

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS VAYEIRAH - 5756

(c/o CShulman@paulweiss.com)

<http://yu1.yu.edu/riets/torah/enayim/1013b.html>

Human Sacrifice - The Ultimate Sacrifice

by Daniel Feinberg

(Taken from a shiur given by Rabbi Moshe Shulman)

The Parsha of the Akeida begins with "Vahehi achar hadevarim ha'ele..." -- "After these things, it came to pass," a phrase which usually refers to the event which is described immediately prior to the present story. In this case, however, the previous parsha, the story of the treaty with Avimelech, has no apparent connection to the Akeida. In fact, the parsha of Avimelech begins with the phrase "Vayhi ba'eis hahi" -- "At that time" -- which indicates that this incident is parenthetical, and thus not related to that which follows it.

As such, when analyzing Akeidas Yitzchak, we must view it as directly following the story described in Chamishi: Avraham's eviction of Yishmael. In this context, the test is that much greater. With Yishmael out of the picture, Yitzchak is without debate the next leader of the Jewish people. Avraham had been struggling throughout his life to establish the Jewish nation, and eliminate idol worship. Now, Hashem had demanded that Avraham sacrifice Yitzchak - his one and only progeny. To make things worse, Avraham was called upon to emulate the human sacrifice of the idolaters around him -- a practice against which he actively fought. Hashem's request did not simply test Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for the sake of Hashem. Rather, it examined whether Avraham's trust in G-d was strong enough to seemingly contradict the ideals for which he had worked his entire life.

To appreciate the nature of the test, we must look more closely at the story of the Akeida: Did Hashem originally want Avraham to kill Yitzchak? If so - how is it that Hashem "changes" His mind, if not, what was the test (i.e. - what was Hashem asking of Avraham)? Rashi (22:2) reveals how G-d explained His original command to Avraham in light of the subsequent order not to slay Yitzchak. Hashem said to Avraham, "I did not say shachteihu, slaughter him, but rather, ha'aleihu, bring him up. You have brought him up, bring him down." Clearly, however, Hashem intended that Avraham misunderstand the connotation of ha'aleihu; without that misunderstanding there would be no test. Thus, it would seem that Hashem at least wanted Avraham to think that he was going to kill his son.

Yet, if Avraham was troubled (once again, we must assume he was - otherwise there would be no test) by Hashem's command, that he sacrifice Yitzchak, why didn't Avraham question Hashem? As we see from the incident of S'dom (23:18), Avraham was not one to sit idly by when he perceived a lack of

B'S'D' justice. Even if Avraham felt it inappropriate to "selfishly demand" his personal "right", why not at least speak out for the sake of Yitzchak - why did he deserve to die?
From the response of Hashem as quoted above it becomes clear that Avraham did indeed question Hashem - yet, only after the fact. Had he questioned Hashem prior to the Akeida, it could be viewed as though he might not have fulfilled Hashem's commandment were he to receive an unsatisfactory answer.

To fully understand this we must first deal with a more basic question: Why is it that Avraham questioned Hashem?

The relationship between Hashem and the Jews changes radically after the Torah is given. After this point, the relationship was one of metzaveh v'metzaveh, the Commander and the commandee. Prior to the giving of the Torah, Man learned how to act properly based on the example that Hashem set forth. Man must question Hashem so he can fully understand the Ways of Hashem, so man himself will know how to act.

Parshat Vayera, 5755

Vol. 10 No. 13

From: "Yeshivat Har Etzion <yhe@jer1.co.il>"
To: CSHULMAN, " " Yeshivat Har Etzion Virtual Bet
Mi...
Date: 11/6/95 9:05am
Subject: Message from the Roshei Yeshiva

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH
PROJECT(VBM)

YHE-ABOUT: UPDATES AND SPECIAL MAILINGS

The following is the text of a notice posted in the Yeshiva today (Monday Nov. 6). Yesterday the entire Yeshiva went to the Knesset to pay their respects to Prime Minister Rabin z"l. Later today, Rav Amital will address the Yeshiva, after which we will depart for the funeral.

Broken hearted and despondent, we bitterly mourn the loss of the House of Israel, God's People, in the murder of our Prime Minister. We share the family's anguish.

From the depths of our hearts and our pain, we call for sincere and far-reaching efforts to enhance national unity and love of our fellow Jews.

On this bitter day, we feel a sacred obligation to search our hearts - on an individual, ideological, political, and national level - regarding our direction in the past and in the future, in terms of both substance and form. At this time of crisis, we should not seek to accuse others or to absolve ourselves of responsibility, but rather to fully accept responsibility for our actions.

We are particularly pained by the fact that the perpetrator of this abominable murder grew out of the community with which we are identified, acting out of distortion of its values. We fully recognize our special obligation to examine our own camp, in order to ensure its holiness and morality.

Out of a deep feeling that "It is a time of travail for Jacob," we turn in prayer to the Almighty that he bring us salvation.

With broken hearts,

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein

Rav Yehuda Amital

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To: CSHULMAN , " " Yeshivat Har Etzion Virtual Bet Mi...
Date: 11/7/95 10:40am
Subject: On Rabin's Assasination

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH
PROJECT(VBM)

YHE-ABOUT: UPDATES AND SPECIAL MAILINGS

ON THE ASSASSINATION OF PRIME MINISTER RABIN Z"l

On Monday, November 6, Harav Yehuda Amital shlit"a, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, addressed the Beit Midrash, in response to the tragic murder of Yitzchak Rabin z"l, Prime Minister of Israel. Following his address, the entire Yeshiva boarded buses in order to attend the funeral in Jerusalem.

Rav Amital began by stressing the importance of the Yeshiva students attending the funeral, even though the actual ceremony was closed to the general public. He then proceeded to quote from the Book of Samuel. "When Avner ben Ner was murdered by Yoav (II Samuel 3:33), King David intoned, 'Should Avner have died the death of a churl? Your hands were not bound, your feet were not put in fetters; but you fell as one falls before treacherous men.... You will know that a prince, and a great man has fallen this day in Israel.' We today are stunned and shattered, depressed, disgraced and shamed, pained and sorrowed, by the abominable murder of the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, in this, reishit tzemichat ge'ulateinu, the dawn of our redemption."

Rav Amital then cited the Ramban, commenting on the commandment to appoint a king, who states that whomever the Jewish people choose is the choice of God. If God had not approved, the election would not have succeeded. This horrible act, directed against the kingdom of Israel, is also an assault on the kingdom of God. It is an assault on the entire people of Israel, not only because of the act itself, but because one man cannot say: I will decide for everyone, I have the right to assault the anointed of God, chosen by the people, a man who dedicated his entire life to the Jewish people. How many merits he had! Even if one disagreed with all his policies, the role the Prime Minister played in the Six Day War alone is sufficient to atone for anything else he might have done. Our sages tell us even a sinful idolater cannot be put to death unless the highest judicial authorities condemn him - and now, along comes an individual who decides that he is the Sanhedrin.

Aside from this, we are obligated to rend our garments over the desecration of God's name. Have we become like Sodom, do we resemble Gomorrah? The Jewish people, who taught the world absolute morality, beginning with the prohibition on murder; the Jewish state, the only democracy in the Middle East, a nation founded on the vision of redemption - now resembles some Third World banana republic. This obligates us in keria (tearing), if not in rending our clothes, then in rending our hearts. What has happened to us?

Rav Menachem Zamba zt"l, commenting on the argument in Agudat Israel sixty years ago concerning the partition plan, stated that the continued suffering of the Jews in the world

constitutes a desecration of God's name. The State of Israel, the refuge of all Jews, represents the sanctification of God's name after the Holocaust. And now, Rav Amital continued, I tremble - for God does not forgive the desecration of His name. There is a double chillul Hashem (desecration of God's name), when one who claims to be a ben Torah, who sees himself as serving God, is capable of this deed. This is Torah? This is Torah education!? What a terrible chillul Hashem!! Anyone who is not shocked lacks even a iota of yir'at shamayim (fear of God); he has no idea of what is the honor of God.

On the national level, I don't know who is responsible, Right or Left, for using more inflammatory language. But on our level, in the Beit Midrash, measuring with a Torah standard, I know. When a man is found dead in the field, the Torah requires the elders of the neighboring city to state: Our hands have not spilled the blood (Deuteronomy 21:1 -9). The sages explain that their declaration of innocence means that they did not send off the victim without provisions and without escort. Rashi elaborates: perhaps he left the town without food, and, out of hunger and desperation, attacked another man and was killed. This possibility, far-fetched as it seems, will preclude the elders from declaring their innocence if they did not provide him with food when he left. This is the Torah measure of culpability! Those who spoke of the "reign of iniquity" ("memshelet zadon"), who called the government a "Judenrat," who questioned the legitimacy of the government, who publicly issued the ruling concerning disobeying orders in the army - are they less culpable than the elders who failed to provide a traveler with provisions? Is the connection more far-fetched? Can they truly say "Our hands have not spilled this blood?"

And as for the title "traitor" which they constantly shouted at Rabin - why did they think he was a traitor? For money? To save himself? Or because he had a different opinion, because, looking ten years ahead, he feared for the future? Is there here less responsibility for what happened than in the case mentioned in the gemara? After the Goldstein massacre, how many rabbis condemned it outright, without hemming and hawing? Don't you see the connection between that and the current tragic events? Rav Amital then cited a midrash: "You shall love the Lord your God - be loved by others, distance yourself from sin and from theft, even from an idolater, for one who steals from an idolater will eventually steal from a Jew, and one who lies to an idolater will eventually lie to a Jew, and one who sheds the blood of an idolater will eventually shed the blood of a Jew; for the Torah was given only to sanctify His great name in the nations."

On an educational level, I think this tragic event also reveals something frightening. A law student, an educated person, thought that by killing Rabin he would solve all of Israel's problems!? What primitivity, what shallowness, what a lack of thought! In our school and youth movements, have we educated so shallow a generation, where slogans have replaced critical thought?

Where do people get the idea that they have to ask a rabbi about whether to say "ve-ten tal u-matar," but regarding issues which affect all of Israel, they can decide for themselves? And the small rabbis who speak of the need to use

force - would they dare to issue rulings about the laws of Shabbat or aguna? I am gravely worried by this entire ideology of force. And I am even more worried about the dangers posed by people who believe in "sinning for the sake of Heaven." Reb Yerucham, the mashgiach of Mir, said that the verse "...pen yifteh levavchem, ve-sartem va-avadtem elohim acherim" teaches us that the evil impulse can persuade us ("yifteh") that even idolatry is permissible - and even more so, it is a mitzva! And so too with murder, adultery, and all other sins. We are not inoculated against this danger, which lurks especially in the ideology of force, and is doubly dangerous when people begin to speak in the name of God.

Turning to the future, Rav Amital expressed guarded optimism. "I have a feeling," he said, "that extremism on both sides will lessen. We can continue, even while disagreeing, to find the will and the strength to build the State of Israel, for this is the will of God. Despite our differences of opinion, we still have much to unite us. I believe that God will continue to guide us from afar, with all the mistakes we are likely to commit." He then recounted the statement of Rav Herzog zt"l, that we are assured that the Third Jewish Commonwealth will not fall.

We must fight against hatred, Rav Amital continued. After the murder, we hear many people quoting Rav Kook zt"l, who said that just as the Second Temple was destroyed because of sin'at chinam (baseless hatred), so will the Third Temple be built because of ahavat chinam (baseless or indiscriminating love). But why call it ahavat chinam? Are there not many others, yes even among the non-religious, who deserve our love? There are many dedicated members of our society: members of the security services who vigilantly protect us, boys who give three years to the army, doctors who work for meager wages rather than seek their fortunes overseas, and many others. If someone does not share our religious commitment, it does not mean he has no values, and it does not mean that he has no just claim to our love.

The real battle is over the Jewishness of the State. That is where we must concentrate. Abba Kovner, the poet and socialist leader, once proposed to me to join him in spreading some Yiddishkeit among Israeli youth - I would contribute the Torah, he the literature. One year before his death, he said to me, "We've lost a generation; as far as Judaism is concerned, they won't listen even to me anymore. They associate Judaism only with militancy." In the battle for the Jewish soul of the nation, we have received a stab in the back. Now we have to prove that "derakheha darkhei noam" (?the Torah'sX ways are ways of pleasantness). We must constantly remember that every action, every appearance, can be a kiddush Hashem (sanctification of God's name). "We will increase unity and avoid hatred; we will find the ways to see the positive aspects of every Jew; we will pray to God that he will protect us and purify our hearts from hatred, envy, and slander; and we will continue to build this great undertaking which is the work of the hands of God - the return to Zion - until we witness the coming of the redeemer, speedily in our days, Amen."

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To: CSHULMAN , " " Highlights of the Torah weekly por...
Date: 11/4/95 2:37pm
Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayera

* TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros
Parshas Vayera
For the week ending 18 Cheshvan 5756
10 & 11 November 1995
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Summary

Three days after performing Bris Milah on himself, Avraham Avinu is visited by Hashem. When three angels appear in human form, Avraham rushes to show them hospitality by bringing them into his tent, despite this being the most painful time after the operation. Sara laughs when she hears from them that she will give birth to a son next year. Hashem reveals to Avraham that He will destroy Sodom, and Avraham tries to plead for Sodom to be spared. Hashem agrees that if he finds fifty righteous men in Sodom, He will not destroy it. Avraham manages to `bargain' Hashem down to ten righteous men. However, not even ten can be found. Lot, his wife and two daughters are rescued just before sulfur and fire rain down on Sodom and Amora. Lot's wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot's daughters fear that, as a result of the destruction, there will be no husbands for them. They decide to get their father drunk and through him perpetuate the human race. From the elder daughter, Moav is born, and from the younger, Ammon. Avraham moves to Gerar, where Avimelech abducts Sara.

After Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream, he releases Sara and appeases Avraham. As promised, a son, Yitzchak, is born to Sara and Avraham. At Hashem's command, on the eighth day after the birth, Avraham circumcises him. Avraham makes a feast the day Yitzchak is weaned. Sara tells Avraham to banish Hagar and her son Yishmael because she sees in him sure signs of degeneracy. Avraham is distressed at the prospect of banishing his son, but Hashem tells him to listen to whatever Sara tells him to do. After nearly dying of thirst in the desert, Yishmael is rescued by an angel, and Hashem promises that he will be the progenitor of a mighty nation. Avimelech enters into an alliance with Avraham when he sees that Hashem is with him. In a tenth and final test, Hashem instructs Avraham to take Yitzchak who is now 37, and offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham does this, in spite of ostensibly aborting Jewish nationhood, and contradicting his life-long preaching against human sacrifice. At the last moment, Hashem sends an angel to stop Avraham. Because of his unquestioning obedience, Hashem now promises Avraham that even if the Jewish People sin, they will never be completely dominated by their foes. The Parsha ends with genealogy and the birth of Rivka.

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Commentaries

"For I have loved him (Avraham), because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem..." (18:19). Our Sages promise that if someone is a Torah scholar, and both his son and grandson are also Torah scholars, then the Torah, like a guest who constantly comes back to stay at the same hotel, will never leave that family. Given this promise, a great Rabbi of a previous generation was asked why it was that so many Jews have lost their connection to Torah -- for since our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov were all Torah scholars, it should be that the Torah should never have become estranged from their progeny. The Rabbi answered with an experience of his own: "Once I was traveling from place to place selling a scholarly work that I had authored. I arrived at a town I knew well and knocked on the door of the boarding house where I always stayed. There was no answer. So I turned around and looked for other lodgings. The Torah would tell you the same story -- She knocks on doors and cries out `Open up for me! Let me come in!' But seeing as no-one answers and no-one opens the door for her, she seeks other lodgings..." When the Torah knocks, all we have to do is to open up our doors! (Adapted from the Chafetz Chaim)

(Avraham said:) "Perhaps there are fifty tzadikim in the midst of the city; and will You destroy and not forgive...?" (18:24). Some irreligious youth were once detailing how they had spent Yom Kippur carousing in bars: "Yeah - it was great. We had the time of our lives!" "Did David go too?" "Nah -- not David. He's a tzadik..." In certain circles, apparently, one can become a `tzadik' with very minimal qualifications... Avraham Avinu knew there were no tzadikim in Sodom, so he appealed to Hashem to save the city on behalf of the `tzadikim' "in the midst of the city" -- i.e. compared to the rest! Since people saw them as tzadikim, the people would not understand why they were being destroyed, and consequently Hashem's name would be profaned. (Adapted from Rabbi Zalman Sorotskin in There Shall be Light)

"And Avraham called the name of that place `Hashem Yireh' (G-d will see)" (22:14).

Yerushalyim is a magnificent sight, and all are overwhelmed by its natural beauty. But it is also the spiritual center of the world, and, for the Jew, this is its essence.

The name Yerushalyim is a combination of `Yireh' -- `(Hashem) will see' which is the name Avraham gave it in this verse, and `Shalem' - `whole' which is what Malki-Tzedek called it in last week's Parsha. So really, since chronologically the name `Shalem' preceded `Yireh', its name should have been something like Shalyim-yeru. However, the essence of Yerushalyim

is spiritual, for "the eyes of Hashem...are always upon it" and its physical beauty -- shalem -- is secondary. Thus the `Yeru' comes before the `shalyim'.

(Based on Rabbi Meir Shapiro in There Shall be Light -- Rabbi Y.M. Goodman)

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Haftorah: Melachim II 3:1-37

Just as Avraham and Sara were both old and yet Hashem gave them a child, similarly in this week's Haftorah, Hashem grants the Shunamite woman and her husband a child. Why then does the Haftorah begin with an entirely different miracle, that of the miraculous oil filling pitcher after pitcher until the penniless widow of the prophet Ovadia became rich? What is the connection between these three women? The answer is that they all excelled in chesed - in kindness to others. To this day, Sara is a role-model of the Jewish woman. Her life was an unceasing labor of welcoming guests and teaching them about Hashem. Ovadia's widow was also a heroine of chesed as

depicted in the Haftorah, and the same was true of the Shunamite woman. All three cast the mold, the archetype of the Jewish woman for all generations.

(Adapted from The Midrash Says)

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Sing, My Soul!

Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

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M'ein Olam Haba, Shabbos Menucha -

A semblance of the World to Come is the Sabbath Day of rest.

A number of comparisons between the Sabbath and the World to Come are suggested by Chassidic commentators:

Just as a man's reward in the World to Come is commensurate with his deeds in this world so the holiness and pleasure he enjoys on Shabbos commensurate with the spiritual investment he has made during the six days of labor preceding it.

Just as one can enter the World to Come only after he has completely divested himself of the materialism of this world so can one enter Shabbos only when he has purified himself from the material existence of the previous days.

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To: CSHULMAN
Date: 11/4/95 11:45pm
Subject: Torah Studies - Vayeira

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B"H

Torah Studies

Adaptation of Likutei Sichos

by

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

VAYEIRA

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VAYEIRA

In this week's Sidra, we read of G-d's appearance to Abraham after his circumcision. But why was his circumcision so great an act as to merit such a reward?

This is the question that the Rebbe answers, and explains in depth the special relationship between the Jew and G-d which is reached by the performance of the commandment.

THE STORY OF THE FIFTH LUBAVITCHER REBBE

The Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, told a story about something that had happened to his father, Rabbi Shalom DovBer, when he was a child of four or five.

The Shabbat on which the Sidra Vayeira was read was the Shabbat closest to Rabbi Shalom DovBer's birthday; and to mark the occasion he was taken by his mother to see his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe), to receive a birthday blessing.

As soon as he entered the room, the little boy burst into tears. His grandfather asked why he was crying. He replied that he had learned in Cheder (class) that G-d had revealed Himself to Abraham, and he was crying because G-d does not also reveal Himself to him.

His grandfather explained: "When a Jew who is ninety-nine years old decides that he must circumcise himself, then he is worthy that G-d should reveal Himself to him."

There is, however, another version of this story (Rabbi Shalom DovBer, being a little boy at the time, did not remember the incident, and knew the story - in two versions - only from Chassidim who had been present), according to which his grandfather's reply was:

"When a righteous Jew who is ninety-nine years old decides that he must circumcise himself, then he is worthy that G-d should reveal Himself to him."

THE MEANING OF CIRCUMCISION

What was the significance of this act of Abraham? Even when a Jew is ninety-nine, and not merely in calendrical years, but in uninterrupted years of service (for when the Torah describes Abraham as "advanced in days," the Zohar comments that this means that each day was complete in its service), he is still bound to circumcise himself, meaning, spiritually, to remove the "foreskin" of the world, that surface of selfish pleasures which conceals its true nature as the Divine creation.

For, it is written in Pirkei Avot, "When a man is one hundred, it is as if he were already dead and passed away and removed from the world." In other words, at such a point, in age or in spirit, when the world no longer masks the Divine, a man has achieved the inner meaning of circumcision. But before this, even by one year or one degree of holiness, the task remains unfulfilled.

CIRCUMCISION AND ABRAHAM'S PERFECTION

There is a special connection between Abraham and circumcision.

For it is said that six commandments were given to Adam; a seventh was given to Noah . . . and in addition to these a new commandment was given to Abraham - that of circumcision.

Since the command was first given to Abraham, it must have had a particular relevance to him; from which it follows that his circumcision did not just add something to ninety-nine years of complete service, but that until then his life was lacking its central component.

This is reinforced by the fact that, in reference to the command of circumcision, G-d says to Abraham, "Be thou perfect," implying that hitherto Abraham had been marred, his service incomplete.

The Works of the Fathers

The circumcision of Abraham has an even deeper significance.

On the one hand, it is known that the commandments which we (subsequent to the Giving of the Torah) fulfill are far higher than those which the Fathers fulfilled before the Torah was given, so much so that the Midrash can say: "All the commandments which the Fathers kept before You are like the aroma (of fine oil), whereas ours are like oil poured forth."

What the Fathers did was, compared to our own acts, like an aroma compared to its source, like an emanation compared to its essence. This is because what the Fathers fulfilled, they did from their own strength and inclination (as when Abraham initiated the morning prayer, and Isaac the tithe), rather than in response to the Divine command.

For when, after the Giving of the Torah, we keep one of the commandments, we are thereby related to He who commanded. And this is the essence of G-d, for He gave the Torah with the opening words "I ?AnochiX (in My essence) am the L-rd your G-d."

This relation permanently changes the world, investing it with a timeless holiness. But the spontaneous righteousness of the Fathers was not a response to a command. It did not relate them to the essence of G-d. And therefore the holiness of their acts was only temporary in its effect on the world.

Nonetheless, we have the maxim, "The works of the Fathers are a sign for the children," meaning that the spiritual resources that we have in being able to keep the commandments are an inheritance from the virtue of the Fathers before the Torah was given.

How was this transmitted if, as it seems, there is no connection between the commands before and after Sinai?

However, one command bears this connection, and this was circumcision; because it alone was commanded by G-d to Abraham (albeit not prefaced by the disclosure of His essence, "I am the L-rd your G-d"); and therefore its effect on this world persisted through time.

This is the connecting link between all the acts of the Fathers and the later capacity of the Children of Israel to do G-d's will:

Abraham's circumcision endured in its merit.

MAKING GOOD THE PAST

Now we can understand that Abraham's decision to circumcise himself after ninety-nine years of service was not simply to add something which would make all his subsequent life complete, but rather retroactively to remedy his previous defect.

This applies to all who have yet to reach the stage of "one hundred years": Not merely to add to their service but to bring their previous deficiencies to perfection.

THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE STORY

Now we can understand the meaning of both versions of the Tzemach Tzedek's reply to Rabbi Shalom DovBer.

The second version teaches us that it is binding even on the righteous man to undergo (the spiritual analogue of) circumcision; how much more so is it binding on the ordinary Jew.

But how can the first version stand? Is it not included a fortiori in the second? Also - Abraham was a righteous Jew even before his circumcision (he merely lacked the predicate of perfection). How then could he be called an "ordinary Jew"?

The answer is: Abraham's act of circumcision was a response to the Divine command and related to the deepest aspects of G-dliness. So that this summoned forth the deepest powers of the soul, at which level there is no distinction between the righteous and the ordinary, and where the distinguishing characteristics of men are effaced.

In short, the second version takes the surface point of view where the righteous is distinguished from the others, (and therefore emphasizes the duty of a righteous man); the first, the deeper one where all Jewish souls are equal in their source.

A RELATIONSHIP ABOVE TIME

Underlying the idea of the merit of Abraham's circumcision is that of the eternal worth of every act of service - it unites the commander, the commanded and the commandment in a bond above time.

But despite the fact that this bond exists even for the unrighteous, (for "even the sinners of Israel are full of Mitzvot"), Abraham's act reminds us that even the righteous has constantly to renew it, by "removing the foreskin of the world"; and when he does so, his reward will be that granted to Abraham: The prophetic awareness of G-d.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. V pp. 86-91)

End of text - Torah Studies - Vayeira

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Date: 11/9/95 2:14pm
Subject: Sichot - Parashat Vayera

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PARASHAT VAYERA
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A
(Summarized by Rav Eliyahu Blemenzeig)

THE JOINING OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

The beginning of this week's parasha - perhaps more than any other parasha - teaches us about the uniqueness of Avraham, of the Patriarchs and of the Jewish nation.

"And God appeared to him in Elonei Mamreh and he was sitting at the entrance to the tent in the heat of the day." Avraham was sitting at the entrance to the tent, and at the same time was receiving prophetic visions. He combined daily life with Divine visions, with no apparent logical bridge

between them. In his experience, two worlds, heaven and earth, meet and are unified. Three angels reveal themselves to him as three men "from the marketplace".

"And he said, My Lord(s)..." Whether he meant this to refer to the Divine, or merely to be polite to these three men, "these and those are the words of the living God"; the two worlds - the holy and the mundane - meet, and the reality thus created seems altogether natural. The patriarchs of our nation demonstrate how heaven and earth can be brought close to each other and unified.

One of the central issues upon which atheism and paganism are based is the assumption that earthly creatures cannot participate in a higher, heavenly world. If there is to be any meeting at all of the two worlds, then it can only be between the earth and the most lowly manifestations of the higher powers. This is what is signified by the midrash's portrayal of the angels' appearing like pagans who 'bow down to the dust of their feet'.

Avraham welcomes into his home people whom he suspects of being pagans who worship the dust under their feet, who believe that no convergence of the higher and lower worlds is possible - and Avraham proves to them that this is not so. A person may live a day-to-day practical life - sitting at the entrance to the tent, preparing and serving a great feast - and at the same time experience prophetic visions.

However, this lifestyle, the daily combination of heaven and earth, involves some measure of difficulty. The person who concentrates his spiritual energies on a few individual and isolated occasions is at times he is capable of attaining very high levels of spirituality. But the person who spreads his energies throughout his entire life, often finds it difficult to reach any kind of spiritual climax. The prayer of a person who prays once a day is different from that of a person who prays three times each day.

Avraham demonstrated at the 'akeda' that although his entire life was one long expenditure of spiritual energy, it lost none of its power along the way, and he continually succeeded in attaining tremendous enthusiasm and self-sacrifice.

According to the Rambam in Moreh Nevukhim (3:51), only four people achieved this level of combination of spirituality with daily life: the three patriarchs, and Moshe Rabbeinu. In the same chapter, the Rambam describes the path to achieving prophecy, i.e. how to bring the heavenly realm closer to the earthly one. This path, he maintains, is divided into levels, the highest of which is "when a person reaches real achievements and is pleased with what he has achieved, in that he communicates with people and takes care of his physical needs, but all the while his thoughts are with God, and He is before him always in his heart, even though physically he is in the midst of other people." The Rambam says of this level, "I do not say that this was the level of all the prophets; I say only that it was the level of Moshe Rabbeinu, may he rest in peace... and this was also the level of the Avot."

As to the reason why these four people managed to attain this elevated level, the Rambam writes: "Because their ultimate aim in all their actions was to achieve a great closeness to God; because their principle intention throughout their lives was to create a nation that would know God and

serve Him, 'for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him...'. It is clear that the purpose of their strivings was to bring monotheism to the world and to direct people to love God, and hence they merited to reach this level."

This example and message of monotheism cannot be transmitted by individuals, no matter how impressive their spiritual achievements. It can only be carried by an entire nation, with all its sectors and institutions, with its political, social and economic arrangements, which carries out complex and varied activities while living according to its Divine mandate. This is the only way in which heaven and earth can be bridged. Those who strive towards this aim are rewarded by having their material lives inspired and accompanied by a spiritual and Godly world, in which men and angels serve together.

(Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat, Parashat Vayera 5732.
Translated by Karen Fish)

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Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeira

- "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeira -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah

portion: Tape # 29, Mila and the "Yellow" Baby Good Shabbos!

Parshas Vayeira:

The Contrast Between the Policies of Avrohom & Those of Sodom

In this week's Parsha we have the story of how G-d destroys the infamous cities of Sodom and Amora for their terrible wickedness. Before introducing this incident G-d says [Bereishis 18:17-19] that He cannot withhold the information of this impending destruction from Avrohom, because Avrohom faithfully commands his children and family to keep the way of HaShem to do charity and justice (Tzedakah & Mishpat).

Offhand we would say that Tzedakah & Mishpat are an oxymoron. They would appear to be contradictory terms. Charity is lifnim m'shuras haDin (beyond the requirements of the law) and Judgment is the specific requirements of the law. How can you do both simultaneously?

The Medrashim are replete with details of how terrible the people of Sodom were. One Medrash tells of the little girl who took in guests and was tortured by the populace for the kindness she extended to outsiders.

One must ask, how did Sodom start out? It doesn't seem likely that when the city was founded, the city charter required that one must be of an extremely cruel and selfish nature to be eligible for residency. How then did they deteriorate to the situation described by the Medrashim?

The Medrash tells us that Sodom started out as a fine city, as noble and as caring as any other city. Then one day they came up with a novel idea called "Welfare Reform".

What did they want? They said "Welfare breeds laziness. When you give a person Tzedaka, it takes away his incentive to work. Not working is the worst thing for an individual -- he loses his value of self, he becomes lazy, he becomes depressed, etc." In order to avoid all these problems of the Welfare State they made an enactment: No more Tzedakah. Sink or swim. If you can't make it, take a second or a third job; but no welfare!

A sound rationale. The logic makes sense. But what was Sodom's fatal mistake? The fatal mistake was that they divorced Mishpat from Tzedakah. They said it has to be all Mishpat, all Din -- play it by the book! No exceptions. No Mercy. No Tzedakah!

When there exists a society that is only Strict Justice, only Letter of the Law, that society becomes a Sodom. They can start out with something as innocent and as well-intended as cleaning up welfare cheats, but when one takes away Tzedakah from Mishpat the result is a cruel society, the result is Sodom.

This is the contrast that the verse makes with Avrohom. The hallmark of Avrohom is doing both Tzedakah and Mishpat. With Avrohom even the Law is tempered with Charity.

One of the speakers who eulogized Rav Moshe Feinstein, z"tl, said that one of the hallmarks of Rav Moshe Feinstein was Chessed v'Emes. Rav

Moshe was a great pursuer of Truth, but his Truth was always tempered and always preceded by Kindness (Chessed). Rav Moshe knew that if he would always go with Truth (in checking out individuals for whom he would write letters of recommendation), then invariably people would fall by the wayside, so his Emes was tempered with Chessed. This was in the tradition of Avrohom Avinu -- to do Tzedakah and Mishpat.

When did the Angel Return?

The Angel that announced the forthcoming birth of Yitzchak told Avrohom [18:10] "I will surely return to you ... and behold Sarah your wife will have a son". The Sefer HaPardes asks where do we ever find that the Angel returned? Angels don't lie and the Torah doesn't tell us superfluous detail but we never find that this Angel returned to Avrohom.

The Sefer HaPardes says the Angel did come back. Avrohom thought the Angel would return before the baby was born or for the bris. Instead, however, the Angel came back much later -- at the end of the Parsha.

When Avrohom had Yitzchak on top of the altar and was about to sacrifice him we find [22:11-12] "And the Angel of HaShem called out to Avrohom from Heaven ...and said do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him..." The Sefer HaPardes says it was the same exact Angel who announced the birth of Yitzchak and promised he would return to him.

This Angel's reason for existence was to insure that there would be a Yitzchak. Therefore, the Angel was needed at the time of the Akeidah, when Yitzchak was within a second of losing his life. That's when we find the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy "And behold there will be a son for Sarah your wife."

This is a lesson in Providence, of how G-d directs His world. We live in a society of instant information. As soon as we want to know something we just punch it into the computer and we know it. We want to get in touch with someone, we pick up the telephone and we dial, or hit the automatic dial button.

This is not how life works. This is not how G-d works or how G-d directs his world. "I will certainly return to you". Thirty eight years later! That's when the Angel returned. We cannot understand Providence. Life is full of mysteries, but we always have to believe that the Hand of G-d is there.

R. Moshe Eisemann told the story of a Rabbi Epstein who left Germany before the war and settled in England. He had learned in Kaminetz under Rav Baruch Baer and was settling in England with a lot of German nationals who had settled there before the outbreak of the war. When the war broke out, England evacuated all German nationals to Canada and to Australia.

Rabbi Epstein and Rabbi Elias were sent to Canada. Prior to leaving they filled a big suitcase with Gemaras and had them sent to Canada, so that they would have with what to learn from while they were there. The package never came. (A Shas was printed shortly thereafter in Montreal and they did have what to learn from.)

Years later after the war, Rabbi Elias met someone who was also a German national who was sent by England to Australia. This fellow told Rabbi Elias that the most amazing thing happened during the war. All of a sudden, a suitcase full of Gemaras came to Australia. This was the only seforim available to them in all of Australia.

G-d takes care of his world. We don't always see it immediately, but "I will surely return at the proper time" and take care of Yitzchak. That's how G-d takes care of his world.

Personalities & Sources:

R. Moshe Feinstein -- (1895-1986) Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem, N.Y. One of contemporary Jewry's foremost halachic decisors.

Sefer HaPardes -- Halachic compendium from the School of Rashi.

Glossary

Tzedakah -- Charity

Mishpat -- Judgement

Chessed -- Kindness

Emes -- Truth

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#29). The corresponding halachic portion for tape #29 is: Mila and the "Yellow" Baby. The other halachic portions for Vayeira from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

Tape # 071 - The Last Will & Testament of Rabbeinu Yehuda Hachasid

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Now Available: Mesorah / Artscroll has recently published a collection of Rabbi Frand's essays. The book is entitled:

Rabbi Yissacher Frand: In Print

and is available through your local Hebrew book store or from Judaica Express, 1-800-2-BOOKS-1.

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Subject: Drasha - VaYera

PARSHAS VAYERAH -- 11/10/95

MIXMASTER

It's not often that one receives such diverse company on a single day. But if you're Abraham, anything can happen. The Torah begins this week as Abraham is sitting outside his tent, three days after his circumcision, on a boiling hot day. He is visited by none other than the Divine Presence. In the middle of the conversation, Abraham looks up. He spots three Arab nomads meandering, in the intense heat in his direction. Imagine yourself. You are recuperating from an operation that most males receive 99 years prior, you are in the middle of a conversation with G-d Al-mighty, and three Arabs happen to pass within shouting distance of your tent. We all know what we would and would not do. Let us analyze what Abraham does, and how he does it.

The Torah tell us, "and he (Abraham) said, 'My Master, if I find favor in your eyes, do not pass over your servant.' " The Torah is unclear. Who was Abraham referring to when he said "My Master?" Is he telling G-d not to withdraw His presence as he invites some nomads, or was he respectfully interrupting his conversation with G-d as he shouts to the wayfarers, "Don't leave me, I'll be with you as soon as I finish this conversation with G-d?"

It is quite hard to believe, but these two ideas are Talmudic opinions! I understand how the Talmud can argue about a tree -- was it a willow tree or an apple tree? After all the difference is not consequential. Was the window situated in Noah's ark an actual pane of glass or a sparkling jewel that allowed for a brilliant shine? The opinions in those instances are diverse yet compatible. But the schism in opinions, whether "My Master" is referring to G-d Himself or the leader of a band of Arab shleppers, is too wide to fathom!

What is more troubling is how is it possible to say that Abraham actually paused during a conversation with G-d to tell a few Arab nomads to wait till

he is ready?

Rabbi Isser Zalman Melzer was once sitting with a group of students when suddenly one of them looked out the window and announced that one of Israel's leading Torah scholars was coming toward the home. Rav Melzer quickly prepared his modest Jerusalem apartment to greet the honored guest. The table was bedecked with a freshly laundered, tablecloth adorned with a bowl of fruit, in honor of the distinguished visitor. Rabbi Melzer changed into his Shabbos attire so as to show his respect.

Suddenly there was a knock. Reb Isser Zalman rushed to the door to greet the honored guest. However there was no Rav at the door. In his stead, stood a simple poor Jew who needed a letter of approbation in order to raise funds. From the distance he appeared like the scholar, but obviously the student was grossly mistaken. To the surprise of his wife, and even more so the visitor himself, Rav Melzer ushered the poor man into his dining room. He proceeded to seat him at the head of the table and converse with him. He then offered him a glass of hot tea as he gave him the respect he would have afforded a revered guest. After discussing the poor man's needs with him, Rabbi Melzer wrote a beautiful letter, full of complimentary descriptions, regarding the man and his situation.

After the man had left, Reb Isser Zalman commented, "who really knows how to evaluate and differentiate the value of people. Perhaps this is the way one must treat every Jew. I was happy to channel my enthusiastic expectations of the Rabbi's visit toward this simple Jew."

Abraham knew that there is a Mitzvah to love Hashem, but he also knew that G-d created man in His image. Perhaps it can be an acceptable argument amongst our sages, which Master was told "please wait?" Was it the actual Master of the universe, or the master that was created in the image of the ultimate Master? Perhaps one of the ways that Avrohom manifested his great love for Hashem was through his actions toward his fellow human-beings. And believe it or not, the Master waited.

May I take the liberty to add, at this time of crisis, that it is imperative for all of us to follow our father Abraham's great example.
Good Shabbos 1 1995 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated by Pearl and Jeffrey Ratz
in memory of Dovid ben Ezriel Zelig -- 15 Mar Cheshvan 5754
and in gratitude of the birth of Dovid Shuva on 6 Tishrei 5756

1. Rabbi I. Z. Melzer (1870-1953) was the Chief Rabbi of Slutzk, Poland. He founded the Yeshiva in Kletzk, Poland and in 1925 was appointed to head the illustrious Eitz Chaim Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael (Palestine) He was instrumental in the founding of a network of Torah-true day schools in Israel, and was a beloved teacher of literally thousands of students.

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From: "Menachem Leibtag <ml@jer1.co.il>"
To: CSHULMAN , " " Chumash shiur focusing on theme
an...
Date: 11/10/95 7:43am
Subject: PARSHAT VA'YERA (revised)

Note: The shiur which I sent out last night was a bit rushed and unedited. I
finally finished miluim this morning and found some time for a quick edit - so
please use this revised version instead. To keep this file short, the reprint
from Parshat Eykev regarding Lot and Sdom included in last night's
transmission has not been resent with this shiur..
shabbat shalom

PARSHAT VA'YERA

In our shiur on Parshat Noach, we attempted to find a
continuous theme in Sefer Breishit based on the structure formed by
the "sifrei toladolot". We suggested that after the creation of
mankind and its dispersement into seventy nations, God selected one
nation to serve as his agent to lead all nations towards a theo-
centric existence. This theme explained the connection between the
Migdal Bavel narrative, the choice of Avraham Avinu and nature of
the promises and covenants which God made with him.

The first section of this week's shiur will be a short
'technical' discussion regarding "toldot Terach". The main section
will discuss the thematic significance of the narratives regarding
Avraham Avinu and Sdom.

TOLDOT TERACH

We will begin with a chart which will summarize the basic
structure and progression of the Sifrei Toladolot (noted by capital
letters):

```

SHAMAIM V'ARETZ _      SHEM
ADAM              TERACH
                  Avraham - Haran - Nachor
NOACH             _      Lot 12 sons
                  Amon & Moav
BNEI NOACH _      YITZCHAK / YISHMAEL ?nidchaX
    
```

The chart shows how the story of the "bchiyra" (choice) of
Avraham Avinu actually began with "toldot Shem" (chapter 11,
leading quickly into the story of Avraham Avinu). Although one
would expect the next header to be "toldot Avraham", that phrase is
never mentioned. Instead, the entire story of Avraham unfolds
within the header of "TOLDOT TERACH", which includes his three sons
- Avram, Haran & Nachor. These toldot, beginning with the story of
Terach's aliya towards Eretz Canaan (11:27-31), include not only
the offspring of Avraham, but also the offspring of Nachor and
Haran. ?This unit continues until the end of Chayei Sara where we
find TOLDOT Yishmael and the story of his 12 sons; followed by
TOLDOT YITZCHAK and the story of the birth of Yaakov and Esav etc.X

Since "Toldot Terach" forms the structural header for
Parshiot Lech L'cha, Va'yera and Chayei Sara, this unit must
include not only the story of Avraham, but also the story of the
children of Nachor and Haran (Lot). Thus, we find in these
parshiot:

- 1) Lot's decision to leave Avraham Avinu, preferring the 'good
life' in Sdom (13:1-18).
- 2) Avraham saving Lot (14:1-24), in the battle against the
four kings.
- 3) God saving Lot before destroying Sdom (19:1-24)
- 4) The birth of Lot's two sons - Amon & Moav (19:30-38)
- 5) The 12 children of Nachor (22:20-24). ?8 sons from his
wife and 4 from his pilegish (sounds familiar ?)X

?See Further Iyun Section for a discussion of what was special
about Terach and why the phrase "toldot Avraham" is missing.X

Up until this point, we provided only a 'technical' reason for
the inclusion of numerous stories regarding Lot, Sdom, and Avraham
Avinu. We must now find their thematic significance.

AVRAHAM AND SDOM

In many ways, Sdom represents the antithesis of everything for
which Avraham stands. As we explained last week, Avraham Avinu was
chosen for a Divine purpose - to become a nation which would lead
all mankind towards the recognition of God. Sdom, on the other
hand, represents a society void of that recognition.

This perception of Sdom emerges from the three stories which
involve Avraham and Lot:

- (1) Lot's decision to leave Avraham Avinu and move to Sdom
(13:1-18) reflected his preference not to be dependant on God. ?See
previous shiur on Parshat Eykev for detailed explanation.X There,
we are already informed that:

"The men of Sdom were very wicked to God" (13:13)

- (2) After rescuing Lot from the 'four kings' (chap. 14). To
show his repugnance of that society, Avraham refuses to keep any
property belonging to Sdom recovered in that victory. ?Recall from
12:10-20, that in principle, Avraham saw nothing wrong with
gathering wealth from other nations.X Although he rightly deserved
his 'fair share' of the spoils from the battle which he himself
fought, Avraham Avinu preferred to completely divorce himself from

any 'benefit' originating from Sdom:

"Avram said to the King of Sdom: I swear to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth: I will not take so much as a thread or a shoe strap of what is YOURS, so you can not say: It is I who made Avram rich" (14:21-23)

(3) God's consultation with Avraham, before destroying Sdom: Parshat Va'yera opens with the story of three "malachim" (angels) who came to Avraham for a double purpose - to inform Avraham that (1) Sarah will have a child, and (2) that Sdom is about to be destroyed. Although these two topics appear to be totally unrelated, they do comprise a joint mission and thus should share a common theme. The fact that both stories (chaps. 18->19) are included in the same 'parsha' is yet further indication of their thematic connection.

That connection can be found in the psukim which introduce God's decision to consult with Avraham before destroying Sdom (read 18:16-24).

First, the Torah must recall the reason for Avraham's selection - to become a special nation to lead other nations (the primary theme of the Sefer):

"And God said: Shall I hide from Avraham what I am about to do? For Avraham is to become a great nation, and through him all other nations will be blessed..." (18:17-18)

?compare with 12:1-3, 17:1-8X

Next, God explains the primary characteristic demanded of this nation, by which its mission will be accomplished:

"Ki Y'DAATIV I'maan asher y'tzaveh ba'nav... v'shamru derech Hashem la'assot TZDAKA u'MISHPAT...." (18:19)

?For I have 'known him' (we will deal with this translation shortly), in order that he will instruct HIS CHILDREN and his posterity to keep the way of God by doing "tzdaka u'mishpat", so that the Lord may bring about for Avraham what He had promised him.X

TZDAKA U'MISHPAT

Avraham's offspring (through Yitzchak) are destined to become the 'experts' of "tzdaka u'mishpat" - that should be their message to mankind. If Sdom is to be destroyed for its corrupt "mishpat", then the 'father' of "tzdaka u'mishpat" must be consulted first.

This prelude, sets the stage for Hashem's dialogue with Avraham concerning the possibility of saving Sdom"

"Then the Lord said: the outrage of Sdom and Amora is so great...I will go down and see ..." (18:21)

The use of the word Y'DAATIV seems strange. If it simply means that God 'knows' that Bnei Yisrael will do "tzedeq u'mishpat", how does Hashem 'know' this? What guarantee is there that Avraham's children will keep this mitzvah more than any other? Is there no bchira chofshit - freedom of choice? (Furthermore, the hebrew should be "y'daati" - see mphorshim al atar.)

Rav Yoel bin Nun explained several years ago that the word "Y'daativ" should not be understood as 'Yeda' to know, rather as "Ye'ud" (switching the last two letters as in keves-kesev; salma-simla). Ye'ud, (a similar shresh), means to be set aside for a purpose, a raison d'etre, a destiny. Thus "y'daativ" would not imply that "God knows...", rather, "God set them aside for the

purpose... (that they keep tzdaka and mishpat)". It is not that God KNOWS that bnei Avraham will do tzdaka & mishpat: it is that God chose Avraham IN ORDER that his children do tzdaka and mishpat!

Based on this interpretation, both aspects of the mission of the three "malachim" are interrelated. Their job was not only to destroy Sdom, the symbol of a corrupt society, they were also responsible to make sure that a better society develop in its place. To assure that the philosophy of Sdom would not resurface, it was necessary that Avraham have a son whose offspring would create a 'model society', teaching (by example) other nations the fundamentals of tzdaka u'mishpat.

Although "mishpat" can be found in Sdom (read carefully 19:1 & 19:9), "tzedeq" is absent. Sdom boasted an advanced legal system and cultured society. There were accepted norms of behavior which every citizen must follow. "Hachnasat orchim", for example, was forbidden in Sdom! Should one person harbor a 'wandering lost soul', within weeks the entire city would be flooded with needy people knocking on every door - their 'ideal' society would be ruined! Chazal remark in Pirkei Avot that the attribute of "sheli sheli, shelcha shelcha" (what is mine is mine, what is yours is yours) reflects minhag Sdom. Even though there was mishpat in Sdom, tzdaka in that mishpat was missing!

As we explained in last week's shiur, Hashem's decision to choose a special nation was not a reward to Avraham Avinu for his special behavior, nor did Avraham 'win' some form of divine lottery: Avraham Avinu was chosen FOR a purpose. To bring all mankind closer to God there needs to be a model nation that will practice and preach "tzedeq u'mishpat". And as we said above, it is not that Hashem knows that this will happen: rather it is in order that this will happen that we have been chosen.

When the offspring of Avraham finally conquered their land and the Kingdom of David was established (including its lineage from Ruth the Moabite!), the prophets emphasized this primary purpose:

"Hear the word of God, King of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David... Do "mishpat u'tzdaka"! (what is just and right)... do not wrong a stranger, an orphan, and the widow, commit no lawless act, and do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place..." (Yirmiyahu 22:1-5)

?see also 23:1-6! & Zecharya 7:8, 8:8,16-17, II Shmuel 8:15!X

On the other hand, the "churban" was caused by the lack of "tzdaka u'mishpat". For example, in the famous "mashal ha'kerem" of Yeshayahu (5:1-7):

"... v'ykav l'MISHPAT - v'hiney mispach
(He had hoped to find justice, and found injustice),
l'TZDAKA - v'hiney tza'aka
(to find "tzdaka", and found iniquity)."

In the eyes of Yeshayahu, destruction is forthcoming when the acts of Am Yisrael become similar to those of Sdom (Read 1:1-10):

"hoy, goy choteh... artzchem shma'ama ...
k'SDOM ha'yinu, k'Amorah da'minu.

To assure that the next time that all the nations of the world will gather together in Yerushalaim it will be for the proper purpose (see Yeshayahu 2:1-5), we must return our redemption

process in the proper direction, we must constantly remember the closing pasuk of Haftarat Shabbat Chazon:

"Tzion b'MISHPAT t'padeh, v'sha'veha b'TZDAKA" (1:27)
Zion shall be redeemed by our doing "mishpat"
Its repentance, through our performance of "TZDAKA"

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. TOLDOT AVRAHAM

We saw above that every chosen individual in Sefer Breishit receives his own 'Ayleh Toldot' EXCEPT Avraham! If Toladot reflects b'chira, then Avraham - more than anyone- is deserving of an Ayleh Toldot. Yet, for some reason the story of the Avraham's "bchiyra" is included under the category of Toldot Terach. The lack of an 'Ayleh Toldot' by Avraham indicates that there is something unique about either his 'bchira' or his ability to have children (or both).

I will suggest two possible directions, but the question still remains stronger than any of these answers:

1) One could explain that Avraham's lack of Toladot ?remember: literally, offspringX relates to the difficulty he has in begetting children. The process is long and tortuous: it requires his and Sara's name change and a minor miracle simply for the child to be born. Even then, the labor is incomplete as the child must return to Hashem at the Akeyda. Thus, the lack of any mention of 'Toldot Avraham' could reflect the difficult travail Avraham must endure in order to father and raise his child. ?This may explain why "Avraham HO'LID et Yitzchak" is added to ?Ayleh Toldot Yitzchak".X

2) The various promises and britot are the primary reason for his "bchiyra", and to emphasize that point, the word "toldot" is not used. There also may be something special about Terach himself (see below)

B. Why Terach?

What was so special about Terach that he 'deserves' his own "toldot". It may be related to his decision to 'make aliyah', his attempt to move his family towards Eretz Canaan, even before God commanded Avraham to do so. ?Terach is actually the first real 'zionist' - he plans aliyah, but never actually makes it!X

It could also be suggested that all of Terach's children had the potential to be chosen. Lot lost his 'lot' by leaving Avraham Avinu and moving to Sdom, Nachor lost his 'lot' by staying behind and not making aliya with the rest of his family. Nonetheless, the wives for Avraham's chosen offspring must come from Nachor's family, while "Malchut Yisrael" (David) relates in a certain aspect back to Haran (- Lot -Moav - etc.)

C. Why is Rivka mentioned?

Bnei Nachor (22:20-24) are usually understood as coming to introduce Rivka (see Rashi). However, if this were the case then only her father need be mentioned- why list all of Nachor's children? Based on the above shiur, the answer now is simple: since we are still under the header of Toldot Terach it is necessary complete the lineage of Nachor, Terach's child. Rivka, is the only name on this list which actually doesn't need to be mentioned as she is the next generation. However, she is mentioned, as we need to know about her for the upcoming story regarding her marriage to

Yitzchak.

D. Yirat Elokim

Numerous times in Sefer Breishit we find the use of the phrase "yirat Elokim" (the fear of God), yet it is used in conversations with or between people who do not believe in the God of Israel (e.g. Avraham w/ Avimelech, Yosef w/ wife of Potiphar, Yosef (acting as an Egyptian prince) w/ the sons of Yaakov (see also by Amelek - v'lo yarey Elokim). These sources indicate that this concept of "yirat Elokim" relates to a natural morality agreed upon by most 'normal' societies. Basic moral behavior, such as not taking someone else's wife, should come natural to man, as he is created "b'tzelem Elokim".

From: "Jeffrey Gross <75310.3454@compuserve.com>"
To: CSHULMAN , "Halachic Topics Related to the Week..."
Date: 11/9/95 2:15pm
Subject: Parshas Vayera

HALACHA FOR 5756

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYERA

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Birchos Ha'shachar before Davening

QUESTION: One who arrives late for Shacharis and would not be able to Daven B'tzibur unless he skips certain parts of Psukei D'zimra, may do so. May he also skip the Birchos Ha'shachar, or do they have to be recited before Davening?

DISCUSSION: It depends which of the Birchos Ha'shachar we are discussing:

The Bracha of Al Netillas Yadaim must be said before Davening. If one forgot to say it before Davening he cannot say it after Davening(1). Asher Yatzar should also be said before Davening.

Elokai Neshama should be said before Davening, since some Poskim

hold that after reciting Shmonei Esrei this Bracha can no longer be recited. If one forgot to say Elohai Neshama and remembered during Psukei D'zimra, he should recite it right there and then(2).

Birchos Hatorah should be said before Davening, since according to many Poskim the Pesukim which are said in Psukei D'zimra should be preceded by Birchas Hatorah. If one forgot to recite Birchos Hatorah before Davening, he may say them during Psukei D'zimra(3). If one did not remember that he forgot to say Birchos Hatorah until he is in the middle of Birchos Krias Shema, then he should have in mind, while saying the Bracha of Ahava Rabbah, to fulfill the obligation of Birchas Hatorah(4). He must learn something after Shmone Esrei.

All other Brachos may be said after Davening. If saying the Brachos would cause one to miss Tfilla B'tzibur, he should say the Brachos after Davening (provided that he is sure that he will not forget to say them).

In Shulchan Aruch OC 52 there is an order of preference concerning the parts of Psukei D'zimra that may be skipped. The Birchos Ha'shachar, however, are not mentioned as part of that order. The question arises as to which is the better alternative - is it better to skip the parts (other than Boruch Sh'omar, Ashrei and Yishtabach) of Psukei D'zimra that may be omitted (in order to join Tfilla B'tzibur), or is it preferable to postpone the Birchos Ha'shachar until after Davening, thus not having to skip any part of Psukei D'zimra?

Some Poskim(5) rule that saying Birchos Hashachar before Davening is preferred to saying the parts of P'sukei D'zimra that may be skipped. This Psak is based on the fact that all the Birchos Hashachar are mentioned in the Talmud, while those parts of Psukei D'zimra are not. In addition, originally these Brachos were supposed to be said immediately upon arising and getting dressed. Even though nowadays we say them in Shul, we should not further delay them. Other Poskim(6) rule that Psukei D'zimra takes preference over Birchos Ha'shachar, since Birchos Ha'shachar can be made up after Davening, while the skipped parts of P'sukei D'zimra cannot be made up, according to the view of some Poskim(7).

This issue of Halacha is sponsored L'zchus Haya'el Doniel Meir ben Hinda.

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Mishnah Berurah 4:1.
- 2 Harav. S. Y. Elyashiv, quoted in Tefillah K'hilchasa p.167.
- 3 Mishnah Berura 51:10.
- 4 Biur Halacha 52.
- 5 Harav. Y. Kamenetsky, Harav S. Y. Elyashiv, quoted in Tefilla K'hilchasa p. 192
- 6 Harav C. P. Scheinberg (ibid). See also Avnei Yashfe p. 68.
- 7 This is the Psak of the Aruch Hashulchan 52:5. Not all Poskim are in agreement.

From: "Project Genesis <genesis@j51.com>"
To: CSHULMAN , " lifeline@torah.org"
Date: 11/10/95 11:32pm
Subject: PG LifeLine: Real Reasons

 Project Genesis LifeLine BS"D
 "It is a tree of life to all who cling to it."
 D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
 Volume III, Number 6 Vayera

 Please pray for the speedy recovery of Esther Miriam Bas Aliza Geula
 and Sara bas Yaffa.

In last week's reading, we learned that the shepherds of Avraham and Lot were arguing - and that eventually Avraham suggested to Lot that they part ways, and permitted Lot to choose the direction. The Torah tells us that Lot looked around, and realized that the Jordan Valley was extraordinarily fertile. Therefore he went there, while Avraham settled in Kenaan.

The Midrash tells us that the Torah is only offering us Lot's "surface" reasoning. Why did he choose to go to that valley? In order that he should set up tents reaching as far as S'dom - where "the people of S'dom were truly wicked and sinful to G-d." [13:13] He went because he was attracted to the immorality that permeated S'dom and the nearby cities.

This week, we see the truth come to light. After the destruction of S'dom, Lot's daughters conclude that all mankind has again been destroyed (similar to the flood of Noach), and that it is incumbent upon them to continue the species with the only remaining man. Knowing that Lot would never permit such an act, they give him wine - and two nations emerge, letting Lot's inner nature be known for all time.

[If he was drunk, how do we know that this was indeed his nature? Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (Rashi, 19:33) explains that Lot realized on the following morning what his eldest daughter had done, but nonetheless permitted himself

to become drunk that evening as well.]

Long before the psychologists, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (father of the modern Mussar movement - Mussar perhaps best translated as "Jewish ethics") warned us about inner motivations and the sub-conscious.

There is a relevant story about the Alter of Slabodka (Alter - old man, sage), who once needed to travel to Koenigsburg for an eye operation. When he returned, someone asked him where he had been, and why he went. His reply? He went to Koenigsburg, to see a push-button umbrella.

An umbrella? Didn't he go for an operation?

Well, yes - but the Alter was searching his subconscious. The doctor had told him of two hospitals capable of performing the necessary operation, they had gone through all the plusses and minuses of each location - and eventually they came to a rational decision.

Apparently, the Alter had once before travelled through Koenigsburg. Looking out from his train, he had seen a man operate a push-button umbrella - and in that era, this apparently represented a technological innovation as exciting as Windows '95. So the Alter wondered - how much did that umbrella bias my thinking? Is it possible that I chose a hospital based on the chance to have such an umbrella?

All too often, we do just this - and refuse to admit it. Worse, we make our decisions without any careful thought, without a rational basis, and we still refuse to admit our biases. Is this rational? Perhaps we are fooling no one but ourselves - and who would want to be so easily fooled?

[Heard from: Rabbi Asher Z. Rubenstein, Jerusalem]

EVENTS: Project Genesis is becoming known as the "in" place to announce upcoming events and programs - which is what we promised! Please send in your announcements - America, Israel, Antarctica - but please know that for the sake of our many subscribers, we edit mercilessly to keep it brief:

Arachim, an organization well-known for its educational seminars, will be holding a Thanksgiving retreat at the Doubletree Hotel in Ventura, CA, near Los Angeles. This is a family program, with day care and babysitting available. It is specifically designed for beginners - could this be you? Wed. November 22 - Sun. Nov. 26, English and Hebrew. Call (213) 931-3344, or send your address and phone number to arachim@jer1.co.il.

Chanukah will be preceded this year by another special program from Partners in Torah - we announced their Rosh HaShana program several months ago, which turned out to be a great success. The Chanukah Encounter is a chance for "live" Jewish learning, as novices sit down with experts for two hour-long sessions to learn about the holiday. For more information, call 1-800-STUDY-4-2 Ext. 118 or e-mail them at umesorah@aol.com .

The Seventh Annual International Conference on Jewish Medical Ethics will take place Friday February 16 - Mon. Feb. 19, 1996 at the Radisson Hotel

near the San Francisco International Airport. Leading halachic authorities on medicine and Jewish law lecture alongside top scientists, medical researchers, physicians and government leaders. To join 300-500 physicians, health care professionals, rabbis and others, please e-mail Barry Smail (BSmail7373@aol.com) for further information.

A WORD OF THANKS: I don't know if we've ever received such a warm reaction to any class, or any comment, as we did following our statement this week. Your thoughts were much appreciated - thanks to all who did reply.

Let me emphasize that this statement was written jointly by many of those who teach classes as part of Project Genesis. I do not believe that many individuals (myself least of all) could have expressed so well what much of the Jewish community feels at this time. We pray for the true and lasting peace that will end all warfare, when all will set down their weapons. May it come speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos,

R. Yaakov Menken
Director

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