

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1439 OCT 23RD '21 י"ז מרחשון תשפ"ב

פרשת וירא

PARSHAT VAYERA

ב"ה
40^{Over}
Years
OU
ישראל



Remembering
Rabbi Sacks zt'l
on His First Yahrzeit

Benjy Singer

Teacher, Freelance Writer and
Journalist, IsraelB.org

page 26



The Jews and the
Ram

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Ram, Yeshivat Har Eztion

page 44

יקח־נא
מעט־מים
ורחצו רגליכם
והשענו תחת העץ

בראשית י"ח, פסוק א'

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYERA

Candles 5:23PM • Havdala 6:35PM • Rabbeinu Tam 7:15PM

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Meron Nemirov // Talia Agatstein



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We are looking forward to seeing your amazing shots!

*Rabbi Weinreb and Menachem Persoff's Divrei Torah this week can be found at www.torahtidbits.com

We apologize that in last week's Torah Tidbits we printed Rabbi Manning's name incorrectly. The esteemed rabbi's name is Rabbi Anthony Manning.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed.- Shabbat
October 20- 30/ 14 - 24 Cheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:55 - 6:02
Sunrise	6:46 - 6:54
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:35 - 9:38
Magen Avraham	8:58 - 9:01
Sof Zman Tefilla	10:31 - 10:33
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:23 - 12:22
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:53-12:52
Plag Mincha	4:50 - 4:42
Sunset (Including Elevation)	6:05 - 5:56

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CANDLES	VA'YERA	HAVDALA	CHAYEI SARA	
			Candles	Havdala
5:23	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	6:35	5:16	6:29
5:41	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	6:38	5:35	6:32
5:42	Beit Shemesh / RBS	6:36	5:35	6:30
5:39	Gush Etzion	6:36	5:32	6:29
5:40	Raanana / Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	6:36	5:33	6:30
5:39	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	6:36	5:32	6:30
5:40	Netanya	6:36	5:32	6:30
5:41	Be'er Sheva	6:37	5:24	6:31
5:40	Rehovot	6:37	5:33	6:30
5:23	Petach Tikva	6:36	5:16	6:30
5:39	Ginot Shomron	6:36	5:32	6:29
5:29	Haifa / Zichron	6:36	5:21	6:29
5:38	Gush Shiloh	6:35	5:31	6:28
5:40	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	6:37	5:33	6:30
5:39	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:36	5:32	6:29
5:39	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:36	5:33	6:30
5:41	Ashkelon	6:38	5:35	6:32
5:40	Yad Binyamin	6:37	5:33	6:31
5:41	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	6:33	5:24	6:27
5:29	Golan	6:27	5:29	6:27

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 7:15PM • next week - 7:09pm

Times According to MyZmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities, 40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)



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My grandparents, parents and I were all born in Maimonides hospital in New York. I was under the assumption that it's somewhat of a Jewish hospital. Therefore, I was not surprised when we spent many days with my grandmother in the hospital that the organizations there, specifically the Satmar Chassidim and Bikkur Cholim organizations, provided so much. It was quite remarkable. The Bikkur Cholim room, with a Jewish code, had as much food and drinks as people in the hospital needed. They supplied Challot and grape juice for Shabbat, and anything the Cholim and people visiting them would need.

When I flew to New York to spend time with my grandmother when she was hospitalized, I was far away from my own home. While I am very appreciative of relatives and friends that helped us out, it was extremely useful for me to have the ability to go to the Bikkur Cholim room and bring

what my grandmother needed. More than anything, I remember the volunteers that walked around the hospital from room to room with little wagons asking if anyone needed food, drinks, or toys for the children.

This and other examples like this come to mind every year when we read Parshat Vayera. Hashem sends three *malachim* to Avraham Aveinu to do Bikkur Cholim. When nobody else believed in one G-d, Hashem sent Malachim to Avraham on the third day after his Brit Milah. We see the greatness of Avraham that he is running to take care of everything the Malachim need even when he is in tremendous physical pain.

Avraham is the paradigm for Hachnasat Orchim. Yet, this Parsha also teaches us the importance of the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim. The fact that Hashem prioritizes sending these three *malachim* to do Bikkur Cholim teaches us how critical this mitzvah is. (Technically, one *malach* came to do Bikkur Cholim while the other two had separate missions, but ultimately they all visited Avraham when he was in pain.) When someone is chas v'shalom sick or has a loved one who is sick, the feeling that health is dependent on Hakadush Baruch Hu is felt more strongly than when we are healthy. While it is always important to daven for cholim with kavanah, the reality

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from this issue of TT
be in loving memory of **and לע״י**
Cantor Martin Horowitz z”l
on his 27th yahrtzeit

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is that for most people it hits closer to home when you know and are close with the person who is sick. While we each need to do our *hishtadlut* in eating healthy, exercising, seeing doctors, etc., Hashem is the one who ultimately decides on our health.

When most of us do Bikkur Cholim it's for people we know. Yet Avraham Aveinu did not know who the guests that came to him to do Bikkur Cholim were. Similarly, the wonderful Bikkur Cholim volunteers in the hospital do not know the people they are visiting. The medical clown that made my son laugh when he was in the hospital a number of years ago did not know the kids he was cheering up.

While I am sure there are wonderful volunteers in hospitals all over the world, I can speak from personal experience of witnessing these wonderful volunteers in hospitals throughout Israel. We all know names of Bikkur Cholim organizations - and I am not writing specific organizations because I don't want to leave some out - and we should support their holy work. What I am blown away by are the wonderful volunteers who dedicate time (sometimes several full days each week) to walk around with wagons full of food and toys and offer them to the patients and their families sitting in the hospital.

As I have written about before, this year I spent a number of days in the hospital right before Pesach. I am extremely grateful for the people (family, friends and colleagues)

We as a people remember the horrific and tragic events of Kristallnacht which took place on 16 Marcheshvan



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who visited me and provided me with a wonderful feeling. I remember each visit and what we spoke about because they were meaningful visits.

Just like the *malachim* did not know Avraham Avinu and Avraham did not know them, today's volunteer angels in the hospitals bring not only physical nourishment, but encouragement, smiles, and hope. For those of you who already volunteer, Kol Hakavod. For those of you with time on your hands and looking for ways to help, you can think of organizations you know and ways you'd feel inclined to help, whether driving people to the hospital, volunteering at hospitals or old age homes. It is truly remarkable to see so many Jews caring for other Jews without even knowing who they are. This is a fine example of "Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze LaZeh," simply being there for our fellow Jews.

May we continue learning from the midot that Hashem teaches us and always care for one another.

Wishing you an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Avi,

Executive Director, OU Israel

aberman@ouisrael.org

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parents/grandparents
Bennie & Florence Klein z"l
on their 15th Yahrzeits

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VAYERA



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



Rabbi Reuven Tradburks Director of RCA Israel Region

The beloved stories of the life of Avraham are found in our Parsha. Avraham hosts the angels who have come to tell him of the birth of Sarah. G-d tells Avraham of the impending destruction of 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



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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. Running to do kindness. And the whole house is into it – Avraham, Sarah, the young helpers. The hospitality, concern for others and open home 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 convinces Himself that He may not withhold from

Avraham, the champion of 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.

Something has changed in the life of Avraham. When we first met him, he was promised fame and fortune and family. And the Land of Israel. He received fortune in Egypt, fame in the war of the 5 kings and the 4 kings. Those were personal promises to him – he would have fame and he would have fortune.

The other 2 promises have not yet happened – family and the Land of Israel. Those are not personal promises. Those are historic – the Jewish people will be born from you and the Jewish people will inherit this land of Israel. He has been promised family – for 25 years. And repeatedly promised the Land of Israel. However, all the promises were in one direction – G-d promising to Avraham. Only with Milah was a demand made of Avraham. And no longer an amorphous promise of a child, but an imminent one – in less than a year.

Avraham senses that he is transitioning from recipient to teacher. He needs to be the teacher of G-d's ways to the next generation, and all subsequent. He teaches kindness by example. And he needs to teach justice – not just human justice, but Divine as well. The covenant with G-d of mila is an invitation by G-d to engage. And engage Avraham does.



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 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

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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 Bereshit: 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? 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 (Amora in Hebrew) 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 a bitter irony – as Rav Hershel Schachter likes to point out – did they really think, of all the people

A shloshim gathering in memory of
Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler zt"l

will be held iy"h at Beit Ariel Shul -
Rechov Hapisga 5, Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem
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and family on the passing of her
MOTHER a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

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 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 Beersheva. 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

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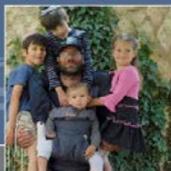
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Beersheva. They name the place Beersheva from the word to swear. Avraham calls out in G-d's name in Beersheva.

Avraham's fame has prompted a pact. But the lesson lies in what is missing. While Avraham is now famous, he holds only great moral suasion; but no political standing. He has no land, no army, no political presence. The promise that he will possess this Land remains but a dream.



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 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 Beersheva.

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. 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 thought about and studied for a lifetime. Perhaps, one element of the story pertains to the promises. While the promise 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. Do not think G-d's reach for man and for the Jewish people will be without it's complexity, it's sacrifices, it's 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, beyond our grasp.

HAFTORAH VAYERA

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

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

"Vayakumu Mesham Haanashim" (18:16)

"And the men rose up from there and looked out towards Sedom"

What is the meaning of the word "Mesham"- "from there"? Obviously, the angels just left the tent of Avraham where they received his hospitality. It's understood that they left from there to here, looking out at Sedom.

Rav Meir Dan Plotsky (Poland 1866-1928) known as the "Klei Chemdah", points out the importance of the word "from there". When the angels witnessed the hospitality and righteousness of Avraham, there, at his tent, and then see the great contrast of the wickedness of Sedom from afar, they were then driven even harder to fulfil their mission to destroy the city. Therefore, the Pasuk reiterates that "the men rose up" from Avraham's tent and "looked out towards" now determined more than ever, to eradicate Sedom. As Rashi says – the reference to "looking out" in the Torah indicates evil. Shabbat Shalom ■

child. Along these same lines the haftarah 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. ■

STATS

4th of the 54 sedras; 4th of 12 sedras in B'reishit
 Written on 252 lines in a Torah, rank: 5
 6 Parshiyot; 4 open, 2 closed
 147 p'sukim - ranks 7th (4th in B'reishit)
 2085 words - ranks 2nd (1st in B'reishit)
 7862 letters - rank: 3rd (2nd in B'reishit)
 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.

***note change of time**
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BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

THE PROPHETS

How fitting is the selection for today's haftarah! It is fitting not simply in the stories that it relates but in the very fact that, as Professor P. Meltzer writes, it is the first time since the start the Torah reading cycle, that the haftarah relates the accomplishments of the righteous, G-d-fearing individual, i.e. the navi Elisha, just as the Torah parsha now focuses upon the deeds of the righteous, G-d-fearing Avraham and Sarah.

The haftarah, taken from the fourth chapter of M'lachim Bet, actually tells two stories. At first glance, the initial story seems to serve as mere introduction to the second. After all, the second and lengthier story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman appears to be closely connected to the events in our parsha, as it deals with the miraculous birth of a son to a once-barren woman and her elderly husband and the near loss of that cherished son to his parents. The parallels to the stories of the miraculous birth of Yitzchak and to Ake-dat Yitzchak, the near-loss of that son, are clear.

But the first story also echoes the events of the parsha quite powerfully. Here we read of a woman, widowed of her righteous, G-d-fearing husband (“v'ata yada'ta

ki avdecha haya yareh et Hashem m'od”) who stands to lose her only two sons. In similar fashion, we read in the parsha of a righteous, G-d fearing husband (“‘ata yada'ti ki y'rei E-lokim ata...”) who stands to lose both of his the sons: Yishma'el, who he was told to send away, and Yitzchak, who he was told to sacrifice.

However, as Rav Yehuda Shaviv explains, there is also an interesting contrast between the parsha and the haftara in the behavior of two troubled, grieving mothers. In the Torah, we read of Hagar who, upon seeing (what she believes to be) the imminent death of her son, throws him beneath a bush and cries mournfully until the angel appears to her and tells her “Kumi, s'ee et b'nech,” “Get up and carry your son,” to return to the son she had cast aside, and subsequently shows her the source of water that would revive him. In the haftarah, on the other hand, the Shunamite woman does not cast the child aside. Instead, she places her son on the bed of the prophet and travels to Elisha for divine guidance. Nor does she suffice with summoning Elisha or depending upon the navi's servant, Gechazi to revive her son. The Shunamite woman declares that she would not leave Elisha, insisting to remain until the prophet brings her son back to life.

I find the contrast in the actions of the mothers to be most inspiring. In difficult

Mazal Tov to



Dr. Josh & Shira Daniel and family



on the birth of a grandson

times, when worried parents – anxious and concerned about their children – refuse to give up hope, refuse to throw the troubled or sickly youth “beneath the bush” but search for answers, even organize new funds and support groups, in order to help their own and others suffering in the similar fashion.

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Dedicated by
Dr. Robert Sreter DDS., M.S.

The Binding of Isaac

“Take your son, your only son, the one you love—Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” (Gen. 22:2)

Thus begins one of the most famous episodes in the Torah, but also one of the most morally problematic. The conventional reading of this passage is that Abraham was being asked to show that his love for God was supreme. He would show this by being willing to sacrifice the son for whom he had spent a lifetime waiting.

Why did God need to “test” Abraham, given that He knows the human heart better than we know it ourselves? Maimonides answers that God did not need Abraham to prove his love for Him. Rather the test was meant to establish for all time how far the

fear and love of God must go.

On this principle there was little argument. The story is about the awe and love of God. Kierkegaard wrote about it and made the point that ethics is universal. It consists of general rules. But the love of God is particular. It is an I-Thou personal relationship. What Abraham underwent during the trial was, says Kierkegaard, a “teleological suspension of the ethical,” that is, a willingness to let the I-Thou love of God overrule the universal principles that bind humans to one another.

Rav Soloveitchik explained the Binding of Isaac episode in terms of his own well-known characterisation of the religious life as a dialectic between victory and defeat, majesty and humility, man-the-creative-master and man-the-obedient-servant. There are times when “God tells man to withdraw from whatever man desires the most.” We must experience defeat as well as victory. Thus the Binding of Isaac was not a once-only episode but rather a paradigm for the religious life as a whole. Wherever we have

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passionate desire – eating, drinking, physical relationship – there the Torah places limits on the satisfaction of desire. Precisely because we pride ourselves on the power of reason, the Torah includes *chukim*, statutes, that are impenetrable to reason.

These are the conventional readings and they represent the mainstream of tradition. However, since there are “seventy faces to the Torah,” I want to argue for a different interpretation. The reason I do so is that one test of the validity of an interpretation is whether it coheres with the rest of the Torah, Tanach, and Judaism as a whole. There are four problems with the conventional reading:

We know from Tanach and independent evidence that the willingness to offer up your child as a sacrifice was not rare in the ancient world. It was commonplace. Tanach mentions that Mesha, King of Moab, did so. So did Yiftah, the least admirable leader in the book of Judges. Two of Tanach’s most wicked Kings, Ahaz and Manashe, introduced the practice into Judah, for which they were condemned. There is archeological evidence – the bones of thousands of young children — that child sacrifice was widespread in Carthage and other Phoenician sites. It was a pagan practice.

Child sacrifice is regarded with horror throughout Tanach. Micah asks rhetorically,

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“Shall I give my firstborn for my sin, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Mic. 6:7), and replies, “He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Mic. 6:8) How could Abraham serve as a role model if what he was prepared to do is what his descendants were commanded not to do?

Specifically, Abraham was chosen to be a role model as a parent. God says of him, “For I have chosen him so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.” How could he serve as a model father if he was willing to sacrifice his child? To the contrary, he should have said to God: “If you want me to prove to You how much I love You, then take me as a sacrifice, not my child.”

As Jews – indeed as humans – we must reject Kierkegaard’s principle of the “teleological suspension of the ethical.” This is an idea that gives *carte blanche* to religious fanatics to commit crimes in the name of

God. It is the logic of the Inquisition and the suicide bomber. It is not the logic of Judaism rightly understood. God does not ask us to be unethical. We may not always understand ethics from God’s perspective but we believe that “He is the Rock, His works are perfect; all His ways are just” (Deut. 32:4).

To understand the Binding of Isaac we have to realise that much of the Torah, Genesis in particular, is a polemic against worldviews the Torah considers pagan, inhuman and wrong. One institution to which Genesis is opposed is the ancient family as described by Fustel de Coulanges and recently restated by Larry Siedentop in *Inventing the Individual*.

Before the emergence of the first cities and civilisations, the fundamental social and religious unit was the family. As Coulanges puts it, in ancient times there was an intrinsic connection between three things: the domestic religion, the family and the right of property. Each family had its own gods, among them the spirits of dead ancestors, from whom it sought protection and to whom it offered sacrifices. The authority of the head of the family, the paterfamilias, was absolute. He had power of life and death over his wife and children. Authority invariably passed, on the death of the father, to his firstborn son. Meanwhile, as long as the father lived, children had the status of property rather than persons in their own right. This idea persisted even beyond the biblical era in the Roman law principle of *patria potestas*.

The Torah is opposed to every element of this worldview. As anthropologist Mary Douglas notes, one of the most striking features of the Torah is that it includes no

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Equally noteworthy is the fact that in the early narratives, succession does *not* pass to the firstborn: not to Ishmael but Isaac, not to Esau but Jacob, not to the tribe of Reuben but to Levi (priesthood) and Judah (kingship), not to Aaron but to Moses.

The principle to which the entire story of Isaac, from birth to binding, is opposed is the idea that *a child is the property of the father*. First, Isaac's birth is miraculous. Sarah is already post-menopausal when she conceives. In this respect the Isaac story is parallel to that of the birth of Samuel to Hannah who, like Sarah, also is unable naturally to conceive. That is why, when Samuel is born Hannah says, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now *I give him to the Lord*. For his whole life he will be *given over to the Lord*." (I Sam. 1:27) This passage is the key to understanding the message from heaven telling Abraham to stop: "Now I know that you fear God, *because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son*" (the statement appears twice, in Gen. 22:12 and 16). The test was not whether Abraham would sacrifice his son but whether he would *give him over* to God.

The same principle recurs in the book of Exodus. First, Moses' survival is semi-miraculous since he was born at a time when Pharaoh had decreed that every male Israelite child should be killed. Secondly, during

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the tenth plague when every firstborn Egyptian child died, the Israelite firstborn were miraculously saved. “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites *belongs to Me*, whether human or animal.” The firstborns were originally designated to serve God as Priests, but they lost this role after the sin of the Golden Calf. Nonetheless, a memory of this original role still persists in the ceremony of *Pidyon HaBen*, redemption of a firstborn son.

What God was doing when he asked Abraham to offer up his son was not requesting a child sacrifice but something quite different. He wanted Abraham to *renounce ownership* of his son. He wanted to establish as a non-negotiable principle of Jewish law that *children are not the property of their parents*.

That is why three of the four matriarchs found themselves unable to conceive other than by a miracle. The Torah wants us to know that the children they bore were the children of God rather than the natural outcome of a biological process. Eventually, the entire nation of Israel would be called the children of God. A related idea is conveyed by the fact that God chose as His spokesperson Moses, who was “not a man

of words” (Ex. 4:10) He was a stammerer. Moses became God’s spokesman because people knew that the words he spoke were not his own but those placed in his mouth by God.

The clearest evidence for this interpretation is given at the birth of the very first human child. When she first gives birth, Eve says: “With the help of the Lord I have acquired [*kaniti*] a man.” That child, whose name comes from the verb “to acquire,” was Cain, who became the first murderer. If you seek to own your children, your children may rebel into violence.

If the analysis of Fustel de Colanges and Larry Siedentop is correct, it follows that something fundamental was at stake. *As long as parents believed they owned their children, the concept of the individual could not yet be born*. The fundamental unit was the family. The Torah represents the birth of the individual as the central figure in the moral life. Because children – all children – belong to God, parenthood is not ownership but guardianship. As soon as they reach the age of maturity (traditionally, twelve for girls, thirteen for boys) children become independent moral agents with their own dignity and freedom.

Sigmund Freud famously had

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something to say about this too. He held that a fundamental driver of human identity is the Oedipus Complex, the conflict between fathers and sons as exemplified in Aeschylus' tragedy. *By creating moral space between fathers and sons, Judaism offers a non-tragic resolution to this tension.* If Freud had taken his psychology from the Torah rather than from Greek myth, he might have arrived at a more hopeful view of the human condition.

Why then did God say to Abraham about Isaac: "Offer him up as a burnt offering"? So as to make clear to all future generations that the reason Jews condemn child sacrifice is not because they lack the courage to do so. Abraham is the proof that they do not lack the courage. The reason they do not do so is because God is the God of life, not death. In Judaism, as the laws of purity and the rite of the Red Heifer show, death is not sacred. Death defiles.

The Torah is revolutionary not only in relation to society but also in relation to the family. To be sure, the Torah's revolution was not fully completed in the course of the biblical age. Slavery had not yet been abolished. The rights of women had not yet been fully actualised. But the birth of the individual – the integrity of each of us as a moral agent in our own right – was one of the great moral revolutions in history. ■

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REMEMBERING RABBI SACKS ZT'L

ON HIS FIRST YAHRZEIT
25/26TH OCTOBER - 20 CHESHVAN



Benjy Singer

It was an experience I will never forget. I was doing research for my MA thesis and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, then chief rabbi, had kindly agreed to speak with me.

My thesis was about the impact that Jewish day schools had on religious and spiritual development. After asking a few questions, Rabbi Sacks said, "Is it OK if we take a break from your questions. I want to share with you my own thoughts."

Rabbi Sacks went on to talk to me about how the key to successful education is nurturing and maintaining positive relationships.

I distinctly remember Rabbi Sacks saying: "Education is about relationships. Yes, we teach texts, laws and history. But we will only make a difference to the lives of our young people if we are connecting with them. What we teach our students is the means. The end is developing

relationships with them - hopefully then we stand a chance of making an impact and imparting our values and ideas."

What was Rabbi Sacks' overall goal? I think the answer is twofold:

1) He wanted to make Judaism relevant and engaging to the most modern Jew. He spoke to the times and made Torah a guide to living in the modern world, and also 2) He wanted to make Judaism and Zionism respectable in the eyes of the non-Jewish world.

Rabbi Sacks became the ambassador of not just Judaism, but also more broadly, of faith and monotheism to the non-Jewish world.

His books, articles, drashot and weekly parsha emails, wove together secular and Jewish thought in an elegant tapestry in a way that you have only been able to read from the writings of Rav Y.B. Soloveitchik and Rav Ahron Lichtenstein and spoke equally to Jews and non-Jews.

Rabbi Sacks' sensitivity and empathy was known to all those who worked with him.

When speaking with Rabbi Dr. Raphael Zarum, the Dean of the LSJS in London, a few days ago about Rabbi Sacks, he told me the following two stories showing how sensitive and kind Rabbi Sacks was.

The first was when a major donor of the LSJS passed away and Rabbi Sacks attended the stone setting. Many rabbis

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Yossi



came from Israel – but the family were not religious and didn't understand Hebrew and felt alienated. Rabbi Sacks read psalms in English and spoke beautifully about the deceased person.

The rabbis couldn't believe he read the psalms in English. But Rabbi Sacks knew that was the right thing to do and he didn't care what the rabbis thought. The family were all moved to tears. That shows the uniqueness of Rabbi Sacks – he understood people and knew what to do in every situation. He wasn't interested in his own personal kavod, but rather in helping people.

The second was when Rabbi Zarum received a call from Rabbi Sacks, 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning. He called him to say that his mother had enjoyed listening to a talk of his over Shabbat. This was the chief rabbi taking time out to call him! Rabbi Zarum said, “ if Rabbi Sacks had called me, just think how many times he did this type of thing to other people too, encouraging them and moving them forward.”

Rabbi Sacks wasn't just an outstanding intellectual and thinker, but also a deeply thoughtful and caring man. His passing has left a tremendous void in all of our lives. But, on the other hand, his teachings have left us with a challenge. To go out and learn and teach Torah - by so doing we become immortal, just like him. ■

Benjy Singer is a teacher and freelance writer and journalist. He also runs the IsraelB.org online community, an online portal, which provides useful information of events, shiurim and news for olim and Jews around the world.



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ROSNER

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Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Avraham's Pain – *Not Medical* Rather Philanthropic

At the beginning of the parsha we encounter Hashem engaging in *bikkur cholim*, visiting Avraham after he is circumcised. The Torah indicates that Hashem appeared in the heat of the day (כחם היום). Rashi tells us that Hashem “took the sun out of its container” and made it so hot so that no guests would disturb Avraham. Once Hashem saw how much it pained Avraham that he could not partake in the mitzva of *hachnasas orchim*, since no guests were to be found, Hashem sent angels disguised as humans as guests to Avraham.

Rav Moshe Feinstein asks- what kind of pain did Avraham experience due to no guests appearing? When no one is in need of a place to stay or eat, there is no obligation to entertain. If it was Succos

and I was unable to obtain an esrog, that is a situation where I am prevented from fulfilling a mitzva. But in Avraham's situation, it is like someone being sad on a Tuesday because today is not Shabbos; or being upset that one cannot blow shofar today because it is not Rosh Hashana. If no one is in need of room and board, then there is no one to invite. Avraham was not withheld from fulfilling any mitzva- since the situation was such that there was no need for his services. So then, why was Avraham so pained?

Rav Moshe explains that Avraham was the “*amud hachesed*”. He couldn't live without performing *chesed*. It was the root of his very essence. If he was not engaged in *chesed*, he was in pain. He was in more pain from not performing acts of kindness

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than from the medical procedure he just endured. A day without an act of *chesed* was truly lacking something meaningful.

We see a similar concept elsewhere in the Torah. Moshe set aside three *arei miklat* in *ever hayarden* even though he couldn't finish the job by designating the remaining three in Eretz Yisrael— because the performance of *mitzvos* was ingrained within him. Similarly, the individuals that were *tamei meis* in the *midbar* and who were exempt from participating in the Korban Pesach due to *ones* (no fault of their own), pleaded to be given a second opportunity so they could partake in this mitzvah. They were indeed granted *Pesach Sheni!*

The *middah of chesed* was embedded within Avraham. *Chesed* is not just about the receiver. It shapes the provider of *chesed* as well. As descendants of Avraham, we have *chesed* in our DNA. We should always consider what we can do to assist others. To be involved in our communities, and to recognize the needs of those around us. To proactively pursue opportunities to engage in acts of kindness and not wait to be asked by others for assistance. May we be blessed to always be on the side that is providing the *chesed!* ■

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Powerful Prayer

The destruction of *Sedom* and *Amorah* is imminent; Lot is instructed to run to the mountains to be saved (*Bereisheet 19;18-23*). But Lot begs the angels to allow him to escape to a closer location and spare the city of Zoar. The angels acquiesce, although Zoar was meant to be destroyed it was ultimately saved. How are we to understand that Lot's appeal was granted while *Avraham Avinu*, who davened for the salvation of even one city, was denied? Further, what inhibited Lot from fleeing to the hills where *Avraham Avinu* lived far away from all the devastation to ensure his safety?

Rashi (*19;19*) explains that Lot was afraid to return to the vicinity of *Avraham Avinu* lest Hashem compare him to his uncle and be found worthy of punishment. Rav Yaffe in *Leavdecha B'emet* questions this logic. Does Hashem compare one person to another? Is not each person judged for his own merits or otherwise? Rather, says Rav Yaffe, when one is found in the proximity of a great person there is an expectation that he should become inspired and aim to emulate the ways of the *gadol*. The *Saba* of *Novardok* teaches that one who lives near a righteous person has a vivid image of exemplary

behavior and that ideal must be an inspiration for all to follow. It seems that Lot viewed such a responsibility as burdensome.

Rav Zaitchik in *Ohr Chadash* reflects on Lot's pathetic mindset here. Instead of admitting his shortcomings and returning to his uncle *Avraham*, he chooses to remain in a precarious and insecure circumstance. Lot prefers to suffer an uncertain future rather than make the necessary changes to his lifestyle and behavior. Indeed, many of us can see a reflection of ourselves in Lot. Even when we know that making significant changes in our lives will lead to greater good, we are reluctant to go beyond what is familiar and comfortable to make those shifts.

Instead, Lot pleads that the city of Zoar be spared and remains in his habituated groove. Yet why was his request accepted? The *midrash* explains that the angels felt *hakarot hatov* to Lot for his hospitality, this obligated them to respond in the affirmative. Rav Yechezkel Levenstein adds that such is the power of gratitude! It can affect powerful change, even beyond the *tefilah* of *Avraham Avinu*.

Rav Druck in *Aish Tamid* infers from here an additional lesson; the power of a *tefilah* that comes from the depths of one's heart. Clearly the *tefilah* of *Avraham Avinu* was powerful, however, one cannot compare it to a prayer offered in the direst of situations. Accordingly, *chazal* teach us that

the *tefilah* of a *choleh* himself is the most powerful. Here, Lot feels the desperation of the moment and emphasizes that his life is in danger. This is certainly a *tefilah* that can pierce the heavens. Rav Druck notes that we see a similar idea in the holiday of *Tu B'av*. One of the reasons offered for celebration on this day is that the last group of people from ages 20 to 60 who dug their graves in the *midbar* on *Tisha B'av* did not die and were able to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. What was different about this group? Every year they dug their graves and although they davened earnestly there was still a part of them that said maybe we won't die this year, maybe we will still get up tomorrow. However, in that last year all those who dug their graves knew they were going to die, there was no option for survival. Thus, they prayed from the depths of their hearts and did sincere *teshuvah*. They all lived and *Tu B'av* became a day that captures the potency of *tefilah* to offset a negative decree.

The Torah is teaching us that despite Lot's limitations and unwillingness to reform, he remains a model for us in the power of genuine, authentic *tefilah*. ■

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SUN, OCT 24

9:00 AM

Rabbi David Walk

Tehillim: Divine Poetry

10:15 AM

Rabbi Aharon Adler

The Biblical Abraham Accords

11:30 AM

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Shir haShirim (L'Ayla)

2:00 PM

Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

Men's Gemara Chabura S,T,TH

<https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

4:30 PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

Men's Gemara B'yun S,M,W,Th

<https://zoom.us/j/86466998217>

8:00PM

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Halacha class on Headcovering for women

MISSED A CLASS?

You can watch the recording at www.ouisrael.org/video-library

MON, OCT 25

9:15 AM

Rebbetzin Pearl Borow

Divrei Hayamim

10:30 AM

Rabbi Aaron

Goldscheider

The Thought of Rav

Soloveitchik

11:45 AM

Rabbi Shmuel

Herschler

Ethics, family and society in the writings of Rav Hirsch, Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik

4:30PM

Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

7:00 PM

Rabbi Baruch Taub

(Zoom only)

8:30PM

Rabbi Elyada

Goldvicht

The Bais – Semichas Chaver Program (Men only)

***L'AYLA CLASSES
ARE FOR
WOMEN ONLY**

TUE, OCT 26

9:15 AM

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)

9:30 AM

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Minchat Chinuch

10:30 AM

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

Parshat HaShavua

2:00 PM

Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

5:00 PM

Rebbetzin Sylvie Schatz

Chazal: Insights Into Our

Times (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/85177782268>

7:30PM

Rabbi Tzvi Mauner

The Bais- Safrut Course

(Men Only)

SPECIAL EVENTS

10:30AM

Russian Compound Tiyul with **Rivi Frankel**

8:30PM

Practical Parenting

Rabbi Dr. Alex Mondrow

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WED, OCT 27

9:00 AM
Rabbi Shimshon Nadel
Halacha and Medina

10:15 AM
Rabbi Anthony Manning
Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa

11:30 AM
Rabbi Alan Kimche

4:30PM
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

7:00 PM
Rabbi Baruch Taub
(Zoom only)

8:30 PM
Rav Meir Goldwicht
(Hebrew) <https://zoom.us/j/2244321902>
Passcode: 18

8:30PM
Rabbi Aschi Dick The Bais- Halachic Controversies (Men Only)

PLEASE NOTE:
Password for classes is: **ouisrael**

THURS, OCT 28

9:15AM
Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Sefer Kohelet

10:15 AM
Rabbi Baruch Taub
Parshat Hashavua

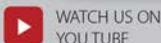
11:30 AM
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein
Unlocking the Messages of Chazal

2:00 PM
Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld

4:30PM
Rabbi Hillel Ruvell

8:00 PM
Rabbi Ari Kahn Parshat HaShavua <https://zoom.us/j/2624570009>
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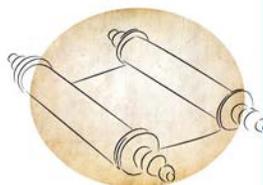


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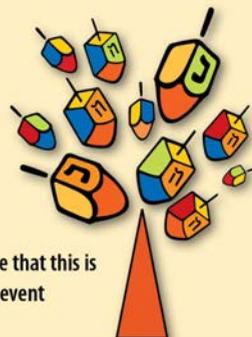
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Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

We Are All Guests

The *Meor Einayim*, the *tzadik* Rebbe Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, zy'a, was one of the leading disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and later, of the Maggid of Mezritch. In addition to his mystical scholarship, the holy Chernobler was particularly active in the mitzvah of *pidyon shevuyim*, redeeming captives. His days and nights were spent collecting funds, lobbying and engaging in activism on behalf of Jews who had fallen prey to the local squires, landlords and corrupt officers of the Ukraine. He would spare no effort or expense in working on behalf of Jewish prisoners.

One day, while going door to door collecting money to ransom a Jewish debtor in Zhitomir, the Chernobler was arrested and jailed for jaywalking. Lacking the appropriate identification papers, the *tzadik* was thrown into jail. Even as he suffered the indignities and humiliation of prison, the Chernobler maintained his faith. He was also plagued with the nagging, obvious

question: Having devoted his entire life to this specific mitzvah *pidyon shevuyim*, how could God allow this ironic turn of events? That night, his rebbe, the holy Baal Shem Tov, appeared to him in a dream. Smiling, the *tzadik* shared the following message:

"There was none among our forefathers who more exemplified the trait of *chesed* and excelled in *hachnasas orchim*, welcoming and honoring guests, more than Avraham Avinu. The tent of Avraham and Sarah was open on all four sides, and they provided food, shelter and encouragement to any passing wayfarer, stranger or traveller. In his infinite wisdom, Hashem instructed Avraham to hit the road: *Lech lecha m'artzecha*, "Go from your land," and become a traveller as well. Avraham became a stranger in a strange land, so that the experience of being a guest would teach him how to be a host and to more effectively provide for the needs of others.

"You, my dear Reb Nachum," continued the Baal Shem Tov, "you who have spent your life redeeming prisoners and rescuing captives, will now more fully appreciate how crucial the Mitzvah is and you will redouble your holy efforts on their behalf with even more sacrifice and sensitivity."

Our sedra describes the incredible efforts Avraham Avinu made in service of three filthy, Arab travellers, idolaters who arrived at their tent. With alacrity and

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dedication, Avraham personally provided for their every need.

Rav Shabsai Yogel, zy'a, was a student of both Volozhin and Navardok, and served as the Rosh Yeshivah of Slonim. Rav Shabsai survived the war and settled in Ramat Gan, where he rebuilt the yeshivah and was a member of the Moetzes Gedolei Torah of Agudas Yisroel. He once shared the following insight.

Shimon haTzadik taught: על שלשה דברים, העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים, “The world stands on three things, Torah, Divine service and acts of kindness (Prikei Avos 1:2). The first two world-supporting pillars are listed with the *hey hayideah*, the ‘definite article’– *haTorah*, literally “the Torah” and *ha-avodah*, “the Avodah”. The third pillar, *gemilus chassadim*, is mentioned without the *hey hayediah*.

Chazal saw with *ruach hakodesh* that a time would come in history when Jews would debate the nature of Torah and Divine service; the winds of change can alter the way some interpret our holy Torah and what it means to serve God. Therefore, the Mishnah states clearly that ‘Torah’ refers to *the* Torah — our exclusive covenantal relationship through revelation — Torah *min haShamayim*. And *avodah* refers to *the* avodah, the personal connection and authentic service of Hashem revealed by our sages.

Rav Yogel explained that *gemilas chassadim*, the third sustaining pillar of the world, is different. Universal in nature, true *chesed* is without the specific delineation and distinction implied by the word *ha*, “the”. In other words, there are no limits and restrictions in *chesed*; every human



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being is deserving of kindness. This we learn from the ‘pillar of faith’ himself, Avraham Avinu.

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Looking up, he saw three men standing near him (18:2).

Avraham Avinu’s real life experience of being on the road without the stability of a home enabled him to identify and empathize with the needs and circumstances of others in a deeper, and more personal way. Professor Brené Brown is one of the insightful wise-people of our generation. She teaches that empathy and sympathy, often thought of as synonyms, are in fact very different. Empathy is a skill that can bring us closer to others, allowing people we connect with to feel included, while sympathy creates an uneven power dynamic leading to even further isolation

and disconnection. True chesed is delivered from a perspective of being on level ground with others, and therefore empowers the receiver by providing them assistance, support and connection.

Rav Joseph Soloveitchik, zy’a, frames the specific act of kindness of *hachnasas orchim* as an expression of our partnership with Hashem, and as our desire to emulate His Divine ways:

The Almighty is the great *machnis orechim*. His hospitality made it possible for humanity to exist, for the world to come into being. “To be,” means to share in the infinite being of the Almighty. The Almighty, like Avraham, invites people to partake in His boundless existence. Creation is an act of *hachnasat orchim*... We are just strangers whom the Almighty has invited into His “tent,” which is the universe. How beautiful



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is the doctrine of *tzimtzum*, of contraction. What is creation if not withdrawal by God in order to make it possible for a world to emerge in space and time? Infinity steps aside and finitude is born. What is *hachnasat orchim* if not withdrawal by the master from part of his home so that a stranger can occupy the empty part he vacates?

Parshas Vayeira is an opportunity for us to reflect on the extraordinary way our Zeidy Avraham used his real life experiences, travails and journeys as means to connect with, better understand and meet the needs of others. More importantly, it is a time for us to consider how our own ups and downs, our challenges and opportunities, are meant to help us make space within our schedules, homes and lives, for others. We are always being taught deeper levels of empathy and lovingkindness.

May we merit to learn from Avraham Avinu, and practice empathy and *hachnasas orchim* in good health and amid revealed good. ■

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BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Eztion

The Jews and the Ram

There are few scenes in Sefer Bereishit as dramatic as Akeidah Yitzchak. Father and son walk hand in hand, honored to fulfill Hashem's impossible command. Bound and constrained, Yitzchak is prepared to pay the ultimate price for his steadfast belief. For his part, Avraham is willing to sacrifice the child he had waited for with the patience of a hundred years. Avraham is not only surrendering his lone successor, but is also sabotaging his life's work and his celebrated career. You can imagine the jeers the day after he walks down the mountain as a "murderer". This "saint", who had spent a lifetime preaching morality, has now been exposed as a fraud and as a child killer. Undeterred by the cost and unafraid of the consequences, Avraham and Yitzchak ascend the mountain, ready to submit to the divine mystery.

Of course, Hashem has no interest in human sacrifice; if anything, the entire akeidah is designed solely to debunk the concept of human sacrifice. Avraham and Yitzchak are brought to the brink of human sacrifice specifically to discredit any thought that Hashem desires human blood. Though no life would be taken that day, Avraham

and Yitzchak are still willing to sacrifice everything for their love of Hashem. In a dramatic climax, a heavenly angel intervenes at the last second, barely sparing Yitzchak's life and halting the akeidah.

Just when you would think the akeidah has concluded, the Torah describes a seemingly trivial sidenote. As he withdraws the knife from his son's taunted neck, Avraham notices a ram which happens to be caught in the thicket, wildly flailing its horns, but unable to release itself. Avraham sacrifices this trapped ram in place of his son.

Of course, there is nothing random about this ram; Chazal assure us that this ram was created at the dawn of history during the final stages of creation. Why is the sacrifice of the ram so noteworthy? Sacrifices were always offered throughout Bereishit without any fanfare or notable mention. Why is this "historic" ram positioned upon such an epic mountain? Would the akeidah have been incomplete without an ordinary ram sacrifice? Finally, why is the ram's struggle to free itself from the thicket even mentioned? Why is this seemingly inconsequential information about horns stuck in a bush, crucial to the overall story?

Evidently, the thrashing ram possesses deeper symbolism. When a ram's horn, or for that matter, a human limb becomes entangled in a thicket, it can be tricky to separate from the bush. Even if you succeed in disentangling from one branch, a different

branch entangles you. Chazal saw the ram's struggle with a knotty bush as a metaphor of Jewish history. Throughout our arduous but heroic journey in exile we would become ensnared in thorny and trying situations. We would face hatred and persecution. True we would survive horror and hostility but upon extracting ourselves from one predicament we would soon become entangled in a new and different set of adverse conditions. The ram thrashing its horns is a metaphor for the odyssey of Jewish history and the miracle of Jewish survival under unimaginable circumstances.

This powerful metaphor for Jewish survival is implanted as an integral element of the akeidah. By ascending the mountain and abandoning human logic below, Avraham and Yitzchak set a paradigm for their descendants. They enshrined mesirat nefesh at the core of Jewish identity. The love for Hashem runs so deep in Jewish consciousness that we are prepared to defend His presence in this world even at the cost of our own very lives. Avraham and Yitzchak were each prepared to forfeit everything to display their love of God and their submission to His will. Every Jew possesses this trait as part of his genetic composition. Some are more aware of this capacity, while for others it lies buried deep within the recesses of Jewish identity. Either way, mesirat nefesh is part of our national ethos and it was injected into the Jewish heart by Avraham and Yitzchak upon this mountain. Jews do not have a death wish and don't pursue martyrdom. However, every Jew lives with an unspoken awareness that we are placed upon this globe with a mission. We will rally to that mission with every breath we are given by

Hashem and if necessary with our last one.

Our willingness to die on behalf of our belief is largely responsible for our miraculous survival during the past two thousand years of history. Without this courage, defiance, and commitment we would have buckled under the relentless efforts to annihilate our people and our faith. Ideas are rarely defeated by violence and certainly the eternal idea of Hashem can never be eliminated from the Jewish imagination by pressure or persecution. As the akeidah ebbed to a close, the ram signals to Avraham that this trial was essential to empower his children for survival through the thicket of Jewish history. The Jews would journey along a terrifying historical path and without the love and faith programmed at the akeidah, this journey would be unmanageable. This thrashing ram would be sacrificed but the Jewish nation would survive their thicket of history because of this epic moment and due to the indefatigable love for Hashem that every Jewish heart harbors.

With Hashem's help we have finally disentangled ourselves from that thicket and we stand once again upon the mountains of Israel -proud of this incredible legacy and awaiting our destiny. We have come full circle since that heroic morning of the akeidah. ■

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Determining the Status of Shemita Produce - Part 2

The stage of growth of produce plays a role in determining whether it maintains holiness of the *shemita* year. As previously discussed, tree fruits become holy if and when *chanitah* occurs during *shemita* (from *Rosh Hashanah* 5782 until *Rosh Hashanah* 5783). *Chanitah* refers either to the beginning of the formation of the fruit or according to other opinions, the stage at which it becomes edible. The current article aims to discuss other types of crops and when they acquire the status of *shemita* produce.

Grains and legumes

According to Torah law, grains become holy if and when they reach a third of their growth during the *shemita* year. If the grains already reached this stage before *Rosh Hashanah*, they are considered sixth-year produce, even if they are harvested during *shemita*. Our Sages (*Rosh Hashanah* 12:b) bring proof from different verses that a third of full growth is the stage that

determines the grain's status. Halachic authorities discuss when exactly "a third of growth" takes place. The *Ran* (*Rosh Hashanah* 12:b) maintains that a third of the weight is the stage prescribed by the Sages, while the *Chazon Ish* (7:16) proves from other sources that our Sages meant a third of the ripeness. Most authorities accept the ruling of the *Chazon Ish* (see *Kerem Tzion, Terumot* 4). As it is hard to define how one measures ripeness, the accepted method is to go by the volume of the grains. Grains included in this category are the five grains (wheat, barley, rye, spelt and oats).

Similarly, the status of legumes is determined by when they reach a third of their growth. Halacha defines legumes as crops whose seed is consumed, while the leaves of the branch are discarded (see *Rambam Kilayim* 1:8). These include corn, peanuts, and beans of all kinds.

According to almost all authorities, grapes and olives are similar to grains and legumes and their *shemita* status is thereby determined by a third of growth. This is true whether they are grown for consumption or for wine or oil production. Several reasons are suggested by early authorities for why grapes and olives are treated differently

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from other tree-fruits. (See *Ritva* and *Tosafot Ri"d* on *Rosh Hashanah* 12b.)

Vegetables

In contrast to fruits, grains and legumes, the *shemita* status of vegetables is determined solely by when they are picked. Even if a vegetable grew completely during the sixth year, if it is harvested during *shemita* (i.e. after *Rosh Hashanah* 5782) it maintains *kedushat shevi'it*, and all the *halachot* of *shemita* produce apply.

Interestingly, there is an exception to the above rule, mainly applicable to commercial farmers. There are certain vegetables which, after fully ripening, are left on the plant for a number of weeks prior to harvesting. They are purposely not watered or tended in order to benefit from the drying process of the hot sun. This practice is common in the production of paprika and squash. In a case where the vegetable was completely grown prior to *Rosh Hashanah* and was not watered for a certain period of time, then even if

it was picked after *shemita* began, there is no *kedushat shevi'it*. The OU has certified paprika which was grown in this fashion. Based on *Mishnah Shevi'it* (2:8), which requires a certain amount of time before *Rosh Hashanah* during which the vegetables are not watered, Rav Belsky (one of the OU *Poskim*) ruled that paprika peppers not be watered forty days prior to *Rosh Hashanah*. Even though the peppers are harvested afterwards, the paprika is not considered *shemita* produce and may be shipped overseas. The entire process is overseen by top OU *mashgichim*.

Herbs and spices

As various spices and herbs grow differently, the stage which determines them as *shemita* produce depends on the type of plant. Many herbs are similar to vegetables and therefore go by the time of picking. The *Chazon Ish* (14:3) cited hyssop (*za'atar*) as an example of an herb that is similar to a vegetable and becomes holy once it is picked after *Rosh Hashanah*. However,



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other herbs and spices have different rules. For example, rosemary, which grows on branches, “belongs” to the *shemita* year at the point when the branches start to sprout from the plant.

The consumer

During the fall and early winter, knowing the time and dates of *shemita* produce is essential. Otherwise, it can be very confusing to keep track of which produce has *kedushat shevi'it* and which does not. Most fruits will have no *kedushat shevi'it* until later in the year, and the same is true for olive oil and grapes. On the other hand, almost all vegetables and certain spices have *kedushat shevi'it* already at the very

beginning of *shemita*. It is recommended to equip oneself with a *shemita* calendar to be able to consult while shopping for vegetables and fruits. Feel free to reach out to our hotline for further guidance.

In summary:

- Grains and legumes have *kedushat shevi'it* if they reached a third of their growth during *shemita*.
- A third of growth is not measured by weight but rather by volume.
- Grapes and olives have the same “third of growth” rule regarding *shemita*.
- Vegetables are considered *shevi'it* once they have been picked during the *shemita* year, even if they were ripe prior to *shemita*.
- Vegetables that are left on the plant and not watered in order to dry in the sun are not considered *shemita* produce, even if picked after *Rosh Hashanah*.
- It is important to equip oneself with a *shemita* calendar in order to check when each product takes on *kedushat shevi'it*. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Our *Sedra* opens with *Avraham Avinu*, sitting, recovering from his recent *brit mila*, outside his tent during the heat of the day. *Chazal* explain that *Avraham* is sitting outside his tent, anxious to welcome guests, that despite his discomfort and recovery from his recent “surgical” procedure, he is literally sitting and waiting for an opportunity to welcome visitors into his home. Of course, the guests that arrive, are none other than the *malachim* that *Hashem* sends his way to cheer *Avraham* up, to enable *Avraham* to do that *maaseh chesed* he is longing to fulfill, as well as ultimately to share with *Avraham* and *Sara* that they will finally be blessed with a child.

In a stirring and beautiful teaching, **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Horowitz zy’a**, known as the ***Patiker Rav***, points out that there are four eternal lessons to be learned from this story as to how one should perform the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*, the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests into our homes.

The first message- *Avraham* is waiting outside his home, seeking opportunities to be hospitable, rather than waiting for someone to knock on his door or ask to be welcomed. Each one of us must ask ourselves, how can we emulate this *mida* - to literally actively seek opportunities to do *chesed* and to welcome others into our homes.

The second point, *Avraham Avinu* of course had many servants. When these travelers arrive to visit them, it is he and *Sara* themselves who engage in welcoming the guests, in making sure they are comfortable, that they have shade and that they can freshen up. It is *Sara* herself who prepares a meal for these visitors. All this teaches us that *hachnasat orchim* should be done ourselves and not through an emissary.

The third message we can learn is that one should not interrogate our guests, or bombard them with questions to see if indeed they really are in need of our hospitality and assistance. *Chazal* point out that *Avraham Avinu* intuited through his prophetic capabilities that these guests were *malachim*, that they really were not in need of any physical comforts or sustenance, yet this does not impact or limit *Avraham* in any way in terms of his desire to treat them with kindness and dignity.

Finally, these special guests ultimately reveal to *Avraham* and *Sara* that they will miraculously be blessed with a child! This, explains the *Patiker Rav*, teaches us the most profound message of all regarding the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim* and any act of *chesed*, - in reality our guests end up giving us much more than they receive!

May we be blessed to heed the *Patiker Rav*’s powerful words, and to find fulfillment in a life filled with *chesed* and *hachnasat orchim*. ■



RABBI AARON Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

Holy Land, Twice Over

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik suggested that it is inaccurate, from a halachic perspective, to refer to Israel as ‘the Holy Land.’ There isn’t a single holiness according to halacha; there are actually two dimensions of holiness that are inherent in the Land of Israel.

The Rav explained this idea by citing a beautiful Mishna which illustrates the *kedusha* of Israel (Mishna Keilim 1:6). The Sages in this passage state that there are ten levels of holiness found in the Land.

Firstly the Land of Israel is holier than any other land in the world and there are three items in particular, that exhibit its holy character, (a) On the second day of Pesach the *Omer* offering must be taken from barley that grows in the Land of Israel. (b) On the holiday of Shavuot the wheat used for the loaves must be wheat that grew in the Land of Israel. (c) The *Bikurim*, first fruits of the seven species, must be taken from the Land of Israel.

The mishna is perplexing. Surely these are not the only laws that pertain to the uniqueness of Israel regarding its holy status? Why, for example, is *maaser*, *terumah*, being *mafrish challah*, not counted among this list as well? The Rav offered a

penetrating answer. This Mishna is focused on only *one* aspect of Israel’s *kedusha* - namely, the *kedusha* that emanates from the *Makom Hamikdash* (the place of the Temple). There are ten regions in Israel that depending on their proximity to the Temple have a certain degree of holiness. Those areas which are closer have a more potent *kedusha* and as the distance from the central point of the Temple increases the *kedusha* weakens. The *kedusha* has a limit and does not extend past the borders of Israel. That is why the barley, wheat, and first fruits must be taken from somewhere within the boundaries of Israel and brought to the Temple.

By contrast, there is a *kedusha* in Israel which is not contingent on the Temple’s holiness. It is a *kedusha* embedded in the Land; this is why we call the Land *admat kodesh*. The laws of *Shemita*, *terumah*, *maaser* are all laws related to the holiness that exists in the Land of Israel itself. Therefore, in actuality, a double serving of sanctity is manifest in Israel. ■

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WEITZMAN

Playing God?

The Book of Bereishit opens with God creating the world and eventually addressing Adam, commanding him to follow certain instructions. Very quickly Adam and Chava sin and are ejected from the idyllic Garden of Eden, and they dwell in the entrance to the Garden, from where they could see Eden but they were not allowed to enter. When Cain performs an even more atrocious sin, he is distanced even further and has to roam around the world. Last week we read of Noach's trials and tribulations, during which he is not only exiled from his locale, but the entire world is erased through the flood, and humanity must rebuild itself.

The beginning of the Book of Bereishit is a chronicle of man being distanced from God. Avraham, who appears in this week's Parshah, begins to mend this rift and to discover the Almighty in this world. He starts his journey at the tender age of three and later proclaims Divinity to the entire world, travelling from place to place to teach about God and our obligations and allegiances to Him. (See Rambam, Laws of Idolatry 1:3)

This is also the entire history of religious man, our desire to connect with God and find Him in our own world and even in our everyday lives. Religion in general, and

Judaism in particular, are a method to find God in the world that we inhabit.

However, I often face the question posed by couples undergoing fertility treatment, doctors challenging my religious perspective, or members of the public who are exposed to news of medical advancements. Have we gone too far, are we now playing God?

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What is the limit and boundaries to playing God? At what point do we cease to be human and start making Divine decisions? More on this next time. ■

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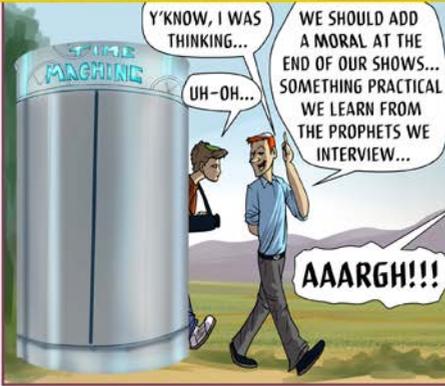
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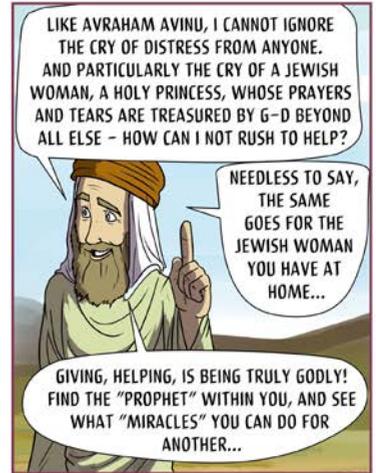
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Is a Difficult to Remove Residue a *Chatzitza*?

Question: I learned that due to the way we use our oven rack, it requires *tevila* (beyond our scope), but by now, it has baked-on residue. With hard work and chemical cleaners, I removed most of the residue, but it is not fully clean. May I do *tevilat keilim* now?

Answer: The laws of *chatzitza* (impediments to the water reaching all of the object) come up in the Shulchan Aruch regarding different *tevilot* – a woman (Yoreh Deah 198), *netilat yadayim* (Orach Chayim 161), and *tevilat keilim* (YD 120 & 202). The main difference is that for a woman, it is a more acute need (to prevent a severe *aveira*) than the latter two (a lower level positive *mitzva* – for hands, it is Rabbinic; for utensils, it is a *machloket* whether it is from the Torah).

The main rule about *chatzitza* (Eiruvin 4b) is that the Torah-level disqualification is

when something is both stuck on a majority of the object (*rov*) and in a manner that the pertinent person wants it removed (*makpid*). It is a *chatzitza* on a Rabbinic level if only one of the issues exists (*ibid.*). You and most people prefer to remove residue on their racks (thus, the chemicals products) – all of it, unless it is impossible or highly taxing. It is a good question – when one does not remove only because it is not so feasible, is it a *chatzitza*?

There are several discussions about *chatzitzot* that are difficult to remove. One is about medically required *chatzitzot*, e.g., stitches, casts, post-operative bandages. The *mishna* states that a bandage on a wound constitutes a *chatzitza* (Mikvaot 9:2). On the other hand, some explain that this is because people often remove the bandage temporarily (see *Sidrei Tahara* 198:23; *Ktav Sofer*, YD 91). Despite the similarities (staying on for a while, difficult to remove), the bandage is different in both directions: a bandage is more annoying than residue; there is a plan to remove it in the future (stringent); the bandage is desired now (lenient).

Two relevant sources are focal points of discussion and distinctions: 1. There is a *machloket* among *Tannaim* whether an arrow lodged in one's leg and is difficult to remove is a *chatzitza* (*Tosefta*, Mikvaot 7:9); 2. According to some *Rishonim* (see *Beit Yosef*, YD 198), one does not need to remove

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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.



certain skin malformations, despite his desire to not have them, because removal is painful. To reconcile these sources, the Sidrei Tahara (198:26) distinguishes between foreign objects, which more naturally constitute *chatzitzot*, and addendums of the body itself. Others distinguish based on how safe it is to remove it (Rash on Mikvaot 10:8; Shut R. Akiva Eiger I:60). Those sources do not provide clear guidance for our case because of differences – here, the residue is foreign and difficulty is the only reason not to remove the residue; we are dealing with a utensil rather than a person.

The closest cases are the following. A woman must try to remove lice from her hair before *tevila*, but irremovable lice are not a *chatzitzta* (Shulchan Aruch, YD 198:47). Like our case, she would like to remove them and just did not succeed, and yet it is considered not *makpid*. The Gra (ad loc. 53) is confusing, as he points out two things: it is natural, and he is not *makpid*. Depending on how these reasons interact, it is unclear

what he would say in our case. The Rama (Yoreh Deah 202:2) says that black stains on the outside of a pot are normal and therefore not a problem. However, not all agree (Gra ad loc. 3), although maybe the stains are not too difficult to remove. The strongest source seeming to indicate that residue that remains after removal efforts is not a *chatzitzta* is the Shulchan Aruch, YD 120:13. One must remove rust before *tevilat keilim*, but if, after efforts to do so a little is left, one is not *makpid*, and it is okay. One could argue that residue in the age of oven cleaners is less acceptable than rust before the advent of stainless steel. However, regarding a case that you do not plan to clean anymore, we have seen enough justification to posit that normal modest residue is not a *chatzitzta*. ■

Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact info@eretzhemdah.org to join.

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BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



לירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב

At the end of every Kumsitz, Chagiga, or Simcha, we typically end off with a joyous rendition of the song לירושלים (Next year in Jerusalem). Often, people living in Yerushalayim have a harder time connecting to these words. Why should they sing these words with passion and fervor, if they already live in Yerushalayim? But there is one small word at the end of this song that gives the answer - הבנויה (which is built up). We ask not only for the privilege of being able to live in Yerushalayim, but to be zocheh to witness Yerushalayim return to all of its formal glory.

This same dialectic is found in the Shemoneh Esrei in the bracha of לירושלים. ולירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב, ותשכון בתוכה כאשר דיברת, ובנה אותה בקרוב בימינו בנין עולם, וכיסא דוד עבדך מהרה לתוכה תכין. ברוך אתה ה', בונה ירושלים.

And to Yerushalayim, Your city, may You return with mercy and may You rest within it, as You have spoken. May You rebuild it soon in our days as an eternal structure,

and may You speedily establish the throne of David within it. Blessed are You, Hashem, who builds Yerushalayim.

עירך ולירושלים - In this Tefilla, we ask Hashem to return to Yerushalayim, to His city. **Rabbi Shimon Schwab** explains that we want Hashem not only to return to the city of Yerushalayim, but to transform it back into His city. The city of Yerushalayim should be a city filled only with Kedusha. It should revert it back to the way we would expect the city of Hashem to appear.

ברחמים תשוב - We ask that Hashem return to the city with mercy, meaning that even if we don't deserve it, He should forgive us and come back to Yerushalayim

ותשכון בתוכה - We want Hashem not only to return to Yerushalayim for "brief visits" but לשכון בתוכה, to really dwell in it and make it His "home".

כאשר דיברת - We remind Hashem that this is a promise He already made to us many years ago, throughout Tanach (for example in Zecharya 8:3 - שבתי אל ציון ושכנתי - בתוך ירושלים *and I will return to Tzion and dwell in Yerushalayim*).

ובנה אותה בקרוב בימינו בנין עולם - We ask Hashem that not only should we see a



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spiritual transformation of Yerushalayim, in which we will feel Hashem's presence and the Kedusha will spread through the city, but that we should see a physical transformation as well.

וכיסיא דוד עבדך מהרה לתוכה תכין - In order for Yerushalayim to return to its complete glory, we ask Hashem to establish new, stable, G-d chosen leadership.

ברוך אתה ה' בונה ירושלים - *Blessed are you HaShem who builds Yerushalayim.*

Living in exile for thousands of years, one can imagine that this Bracha was for centuries cause for tears and immense sadness. The request for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim seemed like a far-off unobtainable dream.

In fact, **Rav Yonatan Eibishitz**, who lived in the 1600's, writes the following words – *“There is no reason to expand on this, for it is clear that one must shed unending tears regarding the building of Yerushalayim....for that is the purpose of mankind, and if we don't have Yerushalayim, what is the purpose of life?”*

Baruch HaShem, in today's times, things have begun to shift. Sure, things today are not perfect. Much of Yerushalayim is secular, there's no Beit Hamikdash or Davidic dynasty, and many do not feel Hashem's presence... but look how far we've come!

So I think that while yes, we need to recognize that we are not there yet and that we





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have a lot to daven for, at the same time we can look towards the future with renewed hope and faith that we are headed towards our national dream of a flourishing and kedusha-filled Yerushalayim.

We conclude the bracha with the words ברוך אתה ה' בונה ירושלים - *Blessed are you HaShem who builds Yerushalayim.* Rav Schwab notes that this bracha is written in the present and not in the future (i.e., *He will build Yerushalayim*). He explains that this is because the rebuilding of Yerushalayim is a process. Hashem is constantly rebuilding Yerushalayim, advancing it both spiritually and physically, so that each day we are one day closer to the fulfillment of our dream.

May we all be zocheh to witness Hashem's ultimate return to a completely built up Yerushalayim - ירושלים הבנויה - ■



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Meron Nemirov Jerusalem Chapter Director **Hashem In Our Lives**

When Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai was about to pass away, he blessed his students saying that their awe of Hashem should be equal to that of their awe of man. At first glance, it seems like an odd bracha. Why stop there? Shouldn't our awe be even greater for our creator?

I believe our parsha has the key. The binding of Isaac is a story of a parent and their son leaving home. They are not sure exactly where they're going. They travel for days, with only the parent really understanding that they've left the safety of their tent. The child walks hand in hand though, not really asking any questions. After a few days it seems clear; the parent resigning themselves to the fact that their child isn't coming home, that they're meeting their end where they are. Then, out of nowhere, divine intervention. An angel comes down, blesses the child and shows the parent that there was something else there all along.

While Akeidat Yitschak might be one of the better known stories of the Chumash, it's not the only one that fits this exact story progression! Hagar and Ishmael follow the exact same story, only one perek earlier! The difference between

these two journeys, Rav Menachem Pinner suggests, is one crucial difference. Avraham knows Hashem is with him, He appeared to him. Vaera! Hagar did not have that experience. Her mission, while also divinely commanded, was not handed down to her through Hashem. She didn't have a moment of knowing that Hashem is with her. This is something we struggle with every day in this world. This is what Rabbi Yohananan Ben Zakai was getting at. Connecting to Hashem can be hard, but connecting to people is a lot easier. We should merit to recognize that no matter where we walk, we are on a mission from Hashem and to know that His spotlight always shines upon us.



Talia Agatstein 10th Grade, Jerusalem **The Greatness of Yitzchak**

In this week's Parsha, the important event of Akedat Yitzchak takes place. It was such an important event that even now, hundreds of generations later, we ask Hashem to remember Akedat Yitzchak, and give us merit for the devotion Avraham displayed by his willingness to sacrifice his son for Hashem. It raises the question: Why does the name of the event refer to the greatness of Yitzchak? This was Avraham's tenth and final test. Wouldn't it

be more fitting to call this important event something more related to Avraham?

Rav Hirsch explains one reason why Akedat Yitzchak was called by Yitzchak's name. He writes that Yitzchak did not directly hear Hashem's command to be sacrificed. He only knew of it from the mouth of his father. Yitzchak, however, was the first Jewish son to accept mesorah/tradition from his father without question. Yitzchak's faith in Hashem was unwavering, and he knew his father was a tzaddik and would never deceive him. Akedat Yitzchak was called by this name to stress the greatness of that moment of Yitzchak accepting an oral tradition from his father- one which he did not hear himself. We learn from here not only to listen directly to Hashem's commandments, but also the importance of listening to our Rabbis and the Torah Shebaal Peh. From this event, the seed was planted for the devotion that future generations would demonstrate for the tradition they receive from their fathers. Important as it is to listen to a mitzvah commanded directly from Hashem, it is also important to observe those which have been passed down in our mesorah, even if we did not hear the command ourselves. Shabbat Shalom! ■

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