

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON VAYERA - 5760

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand[SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]  
"RAVFRAND" LIST - RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS VAYEIRA

The Legacy of Avrohom and the Legacy of Yitzchak This week's parsha contains the famous story of the Akeidas Yitzchak [Binding of Yitzchak]. I would like to relate two insights on the topic of the Akeida. Rav Chaim Volozhiner, in his commentary to Pirkei Avos (Ruach Chaim), says that over the centuries, there have been many causes for which Jews have become martyrs - giving up their lives in order to sanctify the name of G-d. Many of the extraordinary character traits that Jews have exhibited, Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes, are actually legacies that we inherited from our Avos [Patriarchs]. Throughout the centuries, Jews have had the strength to go to their deaths sanctifying G-d's Name because our father Avraham did so first. The principle of "Ma'aseh Avos Siman l'Anim" teaches us that everything that the Avos experienced, happened -- or will happen -- to their descendants. Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains that in addition to the simple interpretation that the actions of the Avos are a historical blueprint of the future, the actions of the Avos are also a personality blueprint of the future. The Avos foreshadow our character legacy. If we have within ourselves the spiritual capability to go to martyrdom for the sake of Torah and Mitzvos, it is only because we have received this character trait as a legacy from our distant ancestors. Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes, specifically, that throughout the ages Jews endured tremendous self-sacrifice in order to fulfill the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel]. Today it is relatively simple to live in Eretz Yisroel. However, a hundred years ago it literally involved risking one's life -- just to travel to Eretz Yisroel. To live in Eretz Yisroel was a constant danger to life. Nonetheless, Jews did it by the thousands. Where did they get that ability? What allowed them to put their lives on the line for the sake of this mitzvah? Rav Chaim Volozhiner answers that Avrohom Avinu was the trailblazer. Avrohom, by following the command of G-d (Lech Lecha m'artzecha [Bereshis 12:1]) to forsake everything and journey to Eretz Yisroel, paved the way for the rest of us.

There is a concept in Jewish thought called Emunas Chachamim [Trust in our Wise Ones]. We must trust our leaders, even if their advice sometimes flies in the face of what we consider the right approach. From where do Jews get this ability to "blindly" listen to the Chachamim? I once heard an explanation in the name of the Chasam Sofer. Yitzchak's test was, in a sense, even greater than the test faced by Avraham. Avraham heard from G-d Himself, that he was to sacrifice Yitzchak. But who told Yitzchak that he was to be a sacrifice? Yitzchak must have considered it awfully strange that G-d, who values life, wants a human sacrifice. Such ritual, after all, is an anathema to all that Torah stands for. But Yitzchak listened to the Chacham of his day. He had belief in the "Wise Ones". This act on Yitzchak's part -- to trust in his Chacham -- is the original source of the character trait passed down by legacy to later generations of Jews -- to have Emunas Chachamim, even in the face of apparent illogical reasoning. At times, blindly following the advice of our Chachamim is no less a test than "Lech Lecha" [Go forth from your land]. But just as we received the power to withstand the trials of "Lech Lecha" from Avraham, we received the power to withstand the trials of "Emunas Chachamim" from Yitzchak.

The Name of The Game is Hishtadlus [Making the Effort] For the second insight on the Akeida, I would like to quote a letter that Rav

B'S'D'Yitzchak Hutner, zt"l, sent to Rav Moshe Sherer, zt"l. Rav Sherer wrote that in 1971 Agudath Israel of America, of which he was President, suffered a terrible setback. For years they worked on trying to pass legislation that would permit governmental aid to private education. Finally, after many years, they were able to pass a law that they felt met the constitutional requirements for preserving the separation of Church and State. However, the United States Supreme Court struck down this law in the summer of 1971. Literally years of work and money went down the drain with one decision. Rav Sherer wrote that he received a letter that summer from Rav Hutner. Rav Hutner wrote, "When I heard the negative ruling of the Supreme Court, I saw an image of you and how you must have felt when you received that decision." Rav Hutner quoted an insight from Reb Yisroel Salanter: When it comes to Community work, one must accept upon himself 3 resolutions: Never lose one's temper; never get tired; and never want to win.

Contrary to what the 'immortal Vince Lombardi' would have us believe (Winning isn't everything - winning is the Only thing), Reb Yisroel Salanter says that the truth is just the opposite. When it comes to communal work, a person should not expect or even want to win -- he just has to try! Rav Hutner wrote, "I've seen you over the years and have noticed that in the face of adversity you haven't gotten angry. Over the 40 years that you've been in communal service, you have never gotten tired either. But now you must try to pass the most difficult of tests in communal endeavors. You have to learn that it is not crucial to win -- it is only crucial to try."

Rav Hutner continued, "How do we see that this is a Jewish trait? Every single Rosh HaShannah we ask G-d for Mercy and invoke the memory of Akeidas Yitzchak. But what happened at Akeidas Yitzchak? It never happened. The Akeida was 'aborted' in the middle of the mission. Avraham never killed Yitzchak! True, the mission was never accomplished -- but Avraham received credit for trying! In this merit we seek Mercy every year. The clear lesson is that the importance lies not in seeing the final victory. The importance lies in putting forth the effort."

Success is for the football field, but for community efforts and 'holy work' the only thing that truly matters is 'how you play the game' -- and the intensity and sincerity of the effort invested.

Personalities and Sources Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821); Lithuania Chasam Sofer (1762-1839) [Rav Moshe Sofer/Schreiber]; Hungary [Bratislava] Rav Yitzchak Hutner (1907-1980); New York [Yeshivas Chaim Berlin] Rav Moshe Sherer (1921-1998), President of Agudath Israel of America Rav Yisroel (Lipkin) of Salant (1809-1883); Founder of the Mussar Movement

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash[SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org] Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Project (Vbm) Student Summaries of Sichot Delivered by the Roshei Yeshiva

PARASHAT VAYERA SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A THE MESSAGE OF MILA Summarized by Ramon Widmonte

"And God appeared to him [Avraham] at Elonei Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." (Bereishit 18:1)

Both Ramban and Rashi connect this to the previous parasha, "On this selfsame day, Avraham was circumcised..." (Bereishit 17:26). In other words, God's revelation to Avraham was a direct result of brit mila (the covenant of circumcision). How so?

The Midrash Rabba, in our parasha, describes how Avraham complained to God that after his mila, he could no longer receive guests. Avraham's nature and destiny was to be "Av hamon goyim" (the father of many nations), to spread the idea of monotheism to the world at large. However, the mila prevented him from doing this, since it made him tangibly different from everyone else. Avraham felt that he had lost his ability to connect with other human beings, to be involved with other nations.

Basing itself on various verses, the Midrash Rabba compares Avraham to a mountain, Yitzchak to a field and Yaakov to a house. This very suggestive midrash has been subject to many interpretations. Let me offer just one. A mountain can be seen from afar - and this was Avraham. Everyone saw him; his message spread through the entire world. Yitzchak was like a field - only those nearby can see it and benefit from its goodness. Yaakov was a house - the most introverted, the loneliest, the most self-contained. On the face of it, the person to whom the mitzva of mila is most appropriate is Yaakov, who was distant and separate in any case.

The Midrash Tanchuma in our parasha quotes the famous polemic between Rabbi Akiva and Turnus Rufus regarding mila. Turnus Rufus claimed that if God wanted man to be circumcised, He would have created man like that. He believed that God's creations were better than mankind's, i.e. that man's natural state is best. Today, too, many people believe that that which is natural is most perfect and most desirable. How can it be that there is a flaw in nature? So not only is the natural world, external to mankind, perfect and beautiful, but man's internal natural world is also perfect, including all of his most banal instincts and feelings.

This is the message of the brit mila. Despite the fact that we recognise the hand of God as constantly guiding and energising the entire natural scheme, we must also realize that there is ugliness and cruelty in nature; there are things against which we have to struggle and which we have to overpower in order to perfect the world and ourselves.

Avraham opposed the mila because it externalised this qualitative shift away from the world's thinking at the time. Was he not too different to make a difference to the world? Initially, he did not understand that only through the uniqueness and distinctness of Am Yisrael would it be possible to have an eternal influence on the world. God came that day to enlighten him on this matter.

And so, the Torah describes that even after the brit, Avraham indeed received guests, and the Midrash describes further that he received others - people who did not come and go, returning to their original faiths, but people who came, and saw, and stayed. Avraham's influence was not diminished, but magnified - reaching down to us in this generation.

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The Golden Median by Rabbi Yosef Adler

.....Our parsha begins with arrival of three Malachim at Avraham's tent. Rashi states that each angel was assigned a specific task, one to inform Sarah of her impending birth, the second to destroy Sodom and Amorah and the third to heal Avraham having just performed the mitzvah of Brit Mila. As the destruction of Sodom was about to unfold,

Hashem says in Perek 18 Pasuk 17: "Will I hide my intentions concerning Sodom from Avraham?" The actual dialogue begins in Pasuk 20. The interim two Pasukim are editor's [God] comments about Avraham. "Avraham will be a great nation for I realize that he will guide his children to follow the way of God to engage in tzedaka and mishpat." .....Rambam in Perek 1 of Hilchot Daot claims that this Pasuk is the basis for the requirement to follow the derech haemtza'i or more frequently referred to as shvil hazahav, the golden median. Rambam writes - "A person ought to train himself to conduct himself in the middle path. This is called the way of God." It is this that Avraham communicated to his children. Following this path will bring blessing and good fortune to all. ....The traditional understanding of this directive is that for each characteristic trait one should never pursue the extremes but rather find themselves somewhere in the middle. When faced with a provocative situation don't be too passive and let it slide, but on the other hand, do not overreact. However, the Rav zt"l believed that this was not the correct interpretation of this cardinal rule. He did not believe that Rambam wanted you to be a perfectly predictable person that in any given scenario we could know exactly how you would respond. This is not what Rambam has in mind. The shvil hazahav is called the derech Hashem, God's way. God is not always predictable. At times he appears as the erech apayim all merciful and compassionate and at other times as el kana God seeking vengeance. Hashem is identified as the oseh shalom but at other times he is the ish milchama. The shvil hazahav, then, is a process. A person must evaluate each situation and decide whether this particular one demands a battle cry to war or peace negotiations. We are not to accept any of the extreme positions. We should not declare war at all turns nor should we always adopt the policy of appeasement. If one were to analyze one's responses over the years, he then would fall somewhere in the middle. Upon occasion you are generous, forgiving, willing to tolerate and on other occasions you demand accountability and react appropriately. This represents the derech hashem and one who follows this path will generate beracha and tova for himself and his surroundings

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From: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky [SMTP:rmk@torah.org] DRASHA PARSHAS VAYEIRAH -- LIFE OF THE PARTY RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

"Was that some party!" Those words, often slurred, are often pronounced as revelers teeter from the exquisite ballrooms of posh hotels and banquet halls, fail to capture the essence of what truly makes a party great. But, what really makes a great party? The caterers will tell you, it's the food. Musicians claim it's the music and dancing. And of course florists will tell you it's the decor. This week, Rashi tells us it is absolutely something else. The Torah tells us of a party a great party. Avraham was 100 years-old and his wife Sora was 90 when Yitzchak was miraculously born. Three years later, when Yitzchak was weaned, they made what the Torah terms "a great party" (Genesis: 21:8). Which brings us back to our first question. What makes a great party? Rashi explains that it was great because "the great people of the generation attended: Shem the son of Noah, Aiver and Avimelech." Why does Rashi translate a great party as one that had great participants? Maybe it was great because it had a 14-piece band? Maybe it was great because it was held in the grand ballroom of the Canaan Hilton? Maybe Sora and Avraham hired the most exclusive caterer? What caused Rashi to explain "great party" as one with great people?

A number of weeks ago Yeshiva of South Shore in Hewlett, New York, hosted its first annual safrus exhibition in memory of Alisa Flatow, ob"m killed by Arab terrorists during a year of study in Israel. The fair, which highlighted the art of the sofer, the Jewish scribe, had an array of amazing hands-on exhibits. There were tables at which children were taught how to write letters for a Torah using a quill, parchment and special ink. There was another display that featured how tefillin are made from the hide to the holy. There was even an exhibit where students, aided by Yeshiva teachers, learned the art of tying the knots, creating the sacred fringes that transform a four-cornered garment into a talit-koton. But the highlight of the exhibition was the opportunity to participate in the writing of an actual Torah to be placed in the yeshiva's new sanctuary. The children sat with a sofer in front of the parchment and participated as the letters turned from words to sentences, converting raw cowhide into the most sacred item on earth. One 7-year-old, Moshe Daphna, went from table to table, learning the process of tefillin making, trying his hand at safrus calligraphy, and actually making a pair of tzitzis. Finally, he had the opportunity to participate, in a small way, in the adventure of a lifetime writing a letter in the Torah. The young boy stood in veneration as he pointed to letters and watched the sofer, with his practiced hands transform the drops of ink into beautiful black letters that glistened on the parchment. The boy stood staring at his letter that had just been inscribed for eternity. Then in all seriousness he turned to the sofer. "Rabbi," the young boy began. "This is awesome!" He pondered a moment and finally spoke. "Can I ask you a

question?" "Surely!" smiled the learned scribe, thinking about the historical or halachic questions the boy would propose.

"Good!" the boy beamed. And then in all innocence he proceeded to ask, "Do you do birthday parties?"

We must understand greatness with the innocence and purity of a small boy who is tired of magicians and clowns entertaining at parties. He knew that there is no greater party than one filled with greatness itself. And greatness comes not in the form of balloon-filled ballrooms that will burst the aspirations of the participants. Distinction is not Titanic-themed dance floors that leave the participants with a sinking feeling. And Judaism's high aspirations will not flourish through hockey-themed Bar-Mitzvahs that leave children questioning their true goals in life. Rashi understands the words "great party" with a Torah vision of greatness. Great party's participants enlighten and inspire. Great celebrations glorify the greatness of the Creator through the blessings He bestowed upon His humble revelers. You can have a wild party with wild times. And you can have a joyous party with jubilant music. But in order to have a "great party" you need "great people".

Good Shabbos Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org]

Weekly-halacha for 5760 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Vayeira

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

#### PROPER HONOR OF A SEFER TORAH

A Sefer Torah, which is the living testimonial of Hashem's covenant with the Jewish people, must be treated with the highest degree of respect and dignity. Accordingly, there are special halachos which are associated with the removal and returning of the Sefer Torah when it is taken out of the Aron ha-Kodesh for Kerias ha-Torah. The following is the proper procedure: The sheliach tzibur should not be the one to take the Torah out of the aron. To accord the Torah due respect, another person is appointed to open the aron(1), take out the Torah and hand it to the sheliach tzibbur to carry to the bimah(2). If no one was appointed to the task, the sheliach tzibbur may "rush to grab this mitzvah for himself"(3).

The Torah is taken out of the aron with one's right hand [although the left hand may be used to help along]. A left-handed person may take out the Torah with his left hand(4). But the Torah is always handed, received and held with one's right hand(5) even if its being given, received or held by a person who is left-handed(6).

While the Torah is being taken out of the aron, it is customary(7) to recite Berich Shmei(8), which is a section of Zohar written in Aramaic(9). Some recite Berich Shmei before the Torah is removed from the aron(10), while others insist that Berich Shmei be said only after it has been taken out(11). One who neglected to recite Berich Shmei at the proper time may recite it until the Torah is unrolled(12).

When the sheliach tzibbur recites Shema and Echad he should face the congregation. When he recites Gadlu, he turns to face the aron(13). He should raise the Torah slightly when reciting each of these verses(14).

One is required to stand(15), without leaning, anytime the Torah is "in motion". Thus when the Torah is being carried from the aron or being raised for hagbahah, one is obligated to stand until it is placed on the bimah or until it is no longer within view(16).

[When the Torah is not "in motion" the following rules apply(17): 1) If the Torah is in the aron and the aron is closed, if it is placed on the bimah or is being held by someone who is sitting down, there is no reason to stand. 2) If it is being held by someone who is standing up (e.g., during keil maleh rachamim), or it is standing upright in the aron and the door of the aron is open, it has become standard practice to

honor the Torah by standing (even though one is not required to do so(18)). 3) If, while being carried, the person carrying the Torah stops to rest, one is required to remain standing, as this is considered "in motion".]

As the Torah makes its way through the right-hand side of the shul towards the bimah, it is considered proper for the congregants to honor it by following behind(19) as it passes by them(20). Others hold that it is considered "haughty" to do so and it should not be done(21). All agree that there is no point for those who are not in the path of the Torah [e.g., their seat is behind the bimah], to come to the front of the shul so that they can follow the Torah.

It is customary and considered correct chinuch for people to bring their young children forward so that they can respectfully kiss the Torah mantle(22). Some have the custom that adults also kiss the sefer when it passes(23), while others frown upon this custom and allow only touching or pointing at the Torah and then kissing that hand(24).

When some people carry the Torah to the bimah, they detour or bend down to allow those who are not within reach of the Torah to kiss it or touch it. This is a bizayon ha-Torah, an act of degradation, and those who do so should be strongly reprimanded(25).

When two or more seforim are taken out of the aron, the other seforim are entrusted to responsible individual to hold until they are to be used. It is improper to allow a child to hold the Torah(26), and it is prohibited to leave the sefer unattended even if it is left in a safe place(27).

It is prohibited to turn one's back to a Torah(28). Accordingly, those who sit in front of the shul directly in front of Torah must turn around during kerias ha-Torah. When, however, the Torah is read from a bimah(29) [or from a shulchan which is over 40 inches high(30)], this prohibition does not apply.

It is customary that those holding a second and a third sefer sit behind the ba'al koreh and the oleh, who are then turning their backs towards those seforim. This is permitted(31) because they are involved in reading the Torah which is on the bimah. But during the haftarah(32) or during Ashrei etc., the sheliach tzibbur should move to the side so that his back is not directly facing the Torah.

**FOOTNOTES:** 1 It is considered a segulah bedukah for easy labor for the husband of a woman in her ninth month of pregnancy to receive the honor of opening the aron; Chidah, Avodas ha-Kodesh, Moreh B'etzba 3:4. 2 Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:1, based on Mishnah Yuma 68b. 3 Sha'arei Efrayim 10:2. 4 Sha'arei Efrayim 10:2. 5 Rama O.C. 134:2. 6 Mishnah Berurah 282:1. Chazon Ish held that the "face" of the Torah should be towards the person who is holding it (Tefilah K'hilchasa, pg. 312), but many people hold the Torah facing away from themselves. 7 German communities do not recite Berich Shmei; Siddur Avodas Yisrael, pg. 122. Many Sephardim recite it only on Shabbos; Ben Ish Chai, Toldos 15. 8 Several Kabbalists attach great importance to the recital of Berich Shmei, since the time when the Torah is removed from the aron is considered an eis ratzon in which one's tefillos are more readily answered; see Yeshurun, vol. 2, pg. 579. 9 Since Aramaic tefillos may be recited only b'tzibur, it is important to recite Berich Shmei together with the congregation; See Mishnah Berurah 101:19. See also Yesod v'Shoshon ha-Avodah 5:8 that an individual should recite Berich Shmei even in middle of Ve'hu Rachum (during the week). During Pesukei d'Zimrah, however, one should not stop to recite Berich Shmei; Teshuvos M'harshag 1:52. 10 Darchei Chaim v'Shalom 196. This also seems to be the view of Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:1 and the custom in most places. 11 Mateh Efrayim 619:48; Rav Pealim 3:8; Igras Moshe O.C. 4:70-9, based on Sha'arei Efrayim 10:1; Az Nidberu 8:48. 12 Mishnah Berurah 134:13. Pischei She'arim to Sha'arei Efrayim 10:1 maintains that it may be said during hagbahah as well. 13 Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:1. 14 Mishnah Berurah 134:13. 15 "Stand" means that if one is sitting he must stand up and if one is walking he must stand still (until the Torah passes by); Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 282:3. 16 Mishnah Berurah 146:17, based on Y.D. 282:2. According to some opinions, the requirement is to stand as long as one can sense that the Torah is being carried, even if it is not visible to him. 17 Based on Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 146:18; Igras Moshe O.C. 5:38-4. 18 Accordingly, a weak or ill person may sit; Meishiv Halachah O.C. 248. 19 Some poskim mention that it is proper to follow until it reaches the bimah (Chayei Adam 31:42) while others write that it is sufficient to follow along "a bit" (Sha'arei Efrayim 10:4). 20 Mishnah Berurah 149:7. 21 Aruch ha-Shulchan 149:3; 282:1. 22 Rama O.C. 149:1. 23 Sha'arei Efrayim 10:4; Kaf ha-Chayim 134:10; 149:10. 24 Pischei She'arim 10:4 quoting Kitzur Shelah; Siddur Tzelosa d'Avraham, pg. 375; Harav Y.Y. Henkin (Eidus I'Yisrael 63). 25 Teshuvos Yad Yitzchak, quoted by Beis Baruch 31:171; Teshuvos Rivam Shneituch, quoted in Tzitz Eliezer 12:40. 26 Mishnah Berurah 147:29. 27 Igras Moshe O.C. 1:38. 28 Y.D. 282:1. 29 Rama Y.D. 242:18; Mishnah Berurah 150:14. 30 Taz Y.D. 242:13. See, however, Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 282:2 who seems to imply otherwise. See also Minchas Yitzchak 5:78. 31 Eimek Berachah, pg. 43. 32 Unless it is read from a klaf; ibid.

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PENINIM AHL HATORAH: PARSHAS VAYEIRAH BY RABBI

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And Hashem tested Avraham. (22:1) With the Akeidas Yitzchak, Avraham Avinu reached the summit of spiritual commitment to the Almighty. He was prepared to sacrifice everything—even his only son, his future—to serve Hashem. Avraham Avinu demonstrated obedience by listening to the command of Hashem. He showed unparalleled yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, when he listened to Hashem without question. The Netziv, zl, emphasizes Avraham's readiness to accept Hashem's command without questioning, as one might listen to a close friend. Avraham was in awe of Hashem, a state of being which precludes the question, "Why"? Fear is equated with unequivocal acquiescence; no questions are asked, one just readily performs the will of Hashem. Avraham listened to Hashem's command to sacrifice Yitzchak. He also listened to Hashem's angel when he was told to halt the sacrifice. Avraham did not suddenly "come to his senses," as some alienated Bible scholars would have us think. Avraham acted with complete obedience. In fact, he set the criteria for halting the sacrifice; the ram that was to replace Yitzchak must carry the same degree of holiness as if Yitzchak had been sacrificed. Regrettably, these people refuse to acknowledge the truth that one can reach the spiritual zenith of serving the Almighty and still remain in complete control of his faculties. Avraham set the standard for avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty through mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice. The pasuk attributes the test to Avraham. Is this title misplaced? After all, Yitzchak was the one who was to be the korban, sacrifice, not Avraham. In the Drashos Ha'ran the point is made that a test is the first time it is initiated. After the first person undergoes the trial, it becomes easier for the person who follows. With this in mind, Sefer Aperiion comments that Yitzchak's test, his willingness to give up his life for Hashem, was not novel. He inherited his devotion from his father, who was thrown into a fiery furnace and who risked his life in battle to save his cousin, Lot. Avraham, on the other hand, was undergoing a trial that had not been previously experienced. Never had an individual been asked to slaughter his son for the sake of the Almighty. This was the supreme test. Avraham had no one from whom to learn. Horav Elchanan Wassermann, zl, observes that mesiras nefesh, sacrificing one's life in order to sanctify Hashem's Name, is not really a significant test. One is exchanging a temporal world for an eternal world. An individual who is bound up in the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem acts with remarkable courage and enthusiasm, excited in the knowledge that he is relinquishing Olam Ha'zeh for Olam Ha'bah. He will now be inducted in the Yeshiva Shel Ma'alai, the Heavenly Yeshiva, where he will accompany the great tzaddikim of old. If this act of Kiddush Hashem causes him to lose his portion in the World-to-Come, if by performing this act of mesiras nefesh he is left with nothing, will he still go forward for the sake of the Almighty? That is the definition of true mesiras nefesh, claims Reb Elchanan. A nisayon is a test of one's dedication to the Almighty. Throughout history, Jews have demonstrated their commitment and have given up their lives as they have sacrificed themselves for the Almighty. They were oriented towards Olam Habah. They always had something to look forward to. The opportunity to die as a Jew, to achieve the ultimate closeness with Hashem, to have a "ticket" to Gan Eden, is the reward of he who is moser nefesh. Avraham Avinu did not undergo that type of mesiras nefesh. If he had carried out Hashem's will, if he had sacrificed

Yitzchak and passed the test, he would have lost everything. What did Avraham want most of all? His greatest desire, his ultimate goal, was to spread Hashem's Name throughout the world. His mission in life was to unite the world in monotheistic belief in Hashem. He told Hashem, "What can You give me, if I go childless? What benefit is Olam Habah if I have no son to carry on my work? What good is Olam Habah for me if all the work I have accomplished in this world is to be wasted because I have no heir to continue what I have initiated?" This was Avraham's test. His mesiras nefesh comprised his willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak, to give everything up, to relinquish his Olam Habah for Kiddush Hashem. Yitzchak's death would bring an end to Avraham's dreams. He would not have Olam Hazei or Olam Habah. No, we cannot compare Avraham's zenith of mesiras nefesh to that of the ensuing generations.

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From: jschwartz@y-mail.yu.edu Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz Subject: The internet Chaburah -- Parshas VaYera (fwd)

Prologue: When in Rome, one feels that he should do as the Romans do. That being the case, one should be particularly content with adjusting one's commitment to religion based upon the location he chooses to settle in. However, Chazal tell us that this is not the case. The Meforshim tell us that the Malachim who came to Avraham actually ate from his provisions in order not to upset him. Rashi among others learn that one learns that when a person is in a new location, he should change his personal preferences for those that are Minhag HaMakom. However, Maran HaGadol Harav Hershel Schachter shlita. (Shiurei Chumash, 5757) quickly pointed out that this is true only when the individual knows he is a Malach. Haphazardly choosing to follow the Minhagim of a place that are merely Minhagei Shtoots, is wrong. Hence, when in Rome one should not do as the Romans do. Sometimes joining with those in the town will actually cause one's downfall. Elsewhere in the Parsha, the Rashbam explains that the Akeida challenged Avraham Avinu's nerves because he agreed to make a deal with the Plishtim (See Shiurei Chumash, 5756). The decision to join with the Romans was defined by Hashem as wrong based upon this Peshat. Accordingly, Avraham was to be challenged in kind - by being asked to do that which the Plishtim do - sacrificing Yitzchak as an Olah which was contrary to his logic, his morals and his emotions. Yitzchak was not allowed to leave Eretz Yisroel because of his status as an Olah Temima. At times, others are asked to leave the land for reasons that may be included under the general heading of communal harmony. This week's chaburah examines the dilemma of leaving for peace entitled:

Packing Out The Sifrei (Parshas Re'eh) tells a story of Rabbi Yehuda Ben Besaira, Rav Mattia Ben Charash and Rav Chananiah ben Achi Yehoshua who were planning a trip out of Eretz Yisroel. As they got to the border, they began to cry and tore their clothes. They then read the Possuk of "V'Yirishem Oisa V'Yishavtem Bah" noting its proximity to the Possuk concerning keeping the Mitzvos so as to suggest that the Mitzva of settling the land of Israel was so great, it outweighs all other Mitzvos. The Rabbis then turned and went home never leaving the land of Israel. The Ramban (Sefer HaMitzvos) counts the settling of the land as a Mitzva. However, the Megillas Esther disagrees and holds that Yishuv Ha'aretz is not a Mitzva according to the Rambam once the Jews were exiled from their land. Hence, it is not a Mitzva that applies to generations of today. (Many question as to whether this is truly the Rambam's position because from sources like Ishus Chap. 13 & Avadim 8:9 it appears as if the Rambam considers Yishuv Ha'aretz a Mitzva even today. The Maharam MiRutenberg (28) notes that a son need not listen to his father when the latter commands him not to make Aliya since it is a Mitzva to make Aliya. Hence the father cannot command the son to violate a mitzva (See Shut Yichaveh Daas IV, 49 for more detail here). However, the Rashbatz (III, 288) maintains that one can leave the land of Israel in order to fulfill the Mitzva of Kibbud Av. The commentaries seem to understand that his position refers to merely travelling out of the land of Israel to greet them and then returning immediately. Now the main component of the Mitzva of Kibbud Av is the fulfillment of the father's wishes FOR HIMSELF. A father's wish for his son need not be fulfilled under the category of Kibbud Av (See HaGahos HaGra Yoreh Deah, 240:36 quoting Rashba and Ramban). Hence, a son need not listen to the father concerning which Yeshiva to attend (see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 240: 25 and Internet Chaburah Parshas Chayei Sarah, 5759) even if he will be attending a Yeshiva that will be in a bad neighborhood. Still, it appears from the writing of the Gra, that when a parent's command does not oppose a Torah precept, one should try to listen to his parent (see Pischei Teshuva 240:22 in name of Chavos Yair). Still, where listening to the parent will cause the child pain and the parent's command is not one where the parent derives direct benefit, one need not listen to the parent. (Hence the psak in the Internet Chaburah (Chayei Sarah, 5759) concerning the parent who says no about his daughter's shidduch). Therefore, when a parent demands that a child return from Eretz Yisroel permanently, he cannot claim that the child must return for Kibbud Av V'Em. However, if a parent were to ask a child to go home during periods of physical (or emotional danger) the child should try to get the parent to reconsider his request. When unable to do so, a temporary return might be allowed or even required.

Battala News Mazaal Tov to Maran HaGadol Harav Hershel Schachter Shlita and family upon his Daughter's engagement to R.C.Tani Cohen.

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The Harold M. & Pearl Jacobs Shabbat Learning Center  
OU Torah Insights Project

Parashat Vayeira October 30, 1999 Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

In this parshah, G-d determines that the city of Sodom must be destroyed. But first G-d decides to inform Avraham of His decision. Why does G-d need to tell this to Avraham? Why does He, so to speak, "clear it" first with Avraham?

Rashi, quoting the Midrash Tanchumah, explains G-d's reasoning: "I called Avraham אבִי הַמּוֹנֵי גוֹיִם - the father of many nations. E How can I destroy the children without first telling their father?"

This powerful and moving midrash reveals to us the role assigned to Avraham. G-d changes his name from Avram to Avraham to better define who he is and what his responsibilities are. He is "Av hamon goyim" - not just the father of the Jewish people, but the father of many nations.

G-d tells Avraham about the plight of Sodom because Avraham's responsibility is not only to his own people, but to all people. Avraham's commitment to this mandate is evident at the end of Parshat Vayeira. Avraham is commanded by G-d to bring his son to an undisclosed place and offer him as a sacrifice.

The Torah relates that Avraham and Yitzchak are accompanied by two young men on their journey. Once the place of the Akeidah comes into Avraham's view, he tells the young men to stay behind, and he and Yitzchak continue on. The experience of the Akeidah was to be an exclusive encounter with G-d that only Avraham and Yitzchak could share. The young men who had accompanied Avraham and Yitzchak would not share the destiny of the Jewish people forged at the Akeidah. Yet, the Torah records that "Avraham returned to the young men and they got up (vayakumu) and walked together to Be'eer Sheva." Of course Avraham went home after the Akeidah. Why does the Torah need to record this? Obviously, there must be some special significance to this pasuk.

Rav Motti Alon suggests another translation for this term, "vayakumu": "and he lifted them up." That pasuk would then be read, "And Avraham returned to the young men and he lifted them up, and they walked together."

Avraham's experience at the Akeidah was a pivotal moment in history. Avraham demonstrates his total dedication to G-d, and he is promised that his descendants will be blessed and will become a great nation. Avraham then returns from this encounter to the young men he left behind. He shares his experience with them. Avraham "lifts them up." He inspires them. Though only Avraham and Yitzchak could experience the Akeidah, they could nonetheless convey the inspiration to those who were not present. Avraham fulfills his responsibility by reaching out beyond himself, Rav Alon explains. In this way he fulfills his mission as "Av hamon goyim."

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, zt"l, emphasizes this aspect of Avraham's mission. He asks why our Patriarchs and Matriarchs are buried along with Adam and Chavah in the Tomb of the Patriarchs. It would seem more appropriate for them to have a separate burial place befitting their role as the forebears of the Jewish people. This placement, the Rav, zt"l, suggests, teaches that although the Jew has a unique history and a unique destiny, the Jew must be intimately connected and involved with the history and destiny of all humankind. Our role and mission as Jews goes beyond concern for our own people. The first Jews, Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu, accepted the responsibility to be teachers for all people.

This mission of Avraham and Sarah is the goal we declare three times each day in the prayer of "Aleinu," when we state our commitment "lesakein olam beMalchut Shakai - to repair the world in the Kingdom of G-d."

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider Rabbi Goldscheider is rabbi of Etz Chaim Synagogue in Jacksonville, FL.

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From: OHR SOMAYACH [SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] \* Torah Weekly \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Vayera  
This issue is sponsored in merit for the complete recovery of Moshe Zalman ben Rivka

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW G-D?

"And He appeared to him -- Hashem" (18:1)

Once there was a man whose eyesight had started to fade. He didn't really notice it at first. But then he started to become aware that he couldn't read the exit signs on the freeway without squinting. He ignored that for a while (and he also ignored a couple of near-misses). One day he caught himself winding down his car window to peer at a street name no more than ten feet away. He decided it was time to visit the optician. After about a quarter of an hour in the optician's chair in which he felt like he was in a remake of The Man in the Iron Mask, the optician pronounced with all due gravity "You need glasses." "Great," he thought to himself. "Isn't technology wonderful." The optician wrote out his prescription and a couple of days later he arrived to pick up his new glasses. He put them on. The foreground was more muzzy than before, but the near-distance was amazing. It was as if someone had re-opened a vanished world for him. He drove around marveling at the clarity with which he could see every street name. Some weeks later, the optician called. He asked him when he would be coming in to pick up his free cleaning kit. "What?" he said. "You have to clean these things?" He drove downtown and picked up his cleaning kit. He applied a little of the special solution to the lenses and gently rubbed them with the lens tissue. The tissue turned black after one or two rubs.

The optician had never seen such a grimy pair of spectacles. The man put on the glasses once again and he was shocked. He was shocked not so much by the clarity with which he could see again but at how little he had noticed how blurry was his sight before he had cleaned his spectacles. Was it really possible that he had been walking around looking at the world through so much grime and had noticed it so little?!

"And He appeared to him (Avraham) -- Hashem" The first sentence of this week's parsha seems reversed. Why didn't the Torah write "And Hashem appeared to him (Avraham)?" G-d doesn't move. He doesn't change. He doesn't "appear" one moment and "disappear" the next. When we talk about G-d "appearing," we really mean that we have brought ourselves close to Him. To us, it looks like He has appeared. It's a bit like Ice Mountain ride at Universal studios, where you feel as though your car is turning over and over, when really the car is stationary and the scenery is revolving. That's the meaning of the verse "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to Me." Corresponding to our efforts to bring ourselves close to G-d, so will we sensitize ourselves to G-d's greatness. We will feel His awe the more. This is what is called in language of the mystics "the arousal from below." Sometimes, we find it hard to see G-d in the world. But maybe it's not because He's far away. Maybe it's because we buy into a lifestyle of spiritual grime. Maybe if we used "G-d's cleaning fluid" -- His Holy Torah -- a little more often, we would be astounded at what a beautiful G-d filled world this is.

Sources: \* Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim, Ohr HaChaim, Devash V'Chalav in Iturei Torah

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From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz [SMTP:packouz@aish.edu] vayera

AISH HATORAH'S Shabbat Shalom Weekly  
DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah By Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

When the three angels passed by Avraham's tent, Avraham pleaded with them to accept his hospitality "because you have passed by your servant" (Genesis 18:5). How is it possible that Avraham consider the fact that they were passing by to be a compelling reason for them to accept his hospitality? Rashi, the great commentator, tells us that Avraham's communication to his guests meant that Avraham considered it his honor that they were passing by him. Everything that they did, Avraham appreciated as if they did it special for him; he appreciated their passing by and their accepting his hospitality as a kindness specifically for him alone. Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz cites the Talmudic (Kiddushin 7a) principle that when someone gives something to a distinguished person, the fact that the person accepts the gift is considered as if one received something from him. Therefore, giving to a distinguished person is actually taking. Who is distinguished? To an arrogant person, no one. To a humble person, like Avraham, everyone is considered distinguished. He honors and respects every human being. Therefore, he considers giving to any person as a personal favor to him.

Our lesson: Look upon it as your opportunity for growth, personality and character development, to make a better world every time that you are able to help someone. Look upon THEM as doing you a favor by letting you help them. CANDLE LIGHTING: Jerusalem 4:16 New York 5:38 ... Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Kalman Packouz  
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From:Rabbi Yisroel Ciner[SMTP:ciner@torah.org] Parsha-Insights - Parshas Vayera  
This week we read the parsha of Vayera. "Vayera ailav Hashem {Hashem appeared to him (to Avrohom)}[18:1]." The passuk {verse} doesn't state the purpose of this visit nor does it state what Hashem said to Avrohom. Rashi therefore understands that this passuk is a continuation from the last passuk of the previous parsha which dealt with Avrohom's bris milah {circumcision}. Rashi teaches that the purpose of Hashem's appearance to Avrohom was 'bikur cholim' [visiting the sick].

Avrohom lifted his eyes and saw three 'men' approaching. He, in spite of his pain, rushed to greet them and to invite them for a meal. They were in fact three angels, each with an individualized mission. One informed Avrohom that in one year's time, Sarah would give birth to a son.

Sarah was standing in a doorway behind the angel when she heard him make this pronouncement. She was a mere eighty nine years old at the time and Avrohom was ninety nine. "Sarah laughed wondering: After I've aged will I regain my youth?[18:12]"

"Hashem spoke to Avrohom saying: Why did Sarah laugh... Is there anything that is beyond Me?[18:13-14]"

"And Sarah denied it saying 'I didn't laugh.' And he (Avrohom) said: 'No, you laughed.[18:15]"

This entire episode with Sarah's laughter and subsequent denial is very hard to understand.

The Ramban explains that, although Hashem had already told Avrohom that he was going to have a son, Avrohom had not relayed that prophecy to Sarah, thinking that Hashem would inform her Himself. Furthermore, in Sarah's eyes, these visitors were nothing more than idolatrous merchants who had perched past their tent. Therefore, there was really no reason that she should have attached any credibility to their seemingly ridiculous declaration.

If so, what was the complaint against Sarah that Hashem voiced to Avrohom?

The Ramban explains that the thought of having a child should not have been so astounding in Sarah's eyes. Instead of scornful laughter her reaction should have been along the lines of a heartfelt: 'From your lips to G-d's ears.'

The Ramban explains further that when Avrohom spoke to Sarah about her attitude, she thought that he was basing his censure on her not having shown happiness when she heard their declaration. She denied it. Once Avrohom stated in a definitive manner: "No, you laughed," she realized that he was basing it on what Hashem had revealed to him. She therefore remained quiet.

The Noam Elimelech explains in a different way which I think has some applications to us.

He writes that a person must aspire to reach such a heightened state of 'Hashem-awareness' that even an 'amazing' event won't be a cause for surprise. Hashem runs the world and can do

anything He wants. On the contrary, the fact that Hashem conceals Himself behind the cloak of nature is very out of the ordinary and quite 'amazing'. Hashem breaking nature and doing His will regardless of what's considered normal is in fact a natural state of His existence and will.

He explains that Sarah laughed with gleeful surprise. What a miracle! Amazing!

Hashem complained to Avrohom: "Is there anything that is beyond Me?" Why was she so shocked? Was she being tricked by and falling into the clutches of nature's illusion?

Sarah was concerned that Avrohom shouldn't mistakenly think that she had scoffed at the thought of having a child. "And Sarah denied it saying 'I didn't laugh.'"

"And he (Avrohom) said: 'No, you laughed.'" On your level, the surprised happiness that you exhibited was tantamount to a scoffing laugh...

We certainly are not on a level where we're expected to accept supernatural events as commonplace, yet there are things which we shouldn't find so surprising. We too are misled by the natural world and are 'surprised' and gleeful when scientific advances lead us right back to the knowledge we already had through the Torah. Of course, there should be no contradictions between science and Torah. One is the probing and revealing of the world's secrets through painstaking experimentation and observation. The other is the knowledge of those very same secrets through the Creator's revelations.

Maimonides, through his knowledge of the Oral Transmission of Torah, writes that the lunar month is exactly twenty nine and a half days, plus 793/1080 of an hour. This comes out to .732459 of an hour or .03059 of a day. The month is therefore 29.53059 days.

NASA, based on information gathered through the most sophisticated telescope they had, concluded that the length of the lunar month is 29.530588. Rounded up to the nearest one hundred thousandth this comes out to the identical number always known to us. When the scientist was told that the Jews already had that number, his response was: Good guess...

That's where we run into difficulties with science. When a monopoly of knowledge has been proclaimed...

However, we should accept these findings as commonplace.

The Talmud [Sotah] teaches that one should only pray for a specific gender during the first forty days of pregnancy. After that point, it's too late as the gender has already been set.

Newsweek reported that researchers at the Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Mass. 'discovered' that in the seventh week of pregnancy, the gene which determines the gender of an embryo launches a process that leads to sexual development.

Surprised?

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

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From: rachrysl@netmedia.net.il[SMTP:rachrysl@netmedia.net.il]  
Subject: "Midei Shabbos by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler"

Parshas Vayeiro ....

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the Seifer P'ninim mi'Shulchan ha'Gro) Vayeiro

Mamrei's Merit "And G-d appeared to him in the plains of Mamrei" (18:1). Specifically in the plains of his associate Mamrei, Rashi explains, because he was the one to advise Avrohom to go ahead and perform the Bris Milah in the first place. Now why should Avrohom need the advice of Mamrei to carry out the instructions of Hashem, asks the Gro?

The people of that time, he explains, practised religions that made heavy demands of them. Among other things, they were expected to burn their children in fire. And it was against such a background that Avrohom would preach in the name of G-d, a religion of lovingkindness. He urged them to believe in the one G-d who made no demands of them other than that they live as decent human-beings, by adhering to a code of conduct based on the seven mitzvos that G-d had commanded No'ach. Killing and maiming, he claimed, were barbaric, and were not part of the ritual that comprised G-d-worship. And now all of a sudden, he himself was about to fulfill a mitzvah which entailed mutilating his own body and that of his children. He stood to lose his credibility among the numerous followers whom he had brought under the wings of the Shechinah. All the acts of chesed that he had performed and would perform, were about to come to an end in one stroke! That explains why he turned to his three friends for their advice, and that explains why two of them, Oner and Eshkol, advised him to desist (because his life's work was more important than one mitzvah - who knows, perhaps that also explains why he had delayed the mitzvah of milah until then, not performing it even without being commanded, like he performed all the other mitzvos without being commanded).

But it was Mamrei whose sound advice he ultimately followed! If G-d said to perform the Bris Milah, then he would perform the Bris Milah, because it is nobody's business to query G-d's commands. And that explains why, after the Bris Milah, G-d appeared to him in the plains of Mamrei.

#### Know How to Answer

Based on the above explanation, the Gro explains a dialogue between the Sotton and Avrohom as the latter made his way to the Akeidoh: 'See what you are about to lose by performing this Akeidoh', the Sotton said to Avrohom. 'Because until now, members of other faiths were weak in their own beliefs. But when you explained to them that that is not the way to serve G-d, you fortified them. You strengthened the knees of those whom other religions bent. But now that you have been commanded to slaughter your only son, your testimony will be rendered worthless.' 'In spite of your words,' Avrohom replied 'I have been commanded by G-d, and that is what I shall do.' 'You are making a mistake,' replied the Sotton. 'G-d cannot have spoken to you. Because who has ever heard of an innocent person having to die?' 'That does not worry me,' concluded Avrohom, 'because I walk in faith, and I do not query His commands.'

#### The Power of Tzedokoh

"And he planted an orchard in Be'er Sheva" (21:37). Others translate "eishel" as a guest-house, which Avrohom set up for weary travellers. The Medrash Tehilim explains that "eishel" is the acronym of Achilah, Sh'siyah, Linah (to eat, to drink and to stay overnight). A story is told of a philanthopist who not only gave a lot of charity, but who would take in guests in a big way. He was exceptionally wealthy, and it happened once that his house burnt down. When they asked Reb Chayim from Volozhin (some say that it was the Gro that they asked) why such a calamity should befall such a worthy man - and how it was possible that the house which was instrumental in the performance of so many mitzvos should be the object of his suffering? - he replied that he used to give his guests food (Achilah) and drink (Sh'siyah) but not places to stay overnight, thereby transforming the word "eishel" into 'eish' (fire).

The question remains however, why a person who performed so much tzedokoh should lose his house - just for not performing the mitzvah of linah? This the Gaon explained in the following manner: Such is the power of tzedokoh, that it saves the person who has sinned from the fires of Gehinom and transfers the punishments to this world, where the fire is only one sixtieth of the fire of Gehinom and where the pain is far less intense. And such is the power of tzedokoh, one may add, that, if it is performed to completion, (Achilah, Sh'siyah and Linah) then even that kaporah is rendered unnecessary.

#### On The Third Day

"On the third day, and Avrohom raised his eyes and he saw the place from afar" (22:4). The Medrash Rabah quotes a posuk in Hoshei'a (6:2): "He will give us life from two days; on the third day He will establish us and we will live before Him".

The Gro explains this Medrash with the Gemoro in Chullin (142a), which states that there is no reward for mitzvos in this world. The reason for this, says the Gro, is because each and every mitzvah is in essence spiritual. Consequently, the world together with everything in it, which is only material, cannot possibly pay for even one mitzvah, since it is of inferior stock, as Chazal have said in Pirkei Ovos (4:17) "One hour of satisfaction in the World to Come outweighs all of life in this world". In that case, one may well ask, how is it that we feed on the merits of the mitzvos that our forefathers performed?

The answer is that it is only the mitzvos themselves that cannot be paid in this world. The merits that we benefit from the deeds of our forefathers are not for the actual performance of the mitzvos, but for the extra effort that they put into them - the keenness and the alacrity, the beautification of the mitzvos and so on - the accessories which are payable in this world. The Torah therefore, makes a point of informing

us, not only that Avrohom carried out the Akeidoh to the letter, but also the amount of effort and preparation that he put into it prior to the actual mitzvah - that he got up early, that he himself saddled his ass, that he chopped wood ... to teach us that that is what feeds us the tremendous rewards that we reap in this world - to this day. The main reward for the actual mitzvah is not payable in this world, as we just explained. It is reserved for us for the World to Come. And that is what the Medrash means when it quotes the possuk in Hoshei'a, explains the Gro. "All that we enjoy in this life from the actions of Avrohom at the Akeidoh, is from what he performed during the first two days, in preparation for the great mitzvah. But why he performed on the third day, the Akeidoh itself, Hashem will establish for the World to Come, when we will live before Him.

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From: Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il]Subject: Insights to the Daf: Moed Katan 12-20 daf@dafyomi.co.il, http://www.dafyomi.co.il

MOED KATAN 14, 15 - anonymously dedicated my an Ohev Torah and Marbitz Torah in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel. MOED KATAN 16 - dedicated by Mr. Avi Berger of Queens, N.Y. in memory of his parents, Pinchas ben Reb Avraham Yitzchak, and Leah bas Michal Mordechai. MOED KATAN 17 (October 24) - In honor of the birthday of Simcha Klein of Yonkers, NY, from the Leichmans of Teaneck, NJ. Ad Meah V'Esrin! MOED KATAN 19, 20 - anonymously dedicated my an Ohev Torah and Marbitz Torah in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel. HELP THE DAFYOMI ADVANCEMENT FORUM CONTINUE ITS WORK We are proud to thank you for your contribution with D.A.F.'s unique & lively laminated bookmarks: the Current Cycle or Rishonim on Shas Send donations to 140-32 69 Avenue, Flushing NY 11367, USA ....

Moed Katan 15b DERIVING LAWS OF AVEILUS FROM THE CONDUCT OF DAVID HA'MELECH QUESTIONS: The Gemara derives that an Avel is prohibited to be with his wife from the verses that describe the conduct of David ha'Melech when his infant son died. The verse says that after the child had died, "David comforted his wife Bas-Sheva, and he came to her and lay with her" (Shmuel II 12:24). This implies that he was with his wife only after the Aveilus for his son ended, but during Aveilus he was prohibited to be with her. (a) This proof that an Avel is prohibited to be with his wife is problematic. The verse says that "it happened on the seventh day that the child died" (ibid. 12:18). If the child was only seven days old when he died, then he has the status of a Nefel (stillborn), and there is no requirement of Aveilus for a (stillborn)! Thus, why does the Gemara even assume that David was observing Aveilus to begin with? (b) Furthermore, we see in the verses that David clearly was not an Avel after his son died, because the verse says that when the child died, "David stood up from the floor, washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. He came to the house of Hashem and he bowed down. He came to his house, asked for food, and they served him food and he ate" (ibid. 12:20). How can we learn the Halachos of Aveilus from David ha'Melech if he was clearly not an Avel? (RADAK ibid.)

ANSWERS: (a) The RADAK gives two approaches to answer the first question: 1. Chazal understood that when the verse says, "It happened on the seventh day that the child died," it does not mean that the child died on the seventh day of his life. Rather, it means that he died on the seventh day of his illness. He was older than thirty days, and thus his parents were obligated to observe Aveilus for him. 2. Even if the child was only seven days old as the verse implies, perhaps David was nevertheless obligated to observe Aveilus for him. The Gemara in Shabbos (136a) says that the reason one does not mourn for a Nefel is because the child was not yet completely formed. However, if one knew for certain that the child had been in gestation for full term, then one does mourn. David ha'Melech knew that the child was a full-term baby, because he had only been with Bas Sheva one time (Shmuel II 11:27).

(b) There are several approaches to answer the second question: 1. The RADAK suggests that David ha'Melech washed himself and changed his clothes \*before\* he became an Avel -- that is, after the child died but before he was buried, while he was still an Onen when the Halachos of Aveilus (according to some Rishonim) are not yet observed. The reason he washed during Aninus is because he wanted to go bow down to Hashem in the place of the Shechinah in order to fulfill the dictum, "One is required to bless Hashem for the bad just like one is one required to bless Hashem for the good" (Berachos 54a). He wanted to praise Hashem even on the occasion of the loss of his child, so he immediately went to the place of the Shechinah. Since it is not proper to go there dirty and disheveled (as David had been fasting and sitting on the ground for seven days while the child was sick), he needed to wash up and change his clothes. This is also the explanation of the RITVA in our Sugya, as well as the RA'AVAD cited by the ROSH.

2. The RAN (Chidushei ha'Ran) answers that perhaps the laws of Aveilus apply differently to a king. A king is not permitted to disgrace himself publicly, and that is why David ha'Melech was permitted to wash and change his clothes. However, even a king is required to observe the Halachos of Aveilus that apply only in private, such as the prohibition of being with one's wife.

3. The RAN gives a second answer and says that perhaps David ha'Melech needed to wash himself not for pleasure, but in order to clean off the dirt from his body, since he had been sitting on the ground for seven days. It is permitted for an Avel to wash or change his clothes when he is not doing so for pleasure but because he has become dirty (as the Gemara implies on 24a).

Moed Katan 17 PERMISSION TO SIN QUESTION: The Gemara quotes Rabbi Ila'i who said that if a person sees that his Yetzer ha'Ra is overcoming him, he should go to a place

where nobody knows him, dress in black clothing, wrap himself in black, and then do what his heart desires, in order not to be Mechalel Shem Shamayim in public.

How could Rabbi Illa'i give permission to a person to sin? ANSWERS: (a) RABEINU CHANANEL explains that Rabbi Illa'i is not actually permitting a person to sin. Rather, he is referring to a person who has an urge to drink wine while listening to alluring songs in order to make himself merry in a way that will arouse his Yetzer ha'Ra to want to sin. In such a situation, Rabbi Illa'i directs to do the merry-making activities, which are not themselves sins per se, in private and dressed in black, to prevent Chilul Hashem. Rabeinu Chananel adds that even these actions Rabbi Illa'i does not permit one to do, but rather Rabbi Illa'i is saying that by going to a foreign place and wearing black, one's heart will be humbled and his desire to engage in this merry-making activities will be broken. (b) RASHI in the name of Rav Hai Ga'on says that Rabbi Illa'i is indeed referring to doing actual sins of immorality. He is not giving permission to do them, though. Rather, he is saying that if the would-be sinner goes to a foreign place and dresses in black, Rav Illa'i guarantees that the person will become humbled and his urge to sin will leave him. (c) RASHI in his other explanation says that Rabbi Illa'i's words are to be taken at face value. If a person feels compelled to sin, he should do so in private so that he not be Mechalel Shem Shamayim in public. Sinning in private removes some aspect of the severity of the sin. (d) The RIF writes that the Halachah does not follow Rabbi Illa'i, but even if a person has the urge to sin, he is not permitted to go to a far-away place and dress in black. Rather, he should make every effort to break his urge to sin, for it is certainly within his ability to refrain from sinning. We rule, as the Gemara in Berachos (33b) says, that "haKol b'Yedei Shamayim, Chutz m'Yir'as Shamayim" -- "everything is in the hands of Hashem, except for [a person's own choice to acquire] fear of Hashem." The Rif's words imply that he understands Rabbi Illa'i to disagree with the cardinal principle of free choice, and that is why he says that if a person is unable to choose to refrain from sinning, he should sin in private and not be Mechalel Shem Shamayim in public. How can this be? Bechirah, free choice, is the most fundamental principle of Torah observance! RAV ELCHANAN WASSERMAN raises this question and leaves it unanswered (KOVETZ MA'AMARIM 7:8). Apparently, the Rif means that there are times when a person's desire is so strong that he does not have the willpower to overcome it. His level of Bechirah has fallen to such a realm that choosing not to sin in this particular sin is not part of his Bechirah (see MICHTA'V MELIYAHU, 1:2:2, p. 113), like an addiction. However, since he cannot know for certain that he is unable to overcome his urge, he must put forth every effort to overcome the desire.

Moed Katan 18 PHARAOH WAS ONE "AMAH" TALL AGADAH: The Gemara says that Pharaoh was one Amah tall, his beard was one Amah long, and his Ever was an Amah and a Zeres long.

What are Chazal trying to teach us? Was Pharaoh really such a strange looking midket? The Acharonim address this question. The MAHARAL (Be'er ha'Golah #5) explains that Chazal are not describing Pharaoh's physical attributes. Rather, they are describing the measurements that would be appropriate for him based on his deeds and his character traits. Although it is not possible for a human being to have those physical dimensions, had it been possible, it would have been appropriate for him. The reasons for this are as follows. (a) The Maharal explains that when Chazal say that he was very short, that means that he was lowly and of low esteem. The fact that the Jewish people fell into the hands of such a lowly person was, in one sense, a good sign, because when the Jewish people "hit rock bottom" by being subject to such a lowly monarch, their redemption is soon to follow. Hashem is "Magbi'ah Shefalim" and raises them up and redeems them. (See Kesuvos 66b -- "Happy is Yisrael, that when they are punished they are subject to the lowest of the nations.") (b) When Chazal say that Pharaoh's Ever was an Amah \*and\* a Zeres\* long, they are saying that he was very shameful, and that his shame was the most outstanding of his attributes. The BEN YEHOYADA adds that the land of Mitzrayim is called "Ervas ha'Aretz" (Bereishis 42:9), for it was a land whose people were totally immersed in immorality at a time when all the other nations distanced themselves from immorality (see Rashi Bereishis 34:7, Rashi Bamidbar 22:5, Vayikra 18:3). This is what the Gemara is stressing -- Pharaoh, the leader of Mitzrayim, epitomized the trait of licentiousness more than anyone else. The word "Zeres," he says, is related to the term "Zoreh" (see Yevamos 34b -- "Dash mib'Fnim v'Zoreh mib'Chutz"), which is a word that describes what the Ever does. (Similarly, this is probably what Chazal mean when they say that Pharaoh was one Amah tall, and his beard was one Amah long. When they say that he was one Amah tall, that means that his entire essence was concentrated on immorality, represented by the word "Amah." When they say that his beard was one Amah long, that means that all of his wisdom (represented by the beard) was concentrated only on immoral pursuits.)

18b ATTEMPTING TO CHANGE ONE'S DESTINED SPOUSE QUESTION: The Gemara quotes Shmuel who says that a person is permitted to get engaged during Chol ha'Mo'ed. Shmuel says that the reason is because if one tarries and waits until after the festival, perhaps someone else will pray to marry her and will succeed in taking her away. Therefore, one may get engaged during Chol ha'Mo'ed in order to make sure no one else gets her. The Gemara then gives an example of how a person can take away someone else's intended spouse through prayer. Rava saw a man praying that Hashem let him marry a certain woman. Rava told him not to pray for such a thing, "because if she is destined to be your wife, so she will be your wife anyway and you do not have to pray for her, while if she is not destined to be your wife, then you are denying Hashem." Later, Rava heard the person praying that Hashem should take his life, or take the woman's life [so that he not have to see the woman marry someone else -- Rashi]. Rava scolded him and said, "I told you that you should not pray for such things." This incident is cited by the Gemara to prove that a person's prayer can change his destiny with regard to whom he marries. However, we see the opposite from this incident! Rava says that one's prayers will not have any effect on whom he marries! ANSWER: (a) RASHI says (DH O' Iyhu) that the only way that a person will not be able to marry his intended spouse is if someone else prays that one of them should die. It is not possible to pray that someone else should marry one of the intended partners. This is what Shmuel means when he says, "Shema Yekadmenu Achar" -- not that someone else will marry

her, but that someone might pray that she die. (b) The RITVA explains that after Rava told the person not to pray, the person did not listen and he continued to pray that he be able to marry a certain woman. Indeed, his prayers were answered and he married the woman of his prayers. After he married her, though, the marriage was so difficult that he prayed that either he or she should die. At that point, Rava said, "I told you that there is nothing to gain by praying to change your destined spouse!" Accordingly, when Rava initially told him not to pray because "if she is not destined to be your wife, then you are being Kofer against Hashem," he did not mean that it is impossible to change one's destiny; he was just trying to discourage the person, for he saw that the Shiduch would not work. ("You are being Kofer against Hashem" means that by saying that you want to marry this woman, you are implying that you know better than Hashem what is good for you.) The only way to pray for a Shiduch in a beneficial way is by doing good deeds and thereby meriting a better Shiduch. The MAHARSHAM points out that the Yerushalmi (Beitzah 5:2) writes explicitly that even if one changes his marital destiny through prayer, the marriage will not work out ("Lo Ka'ima"). Also, the Zohar (Mishpatim 109a) says that any children born from such a marriage will be attributed in some metaphysical way to the man who was supposed to be the father of those children, the predestined mate of the woman. This also seems to be the approach of RASHI on the Rif, and the commentary of TALMID RABEINU YECHIEL. 8 The NIMUKEI YOSEF and the CHIDUSHEI HA'RAN explain (apparently based on the same Yerushalmi) that if a person changes his destiny through prayer it will not be lasting; eventually the right person will get the right wife, because the wrong spouse will die or divorce her. Their texts of the Gemara reads, "Kafarta Bah" instead of "Kafarta ba'Hashem" -- "if she is not destined to be your wife, then you will be Kofer against \*her\*," that is, you will eventually realize that you are not fit for each other and you will rebel against her. If so, Rava did not mean that it is impossible to change one's destined spouse, because it is possible to change it \*temporarily\*. That is why Shmuel permits one to get engaged on Chol ha'Mo'ed, lest somebody else take her as his wife temporarily.

Moed Katan 19 WHEN DOES THE FESTIVAL ANNUL THE SEVEN DAYS OF AVEILUS QUESTION: The Mishnah states that if a person becomes an Avel before a festival, the festival annuls the seven days of Aveilus ("Regalim MafsiKin"), and, in addition, the festival does not count ("Einan Olin") as part of the days of the Aveilus. "RASHI" questions why the Mishnah has to say that the festival does not count as part of the days of the Aveilus -- since the festival annuls the Aveilus, it is obvious that the festival does not count as part of the Aveilus! In what way would we have thought that the festival counts towards the days of Aveilus? (It cannot be that the Mishnah mentions "Einan Olin" simply because the first part of the Mishnah, regarding Shabbos, says that Shabbos does count ("Olah"), because the Gemara later (23b) says that it only says "Olah" in the first part of the Mishnah with regard to Shabbos because the second part of the Mishnah says "Einan Olin" with regard to Regalim!)

Rashi explains that when the Mishnah says that the festivals are "Einan Olin," it refers to a case where the burial was less than three days before the festival. In such a case, the seven days of Aveilus are not annulled, but they continue after the festival and it is appropriate to say that the festival does not count towards those seven days. (This is the explanation given by the PERUSH RABEINU GERSHOM ME'OR HA'GOLAH, published by Mechon ha'Talmud ha'Yisraeli with footnotes by Rav Nisan Zaks, which seems to be based on the same manuscript as the commentary we are discussing, dubbed "Rashi" which is printed in the margins of this Maseches -- see our Introduction to Moed Katan.) A Talmid of "Rashi" wrote a marginal note on this explanation of Rashi, which is included in the text of Rashi's commentary as it is printed in today's editions of the Shas. The Talmid criticizes the explanation of Rashi, claiming that it is based on a mistake. When the Mishnah says that the festival annuls the Shiv'ah in a case where the Aveilus began three days before the festival, it is "Lav Davka" -- even if the Aveilus began just one minute before the festival, the festival it annuls the Shiv'ah. What, then, does the Mishnah mean when it says that the festival "does not count" towards the Shiv'ah, if the Shiv'ah anyway is entirely annulled right away? It means that if the Aveilus began \*during the festival\* itself, then the days of the festival do not count as part of the seven days of Aveilus (and one must observe the Shiv'ah after the festival), because none of the Shiv'ah was observed before the festival. (RASHI on the Rif writes both explanations for the words "Ein Olin.") Many Acharonim ask that the comment of the Talmid here appears to be a blatant error. The Gemara later (20a) says explicitly that Reb bi Eliezer and the Chachamim, as well as Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel, argue whether the festival annuls the Shiv'ah when the Aveilus begins immediately before the festival, or only if it begins three days before the festival. How, then, could the Talmid say that our Mishnah is Lav Davka, when the Beraisa says clearly that such an opinion (requiring that the Aveilus be observed for at least three days before the festival in order for the festival to annul it) does exist. Since our Mishnah clearly says that three days must be observed before the festival, we must assume that our Mishnah means what it says, and is reflecting the opinion of Beis Shamai/Rebbi Eliezer! (GILYON HA'SHAS, HAGAHOS HA'BACH, etc.) ANSWERS: (a) RAV BETZALEL RENSBERG (20a) answers that since the Mishnah says that festivals annul the Aveilus ("Regalim MafsiKin"), it implies that festivals annul the Aveilus \*no matter\* how much has already been observed before the festival (see Insights to 20:2a). (b) The Talmid does not mean that our Mishnah holds that the festival annuls the Aveilus even when three days of Aveilus were not yet observed. Rather, he means to say as follows. When the Beraisa says that Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel argue about how many days of Aveilus need to have been observed in order for the festival to annul the Shiv'ah, it is referring back to the Mishnah. Beis Hillel in the Beraisa is saying that the Halachah \*of our Mishnah\*, that "Regalim MafsiKin," applies when \*any amount\* of Aveilus was observed before the festival. As such, Beis Hillel agrees to everything mentioned in the Mishnah except for the fact that three days of Aveilus before the festival are needed in order for the festival to annul the Aveilus. Since Beis Hillel agrees with everything that the Mishnah says, it must be that he also agrees that "Regalim MafsiKin," they annul the Aveilus, and "Einan Olin" -- they do not count towards the seven days of Aveilus. Indeed, the very Tosefta (2:5) which records the opinion of Beis Hillel that even one moment of Aveilus before the festival suffices, begins by

saying that the festival does not count for the seven days (Eino Oleh). How could Beis Hillel agree to those words, though? Beis Hillel maintains that even after one minute of Aveilus, the festival annuls the entire Aveilus, and if so, it is meaningless to say that the festival "does not count" towards the seven days! The seven days were annulled! It must be that Beis Hillel understands the Mishnah to be discussing a case where the Aveilus occurs during the festival itself.

That is what the Talmid means when he says that the three days mentioned in the Mishnah are Lav Davka. He means that, l'Halachah, one does not have to observe Aveilus for three days before the festival, like Beis Hillel says, in order for the festival to annul the Aveilus. At the same time, though, Beis Hillel agrees with the Mishnah when it says that the festival "does not count" towards the seven days. The Mishnah must mean, therefore, that when the Aveilus begins during the festival, the festival does not count towards the seven days. The Talmid would agree to Rashi on the Rif who writes that there are \*two\* possible scenarios in which the festival does not count towards the seven days of Aveilus: when the Aveilus started two days before the festival (according to Beis Shamai), or when the Aveilus started \*on\* the festival (according to Beis Hillel). If this was the question of the Talmid on Rashi's explanation, then we might be able to answer the question. According to the explanation of Rashi (20a, DH Tana Didan, as we explain in the Insights there), even Beis Hillel agrees that the festival annuls the Halachos of Aveilus only if three days of Aveilus have been observed before the festival -- except for the Halachah of Kefiyas ha'Mitah. That is, Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel (and Rebbe Eliezer and the Chachamim) are only arguing with regard to how many days of Aveilus must be observed before the festival to annul the obligation of Kefiyas ha'Mitah. Everyone agrees, though, that in order for the festival to annul \*all\* of the Halachos of Aveilus, the Aveilus must have been observed for at least three days prior to the festival. Accordingly, Rashi here is following his opinion in that Sugya, and the wording of the Tosefta poses no problem (for when the Tosefta says that the festival "does not count" towards the seven days of Aveilus, it is referring to a case where the Aveilus began two days before the festival, and when it says that the festival annuls the Aveilus when the Aveilus was observed for only one minute before the festival, it is referring only to the specific Halachah of Kefiyas ha'Mitah). (M. Kornfeld)

Moed Katan 20 PRESENT-DAY PRACTICES OF AVEILUS [I] KEFIYAS HA'MITAH HALACHAH: The Beraisa discusses Kefiyas ha'Mitah in a number of places. In the times of Chazal, an Avel would be Kofeh his Mitah -- he would turn over his bed and sit in it while it was upturned. The Gemara (15b) says that this is done to show that our sins have caused the Tzelem Elokim to be overturned. An Avel therefore overturns his bed, which represents the person.

Today, we do not find that this practice is observed. What happened to this practice?

(a) The SHULCHAN ARUCH (YD 387:2) writes, based on the HAGAHOS MAIMONIYOS (Hilchos Avel 5:60) that nowadays we do not observe the practice of Kefiyas ha'Mitah, because the Nochrin might suspect us of practicing witchcraft. (The Yerushalmi in Moed Katan 3:5 uses such reasoning to explain why an Avel who stays in an inn, where many Nochrin are present, does not have to upturn his bed.)

(b) The Shulchan Aruch cites a second reason, in the name of the ROSH, for why we do not practice Kefiyas ha'Mitah today. He says that our beds are made differently than the beds in the time of Chazal, such that overturning our beds does not show Aveilus the same way it did when their beds were overturned. Does this mean that an Avel may sleep on a bed as he normally does? The PANIM METROS (2:150) says that it is permitted to sleep on a bed in the normal manner, even though the Shulchan Aruch writes that on Tisha b'Av, one should sleep on the floor as part of the Aveilus for the Beis ha'Mikdash. That practice is only a Midas Chasidus, and nowadays when people are much weaker, it is absolutely unnecessary to be Machmir.

[II] ATIFAS HA'ROSH The Gemara also requires that an Avel wrap a shawl around his head until it drapes below his eyes as a sign of his dejection. Why is this not practiced nowadays? (a) The SHULCHAN ARUCH (YD 386) cites this Halachah of Atifas ha'Rosh. In the Beis Yosef, he quotes the HAGAHOS MAIMONIYOS (5:70) who says in the name of the SMAG that "although in Spain they do practice Atifas ha'Rosh, we do not practice it today in these countries (western Europe), because we would look so odd that the Nochrin would mock us." However, the Beis Yosef adds that he never saw anyone refrain from doing Atifas ha'Rosh for this reason.

(b) The REMA cites the Hagahos Maimoniyos as the Halachah. In the DARCHEI MOSHE, he writes that he never saw an Avel who practiced Atifas ha'Rosh. Therefore, it is not practiced in Ashkenazic communities.

However, certain Acharonim (MAHARSHAL, ROKE'ACH) write that today even in modern, civilized places one can practice Atifas without worrying about being mocked, because one can do some measure of Atifas not with a shawl but by pulling the hat down over the eyes. Even though no one wraps their heads up in a shawl or turban, many people wear hats.

The SHACH cites these Acharonim, and the ARUCH HA'SHULCHAN writes that a person should conduct himself in this way if he can (not like the Rema who does not require any Atifas). (Although this is not the common practice, people who visited Rav Elyashiv Shlita when he was sitting Shiv'ah testify that he indeed wore a hat lowered over his eyes throughout the Shiv'ah.)

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SHIUR HARAV SOLOVEICHNIK ZT"L ON PARSHAS VAYEIRA  
(Shiur based on Shiurim of the Rav on Masechet Berachos, 1958)

The Mishna (Berachos 34b) says that if a Shaliach Tzibbur makes a mistake in his prayer it is a bad omen for him and his congregation that appointed him. The Mishna says that Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa would pray for the sick and would [immediately] say who would live and who would die. He said that if his prayer flows smoothly he was assured that the prayer was accepted (or another interpretation brought by Rashi is that the sick person is accepted by Hashem) otherwise the prayer is rejected (or the sick person is rejected). The Gemara quotes Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi in support of this idea, Bore Niv Sefasayim Shalom Shalom L'rachok Vlakarov Amar Hashem Urefasiv (Isaiah 57:19).

Rashi (on the Mishna) comments on the statement of Rabbi Chanina that "if the prayer is well organized and I can recite it fluently without stumbling over the words and my prayer flows from my heart to my mouth as long as I wish to extend my supplications". The Rav asked why Rashi was so verbose here? Why didn't he stop after the first part of his explanation, the well organized prayer that he recites without stumbling? We know that Rashi is never verbose without a reason, what was his intention?

The Rav noted that though the concept of Shlucho Shel Adam K'moso is found throughout Shas, it appears in a Mishna in only one place: this Mishna in Berachos. The Rav asked: we have a concept that an emissary, Shaliach, whose mission results in an undesirable outcome to the appointer, M'shaleach, is no longer considered his Shaliach as the M'shaleach can claim that he sent the Shaliach for his benefit not his detriment, L'tekuni Shdarticha Vla Lavti. This concept is consistent all over, in Choshen Mishpat, in Even Haezer etc. Why do we say that a Shatz that makes a mistake in his prayer portends a bad omen for his congregation. Why can't they disavow his services based on L'tekuni Shdarticha, that they appointed the Shatz to help and not hinder?

The Rav explained that there are 2 different types of Shlichus. Regular Shlichus implies representation but not replacement. If an Shaliach summons a litigant to court on behalf of his M'shaleach, the litigant may refuse to deal with the Shaliach and claim Lav Baal Devarim Didi At, you are not my legal protagonist, I wish to deal directly and only with him. However if the Shaliach is appointed with a Harshaah, power of attorney, the M'shaleach grants the Shaliach all the rights and privileges that he would have enjoyed in the case. The defendant can no longer claim Lav Baal Devarim Didi At. If a Shaliach with a Harshaah makes a mistake, the M'shaleach can not claim L'tekuni Shdarticha. If I appoint someone as Shatz, he is supposed to pray for me, as if I was praying. [The Rav noted the importance of the Tefilas Shatz and how important it is to listen to every word the Shatz utters, since the Shatz is mouthing my prayer. I can't fulfill the Mitzvah of prayer without listening to each word.] In essence, the Shatz is viewed as a Shaliach with Harshaah. If he makes a mistake, his action is ascribed to those who appointed him.

The Rav explained that Rabbi Chanina was not the first great person to pray for the sick. In Parshas Vayeira, Hashem tells Avimelech to ask Avraham to pray for him. If Hashem wanted to heal Avimelech why was it necessary to ask Avraham to pray, why not accept Avimelech's Tefila? If Hashem did not want to heal Avimelech, then why ask Avraham to pray at all? The Rav explained that Hashem was telling Avimelech that He has no need for him. However if Avraham has a need for Avimelech, a need that motivates Avraham to pray on his behalf, a need that is so strong because Avraham would personally feel the loss of Avimelech, then Hashem will accept the prayer of Avraham.

The Rav explained that Judaism teaches that man lives as long as he has a mission to complete. Once his mission is completed, he is terminated, similar to the worker who is hired for a specific job and released upon completion (Job 14:6). The Rav quoted the story (Yerushalmi Peah 3:2) where the mother of Rabbi Tarfon broke the lace

on her shoe and could not walk on the ground. Rabbi Tarfon placed his hands under her feet and she walked on his hands until she reached her bed. A while later Rabbi Tarfon became deathly ill. When the Rabbis visited him, his mother begged them to pray on his behalf, claiming that Rabbi Tarfon honored her above and beyond the requirement of the law. She related to them the story of how he helped her. The Rabbis said that even had he acted in this manner thousands of times, he would not have fulfilled even half of the requirement of the Mitzvah of Kibbud Aym. The Rav asked why did the Rabbis negate the merit that she mentioned? After all we look to accentuate the good deeds of the sick so that Hashem may heal them. The Rav answered that if Rabbi Tarfon's mission in life was to take care of his elderly mother, and his mother is stating that he accomplished all there is to do for Kibbud Aym, then Rabbi Tarfon has completed his mission and is ready to return to Hashem, who sent him on his mission. However the Rabbis insisted that he had not yet fulfilled his mission, hence there is still a great purpose to his life and a need for its continuity.

Hashem told Avimelech that if Avraham had no need for Avimelech, then Avimelech's mission was complete and it was time for him to die. However if he could convince Avraham that he was necessary, this would move Avraham to pray earnestly on his behalf with a sense of urgency, and Hashem would listen to the prayer of Avraham, because he is a prophet, Ki Navi Hu. The Rav explained that Navi and Niv, as in Niv

Sefasayim, share the same root. Niv derives from fruit, Tenuvos Soday. If the prayer for the sick is easily expressed, if it rolls off the tongue without stutter or stumble, then it is indicative that the one praying for the sick person is anguished by his situation. He would feel a great loss if something were to happen to him. He is at no loss for words, he is capable of expressing all that his heart feels in this situation. Such a prayer will be heard and accepted by Hashem. However if the one praying can't motivate himself on behalf of the individual in need, then he will stumble and falter in his prayer and it will be rejected. If the prayer is Niv Sefasayim, then it will be Shalom Shalom Larachok Vlakorov, there will be peace for those far and near, only then will the prayer will be accepted. If the Shatz cannot motivate himself to pray carefully and

fluently on behalf of his congregation, it must be because he does not empathize with them. Such a Shatz will not be an effective Shaliach for his congregation.

The Rav portrayed Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa as "the Chofetz Chaim of his generation". In his generation, there were many great Gedolim, however it was always the Chofetz Chaim who was asked to pray on behalf of a person in need. As the Gemara says, even Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai asked Rabbi Chanina to pray on behalf of his son, even though Rabbi Yochanan was the greater scholar. Rabbi Yochanan himself said that Rabbi Chanina was considered a servant before Hashem while he, Rabbi Yochanan, was considered an officer before Hashem. The prayer of the servant of the King is more readily accepted. A Rabbi Chanina or a Chofetz Chaim is able to empathize with the person in need and to eloquently express the anguish he feels because the person he is praying for is in need.

Rashi's verbosity in the Mishna is now understandable. In order for him to pray for the individual, [or for the Shatz to pray for the Tzibbur], Rabbi Chanina had to be motivated to the point that his prayer flowed from the heart without error or stumble. For if one is truly interested in the welfare of another person, he will be very careful in his approach and will be sure not to make a mistake. Rabbi Chanina was emulating Avraham the Navi who prayed for Avimelech with a prayer that was Niv Sefasayim. If the prayer is truly Niv Sefasayim, it will result in peace to those in need, be they near or far.

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