, Hashem took away their madreigos. The only way to pass the test was with emunah peshutah.

The Torah writes here **וירא את המקום מרחוק**. The pasuk uses the word **מרחוק**, "from a distance." What did Avraham do? Avraham distanced this question from his mind so that he could do Hashem's will with *emunah peshutah*.

We now go to the **Avodas Yisrael *zt'l***, who explains the words **וירא את המקום מרחוק** as follows:

"When Hakadosh Baruch tests a person, Hashem conceals Himself and takes away the person's perception of Hashem that he had previously. This is because if a person has clarity in emunah (as he had before the test), it won't be a test at all.

When one is aware that he is standing before the great and awesome King and knows that Hashem is looking at him, of course, he won't rebel against Hashem.

A test occurs when one loses his clarity in emunah. Therefore, we can assume that when Hashem tested Avraham and said **קח נא את בנך *'Please take your son…*** Hashem took away Avraham's clarity in emunah deveikus in Hashem. The test was whether he would maintain his righteousness even then. Even so, **וילכו שניהם יחדו** , Avraham and Yitzchak went together to do Hashem's will with love and emunah peshutah."

So, how did Avraham pass the test? The Yesod HaAvodah explains that "Avraham passed the test only with the power of his *temimus* and *emunah peshutah*." Avraham lost his deep perception and

deveikus at that time. He was like a simple person who believed in Hashem.

With this emunah, he passed his tests. Sure, he had questions, but he knew this was Hashem's will, and he happily obliged.

Reb Mendel of Vitebsk *zt'l* explains that all ten tests that Avraham Avinu's passed were similar to the akeidah in that Avraham could have asked questions, but with Emunah peshutah he passed them all.

We are also confronted with tests like the trials that Avraham Avinu endured. Hashem's divine providence is often concealed. We don't understand why good people suffer, or why our tefillos aren't immediately answered, and so on. If we ask questions, we fail the test.

The counsel is **המקום מרחוק** ; keep the questions far away from you and trust in Hashem with Emunah peshutah that everything happens precisely as it is meant to.



Akeidas Yitzchok

The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* was in the beis medresh of the **Magid of Mezritz *zt'l*** *and* heard three people discussing the *akeidah*.

"What is so special about this test? Wouldn't every yid sacrifice their child if Hashem spoke to them and told them to do so?"

One answered that it's true that every Yid would do the same, but that's because Yidden are descendants of Avraham Avinu, and they inherited Avraham's devotion to Hashem. But Avraham was the son of Terach. He didn't have the genes from his ancestors to draw upon.

He had to reach this level on his own. That's the reason the *akeidah* was a very difficult test for Avraham.

Another person said that he isn't fully satisfied with that answer because when one is commanded directly by Hashem to do an *akeidah*, he would undoubtedly do so, even without the influence of his parents and ancestors. "In my opinion, the greatness of the *akeidah* is that Avraham performed it immediately, and he didn't push it off for another time. When Hashem told Avraham to perform the *akeidah*, Hashem didn't specify *when* he should do it. Technically, Avraham could have waited several years before bringing Yitzchak as a *korban*. But because of Avraham's great love for Hashem, he didn't wait — and that's the greatness of his deed."

Yet a third person was not satisfied with that answer either because every Yid would also go immediately to do Hashem's will if they received this message directly from Hashem. "In my opinion, the greatness of Avraham is when the *malach* came and instructed Avraham not to sacrifice Yitzchak. At that moment, Avraham wasn't any happier than when Hashem told him to **והעלהו לעולה**, to sacrifice Yitzhak. This is the aspect of the *akeidah* that is so unique."

The Baal HaTanya commented that they each spoke in accordance to the level they were on.

18:33 וַיֵּלֶךְ ה׳ כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלָּה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לִמְקֹמוֹ

Even after Avraham was told that there were not even ten righteous people in Sodom in whose merit the city would be spared, he "returned to his place," and continued to search for people whose deeds might qualify them as such.

One must therefore never cease to look for good in one's fellow man. **(Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev)**

Running to do a Mitzva

The Pasuk says **וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם** 18:1. The next Pasuk says **וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל**. Why is **פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל** repeated? We already know that Avraham Avinu was **פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל**?



Hashem came to Avrohom to be **מבקר חולה** when His visit was interrupted by 3 men appearing at Avrohom's tent.

The Gemarah says that the Mitzva of **הכנסת אורחים** is a more important Mitzva than to be **מקבל פני שכינה**. A person going to do a Mitzva should run, but what if you are leaving one mitzva to go to another one?

It depends on which mitzva is more important. So, since the mitzva of **הכנסת אורחים** is more important, therefore the Pasuk says **וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם** - where from? - Right from **מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל**

First Worrying About a Human Being

אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אַל־נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ ***If only I have found favour in your eyes, please do not pass on from beside your servant***. (18:3)

Chazal (Shabbos 127A) learn from this pasuk that welcoming guests is even greater than welcoming "the face of the Shechinah." We learn this lesson from Avrohom Avinu, but how did he know this?

Sefer M'Zekeinim Esbonen answers that he knew this based on common sense. The Shechinah is not hungry. It can wait. A human being, however, is hungry and must be fed right away.



Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff

וְהִשָּׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ – "...and recline under the tree."

What was so amazing about the Hachnosas Orchim of Avraham Avinu in requesting that his visitors should recline under a tree that it is the source of us having the mitzva of sitting in the Succah? He didnt even do anything or prepare anything?

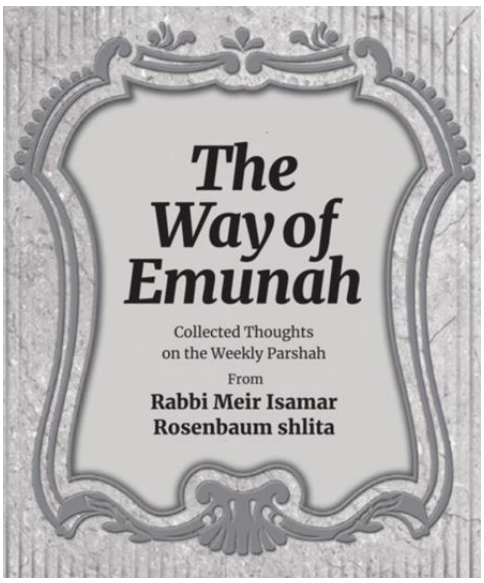
Rabbi Chaim Kaufman explains that when carring out Hachnosos Orchim, the most important thing is to make your guests feel welcome and comfortable! And that is exactly what Avrohom did!

Bikur Cholim - Rabbi Yehoshua Alt



We know of the great Mitzva of Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, whose reward is that one who fulfils, enjoys their fruits in this world but the principle remains intact for him in the next world (Shabbos 127a).

In a letter dated Tuesday, the 22nd of Sivan, 5697 (1937), the **Chazon Ish** wrote to **R' Isser Zalman Meltzer** when R' Isser Zalman was ill that he really wanted to visit him but he overcame his desire in order not to disturb his rest, as he heard that doctors said that there is nothing better than silence (Igros Chazon Ish, 1:114).



Parshas Vayeirah's Greatness Over Rosh Hashanah

My father shlita (quoted in Divrei Torah Kretchnif-Yerushalaim, Vayeirah 5780) related that my grandfather, the **Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a** would say that Shabbos Parshas Vayeirah is even greater than Rosh Hashanah. He explained that the **Zohar Hakadosh** says that on Rosh Hashanah, there is a hisorerus of chesed and rachamim. However, there also is a strengthening of the powers of the satan and his evil forces that make complaints against Klal Yisroel. They cannot stand to see us receiving good influences on Rosh Hashanah, so they rise up to try to stop it. Hashem rules the world with justice and truth; therefore, He sometimes is forced to agree with them and to withhold the goodness that He really wants to provide for us with His traits of chesed and rachamim.

This is only true on Rosh Hashanah, when the good influences openly rain down on the world. When the evil forces see this, they try to stop it.

On Shabbos Parshas Vayeirah, the good influences also descend to the world in the same way that they do on Rosh Hashanah. This is seen from the Seforim Hakedoshim that say that because the Parshah of Vayeirah is read on Rosh Hashanah, it arouses the same power as that day. However, since this is not known to all, the damaging forces are unaware of this secret. Therefore, they do not try to stop it. Accordingly, Shabbos Parshas Vayeirah is a time when we can merit all good things, including Divine chesed and compassion, parnassah and everything else that we need, and no forces stand in our way to attempt to obstruct us from receiving all of this.

Hachnasas Orchim Even Means to Take Out The Garbage



Sefer Maaseh Hatzadikim quotes Sefer Siach Zekeinim as relating the following story:

Rav Eliezer'l once dreamt that a large feast was taking place, with many men sitting and eating. One old man with a white beard was serving everyone. He was running in and out, taking care of every guest at the meal. He brought water to each man to wash his hands. Then he took out the used water.

Rav Eliezer'l thought to himself that it was unfitting for an old Jew with a long beard to take out the dirty water. He thought that this degrading job should be done by a servant.

The old man suddenly ran over to him and said, "I am Avrohom Avinu. You should know that taking out the dirty water that the guests used to wash their hands is part of the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim."

He added, "***My essence is to give and give and give***!"

Only Lifting The Eyes After Ascertaining That The Matter is Permitted

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא ***And he lifted his eyes and he saw***. (18:2)

The Bnei Yissochor zt"l (Sefer Agra D'Kallah) asks what it means that he "lifted his eyes". Why doesn't it simply say that he saw?

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He explains that tzadikim are in full control of their body and senses. This is especially true regarding the sense of sight. This sense can often lead to sin. Therefore, tzadikim are very vigilant to guard their eyes in order to ensure that they don't see anything improper. They master their control of their eyes to the extent that they only look at things that are permitted and unharmful.

Thus, the pasuk says that Avrohom lifted his eyes and saw. He did not merely happen to see anything because Avrohom was in complete control of his eyes, and he only lifted his head to look at something if he was positive that it was permitted.

The Success of The Baby Depends on The Bris Seudah

וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גָּדוֹל בְּיוֹם הִגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק ***And Avrohom made a big feast on the day that he weaned Yitzchok***. (21:8)



Why did Avrohom made this feast?

It is said in the name of tzadikim that the entire future of a baby depends on the seudah of the bris milah. For example, if fish are served at this meal, it is a segulah for the baby to have yiras shmayim. If meat is served, it is a segulah for the baby to grow up to become a talmid chochom.

The same is true regarding a shalom zachor. A man once approached **Rav Aharon of Belz zy"a** together with his young son. The man complained that his son was not succeeding in his learning. He said that it had even taken a lot of hard work before the boy could learn the Aleph Bais and he was having no success at all with Chumash.

The Rebbe asked if the father had made a shalom zachar for his son on the first Friday night after his birth. The man answered that the boy had been born in the middle of the war, when it was impossible to arrange a shalom zachar.

When he heard this, the Rebbe told him to make a shalom zachar that Friday night, and to have men come over to bless the boy as if he were a newborn. The father did so, and, after that, his son did succeed in understanding what he was learning.

The reason Avrohom made a feast for Yitzchok. Yitzchok Avinu was the first person to have a bris milah when he was eight days old. Avrohom wanted to create an everlasting segulah for a person who enters into a bris that he should grow to greatness in Torah and yiras Hashem. Therefore, he made a feast – a seudah to which he invited the gedolei hador – in order to create blessings that will last eternally for all Jews in all generations.



The Yahrzeit of Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz Zy"a

The 22nd of Cheshvon marks the Yahrzeit of Hagaon Hakadosh Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz zy"a, who is often referred to as "Der Mittler Belzer Rov".

Rav Yissochor Dov Rokeach was born in the year 5614. He was the second son of Rav Yehoshua of Belz zy"a and the son-in-law of Rav Yeshaya Meshulim Zusha, the son of Rav Aharon of Chernobyl zy"a. Following his father's petirah in the year 5654, Rav Yissochor Dov was appointed to be Rov of Belz.

He was recognized as the Rabban Shel Yisroel and he fought valiantly to uphold the sanctity of Klal Yisroel. He stood at the helm of "Chaburas Machzikei Hadas" in Galicia. He was nifter on the 22nd of Cheshvon 5687 and laid to rest in Belz.

The Woman's Portion in Hachnasas Orchim

Sefer Sichor Kodesh relates the following story:

When **Rav Yissochor Dov zy"a** was living in Munkatch, there was a shochet in town named Rav Meir Gross zt"l, who was a tremendous machnis orech. He would often make large meals in his home with many guests, especially on Shabbos, yomtov and Chol Hamoed.

One day, R' Meir's wife came to Rav Yissochor Dov and said that she had a complaint against her husband. When Rav Yissochor Dov asked what her complaint was, she answered, "My husband invites many

guests to our home. But the truth is that I am the one who does most of the work. I bake, cook and clean for them. But in Olam Haba, he will get all of the reward for hosting the guests. What will I get from all of this?"

Rav Yissochor Dov replied, "You are being silly. He should be the one asking you for a portion in the reward. If you are doing the cooking and cleaning, he couldn't have guests without you. You certainly will receive a big reward."

Torah Compilations With Yossi

One of the greatest examples of altruism within the whole of Tanach is presented to us at the beginning of Parshat Vayeira. Avraham, who had just had his circumcision, was sitting in pain outside his tent in the heat of the day, looking for strangers. Eventually, he saw three strangers in the distance, and he ran to them.

The Torah tells us how he brought them towards his tent. We are told, וַיְמַהֵר אַבְרָהָם הָאֹהֱלָה אֶל־שָׂרָה - ***Avraham rushed to the tent, to Sarah,*** ***" and he said to her***, מַהֲרִי - ***Quick***!" – ***We've got to get a meal going as soon as possible***. 18:6



It is significant that the term 'מהר' meaning quick is repeated. וימהר – Avraham 'rushed' into the tent, and 'מהרי' – 'quick,' we've got to get going, indicating that sense of urgency.

Avraham easily could have been relaxed at the time. After all, if not for his kindness, these three strangers would not even have known of his existence because it was he who ran after them. If not

for that, they would still be walking along by themselves without anything to eat or drink. So he might well have thought: let them wait!

But that wasn't his attitude. He and Sarah went all out to guarantee that they would not have to wait one moment extra than was necessary in order to have something to eat and to drink.

There is a fascinating question which is asked with regard to the mitzvah of **צדקה** - giving charity. Why don't we make a blessing before this mitzvah? After all, it's a mitzvah like all the other mitzvot of the Torah. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, every time before I gave to charity, I recited a blessing? Wouldn't that show how integral our responsibility to our fellow human beings is, as part of our responsibility to Hashem? - Yet there is no blessing.

Quite a number of answers are given to this question, one of which is given by **Reb Simcha Bunim of P'shischa**, an 18th Century Chassidic master. He said as follows:

Let's say a poor person is standing in front of me at my door begging for food. Before I recite the blessing, I will probably want to wash my hands. I will be reciting Hashem's name, so I will stand up; I will build up sufficient concentration, to have the proper intention; I will recite the blessing, every word with meaning; in the meantime, the poor fellow might collapse and die!

You can't wait when it comes to charity. There is always the element of urgency. That's why there is no blessing. That's something that Avraham and Sarah appreciated when they rushed to help those who were hungry and thirsty.

From them we learn that being kind is not good enough when it is on our own terms. True kindness has empathy at its heart. In this spirit, let us show our kindness by praying together for our soldiers and emergency service personnel who risk their lives to defend and help us, as well as those who need healing, shidduchim, children or

parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual Shabbat.

Young Israel of Midwood by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו ***For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him***. (18:19)

Avrohom merited Hashem's love because of his dedication to commanding his children and hishousehold to follow in his ways of Divine service. However, **Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein** notes that given Avrohom's reputation as an educator par excellence, it is curious that the Torah relates precious little of his actual conversations with his son and spiritual inheritor, Yitzchok.

In fact, the only recorded interactions between them are on the way to the Akeidah, in which the Torah mentions (22:7-8) a total of two lines – a few seemingly trivial words – that Avrohom spoke to Yitzchok, and those were only in response to a discussion initiated by Yitzchok.

וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֶּנִּי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאַיֵּה הַשֶּׂה לְעֹלָה

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹקִים יִרְאֶה־לּוֹ הַשֶּׂה לְעֹלָה בְּנִי וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו

If we are to learn from Avrohom's techniques in giving over our values and priorities to the next generation, shouldn't we be given more examples?

Rav Zilberstein answers that in intentionally limiting the recorded words of Avrohom to his son, the Torah is teaching us a tremendous lesson regarding the education of our children. Many people mistakenly believe that raising children is as simple as constantly lecturing and instructing them what they should and should not do.

The fact that the parents themselves may not follow this advice is believed to be irrelevant, as "Do as I say, not as I do" seems to resolve the apparent contradiction. In reality, of course, nothing could be farther from the truth. Our children are much smarter than we give them credit for, and they see right through our double standards, recognizing that our actions reflect our true beliefs, which they in turn absorb.

The Torah tells us precious little of Avrohom's words to Yitzchok to teach us that this was not Avrohom's primary form of conveying his beliefs. Rather, the most effective form of education came through serving as a personal example of all that he valued and wished to transmit to his son.

A son who sees that his father treasures his daily learning seder and prayer with a minyan, and a daughter who observes that her mother cherishes her commitment to chesed and tznius, will learn these values by osmosis, as this form of instruction is stronger than any words, but it could not be explicitly expressed by the Torah.

Rav Nissan Kaplan of Yeshivas Mir in Yerushalayim adds that of Avrohom's few words to Yitzchok that are recorded in the Torah, two of the words are בְּנִי – ***my son*** – which is an expression of love and endearment.

He explains that this teaches us that in addition to the paramount importance of educating one's children through personal example, it is also essential that each child understands and feels that his parents' messages and teachings are motivated by their caring and love for him. **(Parsha Potpourri- Rabbi Ozer Alport)**

Chinuch Written by D. Fine

וַיְהִי אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הַנַּעַר וַיִּגְדָּל וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיְהִי רֹבֶה קַשָּׁת - *And G-d was with the lad, and he grew, and he dwelt in the desert, and he became an archer.*



The pasuk says that after Yishmael was sent away from the home of Avraham Avinu, HaShem personally raised Yishmael (Bereishis 21:20).

What did this child turn out to be – a child that HaShem Himself raised? The pasuk continues and tells us that he became an archer; he shot arrows.

What?!?!

HaShem raises a child, and he only turns out able to shoot arrows? – Today a parent would be kicking himself if that all his chinuch of his children produced. What's the message here?

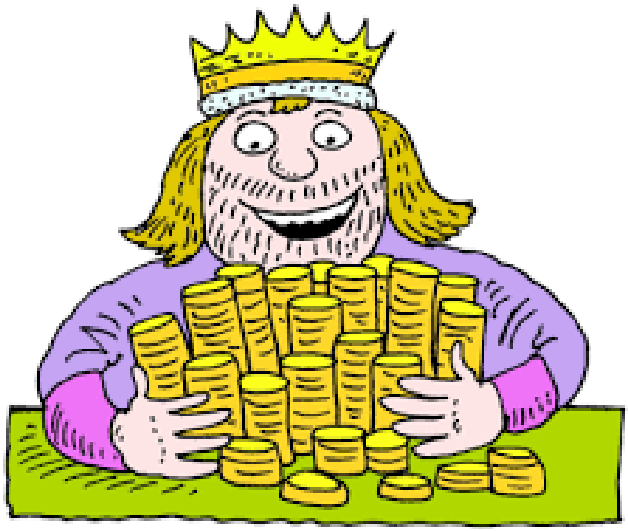
Rav Yitzchak Berkovits answers that the idea of chinuch is, as Shlomo HaMelech writes in Mishlei (22:6) **חֲנֹךְ לַנַּעַר עַל־פִּי דַרְכּוֹ - *'to educate a child according to HIS way'*** – according to the way of the child. That means that education does not mean making the child be the person that you want them to be, but rather the parent is to harness and increase the child's personal talents and potential as much as they can.

In short, the parent teaches the child to reach the best of their potential that they can. But each child will naturally have a different potential and talents to improve. Thus, the potential of Yishmael lay in merely shooting arrows, and so HaShem raised him to be the best archer he could be.

We are not trying to produce clones, we are trying to make each child harness their talents for the good and to be the best that they can.

The Zera Shimshon

כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה... ***to keep the way of Hashem etc. to do charity*** (18:19)



The Mishna says (Avos 6:8), a person should make his Torah study primary because when he passes away none of his gold and silver nor his precious stones accompany him to the next world. Only Torah and good deeds accompany him. This is learned from the passuk written in the book of Tehillim by Dovid the king of the Jewish people (Tehillim 119:72), 'your Torah is better for me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver'.

The Zera Shimshon asks why does the Mishna need the extra wording to inform us who wrote Tehillim? Additionally, even if it would not have been written by Dovid Melech Yisroel, the same lesson would have been learned from the passuk?

The Zera Shimshon explains that the Mishna wanted to impart a very important lesson and intentionally added the fact that is was taught by Dovid Hamelech who wrote Tehillim.

When a person has money he is able to do a lot of good, both in terms of helping out other people and as well, advancing his own service of Hashem. This is seen from the words that Hashem said to have Avraham Avinu in the aforementioned passuk. In fact, it enables someone to acquire a greater knowledge and ability to fulfil the

Torah. On the other hand, someone who is poor cannot give charity in a way that is meaningful to others and as well, due to his perpetual needs for money for his basic necessities his Torah is not complete.

When someone makes a statement about something it is a lot more powerful when the one making the statement is actually an authority to be making that specific statement. It is for this reason the Medrash says (Koheles Rabba 3:11), that when Shlomo Hamelech says that all the pursuits that people run after in this world are worthless, that actually means something, and people are more willing to accept such a statement from someone who ruled over the entire world.

When the Mishna wants to impart a lesson about how valueless money is versus the study of Torah it wants to do so in the most powerful way. Therefore, the Mishna made a point of mentioning the source for passuk rather than simply quoting it.

Being the king, Dovid Hamelech knew the power of money and how much good it could do more than anybody else. Nevertheless, he still said that the Torah is greater and more precious than thousands a piece of gold and silver period.

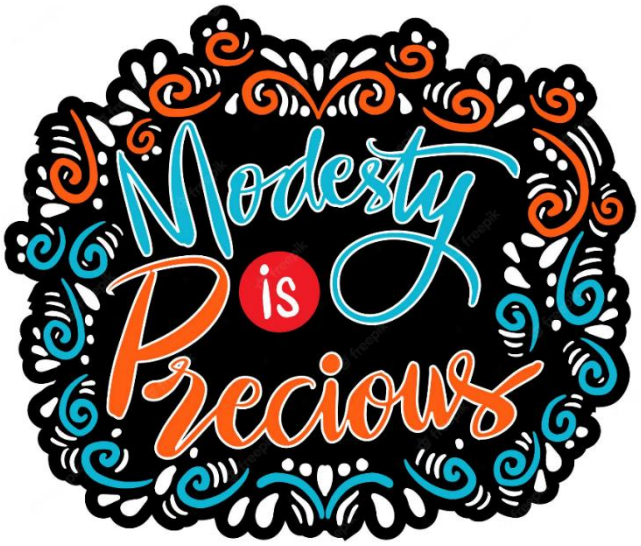


The Zera Shimshon

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל (בראשית יח/ט)

And they (the Angels) said to him (Avraham), "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, Behold! She is in the tent."

The Gemorro in Babba Metzia (87A) explains that this dialogue was written to make known that Sarah was a modest woman.



Zera Shimshon asks why did the Torah find it so important to make special mention that Sarah was modest? Since it is well known that she was tremendously righteous, obviously she was also modest! Besides this, Avraham Avinu already realized that she was modest before they went down to Mitzrayim right after they entered Eretz Yisroel! (Rashi mentions this on the possuk, "I know that you are a very beautiful lady...")

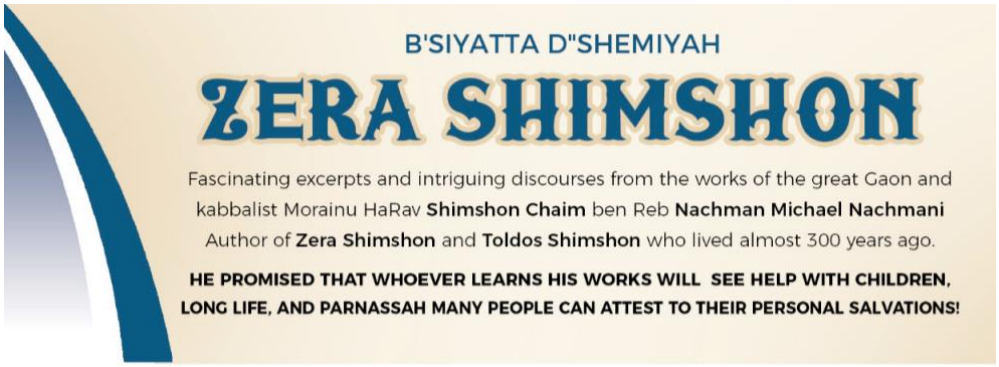
He answers that the Torah isn't telling us that she was simply modest. This was obvious. Rather the Torah is telling us that she reached a remarkably high level of modesty. However the second question still remains, Avraham already knew this.

He answers in light of the Gemorro in Shabbos (53B), "The Rabbis learnt: A certain man was once married to a woman with a stumped hand, yet he did not notice it until the day of her death. Rebbi Yosef observed: How modest this woman must have been, that her husband did not know her! R. Chiya replied, for her it was natural; but how modest was this man, that he did not scrutinize his wife!"

From here we see that a wife is not the only one who creates modesty between a couple. It could be the result of the combined effort of the husband and his wife.

According to this, the fact that Avraham didn't recognize her beauty all the years of their marriage is not a proof that Sarah was exceptionally modest. It could be that the modesty in their home was the outcome of both of their modest behaviour. If this is true, however, then what exceptional modesty did Sarah Imainu display by staying in the tent?

Zera Shimshon answers that the main reason for a woman not to mingle with men is to make it easier for men, who have a strong yetzer horra, not to sin. Sarah and Avraham knew that their guests were really angles and that therefore that they have no yetzer horra (as Rashi points out on the possuk (18/5), "And I (Avraham) will take (for you) a little bread and sustain your hearts..."). Since even with beings who have no yetzer horra Sarah acted modestly and stayed in the tent to be away from them, we see that she was intrinsically very modest!



וַיֵּרָ֣א אֵלָ֔יו ה׳ בְּאֵלֹנֵ֖י מַמְרֵ֑א וְה֣וּא יֹשֵׁ֔ב פֶּ֥תַח־הָאֹ֖הֶל כְּחֹ֥ם הַיּֽוֹם ***Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." (18:1)***

Rashi explains that Hashem appeared to Avraham Avinu to visit the sick and heal him. The Gemara says, in the name of Rami Bar Chama, that it was the third day since Avraham Avinu's Bris Mila.

The Zera Shimshon asks, in the name of the Meforshim, how did Rami Bar Chama know that it was the third day since Avraham Avinu's Bris Mila?

The Zera Shimshon answers by first asking why Hashem only visited Avraham Avinu to heal him, didn't all those in Avraham Avinu's household have Brisim also? If so, why don't we find anywhere in the words of Chazal that Hashem appeared in order to heal them as well?



The Zera Shimshon explains that the Gemara (Baba Kama 16b) says in the name of R' Shimon Bar Yochai that Avraham Avinu had a gem around his neck that when sick people would look at it, they would be healed. This is why the other people in Avraham Avinu's house did not need to be healed by Hashem since they were healed by looking at the stone around Avraham Avinu's neck.

The Amudeha Shiva asks that if Avrahan Avinu had such a stone, why didn't he look at it to heal himself? The Zera Shimshon answers that all the occupants of Avraham Avnu's house were healed within the first or second day of their Bris Mila by looking at the stone, however, Avraham Avinu did not want to look at the stone to heal himself because he wanted to merit more reward for his Mitzva. As well, since this was one of his ten tests, if he would heal himself, it would not be considered a test. Furthermore, people would claim why shouldn't Avraham Avinu listen to Hashem, knowing that he would be healed right away. Therefore, he instead allowed himself to heal naturally to show the world that he was ready to accept the pain with love and joy.

In reward, Hashem appeared to heal him. However, Hashem only appeared to heal Avraham Avinu on the third day since had He appeared before then, people would have thought that Avraham Avinu had healed himself by looking at his stone, since he was not interested in the pain of the Bris Mila. By the third day, it would be clear that although Avraham Avinu was busy giving Brisim to everyone in his house, by day three, he would have for sure had time to look at his stone and heal himself.

In fact, the very fact that Avraham Avinu was sitting outside in the sun was to heal himself naturally. This is why Hashem only appeared

to heal Avraham Avinu on day three, to allow time for people to see that Avraham Avinu did not heal himself but rather accepted the pain that came with his test.

The Zera Shimshon - Bris Milah



The Medrash in the beginning of the parsha comments that after Avraham Ovina circumcised himself, he said that many gentiles will come to attach themselves to this sign of the covenant (between Avraham and his descendants and Hashem) and convert.

Zera Shimshon asks how can we understand Avraham's reasoning? Before Hashem commanded Avraham to make milah, a person could convert painlessly, just keeping Hashem's commandments. After Hashem gave the mitzvo of mila a person has to suffer the pain of circumcision to convert. Why then did Avraham feel that there would be more converts now?

Zera Shimshon answers that Avraham always felt uncomfortable about his sinful beginning. (According to Rebbi Yochannon Avraham only recognized his Creator at the age of 48!) He was afraid that Hashem didn't look at him like a total tzaddik but rather slightly blemished. He felt that Hashem looked at him like a dirty garment that even after it gets dry cleaned, it doesn't look completely new but small remnants of dirt always remain on it.

This changed, however after he circumcised himself. In the parsha we see that Hashem sent three types of remedies to heal Avraham after his milah. Firstly, "the heat of the day". the Medrash explains the reason that Avraham sat near the entrance of his tent "in the

heat of the day" is because heat helps to heal. Secondly, Hashem sent the Malach Rephael to heal him. And thirdly, Hashem payed Avraham a bikkur cholim visit.

Chazal teach us that the mitzvo of bikur chollim helps a sick person recuperate. Why did Avraham need all three remedies?

Zera Shimshon explains that the heat of the day was simply to heal the physical wound of the mila. The Malach Rephael added to Avraham's recovery. Avraham didn't only get back his strength like he was right before he did the milah. Rather, he became to make him strong like when he was much younger. This was in order that he would be able to have more children. Hashem's visit was in order that Avraham wouldn't only recover physically be he become completely clean from all of his sins!

It says in the Gemorro Nedarim (41a) Reb Alexandri said in the name of Reb Chiya bar Abba, "A sick person doesn't recuperate until he has been forgiven for all of his sins...." Rav Hammuna said "He returns to his youth..." Rashi explains, "He returns to his youth: like a young child who never sinned."

In other words, in the merit of milah, Avraham not only merited to become stronger than he was prior to the milah but he also merited to be completely and totally cleansed of any remnants of sin that tainted his soul. After realizing the huge benefit of mila we can now understand why Avraham felt that the mitzvo of mila would cause more people to convert.

The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

How the Akaidas Yitzchok Demonstrated Avraham Avinu's Fear of Hashem

וַיֹּאמֶר אַל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנַּעַר וְאַל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אַתָּה וְלֹא חָשַׂכְתָּ אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי ***And He said; 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, nor do anything to him, for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me' (22:12)***



This Passuk is very difficult to understand. First of all it would seem to imply that until this moment it wasn't so clear that Avraham Avinu was G-d-fearing. That is very hard to comprehend, as we know that before withstanding this last and ultimate tenth test of the Akaidas Yitzchok, Avraham Avinu was tested with another nine very difficult tests and withstood them all, so how can it be that the other nine tests that he withstood didn't prove that he was a G-d-fearing man?

There is also some difficulty in understanding the choice of words that Hashem used when conveying this message to Avraham Avinu. Hashem told Avraham Avinu; '***for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man***'. Why would Hashem stress the fact that Avraham withstood this test out of Fear of Hashem, and not out of his Love to Him?

Hashem continued by saying; '***since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me***'. What is the point in emphasizing '***from Me***', isn't that obvious? After all, Hashem told Avraham Avinu to slaughter his son Yitzchok for Him, and Avraham was about to do so, when at the last moment Hashem prevented him from following through. Wouldn't it be self-understood that when Hashem would then go ahead and tell Avraham that 'you have not withheld your son',

He obviously means that 'you have not withheld your son from Me'? • • •

We all know that Avraham Avinu represented and epitomized the characteristic trait of Chesed; Kindness. His entire being and his whole life was engaged and occupied with doing acts of kindness, charity and helpfulness to anyone who even happened to pass his way. This attribute that Avraham Avinu possessed was well-known to all who came in contact with him.

When Avraham withstood the first nine tests, one was able to shrug them off by saying, that it wasn't Avraham's fear of Hashem that was behind his withstanding the tests, rather it was his good and kind nature and love to every being, that held him back from doing anything against the wishes of Hashem, just as it held him back from going against the wishes of any human being.

That is why Hashem tested Avraham Avinu with the tenth test; to slaughter his son Yitzchok. This was an act which characterized the essence of cruelty, evilness and inhumaneness, which was definitely a direct conflict and contradiction to Avraham Avinu's kind nature. When, nevertheless, Avraham showed that he was willing to accept and abide Hashem's command, and was about to slaughter his only and beloved son Yitzchok, this showed in certainty that Avraham Avinu was a person who followed Hashem's every command, not because of his kind-natured attitude and love to every being, rather out of his fear of Hashem. • • •

We can now understand this Passuk with clarity. Because, up until the Akaidas Yitzchok one could have said that Avraham withstood all the tests, not for Hashem and out of fear of Hashem, rather out of his good-natured personality and natural love for all. Only when Avraham Avinu withstood this final test of Akaidas Yitzchok, was Hashem able to proclaim and acknowledge that '***now I know*** that you are a ***G-d-fearing man***, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, ***from Me***.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

Parshas Vayera is replete with timeless lessons for life that we can glean from Avraham Avinu's legacy. The following is one such lesson.

Avraham pleaded with Hashem to spare Sodom from destruction. Many supplications were extended - only for Avraham to receive a flat-out NO! A regular person would feel dejected and down - not capable of continuing life as usual. Avraham, on the other hand, took this rebuttal in stride, writes the **Izhbitza Rav**, as if nothing was amiss. Only his staunch conviction in following the ratzon Hashem enabled him to do so. Avraham Avinu had no personal agenda.



Another gem we find at the end of the parsha is the nisayon of Akeidas Yitzchok. On the posuk וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם־ה׳ 22:16, the Medrash says that when Avraham asked Hashem not to test him again, Hashem was maskim. However, many Rishonim consider kevuras Sarah as yet another test.

Another difficulty arises when we study Rabbeinu Yonah on Avos. He says the hardest of the nisyonos was that of the Akeida. Yet, he himself maintains that the death of Sarah was also a test. If the Akeida was passed with flying colours, what was the point of an additional "easier" test afterward?

I saw a machshava from **R' Shimshon Pinkus zt"l**, that explains both difficulties. He says that misas/kevuras Sarah was part and parcel of the nisayon of the Akeida. Part of passing a test is the ability to

forge on with life's sojourn, weathering its bumps and potholes with renewed vigour. Had Avraham become despondent after his "wife's petira portion" of the Akeida nisayon, it would have ch"v reflected failure on the entire Akeida. The way he handled this final challenge, was a reflection of the entire nisayon of the Akeida.

We should all learn from Avraham Avinu's inner reservoir of strength and the manner in which he passed all his tests, thereby embracing our challenges as vehicles through which to grow closer to Hashem.

Saying of The Week with Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"Hashem has the remedy for every issue right where we are, so there is no need to travel to find our salvation."

Hagar left Yishmael when he was about to die of thirst. Hashem tells Hagar (Bereishis 21:17): **כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם** *"**I heard Yishmael's prayer 'where he is**.'"*

Rashi learns "***where he is***" in terms of spiritual level, meaning that at that point he was a Tzaddik.

The Ramban, however, understands it to mean that Hashem told her she will not have to travel at all to a well to give Yishmael to drink. Hashem made a well right where he was laying! Hashem's solution to everything is immediate and present at whatever location we are in. We just have to trust in Him and all will be fine.

Parsha Pages



The *shalsheles* is an unusual note. It goes up and down, up and down, as if unable to move forward to the next note. It was the 16th century commentator Rabbi Joseph Ibn Caspi (in his commentary to Bereishis 19:16) who best understood what it was meant to convey, namely a psychological state of uncertainty and indecision.

The graphic notation of the *shalsheles* itself looks like a streak of lightning, a zigzag movement, a mark that goes repeatedly backwards and forwards. It conveys frozen motion - in which the agent is torn by inner conflict.

The *shalsheles* is the music of ambivalence. As Rabbi Yonothan Sacks explains in an essay, the Torah does not have a word for ambivalence. It does, however, have a tune for it. This is the rare note known as the *shalsheles*.

It appears three times in Bereishis, each time at a moment of crisis for the individual concerned. In each case it signifies an existential crisis. The agent is called on to make a choice, one on which his whole future will depend, but he finds that he cannot. He is torn between two alternatives, both of which exercise a powerful sway on him. He must resolve the dilemma one way or another, but either way will involve letting go of deeply felt temptations or deeply held aspirations. It is a moment of high psychological drama. Understanding one's deepest conflict reveals the essence of their personality.

- וַיִּתְמַהְמָּהּ - Lot conflicted over leaving his wealth behind to destruction in S'dom (B'reishis 19:16, see Rashi) •

- וַיִּאְמַרְ - Eli'ezer conflicted over the search for a wife for Yitzchak in Charan (B'reishis 24:12) when he actually wished for his own daughter to be that wife (Rashi B'reishis 24:39) •
- וַיְמָאֵן - Yosef conflicted over his desire for Mrs. Potifar (B'reishis 39:8, second Rashi on 39:11, and on B'reishis 49:24-26) •
- וַיִּשְׁחָטְ - Moshe conflicted over never again being able to function as 'kohen' and thus never bringing any future korbanos •

Parshah Thoughts by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

הלא מצער היא : והלא עונותיה מועטין, ויכול אתה להניחה



Rashi explains that the city of Sedom was destroyed because of its decadence. However, the city of Tzo'ar was one year younger than Sedom, and therefore hadn't yet gotten bad enough to warrant destruction (19:20).

Rav Itzele Blazer observes that from here we can see the difference that just one year can make between becoming evil enough to deserve decimation or surviving. If a year is long enough for a city to become evil, then by the same token, a year can be an amazing amount of time for positive growth.

"It is no challenge to die like a Jew; the true challenge is to live like a Jew." ~~ The Chofetz Chaim

Chesed

Avraham Avinu was a Master of Chesed, kindness, because his focus was the other person and not himself. What he desired most of all was to be good to others. This is a true emulation of Hashem who is the Master Maitiv, one who is good to others. That's because Hashem is only a giver, for we cannot give Him anything. The more we become givers and the less we become takers, the more we act like Hashem, just like our father, Avraham. In order to do that, when we look at others, we should see THEM, not just how they exist in relation to US. That means taking a second look and thinking about what's good for them.



Once, when the **Satmar Rebbe z"l** was leaving the hospital after an illness, a very pushy fellow "insisted" on helping him put on his coat. The Rav told him he didn't need any help, even though he really did. When he was later asked why, he told the questioner: "I didn't let him help me because that man wasn't interested in helping a weak old Jew. Instead, he was focused on his mitzvah of Bikur Cholim, and I am not simply a "cheifetz shel mitzvah."

[One day, a boy arrived late to school. The teacher asked him where he'd been. He apologized, explaining that as a boy scout, he was supposed to start each day with a good deed. Therefore, on his way to school, he stopped to help an old woman cross the street. The teacher replied, "That's very nice of you, but you're forty-five minutes late. Why did it take so long?"

"Oh," responded the boy. "She didn't want to go!"]

Akeidas Yitzchok - Dayan M.D. Elzas

Hashem told Avrohom Avinu to sacrifice Yitzchok. - There are two questions here. Why is it called the 'Akeida which means the binding down of Yitzchok, when the main thing was the sacrifice?' It should surely be called 'Olas Yitzchok or Korban Yitzchok?'

The second question is that the Pasuk says **וַיַּעֲקֹד֙ אֶת־יִצְחָ֣ק בְּנ֔וֹ וַיָּ֥שֶׂם אֹת֖וֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּ֑חַ** – "***He bound Yitzchok his son, and then he placed him on the altar***." (22:9) Whereas on Rosh Hashana in Musaf Shemona Esrei, we say quite the opposite - **וְתֵרָאֶה לְפָנֶיךָ עֲקֵדָה שֶׁעָקַד אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גַּבֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ** – "***And let there appear before you the Akeida when Avraham Avinu bound Yitzchok his son whilst on top of the altar***." Why is there this obvious difference?



HaRav Dovid Cohen, the revered Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chevron, explains, that Chazal say that Avrohom actually bound Yitzchok twice. Once before he put Yitzchok on the altar, so that it should be a proper korban, and a second time when Yitzchok was already on the Mizbeach, as he was worried that he might move at the time of shechitah, making it a pasul korban.

We learn from this, that when we do a mitzva, we should not do it in such a way to just be yotze, but we should carry out a mitzva with all the extra hiddurim and stringencies to ensure that we really want to do the mitzva in the best way possible.

This is why we mention the extra binding on Rosh Hashana, so that it should be as a special zechus for us.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אַחֲרֵי בְלֹתִי הָיְתָה־לִּי עֶדְנָה וַאדֹנִי זָקֵן 18:12



When Sorah heard the angels herald that she would bear a son at her advanced age, she responded by laughing.

Rabbi Dan Lifshitz points out that the theme of laughter recurs too many times in Parshas Vayeira to be coincidental. After the angels' blessing moved Sorah to laugh, Lot's sons-in-law laughed when he warned them about Sodom's imminent destruction (19:14). Sorah's decision to send Yishmael and Hagar away was cemented when she observed him (21:9) **מצחק** –mocking. When Yitzchok was born, his father gave him a name (21:3) that means, "He will laugh," and his mother remarked (21:6), "Hashem has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me."

Rav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch explains that it is appropriate that Parshas Vayeira, which discusses the foundations of the Jewish nation, is replete with the concept of laughter, for the very existence of the Jewish people is absurd from a historical perspective. The notion that a small nation should be exiled from its homeland and dispersed around the earth not once but twice, the second time for more than 1900 years, and manage to maintain its religious identity and traditions defies logic.

Yet as preposterous as it seemed to Sorah's neighbours for a 90-year-old woman and her 100-year-old husband to give birth to a child and live long enough to raise him and educate him in their monotheistic religion and ethical worldview, this was precisely Hashem's plan for His chosen nation.

Our continued existence and prosperity in the face of all odds is the greatest proof of the nonsensical nature of Jewish history, and ultimately, we will have the last laugh, for Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehillim (126:2) that when the time of our redemption comes and Hashem returns us to Eretz Yisroel, **אז ימלא שחוק פינו** –then our mouth will be filled with laughter, may it be speedily in our days.

Parsha Points to Ponder



Did Avrohom sleep the night before setting out for the Akeidah (22:3)? (Har Tzvi, Nesivos Rabboseinu, Ayeles HaShachar 20:8)

As Avrohom prepared to set out for the Akeidah, the Torah records (22:3) **וישכם אברהם בבוקר**. **The Brisker Rav** maintains that the word **וישכם** means "to wake up early" and can only be used if the person was sleeping during the night.

He explains that this reveals the greatness of Avrohom, who was calm enough to be able to sleep the night before setting out for the Akeidah, which he viewed as just another one of Hashem's commandments to perform.

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank and Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman disagree and point out other places where the word **וישכם** is used even though it is clear from the context that the person did not sleep the night before. For example, the verse records (Shmuel 1 15:11) that Shmuel davened to Hashem the entire night, and the next verse states

וישכם שמואל לקראת שאול בבקר – Shmuel rose early in the morning to greet Shaul – even though he clearly did not sleep the previous evening.

Additionally, the Mishnah in Sanhedrin (40a) teaches that in certain cases, the judges on the Beis Din should remain awake discussing a case throughout the night, and in the morning, **משכימין ובאין לבית דין** –they should get up early and come to the Beis Din, even though they were awake the entire night.

As such, Rav Frank and Rav Shteinman argue that there is no textual proof whether Avrohom slept the night before he set out for the Akeidah.

The Paradigm of Avraham Avinu– R' Yissochor Frand

I would like to share a story that is related to Parshas Vayera. In an article written by a first lieutenant in the Israeli Army who participated in the "Second Lebanon War" (July-August 2006), he writes:

"I remember the two weeks of near face to face combat, the confused orders, and insufficient combat gear; the intense hunger, physical and emotional exhaustion, and toughest of all the self-imposed silence and disassociation without our surroundings." (If you recall, this war was not very well planned. Soldiers were sent into battle without the right equipment. They did not even have proper food rations. By most accounts, it was a "failure" for the Israeli army.) "Our attitude was 'now is not the right time to complain but when it is all over – when the air raid sirens stop and we are out of these fatigues – we can talk and the truth will be known.'

When the news came that we were receiving a day off, our hearts soared. We suffered so much stress and hardship; where would we go? How should we take full advantage of this gift?

Rumours began to circulate that we were going to some school in Migdal HaEmek. 'This must be a joke', I thought. 'Who ordered 10 buses to bring us to some Yeshiva with some Rabbi who is just going to try to brainwash us?'"



"Tired and emotionally drained, we got off the buses and stood face to face with an old-world looking Jew complete with white beard, side-locks, and a long jacket." (This Rabbi happens to be **Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Grossman**, also known as the 'Disco Rabbi'; Chief Rabbi of Migdal HaEmek, founder and dean of Migdal Ohr educational institutions and a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council of Israel.)

"Here it comes, I thought, the push to put on Tefillin or to say some prayers. Some day off!" "Boys", the Rabbi thundered, "I suggest the first thing you do is take a dip in the pool to freshen up. In the meantime we will make you something to eat." (How did this story occur? The rumour got around in Northern Israel that the army needed a place for 600 soldiers to have a little R&R (Rest and Relaxation). Rabbi Grossman heard about this, he said "What's the problem – 600 soldiers? They should all come here, of course we have room!" This is how this battalion came to Yeshivas Migdal HaEmek.)

"With the echoes of war from the battlefield still in our ears, it seemed like a mirage or a hallucination. Soft music came from everywhere and flowing water and greenery surrounded us. Within minutes the tables were set with cold refreshing watermelon, cakes, beverages, cheeses, fresh vegetables, and soft rolls. Then we heard,

'Out of the pool! Get dressed and eat something!' We saw piles of new undergarments, 600 new undershirts, and underwear appeared as if out of nowhere, laid out on tables for our choosing."

"Rabbi Grossman sat with us and laughed. Have a good time boys. Have a great time. This evening I will put on the most spectacular performance that you have ever seen." (Here is the line the soldier wrote that I want to emphasize.) "I am not a religious person by any means but I cannot help but envision the first Jew, Avraham, standing and personally serving his guests, perfectly naturally without the slightest hint of condescension. He respected each individual and cared for his needs. Like Avraham, Rabbi Grossman saw this as an obvious act of kindness, a mission of a mitzvah that had fallen into his hands."

"As the evening continued, we learned that this is the essence of who Rabbi Grossman is and what he is all about. He said, 'Tell me friends; I heard that you are lacking different pieces of equipment. Do me a favour. Here's paper and pencil. Just write down everything you are missing and leave the paper on the table.'

That night we enjoyed the entertainment and afterwards slept in soft beds in air-conditioned rooms. Like a fairy tale, we woke the next morning and could not believe our eyes. Mounds of gear that we desperately needed had arrived at Migdal Ohr. A small note from Rabbi Grossman said, 'To my dear friends, with all my heart.'

Rabbi Grossman personally and immediately raised over $60,000 worth of equipment from friends – literally overnight. The essential equipment included ceramic bulletproof vests, helmets, canteens, knee pads, backwater packs, night vision goggles, toothbrushes, socks, and more."

As this soldier mentions, this story is in the great tradition of Avraham Avinu. Avraham Avinu suspected that the strangers before him who came to his door were idol worshippers. Rashi says on the

words "wash your feet" [Bereishis 18:4] "wash off your feet from the dust of Avodah Zarah". Yet he served them like kings. Through such activities, Avaham and Sarah were able to accumulate "the souls you made in Charan" [Bereishis 12:5], bringing thousands of people "under the wings of the Divine Presence".

It is in that tradition that people like Rabbi Grossman can make indelible impressions on even the most hardened of Israeli soldiers, who as they write further in this article "had never seen a pair of tzitsis in their entire lives". We must try to emulate this paradigm, to accept people for what they are without being judgmental or condescending. They are Jews. We need to help them and ask questions later.



Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah



I want to talk to you about something very important. It is a very important lesson in life.

Many of you know that I am a mohel. When the sandek, who is often the grandfather, has finished his mitzva, I always tell him, "You should live to see the babies Bar Mitzva and wedding." And I always ***insist*** that he says 'Amein.'

The Pasuk (18:15) says: **וַתְּכַחֵשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צָחַקְתִּי כִּי יָרֵאָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא כִּי צָחָקְתְּ** - The malachim told Avrohom Avinu that his wife Sarah was going to have a child. Sarah laughed; she couldn't believe it.

Why did she not believe that it could happen?

Avrohom knew that they were malachim, so he believed it. But Sarah either didn't see them, or that she saw them, but didn't realise that they were malachim. So she could not believe that it was going to happen.

The Ramban says that Avrohom told Sarah that when the malachim/people (even if they were simple people in her mind) brought this news, she should have replied, **אמן כן יעשה ה'.**

We learn from here, that when someone gives you a bracha, even if it is a simple person, you must always say 'Amein.' This shows that we have Emunah in Hashem that He can do anything.

Don't Pass The Salt – Rabbi YY Jacobson



We have all made mistakes – they trigger us. We all have things that happened to us. Some of us have had difficult childhoods. It's part of our story, and it's salty.

If the salt is an accompaniment to my dish, it gives me perspective. It gives me clarity. It adds flavour to my life. It tells me who I am, what I have to deal with and what my mission is.

It's our challenges and our struggles that make our life not bland. We can't just cruise through life and remain bland tasteless people. When my whole life becomes about: I'm abused. I'm bitter. I'm horrible. Everything is bad. Look at what type of life I had. And look at this mistake and that mistake. I'm the worst of the worst. By nature and by nurture. My mother and my father. My teachers and my upbringing. My shviger and my shver - and me.

What's left? A pillar of salt!

I call everybody else salty – because I'm salty. And therefore, whatever I taste is bitter. Whatever I touch is bitter. Whatever I see is bitter – How could it not be? It's all being filtered through a pillar of salt. I remain stuck.

The sin of always thinking that I'm a mistake. The sin of always thinking that I'm a sinner, that I'm hopeless. All there is – is salt!

How do we fix this? How do we repair this?

The wife of Lot, her soul was not reincarnated. Where is her soul? Her soul is a pillar of salt. And her tikkun is **על כל קרבנך תקריב מלח** – *put salt on the sacrifices.* What does this mean?

It means that salt is beneficial so long as it accompanies my offering to Hashem.

Korban comes from the word kiruv – closeness. The focus of life is you're always becoming closer. You're always giving a korban. A real sacrifice in Judaism is never about killing, it's about bringing something or somebody closer!

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita - Why Did the Angel Cry?

The midrash says that Yitzchok went blind because the angels wept into his eyes while he was tied up and awaiting slaughter.

The tears the angels shed at the Akeida are said to have done two things. (1) They landed in Yitzchok's eyes, later blinding him and (2) They melted Abraham's knife (BR 56 6) which is why, in 22:12, the interfering angel told Abraham not to cast his ***hand*** against the lad. The previously mentioned knife was already gone!?

The Medrash says that according to BR 56:5 the existence of these tears is derived from Isaiah 33:7 - צָעֲקוּ חֻצָה the angels are imagined to cry bitter tears after screaming "Chootzah." R' Azariah imagines Chootzah to mean "This is unnatural!" It is unnatural for a father to kill his son.

The Malachim cried bitter tears over the demise of Yitzchok.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner Zt'L says that the malach saw all the future hardships and tzaros that was going to befall Klal Yisrael and therefore cried.

Short Vort: Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

וַיֹּאמֶר אַל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנַּעַר וְאַל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אַתָּה וְלֹא חָשַׂכְתָּ אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי *And he [the angel] said, "Do not send forth your hand to the young man, and do not do anything to him, for **now I know** that you fear Hashem, and you have not withheld your son, your only one from **me**"* (22:12)

The angel's words are difficult to understand. First, the angel says, "***now I know that you fear Hashem***," surely the angel should have said "***now Hashem knows that you fear Him***"? In addition, why does the angel praise Avraham from not withholding his son "***from me***," the angel should have said "***from Hashem***," after all, Avraham did not do anything for the angel, he acted solely for Hashem!

The *Darchei Mussar* explains that there are two types of angels: ones made by Hashem in the first six days of creation, and others made by *us* — formed by every one of our mitzvos. Moreover, the strength of the angels that we create directly correlate to the purity of the mitzvah we perform.

Avraham, who had just successfully completed his final and most difficult test thus created ***a perfect angel***. This was the same angel who was talking to him in this verse, which can now be re-read and re-understood as follows: "***…for now I [the angel] know that you fear Hashem, and you have not withheld your son, your only one…" [How can I see that?] "…from me" — by looking at myself as a strong angel I can see that you fear Hashem, for if you did not, I would not have been created so strong and pure.***"

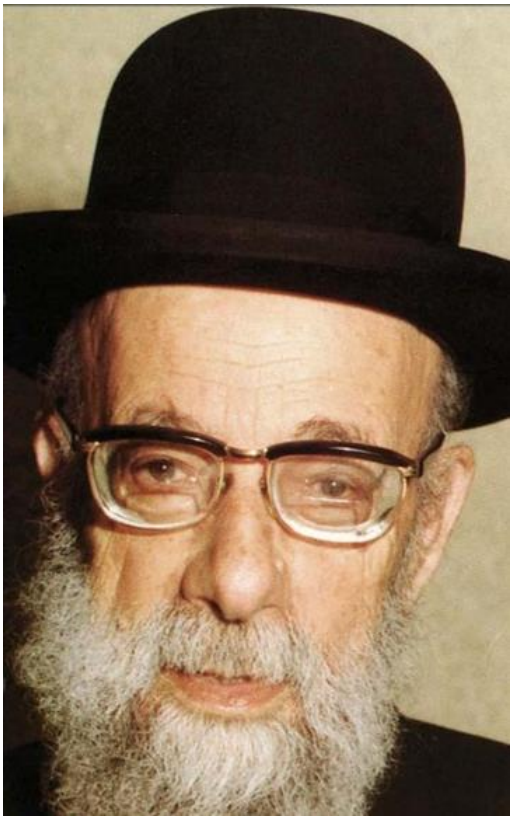
The Nefesh HaChaim takes this concept further by telling us that even when it comes to praising Hashem, angels only have the ability to do so as a result of our actions in this world. Although the upper worlds are a mystery to us, this knowledge alone should empower us to perform mitzvos with greater sincerity and enthusiasm.

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

Rav Yehuda Yehoshua Tzadka zt"l

הרב יהודה יהושע בן שאול צדקה זצ"ל

Cheshvan 12 , 5752



Rav Yehuda Yehoshua Tzadka was Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef. Born in Yerushalayim, Rav Yehuda was a great-great-grandson of Rav Tzadka Chutzin, mechaber of Tzedoka U'Mishpot. His mother, Simcha, was the Ben Ish Chai's niece. The Tzadka family lived in the Bais Yisrael neighborhood of Yerushalayim.

When he was twelve years old, Yehuda Tzadka enrolled in the Porat Yosef Yeshiva in the Old City. There, he became very close to Rav Ezra Attia. At the age of only twenty-seven, he was appointed to teach at the Yeshiva. Among Rav Yehuda's first students was Rav Ovadia Yosef.

In time, Rav Yehuda became the Menahel Ruchani, and with the petira of Rav Ezra Attia in 1970, he was appointed as the new Rosh Yeshiva.

Hearts, Not Bank Accounts

The wealthy should not feel pride in his status, for his soul is equal to the soul of the poor. ~ R' Yehuda Tzadka zt"l — whose yahrzeit is Cheshvan 12.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Sefas Emes asks, why do we learn the concept of zerizus from the pasuk **וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר** – 'And Avrohom arose early in the morning.' (22:3)? – Because the middah of zerizus is most applicable when getting out of bed in the morning!

Rav Dovid Povarsky (Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh) would arrive at the yeshivah at 1.30-2.00am every day! You could find him sitting and learning Torah every morning at this time!

Once, as he was walking to the yeshivah, he told the person who was walking with him, "'The Alter' came to visit me this morning."

The man didn't know if Rav Dovid meant 'The Alter of Slabodka', or 'The Alter of Kelm'!

"Which 'Alter'?" – he asked. He was sure that Rav Dovid had received some kind of vision in a dream. "'The Alter of Slabodka', or 'The Alter of Kelm'"?

"No" Rav Dovid replied – "I mean the Yeitzer Harah [**מֶלֶךְ זָקֵן וּכְסִיל**] – the old and foolish king!"

"Why did the 'Alter' come to the Rosh Yeshivah?"

"He wanted me to stay in bed for another 5 minutes."

"You know", said Rav Dovid, "The whole fight was about those 5 minutes. – If I give him 5 minutes today, it'll be 10 minutes tomorrow and then it will all be over."

Let's work on getting up every morning with zerizus.

Someone once met **Rav Zalman Brizel** in the early hours of the morning. It was before 3.00am! He noticed that Rav Zalman was in very good spirits. "Why are you so happy today?", He asked.

"I had a guest today", he replied.

"Who?"

"The Yeitzer Horah came to visit me today!"

"He said to me, 'Zalman, it's very cold outside, you're 90-years old now, and it's very dangerous for you to be out in the frigid weather. You must remain inside and stay warm for a little longer!'"

"I took a blanket", said Rav Zalman, "and warmed the Yeitzer Horah well, and I told him, ' You stay here, snuggle up and leave me alone! Don't bother me for the rest of the day – And I left in peace!"



No Prayer Is Left Unanswered!

הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה - "*Shall I conceal from Avraham what I am doing?*

What was the purpose of informing Avraham about the plans to destroy Sodom and Amora? Hashem knew that Avraham would daven and negotiate for the salvation of Sodom. Hashem knew ahead of time that there were not even 10 righteous people in Sodom worthy of being saved. Hashem knew that eventually the city would be destroyed. So, what was gained by giving Avraham this information? Wouldn't Avraham's prayers be nothing more than an exercise in futility?

Avraham Aharon Yudelvitz, the Bais Av, explains that informing Avraham was a favor to him. When one davens for another person, whether his prayers seem to be answered, he becomes a better person through those prayers. Hashem wanted to offer Avraham the kindness of having an opportunity to empathize with his fellow man,

to think about the impending tragedy of Sodom, and to at least attempt to stave off the tragedy. - When someone puts himself out for others, he becomes better from that effort.

Another answer is that no *Tefillah* ever goes to waste! The prayers that Avraham *Avinu* offered for Sodom may not have helped the people of Sodom because they did not deserve it. Instead, Hashem saved those prayers to help Avraham's descendants.

Hashem is saying that I am not going to hide from Avraham what I am about to do. I know that Avraham is going to *daven,* and I know that his prayers are not going to help Sodom. However, a great and mighty nation will descend from Avraham. I know that this nation is going to need those prayers at various times in the future. Let Avraham verbalize those prayers now for the welfare of his future descendants.

We can daven to Hashem anytime that we want. Heartfelt tefillah can even change a Heavenly decree that has already been made against an individual or Klal Yisrael. Hashem always listens to our prayers. That does not mean that Hashem always gives us the answer that we want. Sometimes the answer to our prayer is NO! Even though we may want something, Hashem knows what is truly best. Hashem knows if it is truly good for us. However, our prayers are NEVER wasted! Hashem always saves our prayers for a time when they will be needed to help us, our descendants, or Klal Yisroel as a whole.

From the Heart

True prayer flows from the heart, not simply from the lips. ~ R' Yehudah HaChassid zt"l — whose yahrzeit is in MarCheshvan.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE
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Sudden Geulah - Rav Pam on the Parashah by Rabbi Sholom Smith

לָמָּה זֶּה צָחֲקָה שָׂרָה - "*Why is it that Sarah laughed.*"



When Sarah heard one of the guests tell Avraham that she would have a son, she laughed incredulously, not believing that in her old age that was possible. As the pasuk relates, Hashem was upset with her for failing to recognize that nothing is impossible for Hashem.

Ramban adds that although Sarah was not aware that the guests were Heavenly angels, and thought they were simply grateful guests who politely offered her a meaningless blessing, she still should have at least said, "Amen, may it be so." Even though her laugh was "inside her" and she was certainly on a very high level of emunah and bitachon in Hashem, nevertheless, for her exalted level of greatness it was considered a serious failing, which is why Hashem rebuked her.

The Chofetz Chaim offers a fascinating explanation into this incident. What is the Torah teaching us by describing at length her laughing in disbelief, Hashem's criticism of it, and her subsequent denial of what happened — all of which seem to paint Sarah in a very unfavorable light? It is not to diminish Sarah's greatness, but to teach a timeless lesson for the generations near the end of history, in the days preceding the arrival of Mashiach. Just as Sarah struggled to believe that miraculous change could come so suddenly, many people in the final era will find it difficult to believe that we

are on the very brink of redemption. The yeshuah will seem far away, the galus endless, and the world calm and ordinary—without the cataclysmic upheavals one might expect before Mashiach's coming. As the Navi Malachi (3:1) foretells, pis'om, Suddenly, the lord (Mashiach) whom you seek will come to his sanctuary. He will come, even without a moment's notice, even under conditions that make the Geulah seem to be a distant dream.

History itself has demonstrated this truth. Who could have imagined that after seventy years of Communist tyranny, the mighty Soviet Union would collapse almost overnight, without a single shot being fired? Hashem demonstrated to the world at large, and to Jews in particular, that when the appointed time arrives, He can overturn reality in a moment.

The same Divine power that renewed Sarah's body and granted her a child will one day transform the world in an instant. Today, Eretz Yisrael remains a small nation surrounded by countless enemies. Even its allies stand by only when convenient. According to all natural laws, salvation seems remote. Yet Hashem's message to Sarah still echoes through time: "Is anything beyond Hashem?"

When the destined moment comes, the Geulah will arrive swiftly and unexpectedly—pis'om—for nothing lies beyond His power. May we live to see this happen!

No Such Thing as Boredom

A Jew is never bored. Do you know why? - Because they always have time to utilize the power of Tefilah. ~ R' Yerucham Olshin.

"A relationship with Hashem is much bigger than any segulah you will ever have." ~ R' Zecharia Wallerstein.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

The Gemara (Brachos 26b) states that the source for Davening Shacharis is from Avraham waking up the morning after his advocating for Sodom, and returning to the same location to Daven (19:27).

Rav Baruch Hager of Seret (Mekor Baruch, Vayechi) quoted the Belzer Rebbe, who observed, that even though Avraham had spent much effort advocating for Sodom, and his Tefilos were not answered, he still got up the next morning to Daven. That is why particularly this situation is our source for Shacharis.

Even if we feel that yesterday's Tefilos may not have been successful, we still get up the next morning and Daven anyways!

Holy Potato Kugel - Rabbi Label Lam shlita

Many years ago, when I was still a single Yeshiva Bochur, I was given the privileged assignment to give a ride to a very great person. It was *motzei* Shabbos, and a prominent Torah family I knew was having a *bar* mitzvah. I was asked to pick up Rabbi Moshe Neuschlas from New Square. I went with a friend of mine and we arrived at the elderly Rabbi's modest home. He answered the door and we expected him to come right away outside but he beckoned us in instead. We could not refuse his offer.

He seated us at the dining room table and generously presented each of us with a piece of hot and delicious looking potato kugel. As he was putting the kugel down, he was explaining to us the *YICHUS*, the historicity and import of this kugel. As part of its spiritual ingredients, this holy kugel contained *shirayim*, leftovers, or traces of kugel that had been eaten from a series of big Rebbes whose

names I cannot recall. I was not so familiar with this selling point of kugel or any other food.

I felt comfortable enough to ask the Rabbi, "What is the source of *shirayim*, eating from the remnants of what a *tzadik* has eaten from?" - It was a week before Purim, I remember, and he gave two answers immediately.

He said there is a Gemara that says, that if someone eats from something that a *sheretz*, a mouse ate from then it causes forgetfulness. Therefore, how much more so in a positive direction if one eats from something that a *tzadik* ate from it increases his spiritual prowess.

For the second answer the Rabbi referred to a *pasuk* in *Megillas* Esther, which we read on Purim. The *pasuk* says that Haman went out (from the first party) "*B'Simcha U'BTuv Levav*" – with joy and a happy heart. This is not a simple description. The *Chumash* tells us in the rebukes of Ki Savo that the reason why the *Beis HaMikdash* will have been worthy to be destroyed and the Jewish People exiled from the land is "*Tachas Asher Lo Avadeta Es* HASHEM *Elochecha B'Simcha U'Btuv Levav…*" – because you did not serve HASHEM your G-d with joy and a happy heart."

Now, the Rabbi asked, "From where did Haman get such a lofty level? The answer is that Haman was exiting the *seudah*, the party of Esther, and therefore it was the *shirayim* of Esther!"

We then went out to the car satisfied with both the tasty kugel and the delicious answer.

And Sarah said, "G-d has made joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice over me. "And she said, "Who would have said to Avraham that Sarah would nurse children, for I have borne a son to his old age!" And the child grew and was weaned, and Avraham made a great feast on the day that Yitzchok was weaned. (*Bereishis* 21:6-8)

The *pasuk* subtly reveals to us the healthy scepticism people had about Sarah having actually given birth to a child at an advanced age. Rashi comments on something puzzling. Sarah would nurse children: Why is "children" in the plural?

On the day of the feast, the princesses brought their children with them, and she nursed them, for they were saying, "Sarah did not give birth, but brought in a foundling from the street." The Medrash describes that Sarah began to fount with milk and nurse those children.

The Medrash tells us some other interesting information about the future results of that "party" where Sarah "nursed children". Centuries later the Jewish People unanimously accepted the Torah, and the nations of the world were offered the same opportunity, but they refused. However, there were certain individuals within those nations that did want to receive the Torah. They would become *gerim*, the righteous converts, and these people were the descendants of those children that drank from the milk of Sarah at that party. So, it was the holy milk of Sarah that had such a profound effect far into the future. Now, just imagine the impact on Yitzchak!

One of my teachers told us, perhaps whimsically, but still true, that that is what the *Litvak's* say. The *Chassidim*, however, claim that – it was not necessarily the milk that flowed from Sarah but rather the *shirayim* of Yitzchak. So, we see that *shirayim* is not just a souvenir, but the unleashing of a powerful spiritual force embedded deep within a holy potato kugel.

"The challenge is not to have faith when miracles happen - But to find the miraculous in the everyday." ~ Rabbi Nachmon of Breslov.

Standing Still for Others - Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klein

This week, we read of Avraham Avinu's extraordinary *tefillah* on behalf of the people of Sodom. The Torah states, "The people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked" (*Bereishis* 13:13). Yet Avraham was undeterred. He did not dismiss them as irredeemable or withdraw into self-righteous isolation. Instead, he prayed fervently and persistently for their salvation.

Chazal highlight the striking contrast between Noach and Avraham. Noach, despite his personal righteousness, did not pray for his generation. The Torah itself alludes to this deficiency. The floodwaters are called, "The waters of Noach." Why should a global catastrophe bear his name? The Zohar explains that because Noach failed to daven for his people, the waters are attributed to him. His silence became part of the tragedy. But how did the Zohar know that Noach refrained from prayer?

I once heard a remarkable insight.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 26b) teaches that the word *amidah* (standing) refers to prayer. The central portion of our davening, *Shemoneh Esreh*, is itself called *Amidah*. Why is tefillah described as "standing"? Because when a person prays, especially when he prays on behalf of others, he temporarily halts his own spiritual ascent. He could have been learning Torah, growing in avodas Hashem, or pursuing his personal development. Instead, he pauses everything to intercede for another. In that moment, he becomes an *omed*, one who stands still.

This distinction sheds light on the difference between Avraham and Noach.

Regarding Avraham, the Torah says, "Avraham was still standing before Hashem." (Bereishis 18:22). After the destruction of Sodom, it states that Avraham got up to stand at the place where he had previously stood before Hashem (ibid. 19:27). Avraham is repeatedly

described as an *omed*, one who stands still, because he stopped his own personal growth to pray for others.

By contrast, Noach is described as such: "And Noach walked with G-d" (ibid. 6:9). He was a *holech*, one who moves, always progressing in his own spiritual journey. But a true leader must sometimes stop walking. His mission is not only to grow himself, but to stand still for the sake of others.

With this insight, we can also understand the Gemara (*Berachos* 54b) which says, "Whoever prolongs his prayer merits long life." What is the connection between lengthy prayer and longevity?

Man, endowed with free will, is called a *holech*, a being in motion, capable of rising or falling. Angels, by contrast, are *omdim*, stationary beings who cannot change or ascend. When a person closes his Gemara or a mother pauses from her tasks to daven for others, they too become *omdim*. They suspend their own advancement to care for someone else. And so, *middah k'neged middah*, Heaven responds in kind. Hashem says: "If My child has stopped his spiritual clock for others, I will stop his biological clock for him."

Thus, if someone was destined to live eighty years, but spent ten of those years immersed in heartfelt prayer, those years are not counted against him. His time spent as an *omed* becomes time added to his life. That is the deeper meaning of "Whoever prolongs his prayer merits long life." The time devoted to prayer is time not deducted from life, but added to it.

This concept parallels the teaching that money spent on Shabbos, Yom Tov, or a child's Torah education is not subtracted from one's annual income decreed on Rosh Hashanah (*Beitza* 16a). Just as such spending is spiritually protected, so too is time spent in *tefillah* shielded from the limits of mortal years.

It is well known that the holy **Chasam Sofer** would daven a lengthy Shemoneh Esrei. Once, a Rosh Yeshivah davened alongside him and later remarked, "While waiting for you to finish, I learned two pages of Gemara." The Chasam Sofer replied, "I am not worried that I've lost anything. The Gemara says, "Whoever prolongs his prayer merits long life." My davening lengthens my life. I'll have plenty of time to learn."

The Chasam Sofer understood that leadership means sometimes halting one's personal advancement for the sake of others. Avraham stood still; Noach walked forward. But in Hashem's eyes, it is the one who stands still for others who truly moves the world forward, and who merits a longer life for having done so.

Project Mesorah – Rabbi Paysach Krohn

In this week's parsha we have one of the most amazing Rashis. The pasuk tells us that Hashem said to Avrohom Avinu, "*Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Is it really true that I will give birth, although I am old?*" 18:13 [She said that she's old and won't be able to have children.]

But that's not what she actually said – she really said **וַאדֹנִי זָקֵן** - "*and my master is old.*"

Rashi tells us that Hashem changed the words that Sarah said, **מִפְּנֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם** – So that there shouldn't be any strife between them.

Really, are Avraham and Sarah going to have a sholom bayis problem? These were the biggest tzadikim ever!

The Torah wants to tell us that everybody has human feelings and sensitivities, even the greatest amongst us. – We must be so careful when speaking about others.

Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita



We say in the Musaf of Rosh Hashana **וְתֵרָאֶה לְפָנֶיךָ עֲקֵדָה שֶׁעָקַד אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גַּבֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ** – *'Remember on our behalf the binding with which our father Avraham bound his son Yitzchak upon the altar.' [Avrohom bound Yitzchok only once he was on the Mizbeiach.]*

Rav Dovid Cohen writes that our pasuk seems to say otherwise! **וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לָעֵצִים** 22:9 He tied Yitzchok first, and only then he put him **עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ**. [He only put him on, once Yitzchok was bound.]

The Maharal Diskin explains that Avrohom had to do it this way so that it was considered that he was bringing up Yitzchok as the sacrifice. If Yitzchok wasn't already bound, it would mean that Yitzchok was going on his own volition.

So what does the machzor mean that **עֲקֵדָה שֶׁעָקַד אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גַּבֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ?**

The tefiloh that we are davening on Rosh Hashana is hinting to a different part of the Akeidah. The Targum Yonoson, The Yalkut Shimoini, tells us that when Avrohom put Yitzchok on the akeidah, Yitzchok said, "tie me again, tie me tightly, so that I shouldn't be able to move, otherwise I might become a pasul korban."

This was Yitzchok's extra request, so that the korban should be completely perfect with all the hiddurim. This was not Yitzchok's commandment but was done at his own volition. - This is perhaps why it is called Akeidas Yitzchok.

When we daven to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we don't just repeat what Hashem told Avrohom Avinu to do, but **וְתֵרָאֶה לְפָנֶיךָ עֲקֵדָה שֶׁעָקַד אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גַּבֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ** - we also mention the fact that he re-tied Yitzchok once he was already in-situ on the mizbeiach, at the request of Yitzchok, which was done out of love to be mekayem the command of Hashem. – And with this extra, we should have the zechus that Hashem should have rachamim on all of us.



Rabbi YY Jacobson Shlita

Our Sages tell us that the city of Sodom had a bed, and for every guest, if they were too long, they cut off their feet; and if they were too short, they stretched them.

Now, it is noteworthy that the word **סְדוֹם** (samech, daled, mem) and the word for institution - **מוֹסָד** (mem, samech, daled) - share the same letters. Sometimes, unfortunately, an institution does the same as Sodom did. They have one bed for everybody. Everyone has to fit into one box, into one framework. But what if he or she is too long? Or too short? What if they are too creative? - Sometimes, the attitude taken is, "We will cut you down from top to bottom or stretch you!"

But I ask you, "Why should we take an infinite G-d and infinite Judaism and believe it is so small that it can only accommodate people of a particular size in a particular box?"

We have to bring out the deepest creativity in each of our children. They will transform the future.

בס"ד

למודי משה

The Importance of Keeping a Marriage Fresh, Even at Age 99

In *Parsha Vayera* we learn about the *hachnosas orchim* of Avraham Avinu, and how Hashem sent three *malachom* dressed as Arabs to Avraham and he served them a gourmet meal. After Avraham served the meal, they inquired about the whereabouts of his wife Sorah, and Avraham responded that she was in the tent. Rashi notes that the *malochim* certainly knew where Sorah was, but they nevertheless asked in order to give themselves an opportunity to praise her modesty, thereby endearing her to her husband.

In his *kuntres* [booklet] *Ma'amarei Hadracha L'Chassanim* (pg. 27), Rav Shlomah Wolbe questions the conduct of the *malachim*. It is customary to dance before the *kallah* and praise her when speaking at a *sheva berachos* to raise her up in her new husband's eyes and cement the bond between them. At this point, Avraham was 99 and Sorah was 89, and they had already been married for many years. By now, Avraham certainly recognized Sorah's greatness, and if not, nothing their guests said would help. Why did the *malochim* need to accent her modesty to further lift her up in Avraham's eyes?

Rav Wolbe answers that the *malochim* were teaching Avraham – and us – that increasing endearment and deepening the relationship between a husband and wife must continue throughout the couple's entire married life. Marriage is not a one-time event that takes place at the wedding, but an ongoing dynamic process whose greatest enemy is routine.

If the connection between Avraham and Sorah, who had been married for decades, still needed strengthening and renewal, how much more must we strive to constantly develop our feelings of appreciation and respect for our spouses.

As a contemporary illustration of this idea, Rav Yissocher Frand recounts that an American named Rabbi Dovid Hershowitz went to study in the Mir *yeshiva* in Europe in the 1930s, after which he returned to the United States.

Several decades later, he traveled to Eretz Yisroel, where his itinerary included a visit to Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, his old friend from *yeshiva*. They both enjoyed the reunion, and after they spoke for a while, Rav Chaim invited Rabbi Hershowitz to join him for lunch.

As they entered his apartment, Rav Chaim asked his wife, "What's for lunch today?" The Rebbetzin responded that she was serving chicken and rice. - When the illustrious Rosh Yeshiva sat down at the table, he devoured all the food on his plate and remarked that the spices his wife used to make the food were especially delicious. He then asked for more food and promptly finished off another portion, again complimenting his wife's exceptional culinary talents.

Rav Hershowitz was shocked by what he had observed. After the Rebbetzin left the room, he respectfully asked his host, "In Europe, the only thing you cared about was your Torah learning, to the extent that we had to remind you to eat. Even when you ate, we had to remind you to *bentch* because you forgot that you ate. How could it be that so many years later you now clean your plate multiple times and discuss recipes with your wife!?"

Rav Chaim responded, "I invest tremendous time and effort into the *shiurim* I give. I know how deep and profound they are, but when a young *bochur* comes up after a *shiur* and tells me how much he enjoyed it, it still makes me feel good. Even though he could not have possibly grasped all the intricacies I discussed, it is human nature to feel uplifted when receiving a sincere compliment.

"This lunch is my Rebbetzin's *shiur*, and she works hard to ensure that I am well-fed and nourished. Just like the *bochur* who comes over after my *shiur*, I eat everything she serves me with gusto, not

because I have become a glutton, but to make her feel good that her '*shiur*' was well-received."

Even though this story took place when Rav Chaim had been married for several decades, he understood the lesson of the *malochim* and worked to make sure that his wife felt cherished every day of their married life. (R' Ozer Alport)

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Those Who Reach the Door but Do Not Knock

After his bris milah we are told that Avraham sat at the entrance of his tent. - **וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם** - Rashi explains this was to see if there were **עובר ושב** - any passerby that he could bring them into his house and offer hospitality.

A deeper insight: Avraham was specifically watching for those who were *ovrei v'shav* in the most literal sense—people who approached the entrance and then turned away. These were individuals who came close, but were too meek, too embarrassed, or too intimidated to knock. Like poor people who reach the door of a wealthy man, only to turn back out of shame. Avraham understood that such people would never ask for help on their own.

His greatness lay in his sensitivity—he went out of his way to look for those who could not bring themselves to engage. Those were the ones Avraham made sure to care for. [Mayana Shel Torah, Ber 18:1]

We should apply this to our lives. Someone may attend a Torah class, or some event, and then disappear. Not because they weren't interested, but because they felt they didn't belong. All they needed was that person to reach out to them.

Or you may have a person standing near a kiddush, glance around, then slip out. They want connection but feel awkward, unseen, or

unworthy of joining. We must walk in Avraham's ways and reach out to such people.



Parshas Vayeira tells us the story of the destruction of *Sedom* as well as the dramatic last-minute escape of *Lot* and his family. The people of *Sedom* were infamous for their wicked behavior, and they deserved this destruction. But why did *Lot* merit to be saved? Which merit did he do to deserve being saved? Was it bringing guests into his home at risk of death, showing love for the needy and inspiring his daughter to do so against the grain of his surroundings?

Surprisingly enough, the *Midrash* quoted by *Rashi* tells us that it was not. Rather, it was because of an incident that had occurred soon after *Avram*, *Sarah*, and *Lot* had arrived in Canaan and then been forced to descend to *Mitzrayim* due to a famine.

Avram, realizing that his beautiful wife *Sarah* would be a target for the low Egyptians who were likely to kill him to release his wife from her marriage, agreed with *Sarah* that they would say that they were brother and sister. At that moment, *Lot* could have stepped forward and revealed the true nature of *Avram* and *Sarah's* relationship, but he remained silent.

Many years later, this silence at that crucial juncture saved him from being killed in *Sedom*. What seems so surprising is that this was the merit that saved *Lot*.

What was so special about him keeping a secret to prevent his relative from being killed?

The *Alter of Slabodka* explains that *Lot's* kindness and hospitality were just habits that he had acquired while growing up in *Avram's* spiritual home. Rather than behavior that he had to work hard to achieve, they were external actions that he did by rote, without real thought or meaning. Here, however, was one time in his life where he demonstrated real strength and he went directly against his nature.

During the summer, Rabbi Schwartz had promised his children that he would take them swimming at a water park. He was a busy man, and by the time that they were able to get to the water park, it was very late and they were told that there was not much time left. Rabbi Schwartz asked the manager, "What time do we need to get out of the water?" The manager replied, "Exactly 8 o'clock. That will give you fifteen minutes to get ready before the 8:15 closing time."

Rabbi Schwartz considered and accepted, and his excited children rushed off to change and jump into the water. As closing time approached, the manager, however, did not keep his word, and already at 7:45, he was loudly announcing that everyone should immediately leave the water now.

Rabbi Schwartz is not normally someone to take things lying down, and he began to argue. The rest of the swimmers also started to join in, decrying the injustice and deciding that none of them would leave the pool until the clock strikes 8 o'clock. Finally, Rabbi Schwartz's good nature got the best of him, and he decided that despite clearly being in the right, to let it slide and made his way out of the pool. When the other swimmers saw that their ringleader had given in, they too began to emerge and head out to the changing rooms.

As soon as the pool started to empty, there was a loud cry from one of the lifeguards to his associate, "Run, quick, there's a child lying on the bottom of the pool!"

The lifeguards immediately jumped into the water and dragged the boy, who was unconscious, not breathing, and without a pulse. Rabbi Schwartz, alerted by the shout of the lifeguards, turned around, and to his astonishment and great distress realized that the boy was one of his own children. The lifeguards were working on him and, *Baruch Hashem*, after a short period of CPR, the child began to breathe and gradually regained consciousness. His condition slowly stabilized and by the next day, he was already walking around as if nothing had happened.

Perhaps we can say he's a walking miracle because had he stayed in the pool just a few more moments, the outcome could have been tragically very different.

Rabbi Schwartz said that he learned a great lesson from his personal story. There's a great reward that awaits someone who's *mevater*, that foregoes something that's due to him, even when he's clearly in the right. Had I not decided at that moment to give in, the pool would not have been empty and his child would not have been visible to the lifeguards.

We often underestimate what an amazing achievement it is when we overcome our natural desires. Yes, it's natural to want to say over gossip or secrets, but every moment that we succeed in defeating that drive, we can change both ourselves and the world more than we can possibly imagine. - Have a beautiful *Shabbos*.

"The greatness of Avraham's chessed was not merely in the food he provided, but in his 'running.' Even at ninety-nine years old, on the third day after his circumcision, his desire to give was so great that it overcame his physical limitations."

~ Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (Sichos Mussar).



וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אַיֵּה שָׂרָה אִשְׁתֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בָאֹהֶל (18:9), The angels ask Avrohom, "Where is Sarah your wife?" even though, as celestial beings, they certainly knew where she was. Rashi, drawing from the Talmud and Midrash, offers three primary reasons for this question:

To Endear her to her Husband: The angels asked about her to prompt Avrohom to think about her virtues, thereby increasing his love and affection for her.

To Send her the "Cup of Blessing": In Jewish tradition, a guest offers a blessing over a cup of wine at the end of a meal. The angels intended to send this "Cup of Blessing" to Sarah to involve her in the spiritual merit of the hospitality.

To Highlight her Modesty (Tzniut): By prompting Avrohom to answer "She is in the tent," the angels highlighted Sarah's modesty—that she remained in the private, inner space of the home rather than mingling with the male guests.

Rashi also notes a broader ethical lesson derived from the angels' behavior:

Derech Eretz (Proper Conduct): The angels taught that a guest should ask the host about the welfare of his wife, and ask the wife about the welfare of her husband, to foster a sense of care and community.

The "Double Mission" of the Third Angel: While one angel was sent to heal Avrohom and another to destroy Sodom, the third was sent specifically to bring the news of Isaac's birth to Sarah. By asking where she was, they ensured the message was directed to her, even though she was listening from the entrance of the tent.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l was one of the great baalei mussar, Jewish ethicists, of the latter half of the 20th century. The following piece shares one of his important insights into marriage:

The parsha begins with Avraham inviting three angels guised as Arabs into his house and offering them a royal feast. The Torah describes the encounter in great detail thereby revealing an entire handbook for the proper performance of chessed. While most of the narrative focuses on the way a host should treat a guest, the story ends with the chessed a guest should perform with his host.

After the angels finished their meal, they asked Avraham where Sarah was, and he responded that she can be found inside the tent. Rashi explains that the angels certainly knew where Sarah was. The intent of their query was merely to endear Sarah to Avraham. Their question would prompt his answer, "She is in the tent," thusly highlighting her middah of modesty. Avraham's articulation of Sarah's qualities would bring him an added level of appreciation for his wife.

Rav Wolbe comments that it is amazing to think that there was a necessity to endear Sarah to Avraham. Chazal tell us that when Avraham married Sarah he was twenty five years old. When the angels paid their visit he was ninety nine - nearly seventy five years after their wedding. - Endearing one's wife upon her husband would seem to be something necessary for a couple who were just married as opposed to a couple many years past their golden anniversary! Nevertheless, the Torah tells us that an essential aspect of marriage is ensuring that the husband and wife appreciate each another.

Interestingly enough, writes Rav Wolbe, the closer the relationship between two people, the more difficult it is to show and voice appreciation for each other. The pair becomes so used to each other's contributions toward their relationship, that they begin thinking that the other party is indeed obligated to contribute all

that he does. Thus, he is blamed if he fails to provide these services. This puts a damper on their relationship.

This is an idea which is particularly important in marriage. The house is a place of mutual chessed. Whether the husband works or learns, he spends his days toiling to bring material or spiritual sustenance into the house. The wife spends her days taking care of the house and looking after their children. Each of them must constantly find ways to show their appreciation of their spouse for all that they do.

Focusing on the many things the spouse does, as opposed to focusing on the few things that they do not do, brings one to appreciate their numerous qualities and the many contributions that they make.

If the angels felt it necessary to endear Sarah to the elderly and holy Avraham, we can be certain that acknowledgment and appreciation of a spouse's qualities is imperative to a good marriage no matter how long one is married!



You were never meant to fight every battle alone. Even birds fly in formation because shared effort carries them farther than isolated strength ever could. If something is weighing you down, lighten the load – a burden shared becomes a challenge halved and a victory doubled. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rashi.

"People think that to be a 'Baal Chessed' one needs a lot of money. But Avraham taught us that chessed is about the heart. He offered a little water and some bread, but he gave his entire self to the service." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.



Rev Gavriel Brodie ZL

Good morning *rabosai*. I don't quite know - I know where I am but I don't know what I am because I was billed on those beautiful picturesque colorful posters as '**Rabbi** Gabriel Brody'. This morning there's another poster – 'Don't miss **Reverend** Gabriel Brody's *shiur*.' - So I don't know what I am!

❖ The Greatness of Kavanah

The Torah presents two of Avraham's greatest achievements: **hachnasas orchim** (chesed) and the **Akeidah** (mesiras nefesh). Remarkably, in both cases the intended action was never truly completed as intended. The malachim did not need the food Avraham prepared, and Yitzchak was never sacrificed.

This teaches that Hashem values not only actions but also the sincere desire and willingness to perform His will. Proper **kavanah** is an essential part of every mitzvah.

The Torah teaches that the sincere kavanah behind a mitzvah is of immense value. While mitzvos must still be performed, the proper intention is what gives them life and meaning.

❖ The Power of the Individual

When Avraham pleaded for Sedom, he negotiated from fifty tzaddikim down to ten. Rashi explains that fifty could save five cities, forty, four cities, and so on. Yet Avraham still pleaded at every stage because spiritual influence is not merely mathematical.

This idea is reinforced by the blessing in **Parshas Bechukosai**, where five people can pursue a hundred enemies, but one hundred can pursue ten thousand. The combined power of people serving Hashem grows exponentially. Every Jew matters, and no one should consider

himself insignificant. One person's actions can affect an entire community and even tip the balance of the world.

The lesson is that every individual matters. No person can say, "What difference do I make?" - In ruchniyus, one additional person can dramatically strengthen the whole community. As the Rambam teaches, a single mitzvah can tip the scales for the entire world.

From this emerges a fundamental lesson: no person is insignificant. In a world where people often feel disposable, Torah teaches that every individual is indispensable. One person can strengthen an entire community, and a single mitzvah can tip the balance of the world toward merit.

❖ The Humility of Avraham Avinu

The phrase **וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו** appears repeatedly in the Akeidah. At first, only Avraham knew what lay ahead; later Yitzchak knew as well, yet both proceeded with equal devotion.

After the Akeidah, the Torah says, **וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו**. The Baalei Mussar explain that Avraham returned with the same humility he had before. Despite passing the greatest test imaginable, he did not feel superior.

The repeated phrase **וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו** in the Akeidah teaches the unity of purpose between Avraham and Yitzchak. After successfully passing the greatest test imaginable, Avraham returned to his servants unchanged. He did not view himself as extraordinary or superior or boast of his accomplishment. - ***True greatness produces humility, not pride***.

❖ Overcoming Obstacles

The Midrash describes how the Satan repeatedly tried to stop Avraham—appealing to his emotions, his conscience, and finally by creating physical obstacles - a river to block his path. Each time

Avraham answered **אַף עַל פִּי כֵן** - in effect, ***"Nevertheless, I will continue."*** Avraham ignored every excuse and continued forward.

The lesson is not to blame circumstances for spiritual failures. Obstacles, opposition, inconvenience, and public opinion are often excuses. Avraham teaches that a person committed to doing the ratzon Hashem perseveres despite difficulties and does not allow emotions, rationalizations, public opinion, or obstacles to dictate his actions.

❖ **Lot and Avraham**

When Avraham told Lot to separate, Rashi explains that Avraham was not abandoning him. "If you go left, I will be at your right."

Even after parting ways, Avraham remained ready to help Lot. This demonstrated Avraham's enduring commitment to chesed and responsibility for others.

❖ Avraham Avinu's life demonstrates that genuine greatness lies in sincere intentions, responsibility toward others, unwavering commitment to truth, humility after success, and determination to fulfil the will of Hashem regardless of the challenges encountered.

Like Avraham Avinu, we must act with conviction, humility, and determination, trusting that even one sincere act can change far more than we imagine.

Avraham waited for guests on the third day of his circumcision (the day of maximum pain), - "It is at the exact moment of personal difficulty that we need to seek out ways to help those who might otherwise just pass us by." ~ Rabbi Mordechai Weissmann.



וישלח אברהם את ידו ויקח את המאכלת לשחט את בנו וגו' (כב-ו)

Why must the posuk tell us that Avrohom had to stretch out his hand in order to take the knife? Why couldn't it just have said, "**ויקח את המאכלת**" - "And he took the knife" in preparation of his korban - sacrifice?

R' Mendel of Riminov ZT"L answers that Avrohom had so thoroughly trained himself to do Hashem's bidding that his organs always sprang to the task. However, since it was not truly Hashem's intent to have Avrohom carry out the actual sacrifice of Yitzchok, Avrohom's hand did not respond with its normal alacrity. Somehow, it perceived that it would not actually have to do the actual slaughtering! As a result, Avrohom required a special effort to stretch out his hand - hence the extra words "**וישלח אברהם את ידו**".

Not only that, but the Medrash Tanchumah brings down that the **סטרא אחרא** - Evil forces (of the Yetzer Hara), attempted to stop Avrohom all along the way as he pursued fulfilling Hashem's will. Avrohom had already picked up the knife, but through these evil forces, it was knocked out of his hand. Thus he required a separate "**וישלח ידו**" - "And he stretched out his hand" in order to pick up the knife.

Chazal tell us that Avrohom's test was greater than that of Yitzchok – who was to be the actual sacrifice – because Yitzchok responded to Hashem's call unhesitatingly, with alacrity and speed in a manner befitting a tzaddik of his stature. Not so with Avrohom. He had to force himself to act at the crucial moment of taking the knife.

"Every minute can become eternity when used for Torah." ~ Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

Torah Gems

והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וגו' (יח-ב)

We learn in this Parshah, of the hospitality practiced by Avrohom and subsequently by Lot. Concerning Avrohom, the Possuk says **וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל** – '*And he saw and he ran to meet them from the entrance of the tent*'. The same was said of Lot when he met the angels **'וירא לוט ויקם לקראתם'** – '*And Lot saw and rose up to meet them.*' Thus, we may ask, wherein lies the difference between Avrohom's hospitality and Lot's?

The **Bais Halevi** explains that with regard to Avrohom the Possuk tells us **'והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו'** - And behold three men stood before him. Avrohom perceived his guests as ordinary men - idol-worshipping Arabs. And yet, we see that his reaction was to run out to greet them, for Avrohom was the embodiment of Chessed and **הכנסת אורחים**. By contrast, regarding Lot it says **ויבאו שני המלאכים סדומה בערב** - And the two angels came to Sodom during the evening.

Should Lot be commended for giving hospitality to angels? After all, who wouldn't want to welcome angels into his home? That's the difference between them.



Believe in Your Tefillah

Every Yid's tefillah has the power to bring all that he needs, immediately. What holds us back is not the power of tefillah, but our belief in its power. When we daven with complete emuna that Hashem hears every prayer and can answer at once, our tefillah breaks open the heavens. ~ R' Moshe of Kobrin zt"l.



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ויאמר ה' זעקת סדום ועמרה כי רבה וחטאתם כי כבדה מאד (יח-כ)

As official Rov of the Polish city of Belz, the great Gaon **R' Yoel Sirkis ZT"L**, (**Ba"ch**,) was dispensed a rather meager salary that did not suffice to even allow him to buy candles to light up his home at night. As a result, R' Yoel was forced to sit entire nights in darkness, learning Torah from memory or by the light of the moon.

It happened, that many of the townsfolk, passing by the Rov's house at night, concluded that since it was dark in the Rov's house all week, it must mean that he retires to bed early, thereby neglecting his Torah studies as befitting the Rov of the city. They called a meeting regarding this and decided to have him removed based on the assumption that, "A Rabbi who is not awake at night delving into Torah, is not worthy of the Rabbinical seat in our city."

Soon after, the Bach was offered the Rabbinate in the city of Brisk and he eagerly accepted. In his farewell drasha and told the community, "As you know, the people of Sodom and Amorah were punished for their cruelty and wickedness with the overturning of their cities, their homes and everything within them. But why this specific punishment? Didn't Hashem have enough ways to deal with Sodom rather than overturning their entire civilization?"

R' Yoel looked at the people intently. "The answer, I believe, is that if we were to delve deeper into the actual sins of Sodom, we would find that the punishment was most appropriate. The viciousness of the people of Sodom and Amorah lies in the fact that they uprooted and completely turned righteousness and morality inside out.

Instead of spreading Torah and goodness among the people, and taking care of all of their communal responsibilites, they absorbed themselves totally in worrying about the Rov's Torah and how much he was learning, thereby allowing the burden of Parnasa to fall squarely and heavily on the Rov's shoulders....!"

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ותשקין את אביהן יין בלילה הוא וכו' (יט-לג)



A man with an unsavoury reputation of being a drunkard lived in the city of Frankfort. He would spend a good deal of his time and most of his money in the local taverns, while his family suffered the indignity of it all.

Finally, his wife prevailed upon him to go to the *Rov*, **R' Avrohom Abish ZT"L**, and ask for some assistance. The man came to the *Rov* and explained, "**Rebbe**, I have a daughter to marry off and no money to do it with. Please help me. If you were to give me a letter of endorsement, I will probably be able to raise the necessary funds by collecting door to door. R' Abish felt bad for the man and complied, writing a strong letter of endorsement.

On the strength of the *Rov's* letter, the man was very successful in his fund-raising, and received one very large contribution. The man was deliriously happy, and decided it was time to celebrate.

With the money in hand, he ran to his favourite pub where he became so drunk that he passed out. After some time, he regained consciousness and when he felt ready to continue on his mission, he felt through his pockets and realized that his precious letter of recommendation from the *Rov* had disappeared.

Crying bitterly, he saw no other way but to run back to R' Abish and beg him for another letter of endorsement. Sheepishly, he came before the *Rov*, the smell of liquor still emanating from his breath. However, R' Abish had by then heard of the use to which the previous letter had been put and adamantly refused to write another. The man begged and cried but to no avail.

"Let me explain to you why I will not issue you another letter," said the *Rov*, after the man begged for an explanation. We know that a Jewish drunkard is referred to as being **לוט"י** — "Drunk as Lot". Now if we look in the *Torah*, we see that the first person mentioned that actually became drunk was not Lot, but rather Noach. Why then, do we always link drunkenness to Lot?

The answer is that Noach had only sons - no daughters that needed to be married off, so he could afford to become drunk. Lot, however, had two daughters, and he could not get away with drinking away all of his money for he would need that money to arrange marriages for his daughters. Still, he became a drunk and therefore, he has become the symbol of the foolish drunkard!"

Torah Gems



ויתמהמה ויחזיקו האנשים בידו וביד אשתו (יט-טז) - The musical note over the word "**ויתמהמה**" - the "Trop" as it is known - is a *shalsheles*, a long, drawn-out sound that rises and falls three times, and suggests lingering or stalling. - It fits perfectly in the *posuk* since the word **ויתמהמה** is translated literally as, *"And he delayed."*

Its only other two occurrences in *Sefer Bereshis* are when *Avrohom's* servant, *Eliezer*, is about to begin the search for a suitable bride for his master's son, *Yitzchok Avinu*, (**חיי שרה כד-יב**), and when *Yosef* rebuffs the advances of *Potiphar's* wife in Egypt (**וישב לט-ח**).

R' Yitzchok Goodman Shlit"a writes that all three of these incidents are worthy of a *shalsheles* - **שַׁלְשֶׁלֶת**, because in each instance, the very chain of Jewish survival is at stake.

Lot may have delayed his departure from Sodom because of his doubts, but he had to be saved, not because of his righteousness,

but because he was destined to be the father of *Moav*, the ancient ancestor of *Dovid Hamelech*, an indispensable link in the Jewish chain! So, too, *Eliezer* forges another vital link by enabling the joining of our matriarch *Rivkah* and *Yitzchok Avinu* in marriage. And *Potiphar's* wife succeeded in corrupting *Yosef*, causing him to lower himself by succumbing to her immodest advances, she would have most certainly changed the course of Jewish history.

Thus, we see clearly that the tradition of the musical "trop" that we use when we read the *parsha* are not random notes but fit appropriately to the understanding of the word.

The Chofetz Chaim's Bitachon and Reliance on Hashem



During the First World War, the Chofetz Chaim escaped with his students from Radin to Samilovitz. (Like many Yidden at that time, they were trying to keep away from the front, where the war was being fought.) When the front reached Samilovitz, the Chofetz Chaim and his students had to escape further away, and they settled in Shumietz, which is in the Mohilev region of Russia.

In Shumietz, Cossacks would routinely come to the yeshiva to search for bachurim who had evaded the draft to the army. Since there were many such bachurim, it caused much tension and fear whenever the Cossacks came.

In the sefer **החפץ חיים חייו ופועלו** (p.113), it states the following: Once, when they were searching for the bachurim who evaded the

draft, the Chofetz Chaim became very afraid, and he was worried the entire day. He fasted that day, and by nighttime, the Chofetz Chaim felt very happy and optimistic.

He called for his son-in-law, Reb Tzvi, and told him that he found chizuk from the Torah. When the people of Sodom asked Lot to send out the guests so they could harm them, Lot pleaded with them not to harm his guests. He said (Bereishis 19:9)

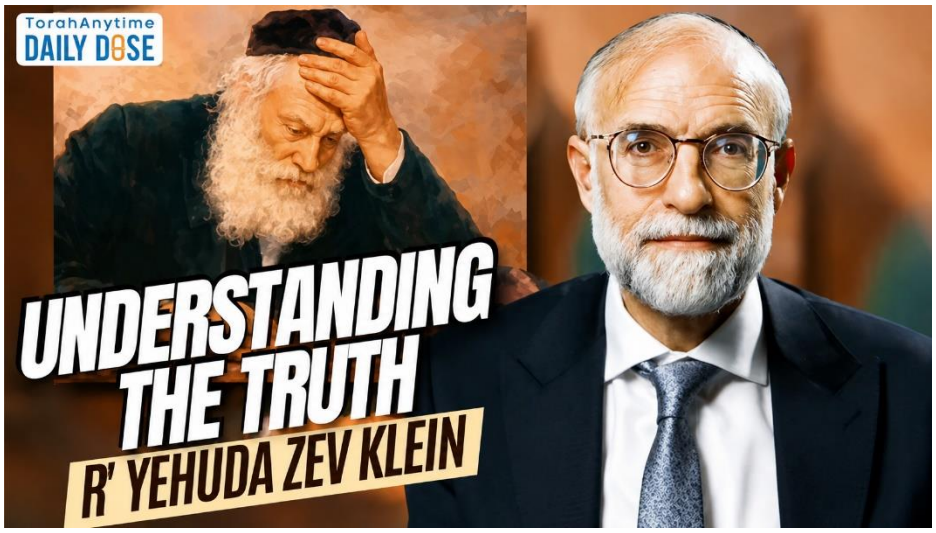
רַק לָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵל אַל תַּעֲשׂוּ דָבָר כִּי עַל כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּצֵל קֹרָתִי, "to these men do nothing, because they have come under the shadow of my roof."

Lot felt responsible for taking care of them because they had come to his home. The Chofetz Chaim said that Lot wasn't the greatest tzaddik when he lived in Sodom, but he understood the principle of taking care of his guests. They came to him, relied on him, and he had to protect them. Certainly, if we go under Hashem's shade and rely on His protection, Hashem will not abandon us!

Indeed, throughout the period they were there, not one student was drafted into the army. Initially, the Cossacks brought some of the bachurim to their commander. But when the commander heard about the greatness of the Chofetz Chaim, he freed all the bachurim.

R' Avrohom Twerski ZT"L (Maggid of Trisk) would say:

"When Hashem wished to give Avrohom Avinu the mitzvah of Hachnosas Orchim - hospitality, he sent angels in the disguise of pagans. We learn from here that when one does a chesed, he should not be discriminating as to who is the recipient or whether he is deserving of that chesed."



In 1976 the great *Rosh Yeshiva*, **Rav Shmuel Berenbaum *zecher tzadik livracha***, suffered a devastating loss. His son, *Rav* Aryeh Leib, a great *Talmid Chacham* who was being groomed to become the next *Rosh Yeshiva*, was accidentally shot in *Eretz Yisrael* and passed away. He left behind a young *almanah* and a house full of little children. After the *levayah*, *Rav* Shmuel came to his son's home to sit *shiva*.

We could hardly imagine the heartbreaking scene of an *elter zeide* sitting *shiva* with young *yesomim*. The air was thick, the home was full of pain and sorrow. The walls were practically crying. Then *Rav* Shmuel turns to his grandchildren and he says, "*Kinderlach*, I want to share with you a *vort*.

We know that when *Yitzchak Avinu* grew old, he became blind. Do you know why? So *Rashi* explains that when Yitzchak lay on the *mizbeach* during that *Akeidah*, **באותה שעה נפתחו השמים**. At that moment the heavens opened up and the *malachim* saw what was happening below. Yitzchak was about to get slaughtered and they started to cry. And their tears fell into Yitzchak's eyes, causing his blindness later in life."

Rav Shmuel asked, "*Kinderlach*, why did the heavens need to open up? *Malachim* can see right through everything, right through all the worlds, right through all the barriers."

So *Rav* Shmuel explained, "From *shamayim*, events are viewed very differently than from this world. What looks tragic and unbearable down here may be seen above as the greatest joy. The *Akeidah*, which was agony in this world, was a moment of immense *simcha* in

shamayim. In fact, we are still reaping the benefits of *Akeidas Yitzchak* to this very day.

So the *malachim* needed the heavens to open up so they could feel what Avraham and Yitzchak felt, to experience the pain and *mesiras nefesh* of human beings, and only then could they cry."

Rav Shmuel then said, "*Kinderlach*, down here it is very painful. *Tatti* is no longer with us. There's crying, there's grief, there's sorrow. But if we had heavenly eyes, we would see that in *shamayim* there's dancing and *simcha*.

Unfortunately, we don't have those eyes. The heavens are closed, so down here we must sit *shiva*."

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Take My House...Please! - The exceptional chesed of the Ozhorover Rebbe zt'l in the aftermath of World War II.

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת וירא**.

רב משה יחיאל אפשטיין, the **אוז'רובר רבי**, managed to leave Europe before World War II at the urging of his grandfather, and he had a small **שול** in New York and **חסידים**. After the war, so one of the first **חסידישע רבי'ס** who managed to reach the shores of America after surviving the camps was the **בלוז'ובר רבי, רבי ישראל שפירא זצ"ל**. If people are familiar, the book about Hasidic tales of the Holocaust by Dr. **יפה אליאך**, many of the stories she brings in there are stories she heard from and about the **בלוז'ובר רבי**.

So when he arrived in New York, he had nothing. He was penniless. He was homeless. The **אוז'רובר רבי** approached him and said, "Please, take my house, take my **שטיבל**, my **שול**, and take my **חסידים**." The **בלוז'ובר רבי** was overwhelmed.

He said, "What? Why?" He says, "I didn't have the **זכות** to go through the seven levels of **גיהנום** that you went through in the war." He said, "I will manage. This is what you need to have."

And when the **בלוז'ובר רבי** told this over to Reb **שלמה לורנץ**, famous personality from **ארץ ישראל** who wrote this down, he said he was very emotional. He said, "Did you ever hear of such **חסד**? That a **רבי** gave me not only his house, not only his **שול**, but even his **חסידים**, and he went off to manage by himself."

A while afterwards, the **אוז'רובר רבי** moved to **ארץ ישראל**, but that wasn't his plan that he happened to be moving to **ארץ ישראל** and he gave the house. He just gave it all.

This is a week where we focus so much on the **חסד** of **אברהם אבינו, הכנסת אורחים** in the beginning of the **פרשה**, but **חסד** in general. And one of the keys of **צדקה** and **חסד** are the words **אשר יחסר לו**. It says you're supposed to give a poor person **כל מחסורו אשר יחסר לו**, everything missing that's missing to him as an individual.

Here, the **אוז'רובר רבי** was able to see that the **בלוז'ובער**, who was a known **רבי** beforehand, needed to be able to rebuild in that way, and he gave him everything that he had.

This is a time, unfortunately a time of war, but fortunately a time of tremendous **חסד**, tremendous **הכנסת אורחים**, tremendous giving in all sorts of ways. People give of their time, of their money, of their hearts, of their souls in order to help those who are homeless because of the war, at least temporarily, the soldiers who are fighting in the war, those who've been harmed in different ways, wounded, or those who unfortunately have lost close ones.

That **חסד** is something that **עם ישראל** have implanted in their DNA from **אברהם אבינו**. May we be **זוכה** to always have that DNA awakened by happy times and to be able to have our eyes open and to see what truly people truly need and be able to give them what they need to

be able to get on their feet again and live happy, healthy lives, not just for themselves, but for all of us.

That's the message of **חסד**, and the message of this great **צדיק**, the **אוז'רובר רבי, זצ"ל**.

זכותו יגן עלינו, may his merit protect us, and may the merit of all the **חסד עם ישראל** is doing protect us and the soldiers and everyone involved, and we should be **זוכה** to see the **גאולה שלימה במהרה בימינו, אמן**. Have a wonderful **שבת**.