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maskil Le'David

**Today May You
Mercifully Remember
the Akeidat Yitzchak**

"Please take your son, your only one, whom you love" (Bereishit 22:2).

Through Akeidat Yitzchak, Avraham Avinu revealed the depth of his affection for Hashem. Even though he could have claimed, "Master of the World, You promised me, 'through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours', so how can I offer him on the Altar?" However, not only did Avraham not ask any questions, but he even arose early in the morning and hurried to perform his Creator's Will, as it says, "Avraham woke up early in the morning."

Even the Heavenly angels were moved when they saw Avraham take the knife to slaughter his son and they realized the extent of his self-sacrifice and the enormity of his love for Hashem. They cried when they saw how he performed Hashem's will with a heart filled with joy and delight. Despite Hashem sending an angel who instructed him, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad," Avraham did not easily surrender and he begged, "If I cannot slaughter him, at least allow me to make a small cut." But the angel replied, "Nor do anything to him for now I know that you are a G-d fearing man."

This requires clarification. Seemingly, all the previous tests where Avraham proved his great love for Hashem should have been enough of a proof. If so, why only after the test of the Akeidah did Hashem say to him, "for now I know that you are a G-d fearing man?"

I think that we can answer based on a well-known principle that Rabbi Akiva teaches us. The Gemara says (*Berachot* 61a), "When Rabbi Akiva was taken out to be killed, it was the exact time of reciting *Kriyat Shema*... They combed his flesh with iron combs while he accepted upon himself the yoke of Heaven. His students said to him, 'Rabbeinu, to this extent?' He replied: 'All my days I was distressed over the verse, "You shall love Hashem... with all your soul," meaning even if He takes your soul. I said, when will I have a chance to fulfil this verse? And now that the opportunity has arrived, should I not fulfill it?!' And he drew out his recital of the word 'echad' until his soul departed."

With *siyata d'Shmaya* I would like to explain the intention behind Rabbi Akiva's words. He wished to clarify to his *talmidim* a very important principle. Even though throughout his life he proclaimed publicly that he loved Hashem with all his heart and soul so much so that he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of fulfilling Hashem's commandments, there was always the suspicion that maybe he was not one hundred percent sincere. He was concerned that his words and declarations might not withstand the test of reality. If he would actually be faced with the challenge of sacrificing his life, he might not pass the test and then it would follow that all his declarations concerning his love for Hashem were only lip-service. By declaring, "All my days I was distressed... when will I have a chance to fulfil this verse," he wished to allay these fears. He wished to be put to the test so as to examine if true love for Hashem burnt in his heart, or was it mere words.

When Rabbi Akiva realized that he was rejoicing and delighting in sacrificing his soul for the sake of Hashem's honor, and was courageously withstanding the test with a heart that was truly imbued with a burning love for Hashem, he came to the comprehension that his ways were genuine.

So it was with Avraham Avinu. Although it is true that Avraham had already passed many tests, none of them can be compared to the test of the Akeidah. It is infinitely difficult to take one's son and slaughter him, all the more so when it is an only son who was born to his parents when his father was one hundred years old and his mother ninety.

Throughout his life Avraham Avinu searched for an opportunity to prove his great love for Hashem, just like Rabbi Akiva did many years later. And while it is true that Avraham Avinu would constantly publicize Hashem's Name to all mankind and his love for Hashem was deeply rooted in his heart, this nevertheless does not prove that he would be prepared to give up his heart and soul for Hashem's sake. Avraham Avinu was afraid that maybe he would not be able to muster up the courage to withstand this kind of test.

Seeing that he was withstanding the test and performing Hashem's will with joy, despite the enormous difficulty, was a great source of joy for Avraham, since it proved the extent of his love for Hashem. And this is why only now did Hashem say to him, "for now I know that you are a G-d fearing man." Now it was clear to all that Avraham was consumed with a burning love for Hashem and he was genuinely prepared to give up all that he had for the sake of fulfilling Hashem's command.

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17 Cheshvan 5786
8 November 2025

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Yayera



Hilula

17 Cheshvan
Rabbi Binyomin Zev
Cheshin

18 Cheshvan
Rabbi Refael Baruch
Toledano

19 Cheshvan
Rabbi Shimshon of Zabrze

20 Cheshvan
Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi,
one of the elderly
Kabbalists of Yerushalayim

21 Cheshvan
Rabbi Aryeh Leib Binah,
Rosh Yeshiva of Netiv Meir

22 Cheshvan
Rabbi Amram ben Rabbi
Massoud Anakaveh

23 Cheshvan
Rabbi Yosef Rafael Chazan,
author of *Chikrei Lev*





FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Parents' Behavior Shapes their Children's Education

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

Hashem Yitbarach, the One who knows thoughts and feelings, testified about Avraham Avinu, “For I have loved him.” And why do I love him? “Because he commands his children to guard My ways and commandments.” Hashem was saying, I know that Avraham will bequeath to his offspring his virtue of holiness, his Torah and his entire way in *avodat* Hashem.

We need to explain how it is possible to bequeath something spiritual to one's child. One can bequeath money, possessions and assets, but how can one bequeath faith in Hashem and love for mitzvah observance? At most one can educate one's child and try and guide him in the correct path, but of course the matter is still dependent on the child himself, on whether he possesses the willingness to accept his father's direction. Fortunate is the person who merits children who are prepared to follow the correct path with which they were educated.

If Hashem testified that Avraham's offspring will go in his ways, this means that there is agreement from both sides, both from the father to bequeath all his *avodat* Hashem to his children, and from the children to accept his ways. It is worth contemplating how one merits this.

It seems to be that the most important requirement is “personal example.” A basic foundation of education is the fact that parents, by their conduct, serve as personal examples for their children. The parents must be people who are consistent and controlled in their conduct and behavior. Their communication with others should be pleasant and gentle, they must be honest in their dealings and faithful to their declarations, no should be no and yes should be yes. They should be as meticulous with observing minor *mitzvot* as they are with major *mitzvot*, and their behavior even in private should be modest. Of course, they must be meticulous about observing the laws of *derech erez* applicable to eating, drinking and similar matters. Without a doubt, positive and dignified behavior on the part of the parents has a more decisive effect in forming the spiritual core of the child than any other measures.

On the other hand, conduct that contradicts what the parents preach is not only a negative example concerning all those matters where the parents are deficient, but also confuses the child and teaches him that it is possible to preach and not observe. Who can predict what devastating far-reaching effects such a poor-quality approach may bring about.

Avraham Avinu and his righteous wife Sarah were indeed a living *mussar sefer* for their son Yitzchak. From his earliest days, Yitzchak observed the ways of his holy parents who served as a personal example, and his soul longed to imitate them. Their holy conduct was etched in his tender soul and this is what enabled him to elevate himself in holiness and purity.



PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Natural Result or Self-perfection?

“Behold! Three men were standing over him” (Bereishit 18:2).

Rashi explains why three men came. “One to announce the news to Sarah, one to overturn Sodom, and one to heal Avraham.” The Maharal in his *sefer Gur Aryeh* questions why the angel who was sent to overturn Sodom had to pass through Avraham's home; his mission had no connection to Avraham.

In the *sefer Chazon Yechezkel*, Rabbi Yechezkel Abramski *zt”l* explains that this angel found it hard to carry out his mission to overturn the city. He claimed that the behavior of the Sodomites was a natural result of a person having an evil inclination, as the angels claimed before the creation of man: “What is frail man that You should remember him, and the son of mortal man that You should be mindful of him?”

So Hashem answered this angel: Come and I will show you my beloved Avraham and you will see to what extent a person is capable of elevating himself and overcoming his evil inclination!

This is the meaning of the continuation of the verse, “So the men got up from there, and gazed down toward Sodom.” After seeing Avraham's merit, how he was able to overcome his inclination, they no longer hesitated to mete out justice to the people of Sodom.

The Picture Aroused Fear

“And he said, ‘Hurry! Three se’ahs of meal, fine flour! Knead and make cakes!’” (Bereishit 18:6).

In the Gemara (*Baba Metzia* 87a) Chazal expound, “It is written ‘meal’ and it is written ‘fine flour,’ from here we learn that a woman begrudges guests.” The question is asked that this verse is a proof to the contrary. Sarah took ‘fine flour’ which is more expensive than ‘meal,’ so this is a proof that a woman *does not* begrudge guests.

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov clarifies this with a *maschal*. A lion once called his cubs and told them: “You should know my children, you are the most powerful creatures in the world and have nothing to be afraid of. All creatures are afraid of you.”

One day the cubs went to tour the world and arrived at palace ruins, where they discovered many paintings. One of them depicted Shimshon the Mighty killing a lion and ripping it apart as one might rip a kid goat. In alarm, the lions ran back to their father and exclaimed: “How could you say that we are the most powerful in the world? We saw a painting of a man ripping apart a lion.”

The father lion answered them: “On the contrary, this picture is proof of the matter. If man ripping apart a lion was a natural phenomenon, the painting wouldn't be showcased. Only because it was a one-off act and not a regular occurrence, was it a reason to display this kind of picture.”

This is the meaning of the above Chazal. The Torah is publicizing Sarah's generosity, for Avraham said take “meal” while Sarah said “fine flour.” This is a proof that Sarah Imeinu was exceptional, for the natural way is for a woman to be stingy with her guests.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Why Did Harav Chaim Kanievsky Cancel his Bein Hazmanim Excursion?

Maran Harav Shach *zt"l*, whose *hilula* fell last week, offers a wonderful explanation on a difficulty that Rashi discusses at the beginning of the *parsha* (*Bereishit* 18:2). The verse says, "He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold! Three men were standing over him. He saw, so he ran toward them." The obvious question is, why does the verse repeat the expression "he saw"; isn't the second "he saw" superfluous?

Rav Shach explains that the Torah wishes to teach us that the mitzvah of tzedakah is not merely a matter of giving charity to a needy person who reaches out, but also includes searching for those who require assistance. The first "he saw" is understood in the literal sense, while the second "he saw" implies "he perceived." This teaches us that Avraham contemplated the matter and considered whether the guests who were approaching required hospitality and charity; he did not wait to see if they would knock on his door and ask for charity. The moment he lifted his eyes "and saw" three men, he immediately considered (the implication of the second "he saw") whether they required food and drink and when he understood that they did, immediately "he ran toward them."

This serves as a lesson for us. If so much sensitivity is necessary when contemplating another's benefit, all the more so is great contemplation required so as not to inflict harm and pain on another. How much thought must one invest to take care that our actions do not cause harm to our fellow Jew. Even just being vigilant in some small way will already be beneficial for us and others as we go through life.

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If Hashem testified about Avraham that he is G-d fearing, this amounts to a solemn promise that Avraham will always cleave to Hashem and fear of G-d will continue to encompass him. This is the reason why Chazal said that Hashem created the world in Avraham's merit, as it says (*Bereishit* 2:4), "These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created". The word *בהבראם*, when they were created,

All who merited recognizing the greatness of Rav Shach, can testify that he was a living example of this lesson that he taught. He showed extraordinary caution in taking someone else into consideration, whether it was a case of offering his assistance or being meticulous not to offend another.

We can see a beautiful example of this sensitivity in the following narrative. Harav Avraham Tzvi Taub, who had a close relationship with Rav Shach, related that he is aware of the reason why Maran Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky cancelled his regular *bein hazmanim* visit to the holy city of Tzefat.

Several years ago, just before the summer *bein hazmanim*, Rav Taub paid a visit to Rav Chaim Kanievsky and told him: "I once asked Rav Shach, 'why do you never take a vacation during *bein hazmanim*, when you anyway don't have to give *shiur* in the yeshiva?'"

"Rav Shach replied, 'People are suffering from so many troubles. I sit in my house and sometimes people come to me to ask for help and advice. Some of them I can help, and many others I cannot help, but nevertheless, just the fact that they have where to pour out their hearts, comforts them and is of benefit to them. If I go away on vacation, people will come and won't find me at home, and they will be left to deal with their oppressive feelings on their own. How can I do this to them?'"

When Rav Chaim heard this, he too declared, "If so, from now on we also will no longer travel during *bein hazmanim*. We will stay here to help people bear their burdens when they come knocking on our door."

can be rearranged to spell *אברהם*, Avraham. Since Hashem saw the pure and lofty level that was an integral part of Avraham's entire life, He therefore created the world in his merit.

If we strengthen ourselves in the ways that our forefathers instilled in us, we are promised that love for Hashem will always be ingrained in our hearts and we will not reject the true path throughout our lives.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Out of Habit

A notable *talmid chacham* with whom I have been acquainted with for a long time once came to me with a surprising request:

"Esteemed Rav, please help me strengthen my *emunah* in Hashem Yitbarach."

I wondered what lay behind this and asked him, "You observe *mitzvot* and diligently study Torah, if so, where is the problem with your faith in Hashem?"

He replied: "Although it is true that I study Torah with diligence, and indeed until today I innocently thought that I possessed strong faith, but to my dismay I discovered that all my Torah study is only done as conditioned routine, based on what I was trained to do from my youth. All those around me study Torah, so I too study Torah. But I do not possess the clear, inner feeling and knowledge that this is the correct path. And now that life's tribulations have begun to beset me, I unfortunately discovered that even my faith in Hashem is dubious and not compelling enough, and this makes it hard for me to cope with my challenges."

I immediately got up and kissed him on his forehead in appreciation of his desire to seek a cure and remedy for his ailment and for being so honest and courageously agreeing to expose to me the very fibers of his being. Of course, I strengthened his faith and guided him, illuminating for him the correct path in life.

Even though he was a learned *talmid chacham*, for many years he did not realize that he had slipped off the footpath, and innocently thought that he was striding on the correct path that leads to spiritual ascent. It was only years later, to his astonishment, that he discovered that he was still far from true faith in Hashem. This happened because he started out without a clear vision and did everything simply out of habit;

he performed the *mitzvot* by rote
without any conscious
thought.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



A Jew Never Strays

There is a verse in this week's *parsha* which says, "So Avraham awoke early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them on her shoulder along with the boy, and sent her off. She departed, and strayed in the desert of Beer-sheva" (*Bereishit* 21:14). Rashi expounds on the words "She departed, and strayed": "She strayed back to the idolatry of her father's house." The question is, where does Rashi deduce this from?

The answer can be found in the following story which is recorded in the *sefer* based on the discourses of Rabbi Shalom Schwadron:

Rabbi Mordechai Pogmeranski was an *illui* and one of the great Gaonim who lived before the Holocaust. He relates that one Friday he travelled by train from Lithuania, and during the journey he came across a religious Jew who was travelling in the same train, a shochet and mohel by profession.

The two began discussing Torah thoughts and did not realize that they had missed their stop. They were so immersed in their learning that they did not even hear when the name of their station was announced.

One hour passed, two hours passed and then came the announcement, "We have arrived at... station."

The Rav heard and cried in distress, "Oh no, we are two hours away from the station where we were supposed to get off. There is no way we will get home in time for Shabbat."

The mohel was terribly agitated. "Listen," he explained, "I haven't been home for a long time... I promised that I would return for Shabbat."

Rabbi Mordechai replied, "Sir, why are you so disturbed, Hashem wants us to be here for Shabbat!"

"Esteemed Rav," the mohel explained, "I want to tell you something. There are no Jews in this town at all!"

"And how do you know that there are no Jews here?"

"Because if Jews lived here, they would call me to slaughter for them."

With no other choice, they left the train station and asked one of the wagon drivers, "Maybe you can tell us if there are any Jews here?" "Yes, indeed," he replied. "There is one Jew who lives here. I will take you to him."

The wagon driver drove them to a house at the edge of the village. They alighted and breathed a sigh of relief when they saw a mezuzah on the door.

They knocked on the door which was quickly opened by a visibly Jewish man.

Standing on his doorstep were two Jews. His face turned pale and he started breathing heavily. "Excuse me," he asked them, "Are perhaps one of you a mohel?"

"Indeed," answered Rabi Mordechai, "My friend here is a mohel!"

The Jew was overcome with joy, "Blessed is Hashem..."

"What happened?" they asked.

"Last week" he began to explain, "I had a baby boy. We did not know when the brit milah would take place because the baby was not feeling well. Just today, the doctor told us that we can go ahead with the brit. 'Now you are telling me?' I exclaimed. 'At twelve o' clock Friday afternoon? From where will I bring a mohel?'"

"I turned to Hashem and prayed, 'Master of the world, You commanded me, 'On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.' I want to perform this

mitzvah, but I do not have a mohel. What should I do?!"

"I cried, I prayed. And Hashem brought you here!"

Rabbi Mordechai turned to his fellow traveler and said, "Now do you understand why we came here?! We have here the father of an infant; I will be the sandak and you will serve as the mohel!"

While they were preparing themselves to perform the brit, Rabbi Mordechai told the father: "Now I understand a Rashi that always bothered me. On the verse (*Bereishit* 21:14), 'She departed, and strayed in the desert of Beer-sheva,' Rashi says that from here we learn that she strayed back to the idolatry of her father's house. How did Rashi know this? It is written that she strayed on the way, she mistakenly left the path, but from where does Rashi know that she returned to her father's idolatrous ways?"

Rabbi Mordechai Pogmeranski went on to explain, "It is very simple. A Jew does not make a mistake! I was talking in learning with my fellow traveler and as a result, without any intention on my part, I missed my stop. It was not a mistake.

"There is no such thing as a Jew who strays off the path by mistake! With a Jew, Hashem guides every step of his way. And if the verse writes, 'She departed, and strayed in the desert of Beer-sheva,' it means that she wasn't a Jew, for had she been Jewish, this verse would not appear. A Jew does not make a mistake; a Jew is guided!"

It is from this point that Rashi deduces that Hagar must have returned to her father's idolatrous ways, because if she would have remained a faithful servant of Hashem she would never have strayed.



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

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