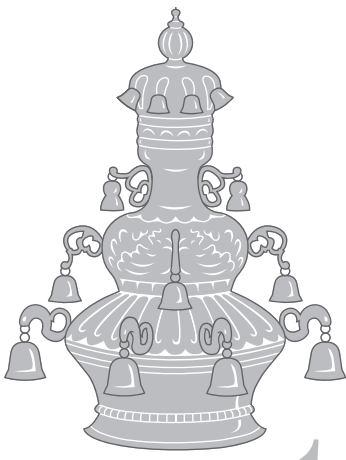




THE
TORAH

חומש

בראשית

∞
TORAH

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

The Book of Genesis

Parshat Vayeira

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*With an Interpolated English Translation
and Commentary Based on the Works of
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEREISHIT

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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A project of
Chabad of California
741 Gayley Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-208-7511 / Fax 310-208-5811

Published by
Kehot Publication Society
770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11213
718-774-4000 / Fax 718-774-2718

Order Department:
291 Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11213
718-778-0226 / Fax 718-778-4148
www.kehot.com

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ISBN: 978-0-8266-0190-1
ISBN: 978-0-8266-0195-2 (set)

Published in the United States of America

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Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*

CHUMASH BEREISHIT

The Book of Genesis

Parshat Vayeira



Kehot Publication Society

770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn NY 11213



GENESIS

Bereishit
Noach
Lech Lecha

Vayeira 4 וִירָא

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Toldot
Vayeitzei
Vayishlach
Vayeishev
Mikeitz
Vayigash
Vayechi

EXODUS

Shemot
Vaeira
Bo
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4 וַיֵּי Vayeira

Overview

Parashat *Vayeira* is the second of the two *parashiot* devoted exclusively to the life and times of Abraham. Although we first meet Abraham at the end of *parashat Noach*, and his later years are chronicled in *parashat Chayei Sarah*, he appears in these *parashiot* only in preparation for his life's work or in its afterglow. In *Noach*, we see him buck the degenerate trend of human history that preceded him and thereby merit God's call to begin the history of the chosen people; in *Chayei Sarah*, we see him ensure the perpetuation of his heritage by passing it on to his successor. Only the *parashiot* of *Lech Lecha* and *Vayeira* focus directly on Abraham's life itself.

The fact that Abraham's life *per se* is chronicled in two *parashiot* indicates that it comprised two distinct phases. In fact, if we examine the events recorded in these two *parashiot*, we are left with the impression that Abraham repeated in *parashat Vayeira* virtually everything he did in *parashat Lech Lecha*. Both *parashiot* open with him experiencing a revelation of God and receiving the promise of progeny; in both *parashiot*, his wife Sarah is abducted by a gentile king; in both *parashiot*, he fathers a son, banishes Hagar, and enters into treaties; in both *parashiot*, his righteous behavior is contrasted with the immoral behavior of his nephew Lot; in both *parashiot*, he defends the cities of the plain—in *Lech Lecha* against human assailants, and in *Vayeira* against the Divine decree brought about by the cities' own corruption. It is as if Abraham had to repeat everything he experienced in his first *parashah*—his first "life" or level of being—but on a different level, in order to infuse his past accomplishments with a new level of Divine consciousness.

Since, as we know, the name of every *parashah* embodies the essence of its content, the essence of each of the two phases of Abraham's life must be reflected in the name of the *parashah* describing that phase.

The event that divides Abraham's life into two distinct spiritual periods is his circumcision. This event is related at the very end of *parashat Lech Lecha*, so that Abraham begins his life as a circumcised Jew only in *parashat Vayeira*. It follows, therefore, that Abraham's life prior to circumcision is one of *lech lecha*—"go, to your true self," while his life after circumcision is one of *vayeira*—"God appeared to him." In *parashat Lech Lecha*, Abraham progresses on his own, steadily ascending the ladder of spiritual progress as far as human efforts can take him. In *parashat Vayeira*, God appears to him and elevates him to a level of spiritual life beyond the reach of human effort.

True, God appeared to Abraham three times in *parashat Lech Lecha*,¹ but these appearances were veiled and vague in comparison to His appearance in *parashat Vayeira*.² The reason for this is straightforward enough: until circumcision, Abraham's progress, as we said, was limited by the constraints of his own human nature. He could only go as far as his own mind and heart could take him. It was therefore *impossible* for God to reveal Himself to Abraham "directly"; Abraham could only experience God through the prism of his own being.

What was it about circumcision that changed all this, that enabled Abraham to transcend the limitations of his own humanity and experience a direct revelation of God?

First of all, circumcision was the first commandment that Abraham observed in response to God's explicit directive. The Torah and its traditions were known even before Abraham's time, and Abraham fulfilled them faithfully to the best of his ability. But this observance was voluntary and therefore lacked the self-effacing humility implicit in a servant's compliance with the will of his master. This is precisely why Abraham did not circumcise himself before God called upon him to do so, even though he observed the rest of the Torah's commandments: since circumcising oneself, unlike all the other commandments, can only be performed once, once he circumcised himself on his own, he would never be able to do so in compliance with an explicit directive from God.

Thus, by circumcising himself in response to God's explicit command, Abraham entered into an entirely new type of relationship with Him. By nullifying his own will before God's, Abraham attained a level of self-effacement he could never have achieved beforehand. His own ego could now dissolve and cease to interpose between God, on the one hand, and his own mind and heart, on the other.

Yet, although circumcision was the only one of the Torah's commandments that God specifically commanded Abraham to fulfill, He had commanded him to do other things before this, such as leaving his father's home and moving to the Land of Israel, traveling throughout the land, and performing the rites associated with the Covenant between the Halves. In each case, Abraham always heeded God's word. What was it about circumcision in particular that brought Abraham to this level of selflessness?

The answer to this question may be found in the way in which God phrased His command to Abraham to circumcise himself: "My covenant shall be *in your flesh*."³ Circumcision is unique among all the commandments in that it alters the body itself. The body's very flesh becomes a concretization of God's will. As we saw,⁴ circumcision granted Abraham control over his erotic drive. Thus, through circumcision, the body can join the mind's self-effacement before God, in this way also ceasing to be an impediment in the individual's relationship with Him.

As we have noted, Abraham began the reversal of the degenerative process that had begun with the sin of Adam and Eve and that had continued through the succeeding generations. The process he set in motion would culminate seven generations later with the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

In order to lay the groundwork for the world's transformation into God's home through the Giving of the Torah, Abraham had to set an example by his own life. In this context, his circumcision was his own personal "Receiving of the Torah," a microcosm of what would later transpire on a national scale at Mount Sinai. In living out the transition

1. Genesis 12:7, 15:1, 17:1. 2. *Zohar* 1:88b, 98a. 3. Genesis 17:13. 4. On 17:1.

from finite human effort to infinite Divine revelation, he set the stage for the creation of a people whose purpose would be to elevate reality above its natural limitations by revealing the infinite God in the finite world.

Once Abraham's personal transformation became the cornerstone of the national identity of the Jewish people, it became, in turn, the inheritance of each individual Jew. We are all challenged to learn from Abraham's life. Abraham aspired throughout his lifetime to make himself into an ever-more-transparent vehicle for expressing God's presence in the world. Yet no matter how far he progressed toward his goal, he always knew that there was still more to accomplish—that he had not yet reached true and absolute self-effacement. It was precisely in this merit that God granted him his wish and enabled him—through the commandment of circumcision—to free himself from the constraints of human ego.

We, too, should always strive toward higher levels of relationship with God and never be satisfied with our present spiritual level. Together with appreciating our achievements, we should, in parallel, train ourselves to consider them merely a hazy, imperfect version of what we ultimately aspire to. When we live our lives this way, we know that God will respond to our endeavors and reveal Himself in our lives commensurately.⁵

5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 49-54.

— ONKELOS —
18:1 וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִי לְהָיִי בְּמִישְׁרֵי מִמְרָא
וְהוּא יָתֵב בְּתַרְעָה מִשְׁכָּנָא בְּמִיחָם
וּמָא:

18:1 וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִי יְהוָה בְּאֵלָיו מִמְרָא וְהוּא יָשָׁב פְּתַח-
הָאֵהָל בְּחַם הַיּוֹם:

— RASHI —
וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִי יְהוָה בְּאֵלָיו מִמְרָא וְהוּא יָשָׁב פְּתַח-
הָאֵהָל בְּחַם הַיּוֹם: וְהוּא יָתֵב בְּתַרְעָה מִשְׁכָּנָא בְּמִיחָם
וּמָא: וְהוּא יָתֵב בְּתַרְעָה מִשְׁכָּנָא בְּמִיחָם וּמָא:
וְהוּא יָתֵב בְּתַרְעָה מִשְׁכָּנָא בְּמִיחָם וּמָא:

1 וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִי. לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחוּלָה. אָמַר רַבִּי חֲמַא בַּר
חֲנִינָא: יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי לְמִילְתּוֹ הָיָה, וְכָא הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
וְשָׂאֵל בְּשִׁלּוּמוֹ: בְּאֵלָיו מִמְרָא. הוּא שָׁנְתָן לוֹ עֲצָה עַל
הַמִּילָה, לְפִיקָךְ נִגְלָה עָלָיו בְּחֻלּוֹ: יָשָׁב. "יָשָׁב" בְּתִיב.
בְּקֶשׁ לַעֲמֹד, אָמַר לוֹ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: שָׁב וְאֵינִי אֶעֱמֹד,
1. תַּחֲלִים פַּב, א.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —
and cause the wound to heal completely.¹⁰
God revealed Himself to Abraham: As mentioned

above,¹¹ Abraham wanted his circumcision to take
place within the framework of nature. He therefore
first consulted with the leaders of his time in order to

INNER DIMENSIONS

[1] To pay a visit to the sick: The Talmud informs us¹² that there are fifty "gates" of understanding, i.e., fifty general levels of Divine consciousness that we can aspire to attain. These levels are termed "gates" because they are the entryways into different levels of our relationship with God.

Whether acquired through experience, study, or introspection, the lessons we learn from life are meant to help us ascend the ladder of Divine consciousness, enabling us to progressively deepen our conceptualization of God as well as our perspective on how He relates to creation. We thus undergo numerous processes of spiritual growth throughout our lifetimes, each one leading us to and through fifty gates of Divine consciousness. Some of these processes are woven structurally into the fabric of Jewish life, such as the annual re-experience of the journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai that comprises the fifty days between the holidays of Passover and Shavuot. Other processes are more personal and less structured, and we may not even be consciously aware of the discrete steps along the way. In all cases, however, the first forty-nine "gates" are those we reach through our own efforts, while the fiftieth is the crowning level bestowed upon us by God in recognition of our having successfully attained the first forty-nine on our own.¹³

Thus, until we reach the forty-ninth gate of any specific spiritual growth process, we sense that we can still ascend further on the ladder of Divine consciousness by virtue of our own efforts. But upon reaching the forty-ninth gate, our desire to continue to enhance our relationship with God causes

us to long intensely for the elusive fiftieth gate; we become "lovesick" for it. This is alluded to by the fact that the numerical value of the word for "sick" (חולה) is forty-nine, since this longing is the spiritual source of physical illness.¹⁴

This is exactly what happened to Abraham when God commanded him to circumcise himself. As we have seen,¹⁵ Abraham voluntarily undertook to observe all the Torah's commandments with the exception of circumcision, which he purposely waited to perform until explicitly commanded to do so by God. This was because he knew that only by circumcising himself in response to God's direct command would he be able to fully avail himself of circumcision's capacity to elevate him to the most sublime spiritual heights. Similarly, God did not give Abraham the command until He saw that he had exhausted his own capacities for self-refinement and had indeed attained the highest level of Divine consciousness possible on his own. Giving him the commandment at this point brought him to the limits of his ability to climb upwards on the ladder of Divine consciousness.

Thus, by circumcising himself, Abraham unquestionably reached his forty-ninth gate, which in turn made him "lovesick" with longing for the elusive fiftieth. Since his body was fully in tune with his soul, this longing manifested itself as physical illness. In appearing to him after the circumcision,¹⁶ God granted Abraham access to the fiftieth gate, whose revelation healed him of his spiritual malady, in turn bringing about his physical healing, as well.¹⁷

11. On 17:23. 12. *Rosh HaShanah* 21b. 13. Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, introduction. 14. See *Ta'amei HaMitzvot* on this verse. 15. Above, 11:32. 16. See *Zohar* 1:88b. 17. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 335; *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 1, pp. 112-113.

The Promise of Isaac's Birth

18:1 On the third day after his circumcision, the 15th of Nisan, 2047,¹ **God appeared to Abraham** to pay a visit to the sick. This occurred **in the Plains of Mamre**; God revealed Himself to Abraham in Mamre's territory as a reward to him for having advised Abraham to follow God's commandment to circumcise himself. Abraham **was sitting at the entrance of the tent**, looking out for travelers to host, but God had made **the heat of the day** unnaturally intense so that no one would venture out on the roads, thus giving Abraham a chance to rest and recover. Abraham started to stand up in deference to God's presence, but God said, "You remain seated and I will stand. You will thus serve as a precedent for your descendants: even though I will manifest My presence at every court case, I will not require all those present to stand in respect; the judges may remain seated."

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

1 God appeared to him: When, as a young boy, Shalom Dovber of Lubavitch learned this verse for the first time, he came in tears to his grandfather, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (the *Tzemach Tzedek*), and cried, "If God appeared to Abraham, why doesn't He appear to me, as well?" In reply to his little grandson's anguished question, the *Tzemach Tzedek* told him that Abraham merited having God appear to him because, although he had indeed refined himself enough to attain very sublime levels of Divine consciousness, he at the same time knew that God is infinite, and that therefore there were still an infinite number of levels of Divine consciousness to attain. This recognition left Abraham feeling grossly inadequate, as though he were still encrusted by layers of insensitivity to Divine awareness that needed to be removed—to be "circumcised"—in order to bare his heart before his Creator.

Much is to be learned, both from the child's impassioned question as well as from his grandfather's answer. Firstly, we learn that we must yearn—even cry out—for God to reveal His presence to us. Secondly, we learn that we, too, can merit to see God's presence if we realize that no matter how much we may have achieved spiritually, we are still not perfect: we still need to "circumcise" ourselves—to remove "the foreskin of the heart"—which prevents us from attaining yet higher levels of Divine consciousness.²

Abraham was sitting: Before his circumcision, Abraham's body was not sufficiently refined to endure the spiritual intensity of God's revelation; as a result, it was sapped of its physical strength, causing him to fall.³ Through circumcision, his body became refined enough to withstand God's revelation.⁴ In fact, it was now capable of withstanding an even loftier revelation than Abraham had ever before experienced.⁵

Of all the commandments, circumcision is the only one able to affect the body in this way, because it is the only one that visibly and permanently alters the physical body. Furthermore, specifically because it sanctifies the physical flesh—which is otherwise the driving force behind our basest impulses—circumcision accomplishes God's purpose in creating the world, which is to transform it into a home for Divine consciousness, more directly than any other commandment. Circumcision therefore has the power to elicit the most sublime levels of Divine revelation.⁶

On the third day after his circumcision: Since the Torah's commandments are meant to affect the entire material universe, including the physical body, they must therefore be fulfilled in a natural, non-miraculous way. For example, since it is normative practice to pay for things we acquire or for services rendered to us, we should expect to have to do the same in order to perform God's commandments. In fact, the *Zohar*⁷ indicates that it is preferable to pay full price to perform a commandment rather than seek to do so for free or at a discounted price. Indeed, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (the *Arizal*) was known to never have been dissuaded by the cost of fulfilling a commandment and was always prepared to pay any asking price.⁸ As we have seen, the natural pain that accompanies circumcision is a significant ingredient in its fulfillment.⁹

This is why God waited until the third day after Abraham's circumcision to visit him. God's very visit would have immediately healed Abraham miraculously of his wound. Therefore, had He visited Abraham any earlier, He would have "disrupted" the natural healing process that circumcision requires, thus risking compromising the integrity of Abraham's fulfillment of the commandment. Only on the third day, when a wound begins to heal naturally on its own, did God visit him

1. Rashi on Exodus 12:40-41. 2. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 23-27. 3. For example, above, 17:3. 4. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Vayeira* §82. 5. See *Or HaChaim* on this verse. 6. See on 17:26, above. *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, vol. 1, pp. 86-87; see also *Hitva'aduyot* 5750, vol. 1, p. 357. 7. 2:128a. 8. *Ta'amei HaMitzvot*, *Re'eh*, *mitzvot tzedakah*. 9. Above, on 17:13. 10. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 77, 82-84.

ONKELOS

2 וְזָקַף עֵינוּהִי וְחָזָא וְהָא תְּלָתָא גְבִרִין קְנִימִין עֲלוּהִי וְחָזָא וְהִיט לְקַדְמוֹתָהוֹן מִתְרַע מִשְׁכָּנָא וְסָגִיד עַל אֶרְעָא: 3 וְאָמַר יי אִם כְּעֵן אֲשֶׁכַּחֲתִי רַחֲמִין קְדָמָךְ לֹא כְּעֵן תַּעֲבֵר מִעַל עֲבָדְךָ: 4 יִסְבוֹן כְּעֵן זְעִיר מִיָּא וְאִסְחוּ רַגְלֵיכוֹן וְאִסְתַּמִּיכוּ תַּחוֹת אֵילָנָא:

2 וַיֵּשֶׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וַהֲנֵה שְׁלֹשָׁה אָנָשִׁים נֹצְצִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרֶץ לִקְרֹאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה: 3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם־נָא מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶל־נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: 4 יִקַּח־נָא מַעֲט־מִיָּם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ:

RASHI

2 וַהֲנֵה שְׁלֹשָׁה אָנָשִׁים. אָחָד לְבֹשֶׁת אֶת שָׂרָה, וְאָחָד לְהַפֶּךְ אֶת סֹדוֹם, וְאָחָד לְרַפָּאוֹת אֶת אַבְרָהָם, שְׂאִין מִלֵּאָף אָחָד עוֹשֶׂה שְׂמִי שְׁלִיחוּיוֹת. תַּדַּע לָךְ, שֶׁבֶן כָּל הַפְּרָשָׁה הוּא מִזְכִּירָן בְּלִשׁוֹן רַבִּים, "וַיֹּאכְלוּ", וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו, וּבִבְשׁוּרָה נֶאֱמַר: "וַיֹּאמֶר, שׁוּב אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ", וּבְהִפְכֵת סֹדוֹם הוּא אוֹמֵר: "כִּי לֹא אוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבָרִי", "לְבַלְתִּי הִפְכִּי". וּרְפָאֵל שֶׁרְפָא אֶת אַבְרָהָם, הֵלֵךְ מִשָּׁם לְהַצִּיל אֶת לוֹט, הוּא שְׁנֶאֱמַר: "וַיְהִי כְּהוֹצִיאָם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶט עַל נַפְשִׁךָ", לְמַדָּת שֶׁהָאָחָד הָיָה מִצִּיל: נֹצְצִים עָלָיו. לְפָנָיו, כְּמוֹ: "וַעֲלִיו מִטָּה מִנְּשָׁה", אָבֵל לִשׁוֹן נִקְיָה הוּא כְּלָפִי הַמִּלֵּאָכִים: וַיֵּרָא. מֵהוּ "וַיֵּרָא" וַיֵּרָא שְׂמִי פְעֻמִּים? הֲרֵאשׁוֹן כְּמִשְׁמַעוֹ, וְהַשְׁנִי לִשׁוֹן הַבְּנֵה, נִסְתַּכַּל שֶׁהָיָה נֹצְצִים בְּמִקּוֹם אָחָד וְהַבִּין שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה רוֹצִים לְהַטְרִיחוֹ, וְאֵף עַל פִּי שְׁיֹדְעִים הָיוּ שִׁינְא לִקְרֹאתָם, עֲמָדוֹ בְּמִקּוֹמָם לְכַבּוֹדוֹ וְלִהְיוֹתוֹ שֶׁלֹּא רָצוּ לְהַטְרִיחוֹ, וְקָדָם הוּא וַרְץ לִקְרֹאתָם. בְּבָבָא מִצִּיעָא: כְּתִיב: "נֹצְצִים עָלָיו", וּכְתִיב: "וַיֵּרֶץ לִקְרֹאתָם" כִּד חֲזוֹנוֹהוּ

2 וַהֲנֵה שְׁלֹשָׁה אָנָשִׁים. פֶּרֶשׁוֹ הֵימְנוֹ, מִיָּד "וַיֵּרֶץ לִקְרֹאתָם": 3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם נָא וְגו'. לְגִדּוֹל שֶׁבָּהֶם אָמַר. וְקָרָא כָּלָם "אֲדוֹנִים", וְלְגִדּוֹל אָמַר: "אֵל נָא תַעֲבֹר", וּכְיוֹן שֶׁלֹּא יַעֲבֹר הוּא — יַעֲמֵדוּ חֲבֵרָיו עִמּוֹ. וּבְלִשׁוֹן זֶה הוּא חוֹל. דְּכָר אָחָד: קָדֵשׁ הוּא, וְהָיָה אוֹמֵר לְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַמְתִּין לוֹ עַד שֶׁיָּרוּץ וַיִּכְנִס אֶת הָאוֹרְחִים, וְאֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁכְּתוּב אַחֵר "וַיֵּרֶץ לִקְרֹאתָם", הָאֲמִירָה קָדָם לְכֵן הָיְתָה, וְדָרֵךְ הַמִּקְרָאוֹת לְדָבָר כֵּן, כְּמוֹ שֶׁפֶּרֶשְׁתִּי אֶצְלֵי: "לֹא יִדּוֹן רוּחִי בְּאָדָם", שֶׁנֶּכְתַּב אַחֵר: "וַיּוֹלֵךְ נֹחַ", וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לוֹמַר כֵּן אֵלָּא אִם כֵּן קָדָם גְּזִירַת מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה. וּשְׁמִי הַלְשׁוֹנוֹת בְּבִרְאשִׁית רַבָּה: 4 יִקַּח נָא. עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ. וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁלֶם לְבָנָיו עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, שְׁנֶאֱמַר: "וַיִּרְם מִשָּׁה אֶת יָדוֹ וַיַּף אֶת הַסֵּלַע": וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם. כְּסֹבֵר שֶׁהֵם עֲרַבִּים שֶׁמִּשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְאַבְק רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְהַקְפִּיד שֶׁלֹּא לְהַכְנִיס עֲבוּדָה זָרָה לְבֵיתוֹ. אָבֵל לוֹט שֶׁלֹּא הַקְפִּיד, הַקְדִּים לִינָה לְרַחֲצָהּ, שְׁנֶאֱמַר: "וְלִינוּ וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם": תַּחַת הָעֵץ. תַּחַת הָאֵילָן:

2. בראשית יח, י. 3. בראשית יט, כב. 4. שם, כא. 5. שם, יז. 6. במדבר כ, ב. 7. פ, ב. 8. בראשית ו, ג. 9. מח, י. 10. במדבר כ, יא. 11. בראשית יט, ב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

gain their approval. By gaining Mamre's personal approval, Abraham enlisted natural, human intellect in support of his circumcision. By giving his stamp of approval to his step, Mamre became both worthy and capable of experiencing something of the selfsame Divine revelation experienced by Abraham in the merit of his circumcision. In fact, in the merit of Mamre's consent, this revelation even permeated the physical territory of his domain, spiritually refining it and thereby rendering it conducive to living a Godly way of life. The Torah therefore makes a point of mentioning that God appeared to Abraham in the Plains of Mamre.²⁴

2 He looked up and behold, three men were standing: During the course of his conversation with God, Abraham was profoundly engrossed in the Divine rev-

elation. Even during our own prayers, when we are the ones who initiate the Divine encounter, we are enjoined to first clear our minds of any distracting thoughts.²⁵ The fact that Abraham noticed the men, despite the intensity of his concentration, shows his extraordinary sensitivity to others.

This sensitivity is the key to hospitality. When offering hospitality to guests, a host must do much more than merely proffer a free meal. He must focus fully on his guests and their needs, display sincere concern for their welfare and comfort, take an interest in their conversation, and in general make them feel at home. Abraham was the paradigm of such sensitivity to others: in the very midst of a conversation with God, he took notice of three travelers and excused himself from God's presence to tend to their needs.²⁶

24. Sefer HaSichot 5750, vol. 1, p. 115. 25. See Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Orach Chaim 98:1. 26. Likutei Sichot, vol. 25, pp. 70, 78.

2 God intended to send three angels to Abraham, each with a separate mission, after visiting him. When He noted that Abraham was disappointed by the absence of guests, He sent these angels in the guise of mortal men for Abraham to host.¹⁸ Although they were not really mortals, the Torah calls them “men,” rather than “angels,” in order (a) to contrast their limited powers with God’s omnipotence, and (b) to indicate that, even had they revealed themselves to Abraham as angels, he would have been just as unfazed as if they had indeed been mortals, since he was accustomed to visits from angels.¹⁹

While Abraham was changing his bandages, **he looked up and behold, three men were standing before him. He took note** that they hesitated to approach him because he was in obvious discomfort. Therefore, after asking God to wait while he attended them, **he ran towards them from the entrance of the tent, and prostrated himself on the ground.**

3 In accordance with proper etiquette, Abraham addressed his invitation to the group’s leader (in the singular). But in order not to slight the other two, **he first said** to all three, “**My masters!**” and only then proceeded to address the leader:²⁰ “**If I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass me, your servant, by.**”

4 Abraham thought that these wayfarers were pagans who worship the dirt of their feet; as he did not want an object of idolatry in his home, he said to them, “**Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and recline under the tree.**”

✧ INNER DIMENSIONS ✧

[4] Recline under the tree: The Midrash teaches us that in the merit of Abraham’s offering the angels respite under the shade of his tree, God rewarded his descendants with the commandment to dwell in *sukot* (huts that provide shade) during the Sukot holiday.²¹

Ironically, Torah law stipulates that it is prohibited to build a *sukah* under a tree, since the covering of the *sukah* must be fashioned from vegetation that is detached from the ground and no longer alive.²² That the shade of Abraham’s tree was a precursor for our present-day *sukah*—despite its future invalidity—demonstrates the difference between Abraham’s experience of the commandments and ours, after the Giving of the Torah:

Since the patriarchs were not explicitly commanded to fulfill the commandments, they could only perform them with whatever mental and spiritual powers were at their disposal at the time. This means that since they were finite beings, both their fulfillment of the commandments and the com-

mandment’s subsequent effect were likewise finite. In contrast, our performance of the commandments is in fulfillment of God’s explicit command to us, and therefore connects us to the infinity of God.

This ability to transcend finitude by performing of a commandment is alluded to in the law stipulating that the covering of the *sukah* must be made of something detached from the ground: Our fulfillment of the commandments *detaches* us from the limitations of this world and unites us with God’s infinity. Abraham, however, did not experience this level of connection to God through the commandments. Therefore, the covering for his “*sukah*” was the branches of a tree *connected* to the ground, alluding to the limitation inherent in his observance of the commandments.

Nevertheless, it was Abraham’s praiseworthy actions that rendered us worthy of receiving both the commandments at Mount Sinai as well as the spiritual capacity to evoke their infinite power.²³

18. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 85, note 49. 19. Rashi on 19:1, below. 20. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 68-72. 21. *Bereishit Rabbah* 48:10. 22. *Sukah* 9b. 23. *Reshimot* 62.

ONKELOS

5 וְאָסַב פֶּתָא דְלֶחְמָא וְסַעֲדוּ
לְבָכּוֹן בֵּיתָא בִּן תַּעֲבֵרוֹן אָרִי עַל
כֵּן עֲבָרְתוֹן עַל עֲבָדְכוֹן וְאָמְרוּ כֵּן
תַּעֲבִיד כְּמָא דִּי מַלְלָתָא: 6 וְאוֹחִי
אֲבָרְהָם לְמִשְׁכָּנָא לְלוֹת שָׂרָה וְאָמַר
אוֹחִיא תַלְתָּ סָאִין קִמְחָא דְסוּלָתָא
לוֹשִׁי וְעִבְדִּי גְרִיזָן: 7 וְלוֹת תּוֹרִי
רְהִט אֲבָרְהָם וְנָסִיב בֵּר תּוֹרִי רִכְיָה
וְטָב וִיחַב לְעוֹלָמָא וְאוֹחִי לְמַעַבְד
יְתָה: 8 וְנָסִיב שְׁמֵן וְחֶלֶב וְכֵר תּוֹרִי
דִּי עֲבַד וִיחַב קְדָמִיהוֹן וְהוּא מְשַׁמֵּשׁ
עֲלֵיהוֹן תַּחַת אֵילָנָא וְאָכְלוּ:

5 וְאִקְרָה פֶת־לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָכּם אַחֲרֵי תַעֲבֹרוּ כִּי־עַל־כֵּן
עֲבָרְתֶּם עַל־עֲבָדְכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ בֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה בְּאִשֶּׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:
6 וַיִּמָּהֲר אֲבָרְהָם הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מִהֲרִי שְׁלֹשׁ
סָאִים קִמַּח סֵלֶת לוֹשִׁי וְעֵשִׂי עֲגוֹת: 7 וְאֶל־הַבָּקָר רִצָּן
אֲבָרְהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן־בָּקָר רֶדֶךְ וְטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַנֶּזֶר וַיִּמָּהֲר
לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ: 8 וַיִּקַּח חֶמְאָה וְחֶלֶב וּבֶן־הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנִיָּהם וְהוּא־עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ:

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לֹא נִתְּתִיהּ¹⁶, "כִּי עַל כֵּן יִדְעַתְּ חֲנֻנִי"¹⁷: 6 קִמַּח סֵלֶת.
"סֵלֶת" לַעֲגוֹת, "קִמַּח" לַעֲמִילָן שֶׁל טְבָחִים, לְכַסּוֹת
אֶת הַקֶּדֶרָה וְלִשְׁאוֹב אֶת הַזֶּהָמָא: 7 בֶּן בָּקָר רֶדֶךְ וְטוֹב.
שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּרִים הָיוּ, כְּדִי לְהַאֲכִילָן שְׁלֹשׁ לְשׁוֹנוֹת בְּחֶרֶד:
אֶל הַנֶּזֶר. זֶה יִשְׁמַעֵאל, לְחֻנּוֹ בְּמִצְוֹת: 8 וַיִּקַּח חֶמְאָה
וְגו'. וְלֶחֶם לֹא הָבִיא, לְפִי שִׁפְרָסָה שָׂרָה נָדָה, שִׁחֲוֹר לָהּ
אַרְחַ בְּנָשִׁים אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם, וְנִטְמָאָה הָעֶסֶה: חֶמְאָה. שְׁמֵן
הַחֶלֶב שֶׁקוֹלָטִין מֵעַל פָּנָיו: וּבֶן הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. אֲשֶׁר
תִּקַּן. קִמַּח קִמַּח שֶׁתִּקַּן, אֲמַטִּי וְאִתִּי קִמִּיהוּ: וַיֹּאכְלוּ.
נִרְאָו כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָכְלוּ. מִכָּאן, שֶׁלֹּא יִשְׁנֶה אָדָם מִן הַמִּנְהָג:

5 וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָכּם. בַּתּוֹרָה בְּנִבְיָאִים וּבְכַתּוּבִים מְצִינוּ
דְּפִתָא סַעֲדָתָא דְלֶבָא, בַּתּוֹרָה: "וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָכּם",
בְּנִבְיָאִים¹²: "סַעֲד לֶבְךָ פֶת לֶחֶם", בְּכַתּוּבִים¹³: "וְלֶחֶם לֶבֶב
אֲנוֹשׁ יִסַּעֲד". אָמַר רַבִּי חֲמָא: "לְבָבְכֶם" אֵין כְּתִיב בְּאֵין
אֶלָּא "לְבָבְכֶם". מְגִיד, שֶׁאֵין יֶצֶר הָרַע שׁוֹלֵט בַּמַּלְאָכִים.
בְּרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה¹⁴: אַחֲרֵי תַעֲבֹרוּ. אַחֲרֵי כֵּךְ תִּלְכוּ: כִּי עַל כֵּן
עֲבָרְתֶּם. כִּי הִדְבַּר הַזֶּה אֲנִי מְבַקֵּשׁ מִכֶּם, מֵאַחֲרֵי שֶׁעֲבָרְתֶּם
עָלֵי לְכַבּוּדִּי: כִּי עַל כֵּן. כְּמוֹ "עַל אֲשֶׁר". וְכֵן כֹּל "כִּי עַל
כֵּן" שֶׁבִּמְקָרָא: "כִּי עַל כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּצֶל קֶרְתִּי"¹⁵, "כִּי עַל כֵּן

12. שׁוֹפְטִים יט, ה. 13. תְּהִלִּים קד, טו. 14. מנח, יא. 15. בְּרֵאשִׁית יט, ח.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

joyed the privilege of being tended to by Abraham, whom they knew to be beloved by God.³²

Prior to the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, fulfilling the commandments using physical objects was a spiritual exercise that did not imbue those objects with holiness.³³ Only at the Giving of the Torah did sanctifying the physical world become a primary and integral objective in fulfilling the commandments. In light of this fact, as far as Abraham was concerned, his fulfillment of the commandment of hospitality centered mainly on its spiritual aspect, i.e., the expression of the supreme desire to care for guests. The fact that the angels did not need his sustenance did not detract in any way from the objective value of his acts of hospitality. Nevertheless, the patriarchs' fulfillment of the com-

mandments before the Giving of the Torah presaged their descendants' fulfillment of the commandments after the Giving of the Torah. The patriarchs therefore used physical objects to perform the commandments so their fulfillment would approximate the manner of their fulfillment after the Giving of the Torah. (We thus find that, although Jacob did not fulfill the commandment of *tefilin* in the same way in which we do today, he did seek physical objects with which to fulfill the commandment.³⁴)

This need to connect spiritual intentions with physical reality was realized by the simple fact that Abraham actively sought actual guests to whom to serve actual food. The fact that the angels did not need this sustenance did not detract from the fact that Abraham had connected his intention to physical reality.³⁵

A CLOSER LOOK

[8] He first brought some cream and milk, and when the calf that Ishmael had prepared was ready, he placed it before them: If Abraham, as we have seen, indeed observed all the laws of the Torah even before they were given at Mount Sinai, how could he have served milk and meat together at the same meal, blatantly violating the Torah's dietary laws?³⁶

Two possible answers to this question are: (a) Abraham served the dairy food first, for it is permissible to eat meat a short time after eating dairy food; and (b) Abraham offered the two types of food separately, allowing his guests to choose either type but not both. Being the host par excellence, Abraham brought out *three* tongues, one for each guest, anticipating the possibility that all three might choose to have a meat meal.³⁷

5 I will bring a piece of bread so that you can gather strength—for bread staves off hunger longer than any type of other food—**and only then will you continue on your way. After all, you have paid me, your servant, a visit,** and it would dishonor me if you would take your leave before I have served you a meal.” God noted that, although Abraham sent someone else to bring the water, he himself brought the food personally; therefore, in like measure, when it came time for Him to sustain Abraham’s descendants after the Exodus from Egypt, He provided them personally²⁷ with *food* but with *water* through Moses.²⁸ The angels did not refuse Abraham’s offer of hospitality, since he was a highly-respected individual and they wanted to demonstrate that it is improper to refuse an invitation from a person of high social stature.²⁹ As soon as the angels arrived, the first one healed Abraham. (God Himself visited Abraham even though He was in any case going to send an angel to heal him, in order to demonstrate that one should visit the sick even if it is not sure that the visit will actually make the sick person feel better.)³⁰

6 Now that his wound was healed, Abraham could move about quickly. **Abraham hastened to the tent, to Sarah, and said, “Hurry! Take three *se’ah* (about 24 kg or 53 pounds) of flour and sift it; use some of the coarse flour to scrape the scum off the pot and use the fine flour to bake. Knead the fine flour and make three loaves of bread.”**

7 Abraham then ran to the cattle, took three calves—one tender and choice calf for each guest—**gave them to his son, Ishmael, the youth** whom Abraham was training in the ways of hospitality, and instructed him to prepare a tongue spiced with mustard for each guest. Ishmael **hurried to prepare it.**

8 Abraham served the guests the various dishes as they became ready. He first **brought some cream and milk,** and when **the calf that Ishmael had prepared** for each guest was ready, **he placed it before them. He stood over them under the tree,** attending to their needs. Since they were angels, they could not really eat, but they feigned eating nonetheless, so it should appear as though **they ate.** They did this in order to demonstrate proper etiquette, i.e., that a guest should always conduct himself in accordance with the customs of his host. While Abraham was serving them, the angels demurely³¹ inquired of Sarah as to her husband’s well-being, in order to once again demonstrate proper etiquette.

— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

8 They could not really eat, but they feigned eating nonetheless: We might infer from this that Abraham did not actually fulfill the commandment of hospitality since the angels did not really need his food! But if this were the case, would God have bothered to make them appear human just so Abraham could *imagine* he was fulfilling a commandment? To complicate matters further, it would follow that Abraham interrupted his communion with God for what seems to have been an exercise in futility!

This question is based on an erroneous understanding of the concept of hospitality. The success of hospitality is not measured by the extent to which we satisfy our guests’ needs—although that may indeed be a part of our hospitality. The central point of hospitality is that we pay attention to our guests.

In this respect, Abraham indeed fulfilled the commandment of hospitality. The angels may not have needed his food nor benefited from it, but they certainly en-

27. Exodus 16:4. 28. Numbers 20:11. 29. Rashi on 19:2, below. 30. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 84, note 49. 31. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 113-114. 32. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 78. 33. See *Torah Or* 11d. 34. See below, on 30:37; *Zohar* 1:162a. 35. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 324. 36. *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* 87:1. 37. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, p. 150, note 40.

— ONKELOS —

9 ויאמרו לה אן שרה אתתך ואמר
הא במשכנא: 10 ואמר מתב אתוב
לותך בעדן דאתון קימין והא
בר לשרה אתתך ושרה שמעת
בתרע משכנא והוא אחוריה:
11 ואברהם ושרה סיבו עלו ביומין
פסק מלמהוי לשרה אורח בנשיא:
12 וחיבת שרה במעיה למימר
בתר דסיבית יהי לי עולימו ורבוני
סיב: 13 ואמר יי לאברהם למא דנן
חיבת שרה למימר הכרם בקושטא
אליד ואנא סיבית: 14 והיתפסי מן
קדם יי פתנגמא לזמן אתוב לותך
בעדן דאתון קימין ולשרה בר:
15 וכדיבת שרה למימר לא חיבית
ארי דחילת ואמר לא ברם חיבת:

9 ויאמרו אליו איזה שרה אשתך ויאמר הנה באהל:
10 ויאמר שוב אשוב אליך בעת חיה והנה בן לשרה
אשתך ושרה שמעת פתח האהל והוא אחריו:
11 ואברהם ושרה וקנים באים בימים חדל להיות
לשרה ארח בנשים: 12 ותצחק שרה בקרבה לאמר
אחרי בלתי היתה לי עדנה ואדני זקן: 13 ויאמר יהוה
אל-אברהם למה זה צחקת שרה לאמר האף אמנם
אלד ואני זקנתי: 14 היפלא מיהוה דבר למועד אשוב
אליך בעת חיה ולשרה בן:

שני 15 ותכחש שרה | לאמר לא צחקתי כי | יראה
ויאמר | לא כי צחקת:

— RASHI —

"למועד אשוב". אמר לה אלישע: אותם המלאכים
שהם חיים וקנים לעולם, אמרו: "למועד אשוב",
אבל אני בשר ודם שהיום חי ומחר מת, בין חי ובין
מת "למועד הזה" וגו'. והוא אחריו. הפתח היה אחר
המלאך: 11 חדל להיות. פסק ממנה: ארח בנשים.
ארח נדות: 12 בקרבה. מסתכלת במעיה, ואמרה:
אפשר הקרבים הללו טעונין ולד, השדים הללו שצמקו
מושכין חלב: עדנה. צחצוח בשר. ולשון משנה: משיר
את השער ומעיד את הבשר. דבר אחר: לשון עדן, זמן
וסת נדות: 13 האף אמנם. הגם אמת אלד: ואני זקנתי.
שנה הפתח מפני השלום, שהרי היא אמרה: "ואדני
זקן": 14 היפלא. בתרגומו: "היתפסי", וכי שום דבר
מפלא ומפחד ומכסה ממני, מלעשות כרצוני: למועד.
לאותו מועד המיוחד שקבעתי לך אתמול, "למועד הזה
בשנה האחרת": 15 פי יראה וגו' פי צחקת. הראשון
משמש לשון "דהא", שנותן טעם לדבר, "ותכחש שרה"
לפי ש"יראה". והשני משמש בלשון "אלא": "ויאמר
לא" כדברך הוא, אלא "צחקת". שאמרו רבותינו:
"כ"י משמש בארבע לשונות: אי, דלמא, אלא, דהא:

9 ויאמרו אליו. נקוד על אי"ו שב"אליו". ותניא, רבן
שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: כל מקום שהפכת רבה על
הנקדה, אתה דורש הפתח וכו', וכאן הנקדה רבה על
הפתח, אתה דורש הנקדה, שאף לשרה שאלו: איז
אברהם. למדנו, שישאל אדם באכסניא שלו, לאיש
על האשה ולאשה על האיש. בבבא מציעא¹⁶ אומרים:
יודעים היו מלאכי השרת שרה אמנו היכן היתה, אלא
להודיע שצנועה היתה כדי לחבבה על בעלה. אמר
רבי יוסי בר חנינא: כדי לשגר לה כוס של ברכה: הנה
באהל. צנועה היא: 10 בעת חיה. בעת הזאת לשנה
הבאה. ופסח היה, ולפסח הבא נולד יצחק, מדלא קרינן
"בעת" אלא "בעת". "בעת חיה", בעת הזאת שתהא
חיה לכם, שתהיו בלכם שלמים וקנים: שוב אשוב. לא
בשרו המלאך ששוב אליו, אלא בשליחותו של מקום
אמר לו, כמוי: "ויאמר לה מלאך ה' הרבה ארבה",
והוא אין בידו להרבות אלא בשליחותו של מקום. אף
כאן, בשליחותו של מקום אמר לו בן. בראשית רבה.
אלישע אמר לשונמית¹⁷: "למועד הזה בעת חיה את
חבקת בן, ותאמר: אל אדני איש האלהים, אל תכזב
בשפחתך". אותן המלאכים שבשרו את שרה אמרו:

16. בראשית לח, כו. 17. במדבר י, לא. 18. פז, א. 19. בראשית טז, י. 20. מלכים ב ד, טז. 21. ראש השנה א, ג.

Sarah's doubts were quelled as soon as she (a) heard directly from God that she was going to bear a son and (b) saw that she miraculously regained her youth.⁴⁵

45. Likutei Sichot, vol. 31, p. 42, note 24.

9 All three angels then asked him, **“Where is Sarah, your wife?”** In posing this question, the first angel was inquiring of Abraham as to his wife’s well-being; the second angel intended to endear Sarah to Abraham by pointing out that she had retired modestly to her tent; and the third angel wanted to send Sarah some of the wine over which they had recited the grace after meals. (Abraham could not give Sarah any of *his* wine, for he himself had not eaten and therefore had not recited the grace after meals; he had been too busy hosting the angels.³⁸ Although the angels only feigned eating, they had to recite grace or else it would have been clear that they were only pretending to eat.) Sarah perceived by the guests’ conduct that they were pious people; she therefore understood that receiving the wine they sent her in no way violated the principles of modesty.³⁹

Abraham replied, **“Here, in the tent.”**

10 The second angel said: **“I have come to deliver a message from God to Sarah: I will surely return to you at this exact time next year, and behold, Sarah, your wife, will have a son that day.”** And Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were already old and had lived out their natural life spans.⁴⁰ All their lives they deeply internalized their experiences.⁴¹ Therefore, the fact that Sarah had ceased having a woman’s cycle was not an incidental event for her; it represented a profound emotional and mental transition affecting her entire life.

12 She therefore did not believe that the angel’s words could come true. She laughed at herself, saying, **“Now that I am withered, shall my skin become smooth?! Shall my womb carry a child? Shall my breasts fill with milk? Besides, my husband is too old to sire a child!”** At that very moment, as she was preparing the bread she had baked, her body miraculously became youthful again and fit for childbearing. She menstruated, and therefore the bread was rendered ritually impure. Abraham therefore had no bread to serve the guests.⁴²

13 Sarah’s laughter and words were inaudible outside the tent. God said to Abraham, **“Your wife laughed! Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really give birth, though I am old?’”** God did not mention the fact that Sarah had also referred to Abraham’s advanced age, in order to not upset their domestic harmony.

14 God continued, **“Is anything too wondrous for God?”** God made a scratch in the wall of the tent and said, **“If anyone will doubt that the son that will be born to you is really yours, let this scratch attest to the miraculous circumstances of his birth.”**⁴³ At the exact designated time, when the sunrays again touch this mark⁴⁴ at this time next year, I will return, as this messenger has informed you, and Sarah will have a son that day.”

◆ **Second Reading** 15 Hearing God’s accusation, Sarah denied it and said, **“I did not laugh,”** for she was afraid, but He said to her, **“No, you *did* laugh.”** In any case,

38. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 110 ff. 39. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 115. 40. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 218. 41. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 91. 42. Rashi on v. 8, above. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 193, note 64. 43. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, p. 42, note 24. 44. Rashi on 21:2, below.

ONKELOS

16 וְקָמוּ מִתַּמְנֵן גְּבֵרִיא וְאֶסְתִּכִּיאָו
עַל אִפֵּי סֻדִּים וְאֶבְרָהָם אָזַל עִמָּהוֹן
לֹאֲלוֹאִיהוֹן: 17 וַיֵּי אֶמֶר הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי
אֲנִי מֵאֶבְרָהָם דִּי אֲנִי עֶבֶד:
18 וְאֶבְרָהָם מִדְּוָה יְהוָה לַעֲם סְגִי
וְתַקִּיף וַיִּתְּבָרְכוּן בְּדִילָה בֵּל עִמָּמִי
אַרְעָא: 19 אֲרִי גְלִי קְדָמִי בְּדִיל
דִּי יִפְקֹד יֵת בְּנוֹהֵי יֵת אֲנִשׁ בֵּיתָה
בְּתִרְוָהִי וַיִּטְרוּן אַרְחָן דְּתַקְנָן קָדָם
יֵי לְמַעַבְד צְדָקְתָא וְדִינָא בְּדִיל
דִּיִּתִּי יֵי עַל אֶבְרָהָם יֵת דִּי מְלִיל
עֲלוּהִי:

16 וַיִּקְמוּ מִשֵּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקְפוּ עַל־פְּנֵי סֻדָּם וְאֶבְרָהָם
הֵלֵךְ עִמָּם לְשַׁלְּחָם: 17 וַיְהוּה אָמַר הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי
מֵאֶבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה: 18 וְאֶבְרָהָם הָיוּ יְהוּה לְגוֹי
גָּדוֹל וְעַצוֹם וְנִבְרָכוּ־בּוֹ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ: 19 כִּי יִדְעֲתוּ
לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשִׁמְרוּ
דֶּרֶךְ יְהוּה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הָבִיא יְהוּה עַל־
אֶבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דָּבָר עָלָיו:

RASHI

וּלְהַתְּבַרֵּךְ בּוֹ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ: 19 כִּי יִדְעֲתוּ. לְשׁוֹן חֲבֵד,
כְּמוֹ: "מוֹדֵעַ לְאִישָׁה"²⁶, "הֵלֵא בְּעוֹ מוֹדַעְתָּנוּ"²⁷, וְאֶתְּעַרֵּךְ
בְּשֵׁם²⁸. וְאֶמְנָם עָקֵר לְשׁוֹן כֵּלָם אֵינוֹ אֵלָּא לְשׁוֹן יִידֵעָה,
שֶׁהַמְּחַבֵּב אֶת הָאָדָם מְקַרְבוֹ אֲצִלּוֹ וְיִודְעוֹ וּמַכִּירוֹ. וְלִמָּה
יִדְעֲתוּ? "לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא" — לְפִי שְׁהוּא מִצְוָה אֶת
בָּנָיו עָלֵי לְשִׁמּוֹר דְּרָכֵי. וְאֵם תִּפְרָשׁוּהוּ בְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: יִידֵעַ
אֲנִי בּוֹ שִׁיֵּצֵא אֶת בָּנָיו וְגו', אֵין "לְמַעַן" נוֹפֵל עַל
הַלְשׁוֹן: יֵצֵא. לְשׁוֹן הוֹדָה, כְּמוֹ²⁹: "כִּכָּה יַעֲשֶׂה אִיּוֹב":
לְמַעַן הָבִיא. כִּי הוּא מִצְוָה לְבָנָיו: שִׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה', כְּדִי
שִׁיבִיא ה' עַל אֶבְרָהָם וְגו'. "עַל בֵּית אֶבְרָהָם" לֹא נֶאֱמַר
אֵלָּא "עַל אֶבְרָהָם". לְמַדְנֵנוּ, כָּל הַמַּעֲמִיד בֵּן צָדִיק, כְּאֵלוֹ
אֵינוֹ מֵת:

16 וַיִּשְׁקְפוּ. כָּל "הַשְׁקָפָה" שֶׁבְּמִקְרָא לְרַעָה, חוּץ
מִ"הַשְׁקִיפָה מִמַּעַן קִדְשָׁךְ"²², שֶׁגָּדוֹל כֹּחַ מִתְּנוּת עֲנִיִּים
שְׁהוּפָה מִדַּת הָרָגוֹ לְרַחֲמִים: לְשַׁלְּחָם. לְלוֹוָתָם, כְּסִבּוֹר
אוֹרְחִים הֵם: 17 הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי. בְּתִמְנָה: אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה.
בְּסוּדָם. לֹא יָפָה לִי לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר זֶה שֶׁלֹּא מִדַּעְתּוֹ, אֲנִי
נִתְתִּי לוֹ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת, וְהַמֶּשֶׁה כְּרַפִּין הֵלְלוּ שְׁלוֹ
הֵן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר²³: "גָּבֹול הַכְּנַעֲנִי מִצִּידֵן וְגו' בְּאֶכָה סְדֻמָּה
וְעַמֶּרְהָ וְגו'. קִרְאֲתִי אוֹתוֹ "אֶבְרָהָם" — אֵב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם,
וְאֲשִׁמִּיד אֶת הַבָּנִים וְלֹא אוֹדִיעַ לָאֵב שְׁהוּא אוֹהֲבִי:
18 וְאֶבְרָהָם הָיוּ יְהוּה. מִדְּרַשׁ אֲגֻדָּה²⁴: "זָכַר צָדִיק
לְכַרְכָּה"²⁵ — הוֹאִיל וְהוֹכִירוֹ בְּרָכוֹ. וּפְשׁוּטוֹ: וְכִי מִמֶּנּוּ
אֲנִי מַעֲלִים, וְהָרִי הוּא חֲבִיב לְפָנַי לְהִיּוֹת לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל,

22. דברים כו, טו. 23. בראשית י, יט. 24. יומא לח, ב. 25. משלי י, ג. 26. רות ב, א. 27. רות ג, ב. 28. שמות לג, יז. 29. איוב א, ה.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

at the close of the meal, when our obligation as hosts is presumably over, we demonstrate that we were not acting out of mere obligation, but rather out of genuine interest in their overall welfare.

Abraham, the host par excellence, was therefore meticulous in escorting his guests.⁵³

18 Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation: The phrase "great and mighty" is not to be understood literally, since Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, never became "great" or "mighty," nei-

ther in numbers or power. Rather, the phrase means that each individual Jew is spiritually "great and mighty," possessing all the strength necessary to transmit the message of Torah and goodness to the world.⁵⁴

Through him all the nations of the world will be blessed: One of the manifestations of this promise is the immense contribution made by the Jewish people in all fields of human endeavor.⁵⁵

19 I cherish him because he instructs his children and his household after him: God's affection for Abraham

A CLOSER LOOK

[16] To escort them: Jewish law obligates us to escort our guests—ensuring that they not be exposed to danger—as part of our comprehensive duty to respect our fellow human beings. Where danger is not a factor, the extent of our obligation to escort our guests is a function of the degree of respect with which we are required to treat them: our students least, our friends more, and our parents and teach-

ers the most. The minimum requirement in any case is four cubits (2 meters or 6 feet). In dangerous areas, we must ascertain that our guests have arranged safe passage to their destination; the local rabbinic court is empowered to compel people to escort travelers or to use communal funds to hire escorts to accompany travelers to safety.⁵⁶

53. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 74. See *Mishneh Torah*, *Avel* 14:1. 54. *Sefer HaSichot* 5704, p. 165. 55. *Sefer HaSichot* 5704, p. 165. 56. *Mishneh Torah*, *Avel* 14:1-3.

16 The angel who had announced that Sarah would have a son, having carried out his mission, departed.⁴⁶ **The other two “men” rose from there and looked out over Sodom**, directing their attention to their next mission, which was to destroy the Cities of the Plain and rescue Lot from the destruction. In the twenty-four years that had elapsed since Lot had moved to Sodom,⁴⁷ he had not succeeded in reforming its inhabitants or the inhabitants of its neighboring cities. In fact, they had formalized their perversions of justice by giving them force of law. For example, they had made it illegal to feed the poor and the hungry, reasoning that it was unfair for those who toiled at earning a living to share with those who did not. Once, a young girl gave a poor man some bread; when her “crime” was discovered, they covered her body with honey and she was stung to death by bees. As she was dying, she cried out to God. Lot could not even rehabilitate his Sodomite wife from her ingrained inhospitableness. Once, when he asked her to give some salt to their guests, she chided him for his request, which she perceived as evil behavior. Lot did not succeed in reforming his neighbors because, despite the lip service he paid to Abraham’s lofty ideals, he inwardly tolerated their behavior and even admired it.⁴⁸ Therefore, even though he himself did not participate in their misdeeds, God nevertheless held him culpable for them.⁴⁹

Once the “men” delivered God’s message to him—and God affirmed their message—Abraham no longer thought they were pagans. But he still thought they were human beings, so when they left, **Abraham walked with them to escort them.**

Abraham Argues with God

17 **GOD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do to the inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain? They are part of the land that I promised him, so I should inform him of My plans. Furthermore, I have made him their ‘father’;⁵⁰ shall I destroy the children without telling the father?**

18 **How can I keep My plans secret from him, seeing that I love Abraham so much that I have promised him that he will surely become a great and mighty nation, and through him all the nations of the world will be blessed?**

19 **I have promised him these blessings for I cherish him, and I cherish him because he instructs his children and his household after him to keep God’s ways by acting with righteousness and justice so that they will earn My blessings. In fact, when he instructs them to follow My teachings, he adds explicitly, ‘so God will be able to bring about for Abraham everything He said concerning him.’ ”**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

16 **Abraham walked with the men to escort them:** The Talmud⁵¹ states that if we fail to provide our guests with proper escort when they take leave of us, it is as if we had killed them, since our negligence leaves them vulnerable to the dangers that may lurk on the road. Moreover, if we fail to escort our guests, they may get

the impression that we did not appreciate their company. By embarrassing them in this way, it is also as if we had killed them, since the Talmud points out that embarrassing someone, making them go pale, is a subtle form of “shedding blood.”⁵² On the other hand, when we take the trouble to escort them on their way

46. Rashi on 19:1, below. 47. Above, 13:10, 13. 48. Rashi on 19:33, below. 49. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 190, note 41. 50. Above, 17:5. 51. *Sotah* 46b. 52. *Bava Metzia* 58b.

ONKELOS

20 וַיֹּאמֶר יי קבילת סדום ועמורה
ארי סגיאית וחובתהון ארי תקיפת
לחרא: 21 אתגלי כען ואדון
הכבולתהון דעלת לקדמי עבדו
אעבד עמהון גמירא אם לא
תיבין ואם תיבין לא אתפרע:
22 ואתפניאו מתמן גבריא ואגלו
לסדום ואברהם עד כען משמש
בצלוי קדם יי: 23 וקרב אברהם

20 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה וְעַתָּה סָדָם וְעַמּוֹרָה בִּירְרָה וְהַטָּאֲתָם בִּי
כְבֹדָה מְאֹד: 21 אֲרֹדְהָנָא וְאַרְאֶה הַכְּצַעְקָתָהּ הַבָּאָה
אֵלַי עֲשׂוּ | כָּלָה וְאִם־לֹא אֲדַעָה: 22 וַיִּפְנֶוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים
וַיֵּלְכוּ סָדָמָה וְאַבְרָהָם עֹדְנֵוּ עִמָּד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: 23 וַיִּגַּשׁ
אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֵף תִּסְפָּה צְדִיק עִם־רָשָׁע:

RASHI

נקדת פסיק בין "עשו" ל"כלה", כדי להפריד תבה
מחברתה. ורבותינו דרשו: "הכצעקתה" צעקת ריבה
אחת שהרגוה במיתה משנה, על שנתנה מזון לעני,
כמפרש ב"חלק" 34: 22 ויפנו משם. ממקום שאברהם
לום שם: ואברהם עודנו עמד לפני ה'. והלא לא הלך
לעמוד לפניו, אלא. הקדוש ברוך הוא בא אצלו ואמר
לוי: "ועתה סדם ועמורה כי רבה", והיה לו לכתוב: "וה'
עודנו עומד לפני אברהם", אלא תקון סופרים הוא
זה: 23 ויגש אברהם. מצינו הגשה למלחמה: "ויגש
יואב" וגו', הגשה לפיוס: "ויגש אליו יהודה", והגשה
לתפלה: "ויגש אליהו הנביא". ולכל אלה נכנס
אברהם, לדבר קשות, ולפיוס, ולתפלה: האף תספה.
הגם תספה. ולתרגום של אנקלוס שתרגומו לשון רגז,
כך פרושו: "האף" ושיאף, ש"תספה צדיק עם רשע".

20 וַיֹּאמֶר ה'. אֵל אַבְרָהָם, שְׁעֵשָׂה בְּאִשְׁרָא אִמֶּר שְׁלֹא
יִכְסֶּה מִמֶּנּוּ: בִּי רָבָה. כָּל "רָבָה" שְׁבִמְקָרָא, הִטְעַם לְמִטָּה
בְּבִי"ת, לְפִי שֶׁהוּא מְתַרְגְּמִין "גְּדוּלָּה" או "גְּדֻלָּה וְהוֹלָכָת".
אָבֵל זֶה טַעְמוֹ לְמַעַלָּה בְּרִי"ש, לְפִי שְׁמִתְרָגְם "גְּדֻלָּה
בְּכָר", כְּמוֹ שֶׁפִּרְשְׁתִּי וְיִהְיֶה הַשְּׂמֵשׁ בָּאָה" 30, "הִנֵּה שָׂבָה
יְבִמְתָּךְ" 31. 21 אֲרֹדְהָנָא וְאַרְאֶה. לְמַד לְדִינִים שְׁלֹא
יִפְסְקוּ דִּינֵי נִפְשׁוֹת אֶלָּא בְּרָאִיה. הַכֹּל כְּמוֹ שֶׁפִּרְשְׁתִּי
בְּפִרְשַׁת הַפְּלָגָה 32. דְּבַר אַחֵר: "אֲרֹדְהָנָא" לְסוּף מַעֲשִׂיהֶם:
הַכְּצַעְקָתָהּ. שֶׁל מְדִינָה: הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עֲשׂוּ. וְאִם עֹמְדִים
בְּמִרְדָּם, כָּלָה אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה בָּהֶם. "וְאִם לֹא" יַעֲמְדוּ בְּמִרְדָּן,
"אֲדַעָה" מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לְהַפְרֵעַ מִהֶן בִּסְוִרִין, וְלֹא אֶכְלָה
אוֹתָן. וְכִיּוֹצֵא בּוֹ מְצִינוּ בְּמִקּוֹם אַחֵר 33: "וְעַתָּה הוֹרֵד
עֲדִיךָ מֵעֲלֶיךָ, וְאֲדַעָה מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לָּךְ". וְלִפְיָךְ יֵשׁ הַפֶּסֶק

30. בראשית טו, יז. 31. רות א, טו. 32. בראשית יא, ה. 33. שמות לג, ה.
34. סנהדרין קט, ב. 35. פסוק כ. 36. שמואל א י, יג. 37. בראשית מד, יח. 38. מלכים א יח, לו.

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all in need.

But it does not suffice to awaken God's attribute of mercy alone; we must also awaken His attribute of justice, since without it, God's mercy would act indiscriminately, sustaining negative forces as well. We awaken God's attribute of justice by examining the resources with which God has blessed us, determining what portion is really necessary for our own sustenance and what portion is superfluous, and then donating the surplus to charity rather than spending it on luxuries for ourselves.⁶⁸ Furthermore, when we receive additional bounty from God, we should train ourselves to feel that we do not deserve to use it for ourselves when others have much less. This practice of self-imposed scrutiny will inspire us to give even more generously.⁶⁹

This was precisely the manner in which Abraham dispensed charity, with both "righteousness and justice."⁷⁰

We must also apply this practice of self-scrutiny to spiritual charity: it should be unthinkable for us to indulge in the luxury of secluding ourselves from the

outside world, selfishly immersing ourselves in Torah study and prayer, while ignoring the spiritual plight of those who are ignorant of the basics of Jewish religion and life.⁷¹

23 He came forward...to confront God—to argue sternly with Him, to appease Him, and to pray to Him: As we have seen, Abraham epitomized the attribute of loving-kindness. Centuries later, God would even refer to him as "the one who loved Me."⁷² It therefore seems incongruous with his basic nature that Abraham would argue sternly with anyone, let alone God. What's more, arguing vehemently was the first approach he employed; certainly it would have been more logical and in keeping with his nature to first try prayer and appeasement, only then resorting to argument if the other methods failed.

The solution to the first inconsistency is as follows: Although it is true that Abraham had a naturally kind disposition, he harnessed it entirely for the fulfillment of God's will. His kindness was therefore subject to the discretion of his rational intellect; he was not above acting sternly when the occasion called for it. This leads

68. Torah Or 63b. 69. Sefer HaMa'amarim Yiddish, p. 205. 70. See Likutei Sichot, vol. 25, p. 84. 71. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, p. 148. 72. Isaiah 41:8; Sotah 31a.

20 So, as He said he would, God said to Abraham, “Because the outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah has become great, and their sin is very grave,

21 I will descend—as I did before the Dispersion,⁵⁷ in order to demonstrate that a judge should not render a verdict until first carefully examining the evidence—and see: if their deeds have matched the outcry that has come before Me—if they are indeed as depraved as the outcry that I have heard against their misdeeds would indicate (such as the cry of the girl they covered with honey⁵⁸), and they have not yet repented—I will annihilate them. If not, then I will know what less-severe punishment to impose on them.”

22 But Abraham knew full well that the inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain were corrupt. The men he was escorting turned from the place to which Abraham had accompanied them and headed toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before God, listening to His words. Abraham understood that these men were on their way to destroy Sodom.

23 He figuratively “came forward,” i.e., prepared himself emotionally to confront God—to argue sternly with Him, to appease Him, and to pray to Him. Seeing that there was very little time left, he began by arguing with God,⁵⁹ and said, “Would You in your anger blot out the righteous along with the wicked?!”

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

stemmed primarily from the fact that he educated both his family and his followers in the ways of monotheism and Godly morality. The fact that he taught and inspired others was more precious to God than all of Abraham’s personal spiritual accomplishments as well as the tests he overcame.⁶⁰

Abraham’s love for God and commitment to Him was unparalleled. This is why God considered it insolent for anyone else to even use the same expression of humble readiness (*Hineni*—“Here I am”⁶¹) used by Abraham. When Moses responded to God’s call using this expression,⁶² God chastised him for doing so, saying, “Do not presume to stand in the place of great ones!”⁶³

Abraham’s commitment to God was so absolute that he was even prepared to sacrifice his life for Him, should the need to do so arise. This preparedness became an ingrained part of Abraham’s nature.

In this sense, Abraham’s willingness to give up his life may be contrasted with that of the Talmudic sage, Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva, aware that giving up one’s life for God earns one the most sublime union with Him, actually prayed for just such an opportunity. Therefore, when the Romans brutally tortured him to death for his beliefs, he was ecstatic that his prayers had been answered.⁶⁴ In contrast, however, Abraham’s readiness to give up his life was unpremeditated: his attitude

was that, were he to be faced with this sacrifice during the course of fulfilling his Divine mission, it would not intimidate him; were he not, neither would he be disappointed. Since he did not view giving up his life as an end in and of itself, he therefore felt no satisfaction when called upon to give up his life for his beliefs. In fact, he was frustrated when King Nimrod threatened his life and imprisoned him for his monotheistic views,⁶⁵ since during his imprisonment he was not free to teach the world about God.⁶⁶

Abraham bequeathed this selfless devotion to God to his descendants, and it subsequently became a hereditary Jewish trait. Indeed, over the generations, many of even the simplest of our people have willingly given up their lives rather than deny their connection to God for even a moment.⁶⁷

To keep God’s way by acting with righteousness [tzedakah] and justice: On a deeper level, “keeping God’s way” means ensuring that God continuously recreate and sustain the world through the Divine Name *Havayah*, which is synonymous with His attribute of mercy. When God channels His creative, sustaining energy through His attribute of mercy, the world is blessed with an abundance of spiritual and material beneficence. We motivate God to use His mercy in this way by awakening and activating our own mercy towards others, dispensing charity (*tzedakah*) to

57. Above, 11:5. 58. Above, v. 16. 59. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 55-58. 60. *HaYom Yom*, 8 Tamuz. 61. Below, 22:1. 62. Exodus 3:4. 63. *Devarim Rabbah* 2:7. 64. *Berachot* 61b. 65. *Bava Batra* 91a; *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer* 26. 66. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5700, p. 30; *Sefer HaMa’amarim Bati L’Gani*, vol. 1, p. 31 (*Bati L’Gani* 5711, section 3); *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, p. 159. 67. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5710, p. 279; see *Tanya*, chapters 18-19.

ONKELOS

ואמר הברגו תשיצי זכאה עם
חייבא: 24 מאים אית חמשין
זכאין בגו קרתא הברגו תשיצי
ולא תשבוק לאתרא בדיל חמשין
זכאין די בגוה: 25 קושטא אגון
דיניך מלמעבד כפתגמא הדין
לשיצאה זכאה עם חייבא ויהי
זכאה כחייבא קושטא אגון דיניך
הדין כל ארעא לא יעביד דינא:
26 ואמר ? אם אשבח בסדום
חמשין זכאין בגו קרתא ואשבוק
לכל אתרא בדלהון: 27 ואתיב
אברהם ואמר הא כען אסגיתי
למללא קדם ? ואנא עפר וקטם:

24 אולי יש חמשים צדיקים בתוך העיר האף תספה
ולא תשא למקום למען חמשים הצדיקים אשר בקרבה:
25 חללה לך מעשת | בדבר הזה להמית צדיק עם-
רשע והיה כצדיק כרשע חללה לך השפט כל-הארץ
לא יעשה משפט: 26 ואמר יהוה אם-אמצא בסדם
חמשים צדיקים בתוך העיר ונשאתי לכל-המקום
בעבורם: 27 ויען אברהם ואמר הנה-נא הואלתי לדבר
אל-אדני ואנכי עפר ואפר:

RASHI

של "השפט", לשון תמיהה: וכי מי שהוא שופט לא יעשה
משפט אמת: 26 אם אמצא בסדם וגו' לכל המקום.
לכל הכרבים. לפי שסדום היתה מטרפולין וחשובה
מכלם, תלה בה הכתוב: 27 ואנכי עפר ואפר. וכבר
הייתי ראוי להיות עפר על ידי המלכים, ואפר על ידי
נמרוד, לולי רחמיך אשר עמדו לי:

24 אולי יש חמשים צדיקים. עשרה צדיקים לכל כרך
וכרך, כי חמשה מקומות יש: 25 חללה לך. ואם תאמר:
לא יצילו הצדיקים את הרשעים, למה תמית הצדיקים:
חללה לך. חלין הוא לך, יאמרו: כף היא אמונתו, שוטף
הכל צדיקים ורשעים, כף עשית לדור המבול ולדור
הפלגה: בדבר הזה. לא הוא ולא ביוצא בו: חללה לך.
לעולם הבא: השפט כל הארץ. נקוד בחט"ף פתח ה"א

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that halfhearted efforts will bear fruit. Like Abraham, we, too, must "come forward," throwing ourselves selflessly into our efforts to save the other person. Only then are we assured success.⁷⁵

Would You in your anger blot out the righteous together with the wicked?: Here we see another one of Abraham's innovations: he was the first person in history to speak up in defense of others. The Midrash relates that Abraham declared to God, "If You want the world to exist, strict judgment cannot also exist; if You want strict judgment to exist, the world cannot also exist." God replied: "Because you seek to justify My creatures' behavior, I will reward you by anointing you as My chosen one, which I have never done for another. Furthermore, in all the ten generations that have passed since Noah and the generation of the Flood, you are the first person with whom I have communed."⁷⁶

The Midrash therefore asserts that it is this merit of Abraham's that sustains the world. In the verse, "These are the chronicles of heaven and earth, having been created on the day that God made earth and heaven,"⁷⁷ the letters of the word for "having been created" (בהבראם) can be rearranged to spell the word for "in [or with] Abraham" (באברהם). The verse can then be understood to mean that God created heaven and earth in the merit

of Abraham,⁷⁸ since he was the first to speak up in defense of God's creatures.⁷⁹

27 I am dust and ashes: As we have seen in the episode of his hospitality to the angels,⁸⁰ Abraham's descendants were later to receive certain commandments from God in the merit of his good deeds. In the merit of Abraham's outstanding humility—in referring to himself as "dust and ashes"—God gave the Jewish people two commandments:⁸¹ (a) the precept of the red cow,⁸² in which a solution made with its ashes is used to ritually purify a person who been defiled through contact with a corpse; and (b) the precept of the bitter waters, in which a suspected adulteress is administered a solution prepared with dust from the Temple's floor in order to determine her innocence or guilt.⁸³

The connection between Abraham's humble declaration and these two commandments appears at first glance to be merely coincidental. However, upon deeper reflection, it becomes clear that the two are indeed inherently related, and that in fact, God's bestowal of these commandments on Abraham's descendants as a reward for his humility is profoundly appropriate, "measure for measure":⁸⁴

Abraham described himself as "dust and ashes" because he truly considered himself less worthy than

75. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 58-59. 76. *Bereishit Rabbah* 49:9. 77. Above, 2:4. 78. *Bereishit Rabbah* 12:9. 79. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5686, p. 108. 80. Above, on verse 4. 81. *Sotah* 17a. 82. See Numbers 19:2. 83. See Numbers 5:12. 84. *Sotah* 8b.

24 There are five cities in this plain. **What if there were fifty righteous people in the city** of Sodom and its four neighboring cities? Ten people constitute a communal entity; their collective merit should suffice for You to redeem one city; the collective merit of five such groups should suffice to redeem all five cities. But even if their merit is not sufficient to redeem the *rest* of the people, what about the righteous individuals themselves?⁷³ **Would You still wipe out the place and not spare it for the sake of the fifty righteous people that are within it?"**

When the angels perceived that Abraham was pleading the case of the Cities of the Plain, they began to walk at a slower pace in order to give him more time to plead his case.⁷⁴

25 Abraham then began to appease God, saying, "Furthermore, **it would be sacrilegious for You to do such a thing—to bring death upon the righteous along with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked fare alike.** It will look like You are acting unjustly! Do you want people to think that You also punished the generations of the Flood and the Dispersion unjustly?" To this God replied, "If you wish, I will review the cases you just mentioned in your presence, and you can tell Me if I acted justly or not." Abraham answered, "No, **that would also be sacrilegious to You!** You do not need to justify your actions to any creature—neither in this world nor in the afterlife, when our perspective will be broader than it is in this life. Notwithstanding, in *this* case, do you mean to punish the righteous along with the wicked? **Shall the Judge of the whole world not judge fairly?!"**

26 **God said,** "I will not hesitate to destroy a city even though doing so will bring about the deaths of righteous individuals who also live there—and this is not being unjust. Their failure to sway the others away from their wicked behavior proves that their righteousness is only partial; they are thus implicated in the wrongdoings of the majority. However, I agree to recognize the collective merit of ten righteous individuals, as you have requested. Therefore, **if I find in Sodom and its four neighboring cities fifty righteous people within them, I will spare the entire area for their sake.**" So God examined the inhabitants of the five cities, but did not find fifty righteous people among them.

27 So **Abraham responded and said,** this time couching his request in the form of a prayer, **"I have begun to speak to my Lord** on behalf of these people, **because I** myself have enjoyed Your beneficent mercy: I would have been reduced to **dust** by the alliance of kings **and to ashes** by Nimrod were it not for You!

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

us to the solution to the second inconsistency: when Abraham saw that the annihilation of the cities was already underway—the angels were headed toward Sodom—he realized that his first option had to be to *demand* of God to annul the decree—in order to (paradoxically) fulfill God's will of treating His creatures with loving-kindness.

Similarly, when we are presented with the opportunity to save another person, either physically or spiritually, we must not hesitate. We should immediately do all in our power to come to the person's aid, even if that means acting in direct opposition to the dictates of our natural dispositions.

Secondly, we must not delude ourselves into thinking

⁷³ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 190, note 41. ⁷⁴ Rashi on 19:1, below.

ONKELOS

28 מאים יחסרון חמשים הצדיקם חמשה התשחית
בחמשה את כל העיר ויאמר לא אשחית אם-אמצא
שם ארבעים וחמשה: 29 ויסף עוד לדבר אליו ויאמר
אולי ימצאון שם ארבעים ויאמר לא אעשה בעבור
הארבעים: 30 ויאמר אל-נא יחר לאדני ואדברה אולי
ימצאון שם שלשים ויאמר לא אעשה אם-אמצא שם
שלשים: 31 ויאמר הנה-נא הואלתי לדבר אל-אדני
אולי ימצאון שם עשרים ויאמר לא אשחית בעבור
העשרים: 32 ויאמר אל-נא יחר לאדני ואדברה אך-
הפעם אולי ימצאון שם עשרה ויאמר לא אשחית
בעבור העשרה:

RASHI

יצילו אחד מהם: 31 הואלתי, רצייתי, כמוי: "ויואל
משה": 32 אולי ימצאון שם עשרה, על פחות לא
בקש, אמר: דור המבול היו שמונה — נח ובניו ונשיהם,
ולא הצילו על דורם. ועל תשעה על ידי צורח, כבר
בקש ולא מצא:

28 התשחית בחמשה. והרי הן תשעה לכל כרף, ואתה
צדיקו של עולם תצטרף עמם: 29 אולי ימצאון שם
ארבעים. וימלטו ארבעה הכרבים. וכן שלשים יצילו
שלשה מהם, או עשרים יצילו שנים מהם, או עשרה
שמות ב, כא. 39

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

anyone else, just as dust and ashes are trampled underfoot by everyone. He therefore did not hesitate to help others, even if doing so entailed endangering his own life. As we have seen, Abraham risked his life in going into battle against the four kings to save his nephew Lot.⁸⁵ Similarly, in this episode, Abraham risks angering God for the sake of the inhabitants of Sodom.⁸⁶

Furthermore: Not only was Abraham ready to sacrifice his physical wellbeing for the benefit of others, he was prepared to forego lofty spiritual experiences for their benefit as well. As we saw above,⁸⁷ Abraham actually interrupted his conversation with God in order to offer hospitality to guests.

In the merit of this selflessness, Abraham's descendants received two commandments that epitomize the value of sacrificing one's own spiritual wellbeing for the sake of others:

- The priest who performed the purification process with the ashes of the red cow became automatically ritually defiled by doing so.⁸⁸ In other words, the priest, whose function was to officiate in the Temple in a state of holiness and purity, was called upon to

give up that very holiness and purity in order to purify someone who had become ritually defiled.

- In preparing the solution to be administered to the suspected adulteress (which would prove her innocence or guilt), the priest would take a parchment inscribed with part of a specific verse from the Torah, which included God's Name, and submerge it in water, thus causing the words from the parchment to be erased. As the Talmud points out,⁸⁹ God is ready to have His Name erased in order to restore peace between husband and wife (when, hopefully, the waters will prove the wife's innocence). The priest is permitted, and, yes, even required, to commit the unthinkable act of erasing God's Name to help others.

Abraham bequeathed to us this capacity to sacrifice our own personal wellbeing for the sake of others. We, as his heirs, must act in this manner even if the beneficiaries of our sacrifice have become "defiled" through contact with "death" (the opposite of holiness, which is life⁹⁰); or even for those who have behaved in such a manner as to have been suspected of immorality.⁹¹

85. See above, 14:13. 86. See *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5689, p. 96. 87. Above 18:2. 88. Numbers 19:7-10. 89. *Shabbat* 116a. 90. See Deuteronomy 4:4. 91. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, pp. 79-85.

28 What if there were five missing from the fifty righteous people? That would still leave nine for each city, and You could count Yourself as the tenth. **Would You destroy the entire city** and its four neighboring cities **because of the lack of five people?**”

And He replied, “I will not destroy the region **if I find forty-five** righteous people living **there.”** But God examined the cities again and did not find forty-five righteous people among them.

29 So Abraham spoke to Him again and said, “What if forty were to be found there, ten for each of the four cities? You could spare four and destroy only one.”

And He said, “I will not take action against the four cities, **for the sake of the forty** righteous people living therein.” But upon reexamining the cities, God did not find even forty righteous people among the inhabitants. Abraham then asked God to save four cities for the sake of thirty-six righteous people, counting God as the tenth for each city. God agreed, but thirty-six righteous people could not be found, either.

30 Then Abraham said, “Let not my God be angry, but let me speak. What if thirty were to be found there? You could spare three cities.”

And He said, “I will not act against the three cities **if I find thirty** righteous people **there.”** But upon examining the cities once again, God did not find thirty righteous people living therein. Abraham then asked God to save three cities for the sake of twenty-seven righteous people, counting God as the tenth for each city. God agreed, but twenty-seven righteous people could not be found, either.

31 Again, Abraham said, “I would like to speak further to my God on their behalf! **What if twenty were to be found there?** You could spare two cities.”

And He said, “I will not destroy the two cities, **for the sake of the twenty** righteous people living in them.” But still, God could not find twenty righteous people among them. Abraham then asked God to save two cities for the sake of eighteen righteous people, counting God as the tenth for both cities. God once again agreed, but eighteen righteous people could not be found, either.

32 Abraham then said, “Let not my God be angry, but I will speak just this one last time. What if ten were to be found there? You could spare one city.”

And He said, “I will not destroy it, for the sake of the ten.” But ten righteous people living in the cities could not be found, either. Abraham then asked God to save one city for the sake of nine righteous people, counting God as the tenth. God agreed, but nine righteous people could not be found, either. Abraham did not ask God to save a city for the sake of eight righteous people, knowing that Noah, his sons, and their wives had totaled eight righteous people, and yet their combined merit was not sufficient to save their generation. So Abraham stopped pleading on their behalf.

ONKELOS

33 וְאִתְּמַלַּק יִקְרָא דִּינִי בְּדִ שְׂמִינִי
לְמַלְלָא עִם אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם תֵּב
לְאַתְרָהּ: 19:1 וְעָלוּ תְרִין מְלָאכִי
לְסֻדּוֹם בְּרִמְשָׁא וְלוֹט יֵתֵב בְּתַרְעָא
דְּסֻדּוֹם וְחֻזָּא לוֹט וְקָם לְקַדְמוּתָהוֹן
וְסָגִיד עַל אַפּוֹהִי עַל אֶרְעָא:
2 וְאָמַר בְּבִעוּ כְעֵן רַבּוֹנִי זִירוּ
כְעֵן לְבֵית עַבְדְּכוֹן וּבֵיתוֹ וְאִסְחוּ
רַגְלֵיכוֹן וְתַקְדְּמוּן וְתַחֲבוּן לְאַרְחֻכוֹן
וְאָמְרוּ לֹא אֱלֹהִין בְּרַחוּבָא נָבִית:
3 וְאַתְקִיף בְּהוֹן לְחֻדָּא וְזִירוּ לְוִתָּהּ
וְעָלוּ לְבֵיתָהּ וְעַבְדוּ לְהוֹן מִשְׁתָּנָא
וּפְטִיר אָפָא לְהוֹן וְאַכְלוּ: 4 עַד לֹא
שְׂכִיבּוּ וְאִנְשֵׁי קָרְתָא אִנְשֵׁי סֻדּוֹם
אִקְפּוּ עַל בֵּיתָא מִעוֹלָמָא וְעַד
סְבָא כָּל עַמָּא מְסוּפָה:

33 וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה כְּאִשֶּׁר כָּלָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל-אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם
שָׁב לְמִקְמוֹ:

שלישי 19:1 וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמְּלָאכִים סְדֹמָה בְּעֶרְבַּ וְלוֹט
יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-סְדֹם וַיֵּרָא-לוֹט וַיִּקָּם לִקְרֹאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ
אֲפָיִם אֶרְצָה: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא-אֲדֹנִי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל-
בֵּית עַבְדְּכֶם וְלִנְעוּ וּרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם
לְדֶרֶכְכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִי בְּרַחוּב נָלִין: 3 וַיַּפְצֵר-בָּם מְאֹד
וַיִּסְרוּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתָּהּ וּמִצּוֹת
אָפָה וַיֹּאכְלוּ: 4 טָרֶם יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְאִנְשֵׁי הָעִיר אִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם
נָסְבוּ עַל-הַבַּיִת מִנֶּעַר וְעַד-זָקֵן כָּל-הָעָם מִקְצָה:

RASHI

לְרַחוּץ? וְעוֹד, שֶׁהָיָה אַבְרָהָם אָמַר לָהֶם תַּחֲלָה: "רַחֲצוּ
רַגְלֵיכֶם?" אָלָּא, כִּי אָמַר לוֹט: אִם כְּשִׁיבֹאוּ אִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם
וַיֵּרָאוּ שְׂכָבָר רַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם, יַעֲלִילוּ עָלַי וַיֹּאמְרוּ: כִּבְר
עֲבָרוּ שְׁנֵי יָמִים אוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה שָׁבָאוּ לְבֵיתָךְ וְלֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנוּ,
לְפִיכָּךְ אָמַר: מוֹטֵב שְׂמִיתָעֲבָבוּ כָּאֵן בְּאִבְךָ רַגְלֵיכֶם שֶׁהָיוּ
נִרְאִין כְּמוֹ שְׂבָאוּ עֲכָשׁוּ, לְפִיכָּךְ אָמַר: "לִנְעוּ" תַּחֲלָה,
וְאַחֵר כִּי "רַחֲצוּ": וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא. וְלֹא אַבְרָהָם אָמְרוּ: "כֵּן
תַּעֲשֶׂה". מִכָּאֵן שֶׁמִּסְרָבִין לְקָטֵן וְאִין מִסְרָבִין לְגִדּוֹל: כִּי
בְּרַחוּב נָלִין. הָרִי "כִּי" מִשְׁמַשׁ בְּלִשׁוֹן אֶלָּא, שֶׁאָמְרוּ: לֹא
נִסּוּר אֵל בֵּיתָךְ, אֶלָּא בְּרַחוּבָה שֶׁל עִיר נָלִין: 3 וַיִּסְרוּ
אֵלָיו. עָקְמוּ אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ לְצַד בֵּיתוֹ: וּמִצּוֹת אָפָה. פָּסַח
הָיָה: 4 טָרֶם יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְאִנְשֵׁי הָעִיר אִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם. כִּי
נִדְרָשׁ בְּבִרְאשִׁית רַבָּה: "טָרֶם יִשְׁכְּבוּ, וְאִנְשֵׁי הָעִיר"
הָיוּ בְּפִיָּהֶם שֶׁל מְלָאכִים, שֶׁהָיוּ שׂוֹאֲלִים לְלוֹט: מַה
טִיבָם וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם? וְהוּא אוֹמַר לָהֶם: רַבָּם רְשָׁעִים. עוֹדָם
מִדְּבָרִים בָּהֶם, "וְאִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם" וְגו'. וּפְשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא:
"וְאִנְשֵׁי הָעִיר" אִנְשֵׁי רְשָׁעִים, "נָסְבוּ עַל הַבַּיִת". וְעַל שֶׁהָיוּ
רְשָׁעִים נִקְרָאִים "אִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם", כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב:
"וְאִנְשֵׁי סְדֹם רָעִים וְחָטְאִים": כָּל הָעָם מִקְצָה.
הָעִיר עַד הַקְצָה, שֶׁאִין אֶחָד מוֹחָה בִּידָם, שֶׁאִפְלוּ צָדִיק
אֶחָד אִין בָּהֶם:

33 וַיֵּלֶךְ ה' וְגו'. כִּינּוּ שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּמֵּת הַסַּנְגּוֹר, הֵלֶךְ לוֹ הַדִּין:
וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמִקְמוֹ. נִסְתַּלַּק הַדִּין נִסְתַּלַּק הַסַּנְגּוֹר,
וְהַקְטָגוֹר מִקְטָרָג, וְלִפְיָךְ "וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמְּלָאכִים סְדֹמָה"
לְהִשְׁחִית. אֶחָד לְהִשְׁחִית אֶת סְדֹם, וְאֶחָד לְהַצִּיל אֶת
לוֹט, וְהוּא אוֹתוֹ שָׁבָא לְרַפְּאוֹת אֶת אַבְרָהָם. וְהַשְׁלִישִׁי
שָׁבָא לְבָשֵׁר אֶת שָׂרָה — כִּינּוּ שֶׁעָשָׂה שְׁלִיחוֹתוֹ נִסְתַּלַּק
לוֹ: 1 הַמְּלָאכִים. וְהֵלֶךְ קָרָאם "אִנְשִׁים"? כִּשְׁהָיְתָה
שְׂכִינָה עִמָּהֶם קָרָאם "אִנְשִׁים". דְּבָר אַחֵר: אֲצֵל אַבְרָהָם,
שֶׁכָּחוּ גִדּוֹל וְהָיוּ הַמְּלָאכִים תּוֹדִירִין אֲצֵלוֹ כְּאִנְשִׁים,
קָרָאם "אִנְשִׁים", וְאֲצֵל לוֹט קָרָאם "מְלָאכִים": בְּעֶרְבַּ.
וְכִי כָּל כִּי שָׁהוּ הַמְּלָאכִים מִחֻבְרוֹן לְסְדוֹם? אֶלָּא, מְלָאכִי
רַחֲמִים הָיוּ, וּמִמְתִּינִים שֶׁמָּא יוֹכַל אַבְרָהָם לְלַמֵּד עֲלֵיהֶם
סַנְגּוֹרָא: וְלוֹט יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר סְדֹם. "יֹשֵׁב" כְּתִיב, אוֹתוֹ
הַיּוֹם מִנּוּחֹה שׁוּפֵט עֲלֵיהֶם: וַיֵּרָא לוֹט וְגו'. מִבֵּית אַבְרָהָם
לְמַד לְחֹזֵר עַל הָאוֹרְחִים: 2 הִנֵּה נָא אֲדֹנִי. הִנֵּה נָא
אֲתֶם אֲדוֹנִים לִי, אַחֵר שֶׁעֲבַרְתֶּם עָלַי. דְּבָר אַחֵר: הִנֵּה
נָא צְרִיכִים אֲתֶם לָתֵת לֵב עַל הָרְשָׁעִים הֵלְלוּ, שֶׁלֹּא
יִכִּירוּ בָכֶם. וְזוֹ הִיא עֲצָה נְכוֹנָה: סוּרוּ נָא. עָקְמוּ אֶת
הַדֶּרֶךְ לְבֵיתִי דֶּרֶךְ עֲקָלְתוֹן, שֶׁלֹּא יִכִּירוּ שֶׁאֲתֶם נִכְנָסִים
שָׁם, לְכָךְ נֹאמַר "סוּרוּ". בְּרִאשִׁית רַבָּה: "וְלִנְעוּ וּרְחֲצוּ
רַגְלֵיכֶם. וְכִי דִרְכּוֹן שֶׁל בְּנֵי אָדָם לָלוֹן תַּחֲלָה וְאַחֵר כִּי

40. שם, ב. 41. נ. ד. 42. בראשית יח, 43. בראשית יח, 44. נ. ה. 45. בראשית יג, יג.

33 Seeing that the “defending attorney” had finished his plea, **GOD**, the “judge,” figuratively **departed** from the “courtroom” **when He had finished speaking to Abraham. Abraham returned to his home.**

The Destruction of the Cities of the Plain

- ◆ **Third Reading 19:1** The two angels were walking so slowly⁹² that they **arrived in Sodom only in the evening.** The Torah here refers to the angels as “angels,” rather than as “men,” because (a) God does not speak in this part of the narrative, and because (b) Lot was not as accustomed to being visited by angels as was Abraham.⁹³ **Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom;** he had been appointed on that very day as their chief judge, and the court was located at the gate of the city;⁹⁴ furthermore, he was on the lookout for guests, as Abraham had trained him in the ways of hospitality. Although Lot was neither one of the founders of Sodom nor a member of its elite, its inhabitants recognized that, being a relative of Abraham, he would be the most likely to render impartial judgments.⁹⁵ **Lot saw them and rose to greet them, and prostrated himself on the ground.**

2 He said, “Please, my lords, be aware that this city is inhospitable to guests, and its inhabitants will harm anyone they see lodging wayfarers. Therefore, **turn aside** and take a circuitous route **to your servant’s house** so no one will notice you entering it. **Spend the night, bathe your feet, and then wake up early and continue on your way.** Please do not refuse me, for now that we have met, it would be an insult to me if you did not lodge at my house.” Unlike Abraham,⁹⁶ Lot was not concerned that the guests might be dirt-worshipping pagans who might bring an object of idol worship into his home. Furthermore, he actually *wanted* their feet to remain dirty in order that, were he to be discovered and accused of having hosted them for several days, it would at least appear that they had just arrived.

They replied, “No, we will spend the night in the city square instead.” They had no hesitations about refusing Lot’s invitation, because his social status was not as high as Abraham’s.⁹⁷

3 He pleaded with them strongly, so in the end they acceded to his request. **They turned his way and entered his house** via a circuitous route, as he had requested. **He made a feast for them and** because it was Passover, and he had learned from Abraham to observe the commandments that would in the future be given to the Jewish people; **he baked matzos for them, and they ate.**

4 The angels asked Lot about the people of Sodom and of the other four cities. Lot replied truthfully that they were wicked people, but at the same time tried to offer excuses for their behavior.⁹⁸ **They had not yet gone to bed when the townspeople, the wicked men of Sodom, surrounded the house—led by the young and followed by the old,⁹⁹ all the people from every quarter.** Even though it was clear that the people who had converged on Lot’s house had come with the intention of doing evil to the guests, no one in the whole city protested.

92. Above, 18:24. 93. See 18:2, above. 94. See Deuteronomy 16:18; *Hitva’aduyot* 5747, vol. 1, p. 518. 95. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 321.

96. Above, 18:4. 97. See 18:5, above. 98. Rashi on v. 12, below. 99. Rashi on v. 11, below.

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5 וקר ללוט ואמרו לה אן גבריא דאתו לותה לותה בליא אפיקון לותנא ונדע יתהון: 6 ונפק לותהון לוט לתרעא ודשא אחד בתרזה: 7 ואמר בבכו כען אחי לא תבאישון: 8 הא כען לי תרתין בנו דלא ידענין גבר אפק כען יתהון לותכון ועבדיו להון כדתקון בעניכון לחוד לגבריא האלון לא תעבדון מדעם ארי על פן עלו בטלל שרותי: 9 ואמרו קרב להלא ואמרו חד אתא לאתותבא והא דאין דינא כען נבאיש לך מדלחון ואתקיפו בגברא בלוט לתרא וקריבו למתבר דשא: 10 ואושיטו גבריא ית ידיהון ואעילו ית לוט לותהון לבייתא וית דשא אחד: 11 וית גבריא די בתרע ביתא מחו בשבריריא מועירא ועד רבא ולאיו לאשכחא תרעא: 12 ואמרו גבריא ללוט עוד מאן לך הכא חתנא ובניך ובנתך וכל די לך בקרתא אפיק מן אתרא: 13 ארי מחבלין אנחנא ית אתרא הדין ארי סגיאת קבלתהון קדם יי ושלחנא יי לחבלותה: 14 ונפק לוט ומליל עם חתנוהי נסבי בנתה ואמר קומו פוקו מן אתרא הדין ארי מחבל יי ית קרתא והוה כמחוק בעיני חתנוהי: 15 וכמסק צפרא הוה ודחיקו מלאכיא בלוט למימר קום דבר ית אתתך וית תרתין בנתך דאשתכחא מהימן עמך דלמא תלקי בחובי קרתא:

5 ויקראו אלילוט ויאמרו לו איה האנשים אשר-באו אליך הלילה הוציאם אלינו ונדעה אתם: 6 ויצא אליהם לוט הפתחה והדלת סגר אחריו: 7 ויאמר אל-נא אחי תרענו: 8 הנה-נא לי שתי בנות אשר לא-ידעו איש אוציאה-נא אתהן אליכם ועשו להן כטוב בעיניכם רק לאנשים האל אל-תעשו דבר פיעל-כן באו בצל קרתי: 9 ויאמרו גשיהלאה ויאמרו האחד באלגור וישפט שפוט עתה נרע לך מהם ויפצרו באיש בלוט מאד וינשו לשבר הדלת: 10 וישלחו האנשים את-ידם ויביאו את-לוט אליהם הביתה ואת-הדלת סגרו: 11 ואת-האנשים אשר-פתח הפית הבו בפסגורים מקמן ועד-גדול וילאו למצא הפתח: 12 ויאמרו האנשים אלילוט עד מילך פה חתן ובניך ובנתיך וכל אשר-לך בעיר הוצא מן-המקום: 13 כי-משחתים אנחנו את-המקום הזה כי-גדלה צעקתם את-פני יהוה וישלחנו יהוה לשחתה: 14 ויצא לוט וידבר אל-חתניו לקחתי בנתי ויאמר קומו צאו מן-המקום הזה כי-משחתית יהוה את-העיר ויהי כמצחק בעיני חתניו: 15 וכמו השחר עלה ואיצו המלאכים בלוט לאמר קום קח את-אשתך ואת-שתי בנתיך הנמצאת פת-תספה בעון העיר:

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גש הלאה, לשון נחת. ועל שהיה מליץ על האורחים, אמרו: "האחד בא לגור", אדם נכרי יחיד אתה בינינו שבאת לגור, "וישפט שפוט", שנעשית מוכיח אותנו: **הדלת**. הסובבת לנעול ולפתוח: 11 **פתח**. הוא החלל שבו נכנסין ויוצאין: **בסגורים**. מכת עורון: **מקמן ועד גדול**. הקטנים התחילו בעברה תחלה, שנאמר: "מזער ועד זקן", לפיכך התחילה הפרענות מהם: 12 **עד מי לך פה**. פשוטו של מקרא: מי יש לך עוד בעיר הזאת, חוץ מאשתך ובנותיך שבבית: **חתן ובניך ובנתיך**. אם יש לך חתן, או בנים ובנות, "הוצא מן המקום", **ובניך**. בני בנותיך הנשואות. ומדרש אגודה: "עוד", מאחר שעושין נבלה בזאת, מי לך פתחון פה ללמד סגוריא

5 ונדעה אתם. במשכב זכר, כמו: 44. "אשר לא ידעו איש"; 8 **האל**. כמו "האלה": **כי על פן באו**. כי הטובה הזאת תעשו לכבודי, על אשר באו בצל קרתי. תרגום: "בטלל שרותי". תרגום של "קורה" — "שרותא": 9 ויאמרו גש הלאה. קרב להלאה, כלומר, התקרב לצדידן והתרחק ממנו. וכן כל "הלאה" שבמקרא לשון רחוק, כמו: "ורה הלאה" 47, "הנה הוצאים ממך והלאה" 48. "גש הלאה" — המשך להלך. בלשון לעז טריטידנו"ש 49. ודבר נזיפה הוא, לומר, אין אנו חוששין לך, ודומה לו: "קרב אליך אל תגש בי", וכו': "גשה לי ואשבה", המשך לצדידן בעבורי ואשב אצלך. אתה מליץ על האורחים, איך מלאך לך. על שאמר להם על הבנות, אמרו לו:

46. פסוק ח. 47. במדבר יז, ב. 48. שמואל-א כ, כב. 49. משך את עצמך ממנו. 50. ישעיה סה, ה. 51. ישעיה מט, כ. 52. פסוק ד. 53. בראשית רבה נ, ה.

5 They called out to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them carnally!”

6 Lot went out to them, to the entrance, and closed the door behind him.

7 He said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not commit such a wrong!

8 Here, I have two daughters who have never known a man carnally. I will bring them out to you, and do with them as you please; but do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof and I am therefore responsible for their safety.”

9 But they said to Lot, “Get out of the way! We are not interested in your daughters; we want the guests!” Then they said to each other, “Look! He wants to protect the strangers. But he *himself* is a stranger! This one came here as a sojourner, and now he sets himself up as a judge to reprove us?!” They turned to him and said, “Now we will deal with you worse than with them!” They pressed hard against the man, against Lot, and moved forward to break down the door.

10 So the men inside stretched out their hands and pulled Lot towards themselves into the house, and closed the door.

11 They miraculously struck the people who were at the entrance of the house with blindness, beginning with the young—for they were the instigators¹⁰⁰—and followed by the old, and they tried to find the entrance but in vain.

12 The men inside said to Lot, “Can you excuse their behavior anymore? Whom else do you have here besides your wife and two daughters? A son-in-law, or your grandsons and granddaughters, or anyone you may have in the city—get them out of here,

13 because we are about to destroy this place, for the people’s outcry before God has grown great, and God has sent us to destroy it.”

14 Lot had two married daughters who lived elsewhere in the city and two engaged-to-be-married¹⁰¹ daughters who lived at home. He went out and spoke to his sons-in-law and his daughters’ fiancés, and said, “Get up and leave this place, for God is about to destroy the city!” but in the eyes of his sons-in-law and daughters’ fiancés he appeared to be joking.

15 Although they had arrived the previous evening, the angels waited until morning to rescue Lot and overturn the city, since it would be unsafe for Lot to travel at night.¹⁰² As dawn was breaking, the angels urged Lot on, saying, “Arise! Take your wife and two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away on account of the city’s sinfulness!”

— RASHI —

בבית להצילם. ומדרש אגדה יש, וזה ישובו של מקרא:
תספה. תהיה כלם. “עד תם כל הדור”⁵⁴ מתרגום: “עד
דסף כל דרא”

עליהם, שכל הלילה היה מליץ עליהם טובות. קרי בה
”מי לה פה”: **14** חתניו. שתי בנות נשואות היו לו בעיר:
לקחי בנתי. שאותן שפבית ארוסות להם: **15** ויאיצו.
בתרגומו: “וידחקו”, מהרהרו: הנמצאות. המזמנות לה

100. Above, v. 4. 101. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 245. 102. *Hitva'aduyot* 5742, vol. 1, p. 495.

54. דברים ב, יד.

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16 וְאֵתְעַבְבִּי וְאֵתְקִיפוּ גְבִירָא בִידָהּ
וּבִידָא דְאֵתְמַהּ וּבִידָא דְתַרְתִּין
בְּנֵתָה בְּדָחַס יְיָ עֲלוּזִי וְאֵפְקוּהִי
וְאֵשְׁרוּהִי מִבְּרָא לְקֶרְתָּא: 17 וְהָיָה
כִּד אֵפְקִיפוּ יְתֵהוּן לְבָרָא וְאִמְרָא חוּס
עַל נִפְשָׁךְ לֹא תִסְתְּכִי לְאַחֲרֶךְ
וְלֹא תִקּוּם בְּכָל מִישְׁרָא לְטוּרָא
אֲשֶׁתִּיזַב דְּלִמָּא תִלְקִי: 18 וְאִמְרָא
לֹט לַהוּן בְּבִעוּ כַעַן יְיָ: 19 הָא
כַעַן אֲשַׁכַּח עֲבָדְךָ רַחֲמִין קְדָמְךָ
וְאֲסֻגִּית טוֹבָךְ דִּי עֲבָדְךָ עֲמִי
לְקִמָּא יָת נִפְשִׁי וְאִנָּא לִית אִנָּא
יָכִיל לְאַשְׁתְּזַבָּא לְטוּרָא דְלִמָּא
תַּעֲרַעְנִי בְּשִׁתָּא וְאִמְרוּ: 20 הָא
כַעַן קֶרְתָּא דְדָא קְרִיבָא לְמַעֲרָק
לְתַמְנָן וְהִיא זְעִירָא אֲשֶׁתִּיזַב כַעַן
לְתַמְנָן הָלֹא זְעִירָא הִיא וְתַתְּקִים
נִפְשִׁי: 21 וְאִמְרָא לָהּ הָא נְסִיבִית
אֲפָךְ אֶף לְפַתְגָּמָא דְדִין בְּדִיל דְּלֹא
לְמַחֲפָךְ יָת קֶרְתָּא דִּבְעִית עֲלֶיהָ:
22 אֲדָחִי אֲשֶׁתִּיזַב לְתַמְנָן אֲרִי לֹא
אֲבֹל לְמַעַבְד פַּתְגָּמָא עַד מִיחָךְ
לְתַמְנָן עַל כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָא דְקֶרְתָּא
צוּעֵר:

16 וַיִּתְּמַהֲמָהּ | וַיַּחְזִיקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּיָדוֹ וּבִיד־אִשְׁתּוֹ וּבִיד־
שְׁתֵּי בְנֵתָיו בְּחִמְלַת יְהוָה עָלָיו וַיֵּצְאוּהוּ וַיַּנְחֵהוּ מִחוּץ
לְעִיר: 17 וַיְהִי כְהוֹצִיאֵם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְטָה
עַל־נַפְשֶׁךָ אֶל־תִּבִּיט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־הַכְּפָר
הַהֲרָה הַמַּלְטָה פֶּן־תִּסְפָּה: 18 וַיֹּאמֶר לֹט אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נָא
אֲדָנִי: 19 הִנֵּה־נָא מֵצָא עֲבָדְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתִּגְדֵּל חֲסִדְךָ
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי לְהַחְיֹת אֶת־נַפְשִׁי וְאִנֹּכִי לֹא אוֹכַל
לְהַמְלִט הַהֲרָה פֶּן־תִּדְבְּקֵנִי הָרָעָה וּמָתִי: 20 הִנֵּה־נָא
הָעִיר הַזֹּאת קִרְבָּה לָנוּם שְׁמָהּ וְהִיא מֵצָעֵר אֶמְלִטָהּ נָא
שְׁמָהּ הִלֵּא מֵצָעֵר הוּא וְתַחֲיוּ נַפְשֵׁי:

רביעי 21 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה נִשְׁאֲתִי פָנֶיךָ גַם לְדָבָר הַזֶּה
לְבַלְתִּי הַפִּכִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: 22 מֵהָר הַמַּלְטָה
שְׁמָהּ כִּי לֹא אוֹכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר עַד־בֹּאֲךָ שְׁמָהּ עַל־כֵּן
קָרָא שֵׁם־הָעִיר צוּעֵר:

RASHI

ברוך הוא רואה מעשי ומעשי בני העיר, והייתי נראה
צדיק וכדאי להנצל, וכשֶׁאֲבֹא אֶצֶל צדיק, אֲנִי כְּרֶשֶׁע.
וכן אֲמַרְהָ הַצֶּרֶפִּית לֵאלֹהֶיהָ: "בֵּאתִי אֵלַי הַזִּכִּיר אֶת
עוֹנִי", עַד שֶׁלֹּא בָּאת אֶצְלִי, הִיָּה הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
רואה מעשי ומעשי עִמִּי, וְאֲנִי צְדִיקָת בִּינִיָּהם, וּמִשְׁבָּאת
אֶצְלִי, לִפִּי מַעֲשֶׂיךָ אֲנִי רֹשֶׁע: 20 הָעִיר הַזֹּאת קִרְבָּה.
קִרְבָּה וְשִׁיבְתָּהּ, נִתְּשָׁבָה מִקְרֹב, לִפְיָךְ לֹא נִתְמַלְּאָה
סִאתָה עֲדִין, וְמֵהָ הִיא קְרִיבָתָהּ: מְדוּר הַפִּלְגָּה, שֶׁנִּתְפַּלְגוּ
הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַתְּחִילוּ לְהִתְנַשֵּׁב אִישׁ אִישׁ בְּמִקְוָמוֹ. וְהִיא
הִיָּתָה בְּשֵׁנַת מוֹת פֶּלֶג, וּמִשָּׁם וְעַד כָּאן חֲמִשִּׁים וּשְׁתַּיִם
שָׁנָה, שֶׁפֶּלֶג מֵת בְּשֵׁנַת מ"ח לְאַבְרָהָם, בִּיצֵד: פֶּלֶג חַי
אַחֲרֵי הוּלִידוֹ אֶת רְעוּ ר"ט שָׁנָה, צֵא מֵהָם ל"ב שָׁנוֹלָד
שְׂרוּג, וּמִשְׂרוּג עַד שְׁנוֹלָד נְחוּר ל', הָרִי ס"ב, וּמִנְחוּר עַד
שְׁנוֹלָד תָּרַח כ"ט, הָרִי צ"א, וּמִשָּׁם עַד שְׁנוֹלָד אַבְרָהָם
ע', הָרִי קס"א, תָּן לָהֶם מ"ח, הָרִי ר"ט. וְאוֹתָהּ שָׁנָה
הִיָּתָה שְׁנַת הַפִּלְגָּה, וּכְשֶׁנִּחְרְבָה סְדוֹם הִיָּה אַבְרָהָם בֶּן
צ"ט שָׁנָה, הָרִי מְדוּר הַפִּלְגָּה עַד כָּאן נ"ב שָׁנָה, וְצוּעֵר
אַחֲרָה וְשִׁיבְתָּהּ אַחֲרֵי יְשִׁיבַת סְדוֹם וְחִבְרוֹתֶיהָ שָׁנָה
אַחַת, הוּא שְׁנָאֲמָר: "אֶמְלִטָהּ נָא", "נָא" בְּגִמְטְרִיא נ"א:
הִלֵּא מֵצָעֵר הוּא. וְהִלֵּא עֲזוּבוֹתֶיהָ מוֹעֲטִין, וְיָכִיל אֶתָּה

16 וַיִּתְּמַהֲמָהּ. כְּדִי לְהַצִּיל אֶת מְמוֹנוֹ: וַיַּחְזִיקוּ. אֶחָד
מֵהֶם הָיָה שְׁלִיחַ לְהַצִּילוֹ, וַחֲבָרָו לְהַפּוֹךְ אֶת סְדוֹם,
לְכָךְ נֶאֱמַר: "וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְטָה", וְלֹא נֶאֱמַר "וַיֹּאמְרוּ":
17 הַמַּלְטָה עַל נַפְשֶׁךָ. דִּיךָ לְהַצִּיל נַפְשׁוֹת, אֶל תַּחוּס עַל
הַמָּמוֹן: אֶל תִּבִּיט אַחֲרֶיךָ. אֶתָּה הַרְשַׁעְתָּ עִמָּהֶם, וּבִזְכוֹת
אֲבָרָהָם אֶתָּה נֶצֶל, אֵינְךָ כְּדָאי לְרִאוֹת בְּפִרְעָנוֹתָם
וְאֶתָּה נֶצֶל: בְּכָל הַכְּפָר. כִּכֵּר הַיִּרְדֵּן: הַהֲרָה הַמַּלְטָה.
אֶצֶל אַבְרָהָם בְּרַח, שְׂהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּהָר, שְׁנָאֲמָר: "וַיַּעֲתֹק
מִשָּׁם הַהֲרָה", וְאֵף עֲכָשׁוּ הָיָה יוֹשֵׁב שָׁם, שְׁנָאֲמָר: "וַיַּעֲתֹק
עַד הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיָה שָׁם אֶהְלֶה בְּתַחֲלָה". וְאֵף עַל
פִּי שְׁכָתוֹב: "וַיֹּאחֶזֶל אַבְרָם" וְגו', אֶהְלִים הִרְבָּה הָיוּ
לוֹ וּנְמַשְׁכוֹ עַד חֲבָרוֹן: הַמַּלְטָה. לְשׁוֹן הַשְׁמָטָה, וְכֵן כָּל
הַמַּלְטָה שֶׁבִּמְקָרָא, אִישׁ מוֹצִי"ר בְּלַעֲזוֹ, וְכֵן: "וְהַמְלִיטָהּ
זָכַר", שְׁנַשְׁמַט הָעֶבֶר מִן הָרָחֶם, "בְּצַפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה" 61,
"לֹא יָכִלוּ מִלֵּט מִשָּׂא" 62, לְהַשְׁמִיט מִשָּׂא הָרָעִי
שֶׁבְּנִקְבֵיהֶם: 18 אֶל נָא אֲדָנִי. רַבּוֹתֵינוּ 63 אָמְרוּ, שֶׁשֵּׁם
זֶה קָדֵשׁ, שְׁנָאֲמָר בּוֹ: "לְהַחְיֹת אֶת נַפְשִׁי", מִי שֵׁשׁ בְּיָדוֹ
לְהַמִּית וְלְהַחְיֹת, וְתִרְגוּמוֹ: "בְּבִעוּ כַעַן ה'": אֶל נָא. אֶל
תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי לְהַמְלִיט הַהֲרָה: נָא. לְשׁוֹן בְּקָשָׁה: 19 פֶּן
תִּדְבְּקֵנִי הָרָעָה. כְּשֶׁהִיָּתִי אֶצֶל אֲנָשֵׁי סְדוֹם, הִיָּה הַקְדוּשׁ

55. פסוק יז. 56. בראשית יב, ח. 57. בראשית יג, ג. 58. שם, יח. 59. להחבא, להנצל. 60. ישעיה סז, ז. 61. תהלים קכד, ז. 62. ישעיה מו, ב. 63. שבועות לה, ב. 64. מלכים א יז, יח. 65. שבת י, ב. 66. בראשית מח, ח. 67. בראשית טז, יג. 68. ירמיה לא, יט. 69. פסוק יג. 70. פסוק כ.

16 Yet he lingered in order to salvage whatever he could of his belongings. **So, out of God's compassion for him, the men grasped him and his wife and two daughters by the hand; they led them out, and left them on the outskirts of the city.**

17 When they had led them out, the angel who was charged with the mission of saving him and his family **said, "Forget about your belongings; run for your life! Do not look back nor stop anywhere in the plain,** for you are just as deserving of annihilation as they.¹⁰³ It is only in Abraham's merit that you are being saved,¹⁰⁴ so it would not be proper for you to witness their destruction. **Flee to Abraham, who is living in the hills, lest you be swept away!"**

18 Lot said to them, "O God, no!

19 Your servant has found favor in Your eyes, and in the abounding kindness You have shown me You have saved my life. But I cannot escape to the mountain where Abraham lives, **lest an evil stigma cling to me and I be judged worthy to die.** I was considered righteous relative to the inhabitants of Sodom, but I would be considered sinful relative to Abraham.

20 Please, there is this town called Bela here nearby that I can escape to; it is small. It was founded fifty-one years ago—a year after the other four cities of the plain—and therefore its sins are slightly less numerous than those of the other four cities. **Let me flee there—its culpability is relatively minor** compared to that of the other cities—and survive."

◆ **Fourth Reading 21** The angel replied to him, **"In this matter, too, I have showed you favor: Not only will I rescue you; I will not overturn the town of which you spoke.**

22 But hurry! Escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." Because the angel had ascribed the ability to overturn the city to himself,¹⁰⁵ which could be construed as a display of arrogance, he was forced at this point to admit that he could not act without God's consent.

The town of Bela was therefore called Tzoar ["small"] from then on.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

22 The angel...was forced to admit: Angels possess no intrinsic identity; they are simply personifications of God's missions. Therefore, when the angels declared, "We are going to destroy the city," they meant that God was going to destroy the city through them, since they did not perceive themselves as separate from God.¹⁰⁶ Lot, however, misconstrued their words to mean that

they did have independent powers outside of God's. Therefore, they were compelled to clearly state that their power was God-given.

We learn from this that when speaking with others, we must take into account how they will interpret our words and ensure that our intention not be misconstrued.¹⁰⁷

— RASHI —

מִלְאָכִים, עַל שְׁאֲמְרוּ: "כִּי מִשְׁחָתִים אָנֹכֶנּוּ, וְתָלוּ הַדִּבֶּר בְּעֵצְמָן, לְפִיכָּךְ לֹא זָזוּ מִשֵּׁם עַד שֶׁהִזְקְקוּ לִזְמֹר שְׁאִין הַדִּבֶּר בְּרִשְׁוֹתָן: **כִּי לֹא אוֹכֵל.** לְשׁוֹן יְחִיד. מִכָּאֵן אֵתָּה לְמֹד, שֶׁהָאֶחָד הוֹפֵךְ וְהָאֶחָד מַצִּיל, שְׁאִין שְׁתֵּי מִלְאָכִים נִשְׁלָחִים לְדָבָר אֶחָד: **עַל כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם הָעִיר צוּעָר.** עַל שֵׁם: "וְהוּא מִצְעָר"⁷⁰:

לְהִנִּיחָהּ וְיִתְחִי נִפְשִׁי" בָּהּ, וְהוּא מְדַרְשׁוֹ⁵⁵. וּפְשׁוֹטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא: הָלֹא עִיר קְטַנָּה הִיא וְאֲנָשִׁים בָּהּ מְעַט, אֵין לָךְ לְהִקְפִּיד אִם תִּנְיִחָנָה וְיִתְחִי נִפְשִׁי בָּהּ: **21 גַּם לְדָבָר הַזֶּה.** לֹא דִיךְ שֶׁאֵתָּה נִצּוֹל, אֲלֵא אִף כָּל הָעִיר אֲצִיל בְּגִלְלָךְ: **הַכְפִּי.** הוֹפֵךְ אֲנִי, כְּמוֹ: "עַד בְּאִי"⁵⁶, "אֲחֲרֵי רְאִי"⁵⁷, "מִדִּי דְבָרִי בּוֹ"⁵⁸: **22 כִּי לֹא אוֹכֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת.** זֶה עוֹנֵשׁן שֶׁל

103. Above, 18:16. 104. Below, v. 29. 105. Above, v. 13. 106. See above, 16:13. 107. *Sichot Kodesh* 5733, vol. 1, pp. 251-252.

ONKELOS

23 שמשא נפק על ארעא ולוט
על לצוער: 24 ויזי אמטר על
סדום ועל עמורה גפריתא ואשא
מן קדם יי מן שמאי: 25 והפך ית
קרויא האלץ וית כל מישרא וית
כל יתבי קרויא וצמחא דארעא:
26 ואסתביאת אתתה מבתרדי
והות קמא דמלחא: 27 ואקדים
אברהם בצפרא לאתרא דשמש
תמן בצלו קדם יי: 28 ואסתבי על
אפי סדום ועמורה ועל כל אפי
ארע מישרא וחזא והא סליק תננא
דארעא כתננא דאתנא: 29 והוה
בחבלות יי ית קרוי מישרא ודכיר
יי ית אברהם ושלח ית לוט מגו
הפכתא בד הפך ית קרויא די הוה
יתב בהן לוט:

23 השמש יצא על-הארץ ולוט בא צערה: 24 ויהוה
המטיר על-סדום ועל-עמורה גפרית ואש מאת יהוה
מן-השמים: 25 ויהפך את-הערים האל ואת כל-הכפר
ואת כל-ישובי הערים וצמח האדמה: 26 ותבט אשתו
מאחריה ותהי נציב מלח: 27 וישכם אברהם בבקר אל-
המקום אשר-עמד שם את-פני יהוה: 28 וישקף על-פני
סדום ועמורה ועל כל-פני ארץ הכפר וירא והנה עלה
קיטר הארץ בקיטר הכבשן: 29 ויהי בשחת אלהים את-
ערי הכפר ויזכר אלהים את-אברהם וישלח את-לוט
מתוך ההפכה בהפך את-הערים אשר-ישב בהן לוט:

RASHI

ידין עמים" וגו', כשכא ליסר הבריות, מביא עליהם
אש מן השמים, כמו שעשה לסדום, וכשכא להוריד
המן, מן השמים: "הנגי ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים":
25 ויהפך את הערים וגו'. ארבעתם וישובות בסלע אחד,
והפכן מלמעלה למטה, שנאמר: "בחלמיש שלח ידו"
וגו': 26 ותבט אשתו מאחריה. מאחריה של לוט: ותהי
נציב מלח. במלח חטאה ובמלח לקתה. אמר לה: תני
מעט מלח לאזרחים הללו. אמרה לו: אף המנגה הרע
הזה אתה בא להנהיג במקום הזה: 28 קיטר. תמור
של עשן, טורק"א בלעז: 28 הכבשן. חפירה ששורפין בה
את האבנים לסיד, וכן כל "כבשן" שבתורה: 29 ויזכר
אלהים את אברהם. מהו וזכירתו של אברהם על לוט?
נוכר שהיה לוט יודע ששורה אשתו של אברהם, ושמע
שאמר אברהם במצרים על שורה: "אחתי הוא", ולא
גלה הדבר, שהיה חס עליו, לפיכך חס הקדוש ברוך
הוא עליו:

24 וה' המטיר. כל מקום שנאמר "וה'", הוא ובית דינו:
המטיר על סדום. בעלות השחר, כמו שנאמר לעיל:
"וכמו השחר עלה", שעה שהלכנה עומדת בקיע עם
החמה, לפי שהיו מהם עובדין לחמה ומהם ללכנה, אמר
הקדוש ברוך הוא: אם אפרע מהם ביום, יהיו עובדי
לכנה אומרים: אלו היה בלילה שהלכנה מושלת, לא
היינו חרבין. ואם אפרע מהם בלילה, יהיו עובדי החמה
אומרים: אלו היה ביום ששהחמה מושלת, לא היינו
חרבין. לכן כתיב: "וכמו השחר עלה", ונפרע מהם
בשעה שהחמה והלכנה מושלים: המטיר וגו' גפרית
ואש. בתחלה מטיר, ונעשה גפרית ואש: מאת ה'. דרך
המקראות לדבר בן, כמו: 72: "נשי למך", ולא אמר "נשי".
וכן אמר דוד: 73: "קחו עמכם את עבדי אדניכם", ולא
אמר "מעבדי". וכן אמר אחשורוש: 74: "בשם המלך",
ולא אמר "בשמי". אף כאן אמר: "מאת ה'", ולא אמר
"מאתו": מן השמים. והוא שאמר הכתוב: 75: "כי בם

71. פסוק טו. 72. בראשית ד, כג. 73. מלכים א, א, לג. 74. אסתר ח, ח. 75. איוב לו, לא. 76. שמות טז, ד. 77. איוב כח, ט. 78. לפיד, אבוקה. 79. עיי' בראשית יב, יט.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] Tohu to become contained and integrated within the vessels of *Tikun*, something which will only occur in the messianic era. The prophet Ezekiel therefore states¹¹⁷ that the cities of Sodom

and Gomorrah will be restored in the messianic era, just as the lights of *Tohu* will finally be absorbed into the vessels of *Tikun* at that time.¹¹⁸

23 The sun had already risen over the earth when Lot reached Tzoar.

24 Here, too,¹⁰⁸ **GOD** deferentially consulted with His heavenly court and **made sulfur and fire rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah—from GOD, out of the sky.** It initially descended as actual rain, to afford them a final chance to repent. When they refused to repent, it became a downpour of sulfur and fire.¹⁰⁹

25 In the early morning, God **overturned those four¹¹⁰ cities and the entire plain, together with all the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation of the ground.** They were all situated on one section of the earth's crust, so God simply lifted up that sheet of rock and flipped it over. Had He waited until later on in the day, when the moon is no longer shining, the moon-worshippers among them would have been able to claim that they would have been spared had the moon been out. Had He destroyed them by night, the sun-worshippers among them would have been able to claim that they would have been spared had the sun been out. God therefore destroyed them in the early morning, when both the sun and the moon are shining. The inhabitants of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah acted wickedly toward both their fellow human beings and toward God, whereas the inhabitants of the cities of Admah and Tzevoyim acted only wickedly toward God and not toward their fellow human beings.¹¹¹ Since antisocial conduct subverts the whole purpose of creation, Sodom and Gomorrah were burned to ashes in addition to being overturned, while Admah and Tzevoyim were only overturned.¹¹²

26 Lot's **wife** turned around, **looked behind him** at the destruction, **and she became a pillar of salt** in retribution for having denied salt to her guests.¹¹³

27 Abraham woke up early in the morning, for he had instituted the practice of daily morning prayer,¹¹⁴ **and went to the place where he had stood before God.**

28 He gazed upon Sodom and Gomorrah and over the whole area of the plain, and he saw smoke rising from the earth, like the smoke of a limekiln.

29 And so it was, that when God destroyed the Cities of the Plain, God was mindful of how Lot had protected Abraham in Egypt by going along with his pretense that Sarah was his sister,¹¹⁵ and in recompense, He sent forth Lot from the midst of the upheaval when He overturned the towns in which Lot had been living even though he deserved, by all rights, to perish together with them.

✿ INNER DIMENSIONS ✿

[24-25] Sodom and Gomorrah were burned to ashes: The spiritual energies manifested in Sodom and Gomorrah were similar in nature to the energies prevalent in the world of *Tohu*, i.e., intense and self-focused Divine energies that could neither be confined to vessels nor coexist with one another. Their self-focus is reflected in the selfishness char-

acterized by Sodom.¹¹⁶ Sodom and Gomorrah therefore had to be destroyed in their entirety, just as the world of *Tohu* was totally destroyed, so that the world of *Tikun*—the world of less intense but more synergistic light—could be built upon its spiritual ruins.

God's ultimate intention is for the infinite lights of

¹⁰⁸. See above, 1:26 and 11:7. ¹⁰⁹. See above, 7:12. ¹¹⁰. Deuteronomy 29:22. ¹¹¹. Above, 14:1. ¹¹². *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 70 ff. ¹¹³. Above, 18:16. ¹¹⁴. *Berachot* 26b. ¹¹⁵. Above, 12:16. ¹¹⁶. See *Avot* 5:10.

ONKELOS

30 וסליק לזוט מצוער וינשב בְּהָר וּשְׁתֵּי בְּנֵתָיו עִמּוֹ כִּי יֵרָא לְשֶׁבֶת בְּצוּעַר וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמַּעֲרָה הוּא וּשְׁתֵּי בְּנֵתָיו: 31 וּתְאֵמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה אָבִינוּ זָקֵן וְאִישׁ אֵין בְּאֶרֶץ לָבוֹא עָלֵינוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: 32 לָכֵה נִשְׁקָה אֶת־אָבִינוּ יִין וְנִשְׁכָּבָה עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע: 33 וּתִשְׁקֶינּוּ אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן יִין בְּלִילָה הוּא וּתְבֹא הַבְּכִירָה וּתִשְׁכָּב אֶת־אֲבִיהָ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ וּבִקְוָמָה: 34 וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרָת וּתְאֵמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה הֵן־שִׁכְבָּתִי אִמָּשׁ אֶת־אָבִי נִשְׁכָּנוּ יִין גַּם־הַלִּילָה וּבְאִי שִׁכְבִּי עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע: 35 וּתִשְׁקֶינּוּ גַם בְּלִילָה הֵהוּא אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן יִין וּתְקַם הַצְעִירָה וּתִשְׁכָּב עִמּוֹ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ וּבִקְוָמָה: 36 וּתְהִירֵן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת־לֹט מֵאֲבִיהֶן: 37 וּתְלֹד הַבְּכִירָה בֵּן וּתְקַרָא שְׁמוֹ מוֹאָב הוּא אָבִי־מוֹאָב עַד־הַיּוֹם: 38 וְהַצְעִירָה גַם־הוּא יִלְדָה בֵּן וּתְקַרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן־עַמִּי הוּא אָבִי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עַד־הַיּוֹם: ס

30 וסליק לזוט מצוער וינשב בְּהָר וּשְׁתֵּי בְּנֵתָיו עִמּוֹ כִּי יֵרָא לְשֶׁבֶת בְּצוּעַר וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמַּעֲרָה הוּא וּשְׁתֵּי בְּנֵתָיו: 31 וּתְאֵמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה אָבִינוּ זָקֵן וְאִישׁ אֵין בְּאֶרֶץ לָבוֹא עָלֵינוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: 32 לָכֵה נִשְׁקָה אֶת־אָבִינוּ יִין וְנִשְׁכָּבָה עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע: 33 וּתִשְׁקֶינּוּ אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן יִין בְּלִילָה הוּא וּתְבֹא הַבְּכִירָה וּתִשְׁכָּב אֶת־אֲבִיהָ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ וּבִקְוָמָה: 34 וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרָת וּתְאֵמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה הֵן־שִׁכְבָּתִי אִמָּשׁ אֶת־אָבִי נִשְׁכָּנוּ יִין גַּם־הַלִּילָה וּבְאִי שִׁכְבִּי עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע: 35 וּתִשְׁקֶינּוּ גַם בְּלִילָה הֵהוּא אֶת־אֲבִיהֶן יִין וּתְקַם הַצְעִירָה וּתִשְׁכָּב עִמּוֹ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשִׁכְבָּהּ וּבִקְוָמָה: 36 וּתְהִירֵן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת־לֹט מֵאֲבִיהֶן: 37 וּתְלֹד הַבְּכִירָה בֵּן וּתְקַרָא שְׁמוֹ מוֹאָב הוּא אָבִי־מוֹאָב עַד־הַיּוֹם: 38 וְהַצְעִירָה גַם־הוּא יִלְדָה בֵּן וּתְקַרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן־עַמִּי הוּא אָבִי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עַד־הַיּוֹם: ס

RASHI

לומר שבקומה ידע, ואף על פי כן לא נשמר ליל שני מלשנות. אמר רבי לוי: כל מי שהוא להוט אחר בלמוס של עריות, לסוף מאבילין אותו מבושרו: 36 וּתְהִירֵן וְגו'. אף על פי שאין האשה מתעברת מביאה ראשונה, אלו שלטו בעצמן והוציאו ערותן לחוץ, ונתעברו מביאה ראשונה: 37 מוֹאָב. זו שלא הייתה צנועה פרשה שמאביה הוא, אבל צעירה קראתו בלשון נקיה, וקבלה שחר בימי משה, שנאמר בבני עמון: "ואל תתגר בם", כלל, ובמואב לא הזהיר אלא שלא ילחם בם, אבל לצערן התיר לו:

30 כִּי יֵרָא לְשֶׁבֶת בְּצוּעַר. לפי שהיתה קרובה לסדום: 31 אָבִינוּ זָקֵן. ואם לא עכשו אימתי, שמא ימות או יפסוק מלהלד: וְאִישׁ אֵין בְּאֶרֶץ. סבורות היו שכל העולם נחרב, כמו בדור המבול. בראשית רבה: 33 וּתִשְׁקֶינּוּ וְגו'. יין נודמן להם במערה, להוציא מהן שתי אמות: וּתִשְׁכָּב אֶת אֲבִיהָ. ובצעירה כתיב: "ותשכב עמו". צעירה, לפי שלא פתחה בנות, אלא אחותה למדתה, חסר עליה הכתוב ולא פרש גנותה. אבל בכירה שפתחה בנות, פרסמה הכתוב במפרש: וּבִקְוָמָה. של בכירה, נקוד על וי"ו של "ובקומה"

80. נא, ח. 81. פסוק לה. 82. דברים ב, יט.

Lot and his Daughters

30 Even though God had granted his request to spare Tzoar, **Lot went up from Tzoar and settled on the nearby deserted mountain together with his two daughters, since he was afraid to remain in Tzoar** because of its proximity to Sodom, **and he and his two daughters lived in a cave.** By Divine providence, there were casks of wine in this cave.

31 Lot's two daughters thought that the whole world had been destroyed except for them and their father, similar to what had happened in the Flood. **The older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old and will soon be unable to father children or will die, and there is no man in the world to marry us in the usual manner.**

32 **Come, let us give our father wine to drink, and sleep with him, and thus produce offspring from our father."**

33 **That night, they gave their father wine to drink. The older girl went and slept with her father, but he was so drunk that he was not aware that it was she when she lay down next to him. But afterwards, when she arose, he was sober enough to realize that it was she, but he pretended not to know.**¹¹⁹

34 **The next day, the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night it was I who slept with my father. Tonight, too, let us give him wine to drink, and you go and sleep with him, and we will produce offspring through our father."**

35 **That night, they again gave their father wine to drink.** Even though Lot was aware of what had transpired with his daughter the previous night, he did not refuse to drink from the wine again the next night, because of his inner allurements to illicit relations. This time, **the younger daughter got up and slept with him, but again, he was so drunk that he was not aware that she had lain down or arisen.**

36 **Thus, Lot's two daughters conceived from their father.** Although they were both guilty of committing incest, the older daughter was the instigator; the younger one had simply followed her lead.

37 **The older daughter gave birth to a son and named him Moab ["from father"]; he is the ancestor of the people of Moab until the present day.**

38 **The younger daughter also gave birth to a son and named him Ben-Ami ["son of my kindred"]; he is the ancestor of the people of Ammon until the present day.** The older daughter was not embarrassed by her behavior and therefore gave her son a name that explicitly publicized her act. In contrast, the younger daughter *was* embarrassed and thus tried to obscure her sin in a less blatant name for her son.

¹¹⁹ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 110-113.

ONKELOS

20:1 ונטל מתמן אברהם לארע
 דרומא ויתב בין רקם ובין חגרא
 ואתותב בגר: 2 ואמר אברהם
 על שרה אתתה אחתי היא ושלח
 אבימלך מלכא דגרר ודבר ית
 שרה: 3 ואתא מימר מן קדם יי
 לות אבימלך בחלמא דלילא
 ואמר לה הא את מאית על עיסק
 אתתא די דברתא והיא אתת גבר:
 4 ואבימלך לא קרב לותה ואמר יי
 העם אף זכאי תקטול: 5 הלא הוא
 אמר לי אחתי היא והיא אף היא
 אמרת אחי הוא בקשיותו לבי
 ובזבאות ידי עבדית דא: 6 ואמר
 לה יי בחלמא אף קדמי גלי ארי
 בקשיותו לבך עבדת דא ומנעית
 אף אנא יתך מלמחטי קדמי על כן
 לא שבקתך למקרב לותה:

20:1 ויסע משם אברהם הנגב וישב בין-קדש
 ובין שור ויגר בגר: 2 ויאמר אברהם אל-שרה אשתו
 אחתי היא וישלח אבימלך מלך גרר ויקח את-שרה:
 3 ויבא אלהים אל-אבימלך בחלום הלילה ויאמר לו
 הנה מת עליה אשה אשר-לקחת והוא בעלת בעל:
 4 ואבימלך לא קרב אליה ויאמר אדני הנוי גם-צדיק
 תהרג: 5 הלא הוא אמר-לי אחתי הוא והיא-גם-הוא
 אמרה אחי הוא בתם-לבבי ובנקון כפי עשיתי זאת:
 6 ויאמר אליו האלהים בחלום גם אנכי ידעתי כי בתם-
 לבבך עשית זאת ואחשך גם-אנכי אותך מחטוי-לי על-
 כן לא-נתתיך לנגע אליה:

RASHI

לדור המבול ולדור הפלגה, אף אני אומר שהרגתם על
 לא דבר, כשם שאמה אומר להרגני: 5 גם הוא. לרבות
 עבדים וגמלים וחמרים שלה, את כלם שאלתי, ואמרו
 לי אחיה הוא: בתם לבבי. שלא דמיתי לחטוא: ובנקון
 כפי. נקי אני מן החטא, שלא נגעתי בה: 6 ידעתי כי
 בתם לבבך וגו'. אמת שלא דמית מתחלה לחטוא, אבל
 נקיון כפים אין כאן, הלא אמרה, משמוש ידיים יש כאן:
 לא נתתיך. לא ממך היה שלא נגעתי בה, אלא חשכתי
 אני אותך מחטוא, ולא נתתי לך כח. וכן: "ולא נתנו
 אלהים", וכן: "ולא נתנו אביה לבוא".

1 ויסע משם אברהם. כשראה שחברו הכרכים ופסקו
 העוברים והשבים, נסע לו משם. דבר אחר: להתרחק
 מלוט, שיצא עליו שם רע שבא על בנותיו: 2 ויאמר
 אברהם. כאן לא נטל רשות, אלא על כרחיה שלא
 בטובתה, לפי שכבר לקחה לבית פרעה על ידי כן: אל
 שרה אשתו. על שרה אשתו. וכיוצא בזה: "אל הקלח
 ארון וגו' ואל מות חמיה", שניהם בלשון "על": 4 לא
 קרב אליה. המלך מנעו, כמו שנאמר: "לא נתתיך
 לנגע אליה": הנוי גם צדיק תהרג. אף אם הוא צדיק
 תהרגנו? שמה כף דרכך לאבד האמות חנם, כף עשית

83. שמואל א ד, כא. 84. פסוק ו. 85. בראשית לא, ו. 86. שופטים טו, א.

'He is my brother.' And everyone else I asked—her servants, her camel-drivers, and her donkey-drivers—also replied that they were brother and sister. **I did so**, i.e., took her for myself, **with an innocent heart**, with no intent to sin. **And I am with blameless hands**, for I have not touched her."

6 God said to him in the dream, "I, too, knew that you did this with an innocent heart, but you cannot claim that your hands are blameless, **for I Myself spared you from sinning against Me** by sending an angel to keep you away from her. It is precisely **because I knew** that you did not intend to do anything wrong that **I did not allow you to touch her.**

Abraham in Philistia

20:1 After the Cities of the Plain were destroyed, travelers no longer had reason to pass through Hebron. In addition, Lot fell into disrepute once his daughters' pregnancies became evident, because it was obvious he had committed incest with them.

For both these reasons, **Abraham journeyed from there** in that same year **to the Negev** and then **settled between Kadesh and Shur**, coming to finally **so-journ** in the Philistine city of **Gerar** (see Figure 20).

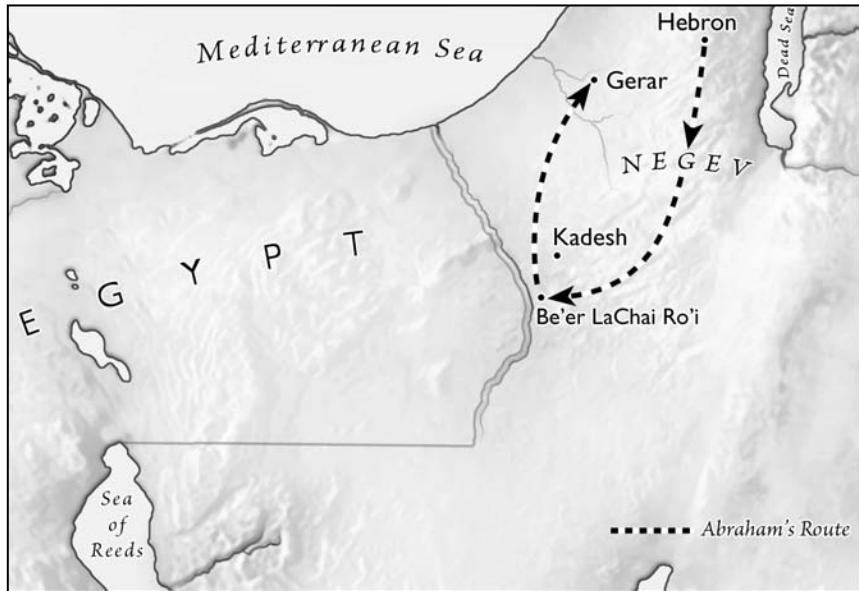


Figure 20: Abraham Moves to Philistia

2 As he had been in Egypt,¹²⁰ Abraham was again asked about Sarah, because her youthful beauty had been restored to her and she was not yet pregnant.¹²¹ **Abraham said of Sarah, his wife**—without asking her permission—**“She is my sister.”** Abraham did not ask Sarah’s permission to say she was his sister this time, for he was sure she would refuse in light of her unpleasant experience in Egypt. **So Avimelech, king of Gerar, sent messengers and had Sarah brought to him.** But when he tried to molest Sarah, an angel prevented him from touching her. Furthermore, at Sarah’s request,¹²² God blocked all the secretory channels of the bodies of the king and his entire household (i.e., of the excretory and reproductive organs, as well as of the ears and the nostrils).¹²³

3 God came to Avimelech in a nocturnal dream, saying, “You are going to die from this affliction on account of the woman you took, for she is a married woman and you will be guilty of adultery if you have relations with her.”

4 Since Avimelech had not come near her, he said, “O God, would You put to death even an innocent nation? Am I to conclude that You also causelessly wiped out the generation of the Flood and punished the generation of the Dispersion as well?

5 Did her husband not say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself also said,

120. Above, 12:12 ff. 121. Rashi on 21:1, below. 122. Rashi on v. 18, below. 123. Rashi on v. 9, below.

ONKELOS

7 ובען אתיב אתה גברא ארי נביא
הוא ויצלי עלך ותחי ואם ליתך
מתיב דע ארי ממות תמות את וכל
די לך: 8 ואקדים אבימלך בצפרא
וקרא לכל עבדוהי ומליל ית כל
פתגמיא האלין קדמיהון ודחילו
גבריא לחדא: 9 וקרא אבימלך
לאברהם ואמר לה מא עבדת לנא
ומא חבית לך ארי איתית עלי ועל
מלכותי חובא רבא עובדין דלא
כשרין לאתעבדא עבדת עמי:
10 ואמר אבימלך לאברהם מא
חזית ארי עבדת ית פתגמא דדין:
11 ואמר אברהם ארי אמרית
לחוד לית דחלתא דיי באתרא
דדין וקטלנני על עיסק אתתי:
12 וברם בקושטא אחתי בת אבא
היא ברם לא בת אמי והות לי
לאנתו: 13 וההו כד טעו עממיא
בתר עובדי ודיהון יתי קריב יי
לדחלתה מבית אבא ואמרית לה
דין טיבותיך די תעבדין עמי לכל
אתרא די נהך לתמן אמרי עלי
אחי הוא:

7 ועתה השב אשת-האיש כי-נביא הוא ויתפלל
בעדך וחייה ואם-אינך משיב דע כי-מות תמות אתה
וכל-אשר-לך: 8 וישכם אבימלך בבקר ויקרא לכל-
עבדיו וידבר את-כל-הדברים האלה באזניהם וייראו
האנשים מאד: 9 ויקרא אבימלך לאברהם ויאמר לו
מה-עשית לנו ומה-חטאתי לך כי-הבאת עלי ועל-
ממלכתי חטאה גדלה מעשים אשר לא-יעשו עשית
עמדי: 10 ויאמר אבימלך אל-אברהם מה ראית כי
עשית את-הדבר הזה: 11 ויאמר אברהם כי אמרתי
רק אי-יראת אלהים במקום הזה והרגוני על-דבר
אשתי: 12 וגם-אמננה אחתי בת-אבי הוא אך לא בת-
אמי ותהי-לי לאשה: 13 ויהי כאשר התעו אתי אלהים
מבית אבי ואמר לה זה חסדך אשר תעשי עמדי אל
כל-המקום אשר נבוא שמה אמרי-לי אחי הוא:

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דבור על אפניו: כשהוציאני הקדוש ברוך הוא מבית
אבי להיות משוטט ונד במקום למקום, וידעתי שאעבר
במקום רשעים, "ואומר לה: זה חסדך וגו'": **כאשר
התעו**. לשון רבים, ואל תתמה, כי הרבה מקומות לשון
אלהות ולשון מרות קרוי לשון רבים: "אשר הלכו
אלהים"⁸⁸, "אלהים חיים"⁸⁹, "אלהים קדשים"⁹⁰, וכל
לשון "אלהים" לשון רבים. וכן: "ויקח אדני יוסף"⁹¹,
"ואדני האדנים"⁹², "אדני הארץ"⁹³, וכן: "בעליו עמו"⁹⁴,
"והועד בבקליו"⁹⁵. ואם תאמר: מהו לשון "התעו"? כל
הגולה ממקומו ואינו מושב, קרוי "תועה", כמו: "ותלך
ותתע"⁹⁶, "תעיתי כשה אבד"⁹⁷, "יתעו לבלי אכל"⁹⁸,
יצאו ויתעו לבקש אכלם: **אמרי לי**. עלי. וכן: "וישאלו
אנשי המקום לאשתו", על אשתו. וכן: "ואמר פרעה
לכני ישראל", כמו על בני ישראל. "פן יאמרו לי
אשה הרגתהו"⁹⁹:

7 **השב אשת האיש**. ואל תהא סבור שמה תתגנה
בעיניו ולא יקבלנה, או ישנאך ולא יתפלל עליך. אמר
לו אבימלך: ומי מפרסמו שלא נגעתי בה? אמר לו:
כי נביא הוא. וידע שלא נגעתי בה, לפיכך "ויתפלל
בעדך": 9 **מעשים אשר לא יעשו**. מכה אשר לא
הרגלה לבא על בריה, באה לנו על ידך, עצירת כל
נקבים, של זרע ושל קטנים ורעי ואנשים וחסם: 11 **רק
אין יראת אלהים**. אכסנאי שבא לעיר, על עסקי אכילה
ושתייה שואלין אותו, או על עסקי אשתו שואלין אותו,
אשתך היא או אחותך היא?: 12 **אחתי בת אבי הוא**.
ובת אב מתרת לכן נח, שאין אבות לגוי, וכדי לאמת
דבריו השיבו בן. ואם תאמר: והלא בת אחיו היתה?
בני בנים הרי הם כבנים, והרי היא בתו של תרד, וכך
הוא אומר ללוט¹⁰⁰: "כי אנשים אחים אנחנו": **אך לא בת
אמי**. הריך מאם אחרת היה: 13 **ויהי כאשר התעו אתי**
וגו'. אנקלוס תרגם מה שתרגם. ויש לישב עוד דבר

87. בראשית יג, ח. 88. שמואל-ב, ז, כג. 89. דברים ה, כב. 90. יהושע כד, יט. 91. בראשית לט, כ. 92. דברים י, יז. 93. בראשית מב, לג. 94. שמות כב, יד. 95. שמות כא, כט. 96. בראשית כא, יד. 97. תהלים קיט, קע. 98. איוב לח, מא. 99. בראשית כו, ז. 100. שמות יד, ג. 101. שופטים ט, נד.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

world must emulate it—degenerated into a nation of monsters who sanctioned and performed unspeakably and unimaginably inhuman acts. The sole reason for

this tragedy was that their wisdom was not based on the knowledge of God, to whom all people must answer, but on their own mortal intellect.¹²⁶

7 Now, return the man's wife. Do not fear that he will not want to accept her back or that he will hold your actions against you and not pray for you, **for he is a prophet** and therefore knows that you did not defile her and that you are innocent. **He will therefore pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, be assured that you will die—you and all that are yours."**

8 Avimelech got up early in the morning. He called for all his servants and discreetly told them all these things, and the men were terrified.

9 Avimelech summoned Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? What wrong have I done you, that you should bring such great guilt upon my kingdom and me? You have brought upon me things that do not normally happen! Such an affliction is unheard of!"

10 Avimelech then asked Abraham, "What did you see that made you do this thing?"

11 Abraham replied, "Look, when a traveler arrives in a city, people usually ask him what he would like to eat or drink, and not whether his female companion is his wife or his sister! I therefore said to myself, 'There is simply no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife if I disclose her true identity.'

12 In any case, she really *can* be considered my sister: she is the granddaughter of my father, and a person's grandchildren are considered his own children. But she is not the granddaughter of my mother, so, since we are related through my father and not through my mother,¹²⁴ it was permissible for us to marry,¹²⁵ and she became my wife.

13 When God made me wander from my father's house, and I knew we would pass through lands inhabited by wicked people, I said to her, 'There is a favor that you can do for me. Wherever we go, say about me: "He is my brother." ' "

— ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞ —

11 There is simply no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife: In this statement, Abraham voiced the two principles underlying his life's work: first, that making the world into a home for God means, above all, encouraging virtue and the practice of justice; and second, that a just and virtuous society is possible only if it is predicated on the belief in God as the creator and master of the world.

Belief in God must therefore be the foundation underlying the education of our children. Only when our children know that God created the world and wants it to be made into His home through righteous and just behavior can we be assured that they will behave justly and virtuously.

God planted within us two forces that motivate our behavior: a good impulse and an evil impulse. If society tries to discourage bad behavior solely by threatening us with punishment, our evil impulse will respond:

"You are smart enough to hide your misbehavior and escape punishment, and even if you are caught, the enjoyment of doing what you want now outweighs the pain of the punishment you might get."

Therefore, the only way to ensure that the evil impulse not overcome the good impulse is by inculcating ourselves with the knowledge that God created us, our impulses, and our tests, and that He commanded us to resist the machinations of the evil impulse and behave according to His instructions. If we know this, we will realize that no matter how smart we are, we cannot hide our actions from God. Only if "there is fear of God in this place" will people not "kill me on account of my wife."

The tragic events of recent history attest to just how true this is. The most "civilized" country in the world, which boasted the greatest advancements in science, art, and philosophy—and even asserted that the whole

¹²⁴. Above, 11:26. ¹²⁵. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 12, p. 87, note 24. ¹²⁶. *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 2, pp. 899-900.

ONKELOS

14 וידבר אבימלך עאן ותורין ועבדין ואמרו ויהיב לאברהם ואתיב להית שרה אתמה: 15 ואמר אבימלך הא ארעי קדמך בדתקן בעיניך תיב: 16 ולשרה אמר הא יקבית אלף סלעין דכסף לאחויך הא הוא ליך כסות דיקר עינין חלף דשלחית ודברתיך וחזית יתיך וית כל דעמך ועל כל מא דאמרת אתו כחת: 17 וצלי אברהם קדם יי ואסי יי ית אבימלך וית אתמה ואמרה ואתרחו: 18 ארי מיוחד אחד יי באפי כל פתח ולדא לבית אבימלך על עיסק שרה אתמה אברהם: 21 ויי דכיר ית שרה כמא די אמר ועבד יי לשרה כמא די מליל: 2 ועדיאת ולידת שרה לאברהם בר לסיבתיה לזמנא די מליל יתה יי:

14 וַיִּקַּח אֲבִימֶלֶךְ צֶאֱן וּבָכָר וְעֶבְדִּים וַיִּשְׁפָּחֹת וַיִּתֵּן לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֵּשֶׁב לוֹ אֶת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ הִנֵּה אֶרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ שֵׁב: 16 וּלְשָׂרָה אָמַר הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי אֵלַיךְ כֶּסֶף לְאַחִיךָ הִנֵּה הוּא־לְךָ כְּסוּת עֵינַיִם לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֲתָךְ וְאֶת כָּל וְנִכְחַת: 17 וַיִּתְּפִלֵּל אֲבָרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַאֲמָהֲתָיו וַיֵּלְדוּ: 18 כִּי־עָצָר עָצָר יִהְיֶה בְּעַד כָּל־רַחֲמָם לְבֵית אֲבִימֶלֶךְ עַל־דִּבְרֵי שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲבָרָהָם: 21:1 וַיִּהְיֶה פֶקֶד אֶת־שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר: 2 וְתַחֲרָ וְתֵלֵד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן לִזְמָנִיו לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים:

RASHI

18 בעד כל רחם. כנגד כל פתח: על דבר שרה. על פי דבורה של שרה: 1 'וה' פקד את שרה וגו'. סמך פְּרָשָׁה זו לְכָאן, לְלַמֶּדֶךָ שְׁכָל הַמְּבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים עַל חֲבֵרוֹ וְהוּא צָרִיךְ לְאוֹתוֹ דָּבָר, הוּא נִעְנָה תַּחֲלָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּתְּפִלֵּל" וגו', וְסָמִיךְ לָהּ: "וְה' פֶּקֶד אֶת שָׂרָה", שֶׁפֶקֶד כָּבֵר קִדְּם שֶׁרָפָא אֶת אֲבִימֶלֶךְ: פֶּקֶד אֶת שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר. בְּהַרְיוֹן: כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר. בְּלִידָה. וְהִיכֵן הִיא אֲמִירָה, וְהִיכֵן הוּא דְּבוּרָה אֲמִירָה: 105 "וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶבְרָהָם אִשְׁתֶּךָ" וגו'. דְּבוּרָה: 106 "הִנֵּה דָבָר ה' אֵל אֲבָרָם" בְּבֵרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים, וְשֵׁם נֶאֱמַר: 107 "לֹא יִירָשֶׁךָ זֶה" וגו', וְהִבִּיא הַיּוֹרֵשׁ מִשָּׂרָה: וַיַּעַשׂ ה' לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר. לְאַבְרָהָם: 2 לִזְמָנִיו. שֶׁהִיא זֵיו אֲקוּנִין שֶׁלֹּא דוּמָה לוֹ: לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר. רַבִּי יוֹדֵן וְרַבִּי חֲמַא, רַבִּי יוֹדֵן אָמַר: מְלֻמֵּד שְׁנוּלֵד לְתַשְׁעָה חֲדָשִׁים, שֶׁלֹּא יֵאֱמָרוּ מִבֵּיתוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִימֶלֶךְ הוּא. וְרַבִּי חֲמַא אָמַר: לְשִׁבְעָה חֲדָשִׁים: לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱתוֹ. "דְּמַלִּיל יְתֵה", אֶת הַמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וְקִבַּע, כְּשֶׁאָמַר לוֹ: 108 "לְמוֹעֵד אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ", שֶׁרַט לוֹ שְׂרִיטָה בַּכֶּתֶל וְאָמַר לוֹ: כְּשֶׁתִּגְעַע חֲמָה לְשְׂרִיטָה זוּ בְּשָׁנָה הָאֲחֶרֶת, תֵּלֵד:

14 וַיִּתֵּן לְאַבְרָהָם. כְּדִי שִׁיתַּפִּיט וַיִּתְּפִלֵּל עָלָיו: 15 הִנֵּה אֶרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ. אֶבְל פְּרַעָה אָמַר לוֹ: 102 "הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ קַח וְלֵךְ", לְפִי שְׁתֵּמְרָא, שֶׁהַמְּצָרִים שְׂטוּפִי זְמָה: 16 וּלְשָׂרָה אָמַר. אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, לְכַבּוּדָה כְּדִי לְפִיטָה: הִנֵּה עֲשִׂיתִי לָךְ כְּבוֹד זֶה, נָתַתִּי מִמּוֹן לְאַחִיךָ שֶׁאֲמַרְתָּ עָלָיו אֲחִי הוּא, הִנֵּה הַמִּמּוֹן וְהַכְּבוֹד הַזֶּה לָךְ "כְּסוּת עֵינַיִם לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֲתָךְ", וְכִסּוּ עֵינֵיהֶם שֶׁלֹּא יִקְלוּךְ, שֶׁאֵלּוּ הַשִּׁיבוּתֶיךָ רִיקְנִית, יֵשׁ לָהֶם לִזְמֵר: לְאַחַר שֶׁנִּתְעַלֵּל בָּהּ הַחֲזוּיָה. עֲכָשׁ שֶׁהִצְרַכְתִּי לְכַבּוֹד מִמּוֹן וּלְפִיטָה, יִהְיוּ יוֹדְעִים שֶׁעַל כְּרַחֲמֵי הַשִּׁיבוּתֶיךָ, וְעַל יְדֵי נִסִּי וְאֶת כָּל. וְעַם כָּל בָּאֵי עוֹלָם: וְנִכְחַת. יֵהָא לָךְ פֶּתַח חוֹן פֶּה לְהַתּוֹכַח, וְלִהְיָאוֹת דְּבָרִים נְכָרִים הַלָּלוּ. וְלִשׁוֹן "תּוֹכַחָה" בְּכָל מְקוֹם בְּרוּר דְּבָרִים, וּבְלַעֲזוֹ אִישְׁפּוּרִי"ר: 103. וְאַנְקְלוֹס תִּרְגָּם בְּפָנִים אַחֲרִים, וְלִשׁוֹן הַמִּקְרָא כִּף הוּא נּוֹפֵל עַל הַתִּרְגוּם: הִנֵּה הוּא לָךְ כְּסוּת שֶׁל כְּבוֹד, עַל הָעֵינַיִם שֶׁלִּי שֶׁשִּׁלְטוֹ כִּף וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֲתָךְ. וְעַל כֵּן תִּרְגְּמוּ: "וְחֲזוּת יְתִיךָ וְיֵת כָּל דְּעַמְךָ". וַיֵּשׁ מִדְּרַשׁ אֲגָדָה, אֶבְל יֵשׁוּב לִשׁוֹן הַמִּקְרָא פִּרְשְׁתִּי: 17 וַיֵּלְדוּ. כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: "וְאֲתִרְחוּ", נִפְתָּחוּ וְקִבְּיָהֶם וְהוֹצִיאוּ מֵה שְׁצָרֶיךָ לְצֵאתָ, וְהִיא לִידָה שֶׁלָּהֶם:

102. בראשית יב, יט. 103. לבחון. 104. בראשית כ, יז. 105. בראשית יז, יט. 106. בראשית טו, א. 107. שם, ד. 108. בראשית יח, יד.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[1] God remembered Sarah...she became pregnant.... And God did for Sarah as He had spoken: The two expressions—"God remembered" and "God did"—allude to two distinct stages: "God remembered Sarah" means that He created the

energy in the spiritual worlds that would enable her to bear a child;

"God did for Sarah" means that He manifested that spiritual energy in the physical world.¹³⁴

14 Having lost the argument, **Avimelech** realized that he needed to make amends for his behavior.¹²⁷ He **took flocks and cattle, servants and handmaids, and gave them to Abraham** to placate him, so that he would pray for him, **and returned Sarah, his wife, to him.**

15 **Avimelech said, “My land is here before you. You may settle wherever you please.** Do not be afraid of my subjects, for they are moral people and will not molest your wife.”

16 **To Sarah he said, “As a token of my esteem for you, I have now given your ‘brother’ a thousand pieces of silver. Let this gift and gesture of respect serve you figuratively as a cover over the eyes of all those with you** who would look askance at you because of this incident, preventing them from doing so. The fact that I had to go to such expense to mollify you shows that I did not abuse and discard you, but rather that I was forced by Divine intervention to give you up. **And for anyone** who may, in the future, cast aspersions on your behavior in this episode, it will serve **as proof** of your innocence.”

17 **Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Avimelech** and the members of his household of their secretory blockages, including **his wife and bondwomen, so that they relieved themselves,**

18 **for God had blocked every orifice of the members of Avimelech’s household, because of Sarah, the wife of Abraham,** and at her behest.¹²⁸

The Birth of Isaac

21:1 But before God healed Avimelech and the members of his household, **God had already remembered Sarah as He had said** to Abraham that he would:¹²⁹ she became pregnant. This is indeed the rule: when someone needs something and prays for that same thing for someone else, God provides his needs first. **And God did for Sarah as He had spoken** to Abraham:¹³⁰ she bore a son.

2 Thus, **Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken,**¹³¹ the 15th of Nisan, 2048.¹³² There were scoffers who did not believe that the child was Abraham and Sarah’s. Some accused Abraham and Sarah of adopting a child and claiming it was their own. Others assumed Avimelech to be the father, pointing out that although Abraham and Sarah had been married for years, Sarah only conceived and gave birth after having been abducted by Avimelech. To silence these ugly claims, God gave three proofs that the baby was indeed theirs. First, he was born on the exact date God had promised; second, God provided Sarah with an abundance of milk, proving she had given birth, as will be recounted presently; and third, the baby looked exactly like Abraham.¹³⁵

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

2 **The baby looked exactly like Abraham:** Our inner thoughts and emotions at any given moment are mirrored on our faces;¹³³ with the passage of time, our approach to life and our way of thinking become etched

into our faces’ contours. And even from birth, our faces reflect our inborn personalities. Thus, the word for “face” (*panim*) also means “inside” or “inner dimension.”

127. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, p. 140, notes 22 & 24. 128. Above, v. 2. 129. Above, 17:19. 130. Above, 15:1-4. 131. Above, 18:10-14. 132. Rashi on Exodus 12:40-41; above, 18:10. 133. Rashi on v. 7 and 25:19, below. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, p. 42, note 24. 134. See Ecclesiastes 8:1: “A person’s wisdom enlightens his face.” 135. *Biurei HaZohar* (*Tzemach Tzedek*), vol. 1, p. 59.

— ONKELOS —

3 ויקרא אברהם ית שום ברה
דאחיליד לה דילידת לה שרה
יצחק: 4 וגור אברהם ית יצחק
ברה בר תמניא יומין כמא די
פקיד יתה יי: 5 ואברהם בר מאה
שנין בד אחיליד לה ית יצחק
ברה: 6 ואמרת שרה חדא עבד
לי יי כל דשמע יחדי לי: 7 ואמרת
מאן מהימן דאמר לאברהם וקיים
דתניק בגין שרה ארי ילדיית בר
לסבתה: 8 ורבא רבא ואחסייל
ועבד אברהם משתא רבא ביומא
דאחסייל ית יצחק: 9 וחזת שרה
ית בר הגר מצריא דילידת
לאברהם מחייר:

3 ויקרא אברהם את-שם-בנו הנולד-לו אשר-ילדה
לו שרה יצחק: 4 וימל אברהם את-יצחק בנו בן-שמונת
ימים כאשר צוה אתו אלהים:

◆ חמישי 5 ואברהם בן-מאת שנה בהולד לו את
יצחק בנו: 6 ותאמר שרה צחק עשה לי אלהים כל-
השמע יצחק-לי: 7 ותאמר מי מלל לאברהם היניקה
בנים שרה כיי-לדתי בן לזקניו: 8 ויגדל הילד ויגמל
ויעש אברהם משתה גדול ביום הגמל את-יצחק:
9 ותרא שרה את-בן-הגר המצריא אשר-ילדה
לאברהם מצחק:

— RASHI —

“בנים” לשון רבים? ביום המשתה הביאו השרות את
בניהן עמה, והיניקה אותם, שהיו אומרות: לא לך
שרה, אלא אסופי הביאה מן השוק: 8 ויגמל. לסוף
עשרים וארבעה חדש: משתה גדול. שהיו שם גדולי
הדור, שם ועבר ואבימלך: 9 מצחק. לשון עבודה זרה,
כמו שגאמר¹¹²: “ויקמו לצחק”. דבר אחר: לשון גלוי
עריות, כמה דתימא¹¹³: “לצחק ביי”. דבר אחר: לשון
רציונה, כמו¹¹⁴: “יקומו נא הנערים וישחקו לפנינו” וגו’:

6 יצחק לי. ישמח עלי. ומדרש אגדה¹⁰⁹: הרבה עקרות
נפקדו עמה, הרבה חולים נתפאו בו ביום, הרבה
תפלות נענו עמה, ורב שחוק היה בעולם: 7 מי מלל
לאברהם. לשון שבח וחשיבות, כמו: מי פעל ועשה¹¹⁰,
מי ברא אלה¹¹¹. ראו מה הוא ומי הוא וכמה הוא גדול
שומר הבטחתו, הקדוש ברוך הוא מבטיח ועושה: מלל.
שנה הכתוב ולא אמר “דבר”, גמטריא שלו מאה,
כלומר לסוף מאה לאברהם: היניקה בנים שרה. ומדוח

109. בראשית רבה נג, ח. 110. ישעיה מא, ד. 111. שם מ, כז. 112. שמות לב, ו. 113. בראשית לט, יז. 114. שמואל ב, יד.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

his father’s kindness, and indeed, enabled it to be expressed in the most efficacious way.

In order to demonstrate that Abraham was indeed Isaac’s father, God chose to make Isaac resemble Abraham even though He could have theoretically just as well made Abraham resemble his yet-to-be-born son, Isaac. The lesson for us here is that when we have the choice between accomplishing something either in a loving or stern way, we should choose the path of love. The path of love is more likely to succeed, and even if it does not, we will have still fulfilled the commandment to love our fellow Jew.¹⁴⁰

We also see here that God suspended the laws of nature in order to convince the scoffers who did not believe that Isaac was Abraham and Sarah’s child. Similarly, we, also, should spare no efforts to bring the truth of God’s message to all strata of humanity, even to those who appear to be on the bottom rungs of society and morality.¹⁴¹

6 Whoever hears will be happy for me and happy with me: The literal meaning of Sarah’s words is “whoever

hears will laugh at me,” for it is unbelievable that a man of 100 and woman of 90 could have a child.

This is exactly how our people’s detractors have scoffed at us throughout the ages. “It is ridiculous to think that your young people will continue to abide by your old-fashioned, outdated values and practices. How can you be so old (-fashioned) and hope to have a child (who will perpetuate your life-style)? Do you really think your sons will lay down their lives rather than serve idols, as Abraham did? Or your daughters will remain pure even in an immoral environment, as Sarah did in Egypt?”

Yet, history has proven that if we dedicate ourselves to educating our youth uncompromisingly, the way Abraham and Sarah educated theirs, we, too will be able to boast offspring like Isaac, selflessly dedicated to our ideals.

Even if it appears that our youth are firmly entrenched in modern culture, seemingly estranged from Jewish values and practice, we should never underestimate the far-reaching effect that even the smallest exposure to Torah-true Judaism can have on their lives.¹⁴²

140. See *Tanya*, end of chapter 32. 141. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 100-106.

3 Abraham named the son who had been born to him—whom Sarah had borne him—Isaac,

4 and Abraham circumcised his son, Isaac, on the eighth day after his birth, as God had commanded him.

◆ *Fifth Reading* 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6 Sarah applied the meaning of Isaac's name—"laughter"¹³⁶—to her own experiences surrounding his birth. She said, **"God has brought me happiness; whoever hears will be happy for me and happy with me."** And so it was: many previously-barren women gave birth at the same time as Sarah, many sick people were healed that day, and many prayers were answered that day; thus many people were happy along with her. Among the numerous miracles that accompanied Isaac's birth was that Abraham retained his potency after this until the end of his life.¹³⁷

7 Abraham held a feast to celebrate Isaac's birth. In order to demonstrate that Sarah had indeed given birth, Abraham instructed all the mothers of infants among the guests to bring their babies without their wet nurses, and Sarah nursed them all.¹³⁸ In recognition of this miracle, **she said, "Who is He who said to Abraham, 'Sarah will nurse many children'? Only Almighty God could have made this promise and fulfilled it, too! For I have given birth to a son in his old age!"**

8 **The child grew up and at the end of two years was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.** All the esteemed leaders of the generation attended, including Shem, Ever, and Avimelech.

Abraham Banishes Hagar and Ishmael

9 Despite Abraham's efforts at educating Ishmael to be moral and upright, Ishmael was drawn to the very same depraved behavior that Abraham was trying to uproot. But Abraham kept hoping optimistically that Ishmael would mature and mend his ways. At one point, Ishmael and Isaac got into an argument about who would succeed Abraham. Isaac insisted that he was Abraham's *sole* heir, while Ishmael insisted that they would *both* succeed him, and since Ishmael was the first-born, he deserved a double portion of the inheritance. When they were in the field, Ishmael shot arrows at Isaac. **Sarah saw all this, and also saw that Ishmael, the son whom Hagar, the Egyptian, had borne to Abraham had also fallen into idol worship, illicit sexual relations, and even murder.**

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

This correlation between the soul and the face especially held true of the patriarchs, since there was no dichotomy between their inner and outer lives: they presented no false façade to the world, so their physical bodies perfectly reflected their inner essence. Thus, since Abraham's innate personality was sheer kindness (*chesed*) and Isaac's was pure severity (*gevurah*), Isaac should naturally not have resembled his father—even though it is natural for children to resemble their par-

ents.¹³⁹ The only way Isaac could look like Abraham, then, was for God to have performed a miracle.

Yet this miracle, too, reflected an inner reality, for although kindness and severity are indeed diametrically opposed, on a deeper level they complement one another. Unlimited kindness can be counterproductive, so tempering kindness with severity is itself an act of kindness. The fact that Isaac resembled Abraham, then, reflected the truth that his outer severity originated in

136. Above, 17:19. 137. Rashi on 25:7; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 95. 138. Rashi on 17:16, above. 139. See *Eduyot* 2:9 and commentary of Maimonides *ad loc*.

ONKELOS

10 וְאָמַרְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם הֲרֹף אֲמַתָּא
הָדָא וְיָת בְּרָה אַרִי לֹא יִירֵת בַּר
אֲמַתָּא הָדָא עִם בְּרִי עִם יִצְחָק;
11 וּבְאִישׁ פִּתְגָמָא לְחָדָא בְּעֵינֵי
אַבְרָהָם עַל עֵיִסָּק בְּרָה: 12 וְאָמַר
יִי לְאַבְרָהָם לֹא יִבָּאֵשׁ בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל
עוֹלָמָא וְעַל אֲמַתְךָ כֹּל דְּתִימֹר לָךְ
שָׂרָה קִבֵּל מִנָּה אַרִי בִּיצְחָק יִתְקַדֵּן
לָךְ בְּנִין: 13 וְאַף יָת בַּר אֲמַתָּא
לְעִמָּא אֲשׁוּנָה אַרִי בְרָךְ הוּא:
14 וְאַקְדִים אַבְרָהָם בְּצִפְרָא וְנָסִיב
לְחָמָא וְרִקְבָא דְמִיָּא וְיִהֵב לְהִגֵּר
שׁוּי עַל כְּתֻפָּה וְיָת רַבִּיָּא וְשִׁלְחָה
וְאַזְלָת וְטַעַת בְּמִדְבָּרָא בְּאֵר שָׁבַע:
15 וְשִׁלְמוֹ מִיָּא מִן רִקְבָא וְרִמַּת
יָת רַבִּיָּא תַּחְתּוֹת חֹד מִן אֵילָנָא:
16 וְאַזְלָת וְיִתְבַּת לֵה מְקַבֵּל אַרְחִיק
בְּמִיגַד בְּקִשְׁתָּא אַרִי אֲמַרְתָּ לֹא
אֲחִי בְּמוֹתָא דְרַבִּיָּא וְיִתִּיבַת מְקַבֵּל
וְאַרְיִמַת יָת קִלְהָ וּבְכַת:

10 וְתֹאמַר לְאַבְרָהָם גֵּרֶשׁ הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֵת־בְּנָהּ כִּי לֹא
יִירֶשׁ בֶּן־הָאֵמָה הַזֹּאת עִם־בְּנֵי עַם־יִצְחָק: 11 וַיֵּרַע הַדְּבָר
מְאֹד בְּעֵינֵי אַבְרָהָם עַל אוֹדֹת בָּנוֹ: 12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֲלֵי־רַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל־הַנֶּעַר וְעַל־אֲמַתְךָ כֹּל
אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֲלֵיךְ שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ כִּי בִיצְחָק יִקְרָא
לָךְ זֶרַע: 13 וְגַם אֶת־בֶּן־הָאֵמָה לְגוֹי אֲשִׁימֶנּוּ כִּי זֶרַעָהּ
הוּא: 14 וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֶקֶר וַיִּקְחֶלֶחֱם וַיַּחֲמַת מַיִם
וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הַגֵּר שָׁם עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֵת־הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּשְׁלַחָהּ וַתֵּלֶךְ
וַתִּתַּע בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאֵר שָׁבַע: 15 וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן־הַחֲמַת
וַתִּשְׁלַךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אֶחָד הַשִּׁיחִים: 16 וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב
לָהּ מִנְּגַד הַרְחֹק בְּמִטְחָוִי קִשֶׁת כִּי אֲמָרָה אֶל־אַרְאֶה
בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב מִנְּגַד וַתֵּשֶׂא אֶת־קִלְהָ וַתְּבַךְ:

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לפי שהיה שונאו על שיצא לתרבות רעה: ואת הילד.
אף הילד שם על שכמה, שהכניסה בו שרה עין רעה
ואחותו חמה, ולא יכל לילך ברגליו: וּתְלַךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב
לגלולי בית אביה: 15 וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם. לפי שדרך חולים
לשתות הרבה: 16 מִנְּגַד. מרחוק: בְּמִטְחָוִי קִשֶׁת. כשתי
טיחות. והוא לשון ירית חץ, בלשון משנה¹⁴⁶: שהטיח
באשתו, על שם שהזרע יורה בֶּחֶץ. ואם תאמר: היה
לו לכתוב: "בְּמִטְחָוִי קִשֶׁת" משפט הווי' לִכְנֹס לְכָאן,
כְּמוֹ¹⁴⁷: "בְּחִגְוֵי הַסֵּלַע", מגזרת¹⁴⁸: "וְהִיטָה אֶדְמַת יְהוּדָה
לְמִצְרַיִם לְחָגָא", ומגזרת¹⁴⁹: "וְחֹגּוֹ וְנִנְעוֹ בִּשְׁכוֹר",
וכן¹⁵⁰: "קִצְוֵי אֶרֶץ", מגזרת "קִצָּה": וַתֵּשֶׁב מִנְּגַד. כיון
שקרב למות הוסיפה להתרחק:

10 עִם בְּנֵי וְגו'. מתשובת שרה: "כי לא יירש בן האמה
הזאת עִם בְּנֵי", אתה למד שהיה מריב עִם יִצְחָק על
הירשה, ואומר: אֲנִי בְכוֹר וְנוֹטֵל פִּי שְׁנַיִם. ויוצאים
בשרה ונוטל קשתו ויורה בו חצים, כְּמָה דָּאֵת אֲמַר¹⁵¹:
"בְּמַתְלַחֲלָה הִירָה זִקִּים וְגו'", ואמר: הלא מִשְׁחָק אֲנִי:
עִם בְּנֵי עִם יִצְחָק. מכיון שהוא בְּנֵי אֶפְלוֹ אִם אִינוֹ הִגּוֹן
בִּיצְחָק, או הִגּוֹן בִּיצְחָק אֶפְלוֹ אִינוֹ בְּנֵי, אִין זֶה כְּדַאי
לִירֵשׁ עִמּוֹ. קל וְחֹמֶר "עִם בְּנֵי עִם יִצְחָק", שִׁשְׁתִּיָּהּ
בו: 11 עַל אוֹדֹת בָּנוֹ. שִׁשְׁמַע שִׁיִּצָּא לְתַרְבוֹת רָעָה.
ופשוט: על שאמרה לו לשלחו: 12 שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ.
בְּקוֹל רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ שָׁבָה, לְמַדְנֹה שִׁהִיָּה אַבְרָהָם טָפַל
לְשָׂרָה בְּנִיאוֹת: 14 לָחֶם וַחֲמַת מַיִם. וְלֹא כֶסֶף וְזָהָב,

115. משלי כו, יח-יט. 116. סנהדרין מו, א. 117. שיר השירים ב, יד. 118. ישעיה יט, יז. 119. תהלים קז, כז.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

a foretaste of the messianic era.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, Abraham was instructed by God to listen to his wife's advice.¹⁴⁹ As we have seen, Abraham and Sarah are metaphors for the soul and the body.¹⁵⁰ By enjoining Abraham (the

soul) to heed Sarah (the body), God granted them a foretaste of the messianic era, in which the body's loftier spiritual source will be revealed and the soul will derive its physical sustenance from the body.¹⁵¹

146. Biurei HaZohar (Admor HaEmtza'i), p. 13. 147. Jeremiah 31:21; Proverbs 12:4. 148. Bava Batra 16b-17a. 149. Likutei Torah 5:15b. 150. See 12:11, above. 151. Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, p. 31.

10 Reporting on the argument between the two boys, **she said to Abraham, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman will not inherit together with my son, Isaac!** He would be unfit to inherit along with any son of mine, even if my own son had no other merits of his own. And he would be unfit to inherit along with as fine a boy as Isaac, even if he were not my son. All the more so is he not fit to inherit along with he who is *both* my son and Isaac!”

11 The matter of Ishmael’s wicked behavior **greatly distressed Abraham.** He was grieved **over** the idea of sending **his son** away.

12 God said to Abraham, **“Do not be distressed about the boy and your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah tells you, heed her voice,** for her prophetic insight is superior to yours. She has foreseen correctly, **for,** as I have already told you,¹⁴³ **it is through Isaac that you will have descendants who will be considered yours** with respect to receiving the blessings I have promised you.

13 But I will also make the son of the bondwoman into a nation, as I have also told you,¹⁴⁴ **for he is also your offspring.”**

14 Abraham rose early in the morning, took bread and a leather flask of water, and gave them to Hagar. He did not give them expensive vessels, for he resented his son for having betrayed him. Sarah’s disparaging report of Ishmael’s wicked behavior aroused God’s attribute of justice against him (this is called “casting an evil eye on someone”), and he became sick and could not walk by himself. Abraham placed the food on Hagar’s shoulder together with the child, and sent her away. In sending her away, Abraham granted her her freedom, so she no longer had the legal status of a servant.¹⁴⁵ She left and wandered in the desert of Beer-sheba. Dejected over being banished from the household of Abraham, she gradually reverted to the idolatrous beliefs with which she was raised.

15 Because Ishmael was sick, he drank more water than usual. When the water from the leather flask was used up, she cast the child under one of the bushes.

16 She then walked away and sat down at a distance, some bowshots away, for she said, “Let me not look on as the child dies.” When the child became deathly ill, she sat at a further distance and wept aloud. Ishmael also prayed for mercy.

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

12 Her prophetic insight is superior to yours: The degree of a prophet’s prophetic insight into the affairs of this world is commensurate with his or her involvement in the world: the more attuned the prophet is, the greater the degree of prophecy. Abraham was somewhat detached and aloof from the world, viewing reality mainly from a spiritual perspective. He therefore could not perceive Ishmael’s true evil, and subsequently failed to see the need to banish him from his house-

hold. Sarah, in contrast, was more involved in worldly matters, so she readily was able to perceive Ishmael’s evil. Her prophetic vision was therefore superior to Abraham’s.¹⁴⁶

Another reason why Sarah’s prophecy was superior to Abraham’s is that we are taught that in the messianic era, the feminine aspect of creation will rule over the masculine.¹⁴⁷ Abraham’s and Sarah’s spiritual refinement was so lofty that it enabled them to experience

^{142.} Above, 17:19, 21. ^{143.} Above, 17:20. ^{144.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 232. ^{145.} *Sichot Kodesh* 5731, pp. 462 ff.

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17 ושמיע קדם יי ית קלה דרביא וקרא מלאכא דיי להגר מן שמניא ואמר לה מא ליה הגר לא תדחלי ארי שמיע קדם יי ית קלה דרביא באתר דהוא תמן: 18 קומי טולי ית רביא ואתקפי ית ידיך בה ארי לעם סגי אשונה: 19 וגלא יי ית עינהא וחות בירא דמניא ואולת ומלת ית רבבא מניא ואשקיא ית רביא: 20 והוה מימרא דיי בסעדה דרביא ורבא ויתב במדברא והוה רבי קשתא: 21 ויתב במדברא דפארן ונסיבת לה אמה אתתא מארעא דמצרים: 22 והוה בעדנא ההיא ואמר אבימלק ופיכל רב חילה לאברהם למימר מימרא דיי בסעדה בכל די את עבדי: 23 וכען קים לי במימרא דיי הקא דלא תשקר בי ובברי ובברי כטיבותא די עבדי עמך תעבד עמי ועם ארעא די אתותבתא בה:

17 וישמע אלהים את־קול הנער ויקרא מלאך אלהים אל־הגר מן־השמים ויאמר לה מה־לך הגר אל־תיראי כי־שמע אלהים את־קול הנער באשר הוא־שם: 18 קומי שאי את־הנער והחזיקי את־ידך בו כי־לגוי גדול אשימננו: 19 ויפקח אלהים את־עיניה ותרא באר מים ותלך ותמלא את־החמת מים ותשק את־הנער: 20 והי אלהים את־הנער וינגל וישב במדבר ויהי רבה קשת: 21 וישב במדבר פארן ותקח־לו אמו אשה מארץ מצרים: פ

ששי 22 ויהי בעת ההוא ויאמר אבימלק ופיכל שר־צבאו אל־אברהם לאמר אלהים עמך בכל אשר־אתה עשה: 23 ועתה השבעה לי באלהים הנה אסתשקר לי ולניני ולנכדי בחסד אשר־עשיתי עמך תעשה עמדי ועם־הארץ אשר־גרתה בה:

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לקראתם ומביאין להם בשר ודג מלוח וגודות נפוחים, כסבורים ישראל ששלמים מים, וכשמכניסו לתוך פיו ופוחו, הרוח נכנס בגופו ומת: 20 רבה קשת. יורה חצים בקשת: קשת. על שם האמנות, כמו "חמר" "גמל" "ציד", לפיכך השי"ן מדגשת. הנה יושב במדבר ומלסטם את העובדים, הוא שנאמר¹²¹: "ידו בכל" וגו': 21 מארץ מצרים. מקום גדוליה, שנאמר¹²²: "ולא שפחה מצרית" וגו'. הנה דאמרי אינשי: זרק חטרא לאוירא, אעקרה קאי: 22 אלהים עמך. לפי שראה שיצא משכונת סדום לשלום, ועם המלכים נלחם ונפלו בידו, ונפקדה אשתו לקוניו: 23 ולניני ולנכדי. עד כאן רחמי האב על הבן: כחסד אשר עשיתי עמך תעשה עמדי. שאמרתי לך¹²³: "הנה ארצי לפניך":

17 את קול הנער. מכאן שיפה תפלת החולה מתפלת אחרים עליו, והיא קודמת להתקבל: באשר הוא שם. לפי מעשים שהוא עושה עכשו הוא גדון, ולא לפי מה שהוא עתיד לעשות. לפי שהיו מלאכי השרת מקטרגים ואומרים: רבונו של עולם! מי שעתיד ורעו להמית בניך בצמא, אתה מעלה לו באר? והוא משיבם: עכשו מה הוא, צדיק או רשע? אמרו לו: צדיק. אמר להם: לפי מעשיו של עכשו אני דנו. והוה "באשר הוא שם". והיכן המית את ישראל בצמא? בשהגלם בבוכדנצר, שנאמר¹²⁴: "משא בערב וגו' לקראת צמא התיו מים" וגו', כשהיו מוליכין אותם אצל ערביים, היו ישראל אומרים לשוביהם: בבקשה מכם, הוליכונו אצל בני דודנו ושמעאל וירחמו עלינו, שנאמר¹²⁵: "ארחות דדנים", אל תקרי "דדנים" אלא "דודים". ואלו יוצאים

120. תהלים סו, ו. 121. ישעיה כא, יג-יד. 122. שם. 123. בראשית טו, יב. 124. שם, א. 125. בראשית כ, טו.

with my son, nor with my grandson." (His concern did not extend any further in time than two generations.) "The same kindness that I have shown you, welcoming you in my land, you shall show to me and to the people of the land in which you have sojourned."

17 God heard the boy's voice, rather than his mother's, for the prayer of a sick person is more efficacious than the prayers others offer up on his behalf. But the ministering angels protested God's intention to answer Ishmael's prayer, arguing that it was not fair to rescue him from death by thirst when his own descendants would, in the future, cruelly kill Jews by thirst.¹⁵² God answered them that since Ishmael's suffering has already atoned for his sins, he is therefore deemed presently righteous and must be judged in accordance with his present status. **So an angel of God called to Hagar from Heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the boy's voice, considering only where he is presently on the scale of moral merit, not according to his future deeds.**

18 Rise, lift up the boy, and grasp him by the hand, for I will make of him a great nation."

19 God then opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the leather flask with water, and gave the boy to drink.

20 God was with the boy and he grew up; he lived in the desert and became an archer, living in the desert and robbing travelers, as God had said he would.¹⁵³

21 He settled in the Paran Desert, and his mother

took him a wife from among the girls of her homeland, Egypt (see Figure 22).

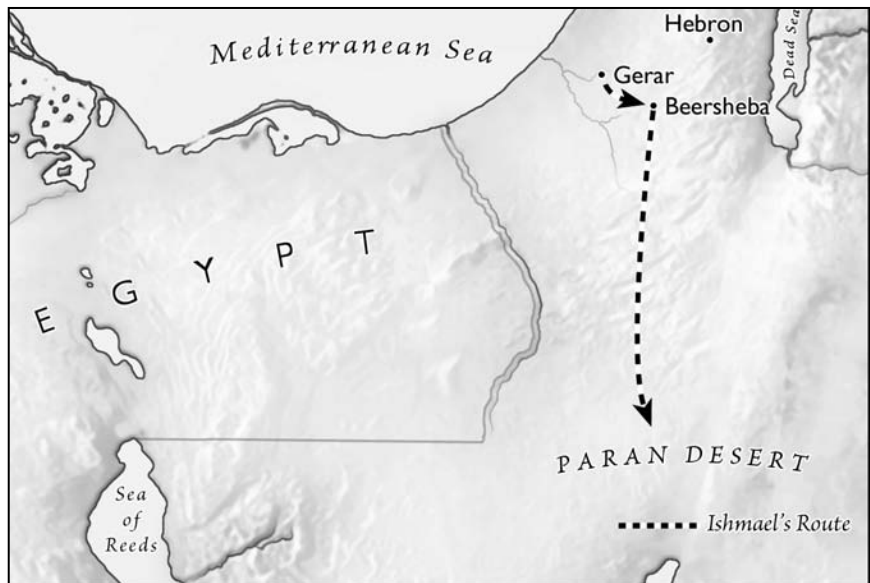


Figure 22: Hagar's Wanderings—continued

Abraham in Beersheba

- ◆ **Sixth Reading 22** At that time, after Sarah gave birth, Avimelech, accompanied by Pikol, chief of his troops, said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do. Besides having a child in your old age, you survived the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, and even prior to that, you vanquished Kedarlaomer's confederacy of kings.

23 So now, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, nor

¹⁵². *Tanchuma*, *Yitro* 5; *Eichah Rabbah* 2:4. ¹⁵³. Above, 16:12.

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24 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֲנִי אֶקְיָם: 25 וְאוֹכַח אַבְרָהָם יֵת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ עַל עֵיטָק בִּירָא דְמִיָּא דִּי אָנְסוּ עַבְדֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ: 26 וַאֲמַר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ לֹא יָדַעִית מֵאֵן עֶבֶד יֵת פְּתֻנְמָא דְרִין וְאִף אֵת לֹא חִוִּית לִי וְאִף אֲנִי לֹא שְׁמַעִית אֱלֹהִין יִמָּא דִין: 27 וְדַבֵּר אַבְרָהָם עֵאן וְתוֹרִין וִיהֵב לְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וּגְזֵרוֹ תְּרוּיָהוֹן קִים: 28 וְאֶקְיָם אַבְרָהָם יֵת שְׁבַע חוֹרְפָן דְּעֵאן בְּלַחֲדִיָּהוֹן: 29 וַאֲמַר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ לְאַבְרָהָם מָא אֲנִין שְׁבַע חוֹרְפָן אֲלִין דִּי אֶקְיָמָתָא בְּלַחֲדִיָּהוֹן: 30 וַאֲמַר אֲרִי יֵת שְׁבַע חוֹרְפָן תִּקְבֵּל מִן יָדִי בְּדִיל דְּתַהִי לִי לְסִתְּרוֹ אֲרִי חֲפְרִית יֵת בִּירָא דָּא: 31 עַל כֵּן קָרָא לְאַתְרָא הַהוּא בְּאֵר שְׁבַע אֲרִי תַמְנָן קִימֵו תְּרוּיָהוֹן: 32 וּגְזֵרוֹ קִים בְּבֵאֵר שְׁבַע וְקָם אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וּפִיכַל רַב חִילָא וְתַבּוּ לְאַרְעָא פְּלִשְׁתִּיָּא: 33 וּנְצִיב אֵילָנָא בְּבֵאֵר שְׁבַע וְצִלִי תַמְנָן בְּשָׂמָא דִּין אֱלֹהָ עֲלָמָא:

24 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֲנִי אֶשְׁבֵּעַ: 25 וְהוֹכַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ עַל־אֲדוּת בְּאֵר הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר גָּזְלוּ עַבְדֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ: 26 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מִי עָשָׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְגַם־אֵתָּה לֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי וְגַם אֲנִי לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי בְלִלְתִּי הַיּוֹם: 27 וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם צֹאן וּבָקָר וַיִּתֵּן לְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיִּכְרְתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּרִית: 28 וַיָּצֵב אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שְׁבַע כִּבְשֹׁת הַצֹּאן לְבִדְהָן: 29 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם מָה הִנֵּה שְׁבַע כִּבְשֹׁת הָאֱלֹהָ אֲשֶׁר הִצַּבְתָּ לְבִדְהָנָה: 30 וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֶת־שְׁבַע כִּבְשֹׁת תִּקַּח מִיָּדִי בְּעִבּוֹר תַּהֲיֶה־לִּי לְעֵדָה כִּי חֲפַרְתִּי אֶת־הַבְּאֵר הַזֹּאת: 31 עַל־כֵּן קָרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בְּאֵר שְׁבַע כִּי שָׁם נִשְׁבַּעוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: 32 וַיִּכְרְתוּ בְרִית בְּבֵאֵר שְׁבַע וַיִּקָּם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וּפִיכַל שְׂרָ־צְבָאוֹ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים: 33 וַיִּטַּע אִשָּׁל בְּבֵאֵר שְׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא־שָׁם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֵל עוֹלָם:

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פרדס להביא ממנו פרות לאורחים בסעודה. וחד אמר: פנדיק לאבסניא, ובו כל מיני פרות. ומצינו לשון נטיעה באהלים, שנאמר¹²⁷: "ויטע אהלי אפדנו". ויקרא שם וגו'. על ידי אותו אשל, נקרא שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא אלוה לכל העולם. לאחר שאוכלין ושותין, אמר להם: ברכו למי שאכלתם משלו. סבורים אתם שמשלי אכלתם? משל מי שאמר והיה העולם אכלתם:

25 והוכח. נתופח עמו על כך: 30 בעבור תהיה לי. זאת: לעדה. לשון עדות של נקבה, כמו¹²⁶: "ועדה המצבה". כי חפרתי את הבאר. מריבים היו עליה רועי אבימלך, ואומרים: אנחנו חפרנוה. אמרו ביניהם: כל מי שיתרצה על הבאר ויעלו המים לקראתו, שלו היא. ויעלו לקראת אברהם: 33 אשל. רב ושמואל, חד אמר:

126. בראשית לא, נב. 127. דניאל יא, מה.

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parting knowledge to each individual according to his or her receptive capacity.

Abraham's inn and orchard were thus two important aspects of his program to disseminate the awareness of God.

We, too, should firstly keep in mind that the very existence of synagogues and institutions of Torah study in a city exert great positive influence upon that city by the mere virtue of their presence, over and above the intrinsic value of the study and prayer that take place within their walls. Secondly, we should teach Torah to people in the manner most suited to their capacity for understanding, employing the specific level of Torah interpretation, as above, that speaks to their soul.¹⁵⁵

He proclaimed the name of God, God of the Universe: In discussing monotheism with his guests, Abraham made all efforts to provide them with a comprehensive understanding of its philosophical principles, leading them methodically from the basic axioms on to the more advanced concepts in accordance with their individual ability to understand. He tailored his instruction to their level of intellect and knowledge via the use of parables and metaphors.

First, Abraham refuted the prevailing belief that God is too exalted to have any actual involvement in the physical world and that He has therefore relinquished His control over it to the forces of nature, which in turn are controlled by the celestial bodies. He taught his

155. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5686, p. 82.

24 Abraham replied, "I will swear."

25 Abraham then disputed with Avimelech over the well of water that Avimelech's servants had seized.

26 Avimelech said, "I do not know who did this thing, nor did you tell me, nor did I hear about it until today." In order to determine who dug the well, they decided that they would each approach it separately; the one before whom the water would rise would be assumed to be the one who dug the well. The water rose before Abraham.

27 Abraham took flocks and cattle and gave them to Avimelech, and the two of them made a treaty.

28 Abraham then set aside seven ewes of the flock.

29 Avimelech asked Abraham, "What are these seven ewes that you have set aside by themselves?"

30 He replied, "You are to accept these seven ewes from my hand, as your acknowledgment that the test we performed is conclusive evidence that I dug this well."

31 That place was therefore called Beersheba ["Well of the Oath"], for there the two of them made an oath.

32 When they had made this treaty in Beersheba, Avimelech and Pikol, chief of his troops, departed and returned to Philistia.

33 Abraham opened an inn in Beersheba. He also planted an orchard in Beersheba in order to provide him with fruit to serve his guests. **There he proclaimed the name of God, God of the Universe. He also induced others to proclaim the name of God.** After eating a fine, free meal at Abraham's inn, Abraham's guests would rise to thank and bless their host. Abraham would respond: "Have you eaten *my* food? You have eaten of that which belongs to the Master of the World. Thank, praise, and bless Him who spoke and the world came into existence!" If anyone refused to praise God, Abraham would reply, "If you insist that you have eaten *my* food, then you owe me the full price of the meal." This was quite high, since he had served them delicacies that were hard to come by in the middle of the desert. In most cases, these guests then capitulated and praised God.

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33 He opened an inn...planted an orchard: Abraham's inn was the first public institution devoted to the dissemination of the belief in monotheism and to the ethical behavior that follows from this belief. Although institutions devoted to teaching Divine wisdom and values existed prior to this (such as the academy of Shem and Ever), they did not actively seek to change society's prevailing beliefs. By boldly establishing a public institution that challenged the world's hallowed tenets, Abraham promoted the awareness of monothe-

ism even among people who never actually visited his inn. As its renown spread, Abraham's inn gradually became a major societal innovation that wielded profound and broad influence.

An orchard: The word for "orchard" (*pardes*) can also be seen as an acronym for the Torah's four levels of interpretation: contextual analysis (*peshat*); allusion and allegory (*remez*); verbal analogy (*derush*); and esoteric allegory (*sod*).¹⁵⁴ Abraham employed all four levels of interpretation when teaching his followers, im-

¹⁵⁴ See Introduction.

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34 וְאֵתוֹתָב אַבְרָהָם בְּאֶרֶץ
פְּלִשְׁתִּי יוֹמִין סְגִיאוֹן:

34 וַיַּגֵּד אַבְרָהָם בְּאֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים יָמִים רַבִּים: פ

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"וַיִּסַּע מִשֶּׁם אַבְרָהָם", מִפְּנֵי בּוֹשָׁה שֶׁל לוֹט, וְכֵן לֵאמֹר
פְּלִשְׁתִּים. וְכֵן תִּשְׁעִים וְתִשְׁעִים שָׁנָה הָיָה, שֶׁהָיָה בְּשִׁלְשִׁי
לְמִילָתוֹ בְּאוֹ אֶצְלוֹ הַמְּלָאכִים, הָרִי עֲשָׂרִים וְחֲמִשׁ שָׁנָה.
וְכֵן כְּתוּב: "יָמִים רַבִּים", מְרַבֵּים עַל הָרָאשׁוֹנִים. וְלֹא
כֵּן הַכְּתוּב לְסֵתֶם אֶלָּא לְפָרֶשׁ, וְאִם הָיוּ מְרַבֵּים עֲלֵיהֶם
שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים אוֹ יוֹתֵר, הָיָה מְפָרֶשׁ, וְעַל כֵּן הָרַחֵק אֵינָם
יִתְרִים יוֹתֵר מִשָּׁנָה, הָרִי עֲשָׂרִים וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנָה, מִדֵּי יֵצֵא
מִשֶּׁם וְחֹזֵר לְחִבְרוֹן. וְאוֹתָהּ שָׁנָה קִדְּמָה לְפָנֶי עֲקָרְתּוֹ שֶׁל
יִצְחָק שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנִים. כִּךְ שְׁנוּיָה בְּ"סֹדֶר עוֹלָם"¹³²:

34 יָמִים רַבִּים. מְרַבֵּים עַל שֶׁל חִבְרוֹן, בְּחִבְרוֹן עָשָׂה
עֲשָׂרִים וְחֲמִשׁ שָׁנָה, וְכֵן עֲשָׂרִים וְשֵׁשׁ, שֶׁהָיָה בֵּן
שְׁבַעִים וְחֲמִשׁ שָׁנָה הָיָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחִבְרוֹן. אוֹתָהּ שָׁנָה —
"וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶלְנֵי מִמְרָא"¹²⁸, שֶׁלֹּא מְצִינוּ קֶדֶם לָכֵן
שְׁנֵי שָׁנִים אֶלָּא שֵׁשׁ, שֶׁבְּכָל מְקוֹמוֹתָיו הָיָה בְּאוֹרֶחַ חוּגָה
וְנוֹסֵעַ וְהוֹלֵךְ, שְׁנֵי מִמְרָא¹²⁹: "וַיַּעֲבֹר אַבְרָם וְגו', וַיַּעֲתֵק
מִשֶּׁם, וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ וַיֵּרֶד אַבְרָם מִצְרֵימָה". וּבְמִצְרַיִם
לֹא עָשָׂה אֶלָּא שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים, שֶׁהָיָה שָׁלְחוֹ פְּרִיעָה,
מִיד — "וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו"¹³⁰, עַד "וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶלְנֵי מִמְרָא
אֲשֶׁר בְּחִבְרוֹן"¹³¹, שֶׁשׁ יָשַׁב עַד שֶׁהִפָּכָה סְדוֹם. מִיד —

128. בראשית יג, יח. 129. בראשית יב, וי. 130. בראשית יג, ג. 131. שם, יח. 132. פרק א.

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Acknowledged: To acknowledge is to admit that something is true without necessarily fully understanding why. Some of Abraham's listeners could not grasp the depth of his words. Nevertheless, they were so inspired by his warmth and passionate love for God that they *acknowledged* that he was speaking the truth.

Praised: Others understood Abraham's teachings and, inspired by their newfound appreciation of God's greatness, began to praise Him themselves.

Blessed: The word for "bless" (*bareich*) connotes enlargement or expansion; to bless someone is to expand their sphere of activity or influence. Some of Abraham's listeners, such as his servant Eliezer, not only fully understood his words but also went on to disseminate them to others, thus expanding Abraham's influence upon the world.¹⁶²

He planted an orchard in order to supply him with fruit to serve his guests: Abraham was not content with merely serving his guests bread to satisfy their hunger, salt to add taste to it, and water to quench their thirst; he even went so far as to offer them rare treats such as fruit, wine, and other delicacies. He did all this without remuneration, joyfully, for complete strangers.

According to the sages, kindness is one of the three innate character traits (along with mercy and bashfulness) that characterize every Jew.¹⁶³ We inherit this trait of kindness from Abraham, and ours is therefore as boundless as was his. We can therefore emulate Abraham's kindness by not only providing others with their basic material and spiritual needs, but also warmheartedly providing them with material and spiritual luxuries, as well.

Since our benevolence stems from a place within our souls that transcends logic, it also transcends the finite

dictates of logic, compelling us to strive to bring happiness and contentment to others to a degree over and beyond minimal necessity.

There is a direct correlation between Abraham's planting an orchard and the subsequent episode of the binding of Isaac.

History has shown that oppression and adversity give rise to uplifted morale, awakening an even stronger sense of self-identity in the oppressed people, whereas freedom and tolerance tend to cause these senses to atrophy. This has certainly proven true as regards the Jewish people: over the course of the generations, when we were permitted to practice our religion freely and openly, we often lost our devotion to our faith and to our ethos of self-sacrifice.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, both Abraham and Isaac rose to the occasion in answering God's call to carry out the sacrifice—an act which required absolute self-sacrifice on both their parts—despite the fact that, prior to this, they had enjoyed a free and unhampered sojourn in the land of the Philistines for many years.

Abraham and Isaac possessed the fortitude to respond with this degree of ultimate self-sacrifice because they had accustomed themselves to cultivating selflessness by providing food, shelter, and luxuries to complete strangers, on a daily basis over the course of years, in a scope totally beyond the boundaries of logic and reason.

We, who are fortunate enough to live in a tolerant society, must similarly ensure that our children grow up imbued with selfless devotion to Judaism. In this way, they will be able, if called upon to do so, to transcend their self-centered concerns for their own comfort for the greater sake of Judaism and the Jewish people.¹⁶⁵

162. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5701, pp. 13, 19. 163. See *Yevamot* 79a. 164. *Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat*, vol. 6, pp. 137-138. 165. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, pp. 770-771.

34 And Abraham sojourned in Philistia for one year more than he had lived in Hebron, i.e., for twenty-six years (2047-2073). After this, he moved back to Hebron (see Figure 23).

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guests that, on the contrary, God is “God of the whole universe,” meaning that it is precisely His infinity that enables Him to concern Himself with the affairs of the physical world just as easily as with the lofty affairs of heaven. In fact, it is God’s infinity that allows Him to supervise the affairs of every last creature, even the most insignificant, down to the minutest detail.

He further explained that because God created the world *ex nihilo*, He must continuously create and sustain it in order for it to continue to exist. Since God created the world through speech, His word must constantly be present in creation, for if not, creation would revert to nothingness just as a person’s words cease to exist as soon as they leave his mouth. And this principle applies not only to creation in general, but also to every facet of creation in particular.

Thus, everything in the world is under God’s direct control and supervision, with the exception of those aspects over which He has given humanity free choice.

Furthermore, Abraham continued, it follows that God provides personally for every one of His creature’s needs—including his guests’. In this way, Abraham proved to them that, in the final analysis, it was not he who had provided them with the meal they had just enjoyed, but God.

Finally, Abraham explained to his guests that not only is God the world’s master and creator, but also that He and the world are one, just as the rays of the sun are one with the sun before they are emitted from it.¹⁵⁶ Abraham explained that when we recognize that nothing exists outside of or in addition to God, it follows that even seemingly ordinary daily activities are in fact opportunities to connect with Him.

Even those of Abraham’s guests who were too simple-minded to follow the logic of his reasoning were won over by the warmth and enthusiasm with which he spoke and the truth that they sensed in his words.¹⁵⁷

If you insist that you have eaten *my* food, then you owe me the full price of the meal: Abraham’s demand seems pointless: Of what value is a thanksgiving prayer if it is uttered for the sole purpose of absolving oneself of payment for the food?

Abraham at first tried to teach his guests about God through explanations and parables, but some of them

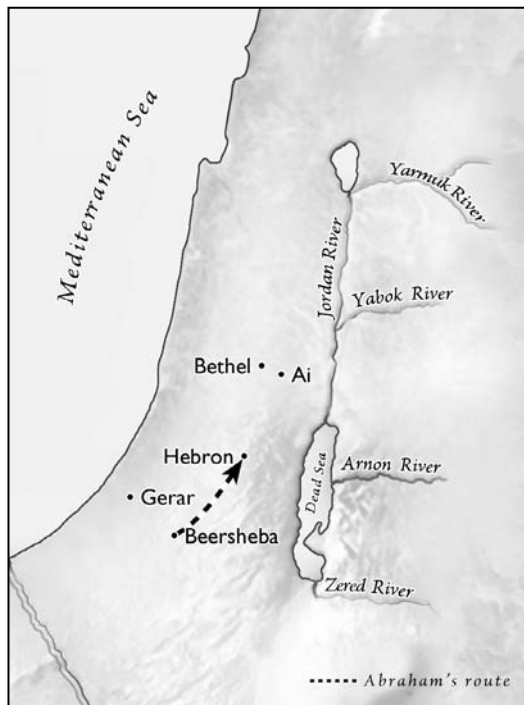


Figure 23: Abraham Moves Back to Hebron

remained unimpressed by his words. With these people, Abraham resorted to a more aggressive approach, designed to break down their spiritual wall of resistance. All people believe in God on some level, yet some are so callous and insensitive that they are in need of forceful encouragement to become aware of their dormant knowledge of God.¹⁵⁸

The Torah instructs us to learn from Abraham’s example and exert ourselves to disseminate Judaism, even when doing so requires the occasional use of pressure. For example, some might argue: Why approach a Jew with the suggestion to put on *tefillin*, when he may only acquiesce because he feels pressured to do so? Is the fulfillment of a commandment in this way of any value?

Abraham’s actions expose the folly of this argument. The fulfillment of a Divine commandment, even if performed under pressure, is a great achievement in and of itself, and can awaken the individual’s latent desire to fulfill the commandment. Since “one good deed leads to another,”¹⁵⁹ that person will very likely eventually come to observe all the commandments, joyfully and of his own volition.¹⁶⁰

He induced others to proclaim the name of God: The effect of Abraham’s words upon his listeners varied, depending upon who they were. In the words of the Talmud,¹⁶¹ Abraham’s guests “*acknowledged, praised, and blessed* the One who spoke and the world came into being.”

^{156.} *Likutei Torah* 4:43b. ^{157.} *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5701, pp. 13-15, 19; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 931. ^{158.} See on Numbers 14:40. ^{159.} *Avot* 4:2. ^{160.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, pp. 122-128. ^{161.} *Sotah* 10b.

ONKELOS
22:1 ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלהים נסה את־אברהם ויאמר אליו אברהם ויאמר הנני: 2 ויאמר קח־נא את־בנך את־יחידך אשר־אהבת את־יצחק ולך־לך אל־ארץ המדינה והעלהו שם לעולה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך:

שביעי 22:1 ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלהים נסה את־אברהם ויאמר אליו אברהם ויאמר הנני: 2 ויאמר קח־נא את־בנך את־יחידך אשר־אהבת את־יצחק ולך־לך אל־ארץ המדינה והעלהו שם לעולה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך:

RASHI

לו: "אשר אהבת". אמר לו: שניהם אני אוהב. אמר לו: "את יצחק". ולמה לא גלה לו מתחלה? שלא לערבבו פתאום ותזוז דעתו עליו ותסתר, וכדי לחבב עליו את המצוה, ולתן לו שכר על כל דבור ודבור: **ארץ המדינה**. ירושלים. וכן בדברי הימים¹³⁴: "לבנות את בית ה' בירושלים, בהר המוריה". ורבותינו¹³⁵ פרשו: על שם שמשם הורגה יוצאה לישראל. ואנקלוס תרגמו על שם עבודת הקטרת, שיש בו מור נרד ושאר בשמים: **והעלהו**. לא אמר לו "שחטוהו", לפי שלא היה חפץ הקדוש ברוף הוא לשחטו, אלא להעלהו להר לעשותו עולה. ומשהעלהו, אמר לו הורידהו: **אחד ההרים**. הקדוש ברוף הוא מתקן הצדיקים, ואחר כך מגלה להם. וכך זה, כדי להרבות שכרן. וכן¹³⁶: "אל הארץ אשר אראך", וכן ביונה¹³⁷: "וקרא אליה את הקריאה":

1 **אחר הדברים האלה**. יש מרבותינו¹³³ אומרים: אחר דבריו של שטן, שהיה מקטרג ואומר: מכל סעודה שעשה אברהם לא הקריב לפניך פר אחד או איל אחד. אמר לו: כלום עשה אלא בשביל בנו, אלו הייתי אומר לו: זבח אותו לפני, לא היה מעבב. ויש אומרים: אחר דבריו של ישמעאל, שהיה מתפאר על יצחק, שמל בן שלש עשרה שנה ולא מחה. אמר לו יצחק: באבר אחד אתה מיראני, אלו אמר לי הקדוש ברוף הוא: זבח עצמך לפני, לא הייתי מעבב: **הנני**. כך היא ענינתם של חסידים, לשון ענוה הוא, ולשון זמון: 2 **קח נא**. אין נ"א אלא לשון בקשה, אמר לו: בבקשה ממך, עמד לי בזה הנסיון, שלא יאמרו: הראשונות לא היה בהן ממש: **את בנך**. אמר לו: שני בנים יש לי. אמר לו: "את יחידך". אמר לו: זה יחיד לאמו, וזה יחיד לאמו. אמר

133. סנהדרין פט, ב. 134. דב"ב ג, א. 135. בראשית רבה נח, ז. 136. בראשית יב, א. 137. יונה ג, ב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

1 God tested Abraham: God tests us in order to bring our essential soul-powers to the fore. In fact, life in general—the very descent of the soul into this world—is such a test. Before descending into this world, the soul relates to God within the limits of reason and does not experience a love for Him that transcends reason. But when the soul is encased in a physical body, which is by nature antagonistic to spirituality, it must summon its innermost strength to remain faithful to God despite its daily trials and tribulations. With this newfound dedication to God, the soul comes to apprehend and appreciate God in a much more profound and intimate way.¹⁷²

Why is this test associated with Abraham and not with Isaac, who not only went along with being bound, but was also the one who was willing to give up his life?

First of all, whether or not we are consciously aware of it, our children represent our most cherished and innermost dreams and hopes. It is the natural hope and ambition of all parents that their children surpass them and inherit a world superior to their own. Therefore, giving up one's own life is in truth less of a test than

giving up that of one's child.¹⁷³

Furthermore, the primary aspect of the test was not the self-sacrifice it entailed but rather the challenge it posed to Abraham's implicit faith in God: God promised Abraham that his son Isaac would be the one to perpetuate his legacy, yet now He was commanding him to sacrifice this very son, in seeming contradiction of His very own word. Yet Abraham unquestioningly carried out God's bid. Isaac, in contrast, had not been promised anything by God, so, ironically, his own faith was not put to the test in this episode.¹⁷⁴

2 Please pass this test, so that no one will think that the previous ones were not real tests: As we saw when he was cast into the furnace in Ur of the Kasdites,¹⁷⁵ Abraham was ready to suffer martyrdom for his beliefs. Yet martyrdom is not necessarily an act of self-sacrifice; in fact, ironically, it can sometimes be an act of self-aggrandizement. For example, the martyr might expect to be lionized in society's collective memory; after all, history is full of people who have accomplished more by their death than they did during their lifetime. Also, if the martyr believes that he will be rewarded in the afterlife, giving up his physical life is simply relin-

173. Sefer HaMa'amarim 5700, p. 37. 174. Ma'amarai Admor HaZaken, Parshiot HaTorah, p. 128. 175. Derech Mitzvotcha, p. 372. 176. Above, 11:28.

The Binding of Isaac

- ◆ *Seventh Reading 22:1* Although Abraham was constantly spending his time and money on preparing meals for his guests in order to induce them to recognize the existence of God and their obligation to serve Him, he had not offered an actual sacrifice to God since moving to Hebron during the first year he settled in the Land of Israel. Satan, the accusing angel of the Heavenly Court, denounced Abraham before God for this apparent lack of piety.¹⁶⁶ God replied, "Everything Abraham does is for the sake of spreading the awareness of Divinity in the world, and the most critical element in his program for accomplishing this goal is passing on this mission to his son. Yet his devotion is so complete that, were I to ask him to sacrifice his son to Me, he would not refuse."

In the meantime, Ishmael had repented somewhat of his evil ways¹⁶⁷ and had moved back to Hebron to be near his father, Abraham.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, he still tenaciously clung to his claim that he was more worthy of succeeding their father. He boasted to Isaac that he had willingly submitted to the pain of circumcision at the age of thirteen. To this, Isaac retorted, "Don't try to win this argument by telling me about your willingness to suffer pain for God's sake in *one* limb of your body! If God were to order me to offer my *whole* body to him, I would not refuse!"

It was after all these words¹⁶⁹—both God's to Satan and Isaac's to Ishmael—that, in the year 2085, God tested Abraham in exactly this way. He said to him, "Abraham!" and he replied devotedly, "Here I am. I am ready to do Your bidding."

2 He said, "Please pass this ultimate test, so that no one will think that your devotion to Me is limited. Take your son." Abraham answered, "I have two sons." God said, "I mean **your only one**." Abraham said, "They are *both* only sons: Ishmael is the only son of Hagar, and Isaac is the only son of Sarah." God said, "I mean **the one you love**." Abraham said, "I love them both!" God said, "I mean **Isaac**." God deliberately spoke ambiguously at first (a) in order to give Abraham time to realize the weightiness of His words and not agree too hastily, thereby forfeiting the merit of full, willful consent, and (b) in order to make the command more impressive and grant him reward for each expression He used. God continued, "Take him **and go away to the land of Mount Moriah**. Mount Moriah is to be the site of the future Temple,¹⁷⁰ from where Divine instruction [*hora'ah*] will issue to the world. The Temple is also to be the locus of Divine service, the most intense form of which will be the incense-offering, a key ingredient of which will be the myrrh [*mor*].¹⁷¹ It is therefore fitting for you to undergo and pass this test on Mount Moriah, for your precedent will inspire future generations to follow My teachings and serve Me with pure devotion. **Take him up there** and prepare him as a **burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I will designate to you**." God did not explicitly tell Abraham to *sacrifice* Isaac—although that is what Abraham thought He meant—since He merely intended to see if he would be willing to do so. Also, He did not immediately tell him on which mountain to perform the sacrifice, so that he would earn the reward of trusting God implicitly, just as had been the case with His initial command to go to the Land of Israel.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁶. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 12, p. 26, note 35. ¹⁶⁷. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, p. 84, note 40. ¹⁶⁸. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 236, note 55. ¹⁶⁹. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 164. ¹⁷⁰. 2 Chronicles 3:1. ¹⁷¹. See Exodus 30:34, and Chassidic Insights *ad loc*. ¹⁷². Above, 12:1.

ONKELOS

3 וְאֶבְרָהִם בְּצִפְרָא וְזִו
יֵת חֲמִידָה וְדִבֵּר יֵת תְּרִין עוֹלָמוֹהִי
עֲמָה וְיֵת יִצְחָק בְּרָה וְצִלַח אֲעִי
לְעִלְתָא וְקָם וְאָזַל לְאַתְרָא דִּי
אָמַר לֵה יֵי: 4 בְּיוֹמָא תְּלִיתָאָה
וְזָקַף אֲבְרָהִם יֵת עֵינוֹהִי וְחִזָּא יֵת
אַתְרָא מְרִחִיק:

3 וַיֵּשְׁבִם אַבְרָהָם בְּצִפְרָא וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת-חֲמֹרוֹ וַיִּקָּה אֶת-
שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אֹתוֹ וְאֵת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עָלָהּ וַיִּלְךְ:
אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר-לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים: 4 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
וַיֵּשָׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם מֵרֶחֶק:

RASHI

“וַיִּצְלַח”, כְּמוֹ: 138: “וַיִּצְלַחוּ הַיִּרְדֵּן”, לְשׁוֹן בְּקוּעַ, פִּינֵדֵר” אֶל-
בְּלַעֲזָר: 139: 4 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי. לְמָה אַחֵר מִלְהֲרָאוֹתוֹ מִיָּד?
כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא יֵאמְרוּ: הֵמָּנוּ וְעַרְבָבוּ פְתָאוֹם וְטָרַף דַּעְתּוֹ,
וְאֵלּוֹ הָיָה לוֹ שְׁהוֹת לְהַמְלִיךְ אֶל לְבוֹ, לֹא הָיָה עוֹשֶׂה:
וַיֵּרָא אֶת הַמָּקוֹם. רָאָה עֵנָן קָשׁוּר עַל הָהָר:

3 וַיֵּשְׁבִם. נִדְרָדְרוּ לְמַצּוֹה: וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ. הוּא כְּעֶצְמוֹ, וְלֹא צָוָה
לְאַחַד מֵעַבְדָּיו, שֶׁהֵאָהֳבָה מִקְלָקֶלֶת הַשּׁוּרָה: אֶת שְׁנֵי
נַעֲרָיו. וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל וְאֶלְיָעֶזֶר. שְׂאִין אֲדָם חָשׁוּב רִשְׁאִי
לְצִאת לְדֶרֶךְ בְּלֹא שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים, שְׂאֵם יִצְטָרֵף הָאָחִיד
לְנִקְבֵי וַיִּתְרַחֵק וְהָיָה הַשְּׁנֵי עִמּוֹ: וַיִּבְקַע. תִּרְגוּמוֹ:

138. שמואל-ב יט, יח. 139. לחטב, לבקע.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

sacrifice prefigured His self-revelation in the Temple,¹⁸⁶ since the sanctification of an entity requires at least some influx of God’s presence into that entity.

In a similar vein, Maimonides states that the binding of Isaac was meant to impart to the world two fundamental principles of the Jewish faith:¹⁸⁷ Firstly, it demonstrates the degree of love and awe that we are capable of feeling and evincing toward God—even more than a father loves his own son. Secondly, it demonstrates the degree to which a true prophet believes in the veracity of his own prophecy, for Abraham certainly would not have sacrificed his son had he entertained the slightest doubt regarding the truth of his prophetic vision.

These two purposes of the binding of Isaac reflect the two functions of the Temple just mentioned: a place for people to worship God with love and awe and a place in which God reveals Himself to us.¹⁸⁸

4 **He saw the place from afar:** According to the Midrash,¹⁸⁹ when Satan realized that he could persuade neither Abraham nor Isaac to disobey God’s command, he made it appear as if there was a river and then large boulders and thorns in their path. Thus, although Abraham’s destination was visible to him, for a cloud hovered over the mountain, it nevertheless seemed to him distant and unreachable because of all the obstacles in his way.

So, too, in our lives: Sometimes we are faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges. Although we may see our destination or goal “from afar,” nevertheless we convince ourselves that our particular circumstances prevent us from achieving our objective. Abraham taught us that even apparently insurmountable obstacles can be overcome, and furthermore, that with perseverance we can and will reach our goal.¹⁹⁰

INNER DIMENSIONS

[4] **He saw the place from afar:** Abraham’s behavior is analogous to that of a father who has to give his sick child some unpleasant-tasting medicine or administer to him some painful treatment. The father’s compassion makes him reluctant to administer the unpleasant cure, but this initial feeling is in fact misplaced pity. The father must bravely “overcome” his own attribute of mercy and act decisively to help his child recover.

In this vein, the *Zohar*¹⁹¹ interprets the word for “the place” (*hamakom*) in this verse as referring to Jacob, the third patriarch, of whom it is said, “He took from the stones of the place.”¹⁹² Abraham epitomized loving-kindness; Isaac epitomized discipline and piety; and Jacob epitomized mercy. In order to bring himself to sacrifice his son, Abraham had to distance himself from Jacob’s attribute of mercy and

instead assume Isaac’s attribute of discipline. Thus, “he saw ‘the place’—i.e., the attribute of mercy—from afar.”¹⁹³

Rabbi Dovber of Mezeritch interpreted the exchange between Abraham and Isaac, further on,¹⁹⁴ in this vein. In its plain sense, the verse reads, “Isaac said to Abraham, his father, ‘My father!’ and he replied, ‘Here I am, my son.’” In Rabbi Dovber’s interpretation, it reads as follows:

Isaac said to Abraham, his father: “But you are my father, the attribute of kindness! What happened to your kindness?”

Abraham replied, “Now, I am ‘my son’—in order to fulfill God’s will, I have garbed myself in your attribute, the attribute of severity.”¹⁹⁵

183. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 178. 184. *Menachot* 73b; *Mishneh Torah*, *Beit HaBechirah* 1:1. 185. Below, verse 14; Exodus 25:8; see *Mishneh Torah*, *loc cit*. 186. See below, verse 13, and Rashi on 25:26. 187. *Guide to the Perplexed* 3:24. 188. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, pp. 68-75. 189. 1:120. 190. Below, 28:11. 191. *Or Torah* 25 (9d). 192. V. 7. 193. *Or Torah* 26 (9d). 194. *Tanchuma* on this verse. 195. *Igrot Kodesh Admor HaRayatz*, vol. 5, p. 439.

3 Abraham did not hesitate for an instant, although he was puzzled how this command fit into God's larger plan for him and for the world.¹⁷⁷ In his eagerness to fulfill God's command, he **got up early in the morning and**, out of his extreme love for God, **saddled his donkey** himself, rather than having one of his servants do so, even though no one actually *rode* upon the donkey; it was used only to carry the wood and tools.¹⁷⁸ **He took his two young men with him, Eliezer and Ishmael, together with Isaac, his son**, because a person of significant social stature should always be accompanied by at least two attendants, so that if one of them needs to be excused to relieve himself, the other is still there to attend to him. At this point, Abraham only told Isaac that God had told him to offer a sacrifice to Him, without mentioning that *he* was to be the sacrifice. Abraham **chopped wood for the offering, and rose and set out for the place that God had told him.**

4 From Hebron to Mount Moriah is less than a day's journey, but it was only **on the third day** of the journey that **Abraham raised his eyes and saw** a cloud hovering over the mountain and understood that he was seeing **the appointed place from afar**. Here again, God did not show Abraham the place immediately in order that no one would be able later on to accuse him of having made a hasty decision.

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

quishing one form of life in order to attain a superior one. Finally, someone who possesses a high degree of personal integrity can easily convince himself that life would not be worth living were he to compromise his values.

Seen in this light, Abraham's willingness to give up his life for God at Ur of the Kasdites—his greatest test prior to the binding of Isaac—could be construed as a calculated (albeit holy) act. He chose to give up his life rather than deny his beliefs, for he knew that his soul would live on in the afterlife, and, furthermore, that his death would show the world that the teachings of monotheism are worth dying for, serving thereby to disseminate them more widely than ever before.

True self-sacrifice, then, is more than simply giving up one's physical life. It is being prepared to give up everything that lends meaning and consequence to life—being willing for it to be as if one had never existed, to be erased from history's memory altogether.

In this light, the binding of Isaac was the ultimate in self-sacrifice. Taking Isaac's life would not have publicized Abraham's devotion to God, since nobody but Isaac was present.¹⁷⁹ On the contrary: Isaac's death would have spelled the abrupt end of Abraham's entire religious program, since he would be taking the life of the person whom he had groomed to carry on his legacy and promote his beliefs.

The binding therefore expressed true self-sacrifice on Abraham's part, motivated by neither physical nor spiritual gain, demonstrating that he was indeed a true servant of God. Furthermore, it proved retroactively that his overcoming the other challenges was also "real"—not motivated by ulterior motives but rather

by his absolute devotion to God's will.¹⁸⁰

The one you love, Isaac. Although Abraham loved Isaac because he was his son and because of his righteous behavior, he also loved him because of his innate personality. God has instilled within each of us a natural yearning for perfection; this is what attracts us to people whose qualities complement and complete our own—our opposites. Abraham, who was naturally predisposed toward kindness and love, loved Isaac, who was naturally predisposed toward severity and awe.¹⁸¹

(This concept of "attraction of opposites" is also evidenced in the musical preferences of the descendants of Ishmael and Esau. Since the Ishmaelites inherited Abraham's characteristics of kindness and joy, they therefore prefer melancholy music. In contrast, the Romans and Westerners, having inherited the traits of discipline and severity from Isaac, show a preference for joyful music.)¹⁸²

I love them both: Abraham loved his sons equally, not only because they were his children, but also because each possessed a unique quality: Isaac possessed extraordinary piety and exhibited exemplary behavior, whereas Ishmael possessed the power of repentance, which is capable of transforming sin into virtue.¹⁸³

The Land of Moriah is the future site of the Temple: The Temple was to serve both as a place to worship God¹⁸⁴ (and offer sacrifices) and as the principal place where God would reveal Himself.¹⁸⁵ The binding of Isaac anticipated these two functions: Abraham's supreme sacrifice in offering up his son prefigured the Temple's function as a place for Divine worship and offering up sacrifices; God's sanctification of Isaac as a

¹⁷⁷ Rashi on Exodus 6:1; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, p. 77, note 16. ¹⁷⁸ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 71; vol. 31, p. 21. See on Exodus 4:20. ¹⁷⁹ See Ibn Ezra on verse 1, above. ¹⁸⁰ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, pp. 73-78. ¹⁸¹ *Torah Or* 17c. ¹⁸² *Or HaTorah, Devarim*, vol. 4, p. 1835.

ONKELOS

5 ואמר אברהם לעולימוהי
אוריכו לכו הָכָא עִם תַּמְרָא
ואנא ועולימא נתמטי עד כא
ונסגוד ונתוב לְתוֹכוֹ: 6 ונסיב
אברהם ית אַעֲי דַעֲלָתָא וְשׁוּי עַל
יִצְחָק בְּרָה ונסיב בידה ית אַשָּׁא
וית ספינא ואָלו תְּרוּיָהוּן כְּחָדָא:
7 ואמר יצחק לאברהם אבוי
ואמר אבא ואמר הָא אָנָא בְּרִי
ואמר הָא אַשָּׁא וְאֶעֱיָא וְאָן אִמְרָא
לַעֲלָתָא: 8 ואמר אברהם קָדָם יִי
גְלִי לָה אִמְרָא לַעֲלָתָא בְּרִי וְאָלו
תְּרוּיָהוּן כְּחָדָא: 9 וְאֵתוּ לְאַתְרָא דִּי
אָמַר לָה יִי וּבְנָא תַמָּן אֲבָרָהָם ית
מִדְבָּחָא וְסָדַר ית אַעֲיָא וְעָקֵד ית
יצחק בְּרָה וְשׁוּי יתָה עַל מִדְבָּחָא
עֵיל מִן אַעֲיָא: 10 ואוֹשִׁיט אֲבָרָהָם
ית יְדָה ונסיב ית ספינא לְמַכֵּס ית
בְּרָה: 11 וקרא לָה מִלְאָכָא דִּי
מִן שְׁמִיָּא וְאִמַר אֲבָרָהָם אֲבָרָהָם
ואמר הָא אָנָא: 12 ואמר לָה
תוֹשִׁיט יָדָךְ לַעֲלִימָא וְלֹא תַעֲבֹד
לָה מִדְּעַם אַרִי כַעַן יִדְעָנָא אַרִי
דְּחָלָא דִּי אַתָּ וְלֹא מִנְעָתָא ית בְּרָךְ
ית יְחִידָךְ מִנִּי:

5 ויאמר אברהם אלינעריו שבו־לכם פה עם־החמור
ואני והנער גללה עד־פה ונשתחוה ונשובה אליכם:
6 ויקח אברהם את־עֲצֵי הָעֵלָה וישם על־יצחק בְּנוֹ
ויקח בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַמַּאֲבָלָת וילכו שניהם
יחדו: 7 ויאמר יצחק אל־אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי
ויאמר הנני בני ויאמר הנה האש והעצים ואיה השֶׁה
לְעֵלָה: 8 ויאמר אברהם אלהים יראה־לו השֶׁה לְעֵלָה
בְּנִי וילכו שניהם יחדו: 9 ויבאו אל־המקום אשר אמר־
לו האלהים ויבן שם אברהם את־המזבֶּח ויערף את־
העצים ויעקֹד את־יצחק בְּנוֹ וישם אתו על־המזבֶּח
מִמַּעַל לְעֵצִים: 10 וישלח אברהם את־ידו ויקח את־
הַמַּאֲבָלָת לִשְׁחֹט אֶת־בְּנוֹ: 11 ויקרא אליו מִלְאָךְ
יהוה מן־השמים ויאמר אברהם | אברהם ויאמר
הנני: 12 ויאמר אל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנֶּעַר וְאֶל־תַּעֲשׂ
לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי | עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יֵרָא אֱלֹהִים אֹתָהּ וְלֹא
חֲשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ מִמִּנִּי:

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שְׁעוֹקְדִין אוֹתָן בּוֹ הָיָה נֶכֶד: 11 אֲבָרָהָם אֲבָרָהָם. לְשׁוֹן
חֶבֶה הוּא, שְׂכּוּפֵל אֶת שְׁמוֹ: 12 אֵל תִּשְׁלַח. לִשְׁחֹט. אָמַר
לוֹ: אִם כֵּן, לְחֹנֶם בָּאֲתִי לְכָאן, אֶעֱשֶׂה בּוֹ חֶבֶלָה, וְאוֹצִיא
מִמֶּנּוּ מַעַט דָּם. אָמַר לוֹ: "אֵל תַּעֲשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה", אֵל
תַּעֲשׂ בּוֹ מוֹם: כִּי עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי. אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָא: אָמַר לוֹ
אֲבָרָהָם: אֶפְרָשׁ לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת שִׁיחֲתִי, אֶתְמוּל אֶמְרָתָא לִי¹⁴⁴:
"כִּי בִי־יִצְחָק יִקְרָא לָךְ וְזַע", וְחוֹרָתָא וְאֶמְרָתָא¹⁴⁵: "קַח נָא אֶת
בְּנֶךָ", עֲכָשׁוּ אֹתָהּ אוֹמֵר לוֹ: "אֵל תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנֶּעַר"
אָמַר לוֹ הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: לֹא אֶחָלַל בְּרִיתִי וּמוֹצָא
שְׁפָתִי לֹא אֲשַׁנֶּה, כְּשֶׁאֲמַרְתִּי לָךְ "קַח" — מוֹצָא שְׁפָתִי
לֹא אֲשַׁנֶּה, לֹא אֶמְרָתִי לָךְ "שְׁחַטְהוּ" אֵלָּא "הַעֲלֵהוּ".
אֶסְקַמְתָּה, אֶחָתָה: כִּי עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי. מַעֲתָה יֵשׁ לִי מִה
לְהָשִׁיב לְשֹׁטָן וְלֵאמֹת הַתְּמָהִימִם מִה הִיא חֲבָתִי אֲצִלָּךְ,
יֵשׁ לִי פִתְחוֹן פֶּה עֲכָשׁוּ, שְׂרָאִים "כִּי יֵרָא אֱלֹהִים אֹתָהּ":

5 עד כה. בלומר, דרך מועט למקום אשר לפנינו.
ומדרש אגדה¹⁴⁴: אראה היכן הוא מה שאמר לי
המקום¹⁴¹: "כה יהיה ורעף", ונשובה. נתנבא שישובו
שניהם: 6 המאבלת. סבין. על שם שאוכלת את
הבשר, כמה דתימא¹⁴²: "וחרפי תאכל בשר", ושמכשרת
בשר לאכילה. דבר אחר: זאת נקראת "מאכלת", על
שם שישראל אוכלים מתן שברה: וילכו שניהם יחדו.
אברהם שהיה יודע שהולך לשחוט את בנו, היה
הולך ברצון ושמחה, כיצחק שלא היה מרגיש בדרך:
8 וראה לו השׁה. בלומר, יראה ויבחר לו השׁה, ואם
אין שׁה — "לעולה בני". ואף על פי שהבין יצחק שהוא
הולך לשחט, "וילכו שניהם יחדו" בלב שנה: 9 ויעקֹד.
ידיו ורגליו מאחוריו, הידים והרגלים ביחד היא עקדה,
והוא לשון "עקדים"¹⁴³, שהיו קרסליהם לבנים, מקום

140. בראשית רבה נ, א. 141. בראשית טו, ה. 142. דברים לב, מב. 143. בראשית ל, לט. 144. בראשית כא, יב. 145. שם, ב.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[11] "Abraham! Abraham!": The first "Abraham" refers to Abraham, the person; the second refers to the supernal entity called "Abraham," i.e., the

Godly source of kindness and love. Abraham the person, by evincing kindness and love, drew down the Divine energy of the "supernal Abraham."¹⁹⁸

5 Abraham said to his young men, “You stay here with the donkey, while I and Isaac, the young man, go a short distance over there.” To himself, Abraham said, “When I get there, I will see how God intends for me to fulfill my mission without an heir or successor.” He continued to Eliezer and Ishmael, **“We will prostrate ourselves in prayer and then return to you.”** In using the plural, he unwittingly prophesied that he and Isaac would both return.

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt-offering and placed it on his son, Isaac. He took the fire and knife in his hand, and the two of them walked together, with equal enthusiasm to perform God’s commandment, even though Abraham knew he was on his way to sacrifice Isaac but Isaac as yet had no inkling of this.

7 Isaac said to Abraham, his father, “My father!” and he replied, “Here I am, my son.” And Isaac said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the offering?”

8 Abraham replied, “God will see to a lamb for a burnt-offering, and if He does not, then you, my son, will be the offering.” Even though Isaac now understood that he was to be sacrificed, he, too, did not question God, **and thus the two of them walked on together,** father and son with equal enthusiasm.

9 When they came to the place that God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He then bound Isaac, his son, tying his hands and feet behind him, and placed him on the altar, on top of the wood.

10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. At that moment, the heavens opened, the ministering angels saw this heartrending scene, and cried. Their tears fell into Isaac’s eyes, and this later impaired his vision.¹⁹⁶

11 An angel of God then called to him from heaven and said affectionately, “Abraham! Abraham!” and he replied, “Here I am.”

12 The angel said, “Do not raise your hand against the young man to slaughter him!” When he heard this, Abraham thought he finally understood God’s contradictory statements: first, God had promised him that Isaac was to be the one to continue his lineage; then He told him to kill Isaac. When the angel instructed him *not* to slaughter Isaac, Abraham thought that God never really intended him to kill Isaac, but merely to draw some blood from him. So Abraham said to the angel, “Very well; I shall only wound him and draw a small amount of blood.” But to this, the angel replied, **“No, do nothing to him!”** Hearing this, Abraham thought he had failed the test and been deemed unworthy of sacrificing Isaac. So, God said to him through the angel,¹⁹⁷ **“I never intended you to sacrifice Isaac nor draw any blood from him; it was merely a test. For now that you have passed this test and I know that you fear God—since you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me—I have a fitting response for Satan and for all those who wonder why I display so much love to you.”**

¹⁹⁶. Rashi on 27:1, below; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 212, note 9. ¹⁹⁷. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 35, pp. 76-79. ¹⁹⁸. *Or Torah* 30 (10d).

ONKELOS

13 וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה־אֵיל אֲחֵר נֹאֲחֻז בִּסְבָּךְ בְּקִרְנָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֵלָה תַּחַת בְּנוֹ: 14 וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שְׁם־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה יִרְאָה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם בְּהָר יְהוָה יִרְאָה: 15 וַיִּקְרָא מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שְׁנִית מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם: 16 וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה בִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךְ אֶת־יְחִידֶךָ: 17 כִּי־בָרַךְ אֲבִרְכְּךָ וְהִרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וּכְחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שִׁפְתַּת הַיָּם וַיִּרְשׁ זָרְעֲךָ אֶת שְׁעַר אֵיבָיו: וַיִּירֶתוּן בְּנֵיךְ יֵת קְרוֹי סְנֵאִיחוּ:

RASHI

14 ה' יִרְאָה. פשוטו כתרגומו: ה' יבחר ויראה לו את המקום הזה להשרות בו שכנינו ולהקריב כאן קרבנות: אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם. שיאמרו לימי הדורות עליו: בהר זה יראה הקדוש ברוך הוא לעמו: הַיּוֹם. הימים העתידין, כמו: "עד היום הזה" שבכל המקרא, שכל הדורות הבאים הקוראים את המקרא הזה אומרים: "עד היום הזה" על היום שעומדים בו. ומדרש אגדה²⁰⁸: ה' יראה עקדה זו לסלוח לישראל בכל שנה, ולהצילם מן הפרענות, כדי שיאמר היום הזה בכל דורות הבאים: "בהר ה' יראה" אפרו של יצחק צבור ועומד לכפרה: 17 בָּרַךְ אֲבִרְכְּךָ. אחת לאב ואחת לבן: וְהִרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה. אחת לאב ואחת לבן:

13 וְהִנֵּה אֵיל. מוכן היה לכך מששת ימי בראשית: אחר. אחרי שאמר לו המלאך: "אל תשלוך ירך", ראוי בשהוא נאחז. והוא שמתרגמין: "וזקף אברהם עינוהי בטרם אלך". ולפי האגדה: אחר כל דברי המלאך והשכינה ואחר טענותיו של אברהם: בִּסְבָּךְ. אילן: בְּקִרְנָיו. שהיה רץ אצל אברהם, והשטן סוככו ומערבבו באילנות: תַּחַת בְּנוֹ. מאחר שכתוב "ויעלהו לעולה", לא חסר המקרא כלום, מהו "תחת בנו"? על כל עבודה שעשה ממנו היה מתפלל ואומר: יהי רצון שתהא זו כאלו היא עשויה בבני, כאלו בני שחוט, כאלו דמו ורוק, כאלו בני מפשט, כאלו הוא נקטר ונעשה דשן:

146. עיין בראשית רבה ט, ט.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Self-sacrifice refines us in proportion to the extent of the sacrifice involved. The greater the sacrifice, the more dedication to God we must evoke in order to motivate the sacrifice; in other words, we can only sacrifice something for God if God means more to us than whatever it is that we are sacrificing. The deeper the layer of our being that is exposed in this process, the more refined we become.

The devotion we must evoke in order to give up our physical lives for God refines us so profoundly and completely that it transforms the very physical matter of our body, rendering it fit to embody spirituality. The material nature of the body, which is normally too coarse to reveal the Divinity that sustains it, becomes spiritually transparent.

It is precisely this sublime level that Isaac reached when he willingly surrendered his life to God. According to the Midrash,²⁰⁸ Isaac was not only willing to die

for God; he actually *did* die: while bound on the altar, his soul temporarily left him and ascended to heaven. It was in this respect that Isaac's self-sacrifice even surpassed that of his father: whereas Abraham showed himself *ready* to give up his life (at Ur of the Kasdites) and even his entire being (at the binding of Isaac),²⁰⁹ Isaac actually *did* give up his life.

The episode of the binding of Isaac is recited daily as a prelude to morning prayers, since our ultimate objective in praying is to dedicate our entire being to God. If we pray with proper intention and devotion, this objective will be fulfilled: the lives we lead after we finish praying will be imbued with self-sacrifice; furthermore, our involvement in the physical world will be solely for the goal of enhancing our relationship with God and fulfilling our Divine mission in life. Even the most physical aspects of our lives — our "ashes" — will remain "on the altar," part and parcel of our Divine lives.²¹⁰

208. Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 31; Zohar 1:60a. 209. See on v. 2, above. 210. Likutei Sichot, vol. 25, pp. 135-136; Ma'amarei Admor HaZaken 5562, p. 13; BeSha'ah Shehikdimu 5672 §62.

13 Abraham was not content to have simply passed the test; he also wanted God to seal the blessings he earned with the force of an oath. He knew that this called for a sacrifice, just as had been the case with Noah after the flood.¹⁹⁹ **Abraham raised his eyes**, looking for an animal to sacrifice,²⁰⁰ **and he caught sight of a ram** running toward him. This very ram had been designated to be offered in Isaac's stead ever since the six days of Creation, but Satan, frustrated by the fact that Abraham had passed this test, caused the ram to become **entangled by its horns in a thicket**. Undaunted, **Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt-offering in his son's stead**. In order to ensure that this offering would influence God to seal the blessings he had earned by passing the test, Abraham asked God that the status of a sacrifice not be *transferred* from Isaac to the ram, but rather that the offering of the ram *confer* the status of a sacrifice on Isaac: the ram was not to be Isaac's *replacement* but his *proxy*.²⁰¹ Before every act that he performed on the ram—slaughtering it, flaying its skin, burning it—Abraham prayed: “May it be God's will that this act be considered as if it was done to my son.” This conferred upon Isaac the quasi-legal status of an ascent-offering;²⁰² the implications of this status were to become clear later on in his life.²⁰³

God set aside the horn of this ram to blow when He gave the Torah at Mount Sinai.²⁰⁴

14 **Abraham named that site HaShem Yireh** [“God will see”], praying, “May God select this place as the site of the Temple, where His presence on earth will dwell and where He will manifest Himself to His people.” **Since** God indeed *had* designated this mountain for this purpose, **it is said to this day, “On God's Mountain, Mount Moriah, He can be seen.”** He further prayed, “**May God** always **see** and remember the binding of Isaac and consider its merit sufficient to atone for the Jewish people's sins and to save them from punishment, **so that it be said** in all generations, ‘**to this day**, it is as if Isaac's ashes **can be seen on** the altar that Abraham built on **God's mountain**,’ serving as atonement for the Jewish people.”²⁰⁵

15 After the sacrifice, **the angel of God called to Abraham from heaven a second time**,

16 **and said, “God declares, ‘I have acceded to your request to seal the successful conclusion of this test with an oath. By Myself I swear: Because you did this thing, and did not withhold your son, your only one,**

17 **I will bless you and bless your son, and greatly increase your offspring:** they will be so numerous that you will not be able to count them, just as it is impossible to count **the stars of the sky and the grains of sand on the seashore**,²¹¹ **and your descendants shall take possession of their enemies' cities.**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

14 It is as if Isaac's ashes can be seen on the altar that Abraham built on God's mountain: The Torah usually requires the ashes of a sacrifice to be *removed* from the altar.²⁰⁶ The ashes constitute the element of earth remaining after the sacrifice's other constituent ele-

ments—air, fire, and water—have been consumed.²⁰⁷ Thus, the ashes are removed from the altar because they are too coarse to be elevated by the altar's holy fire. In contrast, Isaac's body was so refined that, metaphorically, even his ashes were fitting to remain on the altar.

199. Above, 8:21. 200. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 76, note 10. 201. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 79. 202. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 30, p. 79, note 29, p. 80, note 35. 203. See below, 25:21 and 26:2. 204. Rashi on Exodus 19:13. 205. Rashi here and on Leviticus 26:42. 206. Leviticus 6:3-4. 207. See *Igeret HaKodesh* 15. See above, 18:27.

ONKELOS

18 וַיִּתְּבַרְכוּ בְּדִיל בְּנֵי בִל עִמָּמִי
 אֶרְעָא חֶלֶף דִּי קְבִילֵתָא לְמִימְרִי:
 19 וְתֵב אֲבָרְהָם לֹות עֹלִימוּדֵי
 וְקָמוּ וְאָזְלוּ כְּחָדָא לְבָאָר שָׁבַע
 וַיִּתֵּב אֲבָרְהָם בְּבָאָר שָׁבַע: 20 וְהָוָה
 בְּתֵר פְּתֻגְמֵיָא הָאֲלִין וְאַתְחִנָּא
 לְאַבְרָהָם לְמִימְרָא הָא זֵלִידִת
 מִלְכָּה אֶף הִיא בְּנִין לְנַחֲוֹר אַחִיו:
 21 יֵת עֹוץ בְּכֵרָה וְיֵת בּוֹז אַחִיו
 וְיֵת קְמוּאַל אֲבוּדֵי דְאַרְס: 22 וְיֵת
 כְּשֵׁד וְיֵת חֲזוֹ וְיֵת פִּלְדֵּשׁ וְיֵת דִּלְחָף
 וְיֵת בְּתוּאַל: 23 וּבְתוּאַל אוֹלִיד
 יֵת רֵבְקָה תְּמִנָּא אֲלִין זֵלִידִת
 מִלְכָּה לְנַחֲוֹר אַחִיו דְאַבְרָהָם:
 24 וּלְחִינְתָּהּ וּשְׁמָהּ רֵאוּמָה וְיֵלִידִת
 אֶף הִיא יֵת טִבַּח וְיֵת גַּחַם וְיֵת תַּחַשׁ
 וְיֵת מַעֲכָה:

18 וַיִּתְּבַרְכוּ בְּזֶרְעוֹ כָּל גִּוְיֵי הָאָרֶץ לְעֵקֶב אִשָּׁר שָׁמַעַתָּ
 בְּקִלְי: 19 וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲבָרְהָם אֶל-נַעֲרָיו וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל-
 בְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲבָרְהָם בְּבֵאֵר שָׁבַע: פ
 מַפְטִיד 20 וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּגֶד לְאַבְרָהָם
 לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה יֵלְדָה מִלְכָּה גַם-הִוא בָּנִים לְנַחֲוֹר אַחִיו:
 21 אֶת-עֵוֹץ בְּכָרוֹ וְאֶת-בּוֹז אַחִיו וְאֶת-קְמוּאַל אֲבִי
 אָרְס: 22 וְאֶת-כְּשֵׁד וְאֶת-חֲזוֹ וְאֶת-פִּלְדֵּשׁ וְאֶת-דִּלְחָף
 וְאֶת בְּתוּאַל: 23 וּבְתוּאַל יָלַד אֶת-רֵבְקָה שְׁמִנָּה אֵלֶּה
 יֵלְדָה מִלְכָּה לְנַחֲוֹר אַחִי אֲבָרְהָם: 24 וּפִילְגֶשֶׁשׁ וּשְׁמָהּ
 רֵאוּמָה וְתֵלֵד גַם-הִוא אֶת-טִבַּח וְאֶת-גַּחַם וְאֶת-תַּחַשׁ
 וְאֶת-מַעֲכָה: פ פ פ

קמ"ז פסוקים. אמנו"ן סימן.

RASHI

וממרא. בשרו הקדוש ברוך הוא שגוללה רבקה בת
 זוגו. וזהו "הדברים האלה", הרהורי דברים שהיו על
 ידי העקדה: גם הוא. אף היא השותה משפחותיה
 למשפחות אברהם גם כן, מה אברהם, שנים עשר
 שבטים שיצאו מיעקב, שמונה בני הגבירות וארבעה
 בני שפחות, אף אלו, שמונה בני גבירות וארבעה בני
 פילגש: 23 ובתואל ילד את רבקה. כל היחוסין הללו
 לא נכתבו אלא בשביל פסוק זה:
 חסלת פרשת וירא

19 וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲבָרְהָם בְּבֵאֵר שָׁבַע. לא ישיבה ממש, שהרי
 בחברון היה יושב, שתיים עשרה שנים לפני עקדתו
 של יצחק, יצא מבאר שבע והלך לו לחברון, כמו
 שנאמר¹⁴⁷: "וַיָּגֶד אֲבָרְהָם בְּאָרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים יָמִים רַבִּים",
 מַרְבִּים מִשָּׁל חֶבְרוֹן הָרָאשׁוֹנִים, וְהֵם עֲשָׂרִים וְשֵׁשׁ
 שָׁנָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁפִּרְשְׁנוּ לְמַעַל¹⁴⁸: 20 אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים
 הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּגֶד וְגו'. בשובו מהר המוריה היה אברהם
 מהרהר ואומר: אלו היה בני שחוט, כבר היה הולך
 בלא בנים, היה לי להשיאו אשה מבנות ענר אשכול

147. בראשית כא, לד. 148. כא, לד.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Godliness with every limb of our bodies, down to our
 very bones. As King David said,²¹³ "All my bones pro-
 claim, 'God, who is like You!'"²¹⁴

20 After these words: The juxtaposition of the narra-
 tive of the binding of Isaac with that of the birth of his
 future wife, Rebecca, demonstrates that self-sacrifice is
 an integral part of a healthy marriage. When we marry,
 we are forced to focus on the immediate tasks of sup-
 porting our families, and dealing with the material
 world and its attendant mundane matters. No longer
 are we free to focus as intensely on our own spiritual
 development. Although marrying and raising a fam-
 ily are indeed a part of fulfilling our Divine mission to
 make the world into God's home, we are forced to sac-
 rifice some of the intensity of our own pursuit of spiri-
 tual growth. Marriage is thus a form of self-sacrifice.²¹⁵

The juxtaposition of these two events alludes to yet an-
 other fact: We are taught that before the binding, Isaac
 was unable to have children. After the binding, God
 granted him a soul capable of bearing children.²¹⁶

Because the capacity to bear children is inexorably in-
 tertwined with the concept of self-sacrifice, we see that
 children have an innate capacity to unequivocally ac-
 cept the notion of self-sacrifice. Some educators have
 recommended against teaching young children the
 story of the binding of Isaac, claiming that it would
 unnecessarily frighten them. Their fear is unfounded,
 however, since Jewish children instinctively under-
 stand self-sacrifice to an even greater degree than do
 adults.²¹⁷

24 Reumah: The name *Reumah* can be read as two
 words, meaning "look [at] what" (*reu mah*).

213. Psalms 35:10. 214. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5708, pp. 253-254. 215. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 137; *Hitva'aduyot* 5749, vol. 1, pp. 348-349. 216. *Hitva'aduyot* 5749, vol. 1, p. 382, note 68, citing *Or HaTorah, Bereishit*, vol. 2, p. 432a. 217. *Hitva'aduyot* 5749, vol. 1, p. 349.

18 All the nations of the world shall be blessed through your descendants—because you heeded My voice.’ ”

19 Abraham returned to his young men, and together they set out and went to Beersheba. Abraham remained for a short time in Beersheba.

- ◆ **Maftir 20** Abraham said to himself: “If I had slaughtered Isaac, he would have died childless. It is time for me to marry him off. I will search for a wife for him from among the daughters of my confederates,²¹² Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre.” **It was after these words of Abraham’s that Abraham was told by God: “There is no need to search for a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of your confederates, for just as you will have twelve great-grandchildren who will be the progenitors of the chosen people, eight from their father’s wives and four from his wives’ servants, Milkah, too, has borne eight sons to your brother, Nachor:**

21 Utz, his firstborn; Buz, his brother; Kemuel, the father of Aram;

22 Kesed; Chazo; Pildash; Yidlaf; and Bethuel.

23 And Bethuel has a daughter, Rebecca. She is worthy and fit to be Isaac’s wife. **Milkah bore these eight sons to Nachor, Abraham’s brother.**

24 And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore children: Tevach, Gacham, Tachash, and Ma’achah (see Figure 24).” When Abraham heard from God that Rebecca had been born, he cancelled his search for a wife for Isaac.

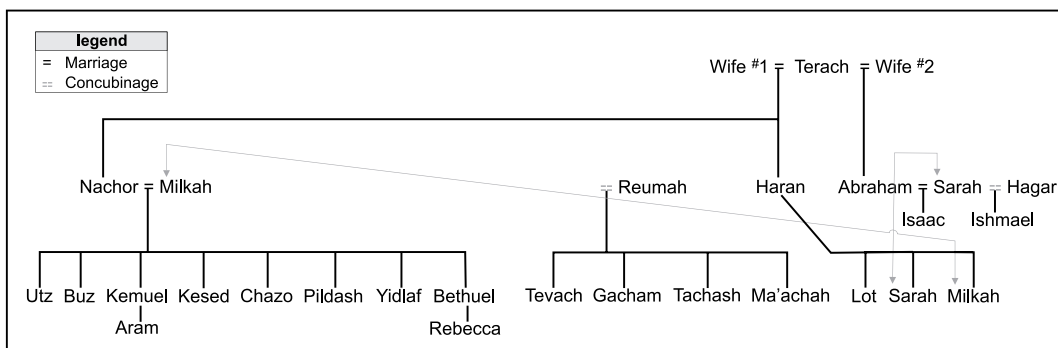


Figure 24: Abraham's Family

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Vayeira* may be found on p. 340.



CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

18 Because you heeded My voice: The word used here for “because” (*eikev*) also means “heel,” alluding to the fact that Abraham was so completely devoted to God that even his heel heeded God’s voice. Through successfully passing God’s tests and selflessly teaching the world about God, Abraham refined his entire being to the extent that even the lowest part of his body, his heel, submitted to God. Indeed, his heel was more at-

tuned to God’s word than was the mind of the greatest of philosophers, for the mind can only *conceptualize* God; Abraham *felt* God with his entire being.

Nowadays, we can achieve a similar degree of self-refinement by following in Abraham’s footsteps and selflessly disseminating Divine consciousness throughout the world. This process begins with ourselves; intense study of the teachings of Chasidism trains us to sense

211. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 20, note 49. 212. Above, 13:18.

When not used to mean “which one” or “which kind,” the word “what” often means “of what significance is...,” or “how little are...,” as in the phrases, “What are we?”²¹⁸ and “What does God, your God, ask of you?”²¹⁹ It thus indicates humility or self-abnegation.²²⁰ In this context, *Reumah* would mean, “take notice of my self-nullification,” referring to people who brag about their humility!

There was once a person who had many good qualities but was unfortunately also arrogant. His friends suggested that if he were to simply acquire the attribute of humility,

he would then be perfect! The man agreed and started acting humbly. At one point, when a fellow was pestering him, the “humble” man finally lost his patience: “Fool!” he cried, “you are nothing compared to me! Do you know who I am? I not only have many good qualities, I also now possess humility as well!”²²¹

The “*reumah* syndrome” can take on a more subtle form as well: we can in fact be selfless, while on some subtle level still maintaining an awareness of our selflessness. Our ultimate goal therefore should be to become truly and entirely unaware of our selfhood.²²²

218. Exodus 16:7, 8. 219. Deuteronomy 1:12. 220. *Or HaTorah*, Nach, p. 671. 221. *Keter Shem Tov* 31. 222. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5720, pp. 33-34.



Vayeira

הפטרות *Haftarot*



Haftarah for Vayeira

2 Kings 4:1-37

Parashat Vayeira recounts the second phase of Abraham's career in the dissemination of Divine consciousness, in which he was aided by God's supernatural help, the greatest expression of which was the birth of his son Isaac in his and Sarah's old age. In the *parashah*, we witness the prophet Elisha dispensing miraculous Divine aid to the widow of Obadiah and to the Shunemite woman, who, like Sarah, is blessed with a child through Divine intervention.

4:1 During the reign of the wicked King Achav over the northern kingdom, Israel, his righteous administrator Obadiah supported the prophets financially. When necessary, Obadiah borrowed money for this purpose from the king's son, Yehoram, and paid him back with interest.⁶ After Achav died, a certain woman, the wife of Obadiah, who was one of the disciples of the prophets, cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that your servant feared God. And now a creditor—Yehoram son of Achav—has come to take my two children to be his bondmen."

2 Elisha said to her, "What can I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" She replied, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house, except for a jug of oil containing only enough oil to anoint one person."

3 He said, "Go and borrow vessels from outside, from all your neighbors. Do not suffice with just a few empty vessels.

4 Then, go inside and close the door behind yourself and your children, for it

is not respectful to God to flaunt a miracle, and pour oil from your jug into all those vessels, and set aside each full one. Do it this way rather than moving the jug from vessel to vessel, for God will make the jug like a spring, and a spring does not move about."

5 So she left him, and closed the door behind herself and her children. They kept bringing her vessels and she kept pouring.

6 When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel," but he answered her, "There is no other vessel." And the oil stopped.

7 She came and told the man of God, asking him whether to sell now or wait until the price rises. He said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your creditor now, for there is enough to pay off your debts even at the present price, and you and your sons will live on the remainder for the rest of your lives."

4:1 וְאִשָּׁה אַחַת מְנֻשִּׁי בְנֵי־הַנְּבִיאִים צָעָקָה
אֶל־אֱלִישָׁע לֵאמֹר עַבְדְּךָ אִישִׁי מֵת וְאַתָּה
יָדַעְתָּ כִּי עַבְדְּךָ הָיָה יָרָא אֶת־יְהוָה וְהַנֶּשֶׁה
בָּא לְקַחַת אֶת־שְׁנֵי יְלָדָי לּוֹ לְעַבְדִּים: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלֶיהָ אֱלִישָׁע מַה אֶעֱשֶׂה־לָּךְ הַגִּידִי לִּי מַה־
יִשְׁלַכִּי (וְלָךְ) בְּבֵית וְתֹאמַר אֵין לְשִׁפְחָתְךָ
כֹּל בְּבֵית כִּי אִם־אֶסְוֶךְ שָׁמָּן: 3 וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי
שְׂאֵל־לָךְ כְּלִים מִן־הַחוּץ מֵאֵת כָּל־שֹׁכְנֵיכִי
(וּשְׁכֵנֶיךָ) כְּלִים רַקִּים אֶל־תִּמְעָטִי: 4 וּבָאת
וּסְגַרְתָּ הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַדְךָ וּבְעַד־בְּנֶיךָ וַיִּצְקֶתָ עַל
כָּל־הַכְּלִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהַמָּלֵא תִסָּעִי: 5 וְתִלְכִּי
מֵאֵתוֹ וְתִסְגְּרִי הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַדְךָ וּבְעַד בְּנֵיךָ הֵם
מְנֻשִּׁים אֵלֶיהָ וְהִיא מֵיִצְקָתָ (מוֹצֶקֶת): 6 וַיְהִי
כַּמָּלֵאת הַכְּלִים וְתֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנָהּ הַנִּיִּשָּׁה
אֵלַי עוֹד כָּלִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אֵין עוֹד כָּלִי
וַיַּעֲמֹד הַשָּׁמָן: 7 וְתָבֹא וְתִגַּד לְאִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים
וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי מִכְרִי אֶת־הַשָּׁמָן וְשִׁלְמִי אֶת־
נְשִׁיכִי (וְנִשְׁכֶּיךָ) וְאַתָּה בְּנִיכִי (וּבְנֶיךָ) תֵּחָיוּ בְּנוֹתַי:

6. See the *haftarah* for *Vayishlach*, below.

8 One day Elisha visited Shunem, where there lived a prominent woman, the sister of Avishag of Shunem.⁷ She urged him to partake of a meal, and later, whenever he passed by while visiting the city, he would stop there for a meal.

9 She said to her husband: "I now perceive that his man who is continually passing our way is a holy man of God. I never see a fly on his table, nor an emission of vital seed on the sheets he has slept on. 10 Let us now make a little walled attic, and set up for him there a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us he will stay there."

11 One day he came there; he retired to the attic and lay down there.

12 He then said to his servant Geichazi, "Call that Shunamite woman." He called her and she stood before him.

13 He said to Geichazi, "Tell her: 'Look, you have gone to all this trouble for us. What can we do for you? Do you want a word spoken on your behalf to the king, or to the general of the army?' "

She answered, "I live among my own people. No one harms me; I have no need for intercession with the king or the general of the army." She left.

14 He said to Geichazi, "What then can be done for her?" Geichazi answered, "The fact is, she has no son, and her husband is old."

15 Elisha said, "Call her," so Geichazi called her, and she stood in the doorway.

16 He said, "Just as you are alive now, so at this season next year you will be embracing a son."

She replied, "No, my master, man of God! Do not prove yourself unreliable to your maidservant by blessing me with a son who will die during my lifetime. Pray that he live." Elisha did not respond to this.

17 The woman conceived and gave birth to a son at the same season the following year, as Elisha had told her.

18 The child grew up, and one day he went out to his father among the reapers.

19 He said to his father, "My head, my head! I am sick in my head!" The father said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother."

8 וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיַּעֲבֹר אֵלִישָׁע אֶל-שֻׁנֶם וְשָׁם אִשָּׁה גְדוֹלָה וּתְחֻקֶּיָּהּ לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם וַיְהִי מִדִּי עָבְרוּ יָסַר שָׁמָּה לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם: 9 וּתְאֹמַר אֶל-אִשָּׁה הַנִּה-נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים קָדוֹשׁ הוּא עֹבֵר עָלֵינוּ תָמִיד: 10 נַעֲשֶׂה-נָּא עֲלֵית-קִיר קְמָנָה וְנִשִּׁים לוֹ שֵׁם מִטָּה וּשְׁלֶחֶן וְכִסֵּא וּמִנְוָרָה וְהָיָה בְּבֹאוֹ אֵלֵינוּ יָסַר שָׁמָּה: 11 וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹא שָׁמָּה וַיָּסַר אֶל-הָעֲלִיָּה וַיִּשְׁכַּב-שָׁמָּה: 12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-גֵּיחָזִי נַעֲרוֹ קְרֵא לַשֻּׁנַמִּית הַזֹּאת וְיִקְרָא-לָהּ וּתַעֲמֹד לְפָנָיו: 13 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִמְרָנָא אֱלֹיָה הִנֵּה תִרְדָּתִי אֵלֵינוּ אֶת-כָּל-הַתִּרְדָּה הַזֹּאת מָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ הִנֵּה לְדַבְרִי-לְךָ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אוֹ אֶל-יֶשָׁר הַצָּבָא וְתֹאמַר בְּתוֹךְ עַמִּי אֶנֹכִי יֹשֶׁבֶת: 14 וַיֹּאמֶר וּמָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר גֵּיחָזִי אֲבָל בֵּן אֵין-לָהּ וְאִשָּׁה זָקֵנָה: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָא-לָהּ וְיִקְרָא-לָהּ וּתַעֲמֹד בַּפֶּתַח: 16 וַיֹּאמֶר לַמּוֹעֵד הַזֶּה בָּעֵת תִּהְיֶה אִתִּי (וְאֵת) הַבֵּקֶת בֵּן וְתֹאמַר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל-תִּכְבֹּד בְּשִׁפְחָתְךָ: 17 וּתְהִרַר הָאִשָּׁה וּתֵלֶד בֵּן לַמּוֹעֵד הַזֶּה בָּעֵת תִּהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר-דָּבַר אֵלֶיָּה אֵלִישָׁע: 18 וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אָבִיו אֶל-הַקְּצָרִים: 19 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אָבִיו רֹאשִׁי רֹאשִׁי וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הַנֶּעֶר שְׂאֵהוּ אֶל-אִמּוֹ:

7. 1 Kings 1:3.

20 He carried him and brought him to his mother; he sat on her knees until noon, and he died. 21 She went up to the attic, laid him on the bed of the man of God, closed the door, and left.

22 She called her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys so I can hurry to the man of God and return."

23 He said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the *Rosh Chodesh* nor the Sabbath, when we are accustomed to go hear the sages teach the Torah."

She replied, "All is well."

24 Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Urge it ahead! Do not slow down for me unless I tell you to!"

25 She set out, and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her from afar he said to Geichazi his servant: "Look, there is that Shunamite woman. 26 Now, please run to meet her, and ask her, 'Are you well? Is your husband well? Is the child well?' "

Geichazi asked her all this, and she answered, "All is well."

27 When she came to the man of God, at the mountain, she caught hold of his feet. Geichazi stepped forward to push her away, but the man of God said, "Let her alone, for she is in bitter distress, yet God has hidden it from me and has not told me."

28 Then she said, "Did I ask my master for a son?! Did I not say, 'Do not prove yourself unreliable to your maidservant? Do not mislead me?'"

29 Elisha understood what had happened. He said to Geichazi, "Gird yourself, take my staff in your hand, and go; if you meet any man do not greet him, and if any man greets you do not reply, for if you do, they will ask you where you are going, and you will be tempted to say, 'to resurrect a dead person,' and this is immodest. When you arrive, place my staff on the boy's face."

30 Elisha wanted to send the women with Geichazi, but the boy's mother said, "As God lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!"

So Elisha arose and followed her to Shunem.

20 וַיִּשְׂאוּהוּ וַיְבִיאוּהוּ אֶל־אִמּוֹ וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל־בְּרֵכֶיהָ עַד־הַצֶּהֳרַיִם וַיָּמָת: 21 וַתַּעַל וַתִּשְׁכְּבֵהוּ עַל־מִטָּת אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּסְגֹּר בָּעֶד וַתֵּצֵא: 22 וַתִּקְרָא אֶל־אִישָׁהּ וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלָחָה נָא לִי אֶחָד מִן־הַנְּעָרִים וְאֶחָת הָאֲתָנוֹת וְאֶרְוֶצָה עַד־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲשׁוּבָה: 23 וַיֹּאמֶר מְדוּעַ אֹתִי (וְאֵת) הַלִּכְתִּי (וְהִלַּכְתִּי) אֵלָיו הַיּוֹם לֹא־הָיָה וְלֹא שָׁבַת וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלוֹם: 24 וַתַּחבֵּשׁ הָאֲתָנוֹת וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־נַעֲרָהּ נִהְיָ וְלָךְ אֶל־תַּעֲצֹר־לִי לְרֹכֵב כִּי אִם־אֲמַרְתִּי לָךְ: 25 וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבֹא אֶל־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־הַר הַכַּרְמֶל וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים אוֹתָהּ מִנֶּגֶד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־גֵּיחָזִי נִעְרֹה הִנֵּה הַשּׁוֹנְמִית הִלְזָה: 26 עַתָּה רִוֵּץ־נָא לִקְרֹאתָהּ וְאֲמַרְלָהָ הַשְׁלוֹם לָךְ הַשְׁלוֹם לְאִישֶׁךָ הַשְׁלוֹם לִילְדָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלוֹם: 27 וַתָּבֹא אֶל־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־הָהָר וַתַּחזֹּק בְּרַגְלָיו וַיִּנָּשׁ גֵּיחָזִי לְהַדְפָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הֲרַפְּחָלָה כִּי־נִפְשָׁה מִרְדָּלָה וַיְהוּזָה הָעֲלִים מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא הִגִּיד לִי: 28 וַתֹּאמֶר הֲשִׂאֲלֹתִי בֶן־מֵאֵת אֲדָנִי הֲלֹא אֲמַרְתִּי לָהּ תִּשְׁלָה אֹתִי: 29 וַיֹּאמֶר לְגֵיחָזִי חֲנֹר מְתִנֶּה וְלָךְ מִשְׁעֲנִתִּי בִידֶךָ וְלָךְ כִּי־תִמָּצֵא אִישׁ לֹא תִבְרַכְנוּ וְכִי־יִבְרַכְךָ אִישׁ לֹא תַעֲנֶנּוּ וְשִׁמַּת מִשְׁעֲנִתִּי עַל־פְּנֵי הַנָּעֵר: 30 וַתֹּאמֶר אִם הַנָּעֵר חַי־יְהוּזָה וְחַי־נִפְשָׁךְ אִם־אֲשַׁעֲבֹךָ וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֶיהָ:

31 Geichazi had gone on ahead of them, but he did not follow Elisha's instructions. To everyone who greeted him and asked where he was going, he said, "My master has sent me to resurrect a dead person." When he had arrived, he had placed the staff on the boy's face, but there was neither sound nor response. He returned to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy has not awakened."

32 Elisha came into the house, and there was the boy, dead, laid out on his bed. 33 So he went inside, closed the door behind the two of them, and prayed to God. 34 Then he mounted the bed and lay upon the child, placing his mouth upon the child's mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his palms upon his palms, and spread himself out over him. And the body of the child became warm. 35 He stepped down, walked once up and down the room, then mounted and again spread himself out over him. The boy sneezed seven times, and the boy then opened his eyes.

36 Elisha called Geichazi and said, "Call that Shunamite woman." So he called her, and when she came to him he said, "Pick up your son."

37 She came and fell at his feet and prostrated herself on the ground. She then picked up her son and left.

31 וַגֵּיחָזִי עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיֵּשֶׁם אֶת־הַמְשָׁעָנָה עַל־
פְּנֵי הַנֶּעֱר וַאֲיֵן קוֹל וַאֲיֵן קָשָׁב וַיֵּשֶׁב לִקְרֹאתוֹ
וַיַּגִּדְלוּ לֵאמֹר לֹא הָקִיץ הַנֶּעֱר: 32 וַיָּבֹא
אֵלִישָׁע הַבֵּיתָה וְהִנֵּה הַנֶּעֱר כֹּת מִשְׁכָּב עַל־
מִטָּתוֹ: 33 וַיָּבֹא וַיִּסְגֹּר הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַד שְׁנֵיהֶם
וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־יְהוָה: 34 וַיַּעַל וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל־הַיֶּלֶד
וַיֵּשֶׁם פִּי עַל־פִּי וְעֵינָיו עַל־עֵינָיו וְכַפָּיו עַל־כַּפוֹ
(כַּפָּיו) וַיִּגָּהַר עָלָיו וַיִּחַם בְּשָׁר הַיֶּלֶד: 35 וַיֵּשֶׁב
וַיִּקְדֹּף בְּבֵית אַחַת הַנָּה וְאַחַת הַנָּה וַיַּעַל וַיִּגָּהַר
עָלָיו וַיִּזְוֹר הַנֶּעֱר עַד־שִׁבְעַ פְּעָמִים וַיִּפְקַח
הַנֶּעֱר אֶת־עֵינָיו: 36 וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־גֵּיחָזִי וַיֹּאמֶר
קְרָא אֶל־הַשְּׁנַמִּית הַזֹּאת וַיִּקְרָאָהּ וַתָּבֹא אֵלָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאִי בִגְדֶיךָ: 37 וַתָּבֹא וַתִּפֹּל עַל־רַגְלָיו
וַתִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־בְּנָהּ וַתֵּצֵא:



Dedicated in honor of our children

**Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways
of our holy Torah*

Yuri and Deana Pikover

