

## How important is it? Very!

We could start this Lead Tidbit with the connections between Avraham Avinu and davening that we learn from p'sukim in Vayeira. Shacharit is attributed to him. The concept of standing in prayer and that the main part of our thrice daily prayers is (are) the Amida, essentially named so because of Avraham. That we learn the concept of Makom Kavua - a set place in shul (and home) to daven, from him. We could start with these sedra connections and then segue into yet a further look into Tal uMatar - we could, but that would be pushing it. So no introduction - except for this paragraph announcing no introduction...

Some people commented that having the umbrella-carrying kid for No'ach and Lech L'cha confused them. But we wanted him this week too, so we changed his colors around and put him in the lower-left corner.

Take a look at a tiny detail among many, many halchos and details of the T&M topic, and see its message.

A few background points first: From 7 Marcheshvan (in Israel) until Pesach, every weekday Amida gets T&M. Omit the request for "dew and rain for a blessing" and the Amida is invalid. If the omission is caught while still in the Amida, there are things to do to remedy the situation. We wrote about them in last week's TT. Finish the Amida and realize that you didn't ask for T&M, and the WHOLE Amida must be repeated. If it isn't until the morning that you

definitely remember that you left T&M out of the previous night's Maariv Amida, then you must double the Shacharit Amida with the second one being a TASHLUMIM (make-up) for the davening that you missed (okay, you didn't really miss it, but you invalidated it by not saying T&M). That's how important this request for T&M is. Now look at one more scenario. Picture this: It is *gate p.4*



**Jerusalem** Shabbat in/out times for Parshat Vayeira  
**4:24pm / 5:36pm** (see page 3 for other zmanim)

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# ParshaPix Explanations on p.37



## Word of the Month

Last opportunity for Kiddush L'vana this month is Friday night - Leil Shabbat - October 22-23, until 2:21 am, pre-dawn of Shabbat morning. Two points need review. First, the only time KL can be said on Leil Shabbat or Yom Tov is when it is the last opportunity. If KL can still be said on Motza'ei Shabbat, then Friday night is not an option. Secondly, the last op for KL in any month is the midpoint between the previous molad and the next molad. Sometimes that time is during nighttime, in which case the last op carries a time with it.



| <u>Candles</u> | <b>Vayeira</b>         | <u>Havdala</u> | <u>next week</u> |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 4:24pm         | Yerushalayim           | 5:36pm         | 4:17 / 5:29      |
| 4:42pm         | S'derot                | 5:38pm         | 4:35 / 5:32      |
| 4:39pm         | Gush Etzion            | 5:36pm         | 4:32 / 5:30      |
| 4:40pm         | Raanana                | 5:37pm         | 4:33 / 5:30      |
| 4:48pm         | Beit Shemesh/RBS       | 5:44pm         | 4:33 / 5:30      |
| 4:40pm         | Netanya                | 5:37pm         | 4:33 / 5:30      |
| 4:40pm         | Rehovot                | 5:37pm         | 4:33 / 5:31      |
| 4:39pm         | Be'er Sheva (& Otniel) | 5:38pm         | 4:32 / 5:31      |
| 4:40pm         | Modi'in/Chashmona'im   | 5:36pm         | 4:33 / 5:30      |
| 4:24pm         | Petach Tikva           | 5:37pm         | 4:17 / 5:30      |
| 4:24pm         | Maale Adumim           | 5:35pm         | 4:17 / 5:29      |
| 4:39pm         | Ginot Shomron          | 5:36pm         | 4:32 / 5:29      |
| 4:38pm         | Gush Shiloh            | 5:35pm         | 4:31 / 5:29      |
| 4:40pm         | K4 & Hevron            | 5:36pm         | 4:33 / 5:30      |
| 4:39pm         | Giv'at Ze'ev           | 5:36pm         | 4:32 / 5:29      |
| 4:40pm         | Yad Binyamin           | 5:37pm         | 4:33 / 5:31      |
| 4:42pm         | Ashkelon               | 5:38pm         | 4:35 / 5:32      |
| 4:26pm         | Tzfat                  | 5:34pm         | 4:19 / 5:27      |
| 4:39pm         | Zichron Yaakov         | 5:36pm         | 4:32 / 5:29      |

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - VAYEIRA - 6:1 pm

**Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI 12-21 Marcheshvan (Oct 20-29)**

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Earliest Talit & T'filin                        | 4:55-5:02am                |
| Sunrise   | 5:46-5:53am                |
| Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 7:58-8:01am) | 8:34-8:37am                |
| Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:01-9:02am)   | 9:31-9:32am                |
| Chatzot (halachic noon)                         | 11:24-11:23am              |
| Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)                 | 11:54-11:53am              |
| Plag Mincha                                     | 3:51-3:43 <sup>3</sup> 4pm |
| Sunset (based on sea level: 5:01-4:52pm)        | 5:06-4:57pm                |

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## LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

Friday night, Leil Shabbat. You are davening Kabbalat Shabbat, soon to be followed by Maariv. Your eye catches the sign in the front of the shul that serves as a reminder to say Tal uMatar (T&M) and you suddenly realize that you forgot to say T&M in your Mincha Amida. Definitely. Okay, you know that an Amida without T&M must be repeated, and if the omission is only realized at the next davening time-slot, then Tashlumin is said (a 2nd Amida) to rectify the omission.

But wait! It's Friday night. Shabbat. The Amida of Shabbat does not contain the b'rachot of request. No Bareich Aleinu. No T&M. So how do you rectify the omission of T&M from Mincha of Erev Shabbat?

Do we say that having left T&M out, it is considered as if you did not daven Mincha and therefore the "regular" rules of Tashlumin apply. Specifically, the Amida of NOW is doubled. That means that a second Shabbat Arvit Amida is said to make up for the week-day Amida that was "missed" at Mincha?

Or do we say, to quote the Gemara from a similar but different situation: MA YARVI'ACH BAZEH! What do you gain by this? You did say an Amida. You neglected to say T&M. How can you make that up on Friday night when the Amida does not contain the request for T&M?

Maybe we need to look at that other situation just referred to and see if it applies in our T&M case. Tuesday was Rosh Chodesh; now it is Tuesday night - no longer Rosh Chodesh. If you had missed Mincha altogether, then you

would say a second Maariv Amida - without Yaaleh v'Yavo (since it is not Rosh Chodesh now) and that second Amida will make up for the Mincha you missed. But let's say that you DID daven Mincha. But you forgot Yaaleh v'Yavo. Had you realized your omission as soon as you finished the Mincha Amida, you would have repeated the Amida with Yaaleh v'Yavo. No question. Had you only remembered at night, but that night is also Rosh Chodesh, then the Tashlumin Amida would contain the Yaaleh v'Yavo that you had omitted. Also good. But if this night is no longer Rosh Chodesh, what's the point of saying a full Amida (which you did back at Mincha) if you will not be saying the one thing you omitted?

In the Rosh Chodesh scenario, each side of the argument inputs into the conclusion of what one should do. (No room here for those details.)

But for T&M, the "what do you gain" argument is dismissed. The Mincha Amida without T&M is voided. Period. The Amida was therefore not said and a second Amida is said at Maariv (even though we don't ask for T&M) to rectify the situation.

Chazal could have ruled otherwise. But they didn't. Perhaps we must draw from this how important they considered the prayers of each Jew for the collective rainfall that we want and need. In this particular scenario, you davened Mincha, you asked G-d to give His blessing... but you omitted asking for beneficial rain. That prayer is more than defective. It is not only voided but it must be replaced by the make-up Amida, even on Friday night. May our joint efforts bear fruit.

### וּלְנִינִי וּלְנִינֵי

ULNINI, and to my NIN. The word NIN means SON (not great-grandson, as it is used in modern Hebrew). It is also important for a BK to know what the words he reads mean. If not, no one will know, but it is no less important for that.

☞ In order to keep our heads above water in life, we can do two things -- lower the water level or raise our heads. The latter course is far more commendable.

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### Donkeys and turbans

He sat there; who was told to stand there

Golfing news? He didn't make par

Last week this week once  
This week last week twice

### LE: Rick's and GB's brother?

No relation to Reb Hirsch Leib Berlin

Yishmael's mother, Mordechai's cousin,  
Yiftach's daughter, Shimshon's wife

The letter without one has two

# Vayeira stats

4th of the 54 sedras;

4th of 12 sedras in B'reishit

Written on 252 lines in a Sefer Torah, ranks 5th

6 Parshiyot; 4 open, 2 closed

147 p'sukim - ranks 7th (4th in B'reishit)

2085 words - ranks 2nd (first in B'reishit)

7862 letters - ranks 3rd (2nd in B'reishit)

P'sukim above average in length (i.e. number of words and number of letters per pasuk) explain its rise in rankings from p'sukim to words (and letters).

Vayeira is actually 2nd largest sedra in the Torah. (Naso, is #1 with no rival - Bamidbar, Pinchas, and R'ei all take up more lines than Vayeira, but those sedras each have many parshiyot, which means a lot of blank space between parshiyot, which adds to the number of lines.)

## MITZVOT

None of Taryag (the 613) are found in Vayeira (one of 17 sedras without entries on the list of 613) - however, there are Midot and values and other lessons.

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

# Kohen - First Aliya

## 14 p'sukim - 18:1-14

[P> 18:1 (71)] And G-d appeared to him (Avraham)...

**SDT:** The use of the pronoun "him" rather than using the name Avraham is significant. EILAV (to him) refers us back to the previous parsha - Avraham's circumcision at the end of Lech L'cha, indicating that the purpose of G-d's visit with Avraham was Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick. Furthermore, the fact that the Torah does not indicate that G-d said anything to Avraham at this "appearance", tells us that He had another purpose, viz. Bikur Cholim. Commentaries teach us that G-d was visiting the sick, even though the Written Word does not say that at all.

He is sitting at the entrance of his tent (watching for travelers to welcome) in the heat of the day.

**SDT:** It was unnaturally hot; that was G-d's doing, to spare Avraham the bother of visitors, He removed the sun from its envelope... However, Avraham is distressed by the absence of visitors, so G-d sends three angels to him in the guise of wayfarers. We have a lesson-within-a-

Further in honor of the upcoming World Series... Last week we reviewed what the outfielders are called. Let's look at the rest of the players...  
First, second, and third basemen are תַּחְנִינֵי רֵאשׁוֹן, שֵׁנִי, שְׁלִישִׁי  
The shortstop is the בָּלֵם  
And the pitcher and catcher are the תּוֹפֵס and מְגִיֵּשׁ

lesson to learn here. To be careful to do for others - especially the ill and elderly - what THEY (need, of course) and want, not what WE want, and not what we THINK they want. Also, to realize that there are exceptions to rules. Some people like being fussed about; others don't. For some, taking things easy is therapeutic. For others, action is their medicine. Avraham did not want to take things easy, even though he was ailing. So G-d, so-to-speak, accommodated him.

Avraham sees the three "men" and runs to greet them, after asking G-d to wait for him (so to speak). (From here we are taught the greatness of the mitzva of Hachnasat Orchim.)

This is one of the ways to interpret the pasuk - that ADO-NAI means G-d, and that Avraham was addressing Him. ADONAI can also mean "my sirs", in which case Avraham could have been speaking to the men/angels. Each possibility causes minor awkwardness in the flow of the p'sukim. The word is considered holy (meaning the first opinion prevails), and Sofrim write it with the Kavana for G-d's name, but some say that one should use a conditional "sanctification" for writing this word. This is a touchy subject for Sofrim, since G-d's names are written with a special declaration of sanctity, and words that are not His names are not supposed to be sanctified. In the few cases where there is a dispute, the T'NAI, conditional statement of kedusha come in handy. However, some authorities rule that it is better to sancify a Name even if it might not be

sacred, rather than not sanctifying it, if it is holy.

**SDT:** "Speak little, but do much." This maxim from Pirkei Avot is manifest in Avraham Avinu's behavior. He offers the angels a bit of water and some bread, but in fact prepares for them (with the help of Sara and Yishmael) a sumptuous meal. The Mishna states that Avraham's meal for the strangers was proportionally greater than even the feast of Shlomo HaMelech in celebration of the building of the Beit HaMikdash. Avraham and Sara are the ultimate models for hospitality, one of the hallmarks of the Jewish People.

One of the angels informs Avraham of the pending birth of Yitzchak. Sara's reaction is to laugh (a slight doubt in the ability of a 100 year old man to father a child and of a 90 year old woman to give birth). G-d asks Avraham why Sara would doubt His ability to permit an old woman to conceive.

**SDT:** Rabbi Yehuda says in the name of Rav (in Bava M'tzi'a): What Avraham did for his guests by himself, G-d did for the People of Israel by Himself; what Avraham did via another, G-d did likewise. Avraham said: YUKACH NA M'AT MAYIM. Rashi explains the strange grammatical form by saying that Avraham did not provided the water to the stangers himself (it does not say K'CHU...) So too, when G-d was to provide water to Avraham's descendants, He commanded Moshe Rabeinu to throw the stick into the water, to strike the rock, to speak to the rock. But Avraham fed the angels himself - "and I will get the bread, etc." When G-d needed to feed the

People, He provided us with Manna. Moshe did not bring it about. G-d gave it straight to the People.

## Levi - Second Aliya 19 p'sukim - 18:15-33

Sara would like to deny that she laughed (and doubted), but she cannot.

The three angels each had a single task: One to heal Avraham, one to announce the birth of Yitzchak (both missions accomplished), the third to destroy S'dom. That angel is now accompanied by Refa'el, whose new task is to save Lot and family. Avraham escorts the angels on their way to S'dom.

**SDT:** *Once again, we learn the correct behavior of a proper host from Avraham: part of hospitality is to escort your guests as they leave your home. It is even said that escorting out is greater than ushering in.*

HaShem next tells Avraham of his intention to destroy S'dom. Avraham pleads and bargains on their behalf, but there aren't enough righteous people to save the cities.

The dialog between Avraham and HaShem is an astounding (and unique) example of the close relationship between them.

**SDT:** *Avraham's expression of humility before G-d is "and I am dust and ash". Says the Gemara, because of Avraham's*

*humility, his children merited two mitzvot - the ash of the Para Aduma and the dust of the Sota. Torah T'mima explains that the Para Aduma ash is the symbol of spiritual purity (which can be thought of as the realm of "between the Jew and G-d" mitzvot). The hopeful outcome of the Sota procedure is Shalom Bayit, being a major example of interpersonal relationships. Thus the reward for Avraham covers the whole range of Jewish life.*

## Shlishi - Third Aliya 20 p'sukim - 19:1-20

The two angels arrive in S'dom and are taken in by Lot. [The nephew of Avraham Avinu has learned something from his uncle.] The people of S'dom demonstrate their evil nature. It is clear from the p'sukim as well as Midrashim and commentaries, that Lot was not sufficiently pious or believing in his own right, but he compared favorably with the people among whom he lived, and he had merit as the nephew of Avraham. (And as the progenitor of Ruth!)

**SDT:** *The word "and he lingered" is read with the rare trop-mark, the shalsholet, which musically emphasizes the reluctance of Lot to (believe what he was told by the angels and) leave. The same word is used in contrast to this behavior of Lot, in describing the haste with which the Children of Israel left Egypt at G-d's command, symbolized by the matza which they hastily baked rather than linger for the dough to rise and produce a "proper" bread demonstrating*

*their faith and confidence in G-d. Interesting, is it not, that Lot is described as baking matzot for the visitors. Rashi's comment: It was Pesach. Which gives us a double association for the contrast between Lot and the people of Israel (Pesach/matza and the unusual word L'HIT-MAH-MEI'AH).*

Lot is led out of the city by the angels, his wife and two daughters with him. They are told to flee for their lives, without looking back at the destruction of the cities. Lot pleads for permission to seek refuge closer by.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 40 p'sukim - 19:21-21:4

2nd longest R'vi'i in the Torah

Once Lot and family are safely away, the destruction of S'dom takes place. Lot's wife looks back - against orders - and turns into a pillar of salt. (Her punishment is specifically with salt as a measure-for-measure for her stinginess with guests.)

From the episode of Lot's wife, we can draw the following point. Lot and family were worthy of being spared the destruction of S'dom, but they were not worthy enough to be able to witness the destruction. This, in contrast to Avraham, who views the destruction.

"And Avraham gets up early in the morning to the place where he STOOD before G-d."

**SDT:** *Avraham returns to the same spot to speak to G-d. From here is derived the concept of having a MAKOM KAVUA, a fixed place for prayer. The Talmud says: "he who fixes himself a place for davening, the G-d of Avraham will help him". (However, a fixed place in shul should NEVER be the cause of argument or discord. E.g. when a person comes late - or even on time - to shul and someone is sitting in "his seat", how to handle such a situation requires sensitivity - and often, the quality of a VATRAN, one willing to yield for the sake of accord.)*

Of course, more fundamentally, it is this pasuk and another that combine to "support" the Gemara's statement that Avraham instituted T'filat Shacharit. That AMIDA, to stand before G-d, means to pray is learned from VAYA'AMOD PINCHAS VAIPA-LEIL. And Pinchas stood in prayer - T'hilim 106:30. The pasuk here in Vayeira links AMIDA with Avraham Avinu and with early in the morning, hence Shacharit.

The Torah reiterates the point that Lot was saved in the merit of his uncle Avraham Avinu (and Ruth, the "mother of royalty" who was to come from Lot - G-d can work merit either from the past or the future).

Lot's two daughters, having witnessed the total destruction of S'dom and its vicinity, assume that they are the sole survivors of mankind. They plot to get Lot drunk and sleep with him in order to continue humanity. Moav and Amon are the results.

Note that everything that has happened so far in Parshat Vayeira, make up a single long, 71-pasuk parsha. From the arrival of the angels through the completion of the final task of those angels - namely, the destruction of S'dom. Apparently, the different episodes all belong together more than one would initially think. The common thread, of course, is/are the angels. Their tasks are now complete.

**[S> 20:1 (18)]** Avraham and Sara now travel to G'rar where they again present themselves as brother and sister. Sara is taken to Avimelech, but G-d appears to him and warns him not to touch her. Avimelech confronts Avraham who explains that his fears were based on the lack of "Fear of G-d" in the place.

Avraham then prays on behalf of Avimelech and his people who were stricken with a disease which rendered them temporarily sterile.

From this point (21:1) to the end of Vayeira, is the Torah reading of Rosh HaShana (part on the first day, part on the second.)

**[S> 21:1 (21)]** G-d fulfills His promise and Sara becomes pregnant. She bears a son to Avraham in his advanced age, and the son is called Yitzchak. Avraham circumcises Yitzchak at eight days of age, as G-d has commanded.

Avraham's having prayed on behalf of Avimelech for children is juxtaposed to Sara Imeinu conceiving. Our Sage

teach us that selflessly praying for others can sometimes result in the same prayers being answered for yourself.

## **Chamishi 5th Aliya** **17 p'sukim - 21:5-21**

Avraham is 100 years old when Yitzchak is born. Avraham makes a great party upon the occasion of Yitzchak's being weaned.

Although the plain understanding of B'YOM HIGAMEIL ET YITZCHAK is "when Yitzchak was weaned" - which Rashi says is at 24 months of age, there is a REMEZ (hint/clue) in the word HIGAMEIL to a possible other explanation of the word. HEI+GIMMEL = 8 (days), MEM-LAMED, MAL, was circumcised. It can mean that the party in question was to celebrate Yitzchak's BRIT.

As Yitzchak is growing up, Sara notices the potential negative influence of Yishmael and demands of Avraham that he send Yishmael and his mother Hagar, away. Blinded by his great "kind heart", Avraham has to be told by G-d to listen to Sara. Hagar and Yishmael once again are on the verge of death in the wilderness, but Yishmael's prayers are answered and they are saved. Hagar is assured by an angel that they will survive.

And indeed they do, and Hagar subsequently marries Yishmael off

to a woman from the land of Egypt.

Both Hagar and Yishmael prayed to G-d when Yishmael was dying. G-d heard "the lad's voice". Rashi says, from here we learn that the strongest prayer offered on behalf of someone who is ill are those of the sick person himself (if he is able to pray on his own behalf). And, of course, others should pray on his behalf as well, regardless of whether the person himself is able to daven. In fact, there are opinions that Bikur Cholim MUST include a prayer for the recovery of the patient (the visitee) in addition to anything else one does, for the mitzva to be considered properly performed. [This can be a touchy issue if the patient is upset by people's praying for him or her. Perhaps in that case, the prayers can be silent and inconspicuous, or not in the sick person's presence.]

## **Shishi - Sixth Aliya -** **13 p'sukim - 21:22-34**

**[P> 21:22 (13)]** Avimelech and his commander Pichol enter into a pact with Avraham. The pact has to do with wells that Avraham dug, that the servants of Avimelech stole, the return of those wells and the acknowledgement by Avimelech that the wells do actually belong to Avraham. The city of Be'er Sheva receives its name from the double meaning of the 7 sheep used as tokens of the

covenant and the oath sworn between them.

Avraham plants an "Eshel" in Be'er Sheva. In addition to being a type of tree, the word ESHEL is considered an acronym of the Hebrew words for Food, Drink, and Lodgings (or Food, Sleeping, Escort). ESHEL AVRAHAM is the symbol of hospitality for all times.

## **Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya** **24 p'sukim - 22:1-24**

**[P> 22:1 (19)]** This is the portion of the Binding of Isaac - Akeidat Yitzchak. The Akeida is one of the few passages from the Torah to be incorporated into our daily davening (there are those who did not include it in their davening, and there are siddurim that don't have it, but most siddurim put the Akeida with an intro and closing prayer, after the morning brachot and before korbanot). It represents the ultimate manifestation of commitment to and love of G-d. It also belongs to the portion of the davening called KORBANOT for obvious reasons. And then there is the idea of a tribute to the originator of Shacharit.

Although none of Avraham's descendants (we, the Jewish People) can ever be tested in so drastic a way (because we have the experiences of our predecessors to give us support), we do derive tremendous inspiration from this portion of the Torah. It is part of our Heritage and, even more, part of our Essence. Tests of Faith are

relative to the individual. Each of us is challenged in different ways throughout our lives. So too, for us as a Nation. May we be always guided by deep commitment to Torah and Jewish values.

**MORE.** Akeidat Yitzchak is our identity card. It defines who we are... even when our own behavior is contradictory to our Torah standards. We stand before G-d on Judgment Day - Rosh HaShana, and we blow the Shofar made from a ram's horn. We ask G-d to remember Akeidat Yitzchak and have mercy on His (sometimes undeserving) children. We read the Akeida in the Torah and we refer to it repeatedly in our Rosh HaShana davening and Slichot, to inspire us and to identify us.

After these events, G-d tested Avraham - He told Avraham to take Yitzchak to Har HaMoriya and offer him as an Olah - an all-burnt sacrifice... Avraham enthusiastically set out to do G-d's bidding... On the third day, Avraham saw the intended place from afar and told the two lads (Eliezer and Yishmael, according to our Tradition) to wait with the donkey... On the way, just Avraham and Yitzchak, hand in hand, Yitzchak asks where the animal for sacrifice is and Yitzchak understood what was to happen from Avraham's answer. Avraham built an altar, bound Yitzchak to it and was about to sacrifice him, when a heavenly angel told him to stop and not harm the "boy".

Avraham spotted a ram (which our Tradition tells us might have been created specifically for this purpose in the instant before the first Shabbat of B'reishit, as one of the final acts of Creation) caught by its horns in a thicket. G-d acknowledges Avraham's dedication and blesses him again with countless descendants... Avraham and company return to B'er Sheva.

**[P> 22:20 (5)]** The parsha ends with mention of the birth of Rivka, to link to the next phase of the development of Judaism - viz., the means of its transmission and continuity.

Maftir is the final five p'sukim.

It is this last portion of 5 p'sukim that tell us about Rivka's birth. But we also hear that Nachor (Avraham's brother) had eight sons from his wife Milka and four sons from his concubine R'uma. (Well-matched to the future 8 sons of Yaakov from his "main wives" (Rachel and Leah), and 4 sons from his "pilegish-like wives, Bilha and Zilpa.

We are really interested in one son - B'tu'el, father of Rivka (and Lavan). Why tell us the rest?

Rabbi Macy Gordon suggests that the Torah is telling us how the "other half" live. Contrast the tough family life of Avraham with his brother's larger family. Nachor had the proverbial house in the suburbs, two cars, membership in the local country club. Avraham had trouble at home, left to places unknown, underwent many

trials and tribulations, was childless for a long time, had domestic difficulties, suffered a famine... Avraham had to wait two generations for his 12 tribes. Nachor's came much sooner.

Ah, but look at the spiritual difference. Look at who Avraham was, and is to us. Now translate the whole comment and apply it to Jewish History vs. the story of many other nations.

## Haftara 37 p'sukim Melachim Bet - 4:1-37

The sedra shows us the sharp contrast between the kindness and hospitality of Avraham & Sara on the one hand, and the cruel "business is business" and "what's in it for me" nature of S'dom. The haftara is about the widow of a prophet who was facing losing her two children because of her poverty and the twisted state of Israel's society that lost sight of the legacy of Avraham and Sara. The prophet Elisha performs a miracle (of olive oil miraculously filling many vessels that the woman had and borrowed and anointed with a few drops of oil she possessed) and the family is spared that plight.

The haftara also tells of the Shunamite woman who prayed so fervently for a son. She had a son but he died. He is miraculously resuscitated by Elisha. This forms a counterpart to the birth of Yitzchak and the subsequent almost-

losing him at the Akeida. (And fits well with Midrashim that say that Yitzchak was actually sacrificed on the Altar and restored to life - we have references to AFARO SHEL YITZCHAK, the ashes of Yitzchak.)

Avraham tells his visitors that after they eat, they can be on their way. From here we learn that one should "allow" his guests to leave when they want, without feeling like they are "forced" to linger (*Gerrer Rebbe*)

Even though we learn from Avraham that hospitality is greater than "visiting with the Divine Presence", we also see that Avraham was rushing in his providing for the guests, because G-d was waiting for him, so to speak.

*Beit Yisrael quoted in Even Bochein*

In parshat Vayeira, Avraham sends Hagar and her son Yishmael away from home and into the desert, at Hashem's bidding. The wayward Yishmael, Hashem indicates, will nevertheless become a great nation in his own right. Thus, when Yishmael is near death in the wilderness from lack of water, we are presented with a tense moment of uncertainty.

Hagar takes herself off to a distance saying, "Let me not see the death of the child", and lifts her voice and weeps (B'reishit 21:16). Yet, in the next verse of the narrative we are told that, "G-d heard the cry of the lad."

From this episode our rabbis teach us two very important lessons. First, Hagar - who until her departure from Avraham's house was considered virtuous but had now "strayed" from the good path (Rashi) - now displays her flawed character. Now she only thinks of herself rather than comfort her dying child. Thus, it is Yishmael's prayer that is received rather than that of the intrinsically self-centered mother (SRH).

Moreover, we learn that even in our troubled moments we should pray to Hashem (and not rely on others' prayers). But we most certainly learn that when confronted with the misfortunes of our dear family and friends, we should be thinking of their suffering first, not ours.

## VEBBE REBBE

**QUESTION:** *In the Beit Midrash where I used to learn, I found a sefer with the name of someone who learned there in the past. I tracked him down, and he said I could keep it. I have since moved away and began wondering whether the owner had the right to let me keep his sefer since the Beit Midrash has a sign that whoever leaves seforim unattended for an extended period allows the yeshiva to take them.*

**ANSWER:** It is not 100% clear that such signs in Batei Midrash and shuls are halachically effective. However, enough places use them and enough poskim (Igrot Moshe, Choshen Mishpat II, 45; Shevet Halevi X, 278; Minchat Yitzchak VIII, 146) suggest them to deal with an inundation of lost objects, that we will assume they work. The question of how they work will help answer your question.

Some signs refer to making the seforim ownerless (hefker), which generally requires the owner to make a declaration in front of three people (Shulchan Aruch, CM 273:7), which is missing in our case. However, since when people are interested in being mafkir, the procedure is reduced (see Meiri, Bava Metzia 30b), reading the sign in agreement may suffice. Although the one who sees the sign does not know if and what he will lose, it is still possible to be mafkir based on future circumstances (see Bava Kama 69a and Tosafot, ad loc.).

Still, hefker is tenuous because the signs prompt few people to clearly relinquish rights in the requisite way.

Let us explore another way the signs can help. While the Torah gives people rights for nice treatment from other people, these rights can be waived (mechila). For example, a father can waive some of the respect due to him by his son. So too, one can forgo his rights to have lost objects returned (hashavat aveida) (B'rachot 19b). Why should we assume one will waive this right? When people enter into a relationship with mutual obligations (including Torah-mandated ones), one can stipulate to the other that he will do so only on condition that he does mechila on certain rights. For example, a groom can tell his bride that he will marry her on condition that she waives her right to financial support (Ketubot 56a).

Similarly, a Beit Midrash can open its doors to students or the public on condition that they waive the right to make the gaba'im do hashavat aveida. If one sees a sign to that effect and enters without protest, he implicitly accepts the condition to waive the obligation of hashavat aveida. It is complicated to determine if, after leaving the period of use of the Beit Midrash, one can say: "I won't come back anymore but now that the relationship is over, I expect you to return my objects." After all, if we are not working with hefker, the object remains the original owner's, just that the finder does not have to look for him. In any case, until he informs the

finder that he has stopped the mechila, one may assume it continues. This system seems to work better than the previous one and to be morally preferable. However, while gaba'im need not be burdened with aveidot in addition to other responsibilities, it is less clear that they deserve to gain the rights to books whose owners' names are clearly displayed.

A third possibility is that the owner gives the Beit Midrash the right to acquire the sefarim as a present at some point. This is like telling a guest to help himself to snacks when he is hungry.

Let us return to your question. If the sign works through hefker, it is likely (but beyond our scope - see Minchat Yitzchak, ibid.) that the Beit Midrash had acquired the sefer, and you need their permission. If it works based on permission to take a present, it depends if they took control of the book (i.e., by stamping it or selling it). If, as makes most sense to us (it may depend on the sign's wording), it is just that people agree to waive hashavat aveida, it is still the original owner's decision who should keep it. Even if it is likely you may keep the sefer, it is not a bad idea to ask the gabbai if he has any objections.

# "BOTH A LENDER AND A BORROWER BE"

(part three)

## THE CHALLENGE OF MONEY

by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

The rights and obligations of both borrower and lender reflect, perhaps more than any other economic transaction, the ethical and moral structure of Judaism. There exists in this respect a perfect balance between the private wealth of the individual, his moral obligations, and his legal rights. This is fitting as the interest free loan is considered as the most refined and elevated level of charity and justice.

One has the obligation to lend his fellow Jew money as an interest free loan since the lender is in reality only a trustee of his wealth. Keeping the Torah's balance with justice, the creditor may secure this loan both through witnesses and through the taking of debtor's assets as security, yet the economic welfare of the debtor, his dignity and spiritual, mental and social protection is constantly guaranteed by halacha.

The creditor may not take essential assets as pledges while certain assets can only serve as security temporarily; for instance a craftsman's solitary set of tools, has to be returned to him each morning. Pledges such as implements which depreciate through usage may not be used by the creditor since the benefit derived thereby is considered

ribit. Nothing may be done by the creditor that will in any way damage the collateral; the creditor may not even enter the debtor's house without his permission. "One may not give a loan on pledge to a widow irrespective of whether she is rich or poor" (Hilkhhot Malveh v'Loveh 3:1). This is explained either by the power that the creditor has through the pledge which could be used for immoral purposes, or that the widow's constant visits to his home to examine the state of the pledge would compromise her good name. Since both reasons are primarily those of sexual morality, it makes no difference if the widow is rich or poor.

The debtor too has religious obligations. "One may not borrow money and then delay payment, telling the lender 'go and come again and tomorrow I will give you' (Mishlei 3:28). So too the borrower may not willfully mismanage the funds given him nor may he spend them on riotous living nor squander the money, so that nothing remains for the lender to regain his loan; this applies even if the lender is extremely wealthy. Any such borrower is considered evil, as it is written, 'the wicked borrows but does not repay (T'hilim 37:21)" (Hilkhhot Malveh v'Loveh 1:3). Above all, he is obligated to return the loan at the date agreed upon; any deviation is considered theft.

What happens when the debtor is bankrupt and truly cannot meet his obligations to the lender? One might argue that since the creditor is wealthier than the debtor, at least at

this particular point in time, the former should waive his claim for repayment. "Not to demand payment when one knows he cannot repay the loan" (Sefer HaChinuch, mitzva 67). This would be a meritorious deed in keeping with the chesed of the loan that he had made. However requiring him to do so, makes him responsible for the welfare of his debtor over and above the obligations of the mitzva. It blurs the conceptual differences between the religious precepts of justice and tzedaka which is such an important element in Judaism. This seems to be the reasoning behind the halacha regarding such a debtor. "When the creditor comes to collect his debt, even when he is rich and the debtor poor, the court may not pervert justice and must collect the debt in full" (Hilkhhot Malveh v'Loveh 1:4). In many modern economies making the debtor responsible for paying his debts, would prevent fraud and waste as well as restoring a measure of morality to society.

Nevertheless, the situation of the poor debtor requires a humane solution. Such solutions have to be provided by the communal responsibility to solve the economic and social problems of its individual members that always exists in Judaism. The creditor, as a member of the community, will be called upon to bear his share. However, here the debtor will be receiving charity with all that it entails, rather than encouraging the immoral behavior and individual irresponsibility induced by the waiving of

obligations and release from the consequences of one's actions. Through this charity, the community will be meeting its religious obligations rather than passing them on to the shoulders of the creditor alone. □

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

## VAYEIRA

### Hospitality Before Heaven

He was an old man, frail, tired, and bereaved. News of Hitler's advancing army preoccupied him, and he was overwhelmed, if not broken, by the requests for advice he was receiving from hundreds of troubled Jews. Indeed, he may have already sensed that he had only months to live.

His name was Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, and he was universally acknowledged to be the world's leading Talmudic scholar. He lived in the city of Vilna, and the time was late 1939.

The person who told me the story was then a young man, barely twenty years old. He was himself a refugee, along with his fellow yeshiva students. He found himself in the neighborhood of Rabbi Grodzenski's residence during the Sukkot holiday. He decided he would attempt to visit the Rabbi, although he knew that he might not be granted an audience.

How surprised he was to find the Rabbi alone, studying and writing.

The rabbi welcomed him, inquired about his welfare, and invited the visitor to join him in a light lunch. The Rabbi told him that because of his age and physical weakness, he deemed himself to be exempt from the requirement to eat in the sukka. He considered himself a mitzta'er, one whose physical discomfort freed him from the sukka requirement.

"But you," the Rabbi continued, "are a young man and reasonably healthy. Therefore, take this plate of food down to the sukka in the courtyard, and excuse me for not being able to join you."

The young man did so, but soon, sitting in the sukka by himself, was surprised to hear the old Rabbi slowly making his way down the many steps from his apartment to join him in the sukka.

"You may wonder why I am joining you," exclaimed the old Rabbi. "It is because although a mitzta'er, one who is in great discomfort, is exempt from the mitzva of sukka, he is not exempt from the mitzva of hospitality, of hachnasat orchim."

This anecdote underscores the importance of the mitzva of hospitality and illustrates the fact that even great physical discomfort does not excuse a person from properly receiving and entertaining his guests.

Of course, the biblical basis for Rabbi Grodzenski's teaching is to be found in this week's Torah portion, Vayeira. In the opening verses, we find that Avraham, despite the fact

that he was recovering from his recent circumcision, exerts himself to welcome a small group of wayfarers and tends to their needs with exquisite care.

Avraham is our model for the important mitzva of welcoming strangers and seeing to it that they are greeted hospitably.

The 17th century sage, Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz, known as the Shaloh HaKadosh, points out that performance of this mitzva helps us realize that we are all wanderers and merely transient guests in the Almighty's world. We pray that He treats us hospitably during our sojourn in His world, and to earn such treatment, we are sensitive to the physical and emotional requirements of our own guests.

Our sages discovered an even deeper dimension to Avraham's hospitality. The third verse in our Torah portion reads, "And he said, 'My lord, if I have found favor in your eyes, pass not away from your servant.'" The simple reading of this verse is that Abraham is speaking to one of his guests whom he refers to as "my lord".

Another reading, a startlingly provocative one, suggests that Avraham is addressing the Almighty Himself, and that the word "lord" should be spelled with an uppercase "L". According to this interpretation, Avraham is asking that G-d Himself excuse him and wait for him while he tends to his guests.

"Welcoming one's guests is a bigger

mitzva then welcoming the Sh'china, the Divine Presence." That is the lesson which the Talmud derives from the story which opens our parsha this week.

Commentaries throughout the ages have questioned whether it is indeed legitimate for one to abandon his rendezvous with God in order to attend to the needs of mere human beings. Is it right for one to interrupt his dialogue with the Almighty just to perform the mitzva of hospitality?

There is a rich literature of responsa to this question. One approach is to understand that it is not so much that hospitality trumps the experience of communication with the Sh'china. Rather, it is that the way to earn such an exalted spiritual experience is by practicing hospitality.

One does not achieve a spiritual experience through meditation and prayer. One achieves true spirituality by painstakingly attending to the needs of others.

This is why we give some charity, perhaps even just a few pennies, prior to engaging in prayer. The Talmud suggests that in order to earn the right to address G-d in prayer, one must first demonstrate that he is not unaware of his obligations to his fellow. First alms, then prayer. First hospitality, and only then can one come into the Divine Presence.

How important it is that we learn the lesson of religious priorities. Never can we place our spiritual longings above our obligations to our fellow

human beings. This is the lesson taught to us so long ago by our forefather Avraham, when he turned away from G-d in order to practice the mitzva of hachnasat orchim. □

## **The Puah Institute**

*for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha*

### **Nobel Prize for Fertility Revolution**

This year's Nobel Prize for Medicine will be awarded to Robert Edwards, the British scientist whose intensive research resulted in the birth of the very first child born as a result of IVF [in-vitro fertilization] treatments.

Edwards, together with surgeon Patrick Steptoe, announced the birth in England of a healthy baby girl named Louise Brown on July 25, 1978. Her delivery was hailed around the world as a medical revolution, one that would change forever the world's understanding of conception, pregnancy and parenthood, and would transform the medical establishment's approach to the treatment of infertility.

Robert Edwards had spent several years attempting to achieve fertilization outside of the human body. His initial findings were published in 1965 in 'The Lancet', a highly-respected British medical journal, and in the British periodical, 'Nature', in 1969. But it was only in 1977, after many failed attempts, that Steptoe and Edwards succeeded in producing a viable pregnancy that would last for the entire gestation period and eventually result in the first in-vitro baby ever to be born.

Lesley Brown, Louise's mother, had blocked fallopian tubes, and until the advent of IVF she, and other women in similar situations, were unable to conceive. Edward's work offered them, for the very first time, a chance to become pregnant.

This revolutionary new technology opened up many possibilities for barren women: eggs could be taken from one woman, fertilized in the laboratory, and then placed in another - either via donations of ova or embryos, or with gestational carriers. Further developments offered solutions to certain male fertility conditions, as well, providing many men - previously considered infertile - the opportunity to become fathers.

These medical advances, while considered extraordinary, also raised a large number of ethical issues. Concern for the status of remaining, unused embryos and their possible destruction has long been the subject of ethical and moral debate, with some religious groups voicing strong objection to IVF treatments.

Ever since the birth of Louise Brown, our poskim have debated the issues and have shown great compassion for couples previously unable to have children.

They have displayed the willingness to utilize these medical advances in order to encourage the birth of more Jewish children, within the framework and guidance of halacha. Members of other religious groups, when made aware of the Jewish attitude towards fertility

treatments, are often surprised - and even jealous - at the openness and acceptance shown by the Rabbis.

The Puah Institute has used these technological advances to assist thousands of couples worldwide to have children. In addition to answering their halachic concerns, Puah's worldwide supervision services has prevented dozens of potential mistakes that could have occurred as a result of fertility procedures.

Some years ago I had the privilege of meeting Robert Edwards. I asked him whether he had ever thought of the prospective, wide-reaching ramifications of his first research projects in the field of IVF and how they might change the world. In his soft voice he replied that in their very first paper, he and Steptoe had already anticipated some of the ethical concerns their work could create. A good scientist, he said, is able to do good lab work; a great one is able to envision the possibilities and steer them in the most positive direction.

Patrick Steptoe died in 1988, and Edwards' health is failing. While this award is sadly long overdue, the Nobel prize is significant recognition of their outstanding contribution in the field of fertility medicine. They can be extremely proud of their achievements: Tens of thousands of previously-infertile couples are today happy parents - including Louise Brown, herself.

## Maharal on the Sedra

**B'reishit 18:3** - And he said, Adonoi [my lords or, alternatively, God], if it please you that I find favor in your eyes, please do not pass from before your servant.

**Rashi:** First he called them all lords, then he singled out the greatest of them to stay, for that would result in the others staying. This interprets adonai in the ordinary sense of "my lords". Alternatively, the term is [a reference to the] sacred, and he was asking the Holy One, blessed be He, to wait while he ushered in the visitors.

**Gur Arye:** Rashi addresses the change in the verse from plural, lords, to singular taavor, pass. Now one must ask, the plural is usually expressed with the patach, which should be read as adonai rather than adonoi. Rabbenu Bechaye notes that the kamatz [vowel sounded AW in the Ashkenazi accent] means both singular and plural, as the form of the notation shows - the kamatz is a dash with a teardrop underneath. It is thus a grafting of a patach, denoting plural, and chirik, denoting singular. The kamatz is a literary device peculiar to the Hebrew tongue that conveys singular and plural simultaneously.

Now consider Adonoi in the sacred sense. The chirik part of the kamatz, the dot in the teardrop, addresses His Oneness, my singular Master. However, to address Hashem in the singular (Adoni) would lack the proper respect due Him. The patach part of the kamatz conveys the proper decorum [the royal plural, thee instead of you, IR instead of DU]. Adonoi addresses both His Oneness and the proper decorum.

*Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr*

## Praying with Passion

**Giving more meaning to our T'fillah  
One Week at a Time**

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## Birchot HaShachar

(part nine)

ברוך... המעביר שנה... יהי רצון מלפניך, ה'  
אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו... ותגמלנו הסדים טובים.  
ברוך אתה ה', גומל הסדים טובים לעמו ישראל.

### Translation:

*...And may it be Your will, HaShem our God and God of our ancestors... and bestow loving-kindness upon us. Blessed are You, HaShem, who bestows loving-kindness on His people Israel.*

### Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

### It's All Kindness

Hashem's kindness is contained in what He bestows as well as what He withholds.

**Insight:** Deeper meanings...

### A Gift Held In Trust

Imagine a world in which a mitzva was clearly and immediately rewarded right here in this world, for all to see. Rav Huna's words in the Gemara present such a world, in which certain mitzvot come with an assurance of certain tangible rewards.

If his description played itself out precisely, every woman who lights her Shabbat candles correctly would have Torah scholars for sons. Every house that bears mezuzot that are kosher and properly placed would be a beautiful home. Every man who is

careful to wear kosher tzitzit would own impressive clothing, and all those who observe Shabbat carefully would possess a winepress overflowing with wine. These are the assertions Rav Huna states unequivocally. Any observer, however, will quickly note that there appear to be a great many exceptions to these statements.

The Shavet HaMusar explores the question of why the rewards that are linked to certain mitzvot do not seem to accrue to all those who scrupulously perform them. He explains that that even where reward is merited, “at times, Hashem sees that the individual will benefit most if He withholds the reward in this world and grants it instead in the World to Come.”

For example, wealth can be a great test, and it is a test that many people are not prepared to pass. That is why Shlomo HaMelech said, “Give me neither poverty nor wealth; provide me my allotted bread.” The Mezudat David and Ibn Ezra explain that the verse asks Hashem to give a person that which he requires for sustenance, but no more. If wealth will cause a person to stumble, Hashem may withhold it rather than drag him down to a spiritual low-point.

“Be careful what you ask for,” goes the popular saying. For a Jew, however, Hashem is the arbiter of rewards. In Him we can trust absolutely, knowing that what He gives is for our good, and what He withholds is equally for our good.

## Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

## What You Wish For

If you are like most people, you see what you want in this world and pursue it. And like most people, your judgment as to the ultimate benefit of the thing you want is clouded by one overriding fact: you want it. With that fact as the foundation, you will be blind to the flaws in the object of your pursuit and deaf to warnings that this may do you more harm than good.

Ben’s uncle was opening a branch of his successful real estate business in the local neighborhood. Uncle Chaim would need someone to manage the new office, a position Ben knew would be lucrative. He had the right experience for the job, and so he prayed to Hashem to lift him out of his current mediocre career and give him a new, highly-paid job with Uncle Chaim.

Despite the fervor with which he prayed, the job went to someone else. Ben felt that his prayers had gone unanswered, and a good thing had slipped through his fingers.

What Ben did not realize, however, was that the job was in fact not “a good thing”.

In denying Ben the job, Hashem saved him from the heart-break of watching his children falter in school as they became distracted by the ever-increasing inventory of electronic toys that would have filled their home. He rescued Ben from the lost learning

time that would have been sacrificed to vacations and entertainment, and from the emotionless prayer that would have emanated from his complacent heart.

As in Ben’s case, the reward which a person merits is not always something he is equipped to use to his benefit. In withholding what seems to us to be unadulterated good, Hashem’s kindness is not so readily seen, and yet, it is still kindness.

We request that Hashem bestow beneficent kindness upon us. Isn’t all kindness beneficent? Eitz Yosef explains that kindness that does not reduce our merit in Heaven is an example of “beneficent kindness.” Example, Maharsha explains that any benefit derived from tefila, no matter how great it appears, can be considered natural... since davening is natural to us... Such benefit is not considered a miracle, does not deplete a person’s merit.

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## WISDOM & WIT

by Shmuel Himelstein

Whenever a yeshiva student was introduced to R’ Moshe Feinstein, he would inquire as to where the student learned. Once, when a yeshiva student told him that he was from a certain yeshiva, R’ Moshe made a point of telling him that he had heard a remarkable chiddush from the student’s rosh yeshiva ten years earlier. R’ Moshe did this deliberately, in order to have the student better appreciate his rosh yeshiva.



The Netziv would give a daily gemara

shiur to his students, but before giving it he would review its contents with R’ Isser Zalman Meltzer. Once, even though he was scheduled to deliver a shiur and had even gone over it with R’ Isser Zalman, at the last minute he canceled it.

R’ Isser Zalman was astonished, and went in to ask the Netziv what the problem was. “Rebbe,” he said, “I know that you had a shiur ready for delivery. What made you decide not to give it”

“Every day, in the morning prayers,” the Netziv told him, “I recite the passage in Ahava Rabba before the Shema, in which one asks Hashem to enlighten us in His Torah, I tearfully ask Hashem to help me in my Torah teaching, so that I may faithfully impart Torah to my students. Today, when I recited the prayer, I felt no tears whatsoever, so I did not think it proper to give a shiur to students.”

## CHIZUK AND IDUD

Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra  
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -  
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim

The Siftei Chachamim says: When Avraham received the command to circumcise himself, he asked his three friends, Eshkol, Aner and Mamre whether they thought he should publicize the performance of this mitzvah which, it seems, would anger the surrounding population and confirm what everyone was thinking, that Avraham thought of himself as “different” than the rest of the people at that time. Eshkol and Aner said it

would be wiser, and safer, if he did the mitzva within the confines of his home, quietly, without much ado. Only Mamre said to Avraham, "If you believe you received this commandment from God don't be afraid, no one will have the power to stop you or hurt you." Avraham thus realized that Mamre was his true friend and understood the depth of his belief.

We have what to learn from this. Israel has many "friends" who give us advice. Many of them - within and without the country - tell us that we should temper our belief, modify our religious nature, transform and refine our vision of peace so that it conforms to that of our Arab neighbors and their vision of Middle East peace. A few advise us to maintain our belief in the importance of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael and stand our ground because we can never give up enough to appease the appeasers.

It is in these times that we can see who are true friends are. Eshkol and Aner were relegated to the dustbin of time. No one ever hears of them again. Only Mamre is honored with beginning a parsha of the Torah; in his house can Avraham feel safe and in his advice can Avraham place his trust.

Rabbi Yaacov Peterseil, Jerusalem

## Avraham's Legacy - Escorting Guests?

Guest article by

**Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher**

Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

"Avraham walked with them to escort them" (B'reishit 18:16). The Rambam writes (Hilchot Aveil 14:1), "There is a mitzva enacted by the Sages to visit the sick, to comfort the bereaved, to conduct a funeral for the dead, to marry off a bride, and to escort guests as they are leaving."

The Rambam gives us a short list of five mitzvot that we are required to do for other people. If you would ask people to vote on which one is the most important mitzva and which is the least important, what would they say? My guess would be that most people would say that escorting guests, the last mentioned, is the least important mitzva.

But the Rambam writes in the very next halacha (14:2), "The reward for escorting guests is greater than all the rest. This is the legacy that our patriarch Avraham established."

But how could this be?

You come into a hospital room. Your friend is lying there sick and pale. You visit him and you pray for him. You cheer him up. You've done a great mitzva.

You come to pay a shivah call. The bereaved has just lost a loved one, and

he feels sad and depressed. You speak words of consolation that warm his heart. You make him feel better. You lift his spirits. It's a wonderful mitzva. You arrange a funeral. You arrange a wedding. Terrific mitzvot.

But what are you accomplishing when you escort your guest out of your house? He enjoyed his meal at your table. He is finished. He is going home. And you walk with him a short distance out of the house. What is so great about that? Why is that the greatest of these five mitzvot?

Because when you escort a guest beyond your doorstep you are showing him respect. You are giving him dignity. You are acknowledging that he is somebody, that he is deserving of your attention and concern. That is a critical need for people. It is like the very air they breathe.

We can survive without food for a while. We can survive without water for a while. We can walk in tattered clothes. We can endure all of this if we are treated with respect, like human beings. That's why the Gemara says (Ketuvot 111b) that it is a bigger mitzva to give a person a smile than to give him a milkshake. This is the legacy of Avraham.

### ParshaPix explanations

◉ Thermometer with kipa, glasses, and stethoscope, wishing someone who is sick a REFU'A SH'LEIMA. This is one of the lessons we learn from G-d. The graphic is from the

Davka Judaica clipart collection (which we use often).

- ◉ UGOT that Sarah LUSHI-ed - they look like matza because the angels' visit was on Pesach.
- ◉ And Lot made matzot for his visitors too
- ◉ One of the three BEN BAKAR that Avraham ran to, in order to prepare the most sumptuous dish for the visitors, tongue in mustard sauce - so says Rashi, quoting the gemara. The dish, by the way, is known in Italian as "Lingua alla Senape" and you can find a recipe at [italianfood.about.com/od/tripetrottersmore/r/blr1765.htm](http://italianfood.about.com/od/tripetrottersmore/r/blr1765.htm)
- ◉ Braille writing, for the angels' blinding the people of S'dom.
- ◉ The specific message is something the blinded S'domites might have graffitied on Lot's door (when they finally found it). It says: GUEST LOVER
- ◉ The skull is the symbol of acid-rain, a good description of that which destroyed S'dom...
- ◉ Wine that intoxicated Lot
- ◉ The alarm clock for Avraham getting up early...
- ◉ Avimelech too...
- ◉ The baby in the cradle represents the birth of Yitzchak
- ◉ Metal shield used by many mohalim in their set up for Mila
- ◉ Father and son walk hand in hand,

VAYEILCHU SH'NEIHEM YACHDAV

- ◉ Davka Akeida graphic is for the Akeida portion (duh, ya think?)
- ◉ a Shofar is connected to the story of the Akeida, as in the ram (see it in the Akeida graphic?) that was caught up in the bramble and replaced Yitzchak as a korban
- ◉ Dorothy and Co. from the Wizard of Oz, which in Hebrew is called UTZ, Nachor's firstborn, from Milka
- ◉ the chef (TEVACH, TABACH), Nachor's son from his pilegish R'UMA
- ◉ the bottle of liquor (BUZ, BOOZE) for UTZ's brother, another son of Nachor and Milka
- ◉ the sea cow (general term for the large marine mammals which include the manatee and the dugong - among the animals that are called TACHASH), another son of Nachor and R'uma
- ◉ Donkey is mentioned in both the sedra and the haftara
- ◉ Olive oil is from the haftara
- ◉ And there is a column (or pillar) of salt - NaCl one on top of another, for Mrs. Lot
- ◉ Binoculars are for VAYASHKIFU, and they looked out (over S'dom)...
- ◉ Terem logo lying on its side for TEREM YISHKAVU...
- ◉ Mortar and pestle is for PILL-DASH

- another son of Nachor and a brother to, among others, B'TU'EL, he being of special interest to us as the father of the future RIVKA IMEINU

- ◉ The new additions to this week's ParshaPix are on the right hand side of said PP. At the top we find a picture of US president Grover Cleveland, the only person to have served two non-consecutive terms as president. After his first term, he lost to Benjamin Harrison, even though he had more votes than Harrison did. His other distinctions include being the only president to have been married in the White House (to a woman less than half his age), and to be the father of baby Ruth, for whom the candy bar was named (and not for Babe Ruth, as some people think). So what's he doing as a visual TTriddle for Parshat Vayeira? If we tell you now, then it isn't a visual TTriddle - it would just be an explained element of the ParshaPix.
- ◉ Below Grover Cleveland are pictures of the well known people in Israel today, who combine to give us TAL and MATAR (as in Brodie and Nadia, respectively). Not a Vayeira connection, but no less timely as we are just into the Tal uMatar season, and have been talking about it these last few weeks (including this week's Lead Tidbit)
- ◉ We'll explain the tow truck with the crown, but try to get your kids (grandkids) or Shabbat guests to

figure it out for themselves. It refers to Avimelech who was the King of GERAR.

- ◉ The sign language hands in the lower right is for closed doors. Interesting how many times it shows up in the Troah reading and the haftara. Again, challenge and guide (if necessary) your children and guests to find the references. The two angels who visited Lot, went outside to confront to S'dom mob that had gathered - they closed the door behind them. In the haftara, in both halves, in both stories presented, we find a point made about closing the door.

## THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW

Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 536 (part three)

### A Simple Guarantee

In reading through some of the cases that were decided by the Beit Din of Jerusalem, I read one case that left me somewhat confused. It seemed like a simple case that any law student would be able to decide, yet there were three opinions by the three judges of the Beit Din, each one finding for the plaintiff on different grounds.

It seems that the lender was about to make a loan to the borrower but would not make the loan without having a guarantor of the repayment of the loan. Mr. Cohen agreed to become a

guarantor of the loan which consisted of a large sum of money. When the borrower did not repay the loan, the lender sued Mr. Cohen on the guarantee. Mr. Cohen pleaded that when he agreed to sign the guarantee he did it because the borrower told him he needed the money to purchase an apartment, and had adequate moneys to repay the loan. It turned out that the borrower used the money to purchase frivolous things for himself and did not purchase an apartment for himself. The main defense by the guarantor is that there was a mistake of fact when he signed the guarantee - he assumed that all that the borrower told to him was true. Had he known the actual state of facts of the borrower he would not have signed the guarantee. Furthermore it is logical that any person would not have signed the guarantee had he known the true state of the facts, and since no one would have signed a guarantee knowing these facts, he should not be held liable on the guarantee. The lender pleads that he did not really know the borrower and made the loan only because of the guarantee signed by Mr. Cohen.

One opinion held that the guarantor is liable, but he did not find it an easy matter to find him so. It seems that there are opinions in the decided cases of the Beit Din that a guarantor can raise a defense that he was not aware of all the facts when he signed the guarantee. The opinion held that this should have been made clear in the loan documents. Since there were no such provisions in the loan documents, the guarantor cannot raise a defense that had he known that the borrower would frit the money away instead of buying an apartment he would not have signed the guarantee. Also the loan documents did not even

mention the purpose of the loan so it would not be a defense to the guarantor in this case. This opinion held that the guarantor is liable because there were no facts to absolve him of liability. A second opinion held that the facts of this case did not absolve the guarantor. Had the facts been known to all that the loan was made so that the money would be used for personal purposes and not for the purchase of an apartment, perhaps the guarantor would not be liable. The third opinion relies to some extent that it is the custom of the land for a lender to rely on a guarantee and his claim of absence of knowledge of pertinent facts does not absolve the guarantor. What I find hard about the case is that it should be an open and shut decision and yet each judge had to go to considerable lengths to find liability.

## Portion from the Portion

# Sir, if you would

Our portion begins with the words VAYEIRA EILAV HASHEM - Hashem appeared to him (Avraham). Avraham then saw three strangers coming towards him. Then in pasuk 18:3 Avraham says ADONAI, AL NA TA-AVOR MEI-AL AVDECHA - Sir, if you would, do not go on without stopping by me. According to Rashi's first interpretation on this verse when Avraham says ADONAI he is addressing the leader of the strangers and is asking them to come in to his tent to rest and eat.

But Rashi brings another interpretation. He says that in this verse the word ADONAI is holy and here

Avraham is addressing Hashem. He says Hashem, please wait here a minute while I go entertain these three strangers, and please don't leave. Doesn't this seem like a lot of chutzpa on the part of Avraham? We are used to hearing people say that they never saw so much chutzpa until they saw the kids of this generation, but it seems that Avraham also had chutzpa to talk like this to Hashem. What is going on here?

One answer could be that Avraham didn't know how long Hashem wanted to talk to him. So he asked G-d if it was okay to go for a minute and come right back to continue the discussion. But it still seems a bit disrespectful to the Creator of the world.

Another answer may be related to what Rav Nachman speaks of as "Holy Chutzpa" - the ability to be able to say or do whatever you believe G-d would want you to do and not to be embarrassed in any way. As it says in Pirke Avot (5:24) 'Be bold as a leopard... to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.' Hashem had come to visit Avraham on the third day after his brit mila, the day when he might have been the most uncomfortable, to see how he was feeling. Hashem was doing BIKUR CHOLIM - visiting the sick. Avraham knew that G-d wants us to follow in His ways, V'HALACHTA BIDRACHAV (D'varim 28:9) and just like He is merciful he wants us to be merciful to our fellow Jew. Just Like He visits the sick He wants us to do the same. So when Avraham saw three strangers walking in the desert, he knew that Hashem would want him to take them

into his tent and feed them. But just at that minute Hashem was talking to him. So what should he do? So he used a bit of his "Holy Chutzpa" and asked G-d if He would wait a minute while he went to take care of those strangers.

Avraham had to use this "Holy Chutzpah" numerous times throughout his life starting from when he destroyed his fathers idols. This character trait of his might be why he was chosen by G-d in the first place. The Midrash says that the nation with the most chutzpa is Israel. (Shmot Rabba 42:9). It explains how this is not derogatory but is actually a compliment to the People of Israel. It is because of this chutzpa that we survived throughout the generations and upheld our religion even when threatened with death at the stake if we did not abandon the Torah.

So when we are about to yell back at some Israeli clerk who doesn't act respectfully or lecture our own child who answers us rudely, let us all remember that chutzpa is what Jews are made of. True we shouldn't use it improperly, but we mustn't forget to muster up this inherited trait when we need it to help us to what G-d wants us to.

## TTTRIDDLES

Last issue's (LECH L'CHA) TTriddles:

[1] If mayors were kings... Janet Taylor

Janet Taylor is the mayor of Salem, Oregon. If mayors were kings, then

she would be today's counterpart of Malki-Tzedek melech Shalem.

[2] He had no teacher's aide or teaching assistant; he was...

A LONE MOREH. Need we say more? All that's left is for you to groan. Complaints about this punny TTriddle should be sent to menp@017.net.il - not that he had anything to do with this one, but he is the master from whom we learn and are inspired to do this kind of TTriddle every so often.

[3] We read of all three this Shabbat

Avraham Avinu is the main personage in Parshat Lech L'cha. Yitzchak is mentioned at the end, when Avraham is told that he will have a son with Sara Imeinu. Yaakov is mentioned in the haftara. This week (Lech L'cha) we read of all three Avot.

[5] Obama's desired multilingual outcome

This TTriddle goes back to Parshat No'ach. We included it in the Lech L'cha issue as a combination TTriddle and comment on the pressure being placed on Israel by the American government.

The aftermath of the Tower of Babel episode was the "confusing" of the languages of the people (multilingual) which resulted in their abandoning their construction - as in VAYACHD'LU LIVNOT HA'IR.

[6]  $318 > 300 + 1 + 70 + 3 > 60 + 70 + 1 + 90 + 2$   
318 is the force that Avra(ha)m took

with him to fight for Lot's safe rescue. It was either a force of 318 fighters or it was just Eliezer, faithful servant of Avraham, whose name has a numeric value of 318. 300 is SHIN for SHIN-AR, ALEF (1) is for ELASAR, AYIN (70) is for EILAM, GIMEL (3) is for GOYIM. These are the kingdoms of the four kings - AMRAFEL, ARYOCH, K'DARLAOMER, and TID-AL, respectively. SAMACH (60) is for S'DOM, AYIN (70) is for AMORA, ALEF (1) is for ADMA, TZADI (90) is for TZ'VOYIM, and BET is for BELA (which was TZO-AR). These were the kingdoms of the five kings - BERA, BIRSHA, SHIN-AV, SHEM-EIVER, and no name given - respectively. In fact, we went with kingdoms in the TTriddle rather than names of the kings because we weren't sure about the BELA-TZO'AR names. Anyway, Avraham and his force was greater than (>) the four kings, who had defeated (>) the five kings.

[7] Laughter in his and his son's name His son's name was to be YITZCHAK, which is based on the word for laughter. Avraham's name also had laughter in his name after the HA was added to AVRAM.

[8] He took with one O and with two AVRAM took with him LOT (with one O) and the R'CHUSH, possessions or LOOT (with two Os) that they had acquired in Charan.

[9] Unexplaineds from the ParshaPix We left two pictograms unexplained

in last week's Torah Tidbits.

The first was a picture of Winston Churchill who was a famous BRIT, followed by two musical notes on that five-line thing, whatever it's called. (Okay, a seach on One Look's Reverse Dictionary found the word STAVE.) Based on the old, well-known "Every good boy does fine" and "face", for the notes of the 5 lines (E,G,B,D,F for the lines from bottom to top) and the 4 spaces between the lines (F,A,C,E from bottom to top), we see that the two notes are E and the A above it. Taking the well-known octave scale of DO RE MI FA SOL LA TI DO, which are the notes C,D,E,F, G,A,B,C - we get that these two notes are MI and LA. Putting it all together - as assuredly most TTreaders have already done - we get BRIT MILA.

And the other was a S'FIRAT HAOMER calendar set to 24-200. Although there is a 24th say of the Omer, the 200 definitely doesn't belong. Except in a TTriddle. 24 is KAF-DALET. 200 is REISH. This gives us KAF-DALET-REISH-LAOMER, who is K'DARLAOMER, one of the four kings who did battle against the five kings and made the mistake of capturing Avraham's nephew. Big mistake! Thanks to the PALIT (OG, according to Tradition) for the intel.

Notice the footer of each page - specifically, the two graphic icons that flank the page number. They usually relate to the sedra (but not always). Avraham's tent and the mount to which he was sent.

**VAYEIRA** Adapted from  
**Unlocking the Torah Text**  
by **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

## Lot's Frightening Journey

**Context:** One of the strangest and most disturbing episodes in the entire Torah is recorded in PParshat Vayeira. Two of the three angels who earlier visited Avraham now arrive at his nephew Lot's doorstep in S'dom. Lot showers them with hospitality... It does not take long, however, before the evil inhabitants of the city learn of the angels' presence and surround Lot's house demanding that the strangers be given up to them. Seeking to protect his guests from the danger confronting them. Lot... offers his two unmarried daughters in their stead. The S'domites refuse the offer... The angels miraculously afflict their potential attackers with blindness, and then inform Lot that to protect himself and his family he must now leave S'dom.

**Questions:** How are we to understand Lot's bizarre behavior? He welcomes strangers... but is willing to sacrifice his own daughters to mob violence.

Does this episode provide us with any kind of window into Lot's personality and soul?

### Approaches:

**A.** With the story of Lot, we are confronted with one of those occasions where a simple, careful, straightforward reading of the biblical text reveals easily missed significance. We must first, however, back up to gain an overview. When we do so, a tragic pattern begins to emerge. This pattern, spanning a

number of chapters in the text, enables us to understand Lot and his frightening journey.

**B.** Our story begins in Parshat Lech L'cha at the point when Avraham and his nephew part ways.

Responding to a dispute between Avraham's and Lot's shepherds, the patriarch turns to his nephew and says: "Let there not be a dispute between you and me and between my shepherds and your shepherds, for we are brothers. Behold, all of the land is before you. Separate yourself from me. If you go left then I will go right..."

Given the opportunity to choose anywhere within the land of Canaan, Lot chooses the fertile Jordan plain and the Torah states, Va'ye'ehal ad S'dom, "And he tented until S'dom."

**C.** Two elements of this phrase immediately catch our attention.

1. First of all, the Torah uses the verb va'ye'ehal, "and he tented," to describe Lot's relationship to the land near S'dom.

The two words normally used by the Torah to indicate residence in a particular location are lashevet, "to live", which connotes permanent residence, and lagur, "to dwell," which connotes impermanent residence.

Here, however, the Torah chooses to use an even more transient "tenting." Why?

2. Secondly, the word AD, "until", is an inherently ambiguous one...

The rabbis tell us that AD can mean one of two things depending upon context. The word sometimes means "up to and including," and sometimes means "up to but not including."

By stating that Lot tents "ad S'dom," the Torah deliberately leaves his situation

vague. Is Lot in the city or outside the city? The facts are unclear.

The Torah goes out of its way to convey a sense of ambivalence on Lot's part as he considers his relationship to the city of S'dom. The reasons for this ambivalence are made abundantly clear in the Torah's very next sentence: "And the citizens of S'dom were greatly evil and sinful towards God."

Lot is aware of the true nature of the city before him... He literally has one foot in the city and one foot out. He believes that he can live on the edge of S'dom without being affected by its evil.

**D.** We next find Lot... when he is taken captive during a war involving S'dom. The Torah states: "And they took Lot and all of his wealth, the son of Avraham's brother, and they went. V'hu yoshev bisdom, and he was living in S'dom."

The seemingly superfluous phrase v'hu yoshev bisdom, is actually chronicling an important transformation. By this point, Lot is no longer living at the edge of the city, but rather "in S'dom." At first ambivalent about his relationship with S'dom, Lot is now comfortable as a full citizen within its borders.

**E.** Finally, we meet Lot yet again, this time in Parshat Vayeira five chapters later. The occasion is the event with which we began: the visit of the angels to S'dom. The Torah introduces this event in the following fashion: "And the two angels came to S'dom in the evening; and Lot was sitting b'sha'ar S'dom, in the gates of S'dom."

You could easily miss it, but the Torah is conveying a very significant point with the two words b'sha'ar S'dom.

Only specific people had the privilege of sitting in the gates of a city in biblical

times: the elders and officials of that city. By now, Lot's transformation is complete. He has moved from the edge of the city to its center. Lot is now a respected elder of the evil city of S'dom. The man who felt that he would be able to withstand the lure of the city has fallen prey to its power.

With the pattern of Lot's personal transformation as a backdrop, we can now begin to understand his seemingly inexplicable behavior when confronted with the threatening mob outside his door.

Lot is not an evil, but, rather, a weak man. His most fatal flaw, in fact, is his failure to recognize his own vulnerability. He believes that he can withstand the temptations of Sodom. Without realizing it, however, he is sucked in and indelibly transformed by the city around him. The Torah testifies that you cannot live near Sodom and remain unchanged.

**F.** At the most critical juncture of his life, Lot displays the aberrant behavior of a man who is trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. On the one hand, he desperately attempts to hold true to the traditions he witnessed in his Uncle Avraham's tent. He welcomes guests and treats them royally. He is willing to go to any lengths to protect them. At the same time, however, he seamlessly crosses over into the horrific world of S'dom and offers to sacrifice his own daughters to a brutal fate. Lot fails because he believes that he can live in two worlds at once - in two worlds which simply cannot coexist.

## Parsha Points to Ponder

### VAYEIRA

1) Why does Avraham address his three visitors in the singular when he asks them not to pass by and come into his house (18:3)?

of the  
2) Why does Sarah say that THIS SON OF THE MAIDSERVANT WON'T INHERIT FROM YOU when asking Avraham to send Yishmael away (21:10)? Even if he sent Avraham away now, couldn't Yishmael return for inheritance after Avraham died? What does one have to do with the other?

3) The Torah relates that AND IT WAS AT THAT TIME, Avimelech and his general came to Avraham and declared GOD IS WITH YOU IN ALL THAT YOU DO (21:22). The words AND IT WAS AT THAT TIME make a clear connection with whatever happened just before this declaration and the declaration. What is that connection given the fact that the previous story was about Yishmael and Hagar in the desert?

## Parsha Points to Ponder

### Suggested answers

1) The Ohr HaChayim answers this question based on the teaching of our Sages that the three guests were angels with specific responsibilities. One came to heal Avraham, one to tell Sarah that she was going to have a child, and the third to destroy Sedom. The first two were headed to Avraham's tent to fulfill their responsibilities but the third one did not have to come to Avraham's tent at all. Avraham was able to sense that the first two guests wanted to come to his tent but that the third person was not necessarily headed to visit him. Thus, Avraham was addressing his words to just one of them when making his plea to come into his tent, thereby explaining the use of the singular instead of the plural.

2) The Kli Yakar explains that Hagar was not referring to physical inheritance. Yishmael could, in fact, return for that after Avraham's death. Rather, she was referring to the spiritual inheritance and she was telling Avraham that Yishmael, as the CHILD OF HAGAR THE EGYPTIAN (as mentioned in the previous verse) was not going to continue Avraham's spiritual legacy and, therefore, it was not worth keeping him around at the spiritual detriment of Yitzchak.

3) Daat Z'kainim MiBaalei HaTosfot teaches that people were saying that if Avraham was truly righteous, he would have never sent his firstborn away from home into the desert. Avimelech and his general wanted to tell Avraham that they did not agree with this line of thinking and reinforced their belief in his righteousness by declaring that, in their opinion, G-D IS WITH HIM IN ALL THAT HE DOES.