

A Taste of Torah

An Eye for Detail

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

"You are Hashem, the G-d Who chose Avram and brought him out of Ur Kasdim and established his name as Avraham. And You found his heart faithful before You." (Nechemia 9:7-8) Out of all the people in the world, Hashem chose Avraham to be the progenitor of His Chosen Nation. But what was unique about Avraham's faithfulness? The Torah tells us that Hashem said, regarding Avraham, "For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem." (Vayera 18:19) However, it wasn't enough for Hashem to look into Avraham's soul and see that he had this potential; Hashem subjected him to ten tests, each one greater than the next, in order to bring that potential to reality. We can find this notion in our own lives. We know that we would do anything for our children, even if it meant putting our lives on the line. However, only one who actually goes through the experience of risking his life to save his child can tell you how much their relationship has grown from this.

Avraham's ten tests are normally assumed to go in ascending order of difficulty, with the final test being the command to bring up his son Yitzchak as a sacrifice. We can easily understand why this was such a difficult test. After all, this was Yitzchak, the son for whom he had waited one hundred years. Hadn't Hashem told him that the Jewish People would come from Yitzchak? If he were to sacrifice him now, would there ever be a Jewish People? Had he not spent so many years preaching to the pagan masses about a G-d of kindness and mercy and beseeching them to forsake their idolatrous practices? Yet here, he would be performing the ultimate act of cruelty. An entire life's work would go down the drain; he would be branded a hypocrite, and all those he had succeeded

in converting would feel they had been duped and would return to their pagan ways. This, indeed, was a tremendous test.

There are some commentaries, though, who say that the final test wasn't the Binding of Yitzchak, but, rather, the death and interment of Sarah. This is mind-boggling, for while it must have been very difficult for Avraham to deal with the passing of his *aishes chayil* Sarah, and having to wrangle with Efron and the Hittites to procure a burial site was no picnic, can we really say that this was more difficult than the Binding of Yitzchak?

Sometimes what seems like the most difficult test can have an element of simplicity to it. It may have been supremely difficult to sacrifice his son, but it was eminently clear what Hashem wanted. Avraham knew he had to overcome all of the aforementioned difficulties and feelings and do that which he knew Hashem had commanded him. But there is a different kind of test, one which, on the surface, may seem easier, but whose difficulty lies in its complexity.

The Medrash tells us that the cause of Sarah's death was that she heard that her son was taken to be brought up as a sacrifice. When Avraham came home to find that his wife had passed on, we can but imagine the thoughts that must have swirled through his head. "If I am putting aside all of my personal interests in order to do the will of Hashem, to the point where I will offer my son as a sacrifice, how can this be the effect of my actions?!" Furthermore, when it came time to bury his wife, he had to pay an exorbitant fee to procure a cave for her burial. "Hashem, didn't you promise me that all of this land will be mine? How can you allow the local inhabitants to take such advantage of me? Is this all that a lifetime of service and *chesed*

Stories For The Soul

Better Sefer than Sorry

The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1817-1893) made a special *seudah* (festive meal) when he completed his monumental work, *Ha'amek She'eila*. At the celebration, he explained the significance of the event. As a young boy, he did not show much interest in his Torah studies. One night, young Naftali overheard his parents discussing their son's situation. His father felt that it would be best for Naftali to leave the yeshiva and become an apprentice to a local shoemaker, so that he might learn a meaningful trade. Naftali rushed out and begged his parents for a second chance, promising them he'd apply himself to his studies, and they agreed. From that day on, Naftali grew to become one of the great Torah giants of the 19th century.

The Netziv concluded, "Had I become a shoemaker, I never would have written these volumes. After passing from this world, I would have appeared before Hashem, and He would have asked, 'Where is your *Ha'amek She'eila*?' I would have been dumbfounded. 'I am a simple shoemaker,' I would have responded. 'I made shoes all my life, not seforim!' But Hashem would have insisted, 'You were supposed to become a great Torah scholar and write this work!'

"And because I avoided that great shame and remorse, I am celebrating today!"

The Torah, when discussing our Matriarch's Sarah's death, specifies every period of the years of her life to point out that she used the time allotted to her properly, achieving her potential. May we, her descendants, merit to achieve the same in our lives.

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Kollel Happenings

AXIS OF EVIL THIS NOVEMBER

Join Senior Educator Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher on a journey in the dark as he explores the nature of evil in Creation - and see the light at the end of the tunnel! For men and women at Aish Denver, Mondays Nov. 9 & 16 From 7:45-8:45 PM.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

The M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD ADOPT-A BUBBY PROGRAM

Do you know of a senior - a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, fellow congregant - who would benefit from a weekly phone call to schmooze, share a thought on the parsha or Jewish calendar, or just say hello? Do you have a few minutes a week to call a senior in the community and make a difference in the life of another? Contact the Denver Community Kollel's M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby program! Call Joyce Litzman at the Denver Community Kollel at 303-820-2855, or email jlitzman@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: *Kaddish Tiskabel* is generally recited following every *Shemone Esrei* prayer. When else is it recited?

A: 1) After the *s'lichos* recited in the days before and after Rosh Hashana. 2) According to some customs, it is recited twice on the night of Purim, once after *Shemone Esrei* and once

following the post-Megillah prayers.

This week's question: Every prayer recited in the presence of a *minyan* is preceded and followed by *kaddish*. When is *kaddish* recited immediately following the *Shemone Esrei* recited by the congregation?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

Fore-sight

Rob Brickner from Brooklyn, NY wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What do the foremothers' names mean? Why are the forefathers' names explained right in the Chumash and the foremothers' names are not described in detail? Rivka - I have no idea what that name means. The others I have a one - or two - word translation. But is there a tradition as to what each of the mothers' names stood for?

Dear Rob Brickner,

True, the Torah usually explains a name only at the time of birth or when the name is being changed. But Sarai is changed to Sarah and Hoshea is changed to Yehoshua (Joshua), yet the Torah doesn't explicitly explain these names. Yitzchak's naming is narrated in the Torah but his name is not explained. The same is true of Judah's sons. Moses' son's name, Eliezer, is explained in the Torah not at the time of his naming.

True, the Written Torah doesn't explain every name, even the names of some of our greatest people. However, the Oral Torah explains these names.

Sarah comes from the word *sar* meaning "noble" and "ruler." Rivka means a young calf, which is a symbol of innocence. Rachel means a sheep, also associated with innocence. Leah means tiredness; Leah cried to G-d so much that her eyes looked tired.

Sources:

Genesis 17:15, 38:3-5

Exodus 18:4

Numbers 13:16,

Tractate Eiruvin 17b

Sefer Halikhotim 17:4

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(acts of loving-kindness) is worth?" But that was not how Avraham reacted. Instead, he accepted whatever Hashem did, even if he didn't understand it, and mourned his wife's passing without muttering and complaining. He paid whatever was necessary in order to provide a respectable burial for her and then continued with his life's mission of bringing awareness of Hashem into this world.

As descendants of Avraham, we relive this test many times throughout our lives. We think, "Hashem, look how I am extending myself for You. I have gone out

of my comfort zone to do Your will, even though it wasn't easy, because I knew that it was right. Hashem, why does it sometimes seem like the very steps that I am taking toward You are the cause of so much pain to me? Shouldn't the road to goodness be paved with comfort?" We need to dig deep into our spiritual reserves, reserves which we inherited from our forefather Avraham, and muster up the strength to accept that Hashem's ways are mysterious, and not let that hamper our growth. We must forge on along the path of righteousness to our destiny.

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