

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1634

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פרשת וירא
PARSHAT VAYEIRA



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ישראל



Setting a Personal Example
Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Page 28



**Teaching Chessed To Our Children:
Lessons from Avraham Avinu**
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski Page 60



והוא ישב פתח־האהל כחם היום
בראשית י"ח:א'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT VAYEIRA ZMANIM
CANDLES 4:09 PM • HAVDALA 5:22 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:01 PM



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Send us your best photos and give us the opportunity to highlight your story.

Everyone is invited to submit! (amateurs and professionals alike)
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We continue to pray for the return of all the kedoshim from Gaza.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS



Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Marcheshvan/ Wed. night Nov. 5

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
November 5 - 15 / 14 - 24 Marcheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:06-5:14
Sunrise	5:59-6:07
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:40-8:45
Magen Avraham	8:03-8:07
Sof Zman Tefila	9:34-9:38
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:22-11:23
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	11:52-11:53
Plag Mincha	3:38-3:33
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:50-4:44



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	Vayeira		Chayei Sara	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:09	5:22	4:04	5:18
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:27	5:25	4:23	5:21
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:28	5:23	4:23	5:19
Gush Etzion	4:25	5:23	4:20	5:19
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:25	5:23	4:20	5:19
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:25	5:23	4:20	5:19
Netanya	4:25	5:23	4:20	5:19
Be'er Sheva	4:27	5:25	4:22	5:21
Rehovot	4:26	5:24	4:21	5:20
Petach Tikva	4:09	5:23	4:04	5:19
Ginot Shomron	4:24	5:22	4:20	5:18
Haifa / Zichron	4:14	5:22	4:09	5:18
Gush Shiloh	4:23	5:22	4:19	5:18
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:26	5:24	4:21	5:20
Givat Ze'ev	4:28	5:22	4:24	5:18
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:25	5:23	4:21	5:19
Ashkelon	4:27	5:25	4:23	5:21
Yad Binyamin	4:26	5:24	4:21	5:20
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:15	5:20	4:11	5:16
Golan	4:21	5:20	4:17	5:16
Nahariya/Maalot	4:22	5:21	4:17	5:17
Afula	4:23	5:21	4:18	5:17

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Vayeira - 6:01PM • Chayei Sara - 5:57PM

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: Zevachim 55



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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The very first game I remember playing was called “the quiet game.” My father would have his children, my siblings and I, play this game at bedtime in order to help us fall asleep. Why did it work? Because clearly we did not want to go to sleep, but playing the quiet game - i.e., in the competition to see who could stay quiet the longest - eventually caused us to fall asleep on our own.

I have been thinking about the quiet game the last few weeks. Why is it that competition so often gets us to do what we need to do? This has been on my mind since the MLB World Series has been going on, with the LA Dodgers beating the Toronto Blue Jays to win the World Series. Normally, I don't follow sports

all that much. But for the past week, I have been in New York and Toronto, and it felt like the only thing people could talk about. I had an amazing and uplifting time, attending wonderful *semachot* and various speaking engagements. In particular, I had the honor of speaking at Mishkan Avraham, a *shul* in Toronto that is very dear to me. It is named after Mr. Avrom Silver, the same Avrom Silver of the Avrom Silver Jerusalem College, a Torah education program at OU Israel. Created in his memory by his incredible family and led for many years by Rabbi Sholom Gold zt”l, the program has *baruch Hashem* produced endless amounts of *shiurim* and Torah (available to watch and listen to on the OU Israel shiurim YouTube channel).

The rabbi of Mishkan Avraham is Rabbi Yosef Kurtz, who is leading a beautiful congregation of people who are coming to learn and have such joy in prayer. Rabbi Yosef Kurtz himself leads Euro Israel, an NCSY summer program that comes to Israel every summer. During the year, Rabbi Kurtz is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva High School Ohr Chaim and Ulpana in Toronto.

Speaking at his *shul*, with the backdrop of the *parsha* of Avraham Avinu, who walked up and down the Land of Israel, I gave an overview of what amazing things are happening in Israel. I spoke about the passion that we have for our beautiful country, and the methods we use to encourage and inspire the teenagers in our Teen Centers to turn from receivers into givers, and ultimately play a vital role in

May the learning
in this week's Torah Tidbits
be לעילוי הנשמה

החזן מרדכי מאיר
בן צבי הירש הלוי זצ”ל
Cantor Martin Horowitz z”l
on his 31st Yahrtzeit on ט”ז מרחשון

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who new him, bringing so many to
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kavana for his kahal, and sharing
his love for all of us in his family.
He is unbelievably missed by us all.

May his neshama have an Aliyah
יהי זכרו ברוך

Mina and Howard Millendorf
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Amiad, & Yagel Rabinowitz

the IDF and Sherut Leumi, as well as in the homes that they will one day build and in leadership positions they will one day have in their communities and cities. I spoke about our amazing staff in our Teen Centers who are so instrumental in making this happen.

Baruch Hashem, we have dear friends and supporters in Toronto that understand that this is the way to make Israel's future brighter and stronger. I am so grateful to these wonderful families and friends that take such an important role in making sure that we can continue doing the critical work that we're doing.

The whole week in Toronto, there were signs everywhere about the Blue Jays. The city was totally focused on their baseball team winning the World Series. Even the Shabbat *kiddush* in *shul* was designed in the colors of the Blue Jays. I couldn't believe my ears when I began to recognize the tune that was used for *kedusha* was "Take Me Out to the Ball Game!" The *dvar Torah* that the rabbi gave at Seudat Shelishit was on the concept of "*anu ratzim v'heim ratzim*" - how the Jewish people run after meaningful things in life, things related to our destiny, and not matters of the moment.

So I have been thinking about competition and what that brings out in us. How it got me and my siblings to go to sleep when we were children, and how it can transform entire cities. Our natural sense of competition is clearly so strong. It gets us moving. It gets us to do things that otherwise we wouldn't do. Good teachers use competition as a method in their classrooms to get students to learn and win the prize. Good bosses use competition wisely to bring out the best in their workers (when they do it well).



I truly believe it is a trait *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* implanted in us that helps us become better human beings. It is really part of our *yetzer hatov*, not our *yetzer hara*. It gets us to try to strive better in life. And it really works. Make a competition with a friend and you'll see. Who can learn more *mishnayot*, or chapters of *Tanach*? When you make a chart and are checking in on each other, the drive is so powerful to win that your goals become so much easier to achieve.

At some point on Shabbat, a man by the name of David came over to me. He told me that he was once in Peru with his family, and

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be לעי" and in loving memory of**

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ט"ז מרחשון - On her ninth Yahrzeit

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On behalf of the Rubin, Polly
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he saw that there is a famous soccer team in Lima, Peru, that has as their symbol the OU. In fact, his whole family bought the uniforms, complete with hats and all, to dress up for Purim recently. I told him how surprised I was that there was a soccer team with an OU symbol, and that I had never heard of it.

After Shabbat, he brought me one of the hats as a gift. I always wanted an OU hat, so I was really thankful for it. And then, I was speaking to my good friend Jeff, who was getting ready to leave to attend the World Series game. He put on his Blue Jays World Series hat, and I put on my OU hat. And we took a picture together.

I asked him a question I was really wondering. "If the Blue Jays win or if they lose, how is it going to make any difference to your life?" And he said, Obviously I want them to win. But I'm going to wake up tomorrow morning and I have my beautiful children and my incredible wife, and I'll manage to get on with my life." He continued, "It's just so exciting. Did you know that the last time we had the World Series here and won was 32 years ago. The city's all happy, the whole country is looking forward to it, it's just so nice to be part of this big thing."

Later, as I looked at the OU hat in the mirror, I said to myself that in the competition of life, I'm on many teams. I'm on Team

Berman, raising a village with my wife and our entire family. I'm on Team Israel, working to improve and develop this beautiful country. But I'm also proud to say that I'm on Team OU. My challenge is to compete in a positive way to continue moving *Klal Yisrael* forward, to keep to the OU Israel mission of making sure that English-speakers coming to Israel can thrive religiously and otherwise in Israel, to make sure we're helping as many teenagers at risk across the country, and to continue trying to raise all the funds necessary in order to be able to help as many people as possible. *B'ezrat Hashem*, I hope everyone on Team OU keeps winning and we continue our success in helping as many Jews as possible.

In *Parshat Vayera*, we see that this is the first time that the Torah uses the word "*vayaratz*" - and Avraham ran (Bereshit 18:7). We are told that Avraham ran to feed his guests. He ran to be the most kind, the most generous, the most hospitable to his guests in the distance. May Team OU, *b'ezrat Hashem*, continue to be like Avraham - and continue running to serve *Klal Yisrael* in all the ways we can.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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Chaim Avraham Fischer z"l

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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"l

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Rabbi Moshe Hauer's zt"l divrei Torah were enthusiastically read each week by tens of thousands of readers of Torah Tidbits. His sudden death this past *Shemini Atzeret* came as a shock to our community and to the Jewish world at large. In the coming weeks and months we will honor Rabbi Hauer's memory by publishing some of his most compelling and thought-provoking divrei Torah. May the study of his exquisite words of Torah be a source of *chizuk* and bring blessing to his memory.

Finding Our Moral Voice

What do you do when the society in which you live seems to have lost its way? How do you respond when the world seems to have lost its moral compass? Is there anything to do or say when educational institutions cannot tell or teach right from wrong?

Sodom was a terrible place. It was depraved and vulgar and it preached apathy as a value; "What is mine is mine and what is your is yours; that is characteristic of Sodom." That stood in complete opposition to Avraham who was driven to share and give and who dedicated his life to teaching and improving

others. Nevertheless, Avraham the optimist who believed that people could change, that societies and the world could improve, pleaded with God to spare Sodom. Yet even Avraham did not suggest that Sodom be spared unless there were a meaningful number of righteous people *b'toch ha'ir*, in the midst of the city.

The classic commentator Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra (12th century) understood this phrase of "*b'toch ha'ir*" as implying that the presence of good people would only be redeeming if they could live their values publicly, "in the midst of the city." If their virtue would be silenced and driven underground, their presence in the city would have no effect, both because the truth would be buried and because a community that intimidates truth-tellers is irreparable.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch went further, requiring the presence of righteous people who refuse to look on idly at the moral ruin of their fellow citizens. Avraham's righteous man "in the midst of the city" who could save Sodom would be someone who is "in lively connection with his whole environment. He never ceases admonishing and teaching,

לעילוי נשמת

Lionel Friedman z"l

on his 15th *yahrzeit*
15 MarCheshvan

In loving memory

Jonathan Friedman and Family

objecting and warning, rectifying and saving, as much as he is able. He is attentive to everyone and never tires of trying to right things – even if hope for success is slight. He never despairs of man and hastens to undertake any action for the sake of man.”

In the current moment, the truth is struggling to find its place in the midst of this country. It is rarely seen in the media and chased away from academia. Are there fifty truth-tellers *b'toch ha'ir*? Are there ten?

The future of this precious country depends on truth not being driven underground. The future of the world requires that clear voices of truth be raised loudly and clearly to teach and repair, never despairing of man.

We all need to be amongst those voices ringing out *b'toch ha'ir*, for Am Yisrael, for Eretz Yisrael, for America and for the world. ■

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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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RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

"Vayakumu **Mesham** Ha'anashim" (18:16)

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

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 Sodom.

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 saw the great contrast of the wickedness of Sodom 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 Sodom.

Rashi introduced this thought by saying – the reference to "looking out" in the Torah indicates evil.

- Shabbat Shalom



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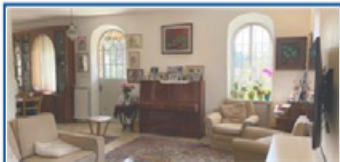
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PARSHAT VAYEIRA

Our parsha is the heart of the beloved stories of Avraham. These stories can be seen as expressing 2 main themes. First, Avraham as the father of ethical monotheism. And second, the distinct nature of the Jewish people.

The Torah will describe Avraham as a kind and generous soul, while at the same time a man of faith, of interaction with G-d and with His Name on his lips. These themes emerge from a very simple reading of the stories.

The second theme, the distinct nature of the Jewish people can be seen by the wonderful literary device of parallel stories. When similar stories are juxtaposed, it is valuable to note their similarities, but more valuable to note their contrasts. And what the similarities and contrasts teach. We will learn of the distinct nature of the Jewish people by noting

the contrasts of parallel stories.



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 – by this time next year you will have a child.

A story of ethical monotheism in living color. Avraham and Sarah greet 3 strangers with a feast of fresh bread and meat after offering them just water and bread. They run and involve the whole family in their generosity. And after being told prophetically of the birth of Yitzchak, Sarah is engaged by G-d in dialogue.

This story serves as our paradigm of kindness, generosity and hospitality, an illustration of the interpersonal that accompanies monotheism, generosity with engagement with G-d.

But the story of the birth of Yitzchak is not the only baby story. We had the birth of Yishmael last week. And we will have the birth of Lot's daughter's children.

In the contrasts in these births lies profound meaning. Hagar was given by Sarah to Avraham and she bore Yishmael. Lot's daughters ply him with drink and bear children from their father.

But here, rather than Sarah merely giving birth, with everyone wondering how that

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could possibly occur at her age, G-d sends messengers to inform them of the impending birth. This is a miraculous birth, a Divine gift. A promise from the Master of the Universe.

In this a contrast has been painted. People doing people things; Hagar bearing a child. Normal, unremarkable. Other people, Lot's daughters bearing children in an exceedingly odious fashion.

Sarah bears through Divine involvement.

And such is the contrast of the nations and the Jewish people. The nations try to make their way in this natural world, devoid of the Divine, meandering, becoming nations, fumbling, mumbling and building their way, trying to make their way in this complicated world.

The Jewish people are entirely different. Covenant, Promises from G-d, miraculous birth. A nation walking, talking and being driven by the Divine.



2ND ALIYA (18:15-33)

The men leave for Sodom. G-d reasons 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.

Avraham is generous in spirit, arguing with G-d Himself to save Sodom. But we must pay attention to not only what Avraham is doing but who he is doing it for. We already know about Sodom from the first moment Lot chose to live there; the people are exceedingly wicked. That is how they are described. And Avraham himself knows it because he bargains all the way down to 10 righteous people. Because he himself knows there aren't 50 righteous. Or 40, or 20.

Avraham is pleading for a city of wicked people. That is his generosity, his kindness, his care and concern for others. Pleading with G-d for them. Another rich display and example of interpersonal ethics, ethical monotheism.



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 tarry but eventually, relent and leave Sodom, told not to look back.

Lot's generosity parallels the generosity of Avraham shown to these same strangers. 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. We see immediately from what ensues that Lot is trying to save these poor men from the inevitable abuse they will be subject to momentarily. While Avraham's generosity is pure, Lot's is to shelter them from the nasty people Lot has chosen to live with.

This story can also be seen as a foil, a contrast to the upcoming story of the Akeida. In both, a Divine command is given. Lot, say the angels, leave this city immediately. Avraham, take your son as a sacrifice.

The contrast is the response. Lot tarries, hesitates at the Divine Command. Avraham arises early in the morning.

And the bitter irony. Lot was commanded to save himself and his family; go quickly before the city is destroyed and you and your family will survive. And he hesitated.

Avraham was told the opposite, the horrible opposite: sacrifice your son, destroy your family. And he jumped to obey the Divine Command. What an irony, a contrast; the one commanded to save his family tarries, while the one commanded to destroy his family jumps quickly.



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.

When Avraham is confronted, fairly, by Avimelech as to why he didn't tell him that Sarah was his wife, Avraham responds that he saw there is no fear of G-d here. Avraham is here stating the foundational principle; fear or awe or deference to G-d compels you to follow His command.

Avraham is advocating ethical monotheism. He says to Avimelech: without deference to G-d, man acts capriciously, with self-interest, in an indulgent manner. Who knows what you would do to her, knowing she is my wife? We Jews, on the other hand, defer to the Divine command, complying with the Divine command.



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 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.

Yishmael's banishment is another parallel story to the Akeida that we are about to read. Both stories feature: parent arising early, a child walking with a parent, the child's life in danger, an angel calls, the parent sees what they did not see before, the child is saved.

The parallel is apparent; but where is the contrast?

Avraham goes to the Akeida by Divine command. Hagar is banished by Sarah. Divine command versus human activity. This contrast informs the contrast of Yishmael and Yitzchak. Yishmael will be a great nation by the criteria of great nations. Yitzchak will be a great nation with a special covenant with the Creator. One will be of this world; one will be of an elevated world.



6TH ALIYA (21:22-34)

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

Another parallel story; a covenant. Avimelech makes a covenant with Avraham. G-d Made a covenant with Avraham. The nations work in the rough and tumble of this world and as such, with Avraham's obvious

success, Avimelech figures it is good to be with a winner. The Jewish people march to the covenant with the Creator, a covenant of an entirely different sort.



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 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.

Why would Avraham have challenged the destruction of Sodom but here is so accepting?

Perhaps the difference lies in the Divine command. When G-d tells Avraham he intends to destroy Sodom there is no Divine command. They are talking. G-d is telling Avraham what He intends to do. Avraham challenges.

Here, at the Akeida, Avraham is commanded. Sacrifice Yitzchak. Not informed. Commanded. I can challenge the Divine intent. I can challenge His balancing of justice and generosity. Perhaps He will balance

things differently.

But when He commands, there is but one response. There is no challenging the command. There is only acquiescence, compliance, deference. We can challenge what He intends to do; we cannot challenge His Command.

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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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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"Dystopia"

I never thought that I would begin a discussion of the weekly Torah portion by referring to a person who was canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church. Never, that is, until I sat down to write this week's *Person in the Parsha* column.

The person in question is Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), the great jurist and counselor to the notorious King Henry VIII, who was beheaded because of his insistence that the Catholic Church was his supreme religious authority, and not King Henry.

I have long admired Sir Thomas because of his courage and also because of his wisdom. One example of the latter is the following quotation, which remains one of my all-time favorites: "The ordinary arts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest."

Although those words of wisdom could themselves serve as the basis for an essay, it is another one of More's contributions to the world's culture that prompts me to begin this column by mentioning him. More earned a prominent place in the history of world literature because of his classic work, *Utopia*. In this work, More imagines the ideal society, one that is perfectly just and fair. Indeed, More coined the word "utopia," which has become part of our everyday parlance.

Centuries after More's martyrdom, at least

two of his countrymen found it necessary to seek a word which would signify a perfectly evil society. They searched for an antonym to "utopia." In the early 19th century, Jeremy Bentham introduced the word "cacotopia," defining it as a nightmare society in which morals mean nothing. Bentham's follower, the philosopher John Stuart Mill, preferred the term "dystopia." It is Mills' term that has prevailed as the antonym of choice for "utopia." Subsequent philosophers have found it ironic that this nightmare world often results from attempts to create an ideal society.

This week's Torah portion, *Parshat Vayera* (*Genesis* 18:1-22:24) tells the story of what was the world's first "dystopia," Sodom. We first encounter this "nightmare society" in last week's *parsha*, *Parshat Lech Lecha*. There, we read of Lot's decision to leave his Uncle Abram's company and "pitch his tents near Sodom." Immediately, the Torah interjects: "Now the inhabitants of Sodom were very wicked and sinful against the Lord." (*Genesis* 13:13) The careful reader of this phrase wonders, "What exactly did they do to deserve such a malignant biblical review? What behaviors were so wicked and sinful?"

The rabbinic commentators, from the Talmud and Midrash down to our very own times, expand upon this description of Sodom and fill in some of the details for us. Rashi briefly summarizes some of the Talmud's views: "They were wicked with their bodies, sinful with their material possessions, and were intentionally rebellious against God."

They violated sexual mores, were unethical in their business dealings, and based their behavior upon a corrupt theology.

The great medieval commentator, Rabbenu Bachya ben Asher, elaborates even further by referring to a passage in the *Book of Ezekiel* that provides us with some further background as to the nature of Sodom. The passage reads: "Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: arrogance! She and her daughters had plenty of bread and untroubled tranquility; yet she did not support the poor and the needy. In their haughtiness, they committed abominations before Me; and so I removed them, as you saw." (*Ezekiel* 16:49-50) The prophet informs us that Sodom was an affluent society which could easily have been charitable to others; yet they enacted laws against charity. They were untroubled, at peace because of their military power, yet they isolated themselves from less fortunate neighboring societies. They committed moral abominations.

Rabbenu Bachya continues, "Although the Torah had not yet been revealed, simple human reason demands charitable deeds and moral behavior. It is despicable that one human would stand idly by as another human suffers from hunger. How can one who has been blessed with bountiful wealth not alleviate another person's poverty? How much more despicable is he who ignores one of his own people, one who dwells within his own community."

Our Sages assert that Sodom and the three cities that were her cohorts were denied a place in the World to Come. It was not because they were a lawless society that they deserved this extreme punishment. Quite the contrary—they had an elaborate legal and judicial system. But their laws

were based upon intolerance, selfishness, and cruelty. Our Sages tell us that their laws were enforced by means of the most sadistic tortures imaginable.

Abraham's *weltanschauung* was the polar opposite of Sodom's. Is it not astounding, then, that he pleaded with the Almighty for Sodom's salvation? After all, if the antonym for utopia is dystopia, then Abrahamism is the antonym for Sodomism. Yet Abraham prayed for Sodom!

Commentators throughout the ages have sought to understand why Abraham supposed that there might be fifty, or even ten, righteous men in such a thoroughly corrupt society. One approach to this problem is attributed to Rabbi Isaiah Jungreis, author of the work *Chazon Yeshayahu*, a profound and original thinker whose life was snuffed out by the Nazis in 1944.

He argues that, paradoxically, the comprehensiveness and totality of Sodom's evil was precisely what Abraham used in its defense. He puts these words into Abraham's mouth: "Almighty Lord! Is it not conceivable that there are indeed fifty individuals in Sodom who recognize the cruel and evil nature of their society but who cannot protest, because their own lives would then be in danger? Surely these well-intentioned but impotent individuals deserve to be considered righteous individuals in whose merit all of Sodom should be saved!"

Rabbi Jungreis suggests that the Almighty's responded as follows: "Yes, dear Abraham. He who opposes evil but does not protest because he fears for his own life is a righteous person. But there were not fifty, nor even ten, individuals in all of Sodom with troubled consciences. It was not the coercive

nature of their environment that prevented them from speaking out. It was their evil and sinful behavior."

I am not qualified to debate Rabbi Jungreis, a keen student of biblical texts and a *kadosh*, a martyr, of the Holocaust. I concur with his hypothesis regarding Abraham's argument. Abraham may very well have argued that those who fail to protest in order to protect their own lives should be considered righteous men.

But I take issue with his conjecture regarding the Almighty's response. I find the following Divine response more likely: "Abraham, dear Abraham! A person who finds himself in an evil society must voice protest, whatever the cost, if he is to be considered righteous. There may very well have been ten, or fifty, or perhaps even more, residents of Sodom who were aware that theirs was a morally corrupt environment. Arguably, those men should not be considered evil. But there is no way that they can be considered righteous. A righteous person speaks out courageously against the evil that surrounds him. Trust me, Abraham, had anyone in Sodom broken the conspiracy of silence which allowed evil to persist, I, the Lord Almighty would have hastened to assist him in his cause."

It was not only Sodom's evil that God could not tolerate. It was also the silence in the face of that evil. And that silence ultimately excluded all of Sodom from the World to Come. ■



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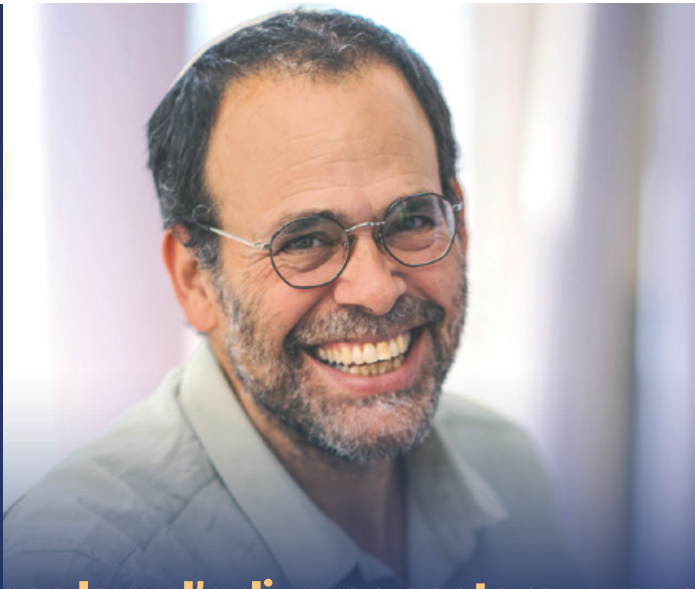
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Even Higher Than Angels

It is one of the most famous scenes in the Bible. Abraham is sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day when three strangers pass by. He urges them to rest and take some food. The text calls them 'anashim' – 'men'. They are in fact angels, coming to tell Sarah that she will have a child (Genesis 18).

The chapter seems simple. It is, however, complex and ambiguous. It consists of three sections:

Verse 1: God appears to Abraham.
Verses 2-16: Abraham and the men/angels.
Verses 17-33: The dialogue between God and Abraham about the fate of Sodom.

How are these sections related to one

another? Are they one scene, two, or three? The most obvious answer is three. Each of the above sections is a separate event. First, God appears to Abraham, as Rashi explains, "to visit the sick" after Abraham's circumcision. Then the visitors arrive with the news about Sarah's child. Then takes place the great dialogue about justice.

Maimonides suggests (in *Guide for the Perplexed II:42*) that there are two scenes (the visit of the angels, and the dialogue with God). The first verse does not describe an event at all. It is, rather, a chapter heading.

The third possibility is that we have a single continuous scene. God appears to Abraham, but before He can speak, Abraham sees the passers-by and asks God to wait while he serves them food. Only when they have departed – in verse 17 – does he turn back to God, and the conversation begins.

How we interpret the chapter will affect the way we translate the word *Adonai* in the third verse. It could either mean (1) God or (2) 'my lords' or 'sirs'. In the first case, Abraham would be addressing Heaven. In the second, he would be speaking to the passers-by.

Several English translations take the second option. Here is one example:

The Lord appeared to Abraham... He

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looked up, and saw three men standing over against him. On seeing them, he hurried from his tent door to meet them. Bowing low, he said, "Sirs, if I have deserved your favour, do not go past your servant without a visit."

The same ambiguity appears in the next chapter (19:2), when two of Abraham's visitors (in this chapter they are described as angels) visit Lot in Sodom:

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening while Lot was sitting by the city gates. When he saw them, he rose to meet them and bowing low he said, "I pray you, sirs, turn aside to your servant's house to spend the night there and bathe your feet."

Normally, differences of interpretation of biblical narrative have no halachic implications. They are matters of legitimate disagreement. This case is unusual, because if we translate *Adonai* as 'God', it is a holy name, and both the writing of the word by a scribe, and the way we treat a parchment or document containing it, have special stringencies in Jewish law. If we translate it as 'my lords' or 'sirs', then it has no special sanctity.

The simplest reading of both texts – the one concerning Abraham, the other, Lot – would be to read the word in both cases as 'sirs'. Jewish law, however, ruled otherwise. In the second case – the scene with Lot – it is read as 'sirs', but in the first it is read as 'God'. This is an extraordinary fact, because it suggests that Abraham interrupted God as He was about to speak, and asked Him to wait while he attended to his guests. This is how tradition ruled that the passage should be read:

The Lord appeared to him . . . Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. The moment he saw them, he ran from the opening of his tent to greet them, and bowed



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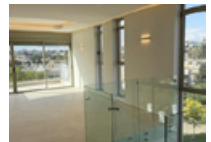
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down low to the ground. [Turning to God] he said: “My Lord, if I have found favour in your sight, please do not pass by your servant [i.e. Please wait for me until I have given hospitality to these men].” [He then turned to the men and said:] “Let a little water be brought so that you may wash your feet and rest under the tree...” (Genesis 18: 1-5)

This daring interpretation became the basis for a principle in Judaism: “Greater is hospitality than receiving the Divine Presence.” Faced with a choice between listening to God, and offering hospitality to [what seemed to be] human beings, Abraham chose the latter. God acceded to his request, and waited while Abraham brought the visitors food and drink, before engaging him in dialogue about the fate of Sodom.

How can this be so? Is it not disrespectful at best, heretical at worst, to put the needs of human beings before attending on the presence of God?

What the passage is telling us, though, is something of immense profundity. The idolaters of Abraham’s time worshipped the sun, the stars, and the forces of nature as gods. They worshipped power and the powerful. Abraham knew, however, that God is not in nature but beyond nature. There is only one thing in the universe on which He has set His image: the human person, every person, powerful and powerless alike.

The forces of nature are impersonal, which is why those who worship them eventually lose their humanity. As the Psalm puts it:

Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nostrils but cannot smell... Their makers become like them, and so do

all who put their trust in them. (Psalm 115)

You cannot worship impersonal forces and remain a person: compassionate, humane, generous, forgiving. Precisely because we believe that God is personal, someone to whom we can say ‘You’, we honour human dignity as sacrosanct. Abraham, father of monotheism, knew the paradoxical truth that to live the life of faith is to see the trace of God in the face of the stranger. It is easy to receive the Divine Presence when God appears as God. What is difficult is to sense the Divine Presence when it comes disguised as three anonymous passers-by. That was Abraham’s greatness. He knew that serving God and offering hospitality to strangers were not two things but one.

One of the most beautiful comments on this episode was given by Rabbi Shalom of Belz who noted that in verse 2, the visitors are spoken of as standing above Abraham [*nit-zavim alav*]. In verse 8, Abraham is described as standing above them [*omed alehem*]. He said: at first, the visitors were higher than Abraham because they were angels and he a mere human being. But when he gave them food and drink and shelter, he stood even higher than the angels. We honour God by honouring His image, humankind. ■

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But Why So Long?

The G'mara in Masechet Megillah (23a) teaches us that the weekly haftarah reading should not contain less than twenty-one verses, with Rashi explaining that the count corresponds to the minimum amount of three-versed aliya for each of the seven Shabbat aliyot. This same minhag is repeated in the writings of the Ge'onim (in *Shaarei Ephraim* and *Otzar Ha'Geonim*) and echoed in the works of the Rambam, the Abudraham and the Shulachan Aruch.

Nonetheless, as many of you know, most of our haftarot are not limited to, or even as long as, twenty-one p'sukim. And, although there are numerous reasons why it was not simple to follow the tradition handed down through the generations, I am especially fascinated by the fact that this week's haftarah, from the fourth perek of M'lachim B, has only one half of the chapter read by Sepharadic minhag

(the first 32 p'sukim), while Ashkenazic tradition reads 37 verses of the perek. In effect, the story as read according to Sephardic tradition, ends in the middle of the story while Ashkenazic minhag completed the entire saga.

To be fair, the Sephardim have a strong basis for their minhag of reading only the first part of the perek: Firstly, it is more consistent with the halacha found in the G'mara, the Ge'onim and the Rishonim, to limit the haftarah to 21 p'sukim and, secondly, the first part of the saga better reflects the primary theme of the parasha itself. Consider: the parasha tells of a barren woman (Sarah) who, together with her husband (Avraham), open their home to wayfarers; they were then miraculously gifted with a son, as G-d had promised them, who faced sure death in his youth. These same events are reflected in the lives of the Shunamite, her husband and their son – hence, the reason why Sephardic minhag concludes the haftarah after conveying these events.

Although I always found it rather “frustrating” to have the story “cut short” with no resolution regarding the fate of the young son of the Shunamite, it is more difficult to understand why Ashkenazim found it essential to add fourteen more verses, p'sukim that, at first glance, seem to be ‘unnecessary’. Would they do so simply to bring the saga to a satisfying conclusion? Certainly, a doubtful possibility! And, considering that there was a clear halachic directive to limit the length



of the haftarah and, additionally, the fact that there was little in the added section that connected to the parasha, we are right to wonder WHY SO LONG??

In considering the possible reasons for the extension of the haftarah, I submit to you that it might be based upon the behavior of the righteous Shunamite, from which we might learn an important lesson.

Avraham's great trial was one placed upon him by Hashem Himself: it is He who promised to grant Avraham (and Sarah, who doubted the promise) a son and who told him to sacrifice Yitzchak. Avraham's courageous and faithful response to Hashem's is deservedly praised and properly acclaimed. But it was G-d Who promised him that son and Who commanded Avraham to bound Yitzchak at the akeida, directives that came DIRECTLY from Hashem.

The trial of the Shunamite was different – and, therefore, even more challenging. The text never tells us that she pleaded G-d for a son and, when Elisha's promises her of an heir, she responds in disbelief by saying: "Don't lie to me." Yet, when her son does die, the skepticism in the navi's words she had shown previously had now become a complete faith in Elisha, a confidence that his promises were echoes of Hashem's words. The story found in the final section of the haftarah underscores the remarkable act of **emunah** from one who heard divine promises from G-d's prophet – but NOT from G-d Himself. It was her strong belief in the prophet that inspired her to run to Elisha, to remain with him and to demand that the navi himself return to resuscitate her deceased son.

For this reason, I believe that the

"addendum" to the haftarah inserted by Ashkenazic scholars was meant to highlight the remarkable commitment of this woman, one that reflected the sacrifice of Avraham Avinu – or even surpassed his actions. A person who can believe in a G-d she never heard or spoke to, one who was willing to sacrifice based upon faith, is, indeed, quite outstanding

And what say we, who have received the b'racha of seeing that same overwhelming belief in Hashem's promises in the actions and the faith of our soldiers, heroes, mothers and fathers!!!

Truly, Avraham's - and the Shumanite's - **emunah** lives on in their descendants! ■

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Setting a Personal Example

When the angels visit Avraham, he begs them not to pass by without accepting his hospitality. He then says:

יָקַח-נָא מַעַט מַיִם וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם

“Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet...” (Bereishit 18:4)

Notice the wording: *yukach na* — “let it **be brought**.” The Torah uses the **passive form**. Avraham himself did not fetch the water; instead, he requested that someone else bring it. Why would Avraham, who ran to serve the angels food himself, delegate this particular act to a messenger?

Rashi explains:

עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, וְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שָׁלַח לְבָנָיו עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיָּרֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת הַסֶּלֶעַ

By means of a messenger. Therefore, Hashem repaid his descendants by giving them water through a messenger, as it says: “Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock” (Rashi ad loc.).

Rashi is building on a Gemara (Bava Metzria 86b):

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: כָּל מִה שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִרָהָם לְמַלְאָכִים עֲצָמוֹ, עָשָׂה הַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְבָנָיו עֲצָמוֹ; וְכָל מִה שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִרָהָם עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, עָשָׂה הַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְבָנָיו עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ.

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Whatever Avraham did for the angels himself, God repaid to his children directly. Whatever Avraham did for the angels through a messenger, God repaid to his children through a messenger.

Indeed, the Gemara notes: Avraham personally served bread and meat — *“וַיִּקַּח חֶמְצָה”* *“He took butter... and Avraham ran to the cattle — Bereishit 18:7–8”*. Correspondingly, Hashem gave Israel the *manna* and the *tzav* (quail) directly. But since water was given *via a messenger*, Hashem provided water in the desert through Moshe striking the rock.

This seems to cast Avraham’s choice in a negative light. Yet Rashi earlier (18:7) says that Avraham had Yishmael prepare the meat “לחנכו במצוות” — to train him in mitzvot. If Avraham was involving Yishmael in hospitality to educate him, why would the Gemara view this as a shortcoming?

THE POWER OF PERSONAL EXAMPLE

The **Eish Tamid** explains: education is most effective when modeled through personal example. Of course, there is value in assigning tasks and training children hands-on, but the deepest impact comes when they see their parents *living* the values they preach. Words alone rarely inspire imitation — actions do.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the later

רפואה שלמה
הדסה בת חיה



verse in our parashah:

כִּי יִדְעֹתִי לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֶת־בְּנֵי וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ
אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָךְ ה'..."

For I have known him, that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem..." (Bereishit 18:19).

This pasuk praises Avraham for instructing his children to follow in the path of Hashem. Yet, we do not find any reference in the Torah to Avraham explicitly *commanding* his children. The Eish Tamid suggests: by **living** the mitzvot, Avraham was instructing them more powerfully than words ever could. Hashem values him for transmitting Torah through example.

MANOACH AND SHIMSHON

A similar lesson emerges from Sefer Shoftim. An angel appears to the wife of Manoach, announcing that she will have a son — Shimshon — who must be a lifelong nazir. She is told not to drink wine during pregnancy. When she relays this, Manoach doubts her and asks to meet the angel. The angel repeats the instructions. But look closely at the wording:

מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא מִגֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן לֹא תֹאכַל וַיֵּין וְשִׁכָּר אַל־
תִּשְׁתֵּי וְכָל־טִמָּא אֶל־תֹּאכְלִי כֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתִיָּה תִשְׁמָר:

She may not eat anything from the grapevine, nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat anything unclean; all that I commanded her, she must observe." (Shoftim 13:14)

The verbs here — *tokhal*, *tesht*, *tishmor* — appear in the feminine, but can also be read in the **second person**. Rav Shimon Schwab (Maayan Beit HaShoeva) explains: the angel was addressing Manoach himself. *You* cannot expect your son to live as a nazir unless *you* set the example. Education without role modeling is ineffective.

CONCLUSION: LIVING TORAH

Avraham involved Yishmael in mitzvot, but

Chazal emphasize that education requires more than delegating — it demands **living the values** before our children's eyes. Manoach had to learn the same: it is not enough to wish for your child to be a nazir; you must embody that lifestyle yourself.

This is the essence of *chinuch*. Children, students, and communities are shaped far more by what they see than by what they hear. The greatest legacy we can give is not instructions but inspiration — showing with our own lives what it means to walk in the path of Hashem.

May we merit to live as role models of kindness, faith, and commitment, so that our children and all those who learn from us will naturally emulate our actions and engage wholeheartedly in the performance of mitzvot. ■

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Awareness Alert

Avraham Avinu and his family migrate southward and visit the territory of Gerar. Suspicious of the residents' morality, Avraham Avinu tells them that Sarah is his sister to avoid her abduction by the king. However, the King Avimelech takes Sarah. That night, Hashem comes to Avimelech in dream warning him against approaching Sarah in any way, lest he suffer the consequences. An interesting dialogue ensues between Avimelech and Avraham Avinu, "How could you claim that you are her brother and conceivably cause me and my people such terrible harm? What did you

see to make you do such a thing?" (*Bereisheet* 20;1-10) Avraham Avinu defends his stance and responds, "*Ki amarti rak ein yirat Elokim bamakom hazeh* — I realized that the one thing missing here is the fear of Hashem." (*Bereisheet* 20;11) What did Avraham Avinu mean here?

Based on Avraham Avinu's experience in Egypt, we may naturally assume that the people of Gerar were lawless, wicked people. However, the Malbim zt"l explains that the people of Gerar were upstanding, good citizens. They had fine midot and cared about matters of justice, law and order. The one issue noticed by Avraham Avinu, "*rak*," was their deficiency in *yirat Hashem*, fear of Hashem. The Malbim continues to explain, a nation whose propriety is based on intellect and reason, is bound to succumb to their desires when tested. Physical desire wields a stronger pull than an intellectual knowledge of right and wrong.

It was this message that Avraham Avinu conveys here. Avimelech believed that in a just society such as his own, no one would dare take another man's wife. Avraham Avinu was demonstrating that unless one believes that Hashem cares about everything he does and that there is accountability for his actions, his primal drives will trump his intellectual reasoning, for every action can find a rational justification.

The *Gr"a* describes this as the primal conflict between Kayin and Hevel. Kayin

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represents the one whose “*nefesh*,” animalistic nature drives his choices, and hence does not want to part with the best of his crop, he would rather keep it for himself. Hevel offers the best of his flock to raise “*ruach*,” his spiritual aspect. When “*nefesh*” and “*ruach*” are at odds, “*Kayin*,” so to speak, always kills “*Hevel*”; the “*nefesh*” drive tends to overpower the aspiration of the “*ruach*.”

This phenomenon, teaches Rav Elchanan Wasserman *hy'd*, in *Kovetz Ma'amarim*, is a result of the way Man is structured. In creating Adam, Hashem says, “*Na'aseh Adam* — Let us create Man!” Chazal explain this as a call to all created beings to contribute a part of themselves to the creation of man. Hence, every person has an element of each animal within them. One can only imagine the mammoth power of a person who contains the energy of a lion, tiger, bear, etc. within. Rav Wasserman further explains that such a being needs a tremendous energy to keep him regulated and disciplined. This is the power of *Yirat Shamayim*. This is the only way one can be assured that he will not be a wild animal, unrestrained, pouncing upon others. The definition of greatness is the extent to which one has developed and refined this quality. One who does not possess *Yirat Hashem*, is nothing more than an uncontrolled, indiscriminate being.

The period of Elul and Tishrei is a time to feel an intense closeness and deeper awareness of Hashem's Presence. Yet, as we move further away from the *Yamim Nora'im*, this message must reverberate in our hearts. Our mandate is to translate and integrate this experience into our daily behavior, acting in the most G-dly way we can. ■

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Vayeira: Welcome!

The revered Rav of Slutzk and Rosh Yeshiva of Eitz Chaim in the Holy City, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, was once learning with his students when one of them glanced out the window. Excitedly, the *talmid* cried out, “Rebbe! The Brisker Rav is heading this way!”

In a flash, Rav Isser Zalman jumped from his seat. As befits greeting a *gadol b’Torah*, he donned his Shabbos coat and hurried to the door to welcome the honored guest. But when the man entered, it became clear: this was not the Brisker Rav at all, but a simple Yid. A worn traveler who arrived to meet the Rosh Yeshiva.

Unfazed, Rav Isser Zalman welcomed him with warmth, offering refreshments and treating him with great *kavod*. Embarrassed, the man said softly, “Rebbe, I don’t deserve such honor... I only came to ask for a favor.

I must travel to America to raise money for my daughter’s wedding; having a *hamlatza*, a letter of recommendation from you would certainly help in my efforts to collect *tzedakah*.”

Without hesitation, Rav Isser Zalman wrote the letter. Then, to the amazement of his talmidim, he escorted the man out of the building and even accompanied him down the road a good distance.

When he finally returned, the students, still puzzled, asked: “Rebbe, once you realized it wasn’t the Brisker Rav, why did you continue treating him with such respect?”

Rav Isser Zalman smiled. “To the contrary! *Hachnasas orchim*, welcoming a guest, is a great mitzvah. In truth, every visitor deserves the same *kavod* we would give the Brisker Rav himself. Sadly, our vision has become dulled; we see differences where Hashem does not. Today, I was sent a gift from Above. I was given the chance to treat a fellow Yid properly—as if the Brisker Rav had indeed come. This time, I was privileged to fulfill the mitzvah as it is meant to be fulfilled.”

While Avraham Avinu sits at the entrance of his tent, post-op, recovering from *bris milah*, Hashem Himself comes to visit him—and yet Avraham suddenly notices three simple wanderers in the distance. With breathtaking humility, Avraham turns to Hashem and says, “*My Master, please do not pass from me...*” (Bereishis, 18:3). He runs to greet the guests, personally serving them



Mazal Tov to



**Devra & Gidon Ariel and family
on the birth of their
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and to



**Akiva & Rivkah Ariel and family
on the birth of their niece**

food, water, and comfort.

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 orchim*. 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 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?

Extending ourselves to serve others cultivates humility, compassion, and an awareness of Hashem's presence in every human being. Chazal learn from here that "Hachnasas orchim is greater than greeting the Shechinah itself." The greatness of Avraham—and of Rav Isser Zalman—was the recognition that the Divine Presence rests in every guest. Showing respect to a simple wayfarer, a Jew who turns up at our door or whom we meet *baderech*, is *kavod* given to Hashem Himself.

May we channel the alacrity of our grandparents, Avraham and Sarah, and emulate the model of Hashem's own *hachnasas orchim*—and *tzimtzum*, making room for others, whomever they may be. ■

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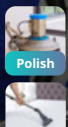
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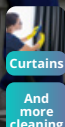
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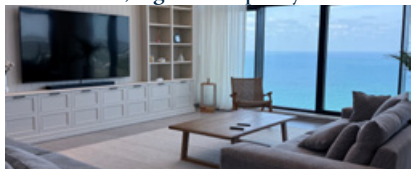
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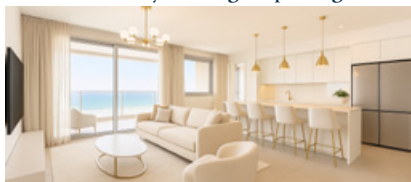
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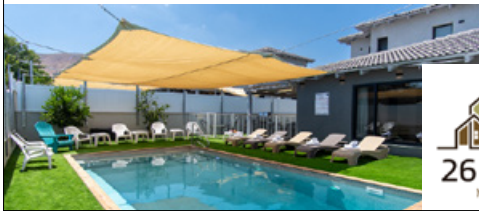
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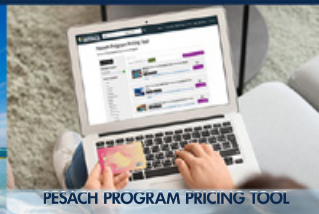
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Transportation of Kosher Ingredients

OU Kosher has been refining its process for approving ingredients for many years. The system currently in use is known as the Group Ingredient System, which categorizes ingredients into six groups, numbered 1 through 6. The lower the number, the less sensitive the ingredient is in terms of kosher certification. This system is not only vital for kosher certifying agencies but also plays an important role for consumers. In certain situations, consumers may need to use products that do not bear kosher certification yet are, in fact, completely kosher—based, of course, on the guidance of competent rabbis who understand ingredient composition and sourcing.

Ingredients in Group 1 are considered innocuous; their source is generally irrelevant, and they can be used globally without

concern. Group 2 ingredients are similar to those in Group 1 but are somewhat more dependent on the product's source. This is because production methods may vary between countries or manufacturers, and these differences can affect whether an ingredient is kosher sensitive.

FLAVOR AND GROUP 3 INGREDIENTS

In previous articles, we have discussed Group 3, which includes the most classic certified kosher ingredients. These ingredients require kosher supervision and certification. While they often originate from kosher sources, two primary concerns must be addressed:

- Non-kosher additives: The possibility that an ingredient is mixed with non-kosher components.
- Equipment usage: The potential that the equipment used in production may have also processed non-kosher ingredients.

The second issue relates to a fundamental concept in kosher law known as flavor transfer, or in Hebrew, *Ta'am*. According to halacha, flavor can transfer through various means, including heat, salting, or even cold contact. For example, an oil might be produced from a kosher source, yet if it is refined or heated in equipment that was previously used for non-kosher materials, the

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non-kosher flavor (*Ta'am Issur*) can transfer to the oil, rendering it non-kosher.

GROUP 4: THE ISSUE OF FLAVOR TRANSFER DURING TRANSPORT

The principle of flavor transfer also defines Group 4. OU Kosher focuses not only on the source of an ingredient but also on its entire production and transportation process. Around the world, liquids are transported in large tankers—some used for food, others for chemicals or industrial materials. While this might seem inconsequential, the method of transfer can significantly impact a product's kosher status. For instance, kosher orange juice concentrate may be shipped from one facility to another hundreds of miles away. If the tanker has been used exclusively for kosher products, the juice remains kosher. However, if the same tanker is also approved to transport grape juice, the orange juice may become disqualified from kosher use. This is due to the halachic principle known as *kavush kemevushal* ("soaking is like cooking"). According to Jewish law (Shulchan Aruch YD 105:1), if a kosher food remains in contact with a non-kosher liquid for 24 hours, the flavor transfers as if they were cooked together. In the case of sharp substances, such as pure lemon juice, this transfer can occur within minutes. To address this concern, OU Kosher uses Group 4 to designate ingredients transported in tankers that have been verified as kosher compatible, ensuring that the ingredients remain kosher throughout their journey. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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Our *Sedra* opens with *Avraham Avinu*, aged 90 years old, sitting, recovering from his recent *brit mila*, outside his tent during the heat of the day. Our *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 *mitzva* 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 simply through an emissary. Each one of us should look for opportunities to be kind and welcoming to others, and to express that kindness, directly, ourselves.

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. Our *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, nor does it limit him in anyway in the way his



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warmth and hospitality is extended.

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 *mitzva* of *hachnasat orchim* and any act of *chesed*, - in reality our guests end up giving us much more than they receive!

The Midrash teaches us that since *Avraham* exerted himself, even as he recovered from his *brit mila* at such an advanced age, to welcome these guests, to feed them, invites them to rest under the shade of the branches, we, the descendants of *Avraham*, merit the *mitzvah* of dwelling in the *sukka*, sitting not only beneath the shade of the branches, the *schach* we lay upon the *sukka*, but also to dwell in the shade of divine protection and serenity which the *sukka* represents. This penultimate example of *Avraham's* great *chesed* and *hachnasat orchim*, ultimately has a lasting impact for all subsequent generations of the Jewish People.

May we be blessed to heed the *Patiker Rav's* powerful words, emulate the ways of *Avraham Avinu*, and find fulfillment in a life filled with *chesed* and *hachnasat orchim*. ■



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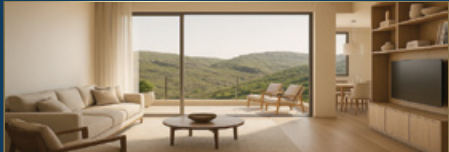
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Avraham was the first to uncover the presence of the One God who governs all existence. His life radiated kedusha and compassion, weaving together devotion to Hashem with tender care for His creations.

When Hashem summoned him to abandon his homeland and journey to an unknown land, he did not hesitate or question. Later, when the King of Sedom offered him gold and treasures after he rescued the downtrodden kings, Avraham refused. He would not enrich himself through immoral wealth. Even at ninety-nine, he embraced the covenant of circumcision, enduring physical pain with quiet resolve and absolute faith. Every choice he made reflected his unwavering loyalty to Hashem.

Avraham's devotion to Hashem was

matched by his devotion to humanity. He rescued his nephew Lot, who had abandoned him in pursuit of greener pastures in the corrupt city of Sedom. He intervened in a brutal, decades-long war, halting bloodshed and restoring justice. Even in his own pain, just days after circumcision, he welcomed weary travelers into his tent beneath the searing desert sun. His faith was not confined to thought or ritual — it took form in kindness and generosity.

DEFENDING THE FALLEN

Among all his achievements, one of Avraham's finest moments was his response to sinners. Noah had spent 120 years building the Teivah, giving time to daven for others and perhaps inspire change. Yet he prayed for no one and brought no one closer to Hashem. When the rain fell, he quietly entered the ark with his family, showing little anguish for a world drowning outside.

Avraham was different. When told of the impending destruction of Sedom, he rose to pray for its people. He pleaded persistently, hoping that even a handful of tzadikim or righteous individuals might spare the entire city. His concern for others ran so deep that he dared to voice what could have sounded heretical from anyone else:

הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט?

"Shall the Judge of all the earth not act justly?"

He began with humility, acknowledging his own smallness — afar va'eifer, mere dust and ashes — yet he spoke boldly, demanding

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justice and mercy from Hashem Himself. This was one of Avraham's greatest moments: his faith expressed not through withdrawal from the world, but through a profound sense of responsibility for others.

To pray for others, you must first identify with them. If you cannot share their pain — or believe in their potential future — your prayers are little more than empty words. This is why Noach could not pray for his generation. His spiritual standing was uncertain, and he feared that too much empathy for sinners might weaken his own commitment. Avraham, by contrast, possessed a deep inner confidence in his faith. He was secure enough to care for others, to pray for them, and to advocate for them even when they had lost their way.

MOSHE'S DOUBLE STAND

Avraham's compassion for sinners became a model for the greatest Jewish leader, Moshe Rabbeinu. Interestingly, Moshe did not grasp this immediately. When he first encountered Hashem at the burning bush, he questioned whether the Jewish people would believe in him or the message he was sent to deliver:

“והן לא יאמינו לי” — “They will not believe me.”

His doubts were understandable. After centuries of crushing slavery, the nation was broken and demoralized. They had drifted toward paganism and despair. Moshe justifiably wondered why Hashem would redeem such a people, or whether they were even capable of redemption.

Yet this is not the kind of leader Hashem desired. Hashem does not seek those who judge or condemn sinners, but those who defend them and continue to believe in their capacity to rise again. For this reason,

Moshe was momentarily struck with tzara'at — a divine rebuke for criticizing his people instead of standing up for them. From Avraham he would learn that true leadership is not built on judgment, but on empathy and faith in the goodness that still flickers within others.

Ultimately, Moshe internalized Avraham's lesson. Twice he stood in defense of his nation against annihilation. After the sin of the egel, he prayed for forgiveness for forty days — twice — pleading on behalf of the people. His appeal reached its height when he declared: “If You will not forgive Your people, erase me from Your book.”

A year later, after the sin of the meraglim, Moshe once again rose to protect the Jewish people from destruction. From his ancestor Avraham, he learned that Hashem does not desire leaders who condemn His nation as sinners, but those who intercede for them, who see their brokenness yet continue to believe in their potential.

THE PRICE OF CONDEMNING ISRAEL

Centuries later, another navi faced the same lesson. Eliyahu triumphantly proved Hashem's dominion against the prophets of Ba'al on Har HaCarmel, yet he was exasperated. Fire descended from heaven to consume his offering, while the sacrifices of the pagan priests were ignored. Still, the people remained unmoved, clinging to idolatry. In despair, Eliyahu cried out to Hashem:

וַיֹּאמֶר קִנְיָה קִנְיָה לְה' אֱלֹקֵי צָבָא-וְתִי כִּי־עֲזָבוּ
בְּרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ הָרָסוּ וְאֶת־נְבִיאֶיךָ
הָרְגוּ בַּחֶרֶב וְאֶתְּרָא אֲנִי לְבַדִּי וַיְבַקְשׁוּ אֶת־נַפְשִׁי לְקַחְתָּהּ
(מלכים א' י"ז)

Instead of defending his people, Eliyahu accused them. In response, Hashem called him to ascend the mountain — and there,

amid the stillness, commanded him to appoint Elisha as his successor. Soon after, Eliyahu would be carried heavenward in a fiery chariot. His spiritual greatness was undeniable, but once he turned from defender to prosecutor, his mission had reached its end.

Hashem does not desire those who condemn His people but those who stand beside them — who, like Avraham and Moshe, defend them even in failure. Avraham set the standard; Moshe embodied it; Eliyahu, for all his brilliance, could not fully grasp it.

GIDON'S LOYALTY

The ability to defend our people is so central to leadership that it can justify divine selection, even when other spiritual traits are lacking. Gidon was not a man of exceptional spiritual stature. Yet Hashem chose him to lead the nation against Midyan precisely because he defended the Jewish people.

When the angel of Hashem appeared to Gidon as he worked in his father's fields, Gidon questioned how Hashem could allow His chosen nation to suffer such hardship. How could Hashem have abandoned His people so quickly? He knew their sins and failures, yet he still believed they remained worthy of divine love and compassion.

His loyalty drew a divine response:
וַיִּפֹּן אֱלֹהֵי ה' וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בְּכַחַךְ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ אֶת־
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף מִדְיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּיךְ?

"Hashem turned to him and said: Go with this strength of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midyan — have I not sent you?" (Shoftim 6:14)

Chazal explain that this "strength" refers

to his defense of Israel. Because Gidon spoke favorably of the Jewish people, the angel revealed himself and appointed him as savior:

שלמד עליהם זכות - מיד נגלה עליו המלאך,
שנאמר 'לך בכחך זה'

"He defended Israel, and immediately the angel appeared to him, as it is written: 'Go with this strength of yours'" (Midrash Tanchuma, Shoftim 4).

In that moment, Gidon taught a timeless truth: Hashem seeks leaders who see beyond sin and failure — who can still believe in the worth of their people and speak in their defense.

Moshe twice rose to defend a nation that had betrayed Hashem yet refused to abandon them. Gidon, too, believed with conviction that the Jewish people did not deserve the suffering they endured. Because of that belief, he was charged to act with confidence, assured that Hashem's blessing and guidance would accompany him.

Even Eliyahu, for all his greatness, could not fully grasp this love for the Jewish people. His frustration led him to rebuke rather than defend, and his mantle was passed to another.

Leadership in Hashem's eyes is not measured only by faith or prophecy, but by the capacity to love, to defend, and to believe in the enduring worth of His people.

RECKLESS WORDS, NOT OUR MASORAH

Our nation is deeply divided over how to balance Torah study with public service. This is not merely a practical disagreement but a profound question about how we understand Talmud Torah and its relationship to our love and responsibility for the Jewish people.

Many who read these words likely share my conviction that the ideal form of divine

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Nochum Yitzchak ben Leah

service combines deep Torah study with active defense of our people and homeland. Others believe Torah study — and the lifestyle that sustains it — must be preserved even at the cost of refraining from the mitzvah of militarily defending our Land.

Amid this debate, many have made deeply troubling statements. They disregard the suffering our people have endured, and their words are hurtful and divisive.

Even more seriously, these statements betray the legacy of our Masorah. To label other Jews — religious or not — as sinners, heretics, or evildoers is a tragic distortion of the lessons taught by our greatest leaders. To vilify those who defended our people and sacrificed for the fulfillment of Hashem's nevuot is an even graver distortion.

Avraham prayed for the residents of Sedom, a society steeped in cruelty and moral decay. Moshe pleaded for forgiveness on behalf of a nation that had worshipped the golden calf. Gidon defended a generation that had repeatedly abandoned Hashem.

We are privileged to live among one of the noblest generations in Jewish history — a people who have waged a long and painful war with courage, unity, and faith. Our nation has risen in devotion to protect life and sanctify

Hashem's name. To dismiss them as sinners is not only intellectually dishonest; it is an inexcusable betrayal of our Masorah and the values that have always defined Jewish leadership. It is not the way of Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabeinu.

The current debate is difficult, but it reflects a deep yearning by both sides to serve Hashem in the fullest way possible. As we discuss and disagree, we must speak with care and reverence — words shaped by love rather than judgment. Every Jew who seeks to live faithfully, and especially those who have sacrificed comfort, safety, or even life itself for the future of our people, deserves to be spoken of with admiration and gratitude.

Harsh words close hearts, but words of respect can elevate even disagreement into a form of avodat Hashem. We must speak with generosity of spirit — seeing the dignity and virtue in every Jew. This is the path that has always guided Am Yisrael — and it is what keeps our nation not only strong, but kind. ■



OU Press is honored to partner with Rabbi Moshe Taragin on his new volume in Hebrew regarding the recent war ('Emunah B'toch Hahastara). This remarkable book is also available in English, **"Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below"**



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THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING

**SUNDAY
NOV 9**

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner
7 Hartum Street, 2nd Floor

SPECIAL EVENT:

7:30 PM

Yahrtzeit Shiur for Reb Yosef
Hillel Brachfeld z'l-Rabbi Aschi
Dick, @ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin Street, Rechavia



*The schedule is subject to change
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last minute schedule changes
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**MONDAY
NOV 10**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men) - Semichat
Chaver Program Rav Elyada
Goldwicht@ **Bet Knesset**
Ohel Yitzchak
Keren Hayesod St.



OU Israel | Women's Division
2 Radak St., Rechavia

6:00-10:00PM

ATID Midrasha
(women in their 20's)

7:00-9:00PM

Dorot Choir Session with
Hadassah Jacob

8:00-9:30PM

Women's Chayei Sarah Shiur
with Rena Ariel

**TUESDAY
NOV 11**

OU Israel is supported by the Jewish
Federation of Broward County



COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

(Rabbi Shmuel Goldin Resumes next week)

11:25 AM

Understanding Tefila
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal-
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries Parsha
Shiur
Mrs. Shira Smiles

10:15AM

Sefer Bereishit:
Exploring the Middot of
the Avot
Mrs. Leah Feinberg



MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

10:00AM -2:00PM

Weekly Kollel Boker-Instructors include
Rabbi David Fine

Rabbi Ian Shaffer
Rabbi Aschi Dick
Rabbi Avi Herzog

1:00PM- NEW!!!

Modiin Lunch and Learn with **Rabbi Aschi Dick** - Masamerica Offices,
28 Dam HaMacabbiim St, 3rd Floor, Shiur followed by mincha at 1:45pm

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY
NOV 12**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Life After Death: Brain Death
and Organ Donation in Halacha-
Rabbi Aschi Dick (Rabbi Anthony
Manning will resume Dec. 3)

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A Study of Rav Kook's sefer
Midot HaRaya

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:30PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Development
Dr. Deborah Polster

SPECIAL EVENT:

8:00PM

NextGen Beit Shemesh Event
(Neve Shamir)

**THURSDAY
NOV 13**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua **Rabbi Baruch
Taub**

11:20AM

Trailblazing the Text of TaNach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 PM

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies. (the Bais)
Rabbi Aschi Dick @ Bet Knesset
Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St.

8:30 PM

The Bais- Men's Chabura
in partnership with Kehilat
Hashiveinu
Rabbi Noam Koenigsberg
RAMOT

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- ♦ Rabbi Tzvi Mauner
- ♦ 1st class: Sun. Nov. 16

BET SHEMESH

Yeshivat Reishit:

- ♦ Rechov Rashi 21
- ♦ Tues. 8:30 - 10:30 pm
- ♦ Rabbi Elie Levi
- ♦ 1st class: Tues. Nov. 18

MODI'IN

Hesder Yeshiva Meir Harel:

- ♦ Emek Bet Shean 53
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- ♦ Rabbi Phil Schajer
- ♦ 1st class: Tues. Nov. 11

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For more Information: contact Rabbi Tzvi Mauner at MaunerSofer@gmail.com



WWW.OUISRAEL.ORG | To register: www.ouisrael.org/events/safrut25/



OU ISRAEL

Women's Division

TORAH TUESDAY

Beit Knesset Hanassi, 24 Ussishkin

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TORAH TAPESTRIES
PARSHA SHIUR

MRS. LEAH FEINBERG
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on the occasion of his first Yahrzeit



SUNDAY, NOV. 9, 7:30 PM

Bet Knesset HaNasi, 24 Ussishkin Street, Rechavia



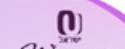
♦ Remarks & Personal Reflections **Rabbi Sam Shor**



♦ Shiur: "Reciting Tal Umatar for Travelers Between Israel and the Diaspora - From 7 Cheshvan to Dec. 4" **Rabbi Aschi Dick**

Refreshments will be served

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ROSH CHODESH KISLEV

Women's Seminar

Gevurah: Bayamim Haheim Bazman Hazeh



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to the Heroes of Today



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נר איש וביתו:
Heroes & Heroines of the Home



MRS. JEN AIRLEY

Hallel & Gevurah:
Are Our Days Greater Than
Chanukah?



Thursday, Nov. 20
9:15 am - 1:00 pm



The Great Synagogue
56 King George St



50 NIS,
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In loving memory of Mrs. Linda Pruwer-Brachfeld a"h

Register at: [ouisrael.org/events/kislev2025](https://www.ouisrael.org/events/kislev2025)



TORAH TIDBITS LIVE!

in Pardes Hanna *with* **Rabbi Sam Shor**

Shabbat Parshat Vayeishev | Dec 12-13

FRIDAY :

7:30 PM Oneg Shabbat - Welcoming Remarks
Aleeza Ben Shalom, Torah Tidbits contributor, followed by Tisch, Wine-Tasting, Niggunim & Shiur: *Noach, Yaakov and the Chashmonaim-The Backstory of the Nes Pach HaShemen.* @Ben Shalom Residence, Alon 33

SHABBAT DAY:

12:00 PM Community Kiddush and Shiur: *Sod HaSevivon*
Followed by Community Lunch @Heichal Yehudit, near 38 Hatzfira St.

MOTZA'EH:

7:30 PM Melava Malka and shiur: *Tashlich in Tevet: Unlocking the Spiritual Potential of Chanuka* @ Neve Michael, near Hadarim St. 43

TORAH TIDBITS LIVE! is an exciting new OU Israel initiative which brings your favorite Torah Tidbits writers and teachers to learn together with communities across Israel.

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Shabbat VaYeitzei | Nov. 28/29

Kehilat Ad HaShamayim | Katzrin

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FRIDAY:

4:20 PM Tefila @ The Patio, followed by Chicken Soup Kiddush

8:30 PM Oneg Shabbat-Tisch, niggunim, Torah at Janovsky
Residence, Rechov Avnei Eitan 7

SHABBAT DAY:

8:30 AM Tefila @ The Patio. Rabbi Shor will give the drasha
before Musaf

11:00AM Kiddush

12:00 PM Community Lunch followed by Shiur:
Chanuka: Kindling the Lights of Mashiach
Mincha will follow the shiur

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WEDNESDAY, NOV 12 | 8:00 PM

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Put Your Community on the Map!

- The OU in Israel is building a **national directory of shuls with an English-speaking presence** - from fully Anglo congregations to Israeli shuls where English speakers still feel at home.
- **Are you a Rabbi, Rebbetzin, or shul leader (e.g. a vaad member)?**
Please take 10 minutes to complete our short questionnaire.
- **Part of a shul but not in leadership?** Share this form with your Rabbi or leadership team so your community can be represented.
Your input will help identify and strengthen English-speaking communities across Israel, helping future opportunities for support and collaboration.
- **DEADLINE EXTENDED:**
Complete the form by November 30th and your community will be entered into a raffle for a free OU Israel event - from an inspiring guest speaker to a tailored community program.



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Women's
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ROSH CHODESH KISLEV

Women's Seminar in Beit Shemesh

Gevurah: Bayamim Haheim Bazman Hazeh



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From the Heroes of Chanukah
 to the Heroes of Today



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בר איש וביתו:
 Heroes & Heroines of the Home



MRS. JEN AIRLEY

Hallel & Gevurah:
 Are Our Days Greater
 Than Chanukah?



Sunday, Nov. 23
 9:15 am - 1:00 pm

Beit Midrash Torani Leumi
 5 Reuven Street

50 NIS,
 Brunch will be served

Register at: ouisrael.org/events/kislev2025BS



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN
DIRECTOR,
OU WOMEN'S INITIATIVE



This Is Not The End of the Story

This week's Haftorah introduces two women — each facing a crisis that feels final. The widow fears losing her sons to the creditor. There is no money, no plan, no way out. The Shunamite woman holds her lifeless child in her arms. Both are confronted with a reality that looks absolute. Yet neither woman accepts it.

The widow takes the tiny jar of oil she has — and pours. She acts with determination as if there is a future yet to be built. The Shunamite woman travels to Elisha and refuses to leave him. She demands that the story is not closed.

These women teach us that faith is not passive. Emunah is not simply accepting life as it presents. It is the belief that Hashem

can write further chapters we cannot yet see. Their courage echoes today.

So many women in Israel — especially wives and mothers whose loved ones are serving in miluim — are living with fear and uncertainty. But they continue to build homes of warmth, continue to daven, continue to make Shabbos beautiful, continue to hold hope. They, too, are quietly declaring: This moment is not the whole story.

Like the women of our Haftorah, they believe the next chapter can still hold life and light — and in that belief, they help bring it closer. ■

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TOWARDS MEANINGFUL PARENTING

REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
DIRECTOR OF OU ISRAEL WOMEN'S DIVISION

Teaching Chessed To Our Children: Lessons from Avraham Avinu

The Torah is not only a record of history — it is a guide for life, including how we raise and educate our children. One striking example is Avraham Avinu, who mastered the middah of chessed and carefully taught it to the next generation. Even while still recovering from his Brit Milah, Avraham sat at the entrance of his tent, attentively watching for travelers in need of hospitality. When he finally saw guests approaching, the Torah describes his immediate and thoughtful response: he ran out to greet them, offered them water to wash their feet, and invited them to rest under the tree. Bereishit 18:6-8 then details his purposeful and swift actions in preparing to serve them.

וַיָּמַהֵר אַבְרָהָם הָאֱלֹהִים, אֶל-שָׂרָה; וַיֹּאמֶר, מִהֲרִי שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קֶמַח סִלָּת--לוֹשִׁי, וְעֹשִׂי עֲגוֹת. וְאֶל-הַבֶּקָר, רֹצֵעַ אַבְרָהָם; וַיִּקַּח בֶּן-בֶּקָר רֶדֶד וְטוֹב, וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-הַנַּעֲרָה, וַיִּמְהַר, לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתוֹ. וַיִּקַּח חֲמֵצָה וְחֵלֶב, וַיִּבֶן-הַבֶּקָר אֶשֶׁר עָשָׂה, וַיִּתֵּן, לַפְּנִיָּהִם.

Avraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, make three seahs of fine flour into kneaded cakes." And he ran to the herd, and took a tender and good calf, and gave it to the young man, and he (the young man) hurried to prepare it. Avraham also took butter

and milk, and the calf that had been prepared, and set it before them.

Rashi explains: "אל הנער" - זה ישמעאל לחנכו במצות — the "young man" whom Avraham instructed to prepare the calf was none other than his son Yishmael. According to Rashi, Avraham deliberately involved Yishmael so that he could learn and be trained in performing mitzvot.

One may ask, why doesn't Avraham teach Yishmael at the very start of the mitzvah, instead of midway through it? The lesson is clear: to educate a child, the parent must first perform the mitzvah themselves. Only after demonstrating proper behavior should the parent involve the child. Examples in action have a far greater impact than verbal instruction alone.

Indeed, Yishmael internalized the mitzvah and carried it out with the same urgency and care as his father: "וימהר [הנער] לעשות אותו" — *"And the young man hurried to do it"*

On the other hand, if a parent simply instructs the child from a chair — "Welcome the guests," "Set the table," and so on — without first modeling the behavior, this is not true education. It is mere obedience training.

The child learns to follow orders, but not the deeper value of the mitzvah.

Notice how the story unfolds as a true family project: Sarah prepares the cakes, Yishmael prepares the calf, and Avraham serves the meal to the guests. Each family member has a role, contributing to a single act of chessed. This structure not only ensures the task is accomplished efficiently, but it also teaches children responsibility, participation, and the value of working together for a mitzvah.

Children learn best when they see acts of kindness in action. Modeling chessed in daily life — whether helping a neighbor, giving tzedakah, or offering support to a friend — provides a living blueprint for our children.

We see this principle in action in more recent times as well. Rabbi Mordechai and Henny Machlis famously hosted over 100 people at every Shabbat meal in their home. Their daughter, Elisheva Rosenthal, comes every year to speak to the OU Israel Bat Mitzvah program. She shares with the girls how growing up in such a home shaped her own passion for chessed. Each child in the family had a specific role in preparing for the massive Shabbat meals. Elisheva recalls that it never felt like a burden; rather, the

children felt needed, important, and part of a larger act of kindness.

Many times, parents debate whether to take on more chessed. After all, how will it impact the family? Will there be less time to devote to the kids? Following this model, however, we can turn chessed into a family project. In doing so, our children not only do not lose out — they gain so much in responsibility, empathy, and in building their own middah of chessed.

In conclusion, the story of Avraham, Sarah, and Yishmael, together with the real-life example of Rebbetzin Henny Machlis's family, reminds us that chessed is best learned through doing, not just watching. Parents who model, guide, and actively involve their children in chessed teach more effectively than words alone ever could. ■

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RABBI BREITOWITZ'S TUE. SHIUR

Dedicated anonymously for the refuah shleima of Evelina bat Galina

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RABBI MANNING'S WED. SHIUR

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RABBI GOLDSCHIEDER'S WED. SHIUR

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RABBI ARI KAHN'S SHIUR

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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The Soulful Faith in Every Jew (Middot HaRa'aya #10)

“The great faith in the Divine inherent in the heart of Jew is beyond assessment and beyond comparison...in the inner realm of the soul there is present the Divine light of yearning for the living God and for attachment to Him to the point of self-sacrifice.” (*Middot HaRa'aya, Emunah #10*)

Rav Kook contends that in the soul of every Jew exists a deep faith in God. Although at times this faith and attachment to the Creator may be “covered over by an outer filth” due to other influences, the core fire of faith is never extinguished.

Rav Kook cites two fascinating sources to anchor his position (*Ibid.*). The first is a passage in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 37a) which comments on the episode of our forefather Yitzchak imparting a blessing before his death. When Yaakov entered the room wearing the clothing of Esav, the verse says that Yitzchak could smell the distinctive smell of the clothing of his eldest son Esav (who wore his clothing in the field and for hunting). The Talmud comments on the verse: “And he [Yitzchak] smelled the

fragrance of Yaakov’s garments [*begadav*] and he blessed him’ (*Bereshit* 27:27), do not read *begadav*, which means “his garments” read it as *bogadav*, which means his ‘traitors’.”



Rav Abraham Isaac Kook zt"l

Apparently the Talmud is suggesting that Yitzchak knew that Esav had serious faults and had become “a traitor” to his faith and yet he was convinced that he deserved blessings because a Jewish soul always maintains a spark of pure faith in the Almighty.

In a second source Rav Kook cites the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabbah* 65:2) which tells the story of a Jewish traitor by

the name of Yosef Meshita who had sided with an enemy of Israel, The enemy asked that he enter the Temple and whatever he remove would be his. He entered and took the golden Menorah. When he returned to them they said that it's not appropriate for a commoner to make use of the Menorah. “Go in a second time and take what you want and it will be yours.” At that point Yosef refused. They then offered him an exorbitant amount of money. They began

to torture him and he still refused.

What caused Yosef to change his outlook and suddenly refuse to side with the enemy? Rav Kook suggested that his holy soul and inherent bond to the Creator had simply been blocked for many years and was finally freed. Rav Kook stated that the love was surely there all along: “What was revealed in the end was also present in the beginning, but it was covered over by outer filth, a result of the unclean influence of the nations...” (*Midot HaRa’aya, Emunah* #10)

THE HIDDEN LOVE OF THE BAAL HATANYA

Rav Kook’s proposition that a hidden faith in God abides in every Jewish soul surely echoes one of the celebrated teachings of the first Rebbe of Lubavitch found in his master work Tanya. In chapter 18 the Rebbe argues that the infinite light of God can be found within the soul of a Jew - no matter who he or she is. There is a hidden love which was inherited from our forefathers, who were great lovers of God, and therefore we have it within us.

It is noteworthy that the illustrious Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, who took issue with many of the other ideas espoused by Chassidut, agreed wholeheartedly with this notion. In his commentary on Pirkei Avot (*Ruach Chaim* 5:3) he highlights the fact that in the Mishna which lists the trials that Avraham endured, the Mishna employs the term “Avraham Avinu.” This addition of *Avinu* (our forefather) is meant to teach that he engraved in the soul of succeeding generations his unique attributes. Therefore even simple, unlearned Jews, have the fortitude to live their lives, and at times to give up their lives, for the sake of God in the same way Avraham was willing to give his life in



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Ur Kasdim for the sake of God. Rabbi Chaim Volozhin writes: “All the ten tests charted a course for us. Indeed, how many people feel the urge to go to the Holy Land, to Eretz Yisrael! This is from the test of *Lech Lecha* (“Go out from your land).” (*Ruach Chaim*, comment on Mishna 5:3)

ADDRESSING THE NON-BELIEVER

Rav Kook did not regard those Jews who questioned and even abandoned traditional Jewish living as necessarily being rebellious. He perceived them as people who often were sincerely searching for truth and deeper understanding. Thus, he said, it behooves the traditional Jewish community to address their doubts and share with them Torah teachings so that they will see the profound wisdom of the depth of our faith. “The present generation is not a low generation, but rather a very high and superior one...we must give it wisdom, and welcome it with an optimistic attitude. Its values of righteousness and ethics are extremely idealistic, and we only need to purify and elevate them.” (*Kevatzim Miktav Yad Kodsho 1, Pinkas Rishon l”Yaffo* 79, translated in *Spiritual Revolution* vol. 1, Shwartz, p. 172)

THE KOHEN QUALITY IN EVERY SOUL

Rav Kook felt that the notion of deep-rooted faith embedded in the heart of

every Jew is symbolized by the Chanukah story and the oil that remained untainted and shone brightly in the darkness of the onslaught of the Greeks. Rav Kook presented this idea in the following beautiful way: *She-men* (oil) represents *middot* (character traits) and *deot* (ideas). The Greeks defiled the Jewish people's thoughts and values in the days of Chanukah. However, every Jew has the quality of the Kohen, which is a faith in God and a longing to live a better life in the light of Hashem's Torah. The inner Kohen Gadol is representative of the unbreakable faith and love a Jew has for Hashem. When the inner Kohen Gadol becomes buried deep inside of us and almost is completely inaccessible, Hashem wakes up our emunah (faith) Himself. (Ain Aya, Shabbat daf 21)

BEGIN THE DAY WITH EMUNAH

It is worthy of note that one of the first words a Jew utters to begin his day is the word: *emunah*. The phrase recited each morning when one arises from their sleep, *Modeh ani*, concludes with the words *raba emunatecha* (great is Your faithfulness). Rav Kook suggested that God's great faith in his world and his creation means that He has faith in each individual. God's faith in humanity inevitably instills within each individual a powerful sense of confidence and purpose.

When a person recites *Modeh ani* and awakens to a new day, the message embedded in the words, *Modeh ani*, awakens a person to the awareness of the profound depth of God's faith in each of His creations. Every individual soul has been placed on this earth by God to fulfill a unique mission that is unique to every person. (*Siddur Olat Re'iya*, vol. 1, p. 3)

LIFE LESSONS

- Do something that will cause God's existence to be more clearly recognized in this world. Mention God's name in three conversations today.
- Stop for a moment before saying 'God willing' or 'thank God' and think about the words. Internalize them before speaking.
- Discover something beautiful about God's world that you never noticed before.
- Like Avraham, use your discovery to better appreciate the Oneness of God. ■



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Rubbing Cream on Someone who Accepted Shabbat

לעילוי נשמת
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Question: After my wife lit candles, she realized that she had not applied (non-medicated) cream to an area of dry skin on her face. She asked me to do it for her (I had not yet accepted Shabbat). Was it permitted for me to do so?

Answer: Although your description seems to indicate no problem of *refu'ah* (medical actions) on Shabbat, your wife was correct that smearing a cream onto one's skin is forbidden on Shabbat. This is clear when one wants a film of cream to be **on** the skin for a while, but is likely true even if it will be absorbed relatively quickly (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 33:13). It is possible to dab small lumps of cream and let them spread out by themselves. However, we will address your excellent question regarding normal application.

You may be aware that even after accepting upon herself the *halachot* of Shabbat, a wife may ask her husband who did not yet do so to do *melacha* for her. The *gemara* (Shabbat 151a) allows Reuven to tell Shimon who is in the *techum Shabbat* of Reuven's produce to look after it, even though Reuven is out of the *techum* himself. The Rashba (ad loc.)

derives from this that one who has accepted Shabbat can tell a Jew who did not yet do so to do *melacha* on his behalf. The Ran (Shabbat 64b of the Rif's pages) says that one may not generalize based on the *gemara* regarding *techum*, where there is a special way to get to the distant place (*burgenin*), but elsewhere one may not ask someone to do something that he may not. The Beit Yosef (Orach Chayim 263) counters by stressing that the one who accepted Shabbat could have not accepted Shabbat early. The Shulchan Aruch and Rama (OC 263:17) accept the Rashba's leniency, including physically benefiting on Shabbat from that which was produced on his behalf.

Your question, then, is whether the leniency of letting Reuven, who did not accept Shabbat, do *melacha* for Sarah, who accepted it, applies even if Sarah will be directly involved in the *melacha* (e.g., have the cream applied to her skin). I did not find a source on this case, but sources on parallel matters should suffice, as the question is general: is direct involvement but, primarily, as an object (i.e., another person does the *melacha to him*) make one considered a partner in the action (which in your case, would be *chillul Shabbat* for your wife).

One equivalent matter is when a non-Jew

is allowed to do a *melacha* to heal a sick Jew, where a Jew, including the sick person, may not do that same thing (Shulchan Aruch, OC 328:17). The Rama (ad loc.) says that in such cases, one “may assist [the non-Jew] a little, for assistance is not [halachically] significant.” This follows the rule found in various *gemarot* that “assisting is not significant” (see Beitza 22a; Shabbat 93a). Admittedly, some point to a *gemara* (Makot 20b) that seems to indicate the opposite – one who lets someone cut his hair in a forbidden manner is punished like the one who cut it. The Taz (OC 228:1) reconciles the sources by distinguishing between cases where the person having the violation done to him needs to do something to enable the one acting to do the violation. The Taz thereby rejects the Rama’s (OC 228:3) permission to have a non-Jew pull a Jew’s tooth when necessary, because the Jew has to open his mouth. However, most *poskim* agree with the Rama, not the Taz (see Mishna Berura 328:11, 61). (Many say that forbidden haircuts is more stringent in this regard than

melacha on Shabbat – see Nekudot Hakesef (the Shach) to Taz, Yoreh Deah 198:21).

Another question about whether one having *melacha* done to him is considered a halachic “collaborator” is when a woman who did not cut her nails needs to go to the *mikveh* on Shabbat. Most *poskim* allow a non-Jew to cut them (see Nekudot Hakesef ibid.; the Taz is again stringent); Be’ur Halacha 340:1; Yalkut Yosef, OC 340, Gozez 11).

The standard *p’sak* is thus that your wife could even maneuver herself to help you apply the cream. However, it was probably simple enough to apply it without her needing to do anything, in which case, even the Taz would permit it. ■

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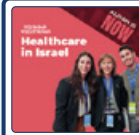
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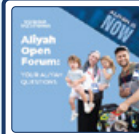
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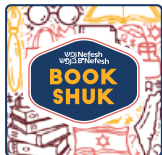


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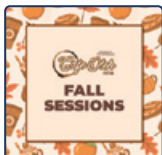
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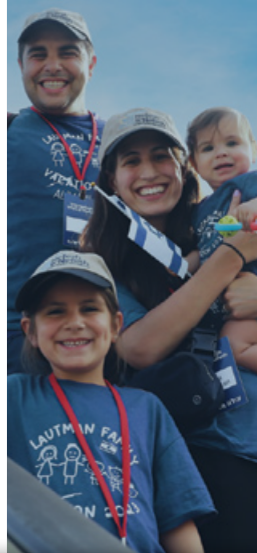
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Where is the Husband?

Last time we discussed Rabbi Yehuda Henkin's book *Bnei Banim* that is being translated into English.

One teshuva relates to the question of the husband's presence during childbirth. This is a relatively modern question, as in previous generations the husband did not participate in the birth at all. Women would deliver the baby at home, and later in a hospital setting, in the presence of a midwife, and not necessarily even a doctor. The husband was, at the most, outside the room and was informed of the birth after it was already over when the baby and his wife were fully dressed.

But times have changed and women want their husbands to be present and participate in the process of birth. Men also want to be more a part of the delivery of their children and assist their wives when necessary.

Rabbi Henkin discusses this question and raises the halachic problems. The halacha

requires a distinct separation between husband and wife during the times that the wife is impure. This separation includes not only physical contact but also seeing the required covered parts of his wife's body.

The process of birth renders a woman halachically impure due to the bleeding involved and the opening of the cervix due to the expulsion of the fetus. During birth the woman will be uncovered and the husband cannot look at various parts of her body, nor can he hold her due to the halachic limitations on touching at this point. As such, Rabbi Henkin writes that if the husband is not needed then he should not be present.

But the question becomes more relevant when the wife demands that he be present as this will calm her and encourage her, which will be an easier and more positive birth experience. In such a case, Rabbi Henkin examines the permission that the Rabbis gave to perform various acts to alleviate the woman's fear and concerns.

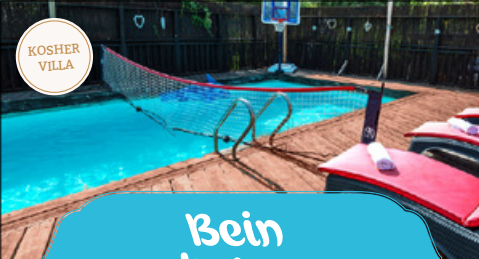
For example, the Gemara (Shabbat 128b) permits lighting a candle, even though the woman giving birth is blind and does not derive direct benefit from the light. The Rabbis permitted this since it will alleviate her fear that the midwife or attending physician will not be able to see clearly and will not be able to assist her as necessary. Even if the midwife claims that she can perform her task in the current light, since the woman would be calmer if the light was lit it is permitted.

More on this next time. ■

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OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

Michal Silverstein, MS

Daughters and Dating

Dear OU parenting,

I have a 24 year old daughter who wants to get married and I'm not sure how to help her. The dating scene is very daunting to me.

E.H.

Dear E.H.,

This is something that a lot of mothers are struggling with today. For the past few years, beginning with Covid and continuing through the war, dating has become even more challenging. During Covid it was almost impossible to meet in person and during the war a majority of young men were in the army and still are. In addition, when a young man becomes available, he may not be in the state of mind to date. All this reinforces the sentiments of Chazal - finding your soul mate is as difficult as the splitting of the sea.

Although technology has advanced drastically with so many ways to connect and communicate, there are other real challenges presenting themselves. One challenge being the fact that the religious dating scene is layered and fractured into many subsets and categories. What was once a clear identifying description between religious and non-religious, is now very nuanced. There are levels

of orthodoxy, and hashkafa, and lifestyle that didn't exist before. On the one hand, it's good to know yourself and what you're looking for, and on the other hand it's important to be flexible and open minded.

Despite the challenges, how can a parent help their child navigate this complicated journey?

Firstly, ask your child if she would like your help. Clear communication is so important in order to coordinate your expectations. What role does she want you to play in her dating process? Many single girls today don't even know how to get started meeting someone especially if they're shy.

Your daughter may express that although she is interested in getting married she doesn't need your active help in finding "the one". She is very outgoing and wants to meet someone organically. In that case, you can offer your support. You can be available to discuss her relationship or be a listener through the process.

When you can guide her through the ups and downs of a relationship and can reflect back to her, you can provide your daughter with stability and perspective. It's equally important to not get overinvolved and to project confidence in her decision making. If you see something disturbing in the relation, a red flag, it's important to address it and bring it to her attention.

As a parent, you have more relationship experience and are more objective, whereas your daughter can get swept up in a relationship which can compromise her judgement.

Since relationships are emotionally charged make sure you approach concerns in a delicate fashion so your daughter is more receptive. If you come across as attacking or judgmental, your child will probably become defensive. It's a delicate balance between being assertive while being present and understanding.

If your daughter however, expresses her desire for you to actively get involved with the dating process, it requires additional time and energy. It means becoming familiar with a system within the shidduch world. It means becoming active, seeking out appropriate whatsapp groups and websites/ online initiatives. It means posting your daughter's bio and profile, becoming her advocate and following up with potential matches. It means networking, similar to business networking only with dating. The way to do this is to connect with mothers slightly older and with

more life experience than you have. Ask them to connect you to others and broaden your social network to people from likeminded communities with similar goals. At any point, if your daughter feels stuck, overwhelmed or confused, I recommend reaching out to a professional, experienced dating coach.

And finally, remember to incorporate prayer and make time for tefilla. Just like anything else in the life of a Jewish person, we believe and have faith that if we put in the effort, Hashem will help us reach our goal. Be'H.

Be'hatzlacha ■

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to parenting@ouisrael.org (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.

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Torah Is Alive

In every generation, the Torah continues to speak — alive, relevant, and brimming with guidance for our lives today. The stories of our ancestors are not distant memories but eternal blueprints for how to live with faith, courage, and vision. Each parsha shines a light on the challenges and opportunities of our own times, revealing that the Torah is not about the past, but about us — here and now.

Last week's parsha told of a strange and dramatic episode — the war of the four kings against the five. At first glance, it seems like a political power struggle that has little to do with Avraham Avinu or his divine mission. Why does the Torah devote an entire section to this battle? And why did Avraham, a man of peace and kindness, get involved in a war that seemingly had nothing to do with him?

The Torah tells us Abraham was responding to "כי נשבה אחיו" — his brother (Lot) was

taken captive. Avraham could have easily reasoned that this was not his fight. Lot was hardly a loyal relative — he had quarreled with Avraham, separated from him, chosen the corrupt society of Sodom, and rejected Avraham's, hence Hashem's, values. Why risk his life, his students, and his mission to save someone who had turned away from him?

Rav David Bagno offers a remarkable insight. Avraham saw far beyond the present moment. He understood that from Lot would one day come Ruth the Moabite, the great-grandmother of King David, from whom Mashiach himself would descend. Avraham was not simply rescuing a wayward nephew — he was safeguarding the future of redemption.

This act teaches us more than loyalty or גבורה, bravery, which was completely outside of Abraham's character but necessary for the rescue. It reveals Avraham's spiritual vision — his ability to see holiness where others saw failure, to recognize potential where others saw only corruption. Every soul, even one living in Sodom, can contain the spark of Mashiach. That too is the living Torah's message to us: never write anyone off, never lose faith in the divine potential hidden within every person and every situation.

The Torah was not simply teaching us of a geopolitical battle, but lessons for us in every moment. For today.

THE ULTIMATE TEST — THE AKEIDAH

In this week's parsha, we encounter Avraham's final and greatest test — the Akeidah,

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the binding of Yitzchak. Hashem commands Avraham to take his beloved son, the miracle child promised after years of longing, and offer him as a sacrifice.

The Torah begins: **והאלוקים ניסה את אברהם** — “And Elokim tested Avraham.” Commentators notice the unusual choice of the divine name Elokim, which represents strict judgment, instead of Hashem (יה-וה), which denotes compassion. Why is this the only test explicitly called a “test”? And why, when Avraham passes, does Hashem say: **עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלוקים אתה** — “Now I know that you are God-fearing”? Hadn’t Avraham already proven his love and faith through nine previous trials — leaving his homeland, enduring famine, facing exile and persecution?

The Slonimer Rebbe offers a profound answer. All the earlier tests expressed Avraham’s **אהבה** and **חיבה** — his boundless love for Hashem. He embraced every challenge, seeing each as an opportunity to serve and come closer to the Divine. But the Akeidah was different. This test could not be fulfilled with love. To raise the knife over one’s cherished son could only be done through **yirah** — awe, fear, and complete submission to Hashem’s will.

When Hashem said, **עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלוקים אתה**, it was not that He learned something new. Rather, He was revealing to the world that true faith is not only about love and inspiration, but also about the courage to act from awe and duty, even when one’s heart is breaking.

THE MODERN AKEIDAH

For many in our generation, reeling from two years of war, this story feels painfully personal. Parents who have sent their

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spouses, sons and daughters to defend Am Yisrael, to risk their lives al kiddush Hashem, cannot read the Akeidah the same way again.

I often ask myself: How did Avraham merit to bring Yitzchak home, to walk together again — **וילכו שניהם יחדיו** — while so many of us have not? Why did Hashem take my Binyamin, while Avraham was spared the grief?

And yet, Hashem’s words to Avraham bring me comfort:

עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלוקים אתה - Now I know that you are God-fearing.

When we sent Binyamin to the army, and later our Yehudah, it was with deep **ahavah** — love for our people, our land, and for Hashem. It was -and is- an honor and a **zechut**, a privilege, to know our children are part of the holy mission of protecting Am Yisrael. But when Binyamin and the others





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went into battle, facing the cruelest and most vicious enemies, that love was mixed with fear. It was not joyous — it was terrifying.

Still, we did it. Because we must. Because yirah — reverent duty — sometimes demands what love alone cannot.

Hashem does not expect us to face such moments with smiles or serenity. He asks only that we meet them with courage and faith. This, too, is our test — our modern Akeidah.

MAY WE MERIT AVRAHAM'S BLESSING

ואני תפילה, It is my prayer that we learn from Avraham in our modern times- clinging to Hashem, following Him when we cannot see our destination clearly, rising to all challenges, passing all our tests- expressing our commitment to God in love and awe.

May every parent, every spouse, and every

soldier who endures this test hear Hashem's comforting words echo in their hearts: "עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלוקים אתה"

May they merit the same outcome as Avraham — that their 'Yitzchak', their beloved, return home safely, whole in body and spirit.

And may we all soon see complete fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham:

That his descendants be as countless as the stars in the heavens and as the sand on the seashore, that our enemies be vanquished, and that we, the children of Avraham, become a true source of blessing for all the nations of the world. ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit Beitbinyamin.org



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Rabbi YY Rubinstein is a global lecturer, columnist and author of 14 books. He spent seven years in Gateshead Yeshiva, plus three in Kollel and has taught in Yeshivas and Seminars for over 40 years.

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The Charedi Rally in Bnei Brak

Most people have not heard about this rally, and that's a shame because it's a deeply important part of our story.

Julie Kuperstein, mother of released hostage Bar Kuperstein, had been dreaming of this rally for almost two years. Her husband, Tal, who had been injured in a car accident, achieved astonishing physical and emotional milestones: He managed to stand again and regained his speech, “for Bar.” At the same time, Julie reached new heights of maternal and Jewish strength, forging a profound and unlikely bridge between the secular and charedi communities.

I had seen her on Shabbat, holidays, and weekdays slowly crafting a new, shared language. We last met just before the hostage

deal, when she led a Shabbat for students and young adults who observed the first Shabbat of the year together in Jerusalem.

Over the course of two years, she had imagined what Bar's homecoming would look like. She always said, “When Bar comes home, our journey will go through Bnei Brak. I don't really know this city, but it embraced me and became my second home. People simply are unaware of the extraordinary people who make up this community.”

And then ... it happened.

Thousands lined the streets of Bnei Brak, singing and dancing around Bar, accompanied by a motorcycle convoy that escorted the celebration. Bar arrived with family and friends, looking nothing like the stereotypical charedi crowd, for a reception in the City Council hall where Julie gave a moving speech. She shared that at Sheba Medical Center, Bar's first stop immediately after his release, they allowed her to sleep next to him at the hospital's maternity hotel — and she felt it was perfectly fitting. It truly was a birth.

At the end of her list of thanks, she thanked the Jewish people “for every single tear.”

Then the convoy brought this young man, who had worked at the Nova music festival, straight to the home of Rabbi Moshe Hillel Hirsch, one of the leading rabbis of the charedi community, for a short conversation. I watched as Julie spoke to the rabbi about the past two years, sharing insights and lessons. And I thought: someone like her really



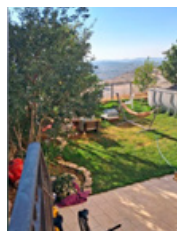
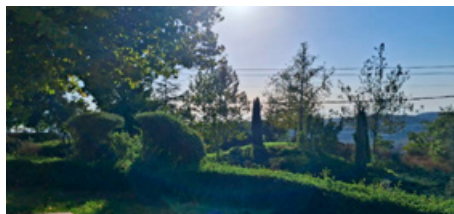
can bridge divides and find solutions.

Deputy Mayor Shlomo Elharar said at the event: “Bar, not only have you come home — you are bringing all of us back home!”

One can only hope. The tone and language of the former hostages as they appeared across interviews and broadcasts suggest that they have risen to a higher plane. They speak of meaning, spirit, and soul.

May they elevate us — in politics, in the media, and online — together with them. ■

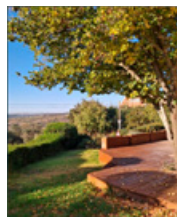
Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.



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Finding Renewal in the Holidays, Even When Your Heart Feels Heavy

When the Holidays Bring Pain Instead of Joy-And How to Shift

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Anonymous asks:

Aleeza, I'm writing to you with a broken heart. I'm in my late 30s and the holidays are approaching. Instead of feeling renewal and joy, I feel anxious and stressed. Every year at the holiday table, someone says to me, "Next year you'll surely be a bride." And every year, I'm left with the same grief and disappointment when it doesn't happen. I feel like it's my fault that I haven't found my person yet. Why am I put in this corner? How can I truly feel the renewal of the holidays

and find joy in my portion?

Aleeza answers:

My dear friend, I hear your pain so deeply. The holidays, which should be a time of comfort and celebration, can become the sharpest reminder of what feels missing. The comments even when meant with love can feel like salt on an open wound. What is meant to bring comfort instead brings pain.

The first thing to remember: it is *not your fault you are single*. This is how Hashem created the world, each soul has a unique journey, and the timing of marriage is written in heaven. We don't always understand why one person marries at twenty and another at 43,

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but we know that it's in Hashem's hands. And yet we still play a role in our soulmate story.

So how can you face the holidays differently? One way is to gently shift from comparison to compassion. Instead of focusing only on what others have, ask yourself: *What can I give at this table? What light, what humor, what warmth is uniquely mine to contribute?* You are not a guest in your family's life - you are an essential part of it. Another step is to prepare yourself emotionally. If you know the comments are coming, plan a response that protects your heart. It can be as simple as a smile and, "Thank you, with Hashem's help, in the right time." This allows you to acknowledge their hope without letting it pierce you. Every prayer is answered, but remember we don't always get a yes. Sometimes Hashem says not now. And while that was previously your answer there's always an opportunity for the next answer to be NOW is the moment, yes!

Renewal, a new year means your soul is being given fresh strength, new faith, and the courage to keep moving toward your future.

May this holiday season bring you not only comfort, but also quiet joy. May you feel Hashem holding your hand at the table, reminding you that you are precious, loved, and never forgotten. And may the year ahead surprise you with blessings beyond what you can imagine.

Aleeza ■

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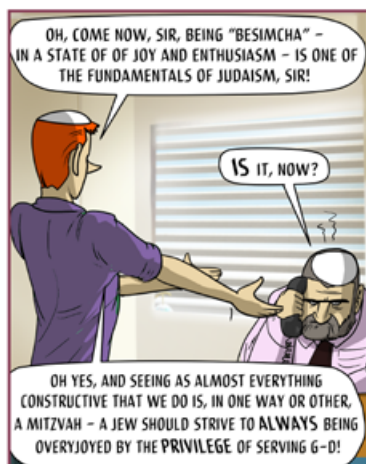
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THE PRAYER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

In Parshat Vayera, Avraham boldly reproaches Hashem over His decision to destroy Sodom. Filled with compassion, Avraham pleads back and forth with Hashem, only to see his appeals unanswered. Beyond learning of Avraham's great compassion, what are we supposed to internalize from this story, especially when Avraham's tefillot are not answered?

As the parsha continues, we find another moment when Avraham's compassion shines through. This time, he prays for the recovery of Avimelech from the very ailment that Hashem had given him to protect Sarah from him. This double occurrence of prayer throughout the parsha compels us to search for a deeper meaning. In truth, one only has to look a little further to discover a beautiful life lesson.

Often in our own lives, we find ourselves praying to no avail. What becomes of our tefillot when Hashem says "no"? Although it's

not always easy to see, the answer is brought to light in this week's parsha. Avraham's appeal for Sodom wasn't answered, yet his prayers protected Lot, ensuring the future line of Moshiach. After Avraham prays for Avimelech to be healed, we see that Sarah is "remembered" by Hashem, enabling her to conceive Yitzchak.

Avraham's story teaches us that when we pray for others, we open the gates for our own prayers to be answered. There may be many times when we feel our heartfelt tefillot have been left unanswered, yet we can trust that the power of tefillah is endless. Without a doubt, our prayers change the world for the better, even when we don't know how. Never underestimate the power of your tefillot, and keep those heartfelt prayers coming.

May we all merit to see Hashem's answers to our tefillot, bringing about Jewish unity and culminating in the coming of Moshiach.

Shabbat Shalom



LEORA BRAUN

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RIISING TO HELP

The very end of last week's parsha spoke about Avraham Avinu receiving his brit milah. The story continues in this week's parsha, opening with the third day after Avraham's bris (the most painful day, according to R. Chama):

"וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו י-ה בְּאֵלָנִי מִמָּוֶה וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב בְּתֶחֱתֵי הָהָרָה"

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One of Avraham's most famous traits is his love for *hachnasat orchim*-welcoming guests. In an attempt to stop Avraham from overexerting himself, the *mefarshim* explain that Hashem removed the cover from the sun, allowing its scorching heat to intensify. Even with the unbearable heat that kept travelers from journeying, Avraham sat outside his tent, eagerly waiting to help and serve anyone in need.

Rashi emphasizes that Avraham *sat* so that he could *stand* to honor the guests he would receive. This further highlights his deep love for helping others. After seeing Avraham's wish for visitors, Hashem sends three angels to him. Despite his pain and old age, Avraham rises at the sight of these extraordinary visitors and runs to greet them.

We can take many lessons from Avraham's actions. One trait that is often overlooked is his respect for others. He prepares himself to rise and runs to help, no matter who approaches. He runs to help *anyone*, paying no attention to their race, beliefs, appearance, or age. To him, all that matters is making a *kiddush Hashem* and showing love through helping others. ■

LIFE SETTLEMENTS

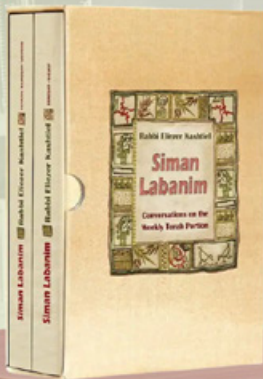
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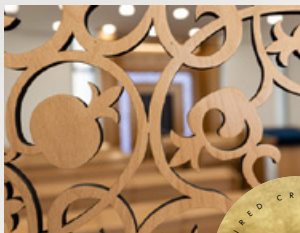
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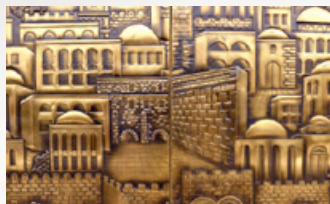
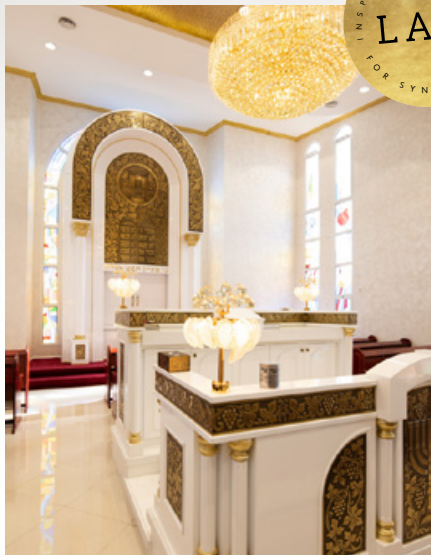
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