

ב"ה
Torah
Tidbits

ISSUE 1538

OU
ישראל

NOV. 4 2023 • כ' מרחשון תשפ"ד

פרשת וירא

PARSHAT VAYEIRA

**UNITED
WE STAND**



Vayeira: The Opening
Page 42
Rabbi Judah Mischel



Amuka: Finding Hope
in the Depths Page 60
Shoshana Judelman



ויתפלל אברהם אל־האלקים בראשית כ"ז

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYEIRA ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:13 PM • HAVDALA 5:25 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:05 PM



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Netanel, our comics writer and designer, is defending our country and unable to produce a comic strip for this week. Stay safe and well Netanel!

THIS WEEK'S COVER IMAGE!

Photo submitted by Dov Lipman of his son Shlomo Lipman

Dov Lipman describes the cover photo with the following words: A tale of two wars. Shlomo's great-grandmother a"h woke up every morning in Auschwitz and prayed to G-d. Today, Shlomo starts every day saying the same words as a proud IDF soldier at war. Am Yisrael Chai.



HELPFUL REMINDERS



Kristallnacht is commemorated on Nov. 9th
(The Hebrew date of Kristallnacht was 16 Marcheshvan)

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	VAYEIRA		CHAYEI SARA	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	4:13	5:25	4:07	5:21
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:31	5:28	4:25	5:24
Beit Shemesh / RBS	4:31	5:26	4:26	5:22
Alon Shvut	4:28	5:26	4:23	5:21
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	4:29	5:26	4:23	5:22
Modiin / Chashmonaim	4:28	5:26	4:23	5:21
Netanya	4:28	5:26	4:23	5:21
Be'er Sheva	4:30	5:28	4:25	5:23
Rehovot	4:29	5:27	4:24	5:22
Petach Tikva	4:13	5:26	4:07	5:22
Ginot Shomron	4:28	5:25	4:22	5:21
Haifa / Zichron	4:17	5:25	4:12	5:20
Gush Shiloh	4:27	5:25	4:22	5:20
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:29	5:27	4:24	5:22
Givat Zeev	4:32	5:25	4:27	5:21
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:29	5:26	4:23	5:22
Ashkelon	4:31	5:28	4:25	5:24
Yad Binyamin	4:29	5:27	4:24	5:22
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:20	5:23	4:15	5:18
Golan	4:25	5:23	4:19	5:18
Nahariya/Maalot	4:26	5:25	4:20	5:20
Afula	4:26	5:24	4:21	5:19
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 6:05 PM • Next Week - 6:00 PM				

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Bava Kama 2



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Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat

Nov 1 - 11 / 17 - 27 MarCheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:03 - 5:11**

Sunrise **5:55 - 6:03**

Sof Zman Kriat Shema **8:58 - 8:43**

Magen Avraham **8:02 - 8:05**

Sof Zman Tefila **9:33 - 9:36**

(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)

Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:22**

Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **11:52**

Plag Mincha **3:41 - 3:35**

Sunset (Including Elevation) **4:54 - 4:47**



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

Last Monday morning, Rabbi Moshe Hauer, Rabbi Shimon Ismach and I went to *Ma'arat Hamachpelah*, the Cave of the Patriarchs, to daven Shacharit. As I listened to the *baal koreh* read from the Torah the beginning of *Parshat Lech Lecha*, “G-d said to Avram: Go away from your land, and your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the Land that I will show you,” while standing where our forefathers and foremothers were buried, I was struck by the significance of beginning Avraham’s story in this place, at this time. The words took on new meaning for me. I began to meditate on the concepts I had just spoken about in the *Amidah*, the first *bracha* of *Magen Avraham*, and I thought about what Avraham did in his life that gave us such merit to return to our Land after two thousand years of exile.

After davening, as these thoughts swirled in my head, I saw my friend, Rabbi Simcha Hochbaum. He said to us, “Isn’t it interesting that this week’s parsha contains the first occurrence in the Torah of *pidyon shevuyim*, the redeeming of a hostage from captivity?” He was referring to how Lot was kidnapped and Avraham had to deal with this by fighting a war to bring him home. I agreed with him that that was indeed interesting, and it caused me to ruminate on these ideas even more.

Leaving *Ma'arat Hamachpelah*, we went to visit the mayor of Kiryat Arba, Eliyahu Leivman and his wife Avishag. Unfortunately, their son Elyakim Shlomo is one of the 239

Israeli captives being held in Gaza, along with his friend and neighbor Eitan Mor who was also taken captive. We sat with Eliyahu, Avishag and their 16 year old daughter Aviyah for a long while, but I could not shake the feeling in my heart of how significant this is. The same issues, the same dilemmas, of hostages and captivity and war, make their appearance in that week’s *parsha*, taking place in this exact location, as we sat in Hebron, in *Elonei Mamre*. We wondered what to do, just like Avraham must have in this place almost 4,000 years ago.

When I returned home, I decided to look into the story in the Torah while doing *shnayim mikra v’echad targum*, and I noticed a few details while reading the text. First of all, I realized that the reason why Lot wasn’t with Avraham, which put him in a situation where he could be kidnapped, was because of how Lot and Avraham had separated from each other. I looked back at how that separation is described by the Torah. Avraham tells Lot: “If you go left, I will go right. If you go right, I will go left” (Bereishit 13:9). While Avraham probably did not have in mind the modern political meaning of left and right, I nevertheless thought about the significance of the

Dedicated L’iluy Nishmat

חיה בת ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה
HELEN SCHIFFMILLER a"h
כ"ו מרחשון whose 5th Yahrtzeit is on

separation between leftists and right-wingers in Israeli politics.

Another interesting detail is how Lot, Avraham's nephew, is described when Avraham hears he was taken captive: "And when Avram heard that his brother was taken captive..." (Bereishit 14:14). Why is Lot called Avraham's brother when he is, after all, Avraham's nephew? The reason

for this is clear to me. When any Jew is in trouble, we automatically feel that that Jew is a brother, a sister, a close family member. Lot may have been Avraham's nephew, but when he was in trouble, he felt

like a brother. There is no better proof for this than what is happening in *Klal Yisrael* right now in response to the crisis. I have no doubt that we are all feeling like brothers and sisters right now to each and every Jew. We are all in this together.

This isn't just a theme in *Lech Lecha*. This week's *parsha*, *Parshat Vayera*, opens with Avraham sitting in his tent after his covenant with Hashem and his *brit milah*. He's in tremendous pain. It's hot. Yet what Avraham Avinu is thinking about, while lying in pain, is "Where are my guests? How can I fulfill the precept of hospitality, *hachnasat orchim*, if there are no people passing by?" It is hard to guess what pained Avraham more.

There are so many acts of *chesed* occurring in our communities right now, but the amount of *hachnasat orchim* we are seeing

in Israel during these times is incredible. When you look at how many Jews living in the Diaspora have opened the homes they own in Israel to families from the north and south. Israelis who own second apartments have invited their brothers and sisters who need shelter and living space. Not only that, but so many living in their own homes have welcomed in one or even more families to live

with them. Everyone has gone the extra mile, making sure everything is there for these families. Even if the refrigerator is working, but a large family from the south is coming, they will replace the refrig-

erator with a larger one to fit their needs. People have bought new beds, tables, chairs, anything that is needed for their fellow Jew. This is true *hachnasat orchim* in action.

It is remarkable to see how the *middot* of Avraham Avinu can be seen in his descendants today. How much he cared for *pidyon*



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המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

shevuyim. How much he focused on *hachnasat orchim*. We have a concept of *maaseh avot siman lebanim* - the actions of the forefathers is a sign for their children. That is truly how it is here.

The world is surprised how united we are. How we care for every single Jew. How much worry we have for 239 Israeli hostages, whom most don't even know and never met. It's because we have the *middot* of our forefathers and foremothers, of Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Rachel and Leah. They taught us what it means to be Jews, with Jewish hearts, and to act like a Jew should.

The fact that we can be here, 4,000 years later, and continue to follow in their footsteps, shows why Avraham was so happy last week at the *Brit Bein Habetarim*, the Covenant of the Pieces. Hashem told him that yes, his children will be in exile, in lands not their own. But they will remain his children. They will keep his covenant and act as he acted. But he also heard the same promise that Rachel Imenu would receive, "And there is hope for your future, says the Lord; and your children shall return to their own border" (Yirmiyahu 31:16). True, there will be struggles. There will be fighting. But so long as we continue with those *middot* exemplified by our forefathers, to help every Jew in need, we can show the world who we are at our best. Let us not forget where we got these *middot* from.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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Vayeira – Praying for Others

The famed kabbalist Rav Yitzchak Luria, the Arizal, taught that before praying one should formally accept upon him or herself the mitzvah of loving one's fellow man, *v'ahavta l'reiacha komocha*, as that is the gateway to entry into G-d's presence. This is remarkable, as prayer is the ultimate religious experience, *bein adam laMakom*, and yet it must be framed and preceded by the consummate interpersonal commitment, *bein adam l'chaveiro*. It was, however, concern for other people that framed the original *shacharit* prayer of Avraham that established the pattern of prayer for the future. When Avraham stood before Hashem in prayer (Bereishit 18:23-33), he was not motivated by the desire for spiritual communion or driven by personal need. His prayer was an expression of love and concern for the people of Sodom. What motivated that original Jewish prayer became the definitive framing for every such prayer.

This perspective can help us resolve an apparent difficulty that arises subsequently in our parsha. We read the story of Sarah being taken by Avimelech and of the plague of barrenness that struck his household as a result. This plague was relieved when Avraham – upon Sarah's release – prayed on their behalf (Bereishis 20:17). The Talmud (BT Bava Kamma 92a) notes that immediately

following this story we are told that G-d remembered Sarah and blessed her with a child. This, explains the Talmud, was because Avraham had prayed for another, even though he had the very same need. One who demonstrates that kind of selflessness will indeed be answered first. Evidently prayer for others – in the spirit of Avraham's prayer for Sodom – is more effective and virtuous than prayer for oneself.

The difficulty rises from the following section (Bereishis 21:17), where we read about Yishmael dying of thirst in the desert. Hagar cannot bear what her son is going through, and so she places him beneath the shelter of a bush and moves some distance away where she raises her voice and weeps. G-d then hears the voice of the child and calls out to Hagar, saying – “Do not fear, for G-d has heard the voice of the child...”. Rashi notes that it was the child's cries who were heard, not those of his mother, “for the prayer of the ill person himself is more powerful than that of the prayers of others on his behalf.”

These two neighboring observations appear to be in conflict. In the first case Avraham's prayer is given extra impact because it is for others, whereas in the latter case, Yishmael's prayer is heard because it is for himself. How do we reconcile these two conflicting sources?

The difference is clear. In the first case, Avraham was not forced to pray for Avimelech; he chose to. Avimelech had apologized to him and had made good to him. He held nothing against him; in fact, he wanted him to thrive. It was Avraham of his own accord who saw their suffering and wanted to do his part to ameliorate it. There is nothing more powerful to G-d, no prayer more welcome, than a prayer that is an expression of our genuine care for each other. Hagar's prayer, on the other hand, was not for her child. Hagar was upset by his suffering, but she was out to relieve her own pain over her son's suffering, not his - witness the fact that she distanced herself from him even as he was suffering and dying. If her concern was truly his pain, she would have stood by him in his suffering. Clearly, her concern was for her own share of her child's pain. She moved to where she would not have to observe, not have to see and to share the depth of his pain.

Hagar averted her eyes from the suffering of her own son. Avraham chose to focus on the suffering of strangers. Avraham defines our legacy, our path in life. It was Avraham's prayer for Sodom that established the format of prayer for the Jewish people, framed by caring for each other.

No matter how long the current war drags on, we will not avert our eyes from the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Israel. May Hashem hear our heartfelt prayers and bring an end to the suffering of *acheinu kol beit Yisrael*. ■



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ותאמר לאברהם גרש האמה הזאת ואת בנה... (כ"א:י)

"And she said to Avraham: Drive away this maidservant and her son.... (21:10)

Would it not have been wiser for Yishmael to remain and receive the same type of parental education that Yitzchak acquired? Perhaps, Yishmael would not have become the evil person that he later became?

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan 1838-1933) answers by saying that Sarah resolved that Yishmael would be a poor role model for Yitzchak. Thereby, leaving the only alternative, to send Yishmael away. While she realized that the opposite could occur of Yitzchak having a positive influence on Yishmael to leave his evil behavior, however, her prophetic perception advised her otherwise.

Avraham was hesitant and needed G-d to comply with Sarah's request of sending Yishmael away. The ability of evil becoming dominant is too great and cannot be risked.

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT VAYEIRA

The beloved stories of the life of Avraham are found in our Parsha. Avraham hosts the angels who tell him of the impending birth of Yitzchak to Sarah. G-d tells Avraham of His intent to destroy Sodom; Avraham pleads on their behalf. The city of Sodom is destroyed, Lot is saved. The nations of Moav and Amon are born from Lot and his daughters. Avraham sojourns in Gerar. Sarah gives birth to Yitzchak. Hagar and Yishmael are sent away. Avraham makes a pact with Avimelech. The parsha concludes with the dramatic story of Akeidat Yitzchak, the near death of Yitzchak at the hands of Avraham.



1ST ALIYA (18:1-14)

G-d appears to Avraham. 3 men are warmly welcomed by Avraham with lavish hospitality. They announce to him that by this time next year Sarah will have a child. She overhears this from the tent and laughs, for her ability to bear a child is a thing of the past. G-d protests – is anything too much for G-d – this time next year you will have had a child.

This story is a precious glimpse into the home of Avraham and Sarah. The whole house participates in the kindness – Avraham, Sarah, the young helpers. And the word run or fast occurs 4 times in 6 verses. This is an energetic, enthusiastic welcome.

The eager hospitality modeled by Avraham becomes the paradigm of chesed for the Jewish people.

Sarah laughs at the news that she will have a child. She is reprimanded for that. But Avraham laughed at the same news at the end of last week's parsha. He is not reprimanded. Rashi comments there: laughter comes in 2 forms. Simcha, happy laughter. And scoffing. Avraham laughed; wow, look at that, me 99, she 90 – and we'll have a child! Sarah scoffed, guffawed: what? Me at 90 and he at 99? Don't think so.

She has a point. Sarah is the realist. Avraham the dreamer. Jewish history will need the dreamers and the realists. The Avot tend to be the dreamers; the Imahot, the women, the realists.



2ND ALIYA (18:15-33)

The men leave for Sodom. G-d reasons that He may not withhold from Avraham, the champion of

May the Torah learned
from this Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of and לע"נ
ROBERT ACKERT ז"ל
ירחמיאל חי בן אברהם ז"ל
כ"ב מרחשון תשפ"ב
on his second yahrzeit
beloved husband, father
and grandfather
*We love and miss you so much
Rita, Dina, Rebekah & family,
Yehoshua Chaim & family*

justice, of His plan to destroy Sodom. Avraham challenges Him: How can You destroy the righteous along with the wicked? And how can You destroy the place if there are righteous people present? Avraham presses his point.

The generosity of Avraham continues, though expressed quite differently here. He refuses to allow, unchallenged, the destruction of Sodom. And his argument changes. The first argument is: why should the same fate be for both righteous and wicked? If You destroy the city, then the same fate awaits both righteous and wicked. A just G-d would punish the wicked, but not the righteous. But then he turns the tables. Don't spare the righteous and punish only the wicked; rather, save the whole city, wicked and all. Avraham is pleading for the lives of the wicked.

Avraham has great generosity of spirit. The Judge of all can judge the wicked; my role is to be generous to them. He previously rescued Lot and all the people of Sodom who had been taken captive in the wars of the 4 Kings and 5 Kings; these same people who then too were already described as wicked. Further on in our parsha, he is not happy with Sarah wanting to send Yishmael away, even though his behavior is not to Sarah's liking. This too is his generosity of spirit.

We would be true students of Avraham if we left the judgement of our fellow man to Him, and were generous to a fault to them instead.



3RD ALIYA (10:1-20)

The men journey to Sodom. Lot prevails on them to stay with him. The men of the city object to

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the presence of these foreigners. It turns violent. The visitors tell Lot that Sodom is to be destroyed and he must leave quickly. His sons in law refuse. The morning dawns and Lot, his wife and daughters leave Sodom, told not to look back.

Lot is Avraham's closest relative. He seems to follow in the footsteps of Avraham. He welcomes the strangers, gives them a place in his home, serves them food. A parallel story to Avraham's kindness to them. But the lesson lies not in the similarities but in the differences. Lot is living in Sodom. That makes all the difference.

This story is the beginning of the theme that will dominate the rest of the book of Genesis: who of Avraham's family is in? And who is out? Avraham's family will inherit the covenant of the Jewish people – but who in his family? After all, Lot is his nearest of kin. With the imminent birth of Yitzchak, the question as to who will inherit the Land of Israel becomes urgent. Will it be all of Avraham's entourage? Lot, Yishmael, Yitzchak? Will Avraham's generosity of spirit extend to the promise of the Land – will he want to include his broader family unit?

Well, one person we can see is not going to be a part of Jewish history: Lot. Lot writes himself out of that possibility with his association with Sodom.



4TH ALIYA (19:21-21:4)

Lot is told to flee Sodom. The cities of Sodom and Gemora are destroyed. Lot's wife looks back and turns to a pillar of salt. Avraham looks out from the hills and sees the destruction. Lot flees to the hills. The 2 daughters of Lot ply him with wine and become pregnant from him,

reasoning that they are the only ones left in the world. They name their children Moav and Amon. Avraham goes to Gerar. Avimelech is told by G-d not to touch Sarah. Avimelech confronts Avraham as to why he hid Sarah's identity from him. Avraham responds: I saw there is no fear of G-d here. G-d fulfills what he promised to Sarah. She gives birth to Yitzchak. Avraham circumcises him as G-d commanded.

There is a lot of "seeing": Lot should not look back, while Avraham is looking over the plain. The daughters see themselves as Noah and family – the sole survivors. Avraham sees there is no fear of G-d.

Lot did not see, or take to heart that he lived amongst sinners. What Lot did not see around him Avraham perceived immediately in Gerar; there is no fear of G-d here.

The story of Lot's daughters is tragic self-deception. Rav Hershel Schachter likes to point out – did they really think, of all the people in the world, they are the most righteous to be saved? There is no one else in the entire world except them? Really? What about Avraham? How did they feel the next day when they walked down the street and saw a whole world of people?



5TH ALIYA (21:5-21)

Yitzchak grows and is weaned. Sarah sees Yishmael playing with Yitzchak. She tells Avraham to banish this boy, for he will not inherit on a par with Yitzchak. This troubles Avraham but G-d tells him to listen to Sarah. Avraham arises early, sends away Hagar and Yishmael. They go to the desert of Be'er Sheva. The water runs out. Hagar cannot bear to see the death of her child and cries. An angel calls to her. Her eyes are opened, she sees a

well and gives water to Yishmael.

The next generation of the Jewish people has now been born. Who will be part of the covenant? Lot is out, but he is not a child of Avraham, albeit a nephew. Sarah tells Avraham that Yishmael, although a child of Avraham, is not the next generation of the Jewish people. Yishmael's banishment is a parallel story to the Akeida that we are about to read. In both stories Avraham arises early, a child walks with a parent, the child's life is in danger, an angel calls, the parent sees what they did not see before, the child is saved. Similar stories teach that G-d cares and saves the one in distress. But similarities are only similar – they are not the same. Yishmael will not be Yitzchak's equal in the next generation of the Jewish people.



6TH ALIYA (21:22-34)

Avimelech initiates a pact with Avraham in Be'er Sheva. They name the place Be'er Sheva from the word to swear. Avraham calls out in G-d's name in Beersheva.

Avraham's fame has prompted a pact. Why would Avimelech make such a pact? It would seem that not only is Avraham famous, but so too are the Divine promises of inheriting the Land of Israel. People know about them. And believe them and respect them. So, they would rather be on Avraham's side.



7TH ALIYA (22:1-24)

Akeidat Yitzchak, the binding of Isaac. Avraham is told to take Yitzchak and offer him as an offering. On the way, Yitzchak questions Avraham. They arrive at the mountain. At the last moment, the angel calls to Avraham. Avraham has



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proven his loyalty to G-d's command. He sees a ram caught in the bush and offers it in the place of Yitzchak. They return to Be'er Sheva.

The most dramatic story in the Torah. A story of absolute loyalty to the Divine command but also one of pathos and irony. The man of generosity, who pleaded for the lives of the wicked of Sodom now prepared to take the life of his son. The one who challenged the injustice of the impending destruction of Sodom, now has no voice of objection. And the most obvious – the one who waited patiently for 25 years for the promise of a child – and a future – now prepared to destroy it all.

A story that can be pondered and studied for a lifetime. Perhaps, one element of the story pertains to the promises. While the promises to Avraham of fame, family and fortune have been granted by G-d. And the promise of his family inheriting the Land of Israel is now able to take shape. So everything in life works out just right. No. Do not think G-d's reach for man and for the Jewish people will be without its complexity, its sacrifices, its mysteries in trying to understand the ineffable ways of G-d. While an intimate bond is being created of G-d's love for the Jewish people, and while we are increasingly being drawn to Him, He remains opaque, inscrutable,

mysterious, ineffable. We live with Divine intimacy and vast distance simultaneously.

HAFTORAH - 2 KINGS , 4:1-37

This week's parsha famously tells us that although Avraham and Sarah were advanced in age they miraculously bear a child. Along these same lines the *haftorah* this Shabbat describes a similar incident in which the navi Elisha assures an elderly childless woman that she will bear a child.

Elisha would often pass through the city of Shunem. A couple who lived in the town offered a place for Elisha to stay. They even made a guest room that Elisha could use whenever he needed. Elisha became aware that the couple was childless. He blessed the woman that she would give birth. Indeed a year later a son was born to the couple.

The story does not end there. A few years later the son died suddenly. The woman called Elisha back to her home. Elisha quickly came and miraculously was able to bring the child back to life. ■

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on their 17th yahrzeits

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this issue of Torah Tidbits
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our father, grandfather,
great-grandfather

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STATS

4th of the 54 sedras; 4th of 12 sedras in Bereshit.
Written on 252 lines in a Torah, rank: 5.
6 Parshiyot; 4 open, 2 closed.
147 pesukim - ranks 7th (4th in Bereshit).
2085 words - ranks 2nd (1st in Bereshit).
7862 letters - rank: 3rd (2nd in Bereshit).
Vayeira is actually the 2nd largest sedra in the Torah. (Naso, is #1 with no rival - Bamidbar, Pinchas, and R'ei all take up more lines than Vayeira, but those sedras each have many parshiyot, which means a lot of blank space between parshiyot, which adds to the line-count.)

MITZVOT

None of Taryag (the 613 mitzvot) are found in Vayeira (one of 17 sedras without entries on the list of 613) - however, there are Midot and values and other lessons.



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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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Optimism Pays

It may not have been the first day I reported to my new job, but it was not many days later that I first met Richard Hood. I had joined a team of new PhDs, some trained as psychologists and some as educators, whose assignment it was to breathe new life into a very old-fashioned, one might even say backward, school system in suburban Washington, D.C.

It was a rapidly changing community that had been semi-rural up until the late 1960s. At the time I joined the school system advisory staff as senior school psychologist, the area was becoming much more diverse. On the one hand, high-level government employees were beginning to move there, finding the real estate prices more attractive than the neighboring counties. But at the same time, there were a number of areas that were depressed socio-economically and were spillovers from the teeming African-American ghettos of our nation's capital. It was not long before that Washington had experienced the riots of 1968.

I have many stories to tell about the years I served in that environment. But I want to focus this week's discussion upon the personality of this one colleague, Richard Hood, a tall, burly man in his early thirties with a Southern drawl that originated in

small-town Mississippi. His politics were liberal; he was open-minded, tolerant, and most empathic. But he was a cynic. His favorite word was "irredeemable." "This school system is 'irredeemable,'" he would say. "The government is irredeemable." "Mankind is irredeemable." "The world is irredeemable." His attitude to life was best expressed in the sign that hung above his desk: "Pessimism Pays."

He felt that people were essentially evil, that a life of pain and frustration awaited us all, that man was fated to suffer. His spiritual mentor was the philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, whose writings have been described as the "Bible of pessimism."

Richard had a bone to pick with Western culture, child-rearing, and public education.

**May the learning in this issue
of Torah Tidbits be לעילוי נשמת**

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world of people whose lives he touched**

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He felt that we deceive our children into believing that the world is basically a benign and safe environment, that success could be achieved by hard work, and good health guaranteed by clean living. He maintained that “we indoctrinate our youth into the belief that the world is a rose-garden, whereas in reality it is a snake pit.”

I had long one-on-one discussions with him, because he was fascinated by Jews and Judaism. In those discussions, he came to believe that “you Jews are the worst of all. You just emerged from the hell of the Holocaust, and you still tell your children that all we will be well if they just cling to your tradition.”

I think of Richard often, and was sad to learn that he passed away several years ago after having returned to his Mississippi origins upon his retirement from a university teaching post. I especially remember him whenever this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Vayera* (Genesis 18:1-22:24), rolls around.

Why *Vayera*? Because it is this week that we read the story of the *akeda*, of Abraham’s obedience to God’s command that he bind his son, Isaac, upon a mountain-top altar and offer him as a human sacrifice to the Lord. This is surely one of the most troubling passages in the entire Bible, and traditional Jewish commentaries



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ביחד ננצח



as well as great secular philosophers have struggled to understand it. How could Abraham, who so valued human life that he stood up to God Himself pleading the case of wicked Sodom and Gomorrah, unhesitatingly obey God’s command that he slay his own son?

That is not a question I will even attempt to address within the limits of this column. But another aspect of the story has always troubled me. At the beginning of the story, Abraham was unaware of its happy ending. He did not know that at the last moment, an angel would order him to desist from sacrificing his son. As far as he knew, a terrible, unspeakable tragedy was about to unfold. But in his words to the servants who accompanied him, he was completely reassuring and gave them no inkling of the catastrophe that was about to

occur: “You stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you.”

And he gave Isaac no hint about the fate that awaited him. Did he not owe the lad a glimpse of his imminent death, a chance to prepare himself to meet his Maker? Was it not the height of duplicity for Abraham to reassure his son that all would be well? I could just hear Richard ask these piercing questions. Although, to my recollection, he and I never discussed the Bible, he was raised as a Southern Baptist and surely knew the story of the binding of Isaac.

To me, the answer to these questions lies in this phrase, repeated twice in the narrative, for emphasis: “And the two of them walked on together”. Abraham conveyed to Isaac this message: “I am with you. I will hold your hand. I will be there for you despite the horror that awaits us both.” This is the attitude that Jewish parents have conveyed to the children throughout all of the tragedies of Jewish history. Yes, there are persecutions and pogroms and torture and worse. But I will be there with you. I will be close to you.

This is one of the themes of so many of the Psalms. Rarely is the Psalmist assured that “everything will be alright.” More often, he is told, “I, God, am with you.” I am

with you in your exile, in your wanderings, in your suffering. I am with you in the hell of Auschwitz and Treblinka. The Psalmist asserts, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.”

The Talmud teaches us that the *Shechinah*, the Holy Presence, is in exile alone with us. Most eloquently, Asaf in Psalm 73 expresses the consoling power of the awareness of God’s closeness in the most dire of circumstances: “I have been constantly afflicted, each morning brings new punishments...Yet I was always with You, You held my right hand...As for me, nearness to God is good...”

Abraham felt that his duty to obey God took priority over the love for his beloved son. That is one central lesson of the story, although it remains a disconcerting lesson for us. But this much we can comprehend: his behavior reflected reassurance and trust, optimism and hope. At the end of the story, that hope proved justified.

Richard could never fathom Abraham’s lesson. To remain hopeful in the face of threatening doom, to be able to see beyond the dark clouds of fate, to continue to pray even when “the sharp sword dangles over one’s neck:” that is Abraham’s lesson and that is the Jewish way.

More than just the “Jewish way,” this capability is the secret of Jewish survival. It is a secret that we all must learn, especially in our times, when many challenges sadly still beset us. We can be confident that the *Shechinah* is there for us, but we must be sure that we are there for each other. ■

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לעילוי נשמות

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The Binding of Isaac: A New Interpretation

It is the hardest passage of all, one that seems to defy understanding. Abraham and Sarah have waited years for a child. God has promised them repeatedly that they would have many descendants, as many as the stars of the sky, the dust of the earth, the grains of sand on the seashore. They wait. No child comes.

Sarah, in deep despair, suggests that Abraham should have a child by her hand-maid Hagar. He does. Ishmael is born. Yet God tells Abraham: This is not the one. By now Sarah is old, post-menopausal, unable by natural means to have a child.

Angels come and again promise a child. Sarah laughs. But a year later Isaac is born. Sarah's joy is almost heart-breaking:

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter; all those who hear will laugh with me." Then she said, "Who would have told Abraham, 'Sarah will nurse children'? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age" (Gen. 21:6-7).

Then come the fateful words:

"Take your son, your only one, the one

whom you love – Isaac – and go to the land of Moriah. There, offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, the one that I will show you." (Gen. 22:2).

The rest of the story is familiar. Abraham takes Isaac. Together they journey for three days to the mountain. Abraham builds an altar, gathers wood, binds his son and lifts the knife. At that moment:

The angel of the Lord called out to him from the heavens, "Abraham! Abraham!"

He said, "Here I am."

"Do not lift your hand against the boy; do nothing to him, for now I know that you fear God: for you have not withheld from Me your son, your only one." Gen. 22:11-12

The trial is over. It is the climax of Abraham's life, the supreme test of faith, a key moment in Jewish memory and self-definition.

But it is deeply troubling. Why did God so nearly take away what He had given? Why did He put these two aged parents – Abraham and Sarah – through so appalling

a test? Why did Abraham, who had earlier challenged God on the fate of Sodom, saying, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justly?" not protest this cruel act against an innocent child?

The standard interpretation, given by all the commentators - classical and modern - is that Abraham demonstrates his total love of God by being willing to sacrifice the most precious thing in his life, the son for whom he has been waiting for so many years.

The Christian theologian Søren Kierkegaard wrote a powerful book about it, *Fear and Trembling*, in which he coined such ideas as the "teleological suspension of the ethical"¹ – the love of God may lead us to do things that would otherwise be considered morally wrong – and "faith in the absurd" – Abraham trusted God to make the impossible possible. He believed he would lose Isaac but still keep him. For Kierkegaard, faith transcends reason.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik saw the Binding as demonstrating that we must not expect always to be victorious. Sometimes we must experience defeat. "God tells man to withdraw from whatever man desires the most."²

All these interpretations are surely correct. They are part of our tradition. I want, however, to offer a quite different reading, for one reason. Throughout Tanach, the gravest sin is child sacrifice. The Torah and the prophets consistently regard it with horror. It is what pagans do. This is

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, and the Sickness Unto Death*, 1843, translated by Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954, see pp. 55, 62-63.

2. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Majesty and Humility," *Tradition* 17:2, Spring. 1978, pp. 25-37.



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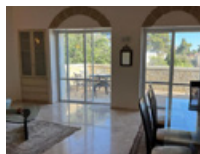
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Jeremiah on the subject:

“They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal - something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind” (Jer. 19:5).

And this is Micah:

“Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:7)

It is what Mesha, King of Moab, does to get the gods to grant him victory over the Israelites:

When the King of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the King of Edom, but they failed. Then he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land” (2 Kings 3:26-27).

How can the Torah regard as Abraham's supreme achievement that he was willing to do what the worst of idolaters do? The fact that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son would seem to make him – in terms of Tanach considered as a whole – no better than Baal or Molech worshippers or the pagan king of Moab. This cannot be the only possible interpretation.

There is an alternative way of looking at the trial. To do so we must consider an overriding theme of the Torah as a whole. Let us assemble the evidence.

First principle: God owns the land of Israel. That is why He can command the return of property to its original owners in the Jubilee year:

“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine. You are merely migrants and tenants to Me” (Lev. 25:23).

Second principle: God owns the Children

of Israel, since He redeemed them from slavery. That is what the Israelites mean when they sang, at the Red Sea:

“Until Your people crossed, Lord, until the people You acquired [*am zu kanita*] crossed over. (Ex. 15:16)

Therefore they cannot be turned into permanent slaves:

“For the Israelites are My servants, whom I brought out from Egypt: they cannot be sold as slaves. (Lev. 25:42)”

Third principle: God is the ultimate owner of all that exists. That is why we must make a blessing over anything we enjoy:

Rav Judah said in the name of Samuel: To enjoy anything of this world without first reciting a blessing is like making personal use of things consecrated to heaven, since it says, “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.” R. Levi contrasted two texts. It is written, “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,” and it is also written, “The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the children of men!” – There is no contradiction: in the one case it is before a blessing has been said, in the other, after a blessing has been said (Brachot 35a).

All things belong to God, and we must acknowledge this before we make use of anything. That is what a blessing is: acknowledging that all we enjoy is from God.

This is the jurisprudential basis of the whole of Jewish law. God rules by right, not by might. God created the universe; therefore God is the ultimate owner of the universe. The legal term for this is “*eminent domain*.” Therefore, God has the right to prescribe the conditions under which we may benefit from the universe. It is to establish

this legal fact – not to tell us about the physics and cosmology of the Big Bang – that the Torah begins with the story of Creation.

This carries a special depth and resonance for the Jewish people since in their case God is not just – as He is for all humankind – Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is also, for Jews, the God of history, who redeemed them from slavery and gave them a land that originally belonged to someone else, the “seven nations.” God is Sovereign of the universe, but in a special sense He is Israel’s only ultimate King, and the sole source of their laws. That is the significance of the book of Exodus. The key narratives of the Torah are there to teach us that God is the ultimate Owner of all.

In the ancient world, up to and including the Roman Empire, children were considered the legal property of their parents. They had no rights. They were not legal personalities in themselves. Under the Roman principle of *patria potestas* a father could do whatever he wished with his child, including putting him to death. Infanticide was well known in antiquity (and in fact it has even been defended in our time by the Harvard philosopher Peter Singer, in the case of severely handicapped children). That, for example is how the story of Oedipus begins, with his father Laius leaving him to die.

It is this principle that underlies the entire practice of child sacrifice, which was widespread throughout the pagan world. The Torah is horrified by child sacrifice, which it sees as the worst of all sins. It therefore seeks to establish, in the case of children, what it establishes in the case of the universe as a whole, the land

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of Israel, and the people of Israel. We do not own our children. God does. We are merely their guardians on God's behalf.

Only the most dramatic event could establish an idea so revolutionary and unprecedented – even unintelligible – in the ancient world. That is what the story of the Binding of Isaac is about. Isaac belongs to neither Abraham nor Sarah. Isaac belongs to God. All children belong to God. Parents do not own their children. The relationship of parent to child is one of guardianship only. God does not want Abraham to sacrifice his child. God wants him to renounce ownership in his child. That is what the angel means when it calls to Abraham, telling him to stop, “You have not withheld from Me your son, your only one.”

The Binding of Isaac is a polemic against, and a rejection of, the principle of *patria potestas*, the idea universal to all pagan cultures that children are the property of their parents.

Seen in this light, the Binding of Isaac is now consistent with the other foundational narratives of the Torah, namely the creation of the universe and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The rest of the narrative also makes sense. God had to show Abraham and Sarah that their child was not naturally theirs, because his birth was not natural at all. It took place after Sarah could no longer conceive.

The story of the first Jewish child establishes a principle that applies to all Jewish children. God creates legal space between parent and child, because only when that space exists do children have the room to grow as independent individuals.

The Torah ultimately seeks to abolish all relationships of dominance and

submission. That is why it dislikes slavery and makes it, within Israel, a temporary condition rather than a permanent fate. That is why it seeks to protect children from parents who are overbearing or worse.

Abraham, we argued in last week's study, was chosen to be the role model for all time of what it is to be a parent. We now see that the Binding of Isaac is the consummation of that story. A parent is one who knows that they do not own their child. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks zt"l** are part of his 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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Respite for Evacuated Families

We have representatives in 6 hotels in Yerushalayim to ensure the families there receive physical and emotional support. NCSY Israel ran a carnival at the Ramada hotel for over 1,800 displaced children. The Zula band is going around to the hotels to provide uplifting respite for children, teens and adults. We will continue to provide for these families.

OU Israel's Crisis Hotline

OU Israel launched a Hebrew emotional support hotline (**Chaverim Makshivim *8298**) which is providing support for the tens of thousands of Israeli teens who are suffering emotionally and mentally from the trauma, loss, anxiety and more since the start of the war. The hotline is run by trained social workers and volunteers who will provide a listening ear, and support and caring to help people cope and become more resilient.

Opportunities for English-Speaking Olim

We recognize the challenge that so many of our English-speaking olim families are grappling with as we face the current reality in Israel. Many are dealing with





the anxiety of their first experiences with sirens and many are facing the first time their children are serving in the IDF during a war. OU Israel is providing twice-daily chizuk calls, virtual art therapy for children, tools for parents to help their families overcome trauma, volunteer opportunities and more. Recordings of the chizuk calls and additional resources can be viewed at ouisrael.org/program/chizuk.



Emergency First-Aid and Chizuk Kit

The OU has packed and distributed over 3,000 resilience packages, which include first-aid supplies, Tehillim, and Israeli flag and letter for chizuk. Research shows people feel stronger when they have first-aid kits, and the comfort of a Sefer Tehillim is timeless. These kits are being packaged and distributed by Zula teens and volunteers. Many have gone to OU Israel Youth Centers participants and staff who have been evacuated from their homes.

Crucial Support to Those Who Lost Loved Ones

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“...V'torat chessed al l'shona”

The events we read of in this week's *haftarah*, a selection from the fourth perek in *M'lachim Bet*, bear a close resemblance to the events we read of in the Torah itself. The story Elisha and the Shunamite woman tells of the astonishing birth of a son to a once-barren woman and her elderly husband, a birth foretold by the navi Elisha and doubted by the woman. It then goes on to relate how, years later, the parents almost lose that cherished son who is miraculously saved only through the intervention of Elisha. The story echoes that of Avraham and Sarah, a story that also tells of the astonishing birth of a son to a once-barren woman and her elderly husband, a birth foretold by G-d Himself and doubted by Sarah. Years later, they too almost lose that son who is saved only through the intervention of Hashem's angel.

But there is an introductory story in the *haftarah* that also echoes the events found in the *parsha*. Here we read of a woman, widowed of her righteous, G-d-fearing husband, who stands to lose her only two sons, just as the *parsha* tells of a righteous, G-d fearing husband who stands to lose both of his the sons: Yishma'el, whom he was told to send away, and Yitzchak, whom he was told to sacrifice.

It is interesting to note that the miracles found in our *parasha* were performed directly by G-d or His angels while those we read of in the *haftarah* are brought through the navi. This change reflects the conscious desire of Hashem to have Man move from a purely G-d-based

existence to one where he too shares in the responsibility of building an ethical and caring society.

But perhaps most interestingly, is that we find a righteous woman at the center of each of the stories-both in the Torah and in the *haftarah*. It was our virtuous matriarch whose saintliness was rewarded by G-d with the birth of Yitzchak and it was her concern for the upbringing of her only child that had her demand the removal of Yishma'el from the house. Her demand was not acceptable to Avraham, yet her foresight and concern was supported by Hashem, Who told Avraham to do everything that Sarah tells him.

The two stories of the *haftarah* also highlight the deeds of righteous women. The pleas of the righteous widow were answered by Elisha and the barrenness of the wealthy Shunamite, was removed by Hashem as a reward for her generosity and acts of kindness. In both navi stories men play almost no part, (indeed, none of their names are mentioned) with one husband having died and one merely tangential to the story. It is the acts of women that capture our attention in the deed they performed in the *haftarah* and in the more subtle actions in the Torah.

What is made clear is that our Torah is a *Torat Chessed*. It is a moral code grounded in acts of kindness and compassion.

And, more often than not, it is the women create that culture within the home and, by doing so, lay the groundwork of *cheded* in each and every generation. ■

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Educating - By Setting A Personal Example

יִקְחֵנָּה מֵעֵט־מַיִם וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת
הָעֵץ (בראשית יח:ד)

Please let a little water be taken, and bathe your feet, and recline under the tree (Bereshit 18:4).

The Torah does not state קח נא (direct command to take) but rather יקח נא (a passive command, it will be taken for you) from which the gemara derives that Avraham asked a messenger (Yishmael) to provide the guests with water (Bava Metzia 86b). The gemara suggests that actions that Avraham performed personally, Hashem performed directly for Am Yisrael. Avraham personally prepared food for the guests and so God directly provided Am Yisrael with the manna. However, since Avraham provided water through a messenger, God provided water indirectly, via the well in the desert.

The Eish Tamid inquires- what is so wrong with Avraham asking his son Yishmael to bring water to the guests? Obviously, it was to teach him how to treat guests – so why is it viewed less favorably?

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Perhaps it is to portray that the most powerful means of educating our children is by setting a personal example.

Later in the parsha the Torah informs us that Avraham taught his children.

כִּי יִדְעֵתִיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאָה אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשִׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט (בראשית יח:יט)

For I have known him because he commands his sons and his household after him, that they should keep the way of Hashem to perform righteousness and justice (Bereshit 18:19).

Yet, in the text we do not find any evidence of Avraham teaching his children *midot*. Clearly, he taught them by example. The most powerful tool in education is one of setting a personal example. A child is most influenced by seeing the way in which a parent or role model conducts themselves.

MANOACH

A similar lesson is derived from the *haftara* of *Parashat Naso* which recounts the famous story of the birth of Shimshon: An angel appears to the (unnamed) wife of Manoach and tells her that she will soon have a son. The angel instructs her that she must not drink wine during her pregnancy, as her son will be a *nazir* from birth. She runs to tell her husband what happened. Manoach is incredulous and asks to meet the angel. The angel indeed reappears in the same place, and if we look closely, we see

that he also repeats his message verbatim. Only after hearing the message himself does Manoach accept it and pledge to obey it.

Rav Shimon Schwab asks what is really going on here. Manoach heard the exact same message from the angel that he had heard from his wife. What did the angel say that clarified things for Manoach?

Rav Schwab explains that Manoach knew the laws of *nezirut* and was asking an educational question: “How can I bring up a child who is a *nazir* if I myself am not a *nazir*? I am going to be drinking wine and going into cemeteries! Get the angel back here to teach me how I can educate my child about something that I myself do not observe!”

The angel answered: “You’re right. You cannot educate your child in something if you do not do it yourself.” If one is not teaching by example, they are not truly educating. Manoach, too, had to become a *nazir*. If we look back at the *pesukim*, we can see some ambiguity:

מכל אשר יצא מגפן היין לא תאכל ויין ושכר אל
תשת וכל טמאה אל תאכל כל אשר צויתיה תשמר
(שופטים יג:ד)

From all that comes out of the grapevine shall not be eaten (*tokhal*), and wine or strong drink shall not be drunk (*tesht*), and any unclean (thing) may not be eaten; all that I commanded her; observe (*tishmor*). (*Shoftim* 13:14)

We read all of these terms – *tokhal*, *tesht*, *tishmor* – in the third-person feminine form, but they can also be read in the second-person neuter form. It’s not “she shall not drink.” Rather, it can be read, “you shall not drink.” The angel was instructing Manoach to become a *nazir* and set a personal example for his son Shimshon!

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If one wants to educate a child to not talk during davening and to learn Torah in his free time, constantly demanding it of a child may not always be the best way to achieve this goal. Serving as a role model and setting a personal example may prove more effective.

During this challenging time, our children are influenced by the manner in which we react to pressure. If we act with a recognition that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge of everything that transpires then that will strengthen our children’s *emunah* and *bitachon* as well. May we be able to be the proper role models for our children so that they can mature as healthy, *bnei torah* and *ba’ale midot*! ■

Mazal Tov to Camp Dror Director
Cindy & Israel Wiesel and family
on the birth of a **granddaughter**,
Tzofia Reut, daughter of
Elie & Sarina Wiesel





Remarkable Recollections

“*Vayizkor Elokim et Avraham, vayishalach et Lot mitoch ha-hafecha* - Hashem remembered Avraham and allowed Lot to escape the upheaval.” (*Bereisheet* 19:29) Rashi explains this perplexing presentation to mean that Lot was saved in the merit of not revealing that Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu were husband and wife when they went down to Egypt. He is rewarded now for that moment of silence. The commentators wonder why this was the merit that saved Lot. Was not taking care of the visiting angels at the expense of his life a worthy merit in its own right?

Rav Weinberger in *Shemen Hatov* wonders why Lot was essentially worthy of being destroyed along with the residents of Sedom. After all, he did have several good qualities that could act in his favor. However, as Lot was a respected judge, explains Rav Weinberger, he had the responsibility to admonish the actions of his compatriots yet he did not do so; his silence condemned him. At the same time, Hashem recalled when Lot's silence was advantageous, thus, measure for measure, this is the merit that specifically saved him.

Many commentators view Lot's act of chesed with the angels as somewhat limited. The *Beit Halevi* remarks that one can't compare the way Lot performed the

mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* to the way Avraham Avinu did. Avraham's guests appeared as regular people, he served them royally with the finest foods and the greatest respect. When these same angels came to Lot, they looked like angels. Obviously, Lot was going to treat them with respect and even risk his life for them. It was therefore not considered enough of a merit to save him from destruction.

Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel, the *Saba* of Sladboka offers a very famous answer. Although every mitzvah generates a reward, it is only those mitzvot that involve *mesirut nefesh*, that challenge a person to go beyond his self-perception, that ultimately make enough of an impression to merit redemption. Lot grew up in Avraham Avinu's household where chesed and specifically inviting guests was a natural exercise. Lot never had to work hard to develop this *middah*. Money, however, and the prospect of riches was a great *nisayon* for him. Lot's silence in Egypt took significant will power and restraint to overcome his desire for material reward. This courageous effort affected his salvation from destruction with Sedom. Rav Dessler in *Michtav M'Eliyahu* adds that it is in the *nekudat habechira*, the place where one struggles, where reward is found. All areas

where one does mitzvot without struggle, where one has already conquered the conflict, merit reward, but the deeper reward comes from the growth found in struggling to decide what to do.

Now, when we are confronted with a real “*et tzarah*,” we must collect as much merit as we can to earn Divine protection. Our study of Lot’s salvation can serve as an inspiration for all of us to move beyond our comfort zone, to stretch ourselves and invest more in our *Avodat Hashem* and *bein adam lechavero*. May Hashem’s grace be forthcoming to grant us ultimate peace and salvation. ■

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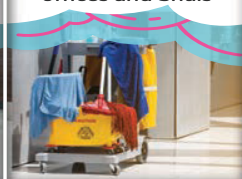
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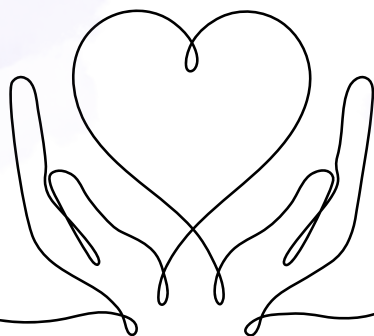


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RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

Executive Director, Camp HASC
Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of
Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

Vayeira: The Opening

A *gaon* in Torah and a renowned educator, Reb Mendel Kaplan, zt'l, was a beloved Rebbe and mentor at the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago and Yeshiva of Philadelphia. As a young man in Europe, he learned in Baranovich under Reb Elchonon Wasserman, and filled in as *maggid shiur* when Reb Elchonon was overseas. For his American charges, Reb Mendel was something of a bridge to the pre-war glory of yeshiva world, sharing *hashkafic* insights on current events as his students taught him English by reading to him the Chicago Tribune. A Rebbe and mentor to notable, accomplished *talmidim* including Rav Chaim Malinowitz, Moshe Gottesman of HANC and Rav Berel Wein, shlit'a, Reb Mendel inspired a generation of builders of Torah.

A young woman employed in the yeshiva as a secretary once brought her nine-year old son with her to work. The woman was not observant of Torah and mitzvos, and her son was enrolled in public school. When Reb Mendel noticed the young boy playing underfoot in the office, he introduced himself and welcomed him warmly. Reb Mendel pointed to the Chumash on the desk and asked the young visitor if he knew what it was. "Sure I do!" the boy answered, "it's a Bible."

"No, my dear child, it is not a bible... this is

a Chumash, something very, very special."

He then pulled up two chairs and sat with the boy for an extended period of time, sharing stories from the Chumash that the child smilingly appreciated and enjoyed.

Later that day a different member of the yeshiva staff asked him why he had devoted so much of his precious time to a nine-year old boy. Answered Reb Mendel, "I hope and pray that I've planted a seed that will grow...and *b'ezras Hashem*, yield fruits years from now. No doubt, whether in this world or the next, the impact of even a little bit of learning will have an impact."

Our sedra begins with the powerful imagery of the righteous, elderly Avraham, post-op, in excruciating pain, waiting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day in order to spot any opportunities to welcome others:

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָלָה
כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם

"Now Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent when the day was hot." (18:1)

After years on the road, traveling city to city inspiring others and collecting and uplifting souls, we continue the theme of *nefesh asher asah*, "the souls that they had made". Sarah and Avraham plant themselves at a major

crossroads, pitching their tent to ‘open the gates’ for converts, travelers and others to join them in their home, and to observe and learn their holy ways.

Rebbe Menachem Nachum of Cherenobyl, the *Meor Eynayim* (Vayeira, 39), cites imagery from the Midrash Rabbah. In the future, Avraham will sit at the “opening” to Gehenom and collect any Jewish souls from עֹבְרֵי הַבְּמַקְּ הַבִּכָּא, “passing through the valley of weeping” (*Tehillim*, 84:7). The word *oveir*, someone who has transgressed, shares a root with the word for ‘wayfarer’, here specifically those on a trajectory toward the vale of tears and suffering, until Avraham meets them on their way, collects them and lifts them up.

Based on the juxtaposition and *drasha* of the Meor Einayim, Professor Ora Wis-kind-Elper, one of the wise-women and great Torah teachers of our generation, frames the setting of our sedra, פתח האוהל, “at the opening”, as a deliberate thematic device calling our attention to a central *midah* and way of service that Sarah Imeinu and Avraham Avinu cultivated. They were masters of sitting ‘at the opening of the tent’, in plain sight, waiting to engage wayward souls in need of shelter and assistance, and to transform their lives. Whether through interrupting his personal prayer to greet and serve guests, or descending from spiritual heights to sit compassionately at the entrance of Gehenom, Avraham was committed to being a blessing to others, however they might show up.

The means through which Avraham and Sarah drew others close was serving them food, providing for physical needs and calling attention to the source of the bounty they

had enjoyed. וַיֵּטֶע אֶשְׁל בְּבֵאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם בְּשֵׁם ה'. “And he planted an *eishel* in Beer-Sheba, and he called there in the name of Hashem” (21:33). Chazal suggest two interpretations of this *eishel*: it was an orchard from which to bring fruits for the guests, or it was an inn for lodging. Rashi points out the word נטיעה, ‘planting’, shares same root as the Torah’s expression וַיֵּטֶע, which can also mean ‘and he set up (a tent).’ In either case, whether a shelter, or a process that will ultimately yield fruits, the *Eishel* can be seen as a metaphor for an aspect of Avraham’s educational methodology of faithfully investing in the wellbeing of others.

Perhaps Avraham’s ability to connect with individuals of varying spiritual levels and at very different stages of their journey lies in a teaching from Reb Ahron, the Belzer Rebbe. Avraham’s placement at פתח האוהל implies that our forefather saw himself at “the opening point”, or the *beginning* of his *Avodas Hashem*. Although he had accomplished and experienced so much, he maintained his *temimus*, simple openness, and viewed himself as a person at the beginning of his spiritual path.

Kabbalistically as well, the order of these initial *parshios* hints toward unfolding stages of inner growth. *Bereishis*, the Beginning, represents our initial attainment of wisdom. *Noach*, meaning “rest” expresses the next stage, settling into that wisdom. In *Lech Lecha*, we “go forth”, and with all its ups and downs, our journey of sharing Divine wisdom commences. Arriving at Vayera, Hashem, the Source of Wisdom, “appears”, revealing Himself openly to us. Now we are fully empowered to ‘plant’ the seeds of wisdom in all who pass by, refreshing and

nourishing them, and to bring them under the shelter of the Wings of the Shechinah.

Parshas Vayeira encourages us to continue to prayerfully cultivate our seeds of faith with love and hope, setting up a nurturing and healthy structure and environment of growth for the next generation. May our encounters with whomever we meet elevate us and them, and bring about further revelation of Hashem's name in the world! ■

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Real Life Rescues



EMT Reunites with Policeman He Saved In Under Fire Rescue

In a recent encounter, volunteer EMT Gad Amar, hailing from Ofakim, was reunited with a policeman whose life he saved on the bloody Shabbat of October 7th.

On the morning of October 7th, at 6:30 A.M., Amar was awakened by a sudden barrage of rockets directed at Ofakim. Approximately half an hour later, the sound of heavy gunfire became audible not far from his house. As a United Hatzalah volunteer EMT and a reserve combat officer in the IDF, Amar felt a sense of duty to respond and provide assistance. He instructed his family to stay in their protective room and lock the doors, donned his protective vest and helmet, and proceeded toward the source of the gunfire. Unarmed, he encountered a combat soldier on leave who was armed and decided to proceed together. After a brief walk, lasting about ten minutes, they reached the site of the incident.

Terrorists were firing with assault rifles in every direction. The pair coordinated with police officers already at the scene to secure the area and search for potential casualties. Shortly after that, a group of four Yasam police officers arrived in an armored vehicle and engaged the terrorists. Following an intense exchange of gunfire, three individuals sustained injuries. Amar attended to the policeman who was most seriously injured and instructed others how to treat those who were more lightly injured. The policeman had been shot in the waist and was experiencing profuse bleeding. The volunteer packed the wound to stop the bleeding.

Due to the unavailability of ambulances in the vicinity, the EMT instructed policemen and civilians at the scene to transport the three injured Yasam policemen in the armored police vehicle, while he stayed in the field and continued to go from one area to another to treat the injured.

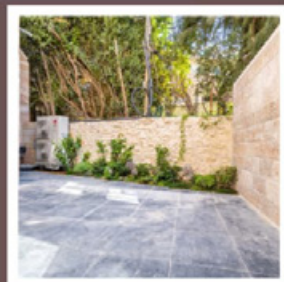
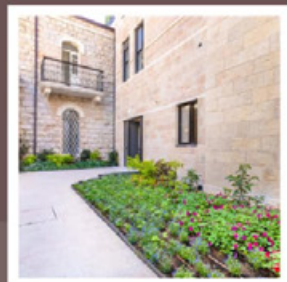
On Thursday last week, Amar reunited with the policeman in a touching encounter at Soroka Hospital. The policeman's family members were moved to tears when the volunteer entered the hospital room in his reserve uniform and EMT vest and hugged the Yasam officer, who expressed his gratitude, saying, "Thank you, you simply saved my life." Amar responded, "I did my job as an EMT. You and your team also saved many Ofakim residents by promptly arriving at the scene and focusing the terrorists' attention on this one area, so we both saved lives that day."





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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Each year as we read *Parshat Vayeira*, and recall *Avraham Avinu's* incredible legacy of total faith and trust in *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, I am particularly drawn to three *pesukim* in the midst of the account of the *Akeidat Yitzchak*.

וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵצֵי הָעֹלָה וַיַּשֶּׂם עַל־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַמֵּאֲכָלֶת וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו: וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאַיֵּה הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵקִים יְרָאֵה־לוֹ הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה בְּנִי וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together. Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "G-d will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together. (Bereshit 22:6-8)

Yitzchak Avinu, sensing what is about to transpire, turns to his father, and asks where is the animal which will be offered unto the *Ribono Shel Olam*. *Avraham Avinu* replies with these powerful words:

"*Elokim yireh lo HaSeh, Bni.... G-d will reveal to us the sheep, Bni-my son.*"

The *Kedushat Levi, Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy'a* offers a unique interpretation to explain *Avraham's* reply to *Yitzchak*.

Elokim yireh lo HaSeh, Bni - Hashem will reveal to us whether the offering will

indeed be a sheep, **or if you, B'ni - my son is to be that offering.** As stunning as this reading of the statement may be in and of itself, perhaps equally stunning is the verse's conclusion- *vayeilchu shneihem yachdav, and the two of them walked together.*

Rashi explains, that even upon hearing his father confirm that which he already may have intuited, that indeed he is to be the offering, *Yitzchak Avinu* walks together with his father, *vayeilchu shneihem yachdav, and the two of them walked together - with equal intent in their hearts.*

Each of these giants of faith were willing and ready for this inconceivable test, indeed they were ready to face this ultimate challenge, together.

During the past many weeks, *Am Yisrael* has faced our enemies and come together in the spirit of *vayeilchu shneihem yachdav*, in a way that has been unprecedented in most of our lifetimes.

Yehi Ratzon, May it be that despite the many challenges that these uncertain and turbulent times have dictated for us, we will continue to find ways to be there for one another, and to strengthen and support one another, so that we may indeed traverse these trying times, together. May we soon be blessed, *B'Ezrat Hashem, to return* to a normal routine, inspired to build an even more vibrant, united community here in *Artzeinu HaKedosha.* ■



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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN
Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Addressing the War Today

The Ideological War Between Yitzchak and Yishma'el

Though initially weary of dispatching his older son, Avraham accedes to his wife's wishes and immediately dismisses Yishma'el. Yitzchak, and not Yishma'el, will succeed Avraham in his divinely installed mission. Though the Torah doesn't offer explicit reasons for Yitzchak's selection, two factors are alluded to.

LIFE OR DEATH?

One difference between the culture of Yitzchak and that of Yishma'el is showcased by the akeidah, an event which only commences *after* Yishma'el has left the scene.

Initially, Avraham is instructed to deliver Yitzchak to Hashem as a sacrifice, only to be halted, at the very last minute, by a divine angel. Avraham's knife is drawn and Yitzchak's neck is taught, as new instructions descend from Heaven. The akeidah was *staged*, drawing Avraham to the brink of human sacrifice, precisely to debunk any notion that Hashem desires human sacrifice. The akeidah repudiates the concept of human sacrifice as part of religion. Had the akeidah not been staged, this message would not have been as evident. By terminating the akeidah

at the very last minute, Hashem loudly announced "I don't want human blood and I don't desire human sacrifice". Hashem wants life and cherishes life.

Having been instructed to stand down from the akeidah, Avraham still requested to symbolically draw some blood from his son. Having generated such heroic passion and staggering faith, shouldn't he be given the opportunity to express it, even without actually sacrificing Yitzchak. As Rashi explains, Hashem responds אל תעש לו מאומה which literally means don't do anything, even to draw blood.

Through the akeidah, Hashem instructs Avraham, and his successor Yitzchak, to construct a religion which cherishes life and preserves human dignity. The drama of the akeidah can only occur once Yishma'el has departed. The descendants of Yishma'el will, tragically, craft a macabre religion of death and blood. Our battle with Islamic fundamentalism is a continuation of this original ideological split and is the reason we were chosen over Yishma'el. We value human life as the greatest gift of a compassionate and caring G-d. They

celebrate death and suffering, wreaking havoc upon their enemies, while subjecting their own people to war and affliction. For them, life is cheap and the akeidah's message is irrelevant. By highlighting the value of human life through the akeidah, The Torah provides the first reason for Yitzchak's selection over Yishma'el.

TWO WORLDS

The second reason for Yitzchak's selection appears during the dismissal of Yishma'el. When instructing Avraham to dispatch Yishma'el, Hashem announces: **וְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לְךָ זֶרַע** (literally “in Yitzchak you will have future progeny”). Grammatically, the word “Yitzchak” should not have included the letter “bet” as a preface. Hashem should have simply stated that “Yitzchak” will be designated as Avraham's successor. Instead, Hashem added an extra “bet” or “ב” to the name of Yitzchak.

The midrash claims that the *reason behind Yitzchak's selection* and the removal of Yishma'el is coded within this extra letter “bet”, which is the numeric equivalent of the number two. The term “*b'Yitzchak*” showcases that, unlike Yishma'el, Yitzchak acknowledges *two* worlds. Due to his capacity to acknowledge “two worlds” – this world and the afterlife- Yitzchak is chosen and Yishma'el is demoted. The extra letter “bet” contains the seed of Jewish selection.

This straightforward reading suggests that Yitzchak alone acknowledges the afterlife. This reading, though, is historically inaccurate. In addition to Judaism, most world cultures and religions acknowledge the afterlife. Without question, Islam acknowledges “Akhira” or



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the “other” world as a primary element of faith. It is intellectually dishonest to portray Judaism as the *only* religion to acknowledge the next world or to justify Yitzchak's selection based upon this uniquely Jewish tenet of faith.

More likely, the midrash celebrates our unique ability not just to acknowledge the two worlds, but to unify them. Much of the modern world has become so entranced with our culture, technology, and the seductions of modern life, that they have completely abdicated any vision of, or belief in, a future world. Our mesmerizing world has dimmed any reality which lies beyond the enchanting delights of modernity. Human imagination has become shackled to a cold and barren empirical prison.

Just the same, the other half of humanity is so captivated by the promises of the

next world, that they look to secede from the affairs and challenges of this world. Religious systems which are pivoted upon the experience of Nirvana – literally being “blown out” or “extinguished”- hope to escape the challenges and commotion of this world.

Jews unify the two spheres; the next world isn't a *reward* as much as a *result*. We develop our spiritual and religious personalities as best we can in this world, despite its impediments and despite its conditions of defeat. As a result, when we exit this world, we enter a second sphere without spiritual inhibitions and continue our spiritual experiences without the hindrances and barriers of this world. For a Jew, the next world doesn't promise endless pleasure or limitless financial abilities. The next world is merely a consequence of our current world. As Henry Drummond, A 19th century British religious thinker once commented, “to get to Heaven, we must take it there with us”. Yitzchak is chosen because he fuses the two worlds into one continuum.

Islamic descriptions of the afterlife as providing sensual pleasures sever the two worlds. The false premise that endless bodily gratifications are afforded a person who exhibits moral restraint and pious behavior in this world separates the two realms into unrelated realities. Yishma'el acknowledges the presence of the afterlife, but does not fuse it properly to this world. Yishma'el is demoted because he and his descendants rupture, rather than unite, the two worlds. B'yitzchak.

MURDER AND THE AFTERLIFE

Islamic fundamentalism has further

fractured the two realms. The warped and sick notion that you can enter the next world by committing a heinous crime in this world completely severs the two realities. For a *shahid*, murdering innocents or even infidels will secure entry into the next world. The notion that a crime in this world can serve as a ticket of entry into the next world completely detaches the two worlds. If our two worlds are united, it is preposterous that a terrible crime in this world earns a place in the next one.

Judaism rejects this fracture but instead merges the two into one band. As the Rambam asserts, the next world enables wise and just men to sit endlessly in the presence of Hashem and enjoy the spiritual glow of the shechinah (*nehenin miziv hashechinah*) We earn that condition by building a spiritual interface between ourselves and Hashem in this world. The unique capacity of a Jew to straddle the two realms and integrate them into one reality is the reason we are selected and Yishma'el is discarded. Not because we alone envision the next world, but because we are able to integrate the two experiences into one letter 'bet'. B'yitzchak. ■

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS

Waking Up to the Akedah

Parashat Vayera culminates in one of the most dramatic episodes in the Book of Genesis, the Binding of Yitzchak or the Akedah (Genesis 22:1-19). In an exquisitely sensitive reading of these epic verses, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook addressed many questions that occur to every reader but go overtly unanswered by the Torah. Let us focus on one: What was Avraham's state of mind?

Rav Kook reveals to us an individual who passed this most difficult trial with unshakable faith, immensurable passion, and remarkable efficiency. A few examples from his pen on Genesis 22:3: "Avraham rose early in the morning" because he slept soundly the night before, secure in the knowledge that he was submitting to God's will. "He saddled his donkey," taking meticulous care of every detail before setting out, in order that he could carry out his task promptly and efficiently. "He split the wood," leaving nothing to chance by having wood ready for immediate use when the time would come.¹

Astoundingly, Avraham's devotion grew by degrees with each passing day, and even minute, of his journey to the place where he would sacrifice his beloved son. Even after receiving the divine directive not to go through with it, Avraham remained determined to somehow fulfill God's will, refusing to allow the buildup

of spiritual energy within him to simply dissipate. And so when the Torah tells us that he placed the ram on the altar "in place of his son" (Genesis 22:13), Rav Kook interpreted this to mean that "with the same immense love of God that burned in his heart in preparation for offering his son as a sacrifice, he offered up the ram."² All the love, all the surrender, all the willpower—Avraham transferred it all onto the offering. Nothing was lost.

Many observe the custom of reading the nineteen verses of the Akedah each and every morning, immediately after reciting the morning blessings. In the early 1900s, a young man in Switzerland was desperate to speak to a rabbi about personal struggles with Jewish life and theology. He decided to meet with Rav Kook, and they conversed late into the night on a host of issues concerning theology and faith. Given the late hour, the young man could not return home, so he lodged at Rav Kook's home. Turning in for the night, he registered how impressed he was with Rav Kook, yet he still felt torn and spiritually confused. Early the next morning, he was awakened by the sound of steps in the adjoining room. Listening more carefully, he could make out that it was Rav Kook, who had begun praying. The saintly rabbi was reciting the passage of the Akedah. Upon hearing the intensity of spirit

1. Siddur Olat Re'iyah, 1:86.

2. Ibid., 1:94.

with which the rabbi enunciated every word, he reported that “I listened to him, and I was transformed into a completely new man.”³

The young man in this story is Rabbi David Cohen, who would go on to share a lifelong, close relationship with Rav Kook. He himself became one of the celebrated rabbinic scholars and mystics of Yerushalayim and was known as “the Nazir” for his abstention from drinking wine and from cutting his hair, like the biblical Nazirite. From handwritten manuscripts, he compiled and edited Rav Kook’s most philosophical and profound work, Orot ha-Kodesh. In the introduction, Rabbi Cohen writes that hearing Rav Kook’s soulful reading of the Akedah with a sublime melody changed his life. He sensed the passion that a Jew can feel for the Holy One, the intimate connection, and his doubts were put to rest.

Although the Torah depicts the Akedah as a one-time, historic event, the way Avraham reacted to God’s call serves as a model for how to respond to and fulfill the divine commandments in our own lives. We are to strive to develop an inner spiritual life of clinging to God and devotedness to his will, outwardly expressed by ardent alacrity in performing His mitzvot. As it happens, we express these very aspirations daily when we recite the Shema. We affirm, using the Torah’s own words, that we should be brimming with love of God and deep devotion to His commandments: “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

The Akedah is not only a lesson in obedience and faith. We are capable of attaining

3. “Mavo le-Orot ha-Kodesh,” in Orot ha-Kodesh 1:1, 17–18.

an intimate, deep bond with the Creator. Rav Kook further teaches that this is within every Jew’s reach, as love of God is hardwired into every Jewish soul, whether one is conscious of it or not.⁴ We need not implant religious fervor since we are already naturally growing in towards the divine light. ■

4. Orot ha-Teshuvah, 6:2.

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book ‘Torah United’ (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.

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Forgetting *R'tzei* at *Seuda Shlishit*

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I was not sure if during *Birkat Hamazon* (=BHMZ) after *seuda shlishit*, I said *R'tzei V'hachalitzenu* or not. Should I have repeated BHMZ?

Answer: The rule is that one who forgets *R'tzei* in BHMZ on Shabbat must repeat BHMZ (Berachot 49b). Is that also true for one who is unsure (*safek*) if he recited it? On one hand, the requirement to mention Shabbat in *Birkat Hamazon* is only Rabbinic, making it logical to apply *safek berachot l'hakel* when there is a *safek* whether one said *R'tzei*. Indeed, regarding one who is unsure whether he recited *Ya'aleh V'Yavo* (=YVY) on Rosh Chodesh, the Rama (Orach Chayim 422:1) invokes *safek berachot l'hakel*. However, the Mishna Berura (288:16) points out that the consensus of *Acharonim* rejects his opinion because we can **presume** he left out YVY, as there is a *chazaka* that one who was not concentrating (a fair assumption about one who soon thereafter (see below) does not remember what he said) did not recite infrequent additions. This follows the precedent of a *safek* on what one said regarding rain-related recitations at the beginning of a "recitation season" (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 114:8).

Even if one does not accept the Rama, there are a few reasons to not repeat

BHMZ in a case of *safek* if he said *R'tzei* (see Yabia Omer VII, OC 28): 1. A weekly addition is not as easily forgotten as a monthly one. 2. The different atmosphere of Shabbat makes it easier to remember *R'tzei* than YVY. 3. An extra *tefilla* done due to *safek* is not problematic (Berachot 21a), whereas for BHMZ, it is problematic. Indeed Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yabia Omer *ibid.*) rules not to repeat BHMZ in a *safek* if he recited *R'tzei*. On the other hand, Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (57:7) accepts the Mishna Berura that we should repeat BHMZ for a *safek* of missing *R'tzei* (if the doubt arises soon after he should have said it – see Mishna Berura 422:10).

However, there is an accepted reason not to repeat BHMZ in your case. The *gemara* (Berachot 49b) says that one who forgets YVY in BHMZ of Rosh Chodesh, as opposed to Shabbat and *Yom Tov*, does not repeat BHMZ. The difference is that on Shabbat, one must eat [enough bread to make BHMZ a necessity – Tosafot ad loc.], whereas on Rosh Chodesh, he need not. The Mishna Berura (188:26) explains that Chazal instituted that only for the special days when BHMZ is necessary are the additions to BHMZ for those days essential. Although some consider it a full obligation to have bread at *seuda shlishit*, other serious positions do not view it as a

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



full requirement (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 291:5). Therefore, repeating *BHMZ* due to a forgotten *R'tzei* at *seuda shlishit* might be unwarranted, and one must not take that chance (Shulchan Aruch, OC 188:8; Mishna Berura ibid. 31; Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata ibid.). According to most, this is true even for one who is always careful to eat bread at *seuda shlishit* because the fact that he always *bentches* is a personal decision, not an objective Shabbat obligation (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 57:(20)).

It is possible to do a type of repetition. The *gemara* (ibid. a) says that for one who realized he left out the addition after finishing the third *beracha* but before starting the fourth, there is an independent *beracha* for each of the respective days to thank Hashem for giving us the day. The *gemara* mentions this even regarding Rosh Chodesh, but leaves it as an unsolved question whether the *beracha* on Rosh Chodesh finishes with the *Baruch ata Hashem ...* form. This *beracha* applies also to *seuda shlishit*, and since *seuda shlishit* is likely supposed to be a real meal, the Mishna Berura (Be'ur Halacha to 188:8) advocates finishing it with a *beracha* form. However, one would not do so if he *bentches* after nightfall, as it is a doubt whether the additions are called for then, and a separate *beracha* is therefore not warranted (Be'ur Halacha to 188:10). Regarding a case that he missed this cut-off point, some allow reciting *R'tzei* during the section of "*Harachaman*"

recitations, but the stronger opinion is to not do so (see Rama, OC 188:7). ■

Having a dispute?



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RABBI GIDEON

**Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha**

WEITZMAN

PUAH on the Homefront

This Simchat Torah will remain forever in our collective Jewish memory. Israel was plunged into a state of war and emergency that affected everyone; the soldiers on the frontlines, as well as the families they left at home.

Like many others, PUAH quickly assessed how we could serve the urgent and immediate needs of Israel. One of the ways that we are able to do so was to adapt a program that we developed to help married couples prepare for their wedding day.

One concern for the young couple about to get married is that the bride will be able to go to the mikvah before the wedding day. This seems to be a simple undertaking, and basic timing of the wedding date should be instrumental in ensuring that the couples stand underneath the Chuppah after having been to the mikvah.

However, in many cases it is far from simple, and most couples rely on hormonal medication to guarantee that the bride will be able to go to the mikvah before the wedding. In the past we saw many cases, with even the best intentions, that did not receive the correct medical advice. A woman took hormones and was still not able to go to the mikvah due to a reaction to the hormones, or an inappropriate medical plan.

A couple of years ago, one of the PUAH

Rabbis decided to improve this situation. Rabbi Lior Segev contacted a few religious female gynecologists and suggested that they provide tailor-made plans for each bride. The program called Likrat Kallah, is run by one of our female counselors, Dr. Moriel Yarchi, and she performs an intake for each bride, communicates with the doctors, and receives a specific plan regarding the course of treatment. She is also available for emergencies and last-minute changes to the plan if necessary.

Several hundred women have been through this program and only a handful have not been able to go to the mikvah prior to their wedding day.

Since the beginning of the current war a new reality has emerged; young men and women want to get married, and, due to them serving in the military, often need to change the wedding date. This requires creative solutions and increasing accessibility to this program. The staff running it have made themselves available for such amazing couples, entering into married life in the middle of a war, even in the most difficult circumstances. PUAH has been able to remove one complication and enable the brides to get to the mikvah on time.

More on this next time. ■

ISRAEL IS UNDER ATTACK. HOW CAN I HELP?

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Parenting in Times of War

Dear Parents,

I'm writing to you during a challenging time. I've written before about terror attacks but now we are living in unprecedented times. We are in the midst of a war and there are many unknowns. When will schools go back to their regular schedule? When will life go back to normal? How long will this war last? During periods of great uncertainty there are some key points to keep in mind which can help lower anxieties.

Firstly, when you feel overwhelmed, try to focus on where you are at the moment and what you are currently doing. Practice mindfulness techniques such as taking slow, deep breaths and feeling your feet planted on solid ground. If you are not in imminent danger, remind yourself that you are safe right now. Think about all the things that you may be grateful for at the moment, such as having food, family, friends or your health. Much of the anxiety is caused by the brain racing ahead thinking of all possible future scenarios. This kind of circular thinking creates confusion and heightens anxiety.

Another tip is to do something that you find enjoyable and that helps you calm down like drinking a hot cup of tea/coffee, eating a snack, taking a bath/ shower, or reading a book. Listening to music,

creating art and journaling are more ways to relax and keep yourself occupied. Whatever activity has helped you calm down in the past, will probably help you now too. Going for a walk, dancing or exercising can also be effective in reducing stress.

Once your body is calm, you can think more clearly and focus on whatever task lay at hand. Always bring yourself back to the here and now. Avoid watching too much news and instead fortify yourself with positive forms of chizuk whether it's learning, watching something entertaining or talking to friends and family. Connecting to your community and surrounding yourself with supportive friends will help you stay strong. While so many things are beyond our control right now, try to focus on what you do have control over. There are so many places to volunteer and offer your services. Staying busy and productive will give you a sense of empowerment.

As this situation continues, it's important to realize that our children are looking to see how we're managing. Children are greatly affected by how their parents cope and behave. They take cues from the adults in their lives. As long as parents stay strong and stable, children will feel safe and secure. This doesn't mean that a parent can never cry or feel sad or overwhelmed. These are

valid feelings especially during times of war. Everyone has ups and downs, parents as well as children. It's important to speak openly about these feelings, validate them and make space for them. We just don't want to get stuck there. Parents should aim to maintain a general sense of balance and faith.

These skills and goals such as stress relief techniques, keeping busy and feeling purposeful can be imparted to children as well. Parents who take care of themselves, by finding the right supports and outlets are prioritizing the health and stability of their homes.

May we hear good news! ■

Dr. Eliezer Rosenblum

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וְגוֹאֲלוֹ, בְּרַךְ אֶת-מְדִינַת-יִשְׂרָאֵל,
רֹאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלָּתָנוּ. הֵגֶן
עָלֶיהָ בְּאַבְרַת חֶסֶדְךָ וּפְרֹשׁ עָלֶיהָ
סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ וּשְׁלַח אוֹרְךָ וְאַמְתֵּךְ
לְרֹאשִׁייהָ, שְׂרִיהָ וְיוֹעֲצִיהָ, וְתַקְּנֵם
בְּעֶצֶה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. חֲזֵק אֶת
יְדֵי מַגְנֵי אֶרֶץ קְדֻשָּׁנוּ, וְהַנְחִילֵם
אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְשׁוּעָה וְעֹטֶרֶת נִצְחוֹן
תְּעַטְרֵם, וְנִתֵּן שְׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ
וּשְׁמִיחַת עוֹלָם לְיוֹשְׁבֶיהָ. וְאֵת
אֲחֵינוּ כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, פְּקֹד-נָא
בְּכָל אַרְצוֹת פְּזוּרֵיהֶם, וְתוֹלִיכֵם
מִהֲרָה קוֹמְמִיז לְצִיּוֹן עִירְךָ
וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם מְשֻׁכָּן שְׁמֶךָ, כְּפִתּוּב
בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עֲבָדְךָ: אִם יִהְיֶה
נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם, מִשֶּׁם
יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמִשֶּׁם יִקְחֶךָ:
וְהִבְיָאֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר-יְרָשׁוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ וִירְשֶׁתָּהּ,
וְהִיטִבְךָ וְהִרְבֶּךָ מֵאַבְתְּיָה: וַיַּחַד
לְכַבְּנוּ לְאַהֲבָה וּלְיִרְאָה אֶת שְׁמֶךָ
וּלְשֹׁמֵר אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ,
וּשְׁלַח לָנוּ מִהֲרָה בֶּן-דָּוִד מְשִׁיחַ
צְדִיקָךָ, לְפָדוֹת מַחְכֵּי קֶץ יְשׁוּעָתְךָ.
הוֹפֵעַ בַּהֲדָר גָּאוֹן עֶזְךָ עַל כָּל
יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵּבֵל אֶרֶץְךָ, וְאָמַר כָּל אִשָּׁר
נִשְׁמָה בְּאֶפֶס: ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מְלֶךְ וּמְלִכּוֹתָיו בְּכָל מְשָׁלָה, אָמֵן
סְלָה.



HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

SHOSHANA JUDELMAN



Torah Tidbits is proud to present a new series of articles about the magnificent and holy sites of Israel. This new addition to Torah Tidbits seeks to connect each of us even more deeply to the profound meaning of our people's return to the Land of Israel and bring us even closer to experiencing the *kedushat ha'aretz* in our daily lives.

Amuka: Finding Hope in the Depths

It was 9:30pm and I was walking down the stairs of my seminary in Tsfat. The Rosh Midrasha walked out of his office, saw me, and asked if I would be willing to accompany an American woman to Amuka that night. She had come to Israel for the express purpose of visiting this holy site but needed

some company to avoid being alone with a taxi driver that late at night. Since I was 25 and single, I too was interested in going to Amuka and immediately responded that I would be happy to accompany her.

Amuka, meaning “deep,” is the name of the gravesite of the Tanna, R' Yonatan ben Uziel, the greatest student of Hillel HaZakein and the translator of the books of Nevi'im into Aramaic.

Located in a valley outside of Tzfatz, Amuka is a tefillah destination, especially for singles. According to tradition, Yonatan ben Uzziel either married late in life and he and his wife were unable to fulfil the mitzvah of פרו ורבו or never married since he was so immersed in his Torah study. It is told that before his death he regretted missing out on this element of life which provides tremendous potential for personal growth and, to encourage others to get married, he blessed anyone who would daven at his gravesite to meet their soulmate within a year of the visit.

Marriage is a crucible. It is the relationship that holds a mirror to the soul, forcing a person to face and work on their deepest issues and fears. It is also the relationship that can forge the deepest bonds, paralleling the marriage between Am Yisrael and Hashem and potentially drawing tremendous energy of connection and peace into the world.

We left Tsfat at 11PM and the roads were pitch black. It was exhilarating, driving through the forest, the air permeated by the scent of pine trees, all my senses heightened with the anticipation of reaching our destination. I felt myself carried to a place of calm, a place of profound introspection and possibility, an opening.

I remember the intensity of my davening that night. The physical starkness and the powerful spiritual energy of the place combining to create a heady experience. I felt like I was beseeching Hashem from the depth of my being.

In Masechet Brachot, R' Eliezer ben Ya'akov, is quoted as saying that a person should not stand in a high place to daven but rather in a low place, as it says in Tehilim (130:1): "I called to You, L-rd, from the depths (ממעימקים)." The Gemara is hinting at the middah of humility which is essential for true davening and essential in a marriage. Humility requires that we admit we are lacking, that we don't know everything, that we need each other.

Amuka is the physical embodiment of this middah. A place of depth and yearning that breaks our hearts wide open so we can turn to Hashem in surrender. And in that surrender, with Hashem's help we can have hope for new beginnings. ■



Be'er Tziporah a"h - Bottled Water Gemach



Walking down King George St. in Jerusalem and want a cold bottle of water?

Come help yourself to a bottle at
52 King George.

In loving memory of Yoni's wife
Tziporah a"h, a true Eishes Chayil, always full of chessed, kindness and laughter, and brought life and strength to so many people, that she touched! She was like Aron, who loved peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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Shoshana teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya and Shiviti Women's Institute. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.



Rena Bessner
Jerusalem
Chapter Director

Like an Angel

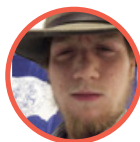
Parshas Vayeira starts with three angels coming to visit Avraham in his tent. This introduces the famous question as to why three angels are required simply to convey a few messages. Rashi answers this question by explaining the reason “for one angel does not perform two tasks.” However, this raises the question- why is it that angels can’t multitask? Are humans more capable than angels? Why is it so important for Rashi to emphasize this to us?

I saw a beautiful idea from Rabbi Menachem Feldman. He explains that we should look at this ‘disability’ as a superpower. When an angel is given a task it naturally isolates it and delves into completing it fully. The angels have no personal pride, or personal agenda that get in their way; at that moment, he is nothing but the task. As such, they cannot perform two acts simultaneously, as it’s impossible to be, fully, in two places at once.

A person, on the other hand, even when performing the will of G-d, still possesses their ego. A person always maintains the sense that he has an independent will, and at that point, he is merely engaged in the mission as well as being an individual. As such, he can never become entirely one with the mission, and therefore won’t

necessarily have an issue engaging in something else.

In his explanation, Rashi teaches us how to be more like an angel- specifically how to be fully engaged in what we are doing, to the extent that we essentially forget about anything else. We need to learn how to help someone else while simultaneously doing so void of any egotistical motives. In these hard times, delving into one chessed can change someone’s life, and just because one is not running around and helping every single person that doesn’t mean you’re not making a difference. Often, being fully engaged in one chessed and doing it properly, is just what it means to be like an angel.



Meir Backman
12th grade, Tel Aviv

The Calming Effect

I can’t believe I’m writing a dvar Torah for Torah Tidbits! I feel a bit incompetent for the job and being that I’m a newbie here in Israel it is a huge honor. In Parshas Vayeira many big important events happen. Avraham’s last and maybe hardest trial, the Akeida. The destruction of the wicked city of Sodom. But something in particular about this Vayeira stands out to me in particular.

From within the first verses I found an amazing life lesson. In the beginning of the parsha Avraham is visited by 3 men.

Avraham treats his guests with such hospitality. Giving them water for washing, shade, milk, cakes, and lamb chops! Now I don't know about you but when I read verses 4-8 there is this urgency and this rush which in my opinion normally isn't felt in the Torah (then again I haven't read that much Torah yet).

But wait there's more, right after verse 8 there's a sense of calm and ease. I feel the lesson in this is that it is so urgent and you should always rush to make everyone feel like your friend so that others can be comfortable around you. In other words, take care of others so that they can be calm and once they're calm now you can be calm knowing they're calm.

The Rambam mentions that at the time of this event Avraham was elderly and had servants and he also recently had a circumcision. Yet still he jumped at the opportunity to be someone's friend, and help them all be calm and relaxed. So let's all this week try to be like Avraham. Let's make those around us feel calmer and more relaxed. Let's be ready to help all around us who need help. Let's be ready to be everyone's friend. And who knows maybe you will get a Tzadik for a son in one year's time :)

Stay strong and stay Jewish! ■

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In addition to a series of one-time special virtual events, we are offering two daily chizuk Zoom sessions. These daily opportunities to come together virtually feature words of chizuk and perspective from OU Israel faculty members as well as the opportunity to recite Tehilim together virtually.



1. DAILY MORNING CHIZUK ZOOM SESSIONS SUN.-THURS. @ 10:30 AM

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2. DAILY AFTERNOON CHIZUK ZOOM SESSIONS SUN. -THURS. @ 5:00 PM

Zoom details for morning sessions:
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May HaKadosh Baruch Hu watch over and protect our chayalim, all those in harm's way, and all of Am Yisrael.

STUART HERSHKOWITZ

President, OU Israel

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