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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYEIRA - 5764

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RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER THE MESSIAH COMPLEX

We read in Parshas Vayera about the meritorious acts of the two daughters of Lot. They thought their entire area was destroyed, and that only they and their father had survived. They truly thought that they were saving the world! The Rabbis of the Talmud point out that because the older daughter stepped forward on the first night "to save the world", she was rewarded to a greater extent than the younger daughter (Bava Kama 38b).

When what the daughters had done became public knowledge, however, Avraham Avinu, their great uncle, was so embarrassed, he moved away from the neighborhood (Rashi 20:1). The daughters mistakenly thought that the entire area had been destroyed, including Avraham and his family, and that only they and their father were meritorious enough to have been spared, singled out by Hashem for the purpose of preserving humanity. For the sake of truly saving the world, even incest would be permitted (see Rashi to Vayikra 20:17).

In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 306:14) we permit one even to violate Shabbos in order to save someone else from shmad. This principle (that we encourage one to violate a lesser sin in order to save another individual from a much greater sin) only applies in very rare instances, where it is absolutely clear that the spiritual "investment" will certainly pay off in a most pronounced fashion. Every legal system contains a clause when in special circumstances we assume that "the end justifies the means". The various legal systems all differ from each other regarding the details of this principle, i.e. in defining acceptable ends.

In Halacha, pikuach nefesh is considered so important a goal, that in most instances it is justified to violate Torah laws when a conflict arises between a given law and pikuach nefesh.

At the start of the movement of chassidus, there were many Chassidim who would invest so much time "preparing" for the fulfillment of various mitzvos (such as tefilah, and the seder on Pesach night) [working with the assumption that the more one invests in "preparation" for a mitzvah, the more will be gained spiritually from the performance of the mitzvah] that they would not get to daven or to eat the matzah until after the appropriate time. They felt that this would be an

acceptable example of "the ends justifying the means" (chatei bishvil shetizkeh).

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, the student of the Gaon of Vilna, vigorously opposed this practice in his work "Nefesh Hachayim". When the mitzvah is performed after the zman, nothing is gained. One has not enhanced his spiritual gain from performing the mitzvah with so much extra preparation, but has rather lost all spiritual gain possible, since the mitzvah has not been fulfilled properly. One who recites shacharis after the correct zman is the same as one blowing shofar on Purim and reading the Megillah on Rosh Hashana. One who is off by half an hour is the same as one who is off by half a year. Rav Chaim concludes that the Talmudic principle that we sometimes recommend - chatei bishvil shetizkeh - only applied before mattan Torah! After mattan Torah all details of each Torah law must be adhered to without any exception.

Reb Osher Tiktiner, a student of Rav Chaim, points out in his sefer, "Keser Rosh", that this concluding statement is really an exaggeration. The Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch do speak of rare instances where we would recommend, even today, after mattan Torah, that one should sin in order to gain spirituality. But these are indeed very rare instances! When one is forced with a situation of pikuach nefesh, even when in doubt, the concern for the pikuach nefesh takes precedence over the other Torah laws, even if the doubt is only a far fetched one. But regarding the daughters of Lot, the chumash points out that in truth, Lot and his daughters did not really merit to have been spared. It was only in the zechus (merit) of Avraham that G-d spared their lives (19:29).

Their assessment of the situation was totally in error. The Talmud points out that sometimes when there seems to be a medical emergency on Shabbos, and the laymen present have no way of determining accurately whether there is a concern of sakana (mortal danger), one must treat the case as one of safeik sakana, and even if later it is discovered that the chilul Shabbos was not at all called for. Nonetheless, since according to the perception of the layman there was a safeik sakana, no kapparah will be needed for the chilul Shabbos (Menachos 64a). Quite the opposite - the layman deserves to be rewarded for taking care of what to him was a safeik sakana. So too in the case of Lot's daughters, although they were totally off in their perception, nonetheless they each deserved a reward for taking care of what they perceived as a major safeik sakana.

Rav Velvel Soloveitchik once commented that his father, Rav Chaim, was much greater than him; Rav Chaim, he explained, had such keen insight, that he had the ability to analyze a political situation so carefully such that he would be able to predict accurately what would follow in another sixty years if one route were to be followed, as opposed to the other route. Rav Velvel readily admitted that he did not at all have that ability. After pausing for a moment he added that he did, however, think that he possessed a certain degree of insight that others lacked - "at least I'm able to see what's under my nose!"

Many people engaged in kiruv have developed a distorted sense of reality. Many think that they're really saving the world. And, of course, in order to save the world they allow themselves certain leniencies and they take certain liberties, like the daughters of Lot, based on the principle of chatei bishvil shetizkeh! We ought all to take to heart the warning of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, once given to young musmachim, not to develop a messiah complex!

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il]
Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm)
Student Summaries Of Sichot Of The Roshei Yeshiva Parashat Vayera
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A
AN EXALTED FAITH
Summarized by Betzalel Posy

And after these things came to pass, the Lord tested Avraham; and He said to him, "Avraham," and he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will show you." (Bereishit 22:1-2)

I would like to examine how the Rambam deals with the parasha of the akeida (the binding of Yitzchak). First, the Rambam tells us that the purpose of nisyonot (Divine tests) in the Torah is not merely to test the recipient, but to teach others important principles in Divine service. The Rambam, then, points out two messages that we learn from this, the test of tests. Let us deal with the second one first, as I want to focus on the first.

The Rambam tells us that the incident of the akeida is a proof of the perfect clarity of prophecy. After all, if there were any doubt that the command to Avraham was both of divine origin and absolutely clear and unequivocal in its meaning, would not Avraham have looked for every excuse to refrain from sacrificing his pride and joy, the son of his dreams? And not only that, but Avraham had three days to think and contemplate whether he was doing the right thing; he did not just impulsively sacrifice his son.

This is an important message for us, as Jews. Judaism is based on prophecy, on G-d telling us what we are supposed to do. Any doubt in the truth or accuracy of the revelation could destroy our whole system. For this reason, the Torah tells us a story of how perfectly clear the revelation of Hashem was to Avraham Avinu, and thus to all other prophets.

The Rambam says that the other message of the akeida is to show how much one must love G-d, even to the point of sacrificing one's only son. Avraham did so not because he was afraid that G-d would kill him, but rather because his strongest love and desire was to serve G-d. To convey this message, the Rambam quotes a verse: "Now I know that you are G-d-fearing, for you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me" (Bereishit 22:12).

This point in the Rambam seems strange. After all, does G-d really need us to love Him to the extent that we would kill our children? Does G-d ever require us to do such a thing? Does He not, indeed, forbid human sacrifice? Furthermore, the verse that the Rambam himself quotes discusses yir'a (fear), not ahava (love), a recurring theme in this week's parasha.

I would like to explain the Rambam based on some letters of Rav Kook zt"l. Avraham Avinu was involved in a debate with the intellectuals of his time. Not all those who worshipped idols were merely primitives who thought that sticks and stones ran the world. Rather, many people intellectually supported the concept of attaching physical substance to divinity, to make it more palatable to the common person. "Your approach," they told Avraham, "is fine for people like yourself who are removed from the real world. But for a regular person to be willing to give his heart, soul, and very life, or the life of his son, there needs to be something he can touch, see or feel. Your pure faith is too elevated for him, me'od na'ala. He must be able to identify with the gods, to fight their battles, love their loves, and hate their hates. This is the only way for one to have true relationship with a deity." The akeida shows a person with a purified faith, the innovation of Avraham, can have a relationship with the Almighty - a relationship that goes to the extreme of devotion, and is based on the one G-d of truth and justice.

The alternate viewpoint is an attractive one. For many years, there were Jews who tried to attach some measure of physicality to G-d, until the Rambam rooted that out of mainstream belief. The Rambam says that all of Judaism is a fight against avoda zara (idolatry). Many say that today, when there is no avoda zara, emuna (faith) is irrelevant. However, I believe that there are many types of avoda zara today, just in different forms.

The editor of Ma'ariv recently wrote a book about his travels to India and his discussion with some Hindu priests there, who told him that Judaism, as well as its offshoots Christianity and Islam, had failed to create a livable system for the majority of people. When people do not have a something tangible on which to base their morality, results such as Nazism are evident. Even in America, the capital of intellectual openness, millions are attracted to cults and other primitive forms of belief, since they see that those who lack some faith, even if they are the biggest intellectuals, can be the worst people. Consider the man who spent years killing people with letter bombs: wasn't he a professor? Thus, the fight of Avraham Avinu is not over, and today more than ever, after the Holocaust and the rise of technology, we must show the world that faith in G-d is the way to achieve "tzedaka u-mishpat" (righteousness and justice).

But it is not only the outside world whom we must show. Today, many people try to sell Torah and mitzvot in the same way. There are "mystics" and "miracle workers" who claim to be able to tell the future or the past from physical objects, even if they are religious items, such as tefillin and mezuzot. Even worse, there are those who claim to have found new solutions to problems future and past by finding all sorts of codes and gimmicks in the Torah, using computers and calculators. These novelties have no importance; they are not mentioned by the Rishonim, nor did they need them! The Rambam had no codes, the Ramban had none, the Vilna Gaon, nor even the Ba'al Shem! What they had was faith and knowledge of G-d and His Torah. These gimmicks may seem like a good way to make "ba'alei teshuva," but a ba'al teshuva who is not for Torah and mitzvot is not a ba'al teshuva. EIN PATENTIM! There are no shortcuts or alternative ways to reach "tzedaka u-mishpat," nor are there shortcuts to reaching the Holy One, the source of tzedaka u-mishpat, who is high and exalted.

We must regain the pure faith of Avraham, who stood against the world and taught of the One G-d. This task falls mainly to us, the inhabitants of the batei midrash; we must purify the Torah of all dross and vulgarization, and show the world and our brethren the true faith, as we recite before blowing the shofar: "Yediyei amim ne'esafu: am Elokei AVRAHAM; ki le- Elokim maginei erez; ME'OD NA'ALA" - "The great of the peoples are gathered together, the retinue of AVRAHAM's G-d; for the guardians of the earth belong to G-d; HE IS GREATLY EXALTED." (Tehillim 47:10)

(Originally delivered Se'uda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Vayera 5757 [1996].)

From: MICHAEL HOENIG [MHoening@herzfeld-rubin.com]
Subject: Torah Essay; Vayeira; "Avimelech's Mysterious Payment of Silver"

AVIMELECH'S MYSTERIOUS PAYMENT OF SILVER
MICHAEL HOENIG

One of the more difficult Psukim to understand is found in Parshat Vayeira towards the end of the episode in which Avimelech, Philistine King of Gerar, takes Sarah, only to have to give her back to Avraham untouched. The monarch not only was stricken with occlusion of the genital organs but also was visited by Hashem in a dream and warned to return Sarah unharmed upon penalty of death. Avimelech awakens, recounts these developments to all his servants and "the people were very frightened." [20:8] Avimelech apparently gets the message for he summons Avraham, expresses consternation over how he was nearly misled to sin; gives Avraham considerable gifts: flocks, cattle, servants and maidservants; and returns Sarah. The King then says: "Behold my land is before you; settle wherever you see fit" (Hinei Artzi Lefanecha Batov B'aynecha Shev). [20:15] Then follows a strange, seemingly bizarre statement specifically addressed to Sarah which Torah records

thusly: "And to Sarah he said, Behold I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold! Let it be for you an eye covering for all who are with you; and to all you will be vindicated." (UleSarah Amar Hinei Nosati Elef Kesef LeAchich Hinei Hu Lach Kesus Aynayim LeChol Asher Itach VeEs Kol VeNochachas) [20:16]

Avimelech's message is strange for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, the following: (1) the statement is made directly to Sarah, not to Avraham, with whom he had the dialogue; (2) it recounts the conveyance of a substantial gift -- one thousand pieces of silver -- which is not included in the listing of generous gifts given to the Patriarch; (3) it is the kind of gift about which Sarah would have learned, thus, raising the question why she had to be told directly by Avimelech; (4) why 1,000 pieces of silver; why not 500 or 2,000; why silver pieces at all, why not jewelry for example?; (5) the message itself is mysterious, not easy to interpret, seemingly couched in symbolism, subtlety or the idiom of the time. Yet, Avimelech goes out of his way to convey it and Torah records it punctiliously. When scripture elaborates in such exquisite detail, the narrative is a natural magnet for intense scrutiny. The Meforshim struggle with the meaning of Avimelech's gift and statement.

Some say that the 1,000 pieces of silver were a gift of mollification for the indiscretion. Some interpret the payment as a form of "Mohar," a bridal price, a kind of compensation for the King's errand and aborted taking of the woman. Limited research, however, disclosed no reason given for the amount or the medium of payment, Elef Kesef, one thousand pieces of silver. And the baffling text of Avimelech's message predictably invokes dispute among the Meforshim, a Machlokes as to its meaning. Some view it as a kind of salutary statement or blessing; some interpret it as a chiding comment; some even as a form of a prophetic curse. Thus, Radak, Ibn Ezra and others say that Avimelech essentially meant as follows: "The fact that, even as King, I tried to redeem myself in such spectacular fashion from the single time I had approached you will assure you in the future of such protection (a covering of the eyes, which guards against improper glances) among your entourage. Consequently you will be able to introduce yourself candidly to anyone without having to disguise your identity."

See Commentary of Rabbi Elie Munk, Kol Hatorah, vol. I at p. 265 ("The Call of the Torah," Artscroll 1994). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch essentially reads the King's message to mean that, with my payment of a redemption gift, you Sarah will be protected in the future from lascivious glances by Gerar's residents and others. However R'Yitzchak perceives it as a reproach to Sarah: "'You have blindfolded me' (by declaring a false identity) Hinei Hu Lach, 'Let the covering of the eyes fall back on you!'" Rabbi Munk also cites Bava Kamma 93a: "'Do not take any curse lightly, not even that of a common man. For Avimelech's curse was realized with Sarah's son, Isaac, whose vision was dimmed' (... Al Tomar Kesos, Ela Kesias Aynayim)." Baal Haturim also interprets the Posuk as a Remez to Yitzchak's future impairment of vision. Even the keen student of Torah verse must concede the difficulty projected by Avimelech's declaration. Understanding Peshat is a struggle and, as the commentators' dispute reflects, a consensus is elusive. Indeed, the only thing we can say with certainty is that the precise meaning may be uncertain. Some deeper reflection may be in order. Nor do all the Meforshim researched answer the other questions posed above about the strange incident.

Following the amorphous declaration by Avimelech, Avraham successfully prays that the King be healed. With respect, perhaps aspects of the foregoing episode have some Keshet, some nexus with another episode later in the next Parsha where a significant sum of silver also changes hands and where Avraham, somewhat uncomfortably, has to deal with Goyim at a high level for high stakes. Before we elaborate on this possible Keshet, we should note several features of the curious message and surrounding references. Avimelech's statement stipulates that the 1,000 pieces of silver should be "for you an eye covering."

[20:16] Other references to "eyes" are also made by Avimelech at, more or less, the same time. Thus, Avimelech tells Avraham: "Behold my land is before you: settle where you see fit." (Hinei Artzi LeFanecha Batov BeAynecha Shev). [20:15] Note, that the Hebrew expression is not "Roeh" (a normal use of the word "see" and one that was used by Avimelech earlier when he said to Avraham, "Ma Raissa" [20:10]) but rather "Batov BeAynecha" (literally, what is "good in your eyes"). So we see in the foregoing episode a curious message linking the payment to an "eye covering" and further, as part of the overall compensation payment or mollifying gift, an invitation to Avraham and entourage to reside in Gerar's precincts wherever their "eyes" see fit.

Now let's skip forward to Parshas Chayei Sarah and, specifically, the episode in which Avraham purchases a burial place for his deceased wife. [23:3-20] Avraham has dealings with B'nai Cheis and, specifically with Ephron the Hittite. The Patriarch pays the extravagant price of "400 silver shekels in negotiable currency" (Arba Meos Shekel Kesef Over LaSocher) following a negotiating session in which Ephron's intent, tactics and course of dealing get very bad reviews from the Sages.

Normally, Torah references to Shekels only mean "Selas"; in Kesuvim (Hagiographa), shekels are equivalent to "centenaria" which are 100 Selas. Here, however, is one of the exceptions where Torah's mention of shekels means that each shekel was equivalent to a "centenarium" or 100 selas. Thus, Avraham paid the gargantuan price of 40,000 selas or "routine" biblical shekels. And, they were "Over LaSocher," fully negotiable anywhere, a further indication of immense value. Ephron's name is mentioned no less than eight (8) times within nine Pesukim [23:9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17]. On all occasions, save one, Ephron's name is written with a "Vav," i.e., written "full" (Malei). However, once, in Posuk 16, it is written minus the Vav (Chasser). When Torah text signifies a lowering of stature, a kind of ignominious act or standing, names or words may be written "minus" (or Chasser) the full spelling -- a sign of moral descent. So it occurs with Ephron when Posuk 16 says that Avraham "weighed out to Ephron the price which he had mentioned in the hearing of the children of Cheis, four hundred Silver Shekels in negotiable currency." [23:16] (no Vav in "Ephron"). The change in text did not escape some of the commentators. Thus, some observe that BiGematria (numerological coding) the name Ephron minus the Vav is equivalent to "Ayin Ra," the evil eye, a connotation of extreme jealousy, avarice and, indeed, some powers reflective of the acuteness of that character trait. Note that a key root word in this mysterious, destructive force is "Ayin" or "eye," i.e., an "evil eye."

Derivatives of the word "eye" also expressly appear during the Ephron episode [see 23:12, 18] when Ephron declares, "I have given it [the field and cave] to you; In the view of the children of my people have I given it to you; bury your dead" (Asher Bo LeCha Nesatiha LeAynay B'nai Ami Nesatiha Lech Kevor Mesecha) [23:12]. Also, Posuk 18 says that Avraham's purchase was confirmed "in the view of the children of Cheis" (LeAvraham LeMikneh LeAynay B'nai Cheis, etc.) [23:18]. These references refer to "eyes" even though other communications are said to be "BeOznay" (heard by; literally "in the ears of") the Hittite citizens. Now we can perhaps hypothesize that Avimelech's message to Sarah about the 1,000 pieces of silver constituting an "eye covering" was somehow mysteriously or prophetically related to the episode with Ephron, whose Ayin Ra -- evil eye -- extracted the exorbitant 400 shekels of silver. Under this hypothesis, according to the Shitah (viewpoint) that holds Avimelech's declaration to be a boon or benefit to Sarah, Avimelech's tender of numerous silver pieces was a Remez and an advance compensatory payment towards the purchase of a burial plot under which protection from Ephron's "evil eye," or the wherewithal to appease it (i.e., pay it), would be needed. According to the Shitah that holds Avimelech's declaration to be a reproach or curse, the 1,000 pieces of silver was a "redemption" for his misbehavior but (because he claimed he was fooled) he conveyed a mean spirited message that his payment

would in the future be dwarfed by the extravagant price that would be extracted by Ephron, a master and practitioner of the evil eye. Support for this negative implication may be gleaned from those commentators who count the death and burial of Sarah as among Avraham's difficult "ordeals" or "tests."

The foregoing episodes both involve Avraham's interaction with Goyim of high stature. In Gerar it is the King; in Chevron, it is Ephron who, the Midrash says on the Posuk, "VeEphron Yoshev Besoch B'nai Cheis ..." [23:10] (Yoshev is written "Chasser," without the Vav), was elevated on that very day to be a leader or commanding figure of the local populace so that Avraham, a distinguished personage, would be dealing with a man of dignified stature in order to honorably consummate the transaction in an unquestionable manner. Also, in both episodes, Sarah is the focal point of the tensions. In each circumstance the words "eyes" (Aynayim or some derivative) are used more than once, instead of other terminology. And the references to "eyes" suggest deeper connotations than the mere act of "seeing." "Eyes" also feature pivotally in Avimelech's mysterious but momentous message to Sarah. In each context, a payment of an enormous sum of silver is made. Respectfully, these nexes are too strong to ignore.

CONCLUSION

When Torah text offers a punctilious rendition of a statement made by or to a Patriarch or Matriarch literally a quotation of momentous import it is vital to understand the meaning and ramifications. And when that declaration is amorphous or when it defies simple interpretation, this is a clue that the particular Torah text requires deeper digging, more intense scrutiny. The instant essay hypothesizes some apparent connections that readers might consider in their search for more definitive answers to the obscure declaration made by an ancient monarch who was chastened by a near fatal, miraculous experience when dealing with extraordinary and towering Torah personalities.

From: Rabbi Pinchas Avruch [pavruch@torah.org] To: kolhakollel@torah.org Kol HaKollel The Voice of the Milwaukee Kollel A Weekly Torah Publication PARSHAS VAYEIRA - 20 Cheshvan 5764

MAINTAINING THE VISION

by RABBI ELLY BROCH

A maxim of Torah scholarship is that we do not only learn much from what our Sages do say, but also from what they do not say. How much more is this standard applicable to the words of the Creator as stated in the Torah: every word is essential and counted for and every omission noteworthy. Certain episodes in the Torah are thoroughly described, whereas others are hinted to or left out. Numerous lessons concerning the Creator and His will are gleaned when investigating these differences.

Pirkei Avos (The Ethics of Our Fathers 5:4) states that our forefather Avraham was given ten challenges to prove his loyalty to Hashem. For the tenth trial, the Akaidas Yitzchak (The Binding of Isaac), the Torah offers a detailed account of Avraham's command to bring his only son, Yitzchak, as an offering. The Torah describes the journey to the location where the sacrifice will take place and the dialogue between Avraham and his beloved son as they approach the mountain. Although Avraham is certainly prepared to carry out the command, G-d prevents him from doing so. Declaring "Now I know that you are a G-d fearing man", G-d gives numerous blessings to Avraham for his magnificent display of dedication to and faith in his Creator. Of all of the trials Avraham faced and overcame, the Torah's commentaries note this one was the greatest.

Lev Eliyahu (Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian; 1876-1976; Mashgiach/spiritual mentor of the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in London and Yeshiva Keneset Chizkiyahu in Kfar Chasidim, Israel; emphasized the importance of developing and improving character and never ceased trying to improve

his own midos (character traits) and sensitivity to others) questions why the Torah devotes a great deal of attention and importance to this test whereas the first demonstration of Avraham's greatness is not explicitly discussed? Medrash Tanchuma (aggadic Midrash on the Pentateuch, of the school of the Sage Rabbi Tanchuma bar Abba of fourth century Israel) explains that Avraham rebelled against his idolatrous upbringing and that his dismissal of his homeland's religion had come to the attention of the authorities. Nimrod, self-deifying king of the land, gave Avraham the option of accepting the idols and deities of the city or being thrown into a pit of fire. Avraham, due to his ingenious deductions and steadfast conviction of one Creator, chose to be cast into the fire. Avraham was miraculously saved, although he was labeled an outcast and remained ostracized. This episode would appear to deserve at least as much narrative as that of the last trial. Moreover, Avraham had not yet been spoken to or had a vision from G-d to corroborate his belief in the Creator, thus compounding the difficulty of this earlier test. In contrast, Hashem had already performed numerous wonders before commanding him to take the life of his son. Why is the last test judged to have been the greatest?

Rabbi Lopian concedes that on face value the first trial was more impressive. However, when considering the internal battle and the tensions, the last trial was far more difficult. Avraham had spent years proving the existence of a Creator through his inspection of the world and its demonstration of plan and purpose. He contemplated the reality of creation until it was crystal clear to him that the Creator continually intervenes and sustains the world with kindness, which Avraham emulated with his kindness and hospitality to others. When confronted with the choice to deny G-d or perish, Avraham had no battles or hesitations because G-d's existence was so clear to him. In contrast, the final test potentially went against everything Avraham stood for. Avraham had spent his entire life doing kindness and attempting to stop atrocities such as human sacrifice, which was a societal norm. The command to take another life as a sacrifice was completely antithetical to all that he had believed and taught. Furthermore, what would his family say when he returned? What would become of the promise that his child would become a great nation? All of these were barriers that Avraham overcame to fulfill the Divine command. He did not do any calculations or deliberations, he subordinated his own logic and feelings to the will of G-d.

Avraham's great challenge appears similar to many that we face: for much of his life operated within a certain paradigm; apparently, his success was that when the paradigm shifted, he was able to change. Not so! His paradigm did not shift, because his paradigm was not HIS worldview; his paradigm was G-d's worldview. He did not perform his acts of kindness because he wanted to bring good to the world. He did acts of kindness because G-d constantly showers the world with kindness, and emulating G-d's kindness brings good to the world. Our forefather Avraham's success was suppressing his own human compassion as he maintained his unswerving commitment to fulfilling G-d's vision. Our challenge is to learn from him and see the world through his eyes.

Have a Good Shabbos!

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MEANING IN MITZVOT

by RABBI ASHER MEIR

Each week we discuss one familiar halakhic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's commentary Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch.

VISITING THE SICK

At the beginning of our parsha we learn that HaShem appeared to Avraham (Bereshit 18:1). Rashi explains that He came to visit the sick. Visiting the sick is considered one of the greatest acts of human kindness, and, partially based on our parsha, one of the ways in which humans can cleave to the ways of G-d.

In order to understand the many sayings of our Sages about the importance and nature of visiting the sick, we have to preface one basic insight. Our Sages definitely did not view illness as something natural. Illness, as a deviation from the normal, is considered a time of extraordinary providence a time when HaShem is examining us more carefully.

On the one hand this special providence carries a special danger: A person should always pray that he shouldn't fall sick, for if he becomes sick, he is told, bring a merit and free yourself (Shabbat 32b). The sick person is suddenly saddled with the burden of proof to demonstrate that he deserves life and health.

On the other hand HaShem's scrutiny is a kind of privilege, and we learn that the Divine presence supports the sick person and stands over his bed (Shabbat 12b). For this reason when we visit the sick we shouldn't sit much elevated over him (SA YD 335:3).

The main mitzva of visiting the sick is to tend to the needs of the sick person. This is evident from the Hebrew term bikur cholim whose literal meaning is not visiting the sick but rather looking after them. This obviously has a positive effect on the sick persons condition.

But visiting the sick also has a spiritual effect on the patients condition. Our Sages explain that performing acts of kindness is a way of cleaving to the Divine presence, because we are going in the ways of G-d Who constantly acts with loving kindness towards His creatures (Sota 14a). In this way the aspect of Divine kindness is among us, as it is aroused through our own actions, and this affects the judgment of the sick person.

ONE OF HIS COHORT The Talmud states that visiting the sick is a mitzva even for one of the sick persons age, or cohort (ben gilo), who takes with him part of the illness. The meaning seems to be that the visitor himself may become somewhat ill (Bava Metzi'a 30b). We can understand this based on a Midrash which suggests that age cohorts and groups are sometimes judged collectively. Rebbe Yochanan said in the name of Rebbe Shimon be Yehotzadak, The Holy One, blessed be He, brings into the worlds ages and groups. If one of the age dies, all of that age should worry; if one of the group dies, all of the group should worry (Ruth Rabba 2:8).

We already explained that sickness is an occasion for judgment and scrutiny. When someone of the sick persons cohort also visits the sick person and groups himself together with him, it is as if he is inviting to be judged together with him. On the one hand, this brings upon the visitor part of the illness. On the other hand, it ameliorates the misfortune on the whole, because it is basic principle of Judaism that the community is judged more leniently than the individual.

FOUR BLESSINGS The Talmud states that one who visits a sick person merits four blessings: he is saved from the evil impulse, and from suffering, he will receive honor, and be blessed with faithful friends (Nedarim 40a). The Maharal explains that these correspond to the blessings of the sick person himself: a sick person is not troubled by the evil urge, and the visitor alleviates his suffering, honors him with his visit, and is a faithful friend to him (Netivot Olam Netiv Gemilut Chasadim 4).

Rabbi Meir has recently completed writing a monumental companion to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch which beautifully presents the meanings in our mitzvot and halacha.

Rabbi Meir authors a popular weekly on-line Q&A column, "The Jewish Ethicist", which gives Jewish guidance on everyday ethical dilemmas in the workplace. The column is a joint project of the JCT Center for Business Ethics, Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev; and Aish HaTorah. You can see the Jewish Ethicist, and submit your own questions, at www.jewishethicist.com or at www.aish.com.

From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Vayeira
WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5764

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav

"KIDDUSH" in SHUL: PROPER CONDUCT

KIDDUSH

Kiddush is recited over a cup(1) of wine or grape juice which holds a revi'is (3 fl. oz.). At least a cheekful (approximately 1.6 fl. oz.) must be drunk.(2)

There is no requirement for anybody but the person who makes Kiddush to taste the wine. As long as the listener intended to fulfill the mitzvah of Kiddush and heard every word of the blessing, he fulfills the mitzvah. It is, however, desirable (a mitzvah min ha-muvchar) to partake of the Kiddush cup.(3) For this reason, many people make certain to drink some wine when attending a kiddush in shul. Doing so, however, can lead to a problematic situation regarding the correct blessing for any other beverage which will be drunk at the kiddush. Let us explain: The blessing of borei pri ha-gafen automatically includes any beverage which is on the table or which will be brought to the table during the kiddush. No shehakol is recited on soda or juice, etc. that will be drunk during the kiddush.(4)

Even those who did not actually recite borei pri ha-gafen but heard Kiddush from another person do not recite a shehakol on other beverages. This rule applies only if one drank a melo lugmav (a cheekful) of wine or grape juice. If one drank some wine or grape juice - but less than a melo lugmav - and wishes to drink another beverage, it is questionable(5) if he needs to recite a shehakol on the other beverages. It follows, therefore, that those who listen to someone else's Kiddush and partake of the wine and then want to drink another beverage, must do one of the following(6):

"Drink at least a cheekful; "Recite a shehakol on a food item; "Listen to a shehakol recited by another person.

KIDDUSH ON SCHNAPPS

It is a common practice to recite Kiddush Shabbos morning over a one-ounce cup of schnapps [or liqueur.(7)] Although many poskim(8) object, as Kiddush must be recited over a cup which holds at least a revi'is and at least a cheekful must be drunk, still there are poskim(9) who defend this minhag Yisrael.(10) They reason that schnapps is different from wine since it is normally consumed in much smaller quantities and is therefore subject to a different set of measurements.(11)

Those who rely on this leniency and recite Kiddush over schnapps, must also recite a borei nefashos over the schnapps, even though only a small amount was drunk. Although one does not recite a borei nefashos unless he drinks at least 3 fl. oz. of a beverage,(12) schnapps - according to this view - is an exception and requires a borei nefashos even on a much smaller amount.(13) When no wine or grape juice is available, there is a way of reciting Kiddush over schnapps which will satisfy the opinions of most poskim: Recite Kiddush on a revi'is of schnapps and drink a cheekful or a revi'is, but instead of swallowing it in one shot, sip it slowly, for a period of up to three or four minutes.(14) When even this is not possible, the next best option is to share the cheekful amount with others who are listening to the Kiddush.(15)

KIDDUSH B'MAKOM SEUDAH

Kiddush must always be followed by a seudah (meal). Most poskim(16) maintain that mezonos eaten at a kiddush is considered a "seudah" for this purpose.(17) After making Kiddush, at least a k'zayis (approximately 1 ounce) of mezonos must be eaten within three to four minutes. One who failed to do so must repeat Kiddush at home before his meal. A mezonos kugel is considered full-fledged mezonos in regard to this halachah.(18) On Pesach or other times when mezonos items are not available, the preferred method is to eat the seudah immediately after reciting Kiddush. If that is difficult, one should drink an additional revi'is (3 fl. oz.) of wine or grape juice. If one has no other wine or grape juice, he can rely on the revi'is of wine he consumed for Kiddush.(19)

There are poskim(20) who maintain that even l'chatchilah, one may eat fruit or shehakol items after Kiddush is recited if there are no mezonos items available. But then, Kiddush must be repeated at home before the meal. Other poskim(21) allow this practice only under special circumstances, such as the case of a person who is weak and needs to eat and has no mezonos available. While there is no obligation to repeat Kiddush at home if the requirements for Kiddush were met earlier in shul or at the simchah hall [unless there are other people at home who did not yet hear Kiddush], it is praiseworthy to do so.(22) One who made Kiddush on schnapps should repeat Kiddush at home over wine or grape juice.(23)

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FOOTNOTES: 1 Some poskim advise against using a disposable cup for Kiddush (Igros Moshe O.C. 3:39; Minchas Yitzchak 10:23), while others are not particular (Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Shevus Yitzchak, Muktzeh, pg. 48; Tzitz Eliezer 12:23). See Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 47, note 51, quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach. 2 Based on the measurements of Harav M. Feinstein. A cheekful is a little more than half a revi'is. 3 O.C. 274:14. There is a minority view (Brisker Rav quoted in Moadim u'Zemanim 3:243) that holds that on Shabbos morning one must partake of the Kiddush cup in order to fulfill the mitzvah. The poskim, however do not agree with this stringency; see Yechaveh Da'as 5:20. 4 O.C. 174:2. Note, however, that Harav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 267) as ruling that only a borei pri ha-gafen over wine exempts all other beverages; when it is recited over grape juice it does not exempt other beverages. 5 Derech ha-Chayim rules that it is sufficient, but Beirur Halachah 174:2 questions that. See Minchas Yitzchak 8:19 and Yechaveh Da'as 5:20. 6 Beirur Halachah 174:2. [It is not sufficient to have specific intention that the blessing over the wine

should only cover the wine itself and not other beverages; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in *VeZos ha-Berachah*, pg. 100.] 7 *Minchas Yitzchak* 10:22. 8 *Mishnah Berurah* 272:30; *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 272:13; *Minchas Shabbos* 79:29; *Ketzos ha-Shulchan* 89:5. 9 *Ketzei ha-Mateh* (*Mateh Efrayim* 625:99); *Eishel Avraham* 272:6; *Maharsham* 1:175; *Chelkas Yaakov* 1:94. 10 Because the practice was defended (in part) due to the scarcity and expense of wine, some poskim suggest that nowadays, Kiddush should be made over wine or grape juice only, see *Nimukei Orchos Chayim* 273. 11 This is based on the view of the *Taz* O.C. 210:1, which is rejected by the later poskim; see *Mishnah Berurah* 190:14. 12 O.C. 190:3. 13 *Har Tzvi* O.C. 159. It follows, therefore, that those who follow the majority view and do not recite Kiddush on schnapps, do not recite a borei nefashos when drinking an amount of schnapps less than a revi'is. 14 *Mishnah Berurah* 271:68. No talking should take place until the minimum amount is drunk. 15 *Mishnah Berurah* 272:30. 16 *Mishnah Berurah* 273:25. 17 A notable exception is the view of the *Viña Gaon*, who maintains that Kiddush can be made only when a seudah of bread follows. His view is quoted by the *Beur Halachah* 273:5 without comment. *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 273:8 considers this to be the preferred method. The general custom, however, follows the view of most poskim. 18 *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 54:22; *Az Nidberu* 8:31. See *Meor ha-Shabbos*, vol. 2, pgs. 576-577. 19 *Mishnah Berurah* 273:25, 27. 20 *Igros Moshe* O.C. 4:63. See also *Ein Yitzchak* O.C. 12 and *B'tzeil ha-Chochmah* 4:2; 5:115. 21 *Mishnah Berurah* 273:26. 22 *Shalmas Chayim* 1:59. See also *Igros Moshe* O.C. 4:63 (anaf 8) who seems to hold that Kiddush should be repeated at home before the main meal. 23 To satisfy the view of the majority of the poskim.

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From: RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com

Subject: RABBI BEREL WEIN'S WEEKLY COLUMNS Vayerah

Torah always deals with real life, with current assessments and realities. In fact, much of the current pattern and modern story of the Jewish people is reflected in the Torah reading of Vayera, especially in the story of Avraham and his nephew, Lot. Lot sees Avraham as being old-fashioned, irrelevant and a definite handicap to the establishment of the new and better worldview. Lot sees the realization of this better world in the newly burgeoning society of Sodom. He ignores the intrinsic evil of that society and builds his hopes on the superficial wealth and glitter that Sodom exudes. He is convinced that his uncle Avraham, childless and old, has no future, while he, with his large family, immense wealth, and the seeming respect of the society of Sodom, will live on and become the new Avraham.

In our century a large segment of Jewry convinced itself that the old Avraham was done for, and in their eyes, deservedly so. Orthodoxy and a Torah life-style and value system were doomed to be relegated to the ash-heap of history. The "new Jew" would be cultured, modernized, secularized, reformed, and "free" of the burdens of Torah law and the Jewish past. He would be a Socialist, a Communist, a Humanist, a secular Zionist, but he would be Lot and not Avraham. And if that meant taking upon Jewish society some of the trappings of Sodom, well, so be it. For after all, it was impossible to remain with the world-view and way of life of the old Avraham. However, Sodom did not turn out to be the paradise that Lot hoped for. Lot's children, raised and educated in Sodom, ridiculed and despised Lot, much as Lot had himself ridiculed and despised Avraham. They resented Lot's old-fashioned attachment to the outmoded ideas of Avraham, of hospitality and kindness to others, even to strangers. Lot's own family turned against him and informed on him to the authorities and people of Sodom.

Lot was the precursor of the Jewish Communists in the Stalin era, who turned in their parents for being "counter-revolutionaries", only to be eliminated a decade later by the "great father Stalin." And, worst of all, Sodom was destroyed! The whole brave new world collapsed in fire and brimstone, poverty and death, disappointment and disillusion. All of the beliefs of the modern Jew in the better world of European culture and modernity were crushed by the Holocaust, by Stalin and his successors,

by the unending trials by fire of the State of Israel. Lot remained alone, unable any longer to return to Avraham, sunk in the incestuous wallowing of his own emptiness of spirit and lack of vision. Meanwhile Avraham somehow miraculously survived and even prospered. He had a son and heir, Yitzchak, and he had a spiritual foundation for his being, and the Lord protected him (albeit barely) from his enemies. Lot is bankrupt and the old, irrelevant Avraham waxed richer and richer.

That is a pretty fair description of today's Jewish world. The outstanding feature of today's Jewish world is the contrast between the resiliency and confidence of Orthodoxy and the angst and depression that characterizes the non-Orthodox Jewish world. Avraham grows strong and mighty while Lot destroys himself. But all is not lost for Lot. Hundreds of years later, long after Sodom has been transformed into salt, sulfur and ashes, a descendant of Lot, Ruth of Moab, seeks out Avraham. She forsakes her home and her family, her opportunity for physical comforts and a seemingly secure existence, and sets out on a difficult road that will bring her to Avraham's people and make her the mother of kings. Somewhere within Lot there was a spark of Avraham that was not extinguished by the experience of Sodom. Ruth discovered that spark within herself and that discovery gave her no rest. She rebuilds her life and her own person under the shadow of Avraham's canopy. There are thousands of descendants of Lot - Jews throughout the world today who are searching for Avraham. They go against family and society and ignore the cluck-clucking platitudes of the professionals of the Jewish world, all in order to reunite themselves with Avraham, with Torah, and with the Jewish past and destiny. Sodom is destroyed, but Lot "who went with Avraham" emerges, even after centuries of separation and self-hate, to take his place once again alongside his uncle in the struggle for G-dliness and sanctity. Is this not a description of our world and our times?

Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ [jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu] To: internetchaburah@yahoo.com Subject: [internetchaburah] Internet Chaburah -- Parshat VaYera

Prologue; The Talmud (Berachos 26b) notes that Avraham set up the Tefillas Shachris. This is based upon the Possuk that notes that Avraham returned to the same place that he had stood in the presence of Hashem (Berashit 19:27). The Talmud notes that Yitzchak set up Mincha and Yaakov Maariv. But why was Avraham able to come up with the concept of Shachris and not that of Mincha or Maariv? Could it be assumed that one only needs to supplicate his master at the start of his day?

Rav Menachem Tzvi Taksen (Ohr Yikrat, Berachot 26b) noted that each of the Avot had to set up his particular Tefillah.

We are aware of the Ramban who notes that the Maaseh Avot are a Siman L'Banim (the actions of the forefathers serve as a guide for the children). The Midrash notes that Avraham's life was set for historical reference from the birth of the nation until the end of the first temple era. Yitzchak's life served as a guide for the second temple era and Yaakov's life continues to be our guide for the current exile until we get back to the land of Israel fully.

We are also aware that Hashem relates with the world in two manners: He can come out revealing his full splendor or he can allow the world to function according to natural law. When we consider these factors, we find that Hashem has utilized these different relationships with the Jewish nation throughout our history. When the nation left Mitzrayim (The Avraham years), Hashem's involvement in the nation was like the rising sun, full of force. For this type of generation, Avraham set up Shachris, a full descriptive prayer to the open power of Hashem.

During the middle period, the second temple era, the hand of G-d was less apparent. For this generation, the Tefilla of choice was the Tefillah Yitzchak - a short tefillah to stand off the downward spiral and an included Techina to Hashem to keep us close to him as we feel our relationship with him becoming less apparent and more hidden.

Finally, following the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and the subsequent Galus, "the Yaakov period", a new tefilla needed to be prescribed. This tefilla would recognize the Shmia of Hashem even in the darkest moments and would highlight the needs for Geula. Hence, Maariv was in order. Maariv, according to the Talmud Ein Lah Keva -- this part of history has no absolute definitive end. We can hasten the Maariv of Jewish history by taking control of our relationship with Hashem and attempting to find and appreciate him and our connection to him. By doing so, the sun will shine again and a new dawn can begin.

HASHKAMA MINYAN: Halacha or horror

The Rema (Orach Chaim 281) notes that there is a custom to delay the Davening times more than one does during the week. The source for this Psak seems to be a Mordechai in Shabbat (398) who notes that the daily Korbanot were specifically gear for "BaBoker Baboker" - the morning time. The Korban of Shabbos was limited to "B'Yom Hashabbat" - some later point. The Mordechai notes that this is Rav hai Gaon's source for davening later on Shabbos.

The Radvaz (Shut Radvaz II:614) notes that indeed the Possuk of Shabbos speaks to the Mussaf Korban. However, since it connects to the Tamid of the day, it seems that even Shachris should be later on Shabbos. However, the Radvaz notes that he personally detests the Minhag of davening later on Shabbos and applies the term *Trizin Makdimim L'Mitzvot* to davening early on Shabbos.

The Mogen Avraham (O.C. 281:1) quotes the Bach who says the reason for the later davening is that Sheina B'Shabbat Taanug -- it is part of Oneg Shabbat to sleep on Shabbat. However, he notes that in the winter, the logic of the Bach is irrelevant. However, if we apply the Bach's reasoning, we do not have a problem of *Zirizin Makdimim* simply because he is fulfilling the Mitzva of Oneg Shabbos at that time (Shut Divrei Yisroel I:84)

R. Chaim Palagi (Ruach Chaim, 281) notes that the Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu specifically notes that one should come to Shul EARLY on Shabbos. Similarly, the Talmud (Megilla 23a) notes that we are to come to Shul early on Shabbos. Rashi adds that this means that one should come early enough to Daven Vasikin. How does the Rema possibly deal with this problem of ignoring the Talmud? Even the Rambam (Teshuvos 118) notes the importance of Davening Vasikin on Shabbos?!

The Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 281:1) suggests that the Talmud was contrasting Shabbos to Yom Tov and that Davening when on Yom Tov should actually be later than on Shabbos in order to prepare the meal properly. However, Rashi's specificity of davening Vasikin on Shabbos seems to negate this position.

An interesting solution to this problem is posed by the Sefer Tikkun Chatzot (21). He suggests that whereas during the week, especially in the winter, people who work are often called upon to Daven at ungodly hours prior to Vasikin, relying on a Kula, the Shabbat situation is different. When one need not go to work, like on Shabbat, he should start Davening a little later, allowing people to Daven "L'Chatchila" by making the Vasikin time no matter when it is. This is also the view of the Beis Meir.

L'Halacha, the Mishna Berurah suggests aiming for Vasikin Davening even on Shabbos. Yalkut Yosef adds that although both of these positions (Vasikin or davening later) have legitimacy, one must be careful NEVER to allow Minyanim to miss the prescribed times for Kriyat Shema and Shemonah Esrai.

Battala News - Mazal Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Eli Bacon upon the birth and Bris of a Baby Boy.

From: Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org] Subject: Kol Torah Parshat Lech Lecha

Kol Torah A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen County Parshat Lech Lecha 13 Cheshvan 5764 November 8, 2003 Vol. 13 No. 9 This week's issue has been sponsored in memory of Moshe Dovid Ben Yitzchak Goldman, who died in the Warsaw Ghetto.

CHALAV YISRAEL PART III BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

Two weeks ago we presented the reasoning and sources behind the lenient view among Poskim regarding Chalav Yisrael. Last week, we presented the reasoning and sources for the strict view among Poskim on this issue. This week we shall complete our discussion of this topic with a review of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's policy regarding Chalav Yisrael

milk and the debate regarding cheese, whey, and powdered milk derived from non-Chalav Yisrael milk.

The Policy of the Chief Rabbinate of Medinat Yisrael

The outgoing Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Rav Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, writes in the current issue of *Techumin* (23:463) that the policy of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate is that even for its regular Kashrut standards it does not rely on Rav Moshe Feinstein's leniency. He explains that even Rav Moshe only permitted government supervised milk in case of need and that in Israel there is no need as Israel, Baruch Hashem, is a land flowing with Chalav Yisrael milk and there is no pressing need to import government-supervised milk that is produced by non-Jews or products containing milk that is produced by non-Jews. We should add that the Chief Rabbinate's policy supports the dairy industry of Medinat Yisrael, thereby facilitating the fulfillment of *Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*. The availability of more jobs in Eretz Yisrael allows more Jews to live in Eretz Yisrael and brings more tax revenue to the Israeli government to function in its job to facilitate Jews living securely in our beloved Eretz Yisrael. Those who advocate the purchase of Chalav Yisrael milk in this country argue, similarly, that this practice economically supports our fellow Jews. The Torah advocates purchasing a product from Jews if possible (see Rashi on *Vayikra* 25:14). Rav Bakshi Doron adds that a major motivation behind the stringent ruling of the Chatam Sofer was to socially distance us from non-Jews. He argues that Chazal enacted the prohibition of Chalav Akum not only because of Kashrut concerns, but also to protect us from assimilation. He cites the Aruch Hashulchan who writes in the context of his discussion of Chalav Yisrael that Chazal have covert as well as overt reasons for their enactments. The covert reason for Chalav Yisrael, Rav Bakshi Doron argues, is to prevent assimilation.

Indeed, observing the strict position requires one to live in an area blessed with a heavy concentration of observant Jews where there is significant consumer demand for Chalav Yisrael products. Rav Bakshi Doron adds that another reason to adopt the strict approach today is extreme complexity of contemporary food production. He is concerned that non-Kosher ingredients are added to the milk that government supervisors do not find objectionable. According to this approach, unsupervised milk would be forbidden today even according to the most lenient approach of the *Pri Chadash*! However, I do not recall hearing such an assessment made by the American rabbinate, although I recall hearing concerns expressed about the Kashrut of vitamins that are introduced into today's milk. I have been bothered by the following problem. The Halacha (see *Pesachim* 50a) requires a traveler to follow both the stringencies of the place he left and the place he arrived. Accordingly, I regularly advise my Talmidim when they travel to Israel to avoid products that contain gelatin, even if they are certified Kosher by the Israeli rabbinate, since the custom in this country is to be strict regarding this matter. Conversely, it would seem that visitors to the United States from Israel should adopt the stringent standard regarding Chalav Yisrael since their practice at home is to be strict about this matter. However, it does not seem that Israeli travelers to America are stringent about this. A very serious Talmid Chacham (who is a Rebbe at a prominent Yeshivat Hesder) explained to me that many Jews in Israel rely on Rav Moshe's approach to Chalav Yisrael when they consume certain American dairy products that bear a reliable American Hashgacha, which are imported into Israel. Therefore, one may argue that it is not the practice of Israeli Jews to be strict about Chalav Yisrael, even though the Israeli rabbinate is strict about this matter.

Powdered Mild - Rav Zvi Pesach Frank vs. the Chazon Ish

Rav Zvi Pesach Frank ruled in the summer of 1944 that it is permissible to drink powdered milk that was imported to Eretz Yisrael from the United States at that very difficult time (Rav Zvi Pesach, though, does not write that his ruling applies only in case of great need). Rav Zvi Pesach compares powdered milk to unsupervised butter produced by non-Jews, called *Chemat Akum*. In order to comprehend this analogy

we must first briefly explore the issue of Chemat Akum. The Gemara does not discuss this issue, rather, it's the Rambam (Hilchot Maachalot Asurot 3:15) who cites the Geonim that argued about this issue with no consensus having been reached about this issue. This issue was not resolved by the time of Rav Yosef Karo, as the Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 115:3) notes that different communities maintain different practices regarding this issue. In Israel today, Rav Zev Whitman records (Binitiv Hechalav p.41) that the policy of the Chief Rabbinate is to be lenient regarding Chemat Akum regarding standard Kashrut certifications and to be strict regarding Mehadrin certifications. We must clarify that the lenient approach does not imply that one may eat butter that is not certified Kosher by a reliable Kashrut agency. Rather, it implies that the level of supervision necessary for butter is lower than the level required for milk according to the Chatam Sofer's stringent view. The Kashrut agency must verify and monitor the product to insure that all of its ingredients are Kosher. However, it is not required, if they follow the lenient view, to supervise the entire butter production. Rather, occasional inspections suffice. The Chochmat Adam (67:9) notes that common practice is to be lenient about this issue and Rav Mordechai Willig (1981 SOY Guide to Kashrut p.75) writes that "the custom today is to be lenient and to permit butter produced by a Gentile." This why it is common in our communities to use butter from the large non-Jewish companies that has a proper Hechsher and why we do not use only butter produced by small Jewish companies as we do by wine and cheese. The Rambam explains the reasoning behind the two opinions regarding butter. The lenient view argues that Chazal never banned consuming the butter of non-Jews and that we are certain that the butter comes from a Kosher animal because the milk of a non-Kosher animal cannot be made into butter. The stringent view is concerned that leftover bits of non-Kosher milk that may have been in the milk from which the butter was made, remain in the butter. For an enlightening analysis of the two views see the Biur HaGra to Yoreh Deah 115:17. Rav Zvi Pesach Frank argues that powdered milk is permissible according to the opinions that permit Chemat Akum. Rav Zvi Pesach reasons that we may conclude from the lenient opinion regarding butter that Chazal did not impose their decree on all milk products, but rather only on milk. Once the form of the milk has changed, the decree no longer applies. The Chazon Ish (Y.D. 41:4) vehemently disagrees with Rav Zvi Pesach. He argues that powdered milk is not at all analogous to butter, as the basis for leniency regarding butter is the fact butter cannot be produced from milk of a non-Kosher animal. Powdered milk, on the other hand, can be produced from non-Kosher milk as well. Hence, the Chazon Ish concludes that there is no distinction between fresh milk and powdered milk in regards to the Halacha of Chalav Yisrael. Rav Zvi Sobolofsky notes that this dispute is characteristic of many other Halachic disputes that have emerged in the modern age regarding the status of items that have been dried to a powder. Examples include the dispute regarding the use of reconstituted grape juice for Kiddush (see Teshuvot Minchat Shlomo 1:4) and the Bracha on Pringles, which are made from dried potatoes. The essential issue is whether we view the dried food that was reconstituted as a new entity or the same entity that it was previously. The dispute regarding the Kashrut of powdered milk has never been resolved. Rav Bakshi Doron (Techumin 23:464-465) records that the Chief Rabbanut historically relied upon Rav Zvi Pesach's leniency because of the shortage of Chalav Yisrael powdered milk in Israel until recent years. Currently the Rabbanut relies on Rav Zvi Pesach's leniency for its standard Kashrut certifications but not for its Mehadrin certifications. Their policy is to require any product that relies on Rav Zvi Pesach's leniency to include a disclaimer on the package that states that it contains powdered milk from milk produced by a non-Jew. Rav Bakshi Doron explains that the Rabbanut seeks thereby to discourage reliance on Rav Zvi Pesach's leniency and to eventually discontinue relying on it entirely since powdered milk from Chalav Yisrael sources

are readily available in Israel today. Rav Bakshi Doron also notes that the Kashrut status of milk proteins such as casein and whey that are transformed into powder from milk produced by a non-Jew, hinges on this dispute between the Chazon Ish and Rav Frank. Hence, for Mehadrin certifications the Chief Rabbinate insists that milk proteins be produced from Chalav Yisrael milk. In America, I have heard that some people adopt a compromise opinion regarding Chalav Yisrael - they insist on Chalav Yisrael for actual milk but rely on Rav Zvi Pesach's leniency regarding powdered milk. The appeal of this compromise is that business people can take non-Chalav Yisrael powdered milk with them on their travels to places where Chalav Yisrael is not available and that some popular milk chocolates and ice creams are made from powdered milk. Another compromise that some Kashrut organizations adopt in America is to permit the use of non Chalav Yisrael milk in the production of cheese, even though they would not certify a product that contains non-Chalav Yisrael milk (as noted by Rav Yaakov Borow, Binitiv Hechalav p.47; Rav Borow currently works in the Kashrut department of Tenuva and worked as a rabbinic coordinator for the Orthodox Union before his Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael). This approach assumes that since in this case there are other relevant lenient factors, one may rely on Rav Moshe's lenient ruling. The leniency is the Rama's ruling (Y.D. 115:2) that cheese that was made with Chalav Akum is acceptable Bidieved (after the fact) since cheese cannot be produced from milk from a non-Kosher animal. The leniency of Rav Moshe is a consideration that these Kashrut agencies utilize to Lichatchilah (initially) permit the production of cheese from non-Chalav Yisrael milk in contemporary circumstances, even though they would not rely on Rav Moshe's leniency alone. Indeed, Rav Moshe (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe 3:16) rules that even Baalei Nefesh need not be strict in this case. Rav David Zvi Hoffman's lenient approach outlined in Teshuvot Melameid Lihail 2:36 also serves as a basis for this approach.

Conclusion

In the past three issues we have outlined the variety of approaches that Poskim take regarding Chalav Yisrael in the modern context. Each opinion has a strong basis both in traditional sources and contemporary authorities. Accordingly, it is entirely inappropriate to dismiss any of these legitimate approaches as either "too frum" or "too modern." "Eilu Vieilu Divrei Elokim Chaim," "these and these are the words of the Living G-d."

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Vayera-5764 U N I T E D S Y N A G O G U E - L O N D O N (O)
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Hameforshim - The Commentators
Rabbi Dr Michael Harris, Hampstead Synagogue.

RABBI AVRAHAM IBN EZRA
Ibn Ezra was born in Tudela, Spain in 1089 and died around 1164.

He travelled extensively during his life. His early years were spent in Spain, after which he lived for a time in Italy, then Provence and northern France. In 1158, Ibn Ezra travelled to London. 1160 saw him once again in Provence, but we do not know for certain where he died or where he is buried. One guess is that he is buried here in London.

Ibn Ezra was a polymath, displaying expertise in mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, astrology, Hebrew grammar and as a Paytan or liturgical poet. He authored Tzama Nafshi, a popular Shabbat zemer.

But Ibn Ezra is most famous for his Bible commentary. More accurately, one should say "commentaries", since his exegeses on some books of the Bible exist in both long and abridged versions. Ibn Ezra's independent ideas and original interpretations sparked controversy, but his commentary interprets the Biblical text in accordance with the peshat or plain meaning.

Ibn Ezra's Bible commentary has proved very popular since it was written and has been the subject of dozens of supercommentaries.

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Hameforshim - The Commentators

Rabbi Dr Michael Harris, Hampstead Synagogue.

RABBI SHMUEL BEN MEIR (RASHBAM)

Rashbam was the grandson of Rashi (discussed in last week's Daf HaShavua). He was the son of Rashi's daughter Yocheved and her husband Rabbi Meir ben Shmuel, a leading disciple of Rashi. Rashbam was tutored by both his father and his grandfather.

Rashbam was born in Ramerupt, France, around 1085, and died in France in 1174. He earned a living as a merchant of wine and wool.

Like his grandfather, Rashbam authored a most important commentary on the Torah. Characteristic of this commentary is Rashbam's unprecedentedly strong emphasis on the peshat, the plain meaning of the Biblical text. Whenever possible, Rashbam interprets the text in its literal sense, criticising previous commentators who had, in his view, failed to do this. Rashbam stresses the famous Talmudic dictum: Ein mikra yotsei midei peshuto - a Biblical verse is never free of its plain meaning.

Rashbam also followed his grandfather in penning Talmud commentaries. In some parts of the standard printed edition of the Talmud, Rashbam's commentary is included beside the Talmudic text itself.

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PENINIM ON THE TORAH

BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

PARSHAS VAYEIRA Hashem appeared to him. (18:1) Rashi tells us that Hashem appeared to Avraham Avinu in order to visit him during his recuperation from his Bris Milah. Man is instructed to cleave to Hashem. Chazal explain that we cling to Hashem by following in His ways. As He visits the sick, so should we emulate this great act of chesed and see to it that we care for the ill and infirm. Visiting the sick means more than sending flowers and a card. While this gesture certainly has value, the essence of the mitzvah requires that one pray for the sick person. In fact, we determine when we visit the sick according to what time will inspire the greatest outpouring of tefillah, prayer.

In his inimitable manner, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, focuses on this mitzvah. What is most inspirational about his shmues, ethical discourse, is the sensitivity, caring and love that the venerable Rosh Hayeshivah displays toward his fellowman. Rav Pam gave a shmues about what he felt was important for his talmidim to learn. Some may feel that Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, is relegated to the female gender; Hashem Yisborach demonstrates otherwise. Rav Pam's shmues delves into the minutiae of this mitzvah from a practical standpoint, something he sought to infuse in his talmidim, students. Bikur Cholim means more than mere visitation. It compels us to assess the needs of the sick person and to address them. In some situations, this may involve seeking appropriate medical attention. In other circumstances, it means providing for simple necessities such as seforim, tapes and various items that can occupy the patient's time. The Perishah emphasizes the importance of making sure that the patient's room is clean and orderly, for a person's mind is clear when everything around him is neat, clean and in its proper place. Incidentally, this applies equally to the classroom. A student studies best in a clean, organized environment.

One who is a Kohen has a problem visiting the sick in a hospital which also has a morgue. Nonetheless, there are other ways to enliven the patient's spirits, as evidenced by Rav Pam himself, who was a Kohen.

There was an elderly Jew who davened with Rav Pam in the neighborhood shul. The man was hospitalized with a serious illness. Rav Pam wanted badly to visit him, but due to his status as a Kohen, he was not able to do so. What did the saintly Rosh Hayeshivah, whose sensitivity to other Jews was his hallmark, do? He wrote the man a three-line note wishing him a refuah sheleimah and expressing his hope that the man would soon return to his place in shul.

Can we imagine what such a simple note from Rav Pam could do for an elderly Jew who was alone in the hospital? To be told that he was missed in shul and to be given a brachah for a refuah sheleimah by one of the spiritual giants of the generation could raise a person's spirits from the depths. Indeed, the note did so. The man was strengthened by it. He displayed the note that the "Rabbi" sent to everyone who came to visit. It became his most treasured possession during his last months on earth. When the man passed away, the family hired a rabbi to deliver a eulogy at the funeral service. Not knowing the deceased, the rabbi based his remarks on the salutation Rav Pam wrote in the note. The salutation was Rav Pam's characterization of the man!

Rav Pam emphasized the great kindness a little gesture of sincerity can affect. This note, which meant so much to the sick Jew, became the basis for his own eulogy. He would often express his fear that this kleine tzetle, small note, would someday be held against him by the Heavenly Tribunal, which would accuse, "If you saw how much one small note can accomplish, why did you not do this more often?" What amazes this writer is the nature of Rav Pam's thoughts. Instead of the customary pat on the back for which we all yearn, he was concerned that he either did not do enough or did not do it often enough.

In closing, Rav Pam explains that besides the halachic aspects of the mitzvah, there is a crucial emotional aspect to recognize. Many people feel that their achievements and qualities are underestimated, a fact which is regrettably true. We are into ourselves and it is basically our own accomplishments that mean something to us. This attitude misses the mark and is harmful to others. People crave recognition. While this is true on a regular basis, one who is bedridden or hospitalized, forcibly removed from his daily endeavor and contact with the outside world, is even more miserable. Loneliness, lethargy and feelings of depression quickly set in. This can even delay the recuperative process. Hence, someone who finds it difficult to visit the sick should make it a point to call or write, to convey a few words of hope and encouragement. At least the patient will not think he has been forgotten. When a sick person sees that people care about him, it increases his desire to live, to fight the illness. Indeed, Bikur Cholim can spell the difference between life and death.

And Hashem said, "Shall I conceal from Avraham what I do...And Avraham will be a great nation...For I have cherished him, because he commands his children and his household after him...Avraham came forward, and said, "Will You ever obliterate righteous with wicked?" (18:17,18,19,20)

Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlap, zl, posits that Avraham Avinu's dialogue with Hashem serves as a cogent lesson in how to educate future generations in the area of middos tovos, positive character refinement. To this end, Hashem said, "Shall I conceal from Avraham what I am about to do to Sodom?" After all, he is the educator par-excellence, whose devotion to his progeny sets the standard for others to emulate. Therefore, it is essential that he know what I am about to do to Sodom, so that he will transmit the information - to his descendants, concerning the dangers of negative character traits.

Furthermore, Avraham will derive from My actions that one must be patient with his children. Give them space and time to return, to mend their ways. At the same time, however, he must realize that there is a time when enough is enough. Sodom had reached the point of no return. The residents were beyond education. Punishment was the only recourse.

Avraham Avinu countered, "Will You even obliterate righteous with wicked?" If the purpose of the destruction of Sodom was not specifically for its pedagogic value, I would never question it. Since it is to serve as a lesson for the future, would it not be a greater lesson if the city was spared because of the righteous? This way, future generations would realize the overwhelming role the righteous play and the inspiration they infuse in a community. Regrettably, the number of righteous was inconsequential.

Mazel Tov to Rabbi & Mrs. Simcha Dessler upon the bar mitzvah of their son Eliyahu Eliezer May he fulfill your every wish. A special Mazel Tov to the grandparents Rabbi & Mrs. N. Z. Dessler Marilyn and Ivan Soclof

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Crash Course in Jewish History Part 5: The Promised Land

by RABBI KEN SPIRO

The Jewish story begins in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 12, when G-d first speaks to Abraham, and continues through to the end with the death of Jacob and Joseph. This segment can best be described as the development of the "family" of Israel, which in the Book of Exodus will become a "nation."

In the last installment of these series we examined the patterns set into history when G-d sent Abraham on his journey.

Abraham had been born in Ur Kasdim in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) then moved with his father to Haran (today's northern Syria/southern Turkey) and that is where he got the instruction to go to Canaan, the Promised Land, which will become the Land of Israel.

G-d said to Abram: "Go from your land ... to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

This is a key statement and the promise is repeated several times. For example:

On that day, G-d made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river the Euphrates. The land of the Kenites, Kenizites, Kadmonites; the Chittites, Perizites, Refaim; the Emorites, Canaanites, Gishathites and Yevusites." (Genesis 15:18-21)

"And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your temporary residence, all the land of Canaan as an eternal possession and I will be a G-d to them." (Genesis 17:8)

We say that Judaism is G-d, Torah and the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is not a pay off. G-d did not say to Abraham: Support me and if monotheism spreads throughout the world, I will give you a good piece of real estate for your own. G-d gave Abraham and his family the Land of Israel as a laboratory where his descendants are supposed to create the nation that's the model for the world.

A SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE PLACE

The Land of Israel is a special place; it's the only place on the planet earth where the Jewish people can achieve their mission. A model nation cannot come to be anywhere else. So, it is very important to understand the Jewish relationship with the land. And because it's a special place, a spiritually sensitive place, a place of tremendous potential, it's also a place where one has to behave in a special manner. The Jews were only given the land because of their mission. If they abandon the mission, they lose the land. This is another very important lesson in Jewish history which is repeated, and it is also one of the most often repeated prophecies: "If you don't keep Torah, the Land will vomit you out." One of the most often repeated prophecies is: If you don't keep Torah, the Land will vomit you out. Throughout the early part of the Bible, G-d is constantly talking about giving the Jewish people the Land of Israel and reaffirming that commitment.

Indeed, the great 11th century Biblical commentator Rashi, asks a question of the very first sentence in the Bible: Why does G-d begin with the creation of the universe?

If the Bible is a book of theology for the Jews, why not begin with the creation of the Jewish nation and go immediately to the story of Exodus. That's when the Jews become a nation, get the Torah, and go into the land.

And Rashi answers, quoting an ancient oral tradition that in the future, the nations of the world will say "you are thieves" to the Jewish people. You have stolen the land from the Canaanite tribes. So G-d begins the Bible here at the creation of the universe to tell the world: "I am the Creator of the Universe. Everything is mine. I choose to give the Land of Israel to the Jewish people."

CLAIMS OF CONQUEST

Every other nation in the world bases its claim to its land on conquest. A people came (for example, the English or the Spanish) conquered the indigenous people (for example, the Indians) took the land, settled it, and called it by a new name (for example, United States of America). "Might makes right" is the historical claim of almost all nations in history.

However, the Jewish people base their claim on G-d's promise. It is a moral claim because G-d is G-d and G-d is by definition truth, and G-d is by definition morality. G-d gave the Jewish people the Land of Israel. Without that, the only claim the modern State of Israel can make is it is stronger and was able to take the land from the Arabs.

The Bible gives the Jews a moral claim to the Land of Israel. This is a very important thing, and essential for the State of Israel -- which is not a religious state and often far removed from Jewish values -- to realize that the Bible gives the Jews a moral claim.

Indeed, the early founding fathers of the modern state, even if they were not religious, were deeply steeped in the realization of Biblical heritage of the Jewish

people and their connection to the land. Ben Gurion had an appreciation of the necessity of anchoring a modern, even secular Israeli state in Judaism and Jewish tradition. (We'll get more on Zionism later in this series.)

ISHMAEL

After Abraham arrives in the Promised Land, he is faced with a dilemma. His wife Sarah is barren, and she wants Abraham to have an offspring. So she suggests that Abraham take a surrogate wife, Hagar, who joined Abraham's camp when he passed through Egypt. Hagar is the daughter of the Pharaoh and she had elected to travel with Abraham as Sarah's maidservant. Great people have great servants. And so Abraham takes Hagar as his second wife and from that relationship is going to come a child by the name of Ishmael.

Ishmael will not want to carry on Abraham's mission. Ishmael will go off and found his own lineage; this is all recorded in the Bible, in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 16.

In human history, we're going to have two great monotheistic faiths, which are going to appear later, after Judaism is already established for more than 2,000 years: Christianity and Islam.

The Arabs, according to their own tradition and to the Jewish tradition, are the descendants of Ishmael. Islam is a religion which originated with the Arab peoples. The Arabs, according to their own tradition and according to the Jewish tradition, are the descendants of Ishmael. One of the great attributes of Arab culture is hospitality. And the Bible tells us that Abraham was famous for hospitality.

It seems therefore that even though Ishmael does not carry on Abraham's mission he can't help but be great. He's blessed. By the way, the Bible says specifically that Ishmael is going to be great and that he's going to be at odds with the rest of the civilized world.

"You shall call his name Ishmael ... And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall live in the presence of all his brothers." (Genesis 16:11-12)

SUPERNATURAL BEGINNING

When it is clear that Ishmael will not carry on the mission, G-d tells Abraham, who is then 99, that Sarah, who is 90, is going to become pregnant. And this is how Isaac is born, supernaturally.

As we noted earlier, this is what defines the Jewish people. The Jews never should have been there. The Jews certainly shouldn't have survived, yet they did and still are here.

Before Sarah conceives G-d tells Abraham:

"Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an eternal covenant to his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael ... I have bless him and I will make him fruitful and will increase him exceedingly. He will become the father of twelve princes and I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish My covenant with Isaac who Sarah will bear to you at this time next year." (Genesis 17:19-21)

So Isaac is the person who will carry on the mission of Abraham, the mission of the Jews.

NEXT: ISAAC AND HIS SONS